



# The Alexander Siloti Collection

*By Alexander Siloti*

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## The Alexander Siloti Collection By Alexander Siloti

One of the least known of the great Russian pianists of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, Alexander Siloti

(1863-1945) was one of the most influential and progressive. As a concert promoter, he introduced the music of dozens of composers to the Russian public in the famous Siloti Concerts of 1903-1917, including Albeniz, Debussy, de Falla, Delius, Elgar, Enesco, Mahler and Schoenberg.

A student of Liszt (and one of the teachers of Rachmaninoff), Siloti is a central figure in the development of the great age of the piano virtuoso. As with many of his colleagues, transcribing and arranging existing music for the piano was a major part of Siloti's activity, and since he made no recordings, his published transcriptions are one of the few existing keys we have to his musical taste and philosophy.

In an extended biographical essay, Dr. Charles Barber explores this issue and writes cogently about the style and influence of this remarkable man. The Alexander Siloti Collection is dominated by Siloti's remarkable transcriptions and arrangements of the music of J.S. Bach, notable particularly for their pianistic character and faithfulness to the unique "genetic code of Bach's design."

Some of the Bach works included are: Prelude in B Minor, BWV 855a, Gigue from Suite in Bb Major, Chaconne in D Minor, the Organ Preludes in E Minor and G Minor and the Celebrated Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 565.

Music by Gluck, Mozart and Chopin is also contained in this generous compilation of pianistic wizardry.

This addition to the Master's Collection is likely to be one of the most talked about piano folios of the year.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

"Alexander Siloti (1863-1945), one of Russia's prize pianists, studied with Tchaikovsky, Nikolai, Rubinstein, and Liszt; and he taught Rachmaninoff. As a conductor, accompanist, impresario, and mentor, Siloti led a musical generation in St. Petersburg, discovering such talents as Casals, Sibelius, Hofmann, Scriabin, Glazunov, Ysaye, and others. The introductory notes by Charles Barber state that Siloti created a vast collection of transcriptions and arrangements for keyboard in the 19th-century Romantic tradition. His transcriptions of Bach are notable and range from 'Prelude in B Minor' from *Clavier Buchlein fur Wilhelm and Friedemann Bach*, 'Chaconne in D Minor,' 'Andante' from *Sonata for Violin Solo in A Minor*, "Siciliano" from *Sonata for Flute and Keyboard in Eb Major*, and the "Organ Prelude in G Minor." Additional composers represented include Mozart, Chopin, Liszt, Rachmaninoff, Rimsky-Korsakov, Liadov, Strauss, and others. This collection would be a good addition to any teaching library." --Clavier, October 2004

### **About the Author**

Alexander Siloti

### **The Prize Student of Liszt and Teacher of Rachmaninoff**

If all that could be said about Alexander Siloti (1863-1945) was that he was a prize student of Liszt and teacher of Rachmaninoff, that would be enough to stake claim for him in music history. But in fact, Siloti was, perhaps, as gifted a pianist as Russia has ever produced.

He was a student of Tchaikovsky, of Nikolai and Anton Rubinstein, Hubert, and Taneyev. At Weimar he studied with Franz Liszt who nicknamed him 'Silotissimus' in honor of his extraordinary keyboard skills.

For years, he concertized across Russia, Europe, and America, and earned stunning reviews. He and Tchaikovsky toured Europe together; taking turns conducting and playing Tchaikovsky's first and second piano concerti. Two decades later, he and Rachmaninoff would do the same with the latter's new compositions. Siloti also often performed in recital with such artists as Casals, Ysaye, and Chaliapin. Such was Siloti's stature as a pianist that Liszt, Stravinsky, Godowsky, Arensky, and Rachmaninoff dedicated new music to him.

Besides being a premier pianist, Siloti was also an accomplished conductor, impresario, mentor, and leader of a whole musical generation.

In the Siloti Concerts of 1903–1917, based in St. Petersburg, he brought to his public such artists as Casals, Sibelius, Glazunov, Enesco, the Casadesus family, Josef Hofmann, Carl Flesch, Chaliapin, Scriabin, Ysaye and Prokofiev. In the same series, his guest conductors included Albert Coates, Mottl, Mengelberg, Nikisch, Arnold Schoenberg, Weingartner, and Rimsky-Korsakov.

In this remarkable series he presented first local performances of works by Albéniz, Debussy, de Falla, Delius, Elgar, Enesco, Franck, Grieg, Mahler, Prokofiev, Ravel, Schoenberg, and Richard Strauss. His world premieres included works by Arensky, Balakirev, Blumenfeld, Glazunov, Liadov, Rachmaninoff, Rimsky-Korsakov, Scriabin, Sibelius, Stravinsky, Taneyev, and Tchernepnin, among others.

Siloti had a remarkable gift for the discovery of new talent. Diaghilev first heard (and met) Stravinsky at a Siloti Concert, and the musical world was changed forever. With similar foresight, Siloti conducted Delius in

St. Petersburg before Beecham did in England.

Siloti's work as arranger, transcriber, and editor seemed to have been inspired by his years with Liszt. He studied Liszt's own transcriptions of Berlioz, Mozart, Rossini and Weber overtures, of the symphonies of Beethoven, and of the organ fugues of J.S. Bach.

Each of Siloti's transcriptions is wholly pianistic. With astounding ingenuity Siloti re-voices chords, redistributes pedal figures, re-casts melodic lines, provides exact fingerings which pianists ignore at their peril, offers unusual double-fingerings and "third-hand" mid-keyboard thumb lines so as to re-imagine counter melodies, and in all of this honors the grand nineteenth-century tradition of broad gesture and heightened effect.

Uncommonly for his era, Siloti was also capable of simply enchanting work in small forms and no better example of this rare gift may be found than in his Bach transcriptions which are models of their kind in rendering the composer's intentions.

This book is printed on quality acid-free, opaque paper with lasting covers. The book's pages are Smyth sewn bound for a lifetime permanency and will open up flat for easy use.

Introductory Notes by Dr. Charles Barber

## **Users Review**

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