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In Conclusion

There is a lot (a tremendous lot!) that I have left unsaid in this book. My experience is much richer and my thoughts much more numerous than can be set down in a few printed pages. Moreover, I am an inexperienced writer I find it very difficult to be laconic and concise. Since I intended this book mainly for the average piano teachers and their pupils, I have inevitably had to show, on frequent occasions, that "the Volga flows into the Caspian Sea". I think that the average teacher will hardly hold it against me, for he knows as well as I do that, as far as pupils are concerned, the Volga sometimes flows into the White Sea and occasionally even into the Indian Ocean. I have consequently had to dwell at length on some of the typical mistakes made by pupils (mainly in the chapters on tone and rhythm) which, strictly speaking, are rather cases of ignorance than absence of culture or artistic sense.

I can imagine the yawns of some prominent musician who may come across my book and read these lines. But I repeat, I had no other way, partly because of the average learner for whom this book is meant, and partly because in art, and all the more in learning art, there are no "trifles" and it would be fundamentally wrong—"unpedagogic"—to pass over in silence the beginners' difficulties and misunderstandings.

There is something else I regret: that in these pages I could not give full rein to my imagination and that they are rather descriptions of "what actually happened", "reliable accounts" supplemented by a fair amount of heuristic, than the fruits of freely soaring thought.

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I would add in conclusion a few thoughts on music, the composer, the performer and the musicologist—more by way of thinking aloud than preaching, though the latter may at times creep in. Preaching, I must honestly confess, sometimes makes me a little sick. Alas! I love pupils (specially if they are talented) and music, but teaching...? Perhaps I am simply not a teacher in spite of having "on my books" fifteen prize-winners and hundreds of pupils successfully working *urbi et orbi*.

On music. "*De la musique avant toute chose!*" This call which the poet Verlaine addressed to the poets' camp brings an echo from the musicians' camp: "Poetry above all!" That Poetry with a capital P which is the primary foundation of art and with which all great art is permeated: Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Chekhov's *The Lady with the Little Dog*, Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*,

Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, Giotto's Campanile. I purposely take these examples at random.

Music has been the subject of thinking, writing and discussion since time immemorial. A historian of the time of Nero noted with a sigh that among all the panic, disorder, and the flames of burning Rome, the foreboding of the imminent fall of the empire, at every street corner people sang and strummed and argued heatedly about music. And what of the "revolution" of a Terpander? [Nota 1](#) Opinions about music change, as everything changes, for everything in the world is subject to the swing of history's pendulum. Yesterday's law is tomorrow's taboo. At the close of the Middle Ages it was considered that the greatest impediments to creating music were feeling and passion. But barely five centuries passed before the music of Wagner and Tchaikovsky was born. The musical trend abroad which preceded the appearance of Shostakovich and is known as "modern" or *neue Sachlichkeit*, attempted to span the gap between our times and the past by a bridge across the whole of the romantic and partly also the classical era, which would come to rest on the stable foundations of pre-Bach professionalism. After an excessive poetization of music, its "literization" (when programme music flourished), there appeared people who maintained that music is only music and was not to be confused with other arts (a protest against Wagner's idea of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*).

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Anyone who is thoroughly acquainted with the history of music and is able to follow lovingly its meanders will find his way through them without much difficulty. May I use a somewhat artless metaphor: just as anyone flying over great rivers such as the Yenisei, the Kama, the Volga, looks down with pleasure at their majestic and clear flow, their broad expanse, and their sparkling sheets of water (while the smaller rivers, winding busily in and out, almost hidden by shrubs, flow one knows not whence or whither)—so, too, from the summit of a loving knowledge of history lie clearly visible the main channels through which the mighty flood of music rushes into the unexplored ocean of the future. Such knowledge leads to some simple conclusions: there is no "old" and "new" music; but there is good and bad music, lofty and low music (with all the intermediate degrees).

"Old-fashioned" and "contemporary" music are only the thesis and antithesis; their synthesis is mediocre music. If we consider a great work of the past as out of date, then we simply lack historic perspective (in other words, culture)—that is a fact out of our own unfortunate biography and not out of the biography of the work in question. [Nota 2](#) Anyone who loves literature, poetry and philosophy can (almost in the same breath) read with the utmost delight Sophocles' Oedipus, Tolstoy's Polikushka, the Odyssey and Quiet Flows the Don, become engrossed in Aristotle and immediately after take Karl Marx, and listen with equal joy to a mass by Palestrina and a mass by Janacek...

It seems to me that this is possible, because for a truly cultured person three or four thousand years is a ridiculously short span of life.

I say this as one who knows and loves not only music, but art in general; as a servant of art. But the voices of the indifferent or the inexperienced would probably sound a different note. Yet that is why we exist—we teachers and educators—to tune the voice of the inexperienced, the unknowing, to unison

with us. Experienced teachers know what means to use to reduce indifference and increase knowledge, to awaken love and inspire reverence.

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A few words about the composer. Volumes and volumes have been written about composers; one might say, tons of books, articles, pamphlets. Many of them are extremely interesting and are invaluable in enabling the performer to study and get to know the author.

But Pushkin was right when he said that a poet's words are almost his deeds. That is probably why no biography, not even the private correspondence or memoirs, or even profound psychological research can give such a clear impression of an author as can "his deeds", in other words his work (let us recall once more Rachmaninov: 85% musician and only 15% man). Can one compare the "impression of Wagner" one gets from his music with the impression of him one may get from his numerous articles and autobiography (*Mein Leben*)? Or the impression of Rimsky-Korsakov as composer of operas, with that of him as the author of *My Musical Life*.

With all my respect for Romain Rolland and his noble humanitarian aspirations, I must (at the cost of arousing someone's indignation) say that in spite of his love and adulation of Beethoven and his vast knowledge, everything that he wrote about that great composer seems to me inaccurate and distorted, I would even say somehow unpleasant. He overdoes his picture of Beethoven as "a bundle of misfortunes" and his life as unrelieved suffering (incidentally he writes of Berlioz with the same tedious insistence on the tragic and the gloomy). The author's worthy and wise desire to show the reader that a great man has a greater ability to endure suffering than an ordinary man, that the abyss which separates him from the rest of the world is deep, if not bottomless, and that this tragedy is inevitable and that the path of genius is thorny, all this forces Romain Rolland deliberately to belittle the consolations and joys which an artist derives from the act of creation, from his daily work on his compositions, frequently making him forget all else. Artists themselves have often said so. Suffice it to recall Beethoven's own *Heiligenstadt Testament*. Or the wonderful words which Blok addresses to the artist, words that seem chiselled in marble: "Efface the accidental features and you will see the world is beautiful!"

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Only a true artist has the strength to efface the "accidental features" and this is all the more difficult because, clearer than anyone else, he sees and realizes all the evil of the world, and suffers from it so that his suffering is almost equal to his awareness. [Nota 3](#) And that is precisely why his joys are so great that an ordinary man has difficulty in visualizing them.

The "15% man" of whom Rachmaninov speaks should not be inflated to the full 100%. One should not exaggerate everything "human" or "too human" in him. And that is just what Romain Rolland has done. For an artist to be a man means above all to be an artist, that is: all his life to create works of art and to do so to the best of his ability. But those who write about a great man and study his life and work are not the only ones guilty of a tendentious and one-sided approach. On the one hand there are performers with a confident and

domineering personality who adapt the composer to fit their own image; such was Busoni in his rendering of the Romantics, specially Schumann and Chopin. On the other hand (and this is much worse) there are performers with a narrow spiritual horizon, unable to grasp all the wealth and diversity of music as it developed through the centuries and who resemble those mediocre actors who, instead of acting a part, can only act their own selves.

Let us come back to the composer. I want to refer to what I consider one of the most important problems for a performer, the solution of which will at the same time help to solve the highest aesthetic and cultural task facing him.

We are all acquainted with examples of extreme intolerance on the part of some of the great composers towards their fellow composers whose creative path ran counter to theirs. We know that Chopin could not stand the Finale of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and did not approve of Schubert, accusing him of what we would now call "naturalism"; that Tchaikovsky said some very harsh things about Brahms; that Prokofiev and Shostakovich do not like (to put it mildly) Scriabin; that Scriabin himself, in the last years of his life, reached a state of almost musical solipsism (only approving of some of Chopin and Wagner as being an approach to his own music); that when Wagner was given Brahms' *Requiem* which had only just appeared, he threw it on the floor in anger; that Rachmaninov, in a conversation with Artur Rubinstein [Nota 4](#), said "Music finished with Schumann and Tchaikovsky"; that Debussy, or was it Stravinsky (I don't remember which, perhaps both) said that Beethoven was undoubtedly a great man but hardly a musician, etc., etc., *ad infinitum*.

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This picture is very familiar. Every powerful personality tries to spread, like an elemental force, over the whole world, but happily it encounters other personalities, just as strong, and this gives rise to conflicts just as in Heraclitus: struggle is the father and master of everything on earth. I hope that the great but unliveable-with will forgive me if I say that they reminded me of dandelions and rabbits: if there were no other plants and animals on earth, in two or three months' time dandelions and rabbits would have filled the earth.

To attempt to convince, to instil a sense of fairness, to soften the dislike of these "fighters" (the great creative artists) is senseless and useless. What if we tried to convince Schopenhauer that Hegel was a great and profound philosopher!

Tolstoy's hatred of Shakespeare, so unequivocally expressed in his article on *King Lear*, or his version of Wagner's *Ring der Nibelungen* told in his book *What is Art?* For some reason always bring me to a state of irrepressible mirth. If there were no such brawls between the "masters of our thoughts", if we did not have this enjoyable spectacle, so much more fun than boxing or football, life would become dull indeed.

Quarrel to your heart's content, dear "masters", but remember that we, performers, and even more so teachers, will not follow you in any circumstances. It behoves us to be spectators and not actors in the show you put on.

I do not preach either omnivorousness or absolute tolerance, both of which are signs of a lack of personality or of indifference. But it seems to me—and I have said so earlier—that there can be a degree of historic awareness (plus

experience) which allows one not to take part in the disputes or quarrels of composers, but to see in them the component parts of a great, wonderful and profound process governed by laws.

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The morals of a composer are entirely different from the morals of a performer. The performer must have that sense of objectivity and fairness which the composer cannot have. Yet fairness can be a feeling loftier and more passionate than any love or hate. That, perhaps, is the only advantage of a performer: his ethico- aesthetic predominance over the composer; a very rare phenomenon since it is impossible without a very great talent.

Very frequently instead of Justice (with a capital J) we see merely a readiness to give in.

In actual fact, of course, it happens all the time that a performer prefers one kind of music to another (one may feel more kinship with Brahms, another with Scriabin, etc.). Performers often consciously favour one trend, one style, but not all of them and not different ones. This is a natural phenomenon, it is life itself.

But justice, "universality" are still concepts of a higher order.

When Vladimir Horowitz was twenty-two, he told me with great emphasis how much he loved Mozart and Schumann and how alien Beethoven was to him. Beethoven did not move him in the slightest he was no Mozart, and certainly no Schumann, but something half-way between the two. You can imagine what I felt listening to this, as my love for Mozart and Schumann did not detract from my love of Beethoven, but on the contrary, enhanced it. However, I suppose that Horowitz's views must have changed very considerably since that time.

In their youth, very great virtuosi like Gilels and that same Horowitz usually prefer Liszt and Rachmaninov to many other composers who deserve no less, if not more, attention, probably because these composers (who were also pianists of genius) give special scope for their amazing pianistic gifts. But the youthful Gilels only needed a few years' thorough work on music and on himself before he told me that he considered Schumann's Piano Concerto the best in the world. And that was when he had already played the concertos of Liszt, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov. We all know how excellently he later played the Second Brahms Concerto and in the 1955/56 season all five Beethoven concertos.

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The demand (or rather wish) for "universality" [Nota 5](#) which I require of a pianist—particularly of a pianist, since the music written for the pianoforte, in its scope, variety, wealth and beauty does not yield to symphonic, chamber, operatic or choral music—this demand or wish may perhaps bring an ironic smile: after all, you cannot encompass immensity. Yes, you can. This was proved by Liszt, Rubinstein and practically to the same extent by Josef Hofmann and some others; in our time it is being proved by Richter, Gilels, Sofronitsky and, probably several foreign pianists whom unfortunately I know only from some of their records. One of the foremost, it seems to me, is

Benedetti Michelangeli, and not only as far as repertoire is concerned. The enormous and varied repertoire of Sofronitsky, Yakov Zak and several other of our pianists is a joy not only to myself but to all our musical public.

A certain "resultant" acting between the life and personality of a pianist determines the nature and scope of his activity. One man, having brilliantly finished the conservatoire becomes a professional accompanist to an operatic choir, another devotes himself entirely to teaching, leaving himself hardly any time for practising and improving his playing, while a third begins playing in public at an early age, captures public interest and devotes himself entirely to concert work. But all of them need "universality", i.e. culture, without which in our time nobody can play a useful or welcome part. This truism, too, has to be repeated. Pushkin was once reckless enough to say: "Poetry, God forgive me, should always be a little silly". Some musicians—and they include composers and performers—come to a somewhat erroneous conclusion: "If that is so, then music should be completely stupid".

We teachers are sometimes amazed that, in spite of their superlative gifts, in spite of an understanding of music and of their instrument—the result of good schooling—so very few pianists become performers of interest who carry you away and are able to captivate their audience. The reason, I think, is that with all their other gifts the majority lack the "conductor principle", the creative will, or personality; that they play what they have been taught and not what they themselves have experienced, thought and worked out. And for a pianist, in view of the fact that he is at once the legislative and the executive, "master and servant", this absence of a creative will is fatal.

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In opera a singer is helped by the conductor and the stage director, in chamber music by the accompanist (remember the marvellous combination Dorliac-Richter), but who shall help the solo pianist if he does not help himself? There is scarcely a more saddening experience than listening to the performance of a "good", "senior", "musical" pianist with an "accomplished technique" who plays as if he were accompanying a non-existent soloist. Alas, the voice behind the scenes is not heard, the disconsolate "headless horseman", after wandering aimlessly among the musical expanse, disappears without leaving even the impression of a ghost.

At the opposite pole is the performance of a great pianist with a vivid personality, a passionate will, particularly if he is, at the same time, a composer (Rachmaninov is a striking example). Since we are again speaking of Rachmaninov let me put down some of my thoughts about him because to me they seem to be of fundamental importance.

Perhaps some may find paradoxical my assertion (or rather my personal feeling) that on the one hand Rachmaninov's performance of his own work or, for instance, of Tchaikovsky's *Troika* (and much, much else) and, on the other hand, his performance of Chopin's Sonata in B flat minor (as we know it from records) belong to two entirely different categories of the performer's art. In the first case there is complete fusion of the performance with the work performed; there is authenticity, truth, truer than which nothing can even be imagined; in the second case, a Rachmaninized Chopin, an emigrant who has received such a hefty injection of Russian blood, of daring from "beyond the Moscow River",

that he is hard to recognize after this treatment. Yet in both cases the performer is the same unique pianist of genius. I know that many will disagree with me and will even be offended on Rachmaninov's behalf. What can I do if this is my insuperable feeling or, if you will, my conviction? One witty writer said that in any philosophy one may find a place where the author states his convictions or, using the words of the old mystery: *adventavit asinus, pulcher et fortissimus* (here comes the ass, handsome and strong). I shall not be in the least offended if the reader remembers that ass in connection with my conviction, especially since I shall defend it with the stubbornness of an ass.

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What I called two entirely different categories of the performer's art inevitably touches on "questions of style". I shall state my opinion on the subject lightly, without due gravity.

In my opinion there are four types of "performance style". The first—no style at all! Bach is performed "with feeling" a la Chopin or Field; Beethoven—dry and businesslike a la Clementi; Brahms—impetuously and with eroticism a la Scriabin or with Lisztian pathos; Scriabin—drawing-room fashion a la Rebikov or Arensky; Mozart—a la old maid, etc., etc. This is not fancy; all this I have heard with my own ears.

The second—is the "mortuary" style. The performer is so hampered by the "code of laws" (frequently imaginary), he tries so hard to "keep to the style", and is so pedantically convinced that one should play thus and not otherwise and tries so hard to show that the music is "period" (if, God forbid, it happens to be Haydn or Mozart), that in the end the poor composer dies in front of the sorrowing audience and nothing is left of him except a smell of death. [Nota 6](#)

The third type, which I beg the reader on no account to confuse with the second, is the "museum" performance, based on the most accurate and reverent knowledge of how music was performed and how it sounded at the time it was composed; for instance, the performance of the "Brandenburg" Concertos by a small orchestra and a harpsichord as in Bach's time, observing strictly all the rules governing performances at that time (Stross ensemble, Wanda Landowska with her harpsichord; for the impression to be complete the audience should be in period dress and the hall should be lit by wax tapers instead of electricity) .

The fourth type, finally, is the performance illumined by the penetrating rays of intuition and inspiration; a contemporary, vivid performance, backed by unostentatious erudition, imbued with love for the composer that prompts the wealth and diversity of technical methods; a performance, the slogan of which is: "The composer is dead, but his music lives on!" or, if the composer is still alive: "And he shall go on living in the distant future too!"

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Obviously, styles no. 1 and no. 2 fall by the wayside; the first because of its stupidity, immaturity and youth; the second because it is old, overripe and stupid.

There remain: no. 4, without contest the best, and no. 3, as a valuable, extremely valuable, addition to it.

But enough of this analysis. It cannot cover all the variety and wealth of trend and personality in the art of performance. To my mind one thing remains true: style, good style, is truth, authenticity. Buffon's famous saying: *Le style c'est l'homme* (the style is the man) should be supplemented by the no-less famous saying of Boileau: *Il n'y a que le vrai qui est bon* (only truth is good). Not everyone can find this truth easily, but to one who seeks, who desires it passionately and works tirelessly to find it, it will be revealed.

The more talented, the more musical [Nota 7](#) the pianist, the less worried he is about questions of style as they usually appear to teachers and methodologists, the more vividly will he portray truth in his performance. The musical material gives birth to the form—truth, which can explain so much in art. Rachmaninov, playing Chopin as a genius but not a la Chopin, arouses admiration, in spite of his obvious departure from the composer's spirit, because his powerful personality together with unprecedented mastery will always carry away the listener and also because this is an elemental phenomenon which is not the result of a process of thought, of striving or of reasoned preparation. "For him it is permitted" is what we feel. This is the reign of force, of power, of might. The words of Beethoven come to mind: *Kraft ist die Moral derer, die sich von den anderen auszeichnen—sie ist auch die meinige* (Force is the moral of those who stand out from the others; it is also mine).

But take away the genius and leave the strength and what will be the result? In the best of case — arbitrariness, in the worst, rowdyism.

I repeat once more, there is no falser premise than the famous: *Nichts ist wahr, alles ist erlaubt* (Nothing is true; everything is permitted).

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The performer in search of truth will be guided by the opposite formula: there is a truth, not everything is permitted. When a pupil falls into the arbitrary, tries to be original and becomes wild, I remind him of that excellent rule of strategy: one must have artillery but not show it. If the word "artillery" is replaced by the word "individuality", "temperament", "personality" and many others, the artilleryman's rule will also apply to the pianist.

The almost infinite possibility of playing *differently* (for truth, too, is infinite) while playing well and beautifully (but variety, too, has its hierarchy!) is a phenomenon that has always filled me with admiration; the same happens in other arts also, the same thing happens in nature with its infinite variety of forms of life. [Nota 8](#)

Imagine, for example, that you are listening to a three-hour concert at an average-good music school or conservatoire at which some dozen pupils perform—ever if they play their pieces faultlessly; and then imagine that in the same three hours you hear six or seven excellent pianists—artists. In the first case everything merges into a uniform grey mass, you feel as if you were always listening to the same thing. In the second case, what variety, how many unexpected wonders, how many contradictions and conflicting qualities; every time it is a different instrument (although in actual fact it is the same), different music, everything is different as in infinite Nature where there can only not be two noses alike, but not even two small leaves. Or imagine that the **PERSIMFANS** [Nota 9](#) is playing three different symphonies after which these same symphonies are given under three great conductors. ...These artless

impressions and considerations (in spite of being very elementary their significance is difficult to refute) lead to the optimistic conclusion that the good is much more prevalent than the bad! Here, quality really turns into quantity.

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If I write about these very well-known commonplace things it is, as in so many other cases, only because observing the most ordinary manifestations in life and pondering over them will provide the key to the solution of many problems and help correct many mistakes. If the founders of the **PERSIMFANS** had been as clearly conscious of the phenomenon of the "headless horseman" as I am, the **PERSIMFANS** would exist (and with every good reason) only as a method of work but in no case as a concert organization called upon to perform before tens of thousands of people. I referred to two impressions: that of a concert by good pupils, and the other of performances by several excellent pianists; these are impressions that anyone can easily experience, or else imagine, and I referred to them because even the recording of this simple fact can set thoughts in motion and lead to most useful conclusions. It is to these conclusions that to a large extent this book is devoted. I repeat again that the readers for whom this book is meant are the average piano teacher and his pupils.

Albrecht Dürer, in his reflections on painting, said that there were canons of beauty, truths capable of proof, which rejected the approach based on taste ("I like", "I do not like") by which the crowd is usually guided. The experienced, knowing man will more than once say to himself: "I do not like this, but *it is good*". The inexperienced, non-understanding man says: "I do not like (or do not understand) this, which means that it is bad", or "I like it, therefore it is good", (even if in actual fact it is bad). Oh, if we could only attain such a "passionate objectivity" as that of Dürer or Leonardo, how much better we could decide the lesser as well as the greater questions of art!

I feel bound to quote here a judgment that is particularly dear to me: Haydn was asked whom he considered the best composer. He replied: "I swear before God and as an honest man that I consider the best composer to be Mozart, for he has a perfect mastery of the laws of composition and has the best taste!" And that was that.

This seemingly chary sentence is in actual fact full of profound significance; analyse it carefully and you will see the importance of what it says.

On musicology. Questions related to the appreciation of our art obviously lead to thinking about the scholar, the musicologist, the musician and writer. I know that some great composers and performers take a very cool view (to put it mildly) of this category of people whose activities are connected with music.

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Everyone knows of the numerous witticisms at their expense - for instance that writing about music is like speaking about food which for the hungry is quite inadequate, etc., etc.

I personally value and love expressions of thought and research in this field, provided, of course, they emanate from truly authoritative persons.

For instance, in our own field, the pianoforte, the work of C. P. E. Bach *Versuch über die wahre Art das Klavier zu spielen* was and remains a most reliable and excellent guide, primarily because the old music, for the understanding and mastery of which that work was written, was and continues to be superb music to this day.

And how many excellent books on music have been written by great musicians and musicologists! Think of those in our own country: the writings of Glinka, the wonderful articles of Tchaikovsky, Serov, [Nota 10](#) a great many writings by Stassov, [Nota 11](#). etc., etc.; and in our own times, the writings of Asafiev (Glebov) [Nota 12](#), Sollertinsky [Nota 13](#). (he, unfortunately, wrote very little; with his tremendous talent and erudition he could have written many outstanding books); the interesting books of Professor Mazel [Nota 14](#) and much more. (I have cited only a small part of all the valuable work done in our country in the field of musicology.)

I would also include in the field of musicology everything written by Schumann, Wagner, Liszt, Berlioz and many of their predecessors. True, the works of Wagner were aimed mainly at furthering and proving his own rightness as the creator of the music drama.

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Even in his excellent book on Beethoven he plainly states that the Finale of the Ninth Symphony is a forerunner of his musical drama and that therein lies its main significance. Such a passionate and determined fighter for his art, the greatest, the only one in this field of art, could not reason otherwise. But if you discard the "auto-propaganda", how many profound and passionate thoughts are expressed in his literary work! One cannot fail to read them even if they sometimes do call forth a protest.

Liszt's excellent book on Chopin is well known in our country. When he writes about the compositions of his friend, his prose seems, to our ears, too full of pathos, too pompous, but this is so understandable—the musician of genius, conscious of the inadequacy of words in transmitting the lofty feelings and powerful emotions which he rendered so easily by his playing, resorted to pathos, put in a lot of exclamation marks, naturally fighting shy of a more sober and matter of fact exposition of his thoughts and feelings. Yet he is no less intelligent than Balzac when he writes about "the man of society", his inner make-up and behaviour. These pages are perhaps the most remarkable in all the book.

Unfortunately Liszt's excellent programme notes for the concerts given during the peak period of his work as conductor at Weimar are not very popular in our country (perhaps because of their incidental nature). It is difficult to imagine better "annotations" to music. Brilliant literary quality, intelligence combined with great wit, the depth and accuracy of his musical judgment have made these programme notes into a model of what such writing should be. The main requirement for this "musicological genre"—brevity, laconic style and depth of content is here fully met.

Of Schumann there is no need to speak. His brief advice to learners, his criticisms and articles have rightly earned the respect and love of all musicians.

Berlioz, such as he appears to us from his letters, articles and, I would say, his "musical stories", I consider by no means less brilliant as a writer than as a

musician. I will even confess privately that he gives me more pleasure as a writer than as a composer (with the exception, of course, of some passages of true genius in his *Requiem*, *The Damnation of Faust* and the *Symphonie Fantastique*)[Nota 15](#)

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Why did I embark on an enumeration of all the famous masterpieces in the literature on music? Because our young musicologists (and sometimes also the middle-aged) fail to grasp the meaning, the significance and enchantment of the works I have mentioned. Their own work is permeated with "scholarliness", "analysis" and an accurate description of the object of that analysis which in most cases envelop the reader in unrelieved boredom. You cannot talk about art in a language that is too inartistic. Incidentally, in recent times there has been an improvement in the type of writing known as "dissertation", but this is far from sufficient. There is still too much description in minute-writer's style explaining what goes on in a musical composition ("in such a bar the melody leaps a fifth, in that other bar the bass drops a fourth", etc., etc.). It is probably that type of description that gave rise to the jokes about "describing a dinner" and similar witticisms.

I consider that these bad, formalistic musicological habits should be abandoned once and for all. For a musician they are unnecessary, because he can hear; they are even more unnecessary for the non-musician because he cannot understand them.

As a man who reflects on the subject of art and as a teacher I find that one of my most fascinating occupations is the analysis of the laws of materialistic dialectic, which are embodied in the art of music, in music itself, as well as in its performance, as clearly and precisely as they are in real life. How interesting and instructive it is to follow the laws of conflict between contradictions, to see how in music, just as in life in general, thesis and antithesis lead to synthesis.

We sometimes devote a great deal of time to such discussions in my class. A pianist who knows and feels these laws will always play better than the pianist who does not know them or cannot fathom them.

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This question is too vast and deserves to be specially studied and described; moreover it requires a tremendous number of musical examples analysed in detail; for these reasons I shall not be able to include it in this book. But to direct the reader's thinking I shall just give a small example from my personal experience which may explain what I mean.

Many pupils in my class studied Beethoven's Sonata in D major, op. 10 No. 3. I have hardly even been immediately satisfied with the rendering of the following bit from the last movement (just before the end of the movement):

Nota de revisor: a seguir apresenta-se uma imagem de uma partitura musical que corresponde ao Ex. 101.



Some pupils put too much stress on the strong beat of each half-bar because they wanted to show the change of harmony which occurred on the strong beat; others, apparently on the assumption that a syncopation always requires a certain accentuation, played it thus: bestowing on this lovely syncopated rhythm the character of a cake-walk.

Nota de revisor: a seguir apresenta-se uma imagem de uma partitura musical que corresponde ao Ex. 102.



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For anyone with ears to hear it was at once clear that both renderings were blatantly wrong. The pupil can be helped if it is explained to him that in this small and wonderful excerpt from the Sonata there is a struggle of contradictory elements. On the one hand the change of harmony coupled with the strong beat of the bar attracts our attention (beckons to us, if I may so express myself); on the other hand the syncopation which always requires a certain accent, whatever happens, also "beckons". These two contradictory elements of the musical phrase can be termed "thesis" and "antithesis". But the whole phrase in its entirety is the "synthesis". We musicians tend to replace the word "synthesis" by the word "harmony". It is obvious that in order to achieve harmony in rendering this phrase it is essential to find the balance between the accents on the strong beat of the bar and the accents on the syncopation; this will result in a true and beautiful rendering. It is very easy to show on the piano and very boring to describe in such detail.

I think the reader will have no difficulty in understanding what I am trying to say and will be able to draw far-reaching conclusions from this small example. Dialectic is not metaphysics; it does not hover somewhere in the air above us but is present everywhere in our lives. I feel it also in the way the grass grows and in the way Beethoven composed. Nature is the mother of dialectic.

I could give thousands and yet more thousands of examples of such work with my pupils, and of appeals to them to try to understand the laws of dialectic and give them aesthetic expression. But I think that this small example will suffice. There is hardly need to say that dialectic thinking helps those who did not "receive it from on high" to master long cyclical forms, to develop the musical process in a convincing and living manner and to render the composer's intention with integrity.

My essay would be incomplete if I failed to mention a means of musical education known to all—recordings, tape-recorders, etc. For talented and advanced pianists, recordings are now probably the most powerful means of education. So much that is remarkable and beautiful is available on records that I sometimes had the sinful thought that the time was not far distant when teaching advanced pianists in the senior classes of the conservatoires or by individual teachers will die a natural death and teaching will give way to gramophone records.

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Even now it happens very often that some talented and wideawake pupil comes to my class with a record of Rachmaninov's Second Concerto and asks me for advice. "What do you need me for" I tell him, "When Rachmaninov himself can give you all the advice you want. Listen to your record some ten or twenty times, then I shall hear you once to see what effect this 'listening to music' has had on you."

It would be highly desirable if the greatest masters of the piano were to make records not only of technically easy musical masterpieces which not very advanced pupils can play, but also of "educational" music, such as the etudes by Czerny, Clementi, Cramer, etc. Many of the Clementi sonatas have now been recorded by Vladimir Horowitz and we teachers cannot but welcome this. In his advice to those who learn to play the piano Hofmann says that one must try as far as possible to hear only good performances and avoid the bad. Now this can be done easily.

But in fact I think I am flogging a dead horse. Listening to records and radio is so widespread nowadays that there are, I think, only few people who are not influenced by this typical phenomenon of our times, this outstanding achievement of modern technology.

And here I shall make an end.

The intention had been to supplement my notes by a paper written by my assistant, T. A. Khludova, which would tell in detail of our work in class on various compositions of various composers and various periods.

Although without the use of recordings, without a tape-recorder, without actual sound, such a work is bound to be inadequate and cannot give the exact content of a lesson, it is undoubtedly very useful for learners. But due to the untimely death of T. A. Khludova the publication of her paper had to be postponed indefinitely. This is all the more regrettable since in my book I give

only one detailed description of how we study a composition—our work on the Allegretto from Beethoven's Sonata *quasi una fantasia* of which I speak in the chapter on "The Artistic Image".

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Even so I had to give up the idea of putting down in words the whole of the technical and tonal work, pedal, etc., since without the actual sound substratum (once more, without a tape-recorder!) such a description, however meticulous, of the process of teaching fails to satisfy me.

I am convinced that in the none-too-distant future such books as mine will be published only with an appended sound track which alone is capable of giving a full and clear idea of what is being discussed.

I have already said that I am conscious of the defects of my book, the main one being a somewhat summary treatment of the subject. Any branch of art, once you have spent your lifetime in it, is seen to be so abundant and so vast that an author who puts down on a few printed sheets what he has thought, felt and partly also done, is bound to feel dissatisfied.

But in consolation (of myself) I shall add that the reader will perhaps still feel that this book has a direct bearing on art, and that it is not just a collection of dry methodological considerations. And if my writing can help anyone to penetrate more deeply into our wonderful art and, even if only slightly, stir his feelings and thoughts, I shall be quite content.

Notas de Rodapé

Nota 1- Greek musician and poet who lived in Lesbos in the VII Th century B.C. and is believed to have been the first to introduce the heptachord, Ed.[Voltar Nota 1](#)

Nota 2 - The same may be said of the failure to appreciate a great contemporary work (to mention but Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony).[Voltar Nota 2](#)

Nota 3 - Of course the same may be said of any great man, in any case of a learned man.[Voltar Nota 3](#)

Nota 4 - I have it from Artur Rubinstein himself. They met in a train and travelled in the same compartment.[Voltar Nota 4](#)

Nota 5 - Obviously by "universality" I do not mean a mastery of the entire piano literature quantitatively speaking, but qualitatively.[Voltar Nota 5](#)

Nota 6 - That is why I call this the "mortuary" style. Sometimes this style is mistakenly referred to as the "cerebral" style. This is a regrettable misunderstanding. I have the utmost respect for the brain, and the utmost distaste for the mortuary.[Voltar Nota 6](#)

Nota 7 - A word which Busoni hated. He considered that it could be applied to an instrument but not to a person.[Voltar Nota 7](#)

Nota 8 - This awareness considerably softens my own personal requirements as a teacher, but, of course, in cases when it is already possible to engage in discussion with a pupil and not merely give him instructions.[Voltar Nota 8](#)

Nota 9 - See footnote on p. 64[Voltar Nota 9](#)

Nota 10 - 1820-1871; composer and critic; opponent of Russian nationalist school and hence of Stasov, ed.[Voltar Nota 10](#)

Nota 11 - 1824-1906; scholar and art critic, champion of the "Mighty Five", ed. [Voltar Nota 11](#)

Nota 12 - In spite of a certain persistency in his opinions, his "trinity" as a magnificent musician, writer and scientist remains a unique event (I need only recall the *Symphonic Studies*). [Voltar Nota 12](#)

Nota 13 - 1903-1944; brilliant lecturer and art critic; member of the Leningrad Conservatoire; friend of Shostakovich; wrote a study of Schoenberg in 1934; was violently attacked in the late 1930s, ed. [Voltar Nota 13](#)

Nota 14 - At that time member of the Moscow Conservatoire, ed. [Voltar Nota 14](#)

Nota 15 - I have already mentioned Kurth, Schweitzer, Pirrot and others whom I would advise teachers and learners alike to study (critically, of course) [Voltar Nota 15](#)