

ANTON RUBINSTEIN

PIANO CONCERTOS NOS. 2 AND 4

ALEXANDER PALEY, PIANO
STATE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF RUSSIA
IGOR GOLOVCHIN, CONDUCTOR



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Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Major, Op. 35

1. Allegro vivace assai (18:33)
2. Adagio non troppo (10:09)
3. Moderato (10:26)

Piano Concerto No. 4 in D Minor, Op. 70

4. Moderato assai (14:03)
5. Andante (12:30)
6. Allegro (11:00)



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COMPACT
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ANTON
RUBINSTEIN
(1829–1894)

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TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 76:49

Alexander Paley, piano
State Symphony Orchestra of Russia
Igor Golovchin, conductor

Producer: Vladimir Koptsov

Sound Technician: Vladimir Shuster

Editor: Farida Uzbekova

Recorded in December 1993 in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory

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NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

The life and creative career of Anton Rubinstein make for one of the most fascinating chapters in the history of Russian music. He was a great pianist, composer, public figure, founder of the Russian Musical Society and the St. Petersburg Conservatory – and this is but a partial list of his accomplishments. Hardly any other person contributed so much to his country's cultural life; it remains a mystery why his accomplishments have remained so under-appreciated to the present day.

This “paragon of Russian pianism” was born on November 28, 1829 in a small town in Podolsk province, though the family moved to Moscow in 1834. His first music teacher was his mother – but in 1837, she hired a professional, Alexander Villoing, who played a very important role in the development of his pupil's pianistic talent. Under his guidance Anton progressed very quickly and made his first public appearance at the age of 10. The public marveled at the young virtuoso and he enjoyed tremendous success. It's interesting to note that his first concert, as well as his last one and many others during his more than 50 years of concert activity, was for charitable purposes.

In 1840 he left for Europe and stayed there for three years - learning, performing and meeting outstanding musicians. Despite the fact that Europe was then flooded with brilliant performers of all sorts (including quite a few other gifted children), Rubinstein soon

worked his way up to the first magnitude of celebrity. Liszt hailed him as his successor. From 1844 to 1846 he was in Berlin studying music theory and composition with Siegfried Dehn. In 1846 he moved to Vienna, where he experienced many hardships after his father died. At the age of seventeen, without material support from his family, he was forced to earn his own living.

His fame quickly grew after he returned to Russia in 1848, and he began to experience for himself the inadequacies of Russia's still-primitive musical establishment. By his early twenties, he had already conceived his general plan for reforming music education – and consequently, musical life – in Russia. At that time, however, it was still impossible to institute reforms there. So he returned to Europe in 1854, and spent the next four years concertizing and composing. Astonishing success followed him on all his concert tours, with particularly stupendous triumphs in Vienna, Paris and London. Critics hailed him as one of the world's greatest pianists, comparable only to Liszt; some even argued that “the crown” was rightfully Rubinstein's.

By the late 1850s, the signs of awakening and upsurge of Russian cultural life became apparent. But the state of musical life and art posed several major problems calling for immediate solution. There was a serious lack of well-trained musicians in the country, and their social status often prevented them from practicing their profession. Yet

the demand for such professionals in society was enormous, since music was gradually – but insistently – enriching the lives of the general public; it was no longer the exclusive province of the rich. Fully aware of the need for a music education establishment up to European standards in Russia, Rubinstein spared no energy and effort in filling the void. The initial foundation for educational reform was laid when Rubinstein (aided by his brother Nikolai, also a brilliant pianist) organized the Russian Musical Society in 1859. This led to the inauguration of the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1862, with Rubinstein as a professor and its first director; he held the post until 1867. (Brother Nikolai founded the Moscow conservatory along similar lines in 1856.) He conducted several classes: piano and orchestral music, musical forms and orchestration, ensemble performance and choral performance. Tchaikovsky, a composition pupil of Rubinstein, was among the Conservatory's first graduates.

The next twenty years were dedicated to composing and concertizing. In 1872-73 Rubinstein made a grand tour of America together with the famous violinist Wieniawski, giving 215 concerts in eight months. In 1885-86 he undertook another extensive tour, performing 175 works played twice in seven cities of Russia and Europe. He returned to the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1887, serving again as both director and professor until 1891. The last years of his life were spent mostly in

Dresden, Germany; he died of a stroke at his summer country-house in Peterhof (a suburb of St. Petersburg) on November 20, 1894.

He was a very prolific composer; his works include 16 operas (among them *Dmitri Danskai*, *Feramors*, and *The Demon*), 6 symphonies, 5 concertos for piano and two for cello, a violin concerto, symphonic poems, chamber music, sonatas, much solo piano music and over 160 romances and songs. His opus numbers ran to 119 but the fact that he grouped multiple songs together under single opus numbers makes that figure deceiving.

Not long before his death he said: “When I recall musical life in Russia 25 years ago and compare it to the present-day, I can't but exclaim: is it possible that the 25-year history of our conservatory could have yielded such enormous achievements?”

***Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Major*, Op. 35 (1851)**

Among the works created by Rubinstein in 1848-54, his piano concertos hold a major place. In Russian piano art of the first half of the 19th century, with its prevailing trend towards chamber music, the concerto genre was practically nonexistent. Rubinstein was the first Russian composer whose piano concertos were widely acclaimed, both in Russia and abroad. Between 1848 and 1854 he wrote five works for piano and orchestra,

among them the *Piano Concerto No.2*.

By all accounts, Mendelssohn's musical language had considerable influence on Rubinstein as a composer. However, contrary to this otherwise valid comparison, this influence is least apparent in his early piano concertos. Although they and Mendelssohn's concertos share to a certain extent similar methodology and technical formulas, the imagery of Rubinstein's concertos is entirely different. In them, two spheres prevail, the first being a sense of passionate, heroic drive: evocations of masses of people moving in a march-like tread, the sound of fanfares, calls for action, and triumphant hymns of victory. The second sphere is that of more lyrical impulses and reflective thoughts: man and his limitless capabilities, spring dreams full of warm and heartfelt emotions, and songs of sunrises to come.

The "schematic glossary" of Rubinstein's early concertos presents a complicated alloy, from which two major elements should be singled out. On the one hand, the composer adopted the musical language of western European composers; on the other, he made use of the vocal structure and speech patterns of songs and also rhythmic patterns of popular dances, especially the waltz.

Rubinstein's piano concertos of this period open a new era in the history of Russian piano art. The characteristics and formats of music making had been chang-

ing, in keeping with the demands of a growing pluralistic cultural intelligentsia that sought not only entertainment in art, but also answers to the serious questions of private and public life. Music gradually moved from noble salons to the more democratic arena of concert halls, where composers and performers could reach beyond small groups of cultural elite to much broader and demographically diverse audiences. Rubinstein's piano concertos embraced these fresh historical trends, directing the Russian piano literature of that period from its "chamber" to its "concertante" style.

Rubinstein developed his concerto style in his own unique fashion. It was he who introduced – mainly by means of his concertos – a heroic and powerful impulse into Russian piano music; and it was also he who aspired to combine fresh heroic drive with the soul-stirring, lyrical songfulness that had been a decisive factor in the development of Russian piano music in Glinka's day. In Rubinstein's music, both the lyrical and the heroic are defined in terms of man's everyday life rather than in the superhuman notions of Romanticism. The "lyrical" is always virile, leaving no trace of subjective narrowness. Just as the lyrical is not in conflict with the heroic, neither is the "chamber" style sharply different than the "concerto" style. In his concertos the composer further develops Glinka's tradition of Russian piano chamber music. Consciously or subconsciously

relying on these traditions, young Rubinstein's compositions of 1848-1854 laid the foundation of the realistic lyric-heroic concerto style, which to a certain extent became a determinant factor in the future development of the piano concerto style in Russian music.

***Piano Concerto No. 4 in D Minor*, Op. 70 (1864)**

Rubinstein composed his fourth piano concerto in 1864, after ten years away from the genre. It is a bright and accurate reflection of the collective state of mind of the now much more culturally-minded urban Russian society. Its power lay in its realistic evocation of "modern" life, which was also the reason for the wide acclaim it received from music lovers in Russia.

There are a few similarities that tie this concerto to the earlier ones of the 1850s: the heroic-lyrical style, the schematic roots of the musical language and the characteristics of the piano texture. However, the *Concerto No.4* is a much more mature work than its predecessors. Here the thematic material is given more vivid and clear-cut treatment, the symphonic development is of much greater scope, and the entire composition in general is distinguished by a greater degree of completeness and a more organic dramatic structure.

The material of the main theme of the first movement has a march-like character. But any implied motion does

not impart even the slightest mechanical feel to the heroic and strong-willed music, since the march-like motion is organically combined with an unrestrained stream of pervasive songfulness. The simplicity of this combination makes it utterly convincing as well as reminiscent of Rachmaninoff's second concerto. This blend is accomplished by means of two sections: a lyrical duet and a later passage that – while maintaining the duet-like nature – provides a schematic foundation for the conclusion of the movement.

In his fourth concerto, Rubinstein again introduces lyrical episodes of Russian romance-like character into the texture of the solo part. A short subsidiary part consists of just this romance with a passionate culmination. The elaboration of the first movement is based on Rubinstein's idea of singling out the softer and more lyrical components of the music's heroic character as well as the powerful and active qualities in the cantilena. It ends with a magnificent virtuoso cadenza that demonstrates Rubinstein's pianistic prowess.

The intensely romantic second movement is an extended barcarolle, or boat-song: a form that Rubinstein was fond of, and used often in his music. Quietly splashing chords are heard, as if water on the calm surface of a lake were rippling under the light strokes of oars. A soft rustle is heard in the night's quiet stillness. Hollow-sounding bass textures help to evoke the soft

nocturnal sounds. The piano texture is airy, the harmonization is quiet and simple. The resulting long-breathed timbral-harmonic atmosphere evokes boundless, wide-open and free spaces.

Against this musical background the sounds of a song are heard from afar. Its melody, characteristic of the serenades of Italian gondoliers, may lack originality – but is nevertheless impressive due to the plastic and unrestrained character of its evolution. With its stops at repeated notes, rapturous exclamations on an ascending fourth, the improvisational development of its long and unrestricted melody sounds very natural; the song is not only lovely, but full of joy and optimism.

In the orchestral introduction to the blazing finale, the outcries of trumpet and French horn command the listener's attention as they announce the beginning of a new movement. Here, an entirely different emotional atmosphere prevails: that of a gay and lively dance full of cheerful humor, joyful exclamations, loud outcries and noisy stomping. Rubinstein's contemporaries considered this finale to be quite original, but oddly peculiar because of its somewhat rough and bumptious nature.

The main theme resembles that of the "cracovienne" – a traditional dance of Polish origins that was then widely popular in Russian cities. It was often heard from orchestras at aristocratic or merchants' dances, or even from amateur pianists at gatherings of students and

academicians. It was also popular among factory workers, who would dance it to the accompaniment of the "garmoshka" (a Russian accordion). Accordingly, this cracovienne is not an aristocratic dance, rather a general dance scene painted by the composer, flavored with strong folk-coloring. The finale is written in rough sonata-allegro form, but without significant development. This absence of conventional elaboration is compensated for by a sweeping development of the main theme in the exposition and an intensification of certain elements in the recapitulation.

Rubinstein's fourth piano concerto holds great significance in the history of Russian piano art. Several generations of Russian and foreign pianists were brought up on Rubinstein's concertos, especially the Fourth. It was included in the repertoire of nearly all major pianists of the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, among them his brother Nikolai, Byulov, Tausig, Busoni, Rachmaninoff, Hoffman, Blumenfeld and (later) Oscar Levant, among others. Without Rubinstein's concertos – especially the fourth – Russian music might never have been graced by Tchaikovsky's brilliant B minor concerto.

Notes © 1994 Russian Disc; translated by Marina Ter-Mikaellan, edited by Lindsay Koob

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Alexander Paley was born in Kishinev, Moldavia in 1956. He studied in the Moldavian School for gifted children and in 1971 won first prize in the National competition. In 1974 he was accepted to study at the Moscow Conservatory under Bella Davidovich. In 1984, he won first prize in the J.S. Bach International Piano Competition in Leipzig and the Grand Prix in the first Panchov Vladigerov International Piano Competition in Bulgaria in 1986. During these years, he performed as a recital soloist and also with leading orchestras throughout the former USSR, Hungary, Bulgaria, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Spain and Italy.

Mr. Paley became an American citizen after his emigration in 1988. He is widely recognized for his dazzling technical prowess, convincing interpretations, and his extensive repertoire. He has performed to critical acclaim with orchestras such as the National Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Pops; the Aspen Festival and Minnesota Orchestras; and the St. Louis, San Diego, Colorado, Utah, Milwaukee, Seattle and Syracuse Symphonies – as well as at the Wolf Trap Festival. He made his Carnegie Hall debut with the American Composers Orchestra.

Recent recital engagements throughout the USA have taken Paley to San Francisco, Los Angeles, Richmond, Atlanta, Washington D.C., Chicago, and Seattle. As a chamber musician, he performed in major venues and festivals both in the USA and in Europe. He has partnered with such eminent artists as Bella Davidovich, Mstislav Rostropovich, Oleg Krysta and Dmitri Sitkovetsky, and has played with ensembles such as the Vermeer, Ysaye and the Fine Arts string quartets, the New York Chamber Soloists with Vladimir Spivakov, as well as with principal players from the NDR Leipzig Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic.

Mr. Paley's festival at the Moulin d'Andé in Normandy, France has been the subject of a documentary for Russian television and has led to the creation of the Paley Piano Quartet and the Moulin d'Andé Chamber Orchestra under Paley's direction. He made his operatic conducting debut with this orchestra, leading performances of Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrone* and Telemann's *Pimpinone* at the Theatre of Evreux Scène National in France; he has since gone on to conduct *La Traviata* at the National Opera of Moldavia. In August 1998, he created the Paley Festival in Richmond, Virginia.

Mr. Paley now resides in New York and Paris. He performs extensively in

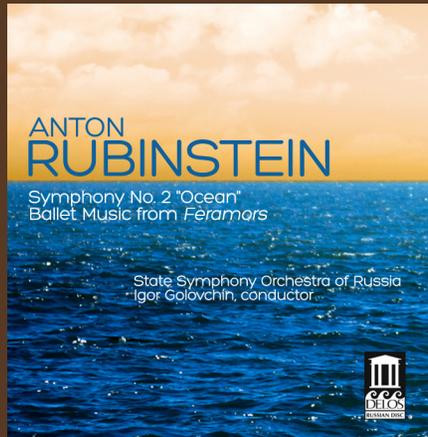
North America and Europe with his wife, pianist Pei-Wen Chen. He has recorded piano works by Liszt and Balakirev (complete) for ESS.A.Y., as well as works by Scriabin and Weber for Naxos. He has recently completed a series of recordings for Acte Sud, including the music of Chopin, Liszt, Rachmaninoff and Sgambati. In addition to the present recording for Russian Disc, he has also recorded for National Public Radio, Radio France and Melodiya.

Conductor **Igor Golovchin** was born in Moscow in 1956. Having displayed a remarkable gift for music very early, he was admitted to the Central Specialized (Gnessin) Music School at the age of six. In 1975, at the age of 19, he was admitted to the Moscow Conservatory – where his examination board (including renowned musicians Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, Boris Khaikin, Kiril Kondrashin and Leo Ginsburg), in view of his talent and high marks, granted him the right to choose the musician with whom he wished to study there: the first time in the conservatory's history that a student had been honored with such a privilege. He chose Kondrashin, who – until his departure to the Netherlands – was young Igor's teacher for nearly four years. He continued his studies with Yuri Simonov, the Bolshoi Theatre's chief conductor – under whose guidance he began his study of opera scores.

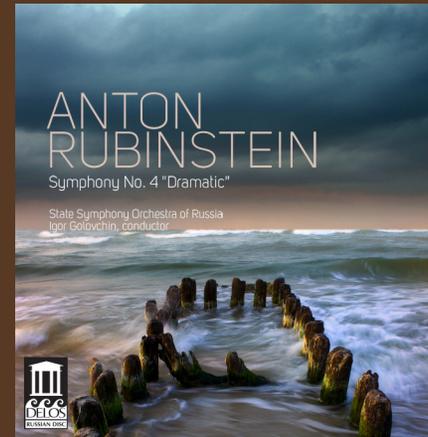
At 25, Igor became chief conductor of the Irkutsk Symphony Orchestra. In 1982, he was a prizewinner at the Herbert von Karajan Conductors' competition, and won first prize at the National Conductors' Competition in Moscow the following year. In 1988, he was invited to conduct the USSR State Symphony Orchestra (now the Russian SSO) for the first time; there he met Maestro Evgeni Svetlanov, with whom he worked extensively.

With that ensemble, Golovchin has toured widely to great acclaim – to include engagements in France, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, Italy and Japan. He has led productions of many well-known operas in Russia's finest theatres. His discography – mostly with the RSO – includes recordings of Rubinstein, Glière, Stravinsky, Rachmaninoff and Sibelius for Russian Disc, now part of the Delos-Russian Disc series. He has also recorded for Naxos the complete symphonies of Balakirev and Scriabin, as well as orchestral music by other Russian masters like Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov, Kabalevsky and Medtner, among others.

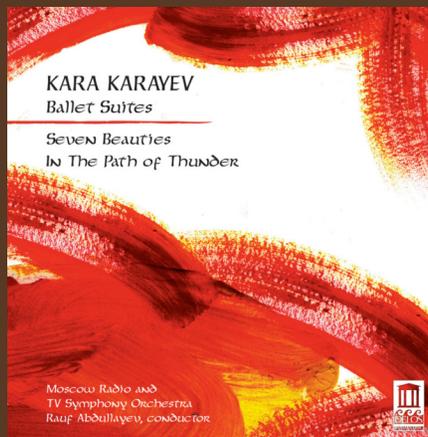
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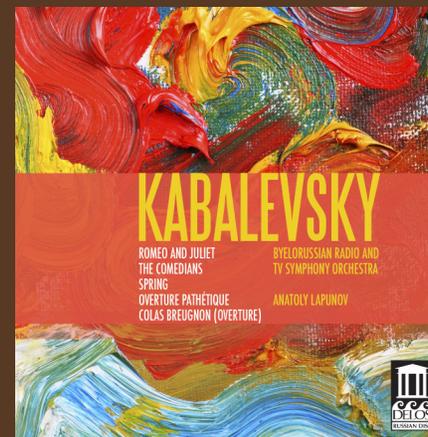
Rubinstein: Symphony No. 2 "Ocean"; Ballet Music from *Feramors* • Golovchin • State Symphony Orchestra of Russia • DRD 2010



Rubinstein: Symphony No. 4 "Dramatic" • Golovchin • State Symphony Orchestra of Russia • DRD 2012



Kara Karayev: Ballet Suites • Abdullayev • Moscow Radio and TV Symphony Orchestra • DRD 2009



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