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..RZEKA EN...

Edward WOLANIN - piano

Fryderyk CHOPIN (1810-1849) : Nocturne in B major Op. 62 No. 1 (1845-1846)

Sergiusz RACHMANINOW (1873-1943) : 10 Preludes Op. 23 (1901)

Gustaw MAHLER (1860-1911) : Adagietto from Symphony No. 5 (1901-1902, transcribed for piano solo by John Gribben)

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"Remember that the future can be much better than your wildest imaginations. It depends on you whether you get ahold of yourself, get up, and move on."

Nick Vujicic

"There is a power in a man [...] that obliges him to rise, though he would be happy to rest, and to believe again in all that yesterday turned out to be only a miserable delusion, and to want again this that life already wanted to forbid him a hundred of times."

Jerzy Żuławski

"In the confrontation between the stream and the rock, the stream always wins; not through strength, but through perseverance."

Buddha

"Men are like rivers; the water is the same in each, and alike in all; but every river is narrow here, is more rapid there, here slower, there broader, now clear, now cold, now dull, now warm. It is the same with men."

Leo Tolstoy

...The EN River...

The CD was born out of necessity of the heart. This is an album about feelings; just as the pieces on it were created under the influence of affections. This is a CD recorded out of desire to express what cannot be expressed with words: to say the inexpressible. This is a CD about the obvious, but at the same time unknown or maybe only hidden? Remote, yet within reach of the hand.

The music is as a wide river. It flows with its current, inevitably going towards the destiny. Sometimes it joins another river and they flow further on together towards the unknown, to their own uncertainty. However, sometimes there are two rivers that flow separately and they join each other at their ends, like the Vistula and the Oder in the depths of the Baltic Sea. The E River and the N River constitute together a new quality, the EN River, and they go on together *en avant* and *en block* towards their goal. The EN River could be travelled by **Endymion**, the mythical lover of the goddess of the moon, immersed in the eternal sleep, a personification of the eternal youth. In the Ancient Rome, in the temple on the Palatine, Selene/Luna was worshipped under the name **Noctiluca** – the Shining in the Night. EN can also symbolise love (Eros) and victory (Nike), but sometimes it can be love and passion, love and uncertainty, love and hate, love and unfulfillment. Everything depends on the decision into which river we step, together or separately. Whether are we joined by the river at the very beginning of the journey or at its very end? "The river of truth flows through the canals of delusions," says Rabindranath Tagore. The river of both dreams and tears.

The symbol EN hidden in the title of the CD can also have another meaning. In the Sumerian culture, the word **En** meant a vicar of god on earth. He was an intermediary between gods and people, a minister, and also a symbol of fertility. Therefore, according to Sumerian beliefs, En is a vicar of God on earth. The creators are also the musical vicars of God (or gods, whatever suits you better) on earth. It is they that transfer the hidden ideas, affections, meanings, and symbols that we discover through interaction with art. They pass the high art to the people on earth. Thanks to them, but also indirectly thanks to the performers, an intentional work of art, as Roman Ingarden used to say, becomes a real one and it is accessible almost within reach of the hand, just as the present CD, which aim is to transfer not only the purely aesthetic aspects of a musical work, but, first of all, the whole scope of emotions and affections that accompany it.

The pieces registered on the CD are joined by a common thread of one idea. Preludes Op. 23 by Sergei Rachmaninoff and the Symphony No. 5 in C-sharp minor by Gustav Mahler were created almost in the same period of time, in 1901-1903. Mahler wrote his *Adagietto* under the influence of passionate feelings towards Alma Schindler, who soon became his wife. On the other hand, Rachmaninoff composed his Preludes Op. 23 shortly after marrying Natalia Alexandrovna Satin. In turn, Chopin's nocturnes became a personification and a symbol of passionate feelings, whereas Nocturne in B major Op. 62 (1845 or 1846) was still created in the times of "asylum" (M. Tomaszewski) – in almost the last months (or years) of Chopin's relationship with Aurore Dudevant, a French writer known as George Sand. One could say that it was women that were an indirect impulse for creation of those works. "A beautiful woman is like a river in which the sages drown," said Seneca the Younger.

This is what Mieczysław Tomaszewski (1998) writes about nocturnes: "The expression of nocturnes is determined by their function; they are "songs of the night." In Chopin's nocturnes it is both a calm and tumultuous night, a love night,

but also the one during which "night talks of countrymen" take place and "November nights" happen. However, it is the "being" that dominates in them, not the "happening." Being in a mood, that is to say in the basic category for nocturnes, in a mood filled with expectation or the present past." Those features of Chopin's nocturnes also perfectly fit Mahler's *Adagietto*, which was written 50 years later. Similarly, one can talk here about being, moods, passions, and an intensified expression. The characteristic movement of a third in the Nocturne in B major and in *Adagietto* may be accidental. However, what if it is not? If it is a symbol of a hopeless cry?

An American music critic and Chopin's biographer, James Gibbons Huneker, writes the following about the **Nocturne in B major** Op. 62: "The main theme of the Nocturne expresses the charm of a mature passion," in turn, the comeback in the recapitulation "emanates with a heavy, stupefying scent." This characteristic of the nocturne could contribute to calling it with the term *tuberose* (as per Tomaszewski, the cycle of broadcasts *All Works of Fryderyk Chopin*, the Polish Radio 2).

Nocturnes Op. 62, the last two nocturnes in Chopin's output, belong to his late compositions from the last three years of the composer's life. The last Chopin's works forecast the late-Romantic style. Therefore, they could be an inspiration to not only Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner, but also to the subsequent generations of composers, including (we cannot exclude such an inspiration) Rachmaninoff and Mahler.

Slightly over 50 years elapsed since Chopin's death (1849) until the creation of Rachmaninoff's Preludes Op. 23 and Mahler's Symphony No. 5. It seems to be many, but at the same time few. It is the same number of years that elapsed since avant-garde experiments of Polish composers, such as Krzysztof Penderecki's *Passion* or Wojciech Kilar's *Riff 62*. We still identify this avant-garde with the 20th century, which is, after all, not that remote; we identify it with our times and not with a distant history. It does not matter that in between there was a turn of centuries and even millenniums. To us it is only a calendar leaf. The turn of the years 2000 and 2001 did not forecast anything new in the art. There was a similar time interval between Rachmaninoff and Mahler and Chopin. They could have similar impressions in relation to the change of the calendar leaf. Therefore, the gap in time between them and Chopin was not as significant as it can seem to us today.

Preludes Op. 23 – a collection of 10 pieces for piano composed in 1901-1903 dedicated by Rachmaninoff to a Russian pianist, composer, and conductor, Alexandr Siloti, who was his teacher and at the same time his relative. Few of them are distinguished by virtuosity and brilliance, another – by nostalgic mood and cantilena. One could venture to say that in the cycle of Preludes Op. 23 the fast miniatures symbolise the masculine element (**E** as Endymion) and the slow, lyrical ones – the feminine one (**N** as Noctiluca).

The initial prelude of the cycle, the Prelude in F-sharp minor, melodious and **nostalgic**, is at the same time **nervous** in the culminations. All preludes in slow tempos and lyrical mood somehow refer more to Chopin's **nocturnes** than to his preludes. In the middle section, the characteristic motifs of thirds are gradually moving away (the third seems to be the leitmotif of the CD). They sound as a calling from two banks of a river; more and more rare and more and more distant. Selene calls her Endymion. The second one, in B-flat major, is distinguished by its panache and flamboyance. It is **extremely energetic**, one could say: an **eruption** of the youthful joy. It is as a volcano, full of **expressive** passion and turbulent commotion. The broadly led melodic line (in the second section) develops in a distinguished, unhurried manner, after which a magnificent recapitulation follows. In turn, the third one, in D minor, is dancing, light, and stylised as a minuet. Endymion meets his goddess of the moon and they perform together a ritual dance.

The next prelude, the Prelude in D major, similarly to the first one, resembles with its scheme and character a **nocturne**. It is maintained in a calm tempo. It is the unhurried accompanying background, which constitutes the basis for the broadly led, almost celestial melodic line, that indicates features of a nocturne. The idyllic moodiness, dynamic **nuances**, lyricism, and the great culmination in the middle symbolising the passion are the features that are revealed **en face**. The Prelude in G minor No. 5 is a proverbial pianistic "hit:" it is **extremely** spectacular, march-like, and plenty of accords. It is **energetic**, military, one could even say **epic**. The duet in the middle brings to mind passionate dialogues from the Romantic operas; it has a lyrical, **nocturne-like** course. The next one, in E-flat major, again develops without a hurry, bringing to mind the **narration** of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto in C minor No. 2, which was being composed at the same time that Preludes Op. 23.

In the energetic Prelude in C minor No. 7, the figuration brings up associations with Chopin's Etude in C minor Op. 10, No. 12, known as the Revolutionary. There is plenty of lyricism and passion here, especially after the beginning, as in the background of the energetic figuration develops a broadly led, as an extensive river, melodic line. It is also here where we can find the fragments that bring to mind the Piano Concerto No. 2. The Prelude in A-flat major No. 8, which is fast, light, and serene, calls to mind Chopin's music (Etudes: in C major Op. 10, No. 7, in A-flat major Op. 10, No. 10, the Prelude in E-flat major Op. 28, No. 19). One could describe them as **expressive** and **narrative** pieces.

The penultimate Prelude in E-flat minor is light, whereas its character is volatile. Here we can also see analogies with Chopin's music (Etude in C Major Op. 10, No. 7). It is as scattered hair of a young girl, which symbolise development of the color narration, full of hidden affections. Despite apparent technical difficulties, it is plenty of lightness, woven of sound subtleties. Heavily chromatised melody calls to mind Baroque rhetoric figures *Passus duriusculus* or pathopoeia: a succession of semitones that can symbolise pain, despair, and suffering. The cycle closes with the nostalgic Prelude in G-flat major. Its mood in the initial phase can be determined as uncertainty. The last phase: calm, *par excellence* romantic recitative immediately calls to mind Chopin's nocturnes. One could even find here direct similarities with the Nocturne in B major Op. 62.

The cycle of Rachmaninoff's preludes, due to its varied expression and technique, can be compared to Hegel's triad: the energetic preludes are the thesis, the slow and lyrical ones are the antithesis, whereas the whole is the synthesis.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) worked and created at the same time, during Rachmaninoff's and Mahler's lives, yet in another cultural circle. He was a Hindu writer and educator who was also known and appreciated in Europe. The problems and ideals of education were close to his heart. He thought that the education should be reflected not in specific didactic methods, but in using the categories of truth and beauty. Many of his poems concern life, passing by, and love. In one of his poems (1913, from the cycle *The Gardener*) Tagore wrote:

"I watch if young straying hearts meet together, and two eager eyes beg for music to break their silence and speak for them.

*Who is there to weave their passionate songs, if I sit on the shore of life and contemplate death and the beyond?
The early evening star disappears."*

In another poem-song from the same collection the poet wrote:

"I am restless. I am athirst for far-away things.

My soul goes out in a longing to touch the skirt of the dim distance.

O Great Beyond, O the keen call of thy flute!

I forget, I ever forget, that I have no wings to fly, that I am bound in this spot evermore.

I am eager and wakeful, I am a stranger in a strange land.

Thy breath comes to me whispering an impossible hope."

The aforementioned words can be an illustration of Rachmaninoff's preludes, and at the same time of Mahler's **Adagietto** written in almost the same year as the preludes.

On the turn of 1899 and 1900, Gustav Mahler built a summer residence in Maiernigg on the lake Wörther, which became his asylum and place of work. Few years later, in March 1902, he married Alma Schindler, who was 19 years younger than him. The Symphony No. 5 was a breakthrough work in the composer's life and output. It was the marriage with Alma that significantly influenced Mahler's change of attitude towards the genre and form of a symphony. Since that time, he started to treat symphony as a kind of autobiography.

The famous *Adagietto*, which features only string instruments and a harp, gained its own fame and it is often performed as an independent piece. What is interesting is the fact that it was exactly *Adagietto* that had its premiere first (1909); it was not until 36 years later that the symphony was performed as a whole. It made way for creation of the equally famous *Adagio* by Samuel Barber. However, it is not the only association that we may have; while listening to *Adagietto* one can think of Ennio Morricone's soundtracks, among others. The piece also became a soundtrack of *Death in Venice* (1971), a famous film by Luchino Visconti. We should add that the film is based on Thomas Mann's short story (1912) of the same title. Its main protagonist is Gustav von Aschenbach, a literary figure, who during his trip to Venice becomes fascinated with a young man. Interestingly enough, Mann used Gustav Mahler, whom he admired, as the prototype of Aschenbach.

On the CD we can hear *Adagietto* in the piano solo version arranged by John Gribben, however, with creative additions by Edward Wolanin. There are also transcriptions made by, e.g., Otto Singer, Guy Coulon, or the pianist Alexandre Tharaud, just to name only the piano ones, which can certify the uncommon popularity of this masterpiece.

Adagietto is an extremely passionate piece, full of expression, both nervous and euphoric. It is a quintessence of feeling at the highest level of experience. Already from the first sounds, from the famous opening motif (*exordium*), where one can hear characteristic sound of strings and harp in F major, the piece carries off the listener into a whirl of narration. It obliges him to somehow follow the stream of sounds, the development of the musical action, almost forces him to feel

the same emotions that accompanied Gustav when he was entering into a relationship with his beloved Alma. The work is a peak of exultation in the art created under the influence of emotions, affections, and feelings. One could venture to say that if the Symphony No. 5 had not been created as a whole, *Adagietto* in itself would have gone down into history. As Bohdan Pocij (1996) writes, Mahler's works express a variety of feelings, among which the supreme position is reserved for love: "One can say that feelings in Mahler's music make circles around one centre: the most important feeling that sets up the whole hierarchy is love. Mahler's music is permeated with love as a human and fundamental feeling and love in the metaphysical, cosmic, theological, and mystic dimension."

The following words of Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska seem to perfectly fit the music (from the poetry collection *Blue almonds*, 1922):

*"My love turned into a spring windstorm –
into a spring windstorm – my madness into a storm –
into a storm – my delight into a somnolent thrill –
into a somnolent thrill – my spring into roses"*

As well as of another of her poems, *The Dream*, from the same poetry collection, which fragment we are going to quote here:

*"Go through a dream towards you
into both sweet hands of you
through immensely long fields,
planted into rows of pots...
of only blue lilies of the valley
and sapphire gentians...
...cross a little lake,
made of wooden tubs...
and a little bit unconsciously
go on through a dark forest in which roses bloom..."*

The composition of the whole CD can be again compared to Hegel's triad: the Nocturne in B major Op. 62 by Chopin is the thesis, the starting point (Endymion begins his journey on the EN River), the cycle of Preludes Op. 23 by Rachmaninoff is the antithesis (Endymion meets his goddess – Noctiluca), whereas Mahler's *Adagietto* is a magnificent synthesis, in which not only our symbolic Endymion meets his Luna/Selene/Noctiluca, but also in which many different musical influences come together, which can be derived from the very Chopin.

The recorded pieces are portraits. They also express well the pianist's features: sensibility to the beauty and to the other man, joy of life, laughter, and suffering. The life wisdom and the youthful fervour. The freshness of emotion and new look on the interpretation. The performer of the recording presented on the CD, Edward Wolanin, is a graduate of the Academy of Music in Warsaw in the class of Prof. Bronisława Kawalla and Prof. Jan Ekier; nowadays, he is a professor of his alma mater, a prize-winner of numerous competitions, and now a member of jury of many of them. We can easily find this kind of information in encyclopedic sources or on the Internet. However, there arises the question: how is he as an artist and how is he as a human being? What makes him choose such solutions and not another ones? He is interested in history and ancient art. The message in the Greek myths seems to reach his artistic imagination in a very convincing manner. His great sensitivity is revealed in music and in contacts with others. He emanates with warmth and naturalness. This is how he is both in life and in music. Yet at the same time, he is a restless soul. It is a feature of each truly sensitive individual. This emanation of anxiety obliges the artist to incessantly investigate, ask questions, doubt the rules, and look for solutions. We should add: better solutions. He seems to ask a question also through his playing. It is the question that had been already formulated by Robert Schumann in one of his piano miniatures: *Warum* – why? Edward Wolanin is an artist of a particular taste and aesthetic aspects. He likes good taste not only in music, but also in life. In sophisticated cuisine, in numerous journeys, not only the concert ones, but also in admiring the beauty of art, literature, philosophy, and nature, which he wants to share with others. He also shares with his playing and he also wants to share with this album, in a particular way; and offer himself to the end.

However, there is something more in this recording. Something that lets ask and at the same time look for (and often find) an answer. It provokes unrest, but also solace. It awakens uncertainty, but it also gives energy. To sum up, this is a CD for those who are looking for hope.

THE EN RIVER

* N *

The love comes suddenly, uninvited,
Sometimes unwanted, unpredictable.
Sometimes youthfully Naïve, usually inevitable,
It may be restless, unfulfilled, insatiable
Despite promises, guarantees, and desires.

Wanted, coveted – it often does not come at all.

It is said that hope dies last.
So do we die before it?
It is said that hope is mother of fools.
So are we both fools?
But when you came to me at that time,
Your name was hope.

I will wait for you.
I am Nearby.
Come when you can.
I will wait.

* E *

I am looking for you in dreams,
In sounds of a ballad,
In nocturnes, preludes, and adagios.

I am looking for you in inspirations, in spurs,
In longings, desires.

I am looking for you in the motif of a third,
In the bow of a phrase stretched over the ages,
The same, broad, vast
As a river among fields, it – EN
Our common way to the unknown.

* EN *

Is it happening for real?
Is it make-believe?
Enthralled heart,
Nervous in the rhythm of *Adagietto*.

Endymion is travelling his river EN
Looking for his goddess of the moon.
Noctiluca.

Hope flows with the stream of the river.
They flow together, though they stride separately.

Towards their own destinies.

Towards the uncertainty...