



Chopin Society of Atlanta

NEWSLETTER

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Upcoming Events

*Annual Fundraising Event
Dinner and Concert
September 2006
SOLD OUT*

*Chopin Recital
Marek Drewnowski, piano
October 22, 2006, 5:00 PM
Roswell Cultural Arts Center
Roswell, GA*

*Chopin's Life and Music
Third Annual Atlanta Youth
Chopin Competition
November 4, 2006, 11:00 AM
November 18, 2006, 11:00 AM
Steinway Piano Galleries
Atlanta, GA*

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Editorial Staff:

Dorota Lato
President, Chopin Society of Atlanta
Editor Mary Montgomery
Asst. Editor Bożena U. Zaremba
Proofreader Mim Eisenberg

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www.chopinatlanta.org for more information regarding events, tickets, member exclusives, and merchandise for sale.

Emotions Controlled

An Exclusive CSA Interview with the pianist Marek Drewnowski
by Bożena U. Zaremba

Your collaboration with Leonard Bernstein had a great impact on your career. After having listened on his car radio to your recording of *Twelve Sonatas* by Scarlatti, Bernstein invited you to play with the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra at the Tanglewood Music Festival. This was unexpected, wasn't it?

It was first of all a great shock. After I recorded Scarlatti's sonatas, I left for Rome for a year. While I was there, martial law was imposed in Poland, and I stayed in Italy for next twelve years. When things changed in Poland I came back. Sometimes small steps determine your whole future. Suddenly, like in dominos, everything changes.

Was this the case with Bernstein?

The fact that Bernstein chose me by mere chance, not knowing me at all, proves his purely musical considerations. But in the real world, there are many factors, outside music, that determine your career. Bernstein really wanted to help me, but even he could not break the wall of the hermetic music world. I was even supposed to do a recording with Anne-Sophie Mutter, but by a turn of events it did not happen. But I shouldn't be complaining because I learned a lot, and this is the greatest treasure I gained. Everything I went through – stress and concerts – really shaped me as an artist. Since then I started to control my music not only through intellect but emotions as well. Emotions that Bernstein had in him were very strong but, at the same time, very controlled. In the case of the greatest composers, emotions form the structure and play an equally important role as intellect. Take Beethoven's symphonies: First there is peace, then the climax approaches, then the storm comes! Most musicians, especially conductors, lack those abilities to thrill – to make people cry, to make them shake with emotions. Bernstein had it all. This was a great lesson for me, and I am so fortunate to have experienced that.

They say that Leonard Bernstein was very temperamental.

Temperamental he was! We could go on forever on that subject. But let me tell you a different story. Imagine this: I get a phone from [Bernstein's manager Harry J.] Kraut, who tells me I will play Brahms's *Concerto No. 1* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. And I had never played it in public! When he asked me if I had, obviously I said yes, because I was afraid they would cancel. To go on stage with Bernstein and play the *Concerto in D-minor* by Brahms – for the first time in your life – is a great pressure! And I endured! Some people may notice on the recording that I made a couple of mistakes here and there (and so did Bernstein), but there is so much emotional "load" on both sides that the listener cannot stay indifferent. This incredible passion verges on exhibitionism.

Many musicians would not accept such an emotional approach.

That's true. Most of them want to achieve musical effect through intellect and through the beauty of the phrase and sound. Even at the International Chopin Piano Competition [in



Continued on p. 3

Chopin's Lifetime of Letters

Starting with this newsletter we will quote some of the most interesting letters that Chopin wrote in his lifetime. As their translator, E. Voynich observes, "They throw light on the genesis of some of Chopin's compositions; on his character, personality and mental habits; on his teachers, colleagues and pupils; on the environment which moulded his childhood, and the inhibitions which throughout life hampered him, both as a musician and as a man."

Here is a letter 21-year-old Chopin wrote to his Polish friend, K. Kumelski, just after arriving in Paris.

Paris, 19 September 1831

My Dear Life

...I arrived here fairly comfortably (though expensively), and I'm glad that I'm remaining here; I have the first musicians in the world, and the first opera in the world. I know Rossini, Cherubini, Paer, etc, etc.; and perhaps stay longer than I intended. Not because I am getting too well here, but because, with time I may get well...

I am gradually launching myself in the world, but I have only one ducat in my pocket! But I am writing you nothing about the impression produced on me by this big town...There is the utmost luxury, the utmost swinishness, the utmost virtue, the utmost ostentation...One can perish in this paradise and it is convenient from this point of view, that nobody asks how anybody lives. You can walk streets in winter, dressed in the rags, and frequent tip-top

society: one day you can eat the most hearty dinner for 32 sous in a restaurant with mirrors, gilding and gas lighting, and the next you lunch where they will give you enough for a dicky-bird to eat, and charge 3 times as much: that happened to me before I had to paid the necessary tax on ignorance.

What a lot of charitable ladies. They just run after people. But I know already several lady vocalists, and lady vocalists here are even more anxious for duets than those of the Tyrol...

On my 5th floor (you would not believe what a beautiful lodging; I have a little room beautifully furnished with mahogany, and a balcony over the boulevard, from which I can see Mont Martre to the Pantheon and the whole length of the fashionable quarter; many persons envy me my view, but none my stairs). Well...I expect to stay here for three years. I am in very close relations to Kalkbrenner, the 1st pianist in Europe... (He is the one whose shoe-latched I am not worthy to untie.)...

Yours for ever.

Fryc

.....

A few months later...

Paris, 1932, (undated), to Dominik Dziewanowski

Dear Domus

...I have got to the highest society, I sit with ambassadors, princesses, ministers; and I even don't know how it came about, because I did not try for it. It is a

most necessary thing for me, because good taste is supposed to depend on it. At once you have a bigger talent if you have been heard at the English or Austrian embassy; you play better if princess Vaudemont was your protector. I can't say "is" because the woman died a week ago...

Though this is only my first year among artist here, I have their friendship and respect. One proof of respect is that even people with huge reputation dedicate their compositions to me before I do to them: Pixis has inscribed to me his last Variations; also, people compose variations on my themes. Kalkbrenner has used my mazurka in this way; the pupils of the Conservatoire, Moscheles's pupils, those of Herz and Kalkbrenner—in a word, finished artists take lessons from me and couple my name with that of Field. In short, if I were stupider than I am, I should think myself at the apex of my career; yet I know how much I still lack to reach perfection: I see it more clearly now that I live only among first-rank artists and know what each of them lacks. But I am ashamed of all this bosh that I have written...

I have five lessons to give to-day; you think I am making a fortune? Carriages and white gloves cost more, and without them one would not be in good taste...

I care nothing for money, only for friendship, for which I beg and pray.

Fryderyk

Prepared by Dorota Lato

Chopin's Life and Music — Third Annual Atlanta Youth Chopin Competition Written and Performance Competitions

The Chopin Society of Atlanta will hold its Third Annual Atlanta Youth Chopin Competition, dedicated to Chopin's life and music. The written competition about Chopin's life will take place on **November 4, 2006, at 11:00 AM**, and the performance competition will take place on **November 18, 2006**, both at the Steinway Piano Galleries (6650B Roswell Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30328). Both competitions will be held in three age groups:

Group A: Born on or after November 1, 1995

Group B: Born between November 1, 1992 and October 31, 1995

Group C: Born between November 1, 1989 and October 31, 1992

The written competition will consist of:

1. Written test on Chopin's life and music
2. Short essay
3. Audio question concerning Chopin's work

Repertoire for performance competition: Two pieces of Chopin's original music of different forms, played by memory. Concertos and sonatas are not allowed.

The deadline for submitting an entry and fee to the Chopin Society of Atlanta is October 15, 2006.

For more information, please visit our website: www.chopinatlanta.org, or contact the Chopin Society of Atlanta at chopinsociety@mindspring.com, or Ping Xu at 770-619-5290.

Please let us know if you would like to be a sponsor or if you would like to establish a special award in your name. Prizes will be awarded to first, second and third place of all age groups in both the written and performance competitions.

Warsaw], everything is sterilized. Those who have emotions make mistakes and get eliminated. [Last year's winner] Rafał Blechacz (though he is so talented and deserved to win) is a pure intellectual. But he is still young, and those emotions may show in the future, to his great advantage. Take [Vladimir] Horowitz: When you hear him play, you either get offended or faint from ecstasy! As far as my sense of esthetics is concerned, I like excitement. There is a lot of risk in my music.

Horowitz, among other pianists, recorded Scarlatti's sonatas before you. What impressed Bernstein in your interpretation?

I think it was the organization of time that is there.

Someone described it very accurately and said that you "breathe beautifully" when you play...

Because despite my emotions I am very classical.

The Festival in Tanglewood was not the only time you played with Bernstein.

No. We played together at a huge concert in Warsaw commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of World War II. It was broadcast around the world. I must say that Bernstein was very supportive of me till the last moments of his life.

You are renowned for unique music ventures. One of the best known is the recording of Chopin's piano concertos in the chamber version.

I was the first pianist ever to record these versions, in 1992. The idea evolved during my studies on Chopin's life. It turned out that when Chopin performed his concertos for the first time it was in the chamber version, with his teacher Józef Eisner present. I decided to find the manuscript but managed to get the chamber version of the *Concerto in E-minor* only, published in 1833 in Leipzig by Friedrich Kistner.

Musicologists unanimously agree that this is Chopin's original version. I believe that Chopin wrote the chamber version first and "extended" it to the symphonic form. I arranged the *Concerto F-minor* myself, according to music tradition. I had great fun doing this. But the critics didn't like it. Even a scientific conference was held to prove these versions are unacceptable. But sometimes one stone makes an avalanche, and now the entire world plays these versions, and I am very proud of it. I still get requests for sheet music.

You have had an interesting movie experience. You wrote a screenplay about another famous Polish pianist, Ignacy Paderewski, did the soundtrack for *The Fascination of Frederick* and also played the role of Chopin in Krzysztof Zanussi's *Chopin's Concert*.



Usually it is a professional actor who plays a role of a musician (very often he cannot play the instrument himself) and a pianist does the soundtrack.

And I don't like it! I don't like when the actor pretends to play the piano. You can tell he knows nothing about it. When [Sviatoslav] Richter played the role of Liszt it was the greatest musical scene I have ever seen.

You live in an old restored palace in Dylew, 60 km from Warsaw. Why there?

After I returned from Italy, I was looking for places associated with old Poland. I found this dilapidated mansion, with no roof, water or electricity. And I rebuilt it.

Now it's not only your dwelling place.

It's true. I have been organizing classical music festivals there, focusing on the young generation of musicians.

You teach at the Music Academy in Łódź. Do you enjoy teaching?

Yes, but it is very hard work. Young people come to the Academy unprepared, with lots of mannerisms. If the child is not properly trained in the first two years it is really hard to change it later. I need three years to correct the mistakes. On the piano the sound is already there and the right sound comes from the right technique. In order to play properly, you need the right posture, and the whole body needs to be prepared so that playing comes naturally, just like walking. And you need to have the right technique to express yourself.

What about developing sensitivity and personality?

But of course! Everyone plays differently. But I don't believe you can form a personality; you can only help it.

Can you "open" someone?

You can and you should, though it requires a lot of mutual trust.

What are your current fascinations?

I am discovering another Polish composer, Tadeusz Majerski, who died forgotten in Lvov in the '50s. It's really amazing and fascinating that there are still so many superb things out there worth recognition and appreciation.

Żelazowa Wola, June 2006

Translation and photos by Bożena U. Zaremba

More information about the artist can be found at www.chopinatlanta.org.

Annual Fundraising Event: Dinner and Concert

The Chopin Society of Atlanta will hold its Annual Fundraising Event in late September in Alpharetta, GA. The guest of honor for the evening will be Mr. Oscar J. Primelles, Vice President of Supply Chain Operations, BellSouth Corporation. Honored guests will be Hon. Philippe Ardanaz, Consul General of France, and Mr. Mariusz Brymora, Culture Counselor from the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, DC. We would like to thank all Chopin Society of Atlanta members and friends for their support, dedication and help in organizing this fundraising event, which is instantly sold out.

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Just for Kids...

Can you guess which happened when? Put in chronological order:

- _____ A. Chopin spends winter in Majorca and composes his preludes.
- _____ B. Chopin begins taking piano lessons with Wojciech Zywny.
- _____ C. J. Elsner becomes Chopin's teacher. (Chopin dedicates to him *Variations, op. 2* and *Sonata, op. 4*, the first compositions which meet with the interest of foreign publishers.)
- _____ D. Chopin composes his first *Polonaise in G minor*.
- _____ E. Chopin arrives in Paris.
- _____ F. Chopin completes his *Etudes, op. 10*.

Answer: B. (1816), D. (1818), C. (1822), E. (1830), F. (1833), A. (1838–1839)

Chopin Society of Atlanta

540 Morton Mill Court

Alpharetta, GA 30022

www.chopinatlanta.com

