

After Midnight Thoughts

On Leopold Godowsky.

Etc..

By Paul Howard.

To The Members of The International Godowsky Society.

Instalment 3.

The 46 Miniatures for Four Hands.

PREFACE

"...For fame is not popularity, the shout of the multitude,
 the idle buzz of fashion, the venal puff, the soothing
 flattery or favour or of friendship; but it is the spirit of
 a man surviving himself in the minds and thoughts of
 other men, undying and imperishable. It is the power
 which the intellect, *exercises over the intellect,* and the lasting homage which is
 paid to it, as such, independently of time and circumstances,
 purified from partiality and evil speaking. Fame ^s it the *x*
 sound which the stream of high thoughts, carried down to
 future ages, makes as it flows-deep, distant, murmuring
 evermore like the waters of the mighty ocean..."

WILLIAM HAZLITT, "Lectures on the English Poets"

X Many years ago I wrote to Godowsky:-

“Have you ² come little book for children? I am teaching my young ones the piano, and find it difficult to get anything suitable to train their minds to today’s idiom, most of the stuff available being the commonplace and stale, while the stuff ^{and ens} which ^{that} is better is a little beyond the child mind. If in your kindness you would send me one little book of exercises or pieces to go on with, I would be grateful.”

In response the Master sent me the 46 Miniatures for Four Hands.

From that Moment life began!

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THE 46 MINIATURES FOR FOUR HANDS

Comprised in Three Suites, Seven Ancient and Seven Modern Dances, and 20 Miscellaneous works. Printed in six books.

“...I have many very interesting ideas to complete my Miniatures. From 46 they would grow to over a hundred. Every form and all that would need to be known about music would be found in the Miniatures...”

(Leopold Godowsky in letter to Paul Howard, July, 1938)

(Man orioises, God disposes, - P.H.)

“They represent the best there is in me. The experience and assimilated knowledge, the aims and aspirations, the hopes and ideals, the disappointments and yearnings of a ^{sensitive} nature and an artist’s soul are all to be found in this series of simple five-finger pieces...”

My 46 Miniatures were composed to enable the beginner - whether child or adult - to start the art of pianoforte playing with music as good and inspirational, as aesthetic and character-building, as the music we hear at serious public concerts.”

(From Godowsky’s Preface to the Miniatures).

“Nothing more amazingly clever or useful has ever been contributed to the pedagogics of the piano...Here you have the simplified epitome of his profound researches, his advanced discoveries, his towering mastery of ² ev Sonata, Java Suite, Walzermasken, and epochal transcriptions of Chopin and Bach.”

Every phase of the Key board... I unhesitatingly place the Miniatures beside Godowsky's Pavane, Sonata, Polka
(Leonard Lieblich, “Musical Courier”, New York, 9/2/35).

EXTRACTS FROM SOME OF MY LETTERS

“Then the Miniatures! They alone are a garden of glory enabling little children or grown people to

succeed in the path of perfection and to attain cultured taste, and exquisite skill and refinement of expression, at the same time achieving a high sense of ensemble."

(Letter to Dr James Francis Cooke, Editor of "Etude", Philadelphia, 24/10.36. Printed in "Musical Courier", 2/1/37. See Instalment 1).

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From an Article Written on Request After My Visit to
Northcote Convent, Vic. One Easter.

"...it was delightful to come to Northcote and I was thrilled by the beautiful convent and surroundings. I came expecting a conference with three or four of the community concerning Godowsky's Miniatures, which I wanted to demonstrate to them. On arrival I was amazed to find an audience of a couple of hundred beautiful girls in mid teens, and a score or two of lovely nuns assembled for a recital. It was like a sudden transition to the heavenly choirs. Then I just had to improvise a full size programme and announce the items as I proceeded.

my children with me. we could have given a

Z Had I brought some of Hands. In Adelaide, Mary, Peter, and Paul Junior gave a demonstration of the Miniatures in 1936, to an audience of about a hundred and fifty members of the Music Teachers Association there. As these children have mixed in our home with half the renowned touring virtuosi and composers of the world - Benjamin Dale, Bachaus, Colin Taylor, Dr. Tom Haig, the Budapest Quartet, Arthur Rubinstein, Paul Ulanowsky, and scores of others - played the piano to them and with them, and frolicked and rolled on the floor with them, 150 teachers did not matter much, and the young beggars on the platform would nearly start a fight as to who should play the next item. Paul, who was then fifteen, had just played the Arabian Chant, and played it exquisitely, when Peter, aged eleven, said, "Aw, I could have done it better than that", and made everybody laugh. (sic)

The 46 Miniatures for Four Hands rank with the most lovely music ever written; each one is an expression of immortal genius and a separate inspiration. The variety they embrace is amazing, X going through every key, every tempo and almost every form. The pupil learns the secret of expressing beautiful thoughts and of producing beautiful sounds, while all the theory and the finest finger technique are acquired subconsciously. The pupil just wanders in a lovely garden picking daisies and finding delight at every turn. In these works which rank among the most important in history, Godowsky has practically said to little children, "you shall be able to play exquisite music without pain or drudgery, finding but delight all the time you learn."

(From "My Visit to You Last Easter", 29/6/38)

My letter to Godowsky concerning the foregoing - Ah, who
knew his time was running so short

demonstration of Godowsky's 46 Miniatures for Four
22.9.38

"Dearest Master,

little

Date?

Did you like my paragraph about the Miniatures on the second page of the article I wrote by request for the Santa Maria College Annual?

I could write a lot more about the Miniatures. There is a project I have in mind and will start before long, which is to write measure to measure comments and instruction in a tutorial manner to enable anyone who has never touched a piano and is without a teacher, to study the works successfully alone. They lend themselves miraculously to the purpose because having mastered the first primo, the student can always do the next one, and "In Church" can be mastered by anyone after a few preliminary directions which can concern note values, etc. The diverse treatment of duration is so complete that having done that one, which is merely a simple exercise in counting and subdividing up to four, a pupil could practice its aesthetic content and proceed from piece to piece without any set-back, and could start on some of the easier secondos ere long.

2 The notes and directions I want to work out will cover every measure of every one of the 46 traversing all the expression signs and their relationship to one another, enabling anyone to travel the true path. Of course, better if they have a teacher - a good one; but teachers are so varied, and there are many who cannot afford a teacher, or if they can, do not see them often or long enough at a time.

The miracle of your Miniatures is that you have created a perfectly graded road from the lowlands to the top of Parnassus with a grade that all can make.

In teaching elocution the pupil can always read the words and the teacher has only to inculcate the proper expression of the words. Reduce the vehicle of expression in music to vanishing point, so that absolutely anyone can read the notes, (and that is what you have done in the commencement of your Miniatures), then it is possible to concentrate on teaching beautiful expression, and bending the mind entirely to that channel.

The second miracle of the miniatures is that while the pupil shall never hear anything but beautiful sounds, the works are so cunningly contrived that the technical efficiency of the hands is subsonsciously acquired.

The reverse has been the process through history; instead of teaching beauty, they have taught dry exercises and vapid "Pieces", producing in the majority of cases a loathing instead of a love of the piano.

The Miniatures reveal that hands, everyone's hands, just as they are, can do a thousand times more than anyone gives them credit for if the mind can ask them to do it. The mind must be taught beautiful thoughts before it can ask the hands to express them.

Your Miniatures are the first works in History to provide perfect grade, and a continual and ever-growing love of music, each one being an immortal exquisite composition. The 48 of Bach could not be used for consecutive teaching. The Schumann Album for the Young is no album for the young, and as a grade is completely out of it.

Affectionately,

(Sgd). Paul Howard"

(Letter to Godowsky, 22/9/38).

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"...I don't regard the Secondos as the teacher's part, except in the very early stages, because some of the Primos are the limit for many pianists, but as a school for the pupil to go right through. By the time one can play all the Primos and Secondos of the forty-six he will be able to study and master without assistance any work ever written. And the home they make! All my children can play the forty-six, Primos and Secondos, and can play first in one way, change places, and play again. There's always something to do at home, There's always another member of the family who is always ready to play. You can understand why I have not got a wireless in the house...

...In the Miniatures, delicacy, subtlety, tone value, are the predominating needs. Pupil learns ensemble in the first stages, priceless!..."

(Letter to "Feste" of the Musical Times, London, 19/7/40)

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From a Letter to Katherine Hansen.

"...I am going to write an article of Godowsky's 46 Miniatures for Four Hands, which mark an epoch in the history of music. My contention is that since Godowsky did his wonderful work there is no need for exercises of any description, and pupils can start on the Miniatures without having seen a keyboard before, and learn ensemble at once; From there to the Triakontameron and various other works they can become superlative artists, and every note they ever touch from the commencement, contributing to, and being part of, first class concert repertoire.

That sounds like a pipe dream, doesn't it? Yes, but it is true.

The beginner's mind shall never be polluted by any harsh sounds or meaningless succession of notes. The aesthetic soul shall never be insulted by having to listen to common, cheap little expressions. The ear is something sacred and holy and shall be protected from all but what is beautiful. There is nothing the matter with fingers. They do not need that mechanical training.

Hands are a thousand times more wonderful than anybody gives them credit for, and will do almost anything if you ask them. But if you do not know what to ask for, if your mind can not conceive and think a beautiful thought, how can you ask the hands to produce it? It is the mind which needs the training, the education to fine and subtle thinking. The Miniatures develop and drill the fingers and wrists subconsciously.

The old method of scales, exercises, and all the hocus pocus of make-believe technical training only teaches them to hate it, whereas if they were taught the beautiful, they would grow to love it, and could achieve and conquer anything: for as Thomas a Kempis in the 'Imitation' says:-

'Love feels no burthen, thinks nothing of trouble,
would willingly do more than it can; complains
not of impossibility, because it conceives that
it may and can do all things.

It is able, therefore, to do anything, and it
performs and effects many things, where he that
loves not, faints and lies down."

(Letter to Miss Katherine Hansen, "Music Teachers' Review", N.Y. 28/5/41).

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Teachers training pupils for University Exams, and those held by visiting examiners of International organisations such as Trinity and Royal College of Music - Associated Board, etc., can, despite fixed lists, introduce the Miniatures, as you will gather from the following letter from a Nun:-

"Dear Mr. Howard,

Calh at last I am able to fulfil my promise of sending you a few lines. The Christmas and New Year festivities are at an end, and things are beginning to be normal again.

My pupil was fortunate enough to secure the State Scholarship for Pianoforte. Both she and the Grade II (Hons.) pupil had Godowsky duets for their extra pieces. The Examiner - MGrade II candidate in the Prelude No.1 Third Suite.

was hysterically interested in the works and
Mr. Gordon Laker -
X I shall continue to interest my pupils in the Master's profound works when our holidays are over. I know you will appreciate the copy of "Australia Today" which I have sent to you, for your overseas friends.

With kindest regards to you and yours, and with renewed greetings.

Played the piano part with the Grade

Believe me, dear Mr. Howard

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) S.M. Cecilia."

Well, dear Member, there you are. I hope I have interested you in the Miniatures, and not wearied you.

In Instalment 4 I had better deal with the Sonata in E minor, and in 5 with the Walzermasken.

I must make a list of the Master's complete compositions with publishers names opposite each, as suggested by Mr. G. Ackley Brower of Birmingham, Alabama, as, of course, each publisher catalogues only those of his own house. Mr Brower gave me a lot of interesting information, and later I must include a copy of his letter.

Sincere Regards,

Paul Howard.

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