



Piano Alex Slobodyanik



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Complete artist information including video, audio and interviews are available at www.pricerubin.com

Alex Slobodyanik – Biography

Alex Slobodyanik is recognized by critics, audiences and his fellow musicians worldwide as a major figure among pianists. At the age of 15, he became the youngest pianist ever to win the **Young Concert Artists International Auditions**. He subsequently received the Grand Prize at the **Stravinsky Awards International Piano Competition** and a **Young Artist of the Year Award** from the **Gilmore Foundation**, establishing him as one of the leading pianists of his generation. His recital engagements have included appearances at **Lincoln Center** on the “**Great Performers**” series, **92nd St Y, Academy of Music, Ambassador Auditorium, Wigmore Hall** in a live **BBC broadcast, UNESCO Hall** in Paris, the **Great Hall** in Moscow and at other major venues throughout the US and Europe. His tour of Japan included recitals at **Osaka Festival Hall** and **Suntory Hall** in Tokyo.

As a soloist, he has appeared with orchestras such as the **Cincinnati Symphony** under **Jesus Lopez-Cobos** on their “**Catch A Rising Star**” series, the **National Symphony**, the **Cologne Radio Symphony, Moscow Philharmonic**, a debut with the **Chicago Symphony** under **Yuri Temirkanov, Hong Kong Philharmonic** subscription concerts and the **Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Eri Klas** at the **Concertgebouw**. He is a frequent collaborator with conductor **Valery Gergiev**, notably in performances with the **Philharmonia Orchestra** at **Royal Festival Hall** in London and **Symphony Hall** in Birmingham, followed by an international tour with the **Kirov Orchestra** highlighted by performances at the **Barbican Center, Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, Rife Center** and **Mariinsky Opera House**, all to critical acclaim. They made a subsequent recording of Rachmaninoff *Piano Concerto #4* for Russian Television.

Alex’s debut recording of the Chopin *B-minor Sonata* and Schumann *Papillons* was released on **EMI Classics** to rave reviews. He has worked on a series of radio recordings for **BBC Radio 3, WDR** in Cologne, **NPR** and **WQXR** in the US, **Cultura Channel Russia** and **NHK** in Japan.

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Alex Slobodyanik – Biography

Alex Slobodyanik has participated in many international music festivals including **Ravinia, Marlboro, Riverbend**, and the **Gilmore Keyboard Festival** in the US, the **Ivo Pogorelich Festival** in Germany, **Lockenhaus Festival** in Austria, **Les Flaneries Musicales d’Ete** in Reims, and **Les Semaines Musicales** in Tours. Mr. Slobodyanik began piano lessons at the age of six with his mother, Natalia. At seven, he entered the **Central Music School** in Moscow, where he studied with **Rene Shereshevskaya**. Upon coming to the United States, he resumed his musical studies with **Nina Svetlanova**. He moved to Cleveland in 1991 to study at the **Cleveland Institute of Music** with **Sergei Babayan** who has been his private teacher and mentor since 1985.

Alex now shares time between Los Angeles, New York and Moscow and is actively pursuing many creative activities and interests, involving music, literature, theater and film.

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Alex Slobodyanik – Press Quotes

With orchestra

“...a dazzling performance....virtuosity and heart”

-John Allison, London Times

[Review of Rhapsody On A Theme Of Paganini, Philharmonia Orchestra with Valery Gergiev]

“[He] has the rare ability to project a huge, ringing piano tone above 100 players of the [Kennedy Center] Concert Hall without ever resorting to pounding. He brought surpassing tenderness to the central “Largo” and loosed Niagaras of octaves in the final movement.”

-Tim Page, Washington Post

[Review of Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No.4, Kirov Orchestra with Valery Gergiev]

“Slobodyanik played with confidence, virtuosity and a clear-headed sense of direction”

-Barbara Zuck, Columbus Dispatch

[Review of Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 4, Kirov Orchestra with Valery Gergiev]

“I was swept away by Slobodyanik’s stunning performance, he made the Concerto’s technical challenges seem like child’s play. It was one of the most musically satisfying performances of that knotty piece I’ve heard.”

-Patrick Meanor, Listener Hi-Fi & Music Review

[Review of Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 4, Kirov Orchestra at Carnegie Hall with Valery Gergiev]

“...filled with contrast and bravura....subtle, silken melodies were gracefully exchanged from piano to orchestra...the final cadential phrases with racing parallel theme in left and right hands, the tension built to a tremendously satisfying conclusion.”

-Keith Morrison, Cincinnati Enquirer

[Review of Prokofiev Piano Concerto No.3, Cincinnati Symphony with Jesus Lopez-Cobos]

“Watch out, world! There’s a young giant out there and he’s going to make some noise!....perhaps the most transfixing piano performance here in two decades....a technique that is glass-smooth, but never sterile and with a musical judgment mature far beyond the young man’s years. And there beats in the artist’s chest a virtuoso’s heart of enormous size.”

-Paul Sweitzer, Arizona Daily Sun

[Review of Chopin Piano Concerto No.2, Flagstaff Symphony with Harold Weller]

In solo recital

“He is an uncommonly polished keyboard virtuoso, flashy in technique but not in manner, poetic to a fault, musical beyond his years...musical depth, comprehensive technical resources, a probing mind and a clear sense of communication....an authoritative style, mechanical ease and gifts for musical rhetoric rare in pianists of any age.”

-Daniel Cariaga, Los Angeles Times

[Review of debut recital at Ambassador Auditorium]

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Alex Slobodyanik – Press Quotes

“One admires Mr. Slobodyanik’s skills and flair, and looks forward to his explorations of a larger musical life.”

-Bernard Holland, New York Times

[Review of debut recital at 92nd St Y]

On CD

Debut album on EMI, Chopin: Piano Sonata No.3 in B-minor, Op.58; Polonaise No.6 In A-flat, Op.53. Schumann: Kinderszenen, Op.15, Papillons, Op.2

“Some of the most engaging Papillons on record and a mesmerizing Chopin Third Sonata....[this] critic can only retreat into a catalogue of superlatives....His Schumann Papillons...delicate and piquant in No.4, immaculately virtuosic in No.6, and with the sort of haunting nuance in No.7 that usually only comes later in a pianist’s career....exceptional refinement and musicianship....this is a debut of debuts.

-Bryce Morrison, Gramophone

“[He] is a pianist who combines cultivation with deep feeling. The slow movement of the Chopin B minor Sonata is both ravishingly refined and intimately expressive – this is playing that compels admiration, but at the same time you feel the music is telling you something. [He] is already master of the smooth, singing legato....the A flat Polonaise is an unqualified triumph, an epic performance – such a world of color and emotion seems to be concentrated into a mere six-and-a-half minutes.”

-Stephen Johnson, Classical-Music.com

“I have never heard Schumann’s Papillons performed with such unsentimental richness....I marveled at the burnished tone he produced [in Chopin’s Third Sonata], especially in the sublime Largo. He, as few other pianists, can sail a phrase above the fray and let it shimmer in visionary splendor....in the last movement...his thundering bass and dramatic sweep of the concluding passages will leave you breathless and spent, yet wanting more.”

-Patrick Meanor, Listener Hi-Fi & Music Review

“Having heard his playing here, it seems almost inconceivable that Slobodyanik could do a single unmusical or unpianistic thing. He’s a true master of his instrument, who brings to his playing of the arch-romantic Schumann a classical sense of proportion and an exceptional gift for characterization...the rapid mood-changes are handled with exemplary judgement and apparent ease....a very auspicious debut indeed.

-Jeremy Siepmann, Classic CD

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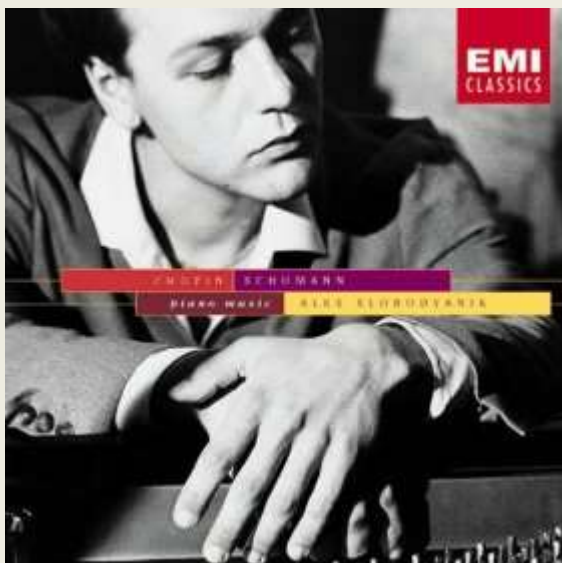
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Alex Slobodyanik – Discography

Debut CD album on EMI Classics, Chopin: Piano Sonata No.3 in B-minor, Op.58; Polonaise No.6 In A-flat, Op.53. Schumann: Kinderszenen, Op.15, Papillons, Op.2; ASIN B000TGXGEM



Available as mp3 album from

Amazon (\$9.49)

http://www.amazon.com/Chopin-Polonaise-Schumann-Papillons-Kinderszenen/dp/B000TGXGEM/ref=sr_shvl_album_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1334767363&sr=301-1

7Digital (\$8.99 - 320kbps mp3, \$13.99 - 16-bit 44.1kHz FLAC)

<http://www.7digital.com/artist/alex-slobodyanik/release/chopin-piano-sonata-no-3-polonaise-no-6-and-schumann-papillons-kinderszenen>

Consumer reviews of CD

Debut of debuts

***** [five stars] customer review on Amazon.com, by D. Graham, October 23, 2006

“I have been in the classical music industry for over 20 years and have never come across such a powerful debut recording. In terms of artistry, which is very rare these days, you will always find it in Alex Slobodyanik’s playing on this recording. His Chopin is mesmerizing and his Papillons are among the best on record. His Kinderszenen demonstrates his virtuosity and breathtaking poetry. Such heartfelt playing, this debut by an enormous young talent should not be taken lightly.”

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Alex Slobodyanik – Discography

A rare talent

***** [five stars] customer review on Amazon.com, by Sarah, October 2, 2006

“...it is possibly the best recording of Schumann’s Papillons I’ve ever heard. Imaginative, daring and fresh. In regards to Chopin, even though I would have loved a bit more punch in the Polonaise, the Sonata is among the most powerful on record.”

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Alex Slobodyanik – Concerto Repertoire

Artist is open to any orchestra suggestions for new repertoire. In the last few seasons, he has performed Chopin 1,2; Brahms 1; Rachmaninoff 1 through 4 and Rhapsody; Prokofiev 1,3 and Beethoven 1,3,5.

Bach

F minor, BWV 1056

D minor, BWV 1052

Beethoven

No. 1 in C major, Op. 15

No. 2 in B flat major, Op. 19

No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37

No. 4 in G major, Op. 58

No. 5 in E flat major, Op. 73 ("Emperor")

Brahms

No.1, D minor, Op. 15

Chopin

E minor, Op. 11

F minor, Op. 21

Chausson

Concerto for violin, piano & string quartet in D major, Op. 21

Liszt

No. 1 in E flat major, S. 124

Mendelssohn

G minor, Op. 25

E Major for two Pianos

A Flat Major for two Pianos

Concerto for piano, violin, and string orchestra in D minor

Mozart

No. 6 in B flat major, K. 238

No. 12 in A major, K. 414

No. 15 in B flat major, K. 450

No. 19 in F major, K. 459

No. 20 in D minor, K. 466

No. 21 in C major, K. 467 ("Elvira Madigan")

No. 22 in E flat major, K. 482

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Alex Slobodyanik – Concerto Repertoire

Mozart, continued

No. 23 in A major, K. 488

No. 24 in C minor, K. 491

No. 25 in C major, K. 503

Prokofiev

No. 1 in D flat major, Op. 10

No. 3 in C major, Op. 26

Rachmaninoff

No. 1 in F sharp minor, Op. 1

No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18

No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30

No. 4 in G minor, Op. 40

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini Op. 43

Rautavaara

Piano Concerto No.2

Ravel

Piano Concerto in D major (for the left hand)

Shostakovich

No. 1, for piano, trumpet & strings, in C minor, Op. 35

No. 2 in F major, Op. 102

Schnittke

Concerto for Piano and Strings

Schumann

Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54

Tchaikovsky

Piano Concerto No. 1 in B flat minor, Op. 23

Piano Concerto No. 2 in G major, Op. 44

Tsepkenko

Concerto-Drama

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Alex Slobodyanik – Recital Programs

Alex Slobodyanik—full-length solo recital programs offered 2015-2017
[60 minute (no intermission) versions also available on any of these for private matinee recitals]

Schubert: Sonata in A minor, op. 143 (21')

Ligeti: Etudes Book 2 (25')

—intermission—

Janacek: '1.X.1905' (12')

Prokofiev: 6th Sonata (28')

Beethoven: Sonata #17 in D minor, op. 31, no.2 "The Tempest" (22')

Beethoven: Sonata #18 in E-flat major, op. 31, no.3 (22')

—intermission—

Schumann: Fantasia (30')

Ravel: La Valse (13')

Schumann: Papillons (12')

Schumann: Kreisleriana: (30')

—intermission—

Ravel: Gaspard de la Nuit (23')

Stravinsky: Petrushka Suite (15')

Stravinsky: Firebird Suite (11')

Chopin: Polonaise in F-sharp minor (11')

Chopin: 24 Preludes (33')

—intermission—

Rachmaninoff: Sonata No. 1 (35')

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Handel: Suite in B flat major, HWV 434 (8')

Handel: Suite in G minor, HWV 432 (11')

Brahms: Handel Variations (30')

—intermission—

Franck: Prelude, Fugue and Variation in B minor, op. 18 (10')

Liszt: Sonata in B minor (30')

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Alex Slobodyanik – Photo Gallery



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MUSIC REVIEW

Slobodyanik the Son at Ambassador

By DANIEL CARIAGA
TIMES MUSIC WRITER

In 1968, six years before Alex Slobodyanik was born, his father, Alexander Slobodyanik, made his first Los Angeles-area appearance.

Under the auspices of S. Hurok, the 24-year-old pianist from Kiev played a recital at El Camino College. A small audience recognized the incipient virtuosity and musical individuality of Slobodyanik, father-to-be, who returned the following year to make a major debut and, as they used to say, a sensation, with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

In 1994, history is repeating itself. Nineteen-year-old Alex, the son, made his debut at Ambassador Auditorium Monday night, producing an enthusiasm that by all rights ought to have been more vocifer-

ous.

The younger pianist Slobodyanik has earned all the medals, honors and grants with which he is credited (at this time, he is a student of Sergei Babayan at the Cleveland Institute).

He is an uncommonly polished keyboard virtuoso, flashy in technique but not in manner, poetic to a fault, musical beyond his years. His Chopin/Haydn/Rachmaninoff/Prokofiev program displayed all the ingredients for a long and successful career to come: musical depth, comprehensive technical resources, a probing mind and a clear sense of communication.

Beginning with Chopin, Slobodyanik exhibited an authoritative style, mechanical ease and gifts for musical rhetoric rare in pianists of any age.

His playing of the B-flat-minor Scherzo reinstated the passions in

that over-familiar showpiece; his caressing of the D-flat Nocturne, Opus 27, rivaled the loving and practiced ministrations of colleagues three times his age. His way with the B-minor Sonata had spontaneity and affection and, most of all, speed—but quickness with sense; at any tempo, his pianistic speech keeps its dignity and logic.

Saving Haydn's C-major Sonata, Hob. XVI:48, for the second half gave it pride of place; its many beauties were not wasted on a warm-up spot. Prokofiev's ubiquitous Seventh Sonata had freshness, kaleidoscopic emotions and, in the finale, breathtaking speed.

At the end, encores were forthcoming: a touching revival of "October" from Tchaikovsky's "The Seasons," and one of the "Visions Fugitives" by Prokofiev.

Heart of virtuoso beats in young player

By PAUL SWEITZER

Sun Correspondent

Watch out, world! There's a young giant out there and he's going to make some noise!

In fact, 21-year-old Russian pianist Alex Slobodyanik is already making beautiful noise.

Slobodyanik joined conductor Harold Weller and the Flagstaff Symphony Wednesday to play perhaps the most transfixing piano performance here in two decades with an expressive reading of Frederic Chopin's second concerto.

Weller and the orchestra also did their part to make the evening memorable with a performance of the big ballet suite "Romeo and Juliet" by Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev, one of their best efforts of recent seasons.

Typical of the overall quality of the performance was the excellent work in the suite's final movement by the string section, a moment of musical refinement heartwrenchingly beautiful to hear.

But it was Slobodyanik and his enormous talent that made the night unforgettable for a near-capacity crowd in Northern Arizona University's Ardrey Memorial Auditorium. For here was a young talent that was exciting and moving and only beginning to achieve fulfillment of his promise.

Given a decade, there might not be a hall big enough to hold his talent. Given two decades, this young pianist will call the world his stage.

A review

After an entrance that portrayed a somewhat awkward, perhaps bumptious youth, Slobodyanik settled at the keyboard and played a performance of the Chopin that captured every nuance of the work.

He made the piece stirring, assertive and beautiful. He captured the essence of the beauty of Chopin particularly in the second movement when his playing seemed as if it were a soft, late afternoon sun bathing a tranquil world in pastel light.

It was all accomplished with a technique that is glass-smooth, but never sterile and with a musical judgment mature far beyond the young man's years. And there beats in the artist's chest a virtuoso's heart of enormous size.

All the time as you listened, you knew here was someone special who is marvelous to hear now and who should stand head and shoulders over his keyboard brethren by the time he is 30 or 35 and certainly by the time he is 40.

You also thought, with joy, that somewhere out there is the spirit of the great Arthur Schnitke, whose death in 1982 stilled perhaps the greatest virtuoso piano talent of the century. And now, perhaps, that spirit and talent have come back in the technique, the huge, gifted hands, the innate musicianship and the great heart of this beautifully talented boy.

The Washington Post

Finding His Forte

By Tim Page
Washington Post Staff Writer

Monday, December 10, 2001; Page C01

The Kirov Orchestra's Saturday afternoon program at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall, under the direction of Valery Gergiev, flew in the face of received wisdom. Instead of touting his versatility by offering a smorgasbord of musical styles, Gergiev selected four defiantly Russian works, all of them begun or completed within a dozen years of one another. Instead of striving for smoothly cosmopolitan ensemble playing, à la the Cleveland Orchestra or Vienna Philharmonic, Gergiev encouraged hurtling tempos and vast, raw crescendos, pitting section against section as if they were bands of gladiators. If the international music world sometimes calls to mind an elite, inbred garden party, peopled exclusively with graduates from the best European and American conservatories, Gergiev and his forces, from the wilds of St. Petersburg, are the proud, fierce invaders at the gate.

I don't think I've ever heard a louder orchestra -- in fact, some of the playing simply overwhelmed the Concert Hall, and took on a glaring and undifferentiated harshness. But the most exciting performance of the afternoon may well have been the first one, a rendition of Anatoly Liadov's "The Enchanted Lake" that never went above a mild mezzo-forte and was mostly much quieter than that, yet quivered with electric tension throughout. The playing had the same lustrous, textured, deeply mysterious sheen one can discern through the hiss and crackle of Leopold Stokowski's early recordings with the Philadelphia Orchestra.

It wasn't until the middle of the opening "Allegro vivace" of Serge Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 4 that we heard the orchestra in full cry. The soloist was Alex Slobodyanik, who has the rare ability to project a huge, ringing piano tone above 100 players and to the farthest recesses of the Concert Hall without ever resorting to pounding. He brought surpassing tenderness to the central "Largo" and loosed Niagaras of octaves in the final movement. Why isn't this piece presented more often? It may not have the big Hollywood tunes of the second concerto, but seems an infinitely tighter and more interesting work than the fabled "Rach Three," particularly when played with such dazzle and assurance.

Reading through early critical commentary on Alexander Scriabin's "Poem of Ecstasy" can make for an amusing afternoon. There is much high-minded talk of mystical exaltation, of the spirit's nobility, of the unconquerable will of Man and so forth.

Even the Washington Performing Arts Society's program notes referred to the "Poem" as a parable of "the free man who has come forth from doubt and challenge [to assert] himself in inspired energy."

All very well and good, but quite peripheral to Scriabin's central purpose in the "Poem of Ecstasy" -- which is nothing more or less than the most realistic evocation of sexual climax in the orchestral repertory, complete with a full minute of convulsive spasms that are as graphic as they are incandescent.

The Kirov's interpretation, with its brilliant and delirious trumpet solos, eagerly welling strings and unflagging urgency of purpose, bordered deliciously on the pornographic, as will any "Poem of Ecstasy" worth its salt.

The afternoon closed with a complete performance of Stravinsky's "Firebird." Wisely, Gergiev opted to look backward toward the music of Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov for context, rather than ahead to the more radical works of Stravinsky, which were around a corner that had not yet been turned. He emphasized the folkish, purely Russian aspects of this great ballet rather than its nascent modernism, which would soon sweep (and, for better and worse, help homogenize) the creative world. The result was a spacious, elemental reading possessed of panoramic scope and a strange and radiant innocence.

I've heard Gergiev called a "provincial" artist. Maybe, but the fact that his musicmaking is so deeply rooted in a very definite part of the world may be among the reasons it is so distinct and immediate, so identifiably his.

I'm still not sure I'd trust Gergiev in Mozart, but I can't think of any present-day conductor I'd rather listen to in the repertory the Kirov played this weekend.

TIMES ONLINE

First Night reviews

LONDON

April 24, 2003

Philharmonia/Gergiev

By JOHN ALLISON

Concert
Festival Hall

★★★★★

SOMETIMES Valery Gergiev conducts like a man in a rush. This time he was. With a late-night plane to Moscow to catch and a meeting with President Putin in the diary — politicians and artists take each other more seriously in Russia than here — he may even have wished that he wasn't scheduled to conduct Shostakovich's longest symphony, the Seventh. But that was not how it sounded in the second half of his extraordinary concert with the Philharmonia: it had urgency, yes, but that is no bad thing in such an unwieldy yet potentially shattering work.

Subtitled the "Leningrad", this is a symphony inspired by the wartime siege of that city but also a wider-ranging meditation on the horrors of repression and war. What could be more topical? This interpretation brooded less than usual and went straight to the heart of the matter in a striving opening, though Gergiev made space for the first great melody, a slowly uncoiling tune on the oboe, beautifully played. When the menacing march began it was barely audible, such was the control that Gergiev obtained from the players.

Indeed, every accent was unanimously in place here, and even in the midst of the terrifying din Gergiev managed to highlight carefully calculated detail that normally gets lost. The middle movements had haunting, bittersweet emotionalism, and in this performance the titanic struggles of the finale were no less titanic than usual, but perhaps less laborious.

There was no hanging about, either, in Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, an old warhorse given a newly refreshing account. The young pianist Alex Slobodyanik was a late replacement for Arcadi Volodos, and, with a dazzling performance such as his, few could have missed the originally announced soloist.

Gergiev drove the piece hard, but Slobodyanik had the technical steel to match him, and nobody neglected the lush outpourings of the slow variations. Again, there were details to admire anew, from the evocation of tolling bells in the piano's thick chords to cross rhythms reinforced by an assertive timpanist. Slobodyanik has the virtuosity and heart to be a natural in this music, so it was a pity there was no time for an encore.

In the Rachmaninov the Philharmonia had played with brittle attack yet also depth, but in Baïakirev's *Overture on Russian Themes* there was a richness and warmth. This may be a pot-pourri of a piece, but Gergiev and these players elevated it.

ALEX SLOBODYANIK

TEMPO

THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

MONDAY, JUNE 10, 1996 C5

CSO gets program half right at Riverbend

BY KEITH MORRIS
Enquirer contributor

In spite of ubiquitous weekend rain, smiles and cheers were commonplace Saturday, as the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra continued the opening weekend of its 1996 Riverbend summer season.

Coming off a dynamite Friday concert that featured young cellist Han-Na Chang, the CSO and 21-year-old pianist Alex Slobodyanik brought the 1,753 in attendance to their feet, further strengthening the standing of the CSO's "Catch a Rising Star" summer concerts' theme.

Mr. Slobodyanik's aggressive, dashing performance of Prokof-

CONCERT REVIEW

iev's *Concerto No. 3 for Piano and Orchestra* was filled with contrast and bravura, all wrapped with a youthful flair that kept Maestro Jesus Lopez-Cobos and the CSO on their toes. Tempos were rapid as passages of running scales leapt from Mr. Slobodyanik's piano in the opening allegro, while more subtle, silken melodies in the middle andantino were gracefully exchanged from piano to orchestra. As Mr. Slobodyanik filled the final cadential phrases with racing parallel themes in left and right hands, the tension built to a tremendously satisfying conclusion.

Earlier, in John Corigliano's modern but approachable *Gazebo Dances*, the CSO delivered some pleasing contrasts of its own, with especially fine playing from the cellos and basses in the closing tarantella deserving recognition. A delightful set of dances scored with a variety of contemporary compositional techniques, Corigliano's music has a way of communicating effectively without much of the baggage associated with many modern works. While the harmonies and orchestrations are at times dissonant and very modern, the basic rhythmic glue has an infectious quality that makes the *Gazebo Dances* seem somehow familiar.

In the concert's second half, the CSO could not live up to the standard set earlier. Unable to put together a consistent sequence of quality solo presentations of the recurrent theme, Ravel's *Bolero* wound up being less than it should have been. The humid night air may be to blame for evident problems in intonation, humidity can not account for missed notes in the low brass that held back this brash but ultimately bland reading.

Bizet's *Carmen Suite* fared better, with nice sustained trumpet lines in the Act I "Children's Chorus" and a very attractive rendering of the Act III Intermezzo including beautiful phrases from flute and harp.

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Chopin Schumann

Chopin Sonata for Piano No 3, Op. 58. 16 Polonaises - No. 6 in A flat, Op. 53, 'Heroic' **Schumann** Kinderszenen, Op. 15. Papillons, Op. 2.

Alex Slobodyanik *pf*

EMI CD Ⓟ **573500-2 (69 minutes : DDD)**



Bryce Morrison

Some of the most engaging Papillons on record and a mesmerising Chopin Third Sonata - too good to be true at budget-price

Faced with a debut recital of this quality, the critic can only retreat into a catalogue of superlatives. Alex Slobodyanik (the son of Alexander Slobodyanik, a celebrated pianist of the '60s and '70s) is Russian-born but American-based and the possessor of a truly prodigious talent. His Schumann Papillons are among the most engaging on record, delicate and piquant in No 4, immaculately virtuosic in No 6 and with the sort of haunting nuance and cantabile in No 7 that usually only comes later in a pianist's career. Rarely has carnival night (the coda) died away more magically, its gaiety lost in a mist of distant chimes, while Slobodyanik's Kinderszenen shows a no less breathtaking rapport with Schumann's poetry. His 'Dreaming' (made very much the nodal and expressive centre of the cycle) is memorable, while 'Child Falling Asleep' evolves into a lullaby of exquisite joy and pain, of childhood revisited through adult eyes and perceptions.

Chopin's Third Sonata begins more flamboyantly, if no less poetically, with a fierce thrust that is hardly maestoso, yet contains such zest and ardour that one listens as if mesmerised. There is no repeat (I have always doubted the authenticity of the first-movement repeats in either of the mature sonatas) and, throughout, some of Chopin's most richly ornate pages are allowed to blossom and expand in glorious profusion (the reverse of the gaunt and death-haunted Second Sonata). Again, there is absolutely no sense of the studio, but rather of live and immediate responses caught, as it were, on the wing. Only a touch of diffidence mars the A flat Polonaise (whose heroic grandeur used to send Rubinstein's audiences reeling into the night, ecstatic and overwhelmed), yet even here the playing reveals the most exceptional refinement and musicianship. The English-based recordings are virtually ideal and, overall, this is a debut of debuts.

Bryce Morrison

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Listener™

HI-FI & MUSIC REVIEW

JULY/AUGUST 2002

Frederic Chopin and Robert Schumann: Chopin and Schumann—Piano Music: Chopin: Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58, and Polonaise No. 6, Op. 53; Schumann: Papillons, Op. 2, and Kinderszenen, Op. 15, Alex Slobodyanik, piano, EMI 5 73500 2

This album is one of EMI Classics' "Debut" series consisting of about 40 up-and-coming young talents ranging from vocal to violin, organ, and chamber groups. Of the seven or so pianists in the series, including some impressive debuts by Jonathan Gilad, Nelson Goerner, and the technical wizardry of Konstantin Scherbakov, Alex Slobodyanik stands out principally because of the profoundly musical quality of his playing. He is the son of one of Russia's great virtuosos, Alexander Slobodyanik, who now lives in the United States, joining other great Russian pianists and teachers like Vladimir Feltsman, Alexander Toradze, and Vladimir Viardo, all of whom have important academic appointments in America. Alex's mother, Natalia, was his first teacher in Russia; his American teachers include Nina Svetlanova and, since 1985, Sergei Babayan at the Cleveland Institute of Music. [If you recall, I interviewed Mr. Babayan a few years ago, in Vol. 5, No. 4.]

I recently heard this young man perform the formidable Rachmaninov *Fourth Piano Concerto* at Carnegie Hall with Valery Gergiev and the Kirov Orchestra, and I was swept away by Slobodyanik's stunning performance; he made the *Concerto's* technical challenges seem like child's play. It was one of the most musically satisfying performances of that knotty piece I've heard. Every once in a while you encounter piano playing that is thoughtful, unaffected, egoless, modest, and totally at the service of the music. I have never heard Schumann's *Papillons* performed with such unsentimental richness. Mr. Slobodyanik never strives after technical effects, although it is quite clear that he could if he

so chose. His playing allows the listener to be deeply moved by Schumann's music rather than by his performance of Schumann's music. In this way he reminded me very much of Sviatoslav Richter's similar ability to remove his ego from the music—or so it seemed. In Schumann's *Kinderszenen*, I thought of Annie Fischer's way of simplifying the work to reveal its inherent beauty, and I found myself admiring both Fischer's and Slobodyanik's refusals to "enhance" the piece by being "expressive" or trying to beautify it. I do not mean to suggest that Mr. Slobodyanik is in any way imitative of either Richter or Fischer. His playing is utterly unadorned and, thus, unaffected. That's what makes it so moving and compelling.

When I listened to his masterful performance of one of the repertoire's most demanding pieces, Chopin's *Third Sonata*, I marveled at the burnished tone he pro-

duced, especially in the sublime Largo. He, as few other pianists, can sail a phrase above the fray and let it shimmer in visionary splendor, somewhat the way Richter does in his recordings of some early Schubert sonatas or Beethoven's *Andante favori in F*. However, Mr. Slobodyanik does permit his considerable virtuosity to gradually emerge, rightfully so, in the last movement of the Chopin *B minor Sonata*; his thundering bass and the dramatic sweep of the concluding passages will leave you breathless and spent, yet wanting more.

I am not the only reviewer deeply moved by this recording. The critic for *Gramophone* called it "a debut of debuts," and I could not agree more. I hope that EMI will give us more recordings from this uniquely gifted artist. How about a recording of the Rachmaninov *Fourth Piano Concerto* with Gergiev and the glorious Kirov Orchestra...?

—Patrick Meenan



Printed in the USA

Classical-Music.com Review

Chopin, Schumann: Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor; Polonaise in A flat, Op. 53

20 January 2012 - 2:21pm

COMPOSER(S): Chopin, Schumann

WORKS: Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor; Polonaise in A flat, Op. 53

PERFORMER: Alex Slobodyanik (piano)

LABEL: EMI Debut

CATALOGUE NUMBER: CDZ 5 73500 2

PERFORMANCE: * * * * * (5 stars) SOUND: * * * * (4 stars)

For a musician, 'cultivated' can be a double-edged compliment. There's an implication of detachment – that the player is holding the music at arm's length rather than allowing himself to become personally involved. But young Russian Alex Slobodyanik is a pianist who combines cultivation with deep feeling. The slow movement of the Chopin B minor Sonata is both ravishingly refined and intimately expressive – this is playing that compels admiration, but at the same time you feel the music is telling you something. At 24, Slobodyanik is already master of the smooth, singing legato. There are no hard or sharp edges. Perhaps that isn't always a virtue. I could have done with just a little of Martha Argerich's devilish, incisive brilliance (as in her stupendous 1967 DG recording) in the Sonata's finale. But the A flat Polonaise is an unqualified triumph, an epic performance – such a world of color and emotion seems to be concentrated into a mere six-and-a-half minutes. By contrast, Slobodyanik's Schumann is sometimes strangely withdrawn. His technical command is extraordinary – as for instance in the famous 'disappearing' chord at the end of Papillons (starting at the bottom, the notes fall silent one by one). But he doesn't quite have the measure of Schumann's subtle or quirky humor; no one understood that better than Alfred Cortot, whose classic Kinderszenen is available in an excellently transferred two-CD Music and Arts set. But Slobodyanik's Schumann can still be moving, not least in the final movement of Kinderszenen, 'The Poet Speaks' – speak he certainly does. Altogether an impressive debut.

-Stephen Johnson

ALEX SLOBODYANIK

Classic CD

May 2000

CHOPIN

**Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor,
Op. 58 (1844); Polonaise No. 6 in
A flat, Op. 53**

SCHUMANN

**Papillons, Op. 2 (1829-31);
Kinderszenen, Op. 15 (1838)**

● Alex Slobodyanik (piano)

● *EMI Classics Debut CDZ 5 73500*

2 ● 69:00 DDD

Having heard his playing here, it seems almost inconceivable that Slobodyanik could do a single unmusical or unpianistic thing. He's a true master of his instrument, who brings to his playing of the arch-romantic Schumann a classical sense of proportion and an exceptional gift for characterisation which never comes close to caricature. Nothing is exaggerated, yet there's no trace of inhibition, and the rapid mood-changes are handled with exemplary judgement and apparent ease.

In his Chopin, however, for all its impeccable artistry, I feel a want of that underlying violence which Schumann, in his description of Chopin's overtly nationalist pieces (the polonaises and mazurkas in particular), characterised as "guns buried in flowers". I find too little here of the tragic element in Chopin, and the B minor Sonata, for all its many virtues, also seems to me to underplay the dramatic stature of this supposed "miniaturist". Nevertheless, a very auspicious debut indeed.

Jeremy Siepmann

Performance	★★★★
Sound	Ⓞ Ⓞ Ⓞ Ⓞ Ⓞ
Price	EE
Verdict	Splendidly promising debut of a real artist
Alternatives	<i>Chopin Sonata 3 - Argerich (DG)</i>

The Columbus Dispatch

REVIEW**MUSIC REVIEW**

RUSSIAN ORCHESTRA POWERFUL, DELICATE, PRECISE

Wednesday, December 5, 2001
FEATURES - ACCENT & ARTS 06G

By Barbara Zuck
Dispatch Senior Critic

Columbus music lovers got a stunning musical glimpse of Imperial Russia under the Czars last night as the *Kirov Orchestra* performed an all-Russian program in the Capitol Theatre in the Riffe Center.

The acoustical properties of the hall garnered about as much interest as the orchestra and its famous conductor, Valery Gergiev. It's been many a moon since most concert-goers have heard a live classical program in this space.

Interestingly, all four works on the program predated the Soviet era, although this is probably not unexpected from an ensemble originally called the Russian Imperial Opera Orchestra.

The concert was presented by the Columbus Association for the Performing Arts, which also presented the Kirov/Gergiev local debut on its 1992-93 "Signature Series." Since that time, Gergiev has become unquestionably the hot property on the international music scene. As artistic and general director of the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Gergiev is widely regarded as the savior of both the Kirov Opera and *Kirov Orchestra*, both of which have suffered from the shrinking subsidies to arts institutions in the post-Soviet era.

As principal guest conductor of the Metropolitan Opera and principal conductor of the Rotterdam Philharmonic, Gergiev, obviously, has succeeded in rising to significant professional positions in enviable places.

Last night's performance demonstrated that Gergiev has succeeded on talent and musicianship in a field where promotions and big jobs too often go first to the politically astute.

His orchestra plays with brilliant precision, power and ensemble. Surely this maestro has a certain personal charm and flair on the podium, but he is not a showman first, a leader second. He is simply too attentive to the music-making for that.

The program opened with *The Enchanted Lake*, a work by Anatoly Liadov. Deliciously impressionistic, the delicately wrought piece conjured up images of a shimmering, icy lake in the deep Russian winter.

Two very big works followed. (Gergiev delayed intermission until after the third piece -- a wise move.)

Here is where some with sensitive ears may have had problems. Listeners seated on the main floor, as I was, were overwhelmed by sound, especially the piercing winds and brass in *Le poeme de l'extase* by Scriabin. (A subtheme last night was the cross-pollination of French and Russian cultures at the root of much of this music.)

Certainly the principal trumpet performed with incredible force and conviction; certainly one risked hearing impairment by the end.

Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 4 introduced young concert artist Alex Slobodyanik to Columbus. Working in tandem with the orchestra, almost as if he were an extension of it, Slobodyanik played with confidence, virtuosity and a clear-headed sense of direction.

The piece de resistance of the evening, however, was Stravinsky's *Firebird*, played in its entirety. This was revelatory music-making. Here was this well-known score as living theater, not as an exercise in orchestral splendor. Instruments became characters, with Gergiev masterfully organizing the storytelling.

It was a performance few American orchestras or conductors could possibly have delivered.

bzuck@dispatch.com

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November 20, 1993

Classical Music in Review

By BERNARD HOLLAND

Alex Slobodyanik Pianist 92d Street Y

At 18, with a dashing piano technique and a distinguishable personality, Alex Slobodyanik fits the Young Concert Artists profile as well as any. The organization has been launching virtuoso careers for over 30 years, and Mr. Slobodyanik's recital at the 92d Street Y on Tuesday identified him as someone eminently launchable.

Debut concerts, by nature, offer incomplete information. Except in rare instances, they are about musicians more than music. Two facts about this performer seemed sure: his warm, clear, unforced piano sound and a fearless, freewheeling musical personality. Not everything works. Mr. Slobodyanik's emphatic hesitations are intended as dramatic breaths but often stop momentum dead in its tracks. Exaggeration, on the other hand, is the teen-ager's rightful property. It deserves encouragement. The over-the-top pounding at the end of Prokofiev's Seventh Sonata will need no further encouragement at all.

Mr. Slobodyanik's program could have come straight out of a cable television advertisement for Romantic pianism's greatest hits: Chopin's B-flat minor Scherzo and B-minor Sonata, Rachmaninoff's booming G-minor Prelude and the most popular of the Prokofiev piano sonatas. A lineup like this shows one of two things: the courage to challenge the untold thousands of performances that have come before or else a basic lack of musical curiosity. Mr. Slobodyanik's only venture into Classical style found him ill at ease. Haydn's wonderful silences in the C-Major Sonata (Hob. XVI:48) were clumsily handled. The elegant high spirits of the finale sounded hectic and lurching.

If this recital was simply a presentation of credentials, then it was a happy one. One admires Mr. Slobodyanik's skills and flair, and looks forward to his explorations of a larger musical life. If, on the other hand, his concert marks the first step toward a career based on crowd-wowing presentations of hit-parade virtuoso pieces, then this talented young man is going to find himself at the back of a very long line. The candidates are many and the opportunities up at the front are few. BERNARD HOLLAND

Russian majors

Yuri Temirkanov brings out heavyweight composers

By Alan C. Artner
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

When Yuri Temirkanov brought his St. Petersburg Philharmonic to Symphony Center last fall, he presented only a single work by a Russian composer, and a minor composer at that. So perhaps it was understandable his return to conduct the Chicago Symphony Orchestra on Friday night featured an entire program of Russian heavyweights.

Of all the living Soviet conductors who worked extensively in the West, Temirkanov has, in recordings and guest appearances, turned out to be one of the stronger custodians of Russian tradition. From Gennady Rozhdestvensky, another visitor this season, we'll get Richard Strauss, John Alden Carpenter and Alfred Schnittke. From Temirkanov, we got Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Peter Tchaikovsky and Sergei Rachmaninov.

Thirty years ago, a program with both Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto and Rachmaninov's Symphonic Dances would have been a pop concert. But today subscription audiences apparently are hungry for that sort of thing, and if so, there are few better ways to give satisfaction than to engage a veteran with the stature of Temirkanov.

In the one novelty, the 5-minute Prelude from Rimsky-Korsakov's opera, "The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh," Temirkanov elicited playing of some atmosphere and delicacy. In the showpieces, he pressed forward consistently, leaving little opportunity for the *tenuto* excesses that once marred his interpretations.

The biggest surprise came in the Rachmaninov. Tapes survive of Temirkanov's 1988 CSO debut at Ravinia, which also held a performance of the Symphonic Dances that was individual in the extreme. Friday's account was straighter and cleaner but still not deeply moving. Without exaggerating the hard, bright modernity of the scoring, Temirkanov seldom went beyond it to Rachmaninov's darker, even tortured, emotional program.



Conductor Yuri Temirkanov returns to Chicago with an all-Russian program.

Classical review

Such probity came more from Alex Slobodvanik in the Tchaikovsky. Whenever free from Temirkanov's urging, the young pianist mused and deliberated to relieve any hint of the perfunctory. Even the most mechanical passagework seemed rethought to fit into a fresh view of the kaleidoscope, as if always seeking to deepen the expressive colors.

With a less propulsive accompaniment, the conception might have sprawled, but that did not happen. Temirkanov's tight rein saved Slobodvanik from too many good intentions, making for one of the happier CSO debuts in recent seasons.

A bit of comedy is also worth mention, given the debate over Symphony Center acoustics. Between the first and second Rachmaninov dances, a nose blown in the upper balcony registered with such force throughout the hall as to cause laughter and applause, sure signs sound in the room is not what it should be.

The program will be repeated at 8 p.m. Saturday, 3 p.m. Sunday and 7:30 p.m. Tuesday. Phone: 312-294-3000.

REVIEWS AND NEWS

MUSIC REVIEW

A Defining Maverick Shows Up

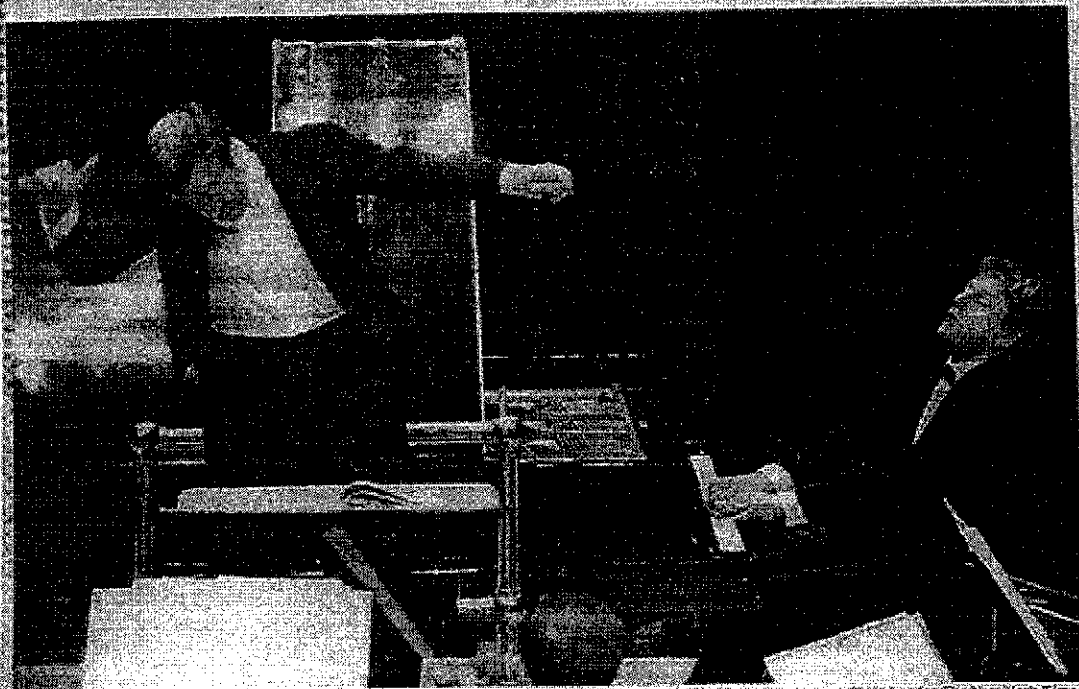
By BERNARD HOLLAND

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 16 — If San Francisco Symphony's Maverick series could never be fully defined without the appearance of Henri Brant, so he showed up in Davitt Hall here on Saturday night ready to cause more trouble. Eighty-nine years old, exceedingly small but very much on his feet, his white t and tails accessorized by a pok dealer's visor, Mr. Brant bange away at the organ as Michael Faust Thomas and the orchestra brought stunned and happy audience "Ice Field," written for San Francisco and scored for just about everything you could think of.

Mr. Brant has made a long career of "spatial" music. A lot of it has been meant for the outdoors, with various war parties stationed at fe flung positions and calling over various distances to one another. It Brant aesthetic, when brought und a roof, shrinks to a form of encl ment. Here the audience, clustered receives incoming fire from eve direction. From one balcony ba drufas jar the bones, from another jazz drum set bristles with enery. The double reeds operate from a hind the stage. Brass players lay heavy fire from their positions.

"Ice Field" lies somewhere between precision planning and ctrolled chaos, a mixture of smt bombs and dumb ones. Things happen regularly but never in quite the same way at every performance. Brant's organ chords and manic pi sagework seem to cut each new slaughter, and an audience more familiar with classical music order a civility offered little resistance. Perhaps they were accepting Brant's unspoken premise that on the streets these days it is not tamed and that we better find beat in what we have.

"Maverick" is both the eort and questionable description of a ries honoring iconoclast rang from Couperin Bouvarrou to Mori Friedman. According to the dictionary, the first maverick was a And a lot more things were said on Dec.



Chris Lee for The New York Times

Valery Gergiev conducting the Kirov Orchestra with the pianist Alex Siobodyanik at Carnegie Hall.

MUSIC REVIEW

Fleet Fingers of Pianist and Conductor

By PAUL GRIFFITHS

After each of their first two concerts at Carnegie Hall last week, on Thursday and Friday, the Kirov Orchestra and Valery Gergiev had their audience leaving exhilarated and entranced. But the listeners left only after demanding, and getting, two or three encores to add to what had already been long programs.

Everything was rich, deep pleasure. So much was happening, even — or especially — in music one thought one knew every note of. Rachmaninoff's Paganini Rhapsody was full of unsuspected incident, especially in the interplay of the piano with individual players and small groups in the orchestra.

A lot of the credit has to go to the piano soloist, Vladimir Feltsman, who was phenomenally alert and dexterous, brilliant in color, neat in shaping, exact at high speed and all the time utterly relaxed, as if he would let his fingers just get along with the job by themselves. But it was with strong comparison, too, by

That musical muscle was there again in the same composer's Second Symphony, which is big tune practically from beginning to end. It was as if the melodies were now being heard at last in 3-D with a superb sense of dynamic shading and color modulation to let their constituent phrases and motifs rise, swell, urge forward and re-

Two concerts, mostly Rachmaninoff.

lapse. And again all the fine detail was there. When the strings handed over the melody to the glorious solo clarinet in the slow movement, for example, they stayed alive and active, swirling around the main line like a cloud of stars.

Mr. Gergiev encourages such fully musical playing partly by the total intensity of his presence in

also look rough. And sometimes he seems to be doing very little at all, other than fizzing at his finger ends.

Yet the sound speaks of extraordinary unanimity in its strength and its constantly changing subtleties of volume, tone, balance and sway. Some of this must be magic at work, some of it experience: Mr. Gergiev has been principal conductor of this orchestra since 1988, and he spends a lot of time with his players in St. Petersburg and on tour.

The Paganini Rhapsody and the Second Symphony were heard in Friday's all-Rachmaninoff concert, which began with "The Isle of the Dead," and there had been more Rachmaninoff the day before: the seldom-played Fourth Piano Concerto with Alex Siobodyanik the expert soloist (though the orchestra here was too loud). Also on this earlier program were wonderful performances of Liszt's "Enchanted Lake" (revealed as a gorgeous tone poem with beautiful woodwind playing and an astonishingly long-drawn-out finale) and Liszt's "Consolation."

Moscow Philharmonic a real treat

By WILLIAM FURTWANGLER
 Post and Courier reviewer

Wednesday evening's concert by the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra at Gaillard Auditorium pulled out all the stops, with spectacular performances of some of the best

REVIEW

musical creations from the era of Russian romanticism.

A packed audience thrilled to these works seldom heard live, yet familiar from recordings, adaptations and cribbing by Hollywood composers.

This in no way diminished the effect of this Charleston Concert Association presentation, which evoked spontaneous applause between movements and several standing ovations.

Anatoly Lyadov's tone poem "The Enchanted Lake" opened with Music Director Yuri Simonov drawing breathtaking sounds from the orchestra.

Reminiscent of Debussy, Faure and Ravel, this small-scale picture was vividly colorful and impressionistic.

Building on this auspicious opening, 24-year-old Russian pianist Alex Slobodyanik tackled the hair-raising and finger-busting Third Piano Concerto by Sergei Prokofiev.

Simonov and his orchestra created as exciting a musical backdrop as could be imagined to the pianist's athleticism. Russian music performed by Russians in this manner is as close as you can get to the original.

Alexander Borodin figured prominently with two works: his "Second Symphony" and the "Polovtsian Dances" from his opera "Prince Igor." Here Simonov drew out the plush liquid beauty of Borodin's melodies and drove home the aggressive barbarism lurking nearby.

The Borodin "Dances" caused a definite audience stir, because this music is familiar to older American audiences. Their main melodies and other Borodin tunes were used in the Broadway musical "Kismet" of half a century ago.

Simonov never shied away from variations in tempo and dynamics. The orchestra responded to every nuance of the music and left no doubt that it is a world-class en-

semble.

Simonov offered three encores following a lengthy standing ovation: "Baba Yaga," another miniature by Lyadov, this time about a witch; and two by Prokofiev, a

waltz from the ballet "Cinderella" and the famous march from the "Lt. Kije" suite.

The virtuosity and versatility was extraordinary right up to the end.