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Muzio Clementi (1752-1832) – Piano Sonata in B Minor, Op. 40 No. 2, I. Molto adagio e sostenuto – Allegro con fuoco e con espressione, II. Largo, mesto e patetico - Allegro

Although his fame today rests primarily on his didactic sonatinas and highly influential technical studies, Clementi was renowned in his day not only as a pianist, pedagogue, and composer but also as a piano maker and publisher. Clementi's musical abilities were recognized early on by William Beckford, who persuaded Clementi's father to allow the fourteen-year-old prodigy to pursue his musical studies at Beckford's estate in England, where Clementi eventually settled and spent a significant portion of his life.

During his years as a touring virtuoso pianist, Clementi was recognized as one of the finest pianists of his generation — he was even famously invited by emperor Joseph II to compete in a musical duel with Mozart in 1780. In the 1790s, he turned his attention to business and established a successful piano manufacturing and music publishing firm. Clementi was also in demand as a piano teacher and counted among his students several influential musicians of the next generation, including Johann Baptist Cramer, John Field, and Giacomo Meyerbeer.

Since the release of Vladimir Horowitz's record devoted to Clementi's music in 1955, there has been a growing interest in Clementi's substantial body of keyboard works, most notably the piano sonatas. Clementi's pupil Ludwig Berger (1777-1839) suggested that many of Clementi's finest piano sonatas were initially conceived as symphonies, perhaps inspired by the orchestral works of Haydn and Ignaz Pleyel (1757-1831). Regardless of the historical veracity of this claim, it is not difficult to discern strong hints of orchestral effects and timbres in Clementi's B-minor Piano Sonata op. 40 no. 2, a two-movement work whose first movement opens with a slow introduction followed by a furious *allegro* marked *con fuoco e con espressione* ("with fire and expression") and reminiscent of Beethoven in its dramatic expressive language. The development section exhibits Clementi's harmonic virtuosity in the ease with which he passes through a kaleidoscopic range of keys. The second movement, a mournful, dirge-like aria without words, transitions directly into the last movement, an *allegro* in 6/8 time which returns briefly to the music of the slow movement before concluding with two pages of a fiery *presto* character.

### Percy Grainger (1882-1961) – *In a Nutshell*, III. Pastoral

"That nut is a genius." George Szell's famous remark about pianist Glenn Gould could be applied equally to Australian-born pianist and composer Percy Grainger, a multi-faceted and multi-talented musician with a personal life as colourful as his music — so colourful, unfortunately, that it has detracted from a serious and balanced appraisal of his legacy. Although remembered today primarily for his lighter encore-type pieces, Grainger made significant contributions to the revival of British and Scandinavian folksong, beginning his field recordings of folksong almost simultaneously with Béla Bartók (1881-1945); he toured widely and successfully as a pianist; and he befriended composers as different in style as Edvard Grieg (1843-1907), Frederick Delius (1862-1934), Benjamin Britten (1913-1976), and Henry Cowell (1897-1965) — he influenced Britten with his folksong arrangements in particular, while he had Cowell released from prison on the condition that Cowell live with Grainger as his live-in secretary for a year.

Originally written for orchestra, *In a Nutshell* was completed in 1916, by which time Grainger was already so well-known as a folksong collector and arranger that he had to specify in his preface to the work that "no folk-songs or any other popular tunes are used in any of the numbers of this Suite." In keeping with its title, the Suite provides a glimpse into Grainger's range as a composer.

*Pastoral*, the third movement of the Suite, is relatively unusual in Grainger's output for its anguished chromatic language and sustained seriousness found only in a handful of other works, such as *The Bride's Tragedy* (1908–13) for chorus and orchestra. Although inevitably lacking some of the fulness and richness of the full orchestral version, Grainger's own piano arrangement of the piece reproduces the emotional impact of the original effectively and faithfully, as well as featuring the use of a marimba mallet to strike the strings inside the piano for the final three notes. With its rapid alternation between moods, from turmoil and anxiety to moments of ecstatic joy and calm repose, the piece might be understood less as a literal depiction of the countryside than as representing the varying psychological states of a troubled wanderer in a bucolic landscape.

### Anatoly Lyadov (1855-1914) – Variations on a Popular Polish Theme Op. 51

Born in Saint Petersburg, the city in which he spent most of his life, Lyadov had the unique distinction of being the only Russian composer until that time to have been born to a family of musicians, his father Konstantin Lyadov (1820-1871) having been a theater and opera conductor respected by Glinka. In contrast with the auspicious musical environment of his early years, however, Lyadov's childhood was characterized by loneliness and neglect as his mother passed away when he was only six years old, and his father was absent for days and weeks at a time owing to the latter's bohemian lifestyle. The lack of a stable, loving home environment had lifelong repercussions for Lyadov, both emotionally and professionally — he struggled with

self-discipline for much of his life and experienced relatively frequent bouts of depression in spite of his otherwise positive, kind-hearted personality and legendary sense of humour and wit.

As a composer, Lyadov was primarily a miniaturist by nature, with most of his individual pieces lasting between three to eight minutes. Published in 1901 with a dedication to Polish pianist Zofia Rabcewicz (1870-1947), the Variations on a Popular Polish Theme Op. 51 are, along with the Variations on a Theme by Glinka Op. 35, among Lyadov's most substantial compositions in terms of sheer length despite lasting only 12 minutes. The Op. 51 Variations feature an exploration of harmonic and rhythmic subtleties of a lyrical and at times pastoral character in place of extroverted virtuosic display, with a pianistic idiom evidently inspired by Chopin and occasional suggestions of Polish folk music, such as the mazurka-like rhythm of the eighth variation and the *krakowiak* character of the tenth and final variation.

Leopold Godowsky (1870-1938) – Renaissance (Excerpts), I. Sarabande, II. Rigaudon, III. Gigue

One of the most sought-after pianists of his generation, Godowsky was almost entirely self-taught as a pianist and composer. Through countless hours of diligent self-study during his formative years, he independently discovered several principles of modern piano technique which would have a lasting impact on his students, including the influential pianist and pedagogue Heinrich Neuhaus (1888-1964). He toured the world as a concert pianist, traveling as far as Indonesia, and left a significant legacy of works mostly for the piano.

The collection *Renaissance* (1906-09) reflects Godowsky's lifelong passion and gift for arranging. In light of the fact that most of the pieces in the collection are from the Baroque era and none are actually from the Renaissance, the title might be interpreted as indicating Godowsky's intention to infuse the pieces with new life by exploring novel harmonic and contrapuntal possibilities. Each piece is a miniature study in texture, tonal colour and control, articulation, rhythm, voicing, and dynamics.

*Sarabande*, the first piece of the set, is based on a movement from Jean-Philippe Rameau's (1683-1764) *Nouvelles suites de pièces de clavecin*. Godowsky's arrangement makes full use of the modern grand piano's greater sonority as compared to the harpsichord while also varying the harmony with chromaticism and added contrapuntal lines.

*Rigaudon* is taken from Act I Scene 3 of Rameau's opera *Dardanus*, a love story in which Iphise, daughter of the Phrygian king Teucer, has fallen in love with Dardanus, her father's nemesis. In the lively outer sections of the *Rigaudon*, the Phrygian troops are preparing to march into battle against the enemy army led by Dardanus, while the lyrical middle section is a chorus extolling the virtues of love. Godowsky's addition of playful inner voices and constant variation of the thematic material suggest the excitement and joy of the soldiers as they dance before departing for battle, while sensual chromatic harmonies intensify the quiet lyricism of the middle section.

*Gigue*, the twelfth piece of the set, is based on a gigue by Jean-Baptiste Loeillet (1680-1730) (not to be confused with French composer Jean-Baptiste Lully, to whom the piece was previously misattributed). Recorded by pianists such as Emil Gilels and Simon Barere, the *Gigue* is a miniature virtuoso etude featuring treacherous passages of double notes and large left-hand leaps. The piece builds to a colossal climactic restatement of the principal theme before dying away in its quiet but tense final lines.

Nikolai Medtner (1880-1951) – Sonata-Ballade Op. 27, I. Allegretto, II. Introduzione e Finale. Mesto – Allegro

Referred to as “the greatest composer of our time” by his friend and colleague Sergei Rachmaninoff, Medtner is an unfortunate case of a tremendously gifted composer whose music has been neglected even since his own lifetime. Born to a family of musicians and intellectuals — his brother Emil, incidentally, was an assistant to Carl Jung — Medtner entered the Moscow Conservatory in 1891, studying piano but, surprisingly, not composition. Sergei Taneyev (1856-1915), one of his professors and mentors at the Conservatory, was initially skeptical of the idea of learning composition without formal instruction; however, after witnessing Medtner’s progress over the next several years, he finally conceded that Medtner had proven to him the possibility of mastering counterpoint and composition independently.

Following the Russian Revolution, Medtner and his wife Anna spent several years moving from one country to another without a regular home until they finally settled in England in 1936 where he continued composing, teaching, and performing occasionally for the last 15 years of his life. Although widely admired as a pianist, Medtner struggled for most of his career to achieve broader recognition as a composer. In a fairytale turn of events, the Maharaja of Mysore discovered and became enamored with Medtner’s music several years before the latter’s death, commissioning Medtner to record his complete works. Although the project remained incomplete at the time of his death, Medtner did manage to record several of his own compositions, including the Sonata-Ballade Op. 27.

It is known from comments made by Medtner to his students that the Sonata-Ballade derived part of its inspiration from a short poem by Russian lyric poet Afanasy Fet (1820-1892) in which Jesus resists the temptations of Satan in the desert and ultimately triumphs over him. The Sonata is divided into two main movements: the first depicts humanity’s search for meaning in nature alone without religion and ends in a cataclysmic collapse; the second movement, consisting of a funeral march introduction followed by a series of episodes depicting Jesus’s struggle with and ultimate victory against Satan, depicts both the triumph of light over darkness and humanity’s discovery of the meaning of life in religion. The Sonata also represents a turning point in Medtner’s own life as it was written during a period in which he began taking a serious interest in Russian Orthodoxy and spirituality which would remain with him for the rest of his life.