

NADIA REISENBERG, piano

CARNEGIE HALL RECITAL, NOVEMBER 21, 1947

Disc A (54:19)

Suite No. 9 in G Minor (10:10)

George Frideric Handel

- 1 I. Allemande (3:32)
- 2 II. Courante (2:12)
- 3 III. Gigue (4:26)

(1685-1759)

Sonata No. 8 in A Minor, K. 310 (15:02)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

- 4 I. Allegro maestoso (5:06)
- 5 II. Andante cantabile (6:52)
- 6 III. Presto (3:01)

(1756-1791)

7 Rondo Brillante in E-flat, Op. 62 (4:58)

Carl Maria von Weber

(1786-1826)

Sonata No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 58 (23:53)

Fryderyk Chopin

- 8 I. Allegro maestoso (8:37)
- 9 II. Molto vivace (2:13)
- 10 III. Largo (7:52)
- 11 IV. Presto non tanto (4:59)

(1810-1849)

Disc B (40:22)

Four Excursions, Op. 20 (10:40)

- 1 I. Un poco Allegro (2:51)
- 2 II. In Slow Blues Tempo (3:14)
- 3 III. Allegretto (2:18)
- 4 IV. Allegro molto (2:09)

Samuel Barber
(1910-1981)

Six Études (13:39)

- 5 Étude in F-sharp Major, Op. 42, No. 4 (1:59)
- 6 Étude in C-sharp Minor, Op. 42, No. 5 (2:49)
- 7 Étude in F minor, Op. 42, No. 7 (:58)
- 8 Étude in D-flat Major, Op. 8, No. 10 (2:06)
- 9 Étude in B-flat Minor, Op. 8, No. 11 (3:18)
- 10 Étude in D-sharp Minor, Op. 8, No. 12 (2:17)

Alexander Scriabin
(1872-1915)

11 Étude in F-sharp Major, Op. 7, No. 4 (1:56)

Igor Stravinsky
(1882-1971)

12 Étude in D Minor, Op. 2, No. 1 (2:22)

Sergei Prokofiev
(1891-1953)

— Encores —

- 13 **Nocturne in C-Sharp Minor, Op. Post.** (3:37) Fryderyk Chopin
- 14 **Toccata** (3:58) Aram Khachaturian
(1903-1975)
- 15 **In the Village** (3:47) Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)



Nadia Reisenberg
Carnegie Hall Recital, 1947
Notes by Gary Graffman

A Recollection

I was never introduced to Nadia Reisenberg. Rather, I became, as a very young child, gradually conscious of her presence. It was a cheerful, smiling presence, joking in mellifluous Russian at her sisters', where I occasionally accompanied my parents for tea; it was a serene and dignified presence on the stage of Carnegie Hall, where I was often taken to hear her play with the Philharmonic, or the more intimate Town Hall, where she treated us to recitals of meltingly lovely Schumann, lucid Haydn, and demonic Prokofiev; it became, a little later on, a frequent, almost regular, and—thank God!—always compassionate presence at the studio of her friend (and my teacher), the volatile Isabella Vengerova, where young pianists like myself did the playing and were afterward exposed to merciless criticism. The mere fact of Nadia's being there, seated quietly on the long couch near the piano, her sweetly understanding eyes telegraphing enthusiasm as well as sympathy to the victim, somehow cushioned even the harshest verbal blows.

But kindness is not necessarily next to flabbiness. Nadia, who over the years infected whole regiments of young pianists with her contagious vitality, her joy of discovery, her sheer love of music, was, as a teacher, a strict taskmistress in her own fashion. She expected hard work, unwavering

discipline, and seriousness of purpose from her pupils. She set the highest standards. She just happened to go about her business in a gentle way.

Nadia's manner of dealing with young artists became familiar to me in later years when we served together on the jury of the Leventritt Competition. Sometimes there were as many as seventy young hopefuls in the preliminary auditions, most of whom would have to be eliminated before the next round. Since no point system was employed in the judging, lengthy, probing, and sometimes heated discussions took place instead. Nadia's analyses were never cruel, but always to the point. "Mr. X? He has good fingers—but to what use does he put them? That strange tempo in the slow movement of the Beethoven...and his shrill tone in the Chopin..." and so on, her lilting Russian accent somewhat modifying the severity of her views. Finally, a joint decision would be reached. "But Mr. X?" Nadia would ask. "He has been eliminated? How is this?" Ten pairs of bloodshot judges' eyes focused on Nadia. "But you yourself said..." Nadia: "The Beethoven. Yes, yes, I know. Of course, it was simply drrreadful!" Her hands flew to her face, protecting it from contamination. A sad smile followed, and then, pleadingly, "But perhaps he has not had the benefit of much experience—nerves? He must have some talent—after all, that section of the Liszt was quite remarkable, don't you agree? Such intelligent phrasing! Surely we must give him another chance to show what he can really do!"

Somehow, Nadia always managed to find a way to kindle sparks of enthusiasm and sympathy. And, ever since I can remember, these were among the sparks that illuminated her so radiantly as well.

1947 Carnegie Hall Recital

This recording of Nadia Reisenberg's 1947 Carnegie Hall recital evokes warm and wonderful memories of her New York performances. Before a note was played—even before she came on stage—an anticipatory hum as the large audience assembled itself heralded expectation of delights to come. The hall was filled with every variety of pianophile, from teen-aged students carrying multiple scores to the most revered musicians of the day (all of whom, it seemed, were Reisenberg enthusiasts, if not close friends). And, sprinkled throughout the auditorium, like chopped dill on a bowl of borscht, was the ever-present contingent of Russian émigrés—*le tout St. Petersburg*—who, like Mme Reisenberg herself (as well as, for that matter, my own parents), had settled in New York city during the 1920s.


Nadia Reisenberg, together with her family, arrived at Ellis Island when she was seventeen. Already a veteran performer, having been accepted at the august St. Petersburg Imperial Conservatory when only eleven, she was quickly welcomed into the musical life of her adopted country and soon began to appear with major orchestras and important conductors. Concurrently, however, the young artist continued piano studies as a member of the élite circle of Josef Hoffman pupils at the Curtis Institute of Music. (In later life she recalled, "I had two-hour lessons every week, and each time I brought new material because when I brought the same piece twice, his comments would be exactly the opposite of what he said before.")

Perhaps the fact that Nadia Reisenberg continually brought different music to those lessons helps account for her extraordinarily wide and varied repertoire. During her long and fruitful career she successfully eluded any attempts at type-casting. Of course she reveled in Russian music, both old and new, and Chopin was very close to her heart. But Mme. Reisenberg was also noted for Mozart—one season, in a series of weekly broadcasts, she performed all 27 piano concertos—and she frequently played chamber music, a task she adored, in programs ranging from all-Beethoven to contemporary works, always partnered by leading instrumentalists of every kind, up to and including a recording of the Brahms E-flat Clarinet Sonata with none other than Benny Goodman, "The King of Swing."

The program of this Carnegie Hall recital is a good case in point, mixing, as it does, Handel and Mozart and Weber and Chopin with Scriabin, Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Samuel Barber. Reviews of Mme. Reisenberg's playing often included the word "stylish." But the Reisenberg style was never a matter of 'One Size Fits All'. As we can hear on these discs, her approach to each work was as individual as the music itself: her Handel elegant and stately; her Weber a playful romp; her Scriabin vividly colored with a glowing sheen. And I was particularly taken with the Tchaikovsky encore, enchanting in its "Russian-ness." (Sorry, I can't think of another word to describe that quality.)

All of this music was played, of course, with remarkable technical command. (Remember, this was a live performance. What we heard at the actual event is what we get here.) But in every instance, Mme. Reisenberg's

virtuosity was at the service of her interpretations. And her interpretations, free of exaggerations and embellishments, were always at the service of the printed score. This was Nadia Reisenberg's credo. As a teacher, she insisted on respect for the printed score "because it's a language, like any other language," she often told her pupils. "It has punctuation marks, it has long sentences and short ones, beginnings of phrases and ends of phrases..." I think this recording makes abundantly clear that, as a pianist, Nadia Reisenberg practiced what she preached.

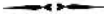


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