

PRIMAKOV in CONCERT, Vol. 1

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Two Chorale Preludes, Op. 122 (5:59)

- 1 Herzlich thut mich verlangen, Op. 122, No. 9 (2:25)
- 2 Herzlich thut mich verlangen, Op. 122, No. 10 (3:31)
(transcribed for piano by Ferruccio Busoni)

Franz Schubert (1798-1828)

3 Fantasie in C major, Op. 15 (D. 760) (21:58)

"Der Wanderer"

Allegro con fuoco ma non troppo;
Adagio; Presto; Allegro

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Album pour enfants, Op. 39 (27:55)

- 4 I Prière du matin (1:13)
- 5 II Matin d'hiver (1:01)
- 6 III Le Petit cavalier (:37)
- 7 IV Petite mère (1:10)
- 8 V Marche des soldats (:53)
- 9 VI La Poupée malade (2:16)
- 10 VII L'Enterrement de la poupée (1:45)
- 11 VIII Valse (1:18)
- 12 IX La Nouvelle poupée (:32)

- 13 X Mazurka (1:18)
- 14 XI Chanson russe (:40)
- 15 XII Le Joueur d'accordéon (:54)
- 16 XIII Kamarinskaïa (:31)
- 17 XIV Polka (:46)
- 18 XV Chanson italienne (1:06)
- 19 XVI Vieille chanson française (1:08)
- 20 XVII Chanson allemande (:59)
- 21 XVIII Chanson napolitaine (1:05)
- 22 XXIV Contes de bonne femme (:47)
- 23 XX La Sorcière (:43)
- 24 XXI Douce rêverie (2:18)
- 25 XXII Chant de l'alouette (1:07)
- 26 XXIII Le Joueur d'orgue de Barbarie (:52)
- 27 XXIV À l'Église (2:45)

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Sonata No. 2, in B-flat Minor, Op. 36 (19:43)

- 28 I Allegro agitato (8:01)
- 29 II Non allegro (6:02)
- 30 III Allegro molto (5:39)

Vassily Primakov, piano

I came to know Vassily Primakov about two and a half years ago. Adam Abeshouse had sent me a recording of "a young Russian-American pianist" playing Beethoven sonatas. For a few weeks the disc languished, unlistened to, on my "in" pile. When I finally got around to hearing the recording, I was astonished. Surprisingly, it was not Primakov's superb pianism that so amazed me—there are countless keyboard lions and lionesses on the scene these days. It seems that eating keyboard for breakfast is now *pro forma*. Nor was it Primakov's superior musicianship that galvanized my attention—there are today quite a few masters of style capable of presenting highly satisfying renditions of the great repertoire. What moved me so profoundly that day, and on many subsequent occasions, was Primakov's ability to reach deeply into a score, marshal its details, and capture the work's spiritual essence. Performers with such a gift are rare in my experience, especially so when as young as Primakov. My encounter with Primakov's art that day led to a sea change in my own life. In the short time that we have worked together, we have made studio recordings of 16 concertos and 6 solo discs. He has become MY breakfast.

As I got to know Vassily, and became familiar with his artistry, we began to plot our future recordings. Naturally, I wanted to learn about his musical past. Fortunately, a number of concert tapes existed, and I quickly became an avid collector of them. The present CD is the first concert compilation of what is planned to be an ongoing series. Live performance recordings differ from the more polished and nuanced atmosphere of studio recordings.

At their best, they capture the burst of adrenaline that helps an artist communicate with maximum energy and focus. In the case of the present recordings, they also give us a glimpse of how a passionate young performer (aged 22-27) was playing in the formative stage of his professional career.

The Two "Chorale Preludes" which open this recording come from Brahms's late "*Eleven Chorale Preludes*", Op. 122, for organ (1896), transcribed for piano by Ferruccio Busoni. The two pieces performed here are Nos. 9 and 10 from Brahms's valedictory work. Both pieces are settings of the chorale "*Herzlich thut mich verlangen*" ("My heart is filled with longing"). Mr. Primakov relates that when he first encountered these works (on an LP made by his teacher, Vera Gornostaeva) an indelible impression was left. Primakov refers to his initial trepidation about performing them, feeling himself not yet ready for the "ominous finality of this music", though he knew that 'some day, I would play them.' This performance is from a concert given in California in 2007.

“Herzlich thut mich verlangen”

Herzlich thut mich verlangen
Nach einem selgen End,
weil ich hier bin umfangen
mit Trübsal und Elend.
Ich hab Lust abzuschneiden
von dieser argen Welt,
seh'n mich nach ewgen Freuden,
O Jesu, komm nur bald!

“My heart is filled with longing”

My heart is filled with longing
To pass away in peace;
For woes are round me thronging
And trials will not cease.
Oh fain would I be hasting,
From thee, dark world of gloom,
To gladness everlasting.
O Jesus! quickly come.

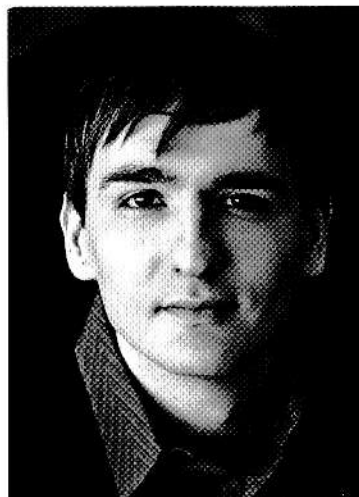
Primakov's reading of Schubert's "Wanderer Fantasy" is the oldest performance on this disc, taken from a concert given in Autumn 2002, as the young virtuoso was about to turn 22 years of age. Schubert's own remark about this work—"the devil may play it", aptly describes the notorious technical demands made during the course of Schubert's four-movement fantasy, completed in 1822. Hearing this performance proved to be fascinating. Many of the traits which give radiance to Vassily's current playing were already there, projected with conviction and technical assurance. Primakov's ability to color artfully, sing freely, dance athletically, and bring formal coherence to large-scale structure, is heard in good measure.

Tchaikovsky's *Album pour enfants*, Op. 39 ("Children's Album") is not often performed in the concert hall, though selected pieces from the set are among the most frequently played music by student pianists. Primakov played the 24 short pieces (for the first and only time in his career) in September of 2006 in this recording of a New York recital. Vassily writes: "When my Mom passed away in 2005 and I started to get back to piano playing, I developed a craving for Russian music, and Tchaikovsky in particular. Nostalgia, memories, a little sentiment, the innocence of childhood—those things are perfectly portrayed in his music. The 24 little pieces are like a day in child's life—starting and ending with a prayer (very much like the life of little Petya Tchaikovsky) and in between, the exciting day of activities, wanderings, dances and impressions. Or perhaps it is a life itself, beginning with a Christening and ending with a funeral mass. Something was just right for me at that time to tackle this wonderfully innocent cycle. The hardest thing is always to find the center—not to sound like a child but at the same time not to sound like a stuffy adult. I want to give particular thanks to my friend Natalia Lavrova for encouraging me to play this work." The titles of the 24 pieces in English are: 1) Morning Prayer 2) Winter Morning 3) Playing Hobby-Horses 4) Mama 5) March of the Wooden Soldiers 6) The Sick Doll 7) The Doll's Funeral 8) Waltz 9) The New Doll 10) Mazurka 11) Russian Song 12) The Harmonica Player 13) Kamarinskaya 14) Polka 15) Italian Song 16) Old French Song 17) German Song 18) Neapolitan Song 19) Nanny's Story 20) The Old Witch 21) Sweet Dreams 22) Lark Song 23) The Organ-Grinder Sings 24) In Church.

Composed in 1913, then revised by the composer in 1931, the *Sonata No. 2, Op. 36*, has proven itself to be one of Sergei Rachmaninoff's 'problem children'. In 1940, with the approval of the composer, Vladimir Horowitz created a version combining aspects of the two manuscripts. Since then, Horowitz's edition has become one that many concert pianists favor. Primakov chose to play Rachmaninoff's 1931 revision in this 2004 New York performance. Vassily Primakov writes; "I've been criticized by some about my approach to this piece. I'm told that my rendition is too musical—that I don't have enough aggression. For me, though, the sonata is not some exercise to show off one's pianistic abilities, but a very poetic and emotionally raw piece of music. Just listen to the opening of the second movement—the swaying that is almost blues-like. And again, as in Tchaikovsky, the beautiful feelings of nostalgia, longing and that open field of emotions."

It is then, with great pleasure, that Bridge Records welcomes you to the first volume of Vassily Primakov's concert recordings.

David Starobin
Director of Artists and Repertoire
Bridge Records, Inc.
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In the years following the release of his Chopin Concertos recording, **Vassily Primakov** has been hailed as a pianist of world class significance. *Gramophone* wrote that "Primakov's empathy with Chopin's spirit could hardly be more complete," and the *American Record Guide* stated: "In every piece his touch is perfect. This is a great Chopin pianist." *Music Web-International* called Primakov's disc "one of the great Chopin recordings of recent times. These are performances of extraordinary power and beauty." In 1999, as a teen-aged prizewinner of the Cleveland International Piano Competition,

Primakov was praised by Donald Rosenberg of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*: "How many pianists can make a line sing as the 19-year-old Moscow native did on this occasion? Every poignant phrase took ethereal wing. Elsewhere the music soared with all of the turbulence and poetic vibrancy it possesses. We will be hearing much from this remarkable musician." Vassily Primakov was born in Moscow in 1979. His first piano studies were with his mother, Marina Primakova. He entered Moscow's Central Special Music School at the age of eleven as a pupil of Vera Gornostaeva. At seventeen, after a

summer at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, he came to New York to pursue studies at the Juilliard School with the noted pianist, Jerome Lowenthal. At Juilliard Mr. Primakov won the William Petschek Piano Recital Award, which presented his debut recital at Alice Tully Hall. While a student at Juilliard, aided by a Susan W. Rose Career Grant, he won both the Silver Medal and the Audience Prize in the 2002 Gina Bachauer International Artists Piano Competition. Later that year Primakov won First Prize in the 2002 Young Concert Artists (YCA) International Auditions, an award which presented him in solo and concerto performances throughout the USA. In 2007 he was named the Classical Recording Foundation's "Young Artist of the Year", and in 2009, his Chopin Mazurka CD (BRIDGE 9289) was named "Best of the Year" by *National Public Radio*. Vassily Primakov's recent recordings include: Schumann: *Carnaval, Kreisleriana, Arabeske* (BRIDGE 9300); Dvorak: *Piano Concerto, Op. 33* (BRIDGE 9309); and Schubert: *Impromptus & Dances* (BRIDGE 9327). In 2010 his first DVD was released: "Vassily Primakov plays Brahms, Chopin, & Scriabin" (BRIDGE 9315). The DVD was named "DVD of the Month" by *BBC Music Magazine*. Vassily Primakov is currently recording the cycle of 27 Mozart piano concertos with the Odense Symphony Orchestra (Denmark). Volume 1 of that series is now available (BRIDGE 9328A/B).

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