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1992 Sydney International Piano Competition of Australia



Olivier Casal PROKOFIEV CONCERTO NO.3

Duncan Gifford LISZT CONCERTO NO.1

Vitaly Samoshko RACHMANINOV PAGANINI RHAPSODY

CONCERTOS

RELEASED BY POPULAR DEMAND



SERGEI RACHMANINOV 1873-1943

Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 43

[23'27]

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|------|
| 1 | Introduction – Variations I-VI | 3'25 |
| 2 | Variations VII-X | 2'54 |
| 3 | Variations XI-XV | 5'01 |
| 4 | Variations XVI-XVII | 3'48 |
| 5 | Variation XVIII | 2'41 |
| 6 | A tempo vivace – Variations XIX-XXIV | 5'38 |

Vitaly Samoshko *piano*

FRANZ LISZT 1811-1886

Concerto No. 1 in E-flat major for Piano and Orchestra

[19'00]

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 7 | I. Allegro maestoso | 5'31 |
| 8 | II. Quasi adagio | 4'40 |
| 9 | III. Allegretto vivace – Allegro animato | 4'10 |
| 10 | IV. Allegro marziale animato | 4'37 |

Duncan Gifford *piano*

SERGEI PROKOFIEV 1891-1953

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 3 in C major, Op. 26

[27'20]

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 11 | I. Andante – Allegro | 8'45 |
| 12 | II. Tema. Andantino – Variation I L'istesso tempo – Variation II Allegro –
Variation III Allegro moderato (poco meno mosso) – Variation IV Andante
meditativo – Variation V Allegro giusto – Tema. L'istesso tempo | 8'56 |
| 13 | III. Allegro ma non troppo | 9'37 |

Olivier Cazal *piano*

Total Playing Time

70'09

Sydney Symphony Orchestra
Edvard Tchivzhel *conductor*

Anticipation was high as audiences filed into the Concert Hall of the Sydney Opera House for the final round of concerto performances at the fifth Sydney International Piano Competition in July of 1992. While, every year, the rumour mill is fuelled and fires as the stages progress, 1992 saw three finalists singled out for various reasons.

30-year-old French pianist Olivier Cazal was a born fire-spitter as he'd shown in the earlier (solo) stages of the competition with a veritable leonine-style conflict in Rachmaninov's second piano sonata (who can ever forget those titanic descending arpeggios at the opening?), and when following Schubert's epic B-flat sonata (D.960) with the three minute whirlwind *Movement* by his teacher Sancan. His playing had a competitive edge and there seemed no doubt whatsoever that he intended to win.

At 19, Duncan Gifford was the youngest Australian entrant that year. Already the winner of a number of major national competitions, at the time of the competition he was studying with Lev Vlassenko at the Moscow Conservatoire and his playing showed real command and absolute control of his instrument.

Only weeks away from his 19th birthday, Ukrainian-born Vitaly Samoshko was the youngest competitor that year. With playing that was secure, ennobling and exciting – with particularly outstanding interpretations in earlier rounds of Chopin's F minor Ballade and

Prokofiev's seventh sonata – he was another audience favourite.

So, the three gifted practitioners of their instruments, all finalists, prepared themselves for the last rounds. But then, one was disqualified. Vitaly Samoshko had, in the Mozart concerto round, used the score for the performance. The reason: he had prepared the 'wrong' A major concerto (KV488 rather than the prescribed KV414). As the story goes, a fellow-competitor heard him practising KV488 and questioned him. Discovering his error, he had three options: to withdraw from the finals; to play the concerto with the music and face possible disqualification (it contravenes a competition regulation); or to risk it from memory, possibly lose face, but not the sixth place.

He chose the second option and was subsequently disqualified – so, in essence, no sixth place was awarded that year. However, in a generous gesture from the jury, he was still permitted to perform his second choice of concerto, and had chosen Rachmaninov's *Paganini Rhapsody*. This, he despatched with greater naturalness, magic and flexibility than any of his concerto co-finalists. His rubato had a tender spontaneity to it, nothing was pre-meditated (in that sense being truly rhapsodic) and the descending chords leading to the treacherous violinistic skips of the final variation were memorably and sensitively shaded.

As with all the performances on this disc, there were moments that went awry, that weren't quite together with orchestra, but it didn't seem to matter. For a start, emotions were running high in the audience (many a bitten lip and forced-back tear) and Samoshko played for the pleasure of playing. Even among studio recordings by celebrities, there are few who brought such mystery to the 17th variation or such poetic poise to the 18th.

With all the security and reliability expected of participants at competitions, Duncan Gifford's Liszt Piano Concerto No. 1 had all that and more. A virtuoso pianistic vehicle like this can fall prey to 20-odd minutes of pianistic pyrotechnics, but Gifford seemed to relish interplay with the orchestra, colouring his filigree work to match the curious triangle solo in the second movement, and opening the piece with fearless, crack-shot octaves. What's more, he showed such grasp of the overall structure of the piece that it emerged as something of a tone-poem for piano and orchestra.

Then there was Olivier Cazal. His Prokofiev Third is still spoken of with awe and amazement by many present at the occasion and the considerable thousands who diligently followed the competition on the airwaves. A quick glance at the audience towards the end of each of the movements showed eager anticipation, heads leaning forward, postures moving to the edge of the seat. It was *that* kind of performance. And

while it meant that at the end of the three movements, piano 'won the race' with orchestra, the sheer excitement it generated could forgive almost anything. This performance had bustle, brilliance and clearly strained at the leash. It also captured all the fairytale imagery of the quieter variations in the slow movement as well as in the reckless abandon of the finale.

Cazal was placed second, but won the People's Choice Prize as well as the Reisner-Pennycuik Concerto Prize. In the prize-winner's concert he expressed his displeasure by substituting Haydn with the 'Funeral March' movement of Chopin's B-flat minor sonata.

Gifford received the Hephzibah Menuhin Memorial Scholarship for the Best Australian Pianist and to date remains the Australian pianist to have achieved the highest level in SIPCA's history.

Vitaly Samoshko's plight received an overwhelming response from the public. The (now late) Sydney pianist John Champ opened a bank account for him with a gift of \$1000 and Ukrainian sympathisers soon topped that up to \$5000. His community also arranged concerts for him around Sydney.

Such is the stuff competitions are made of. We should be so lucky that, after a spate of a dozen years, these memorable performances have finally made it onto disc for posterity.

Cyrus Meher-Homji

Sydney International Piano Competition of Australia

The Sydney International Piano Competition of Australia is internationally recognised as one of the world's great piano competitions.

In 1975, Claire Dan began planning for the first Competition, which was held in August 1977. The Competition comprised five Stages. Chamber music and vocal accompaniment were part of Stage IV and involved the Sydney String Quartet playing piano quintets with the semi-finalists. Leading singers from Sydney and interstate were involved with the semi-finalists in the vocal accompaniment section. The Australian Chamber Orchestra accompanied the Mozart concertos and the then Premier of South Australia provided the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra for the 19th- and 20th-century concertos. 2MBS-FM broadcast some parts of the Competition. Prize money in 1977 totalled approximately AUD\$25,000 and there was a short tour for the First Prizewinner, Irina Plotnikova, after the Competition. Subsequent Competitions were held in 1981, 1985, 1988 (to coincide with the Australian Bicentennial celebrations), 1992, 1996 and 2000.

For the 2004 Competition, a radio audience, estimated at 1.6 million, will be able to hear live broadcasts by ABC Classic FM of all stages of the Competition in Australia and New Zealand. In

addition, the Competition will be presented live on the ABC website to enable a worldwide audience to listen in.

Prize money in 2004 totals over AUD\$120,000 and extensive concert tours throughout Australia are planned immediately after the Competition for major prizewinners. A tour of Australia for the First Prizewinner will take place in 2006. Overseas engagements are planned, together with performances in international festivals in several countries by several of the major prizewinners.

Vitaly Samoshko

Vitaly Samoshko was born in 1973 in Kharkiv, Ukraine. At a very young age he began his piano studies at the School of Music in Kharkiv with Leonid Margarius, who taught him also at the Conservatory of Kharkiv. They continued their collaboration in Imola, Italy, at the Accademia Pianistica 'Incontri col Maestro'.



Vitaly Samoshko won several prizes at international competitions, including Second Prize at the Busoni Competition (1993), Second Prize at the Senigalia International Piano Competition (1995), Second Prize, Concours International de Piano de Montréal (1996), Second Prize at the Rubinstein Piano Master Competition (1998). In 1999 he won First Prize at the Concours International Reine Elisabeth de Piano, in Brussels.

Vitaly Samoshko has established himself as a soloist with a solid reputation and highly developed musical personality. He has appeared in concert at many venues around the world, including Tonhalle (Zurich), the Théâtre du Châtelet (Paris), the Metropolitan Museum (New York), the Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), the Beethovenhalle (Bonn), the Yokohama Minato Mirai Hall, the Okayama Symphony Hall, the

Kyoto Concert Hall (Japan), De Singel (Antwerp) and the Conservatory of Milan.

He has also participated at numerous festivals, such as the Festival of Flanders, the Klavier Festival Ruhr (Germany), the Festival de Montpellier Radio France, the Festival Música Romàntica (Switzerland), the Festival d'Aulne (Belgium), the Yokohama International Piano Festival, the Savannah Onstage Festival (USA), the Festival International de Lanaudière (Canada), Arnhem (Netherlands), San Juan (Puerto Rico) and the Chopin Piano Festival (Poland).

Among the orchestras he has played with are the Tokyo Philharmonic, the New Japan Philharmonic, the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, the Orchestre National de Belgique, the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, Orchestre Philharmonique de Liège, the Orchester der Beethovenhalle, the St Petersburg State Symphony and the Orchestre National de Lille.

Vitaly Samoshko has collaborated with acclaimed conductors such as Charles Dutoit, Marc Soustrot, Gilbert Varga, Georges Octors, David Shallon, Arthur Fagen, Tadaaki Otaka, Louis Langrée, Heribert Beissel and Paul Daniel.

Duncan Gifford

Australian pianist Duncan Gifford has firmly established himself as a major artist of his generation with recent international successes including First Prize in the Maria Callas Grand Prix de Piano in Athens, Greece (2000), First Prize in the Concours Prix Mozart in Lausanne, Switzerland (1999) and First Prize, as well as the Beethoven and Chopin Prizes, in the prestigious José Iturbi International Piano Competition in Spain (1998).



Other competition successes have included First Prize in the World Piano Competition in Cincinnati (1989), Third Prize in the Sydney International Piano Competition (1992), Third Prize in the Montreal International Piano Competition (1996) and Fourth Prize in the Dublin International Piano Competition (1994).

Born in 1972, Duncan Gifford commenced piano studies at the age of six. He subsequently studied with Margaret Hair at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, later moving to the Moscow State Conservatory for six years as a student of Lev Vlassenko and Dmitri Sakharov, graduating with a Master's Degree in Piano Performance. Since 1997, Duncan Gifford has

been based in Madrid where he is working with Joaquín Soriano.

He has given many recitals internationally, including in Australia, Russia, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, the US, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Taiwan, Malaysia, Brunei and New Caledonia. He has performed as soloist with the Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide Symphony Orchestras, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Orchestre de la Camerata Mozart of Rome, the National Orchestra of Ireland, the Metropolitan Orchestra of Montreal, the National Orchestras of Malaysia and Taiwan, the Orchestra of Malaga, Spain and with the Australian Youth Orchestra for their 1993 New Zealand tour and 1994 European tour.

With his orchestral appearances, Duncan Gifford has worked with many conductors including Vernon Handley, Yakov Kreizberg, Paul Daniel, En Shao, Patrick Thomas and Edvard Tschivzhel.

In 1993 he released his first CD featuring the music of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov. His 1995 recording of the complete Debussy Preludes received great critical acclaim and was nominated for an ARIA Award for Best Classical Album.

Olivier Cazal

Olivier Cazal was born in 1962. He made his first public appearance at the age of seven. After studies in his native city at the Conservatoire National de Région de Toulouse with Evelyne Flauw, he entered the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris in 1974 as a student of Pierre Sancan, winning first prizes in Piano and Chamber Music. From 1985 to 1987 he continued his training in Brussels with Michael Faerman.



Since 1988, Olivier Cazal has participated in numerous piano competitions, winning many top prizes, including Second Prizes in the 1988 Barcelona Maria Canals Competition and the 1991 Busoni International Competition in Bolzano, Third Prize in the 1993 Paris Long-Thibaud Competition and First Prizes at the Premio Jaen in Spain in 1993, Pretoria (UNISA) in 1990 and in the Italian Città di Senigallia and Città di Marsala competitions in 1989. He also received the People's Prize at the 1992 Sydney International Piano Competition, the Boucher and Special Jury Prizes at the 1990 William Kapell, University of Maryland Competition, and was a laureate of the 1990 Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition in Moscow.

He maintains a very active concert schedule, which has taken him to all continents of the world. He has performed throughout Europe, as well as in Japan, China, South Africa, Australia and North and South America, with orchestras including the Cape Town Symphony, the Orchestra of Trieste Italy, the Australian Chamber Orchestra and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Executive Producers Robert Patterson, Lyle Chan
(for ABC Classics), Cyrus Meher-Homji (for Universal
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Vitaly Samoshko plays a Yamaha piano.

Duncan Gifford plays a Steinway piano.

Olivier Cazal plays a Kawai piano.

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