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Another useful addition might have been a discography. There have been, for example, at least sixteen recordings on basset clarinets over the past dozen years; even an unannotated list would be a useful reference. Perhaps the fact that the mission statement for the series specifically mentions "concert-goer" as opposed to record-buyer is the reason for this omission. Listed in the bibliography, though not mentioned in the text, is "The Mozart Clarinet Concerto on Record" (*Clarinet and Saxophone* 14, no. 4 [1989]), by another noted British clarinettist and scholar, Jo Rees-Davies. Cambridge has recently published *The Cambridge Companion to the Clarinet,* also edited by Colin Lawson; this collection of essays includes one on clarinet recordings, but not a comprehensive discography. The standard work in this field is Richard Gilbert's *Clarinettist's Discography III* (Harrington Park, N.Y.: Richard Gilbert Productions, 1991, with subsequent updates).

These minor criticisms aside, *Mozart: Clarinet Concerto* is an excellent summary of, and contribution to, the state of scholarship on this important work. It will make an invaluable addition to the library of any clarinettist or concert-goer (or record-buyer!), and if I may be so bold, should be required reading for all students learning the concerto for the first time.

Lorne Buick

Barrie Martyn. *Nicolas Medtner: His Life and Music.* Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1995. 274 pp. ISBN 0-85967-959-4 (hardcover).

Barrie Martyn's exhaustive study, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Scolar Press, 1990) is widely recognized as one of the most important and comprehensive monographs on the composer's life and works available in English. It is certain that Martyn's latest book will occupy an even more important position with respect to Rachmaninoff's lesser-known contemporary, Nicolas Medtner (1880–1951).

The format of the new book is basically the same as that of the first section, "Rachmaninoff the Composer," of the earlier book: a chronological survey of the composer's life alternates with analyses of his works interspersed liberally with musical examples. It is in comparison with the earlier book that certain limitations appear in the Medtner study. Whereas, in *Rachmaninoff,* the musical examples were typeset anew, the Medtner book reproduces excerpts from published scores; the end result lacks consistency in typeface and size from one extract to the next (compare example 51 with example 52, both on p. 88). There is evidence, too, of cutting and pasting in order that clefs, and key and time signatures, appear at the beginning of each excerpt (e.g., example 25 on p. 51).

These shortcomings, admittedly, are merely cosmetic. More vexing is the practice, evident in both books, of not identifying excepts by measure numbers. There are times when it is uncertain whether an excerpt comes from the beginning of a piece or movement, or if it is culled from the middle or end.

Attention to such a seemingly simple detail would have enhanced the book considerably.

Many readers would likely have found useful an overview of the composer's compositional style, such as had appeared in Martyn's earlier book in the chapter on "Rachmaninoff and Russian Musical History." The only overview of Medtner's music is contained in the brief introduction and there are no references to corroborating material in the musical analyses. Certain features of Medtner's style do surface again and again: modality, counterpoint (including many strict canons and fugues, and such pyrotechnics as the combining of a theme with itself at quadruple speed in the first movement of the Piano Concerto no. 2, op. 50), the reviewing, in the final pages, of a work's themes (either successively or in superimposition), the imitation of bells (similar to Rachmaninoff in this regard and cited with reference to over a dozen of Medtner's works, including the well-known "Danza festiva" of op. 38), and so forth. A summation of Medtner's style, making reference to these and other features and footnoting references in the body of the book, or, alternatively, the inclusion of a comprehensive index would have been most welcome. As it is, for example, we have no way of knowing that Medtner's references to the *Dies irae* in the Piano Quintet in C major, op. posth. (1948) had a precedent in the *Tale,* op. 34, no. 3, written over thirty years earlier (1916), or that the summing up of thematic material at the end of both pieces of op. 58 ("Russian Round Dance" and "Knight-Errant" [1940]) had a precedent at the close of the *Tale,* op. 8, no. 2 (1905) and in the recapitulation of the *Sonata-Reminiscenza,* op. 38 (1920).

Another shortcoming, again common to both books, is the lack of a work-list by genre. In the earlier book, a "Chronological Summary of Rachmaninoff's Principal Compositions" was a step in the right direction (as a supplement to the alphabetical index of works at the end of the book), but a formal work-list would have been more useful than the summary and index combined. In Rachmaninoff's case a work-list can be found in any number of sources and *A Catalogue of the Compositions of S. Rachmaninoff* by Robert Threlfall and Geoffrey Norris (Scolar Press, 1982) is widely available in libraries and still in print. With respect to Medtner, a work-list is more difficult to come by, so it is regrettable that Martyn has dispensed with the convenience of even a "Chronological Summary." This is especially true since the opening chapter of the book, which surveys Medtner's juvenilia, is quite confusing. It is mentioned that the Glinka Museum houses "three different autograph lists of projects dating to 1892" (p. 4). The first two of these list projected works that were never completed. Unfortunately, the reader cannot determine if the works appearing on the third list were completed or not. Since the list is based on a thematic notebook, it can be assumed that Medtner got as far as selecting one or more themes for such intriguing titles as the *Funeral of a Piece of Rotten Beef.* This third list does not, by the way, comprise works "dating to 1892" as stated on p. 4, but from the period 1892 to 1895 as noted on p. 5. A fourth list itemizes works completed during Medtner's eight years of study at the Moscow Conservatoire (1892–1900), works that remain unpublished to this day and

which are not discussed in the body of the book. Why is it that the fragment of a Sonata in F-sharp minor (1897), Plate III, is included in the list of Medtner's unpublished manuscripts, while the *Conzertstück* (1900), Plate IV, appears in neither the work lists nor in the index? It is these and other confusing details that could have been avoided had the author provided even a simple work-list, that distinguished clearly between projected, unpublished (incomplete and complete) and published compositions.

On a related issue, it is disconcerting that a second index (after the one devoted to compositions) is limited to persons, so that the reader wanting to investigate, say, stylistic features of Medtner's works — uses of modality or folk material, for example — has no recourse but to sift through the entire book. Perhaps this is Martyn's way of ensuring that his books are read from cover to cover, but the fact remains that the book's usefulness as a reference tool is thereby limited. With respect to the use of vocalise, for example — which is an important element in Medtner's songs — there is a summation in Chapter 11 in connection with the *Sonata-Vocalise,* op. 41, no. 1 and *Suite-Vocalise,* op. 41, no. 2 (both from the 1920s) that cites four examples of the composer's use of vocalise predating 1920. The reader has no way of knowing that five or six post-1920 songs also employ vocalise (op. 45, no. 4; three songs from op. 46; op. 52, no. 6; op. 61, no. 1 [optional]).

It can, in fact, be quite misleading to read only the entry for a single work. It is stated in connection with *Six Poems by Pushkin,* op. 36 that this is "the third consecutive group of songs devoted entirely to [Pushkin]" (p. 130). The reader will be unaware that this is not entirely true unless the entry some fifteen pages earlier for the *Six [Pushkin] Poems,* op. 32 has already been read. There it is revealed that the text to the fifth song of op. 32 "is not by Pushkin but by his closest friend and exact contemporary, Baron Anton Del'vig" (p. 115). Nor can it be known that the unidentified Beethoven Concerto referred to on p. 223 is the Fourth, unless one has read about Medtner's concert repertoire in earlier chapters, or that Medtner's op. 51 (1928) is not really the "final set of *Tales*" (p. 193), unless one reads further to find that the *Romantic Sketches for the Young,* op. 54 (1931) comprise "eight pieces, arranged in pairs, four Preludes and four *Tales*" (p. 210).

I have always found books that integrate musical analysis with biography a little frustrating, since the reader is forced to keep changing gears; inevitably, reading a composer's biography takes a different sort of concentration than reading an analysis of his works. Rather better is the approach taken in *The Master Musicians's Series* (J. M. Dent and Sons), where biographical data appears at the beginning of a book and musical analysis at the end. Martyn has convinced me that alternating biography with analysis can work, but only if the latter is kept sufficiently interesting to become, in a sense, a part of the story. Some might quibble with Martyn's purple-prose descriptions of Medtner's music, such as this characterization of the second movement of the Piano Sonata in E minor, op. 25, no. 2:

> With the occasional sound of cries of pain and howling wind acting as a reminder of the work's poetic inspiration [Tyutchev's "Silentium"], the music rushes along

> in a torrent; even in the interludes, an undercurrent of frantic anxiety is never far away. A dark *tenebroso* episode, perhaps corresponding to the "indistinct and plaintive sound" of the poem, explodes into a series of defiant descending chords, and even the following interlude of quiet reflection is ruffled by trills. The giddy rampage resumes, the expressive resources of the piano pressed to the limit by a style of writing entirely Medtner's own. (p. 88)

This prose style, all Martyn's own, will either invigorate or infuriate the reader. I, for one, found it refreshing and after reading about a work wanted to hear it without delay.

I do find it curious and more than a little frustrating that while Martyn agrees that the usual translation of *Skazki* as "Fairy Tales" is misleading (the matter is discussed at some length on pp. 35–36), he persists in calling the *Skazki* "Fairy Tales" in section headings throughout the book. Martyn himself points out that the two *Skazki* or "Märchen," op. 48 were "the first of their kind to be published with the unfortunate English label 'Fairy Tales'" (p. 178), yet he uses this same inaccurate translation in reference to works from op. 8 onwards. Since everyone agrees that "Fairy Tale" is a misnomer, why didn't Martyn take the plunge and use for his headings "Legend" or "Folk Tale" or, ideally, just "Tale," as he does elsewhere in the book?

These reservations aside, there is much in the book to be applauded. Martyn's unusually high opinion of Medtner, for example, is welcome, even if it is occasionally over the top. I suspect not many readers would agree that Medtner's Violin Sonata No. 3 in E minor, op. 57 is "one of *the* great violin sonatas" [italics mine] (p. 229); it would be interesting, too, to know who the "some" are who "with reason, have claimed [the Piano Sonata in E minor, op. 25, no. 2] to be the greatest piano sonata of modern times" (p. 89). It may or may not be "ironic that, whereas Liszt's *La Campanella* has enjoyed constant popularity over the years, Medtner's [*Fairy Tale,* op. 20, no. 2] — which is vastly more rewarding musically—still languishes in obscurity," but it is certain that Medtner's piece would not win out over Liszt's in everyone's books (p. 69).

When Martyn takes on one of the truly great sonatas of all time he may have gone too far. Few will concur that Medtner's Piano Sonata in G minor, op. 22 is "arguably even more remarkable [from the standpoint of 'organic integrity'] than the comparable one-movement Liszt sonata" (p. 76). There *is* an obvious affinity between the two works that is not only structural but thematic as well. While Martyn remarks on the similarity between the opening of Medtner's work and of Rachmaninoff's First Piano Sonata, he fails to mention a more significant link to the Liszt Sonata. The similarity, rhythmically and in pitch contour, between the theme of Medtner's Sonata, which appears just after the opening at m. 17, and the big tune that appears at the analogous point in Liszt's Sonata at m. 14, is quite striking. There are also similarities in the manner in which these themes are subsequently transformed. Even some non-thematic material in Medtner's work is similar to examples in Liszt's. Compare the passage at m. 83 in Medtner's Sonata with the passage at m. 217 in Liszt's Sonata; the first is chromatic, the second diatonic, but otherwise they are very

close in a number of ways, right down to the contrary motion between the hands. I am not criticizing Martyn for not mentioning these things, but simply noting that his comparison between Liszt's and Medtner's sonatas is perhaps even more apt than he realizes.

Martyn's great admiration for Medtner is in striking contrast to Medtner's opinion of most of his contemporaries. Medtner's place in musical history is similar to that of his good friend and staunch ally, Sergei Rachmaninoff, a composer for whom Medtner had unlimited admiration. Like Rachmaninoff, "Medtner happily acknowledged that he was born out of his time, ... but believed that musical values were eternal and that contemporary music, which had turned away from these values, therefore represented, not progress, but decadence" (p. 175). But, whereas Rachmaninoff was generally discreet about his musical likes and dislikes, Medtner was only too quick to put pen to paper. His diatribes make for some of the most interesting reading in the book. Not long before he died, Medtner poured out his feelings about

> that charlatan Richard Strauss [who] anticipated all these works like [Stravinsky's] "Rake's Progress" half a century ago with his lewd and sadistically sexual "Salome", pouring out in the guise of a sweet-smelling novelty the shameless slops of his "Sinfonia Domestica" on to the heads of a bewildered public. ... And after him came all those theoretical acrobats, the Schönbergs and their followers, and sound as such established a firm dominance over every element in our art, as though everything that had been heard before, from Purcell down to the great Chopin, had lacked this element (p. 258).

Apparently, at a concert in 1924, Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and Concerto for Piano and Winds "upset [Medtner] so much that after the opening of the *Rite of Spring,* with which the concert ended, he left the hall" (p. 156). Elsewhere, Medtner calls Stravinsky a "talentless ... numbskull" (p. 257) and suggests that "one can only speak [of Schoenberg] after having taken a fair dose of bromide" (p. 154). Medtner believed that Wolf was "a forced celebrity" (p. 64), despised Reger (p. 45), and had an almost pathological dislike of Prokofiev, having laughed, along with Rachmaninoff, through one of his recitals in 1916 (p. 125). Busoni fares no better; he is "a man possessing no understanding of composition, a smart aleck who in print and otherwise mutilates the great composers but is himself unable to write even decent piano exercises" (p. 154). Who among his contemporaries could Medtner stomach, besides Rachmaninoff? "Although he considered Bax a 'modernist', he recognized his talent and thought him 'much better than Stravinsky or even Richard Strauss'" (p. 203). Strange views, indeed.

Also of great interest, particularly to readers of *CUMR*, will be the many references to Canada, ranging from passing mention of Gertrude Huntly Green, a Canadian pianist who studied with Medtner, according to Martyn, in 1923 (although both editions of the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* state "in the late 1920s"), to much discussion about Alfred La Liberté. La Liberté championed Medtner's music in Quebec and assisted in the organization of his second North American tour in 1929, which included concerts in Montreal, Trois-

Rivières, Sherbrooke, Quebec City, Toronto, and Sackville. La Liberté was so important to Medtner that the latter wrote, shortly before his death, that "La Liberté, with all his numerous circle in Canada," was one of three friends without whom he "should whither away entirely" (p. 258); the others were Alfred Swan and the Maharajah of Mysore. Medtner dedicated one of his Pushkin settings, *The Captive,* op. 52, no. 7 and the *Sonata minacciosa (Sonata orageuse),* op. 53, no. 2 to La Liberté, and at one point in late 1920s La Liberté tried to persuade Medtner to move to Canada. Medtner was dissuaded, in part, by Rachmaninoff's concern about his colleague's "likely isolation in 'the wilds' of Canada, far from where he could keep a protective eye on him" (p. 191). Other Canadian personalities mentioned by Martyn include mezzo-soprano Florestine Fortier, to whom Medtner dedicated his *Suite-Vocalise,* op. 41, no. 1 and with whom he performed publicly in 1929, and soprano Jeanne Dusseau, with whom he also performed in 1929, but not so successfully as with Fortier; Dusseau "gave Medtner many anxious moments with her faltering performance" (p. 201).

It must be said that there are a few instances in which Martyn loses me. He begins discussing the brilliant *Second Improvisation,* op. 47 by noting that "Though the work is not programmatic, the theme on which it is based is given a title, as is each of the variations ... ." (p. 176). In the ensuing discussion, Martyn observes that "the third [variation], *Winged Dancers* (or *The Feathered Ones*), is filled with the chatter and fluttering of birds; the fifth, *Fancies,* is informed throughout by a correspondingly whimsical rhythmic pulse and spirit; and the sixth, *In the Waters,* with its unceasing flow of undulating semiquavers, conjures up a picture of a bubbling spring or stream" (p. 177). If this isn't programme music, what is?

I also can't understand why Martyn laments that "no international virtuoso has ... championed" the late piano concertos, when fine performances by major artists of the Third Piano Concerto, op. 60 have been available since the mid-1970s; Michael Ponti's landmark recording, released on vinyl in 1975 (Candide), is available on CD (Vox), as are recent recordings by Nikolai Demidenko (Hyperion), Geoffrey Tozer (Chandos), and Geoffrey Douglas Madge (Danacord).[1]

This brings me to the matter of a discography: there isn't one. This would not be worth noting if Medtner's works were better known and more widely recorded. As it is, precious little of his substantial output is currently available and it is difficult to find out just what has and hasn't been recorded, in performances by Medtner himself or by others. Some of Medtner's recording projects are discussed on pp. 196, 208–9, and 246–48, but the information supplied is sketchy at best. The bibliography lists Martyn's discography of recordings by Medtner that appeared in *Recorded Sound* in 1978 (70–71, April-July), but makes no mention of Eric Hughes's discography of others' recordings of Medtner's music which appeared in the same issue. In any event, there must be a more recent Medtner discography around somewhere and it

[1] Medtner's own recording is also available on CD (Testament).

would have been helpful, if it couldn't appear as an appendix to the book, at least to be referred to it.

The many photographs, particularly those of Medtner himself from age 13 to 70, enhance the book considerably. I found Plate 13, a photograph with Rachmaninoff taken in 1938, especially revealing; Medtner comes across as the sullen one while Rachmaninoff looks positively cheerful by comparison! Plate 19, a photograph of Medtner at the piano in 1943, is exquisite; the right hand position is remarkable, with the hand and fingers sloping ever so gently from the wrist to the keys.

In sum, this is a fine book that redresses admirably, if not definitively, the lack of reliable sources on Medtner in English. As Ernest Newman wrote in 1925,

> [Medtner's] music does not make an immediate appeal to the man in the street, but it certainly grows on the musician. It is as stark and strong as Brahms at his best; there is never a superfluous bar in it, never a superfluous note in the chord; it is sinewy, athletic, and for its weight amazingly flexible, for Medtner is a master of combined and contrasted rhythms. The thought is rarely on the surface, but when one makes it one's own, it is the kind one likes to live with. It is sad to think of the réclame that has come to fifty mediocrities in the last decade or so, while a fine mind like Medtner's goes on its way almost unregarded by the crowd (p. 169).

Martyn's book will undoubtedly help attract a whole new audience to the music of this underrated and underplayed composer, who has, happily, easily outlasted the middling talents that Newman had in mind.

Glen Carruthers

R. Larry Todd, ed. *Schumann and His World.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. xi, 396 pp. ISBN 0-691-03698-5 (softcover).

Schumann and His World, edited by R. Larry Todd, combines recent research by several noted Schumann scholars with nineteenth- and early twentieth-century examples of Schumann reception by composers, critics, conductors, and scholars. The book is partitioned neatly into three sections: essays, letters and memoirs, and criticism.

The first section of the book, comprising recent essays by Leon Botstein, Michael Steinberg, Larry Todd, Gerd Nauhaus, John Daverio, Jon Finson, and Bernhard Appel, deals with many diverse aspects of Schumann and his music. These include the composer's position in nineteenth-century German culture, source study and critical reception of selected works, and analytical studies examining topics such as Schumann's symphonic finales and quotation and allusion.

Botstein's essay, "History, Rhetoric, and the Self: Robert Schumann and Music Making in German-Speaking Europe, 1800–1860," examines four aspects of Schumann's life and world: his relationship to the work of Jean Paul and Wolfgang Menzel; the philosophical discourse he encountered as a youth;