



GRIEG

**Piano Concerto
in A minor**

SAINT-SAENS

Piano Concerto No. 2

LISZT

**Fantasia on Hungarian
Folk Themes**

Benno Moiseiwitsch

Hallé Orchestra

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Constant Lambert • Basil Cameron

Leslie Heward

Historical Recordings 1939 - 1947

Great Pianists • Benno Moiseiwitsch (1890-1963)

Grieg: Piano Concerto in A minor • Saint-Saëns: Piano Concerto No. 2

After hearing Moiseiwitsch at Carnegie Hall in the 1926-7 season, the pianist and writer Abram Chasins said to his friend the great pianist Josef Hofmann, "I think I have just heard your heir apparent." Hofmann's immediate reply was, "Ah, so you heard Moiseiwitsch. Now there's a natural pianist in the romantic tradition."

Benno Moiseiwitsch was born in Odessa in 1890. At nine he won the Anton Rubinstein prize and after being told by the Guildhall School of Music in London that they could teach him nothing, he went, at the age of fourteen, to Vienna where he studied with Leschetizky. At first Leschetizky told the young Benno that he could play better with his feet, but young Benno was undeterred and spent nearly two years in Vienna perfecting his art with the great teacher. His British début was in Reading in 1908 and his international career took him to every corner of the world.

It has been said that Moiseiwitsch worked too hard during his professional life and as a result his playing suffered. There is little evidence of this in his recordings but even in the 1920s he was frequently touring the world. To give some idea of his work-load, the following is part of his schedule in the mid 1920s. In January 1924 he played at the Queen's Hall in London having just returned from a tour of Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada. Further Queen's Hall concerts were given in April, June and September, the one in April consisting of Chopin's *Fantasia in F minor*, 24 *Preludes Op.28*, *Sonata in B flat minor* and the Liszt *Sonata in B minor*. Queen's Hall concerts were given in the same months of 1925, but he also toured Britain extensively, playing a huge number of concerts. The Queen's Hall concert of 26th September 1925 was followed immediately by appearances in Bath and Exeter. During November he played in Ryde, Guildford, Chester, Liverpool, the Queen's Hall on the 11th, Tunbridge Wells, Malvern, the Albert Hall on the 25th, Bradford, Liverpool, and

on the 31st, Alexandra Palace. The beginning of November saw him in Glasgow and Edinburgh and from the 7th to the 28th he toured Spain. On the 31st November he played in Croydon, and in December gave concerts in Eastbourne, Brighton, the Queen's Hall again on the 6th plus Woodford Green, Bournemouth and Dublin. January-April 1926 saw his fifth tour of the United States and Canada, from which he went directly on to tour South America from May to July reappearing at Queen's Hall on the 25th and 30th September with two different programmes. Incidentally, two days later Josef Hofmann gave a Wigmore Hall recital which included the *Fourth Sonata* of Scriabin, Balakirev's *Islamey* and *Three Chinese Pieces* by Abram Chasins. In 1928 Moiseiwitsch gave one London recital at the Wigmore Hall before making an extended tour of Australia, New Zealand, India and the Far East.

In 1937 Moiseiwitsch became a British citizen and during the Second World War again took upon himself a huge amount of work for the war effort in response to Mrs Churchill's broadcast appeal in November 1941 for the 'Aid to Russia' fund. Moiseiwitsch wrote her a letter: "I have been wondering in what way I could help. I know that any monetary contribution I could make would only amount to a small drop in the ocean; and since this cause cries out for a bigger effort, I would like to offer my humble services in the following way. If your organization can cope with a concert artist I would willingly offer a day a week, for the duration of the war, to give recitals – private or public – at any centre your organization, in conjunction with my managers, could arrange. I would require neither remuneration nor expense fees."

In December 1941 it was formally announced that Moiseiwitsch would give one recital each week during the war to help the fund, although the concerts seemed to be on consecutive days; Leeds on the 4th February 1942, Huddersfield on the 5th, Birmingham on the

11th and Nottingham on the 12th. The concert of 6th January at the Dorchester Hotel in London was postponed to the 26th and although a reviewer admired 'popular' works of Chopin, Debussy and the Brahms *Paganini Variations*, he found that during one of the two Beethoven Sonatas "Mr Moiseiwitsch's clockwork technique stumbled for a scarcely perceptible moment in the *Pathétique*." Moiseiwitsch's stamina must have been incredible for at the beginning of May he played Beethoven's *Third, Fourth and Fifth Concertos* at the Albert Hall in one programme (each with a different conductor), again for the 'Aid to Russia' fund. Concerts on the 6th, 7th, 8th, 11th, 12th, and 14th March 1943 must have contributed to fibrositis of the arms which led Moiseiwitsch to cancel a concert on the 15th. However, in June he played a tribute to Rachmaninov at the Albert Hall. In this taxing programme he played Rachmaninov's *Second Concerto, Third Concerto* and the *Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini* all conducted by Henry Wood, proceeds again going to the 'Aid to Russia' fund. During the war Moiseiwitsch raised nearly £10,000 for the cause.

Moiseiwitsch became a close friend of the Churchills and on a television broadcast of September 1958 he dedicated a performance of Chopin's *A flat Ballade* to them. In the same year, when appearing on the radio programme *Desert Island Discs* his first choice as one of his records to take to the imaginary island was a famous June 1940 speech of Churchill.

Right at the beginning of the War in November 1939 Moiseiwitsch recorded the Liszt *Hungarian Fantasy* at HMV's Abbey Road Studios. HMV had already recorded Liszt's pupil Arthur de Greef both acoustically and electrically in this work and were to record Solomon in the same work in what was to be one his greatest recordings in 1948. This must have been a congenial session for Moiseiwitsch and conductor

Constant Lambert, as all four sides were issued as first takes and second takes were made only to be kept in reserve. Although the sessions for the Liszt were made in London, by the time the Grieg *Concerto* was recorded in October 1941 the sessions were made out of London owing to bombing, although the Manchester location was not completely safe from air-raids. The Grieg *Concerto* was recorded just before Moiseiwitsch began giving his concerts for the 'Aid to Russia' fund and he receives excellent support from Manchester's Hallé Orchestra and Leslie Heward. The performance has many of the Moiseiwitsch traits – beautiful tone, elegance and an effortless virtuosity. In 1946 he was awarded the C.B.E. (Commander of the British Empire) no doubt for his services to the war effort as well as to music. During the war, in addition to his concert schedule and the 'Aid to Russia' concerts, Moiseiwitsch also appeared in a film about the London Philharmonic Orchestra, *Battle for Music* (1943) and took part in almost thirty recording sessions for HMV.

By 1947 the war was over and Moiseiwitsch must have been exhausted from so much performing and a court case brought by his manager in 1946 (for his failure to appear on the 15th March 1943). However, on 25th April he was back at HMV's Abbey Road studios to record the *G minor Concerto* of Saint-Saëns. Although he gives a performance that is always professional, it does not have the sparkle and *joie de vivre* of his pre-war recordings; indeed, a review of a 1948 recital states that "Mr Moiseiwitsch's playing seemed a little tired, but his liquid quiet tone has lost none of its beauty."

He played in public until his death in London in 1963 at the age of 73.

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Ward Marston

In 1997 Ward Marston was nominated for the Best Historical Album Grammy Award for his production work on BMG's Fritz Kreisler collection. According to the Chicago Tribune, Marston's name is 'synonymous with tender loving care to collectors of historical CDs'. Opera News calls his work 'revelatory', and Fanfare deems him 'miraculous'. In 1996 Ward Marston received the Gramophone award for Historical Vocal Recording of the Year, honouring his production and engineering work on Romophone's complete recordings of Lucrezia Bori. He also served as re-recording engineer for the Franklin Mint's Arturo Toscanini issue and BMG's Sergey Rachmaninov recordings, both winners of the Best Historical Album Grammy.

Born blind in 1952, Ward Marston has amassed tens of thousands of opera classical records over the past four decades. Following a stint in radio while a student at Williams College, he became well-known as a reissue producer in 1979, when he restored the earliest known stereo recording made by the Bell Telephone Laboratories in 1932.

In the past, Ward Marston has produced records for a number of major and specialist record companies. Now he is bringing his distinctive sonic vision to bear on works released on the Naxos Historical label. Ultimately his goal is to make the music he remasters sound as natural as possible and true to life by 'lifting the voices' off his old 78 rpm recordings. His aim is to promote the importance of preserving old recordings and make available the works of great musicians who need to be heard.



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ADD

GRIEG (1843-1907)

Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16

Benno Moiseiwitsch (1890-1963)

Hallé Orchestra • London Philharmonic Orchestra
Constant Lambert • Basil Cameron • Leslie Heward

Playing
Time
64:43

- | | | |
|----------|--|--------------|
| 1 | LISZT (1811-1886): Fantasia on Hungarian Folk Themes | 15:31 |
| | Recorded by HMV in Studio 1, Abbey Road, 3 November 1939 (Matrices 2EA 8139-1, 8140-1, 8141-1, 8142-1); catalogue C 3132-33 London Philharmonic Orchestra • Constant Lambert | |
| 2 | SAINT-SAËNS (1835-1921): Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor | 22:34 |
| | Andante sostenuto - Molto animato | 10:22 |
| | Allegro scherzando | 5:41 |
| | Presto | 6:31 |
| | Recorded by HMV in Studio 1, Abbey Road, 25 April 1947 (Matrices 2EA 11866-1, 11867-1, 11868-2, 11869-2, 11870-2, 11871-2); catalogue C 3588-90 London Philharmonic Orchestra • Basil Cameron | |
| 3 | GRIEG (1843-1907): Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16 | 26:37 |
| | Allegro molto moderato | 11:44 |
| | Adagio | 5:59 |
| | Allegro moderato molto e marcato | 8:54 |
| | Recorded by HMV in Houldsworth Hall, Manchester, 22-23 October 1941 (Matrices 2ER 566-3, 567-3, 568-1, 569-3, 570-1, 571-1, 572-3); catalogue C 3264-67 Hallé Orchestra • Leslie Heward | |

As an international virtuoso of the first order, Moiseiwitsch naturally included within his repertoire the great war-horses of the nineteenth century concerto, three outstanding examples of which are included on this fifth volume in the Moiseiwitsch series. As might be expected Moiseiwitsch gives a truly barnstorming account of Liszt's *Fantasia on Hungarian Folk Themes*. His fabulous touch and command of piano sonority is to the fore in his 1947 recording of the *Second Piano Concerto* of Saint-Saëns, inspired by the keyboard music of Bach. The Grieg Concerto, recorded in 1941, was incredibly popular during the Second World War with its powerful combination of defiant and romantic melodies. Moiseiwitsch played it extensively throughout the British Isles, and his interpretation was well known and well loved.

CP 05537

Archivist and Audio Restoration Producer: Ward Marston

With thanks to Raymond Edwards and Donald Manildi

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