

Concerto for two solo pianos ; Russian music for two pianos

Numéro d'inventaire : 1982.00190.3

Auteur(s) : Igor Stravinsky

Vronsky & Badin

Type de document : disque

Période de création : 20e siècle

Inscriptions :

- marque : Philips N 02100 L

Matériau(x) et technique(s) : carton, vinyle

Description : Pochette en carton contenant un disque microsillon 33 tours. Pochette illustrée en noir et blanc au recto, imprimée en noir et blanc recto-verso.

Mesures : hauteur : 30,5 cm ; largeur : 30,7 cm (dimensions de la pochette)
diamètre : 30 cm

Notes : Disque contient : - Face n° 1 : Concerto for two solo pianos / Igor Stravinsky, 1935. - Face n° 2 : a) Dance of the Tumblers from "Snegourochka" / Rimsky-Korsakov ; arr. Babin ; b) Russian village / Babin ; c) Waltz from Suite No. 1 for two pianos, Op. 15 / Arensky ; d) Cradle song from "Sadko" / Rimsky-Korsakov ; arr. Babin ; e) Circus polka / Stravinsky ; arr. Babin ; f) Tango / Stravinsky ; arr. Babin.

Mots-clés : Musique, chant et danse

Utilisation / destination : musique

Historique : Commentaire des oeuvres au verso de la pochette.

Élément parent : 1982.00190

Autres descriptions : Langue : anglais
ill.



N 02100 L
STRAVINSKY
Concerto for
two solo pianos
RUSSIAN MUSIC
FOR TWO PIANOS



STRAVINSKY

CONCERTO FOR
TWO SOLO PIANOS
(1935)

With this extraordinarily impressive and intricate work Igor Stravinsky joins a distinguished roster of composers who wrote concertos without orchestra. The list includes Schumann with his Piano Sonata in F Minor which he subtitled "Concerto without Orchestra" and Bach with his Italian Concerto for solo harpsichord — these in addition to the many Seventeenth Century musicians who composed concertos without orchestra for organ and for harpsichord. Stravinsky's Concerto for Two Pianos has many remarkable features, not the least of which is that in no sense is one of the pianos a solo instrument and the other an accompanying factor such as the orchestra may be said to be in the classical concerto. The music for both instruments is of equal importance; and the music for both is vigorously pianistic, emphasizing the percussive rather than the legato qualities of the instrument. "Perhaps the most unusual aspect of the score", writes Edward Tatnall Canby in a penetrating essay on the work, "is the complete integration of the two pianos into a single performing unit. There is scarcely a passage in which either piano assumes individuality. The music is inextricably interlocked throughout; there are even passages where the musical ideas, as printed, run across the page from one piano part directly into the other, as though for some incredible four-handed virtuoso!" The Concerto is in four movements — Con moto; Notturmo; Four Variations; Prelude and Fugue. Stravinsky composed his Concerto in 1935 shortly after his second American concert tour. It was first performed by him and his son, Sviatoslav, in Paris on November 21, 1935.



RUSSIAN MUSIC FOR TWO PIANOS

Rimsky-Korsakov: Dance of the Tumblers from
"Snegourochka" (arr. Babin)

Babin: Russian Village

Arensky: Waltz from Suite No. 1 for two pianos, Op 15

Rimsky-Korsakov: Cradle song from "Sadko" (arr. Babin)

Stravinsky: Circus polka (arr. Babin)

Tango (arr. Babin)

The Dance of the Tumblers enlivens the scene in Rimsky-Korsakov's fairy opera, *Snegourochka* (The Snow Maiden), in which the Czar and his court assemble to honour the Snow Maiden and her betrothed. It is a robust, whirling dance that has long been a favourite number on orchestral programs, and is the only part of the opera that is heard at all frequently today. The Cradle Song is a seldom-heard excerpt from *Sadko*, the same legendary opera by Rimsky-Korsakov from which the popular Song of India comes. It is sung by Volkhova, the Sea Princess, to *Sadko*, the seafaring merchant of Novgorod, as he lies asleep on the shores of Lake Ilmen, after his return from an adventurous voyage, during which he visited the bottom of the sea and was wedded to the Princess.

Both of these numbers were transcribed by Victor Babin with the idea of introducing two Rimsky-Korsakov pieces of contrasting mood into the two-piano literature.

Anton Arensky (1861—1906), pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov and teacher of Rachmaninoff and Scriabin, is perhaps best known to concert audiences for this Waltz. It is from the first of three suites for two pianos, and is one of the standard numbers in the repertoire of every piano team.

Besides being an extremely accomplished pianist and arranger, Victor Babin has written quite a few excellent compositions for two pianos. About his Russian Village Mr. Babin has this to say:

"In the summer of 1943, my wife and I, both lovers of folk music of many lands, got hold of a recording of a new peasant song, fresh from the Soviet Union. This unusually powerful and attractive song, within a short space of time, became the tune that was hummed and whistled not only at our home — "Rancho Piano", near Santa Fe, New Mexico — but also by neighbours and friends all around the foothills of the Sangre del Cristo mountain range. I finally wrote a piece for two pianos, called Russian Village, using the song as my theme, and dedicated it to Andre Kostelanetz who, at that time, vacationed in Santa Fe and who seemed to whistle and hum the tune with more élan than any other person in the neighbourhood."

The Circus Polka, subtitled "for a young elephant", was composed by Stravinsky especially for the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus. It received its first performance at Madison Square Garden, New York, during the circus' spring season of 1942. The circus band, under the direction of Merle Evans, played the music, while fifty elephants, headed by Modoc, the prima pachyderm ballerina, and fifty beautiful girls, headed by Vera Zorina, danced the unusual choreography created by George Balanchine.

The ballet was an unqualified success, and ran for 425 performances, though Conductor Evans was afraid the elephants might stampede at any moment, for, according to him, Stravinsky was "not their kind of music". Toward its conclusion, the Polka strikes a note of familiarity with a satirical reference to Schubert's Marche Militaire. The composer later arranged the Circus Polka for orchestra, and conducted the first performance of it in that form with the Boston Symphony Orchestra on January 14, 1944.

In composing his Tango for voice and piano, Igor Stravinsky attempted to write a "popular" piece of music, but his own originality got the better of him, and so the work emerged as another of those arresting, witty and somewhat satirical Stravinsky compositions.

The arrangements for two pianos of both the Stravinsky pieces were made by Victor Babin with the assistance of the composer.

Vitya Vronsky and Victor Babin were both born in Russia — the former in Kiev, the latter in Moscow. After studying in their native land, they both went to Berlin to study piano with Artur Schnabel. It was here that they met in 1929. They were married shortly thereafter, and merged their artistic talents into one great musical unit.

After several years of European tours, during which they established an enviable international reputation, Vronsky and Babin came to the United States, making their debut in 1937. Since then, they have won hosts of friends and admirers through their many American concert tours. Both are now American citizens.

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