



# NIKITA MNDOYANTS

SCHUMANN  
DAVIDSBÜNDLERTÄNZE

BEETHOVEN  
BAGATELLES, OP. 126

PROKOFIEV  
SARCASMS



STEINWAY & SONS

Coming from a family of professional musicians, **NIKITA MNDOYANTS** began to play piano and compose music at a very young age. He gave his first public recital at age eight, and recorded his first CD at age ten. In 1995 he entered the Central Music School in Moscow where he studied piano with Tamara Koloss. At the Moscow Tchaikovsky State Conservatory, he studied composition with Professor Alexander Tchaikovsky and piano with Professor Nikolay Petrov and Professor Alexander Mndoyants. Mr. Mndoyants won first prize at the 2016 Cleveland International Piano Competition, first prize at the 2007 Paderewsky International Piano Competition, and was a finalist at the 2013 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

As a composer, Mr. Mndoyants received first prize at the 2014 Myaskovsky International Competition of Composers (Moscow, Russia) and the 2016 Prokofiev International Competition of Composers (Sochi, Russia).

Mr. Mndoyants has toured in Asia, Europe, Russia, and the U.S. and appeared in major concert halls in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Paris, and Seoul. He has worked with renowned conductors including Bramwell Tovey, Leonard Slatkin, Eri Klas, Ignat Solzhenitsyn, Charles Ansbacher, and Alexander Sladkovsky. In chamber music he has performed with the Borodin, Brentano, Eben, Zemlinsky, and Szymanowsky Quartets. His chamber music partners include pianists Alexander Ghindin and Vyacheslav Gryaznov, violinists Andrej Bielow and Valeriy Sokolov, cellists Lev Sivkov, Evgeny Rumyantsev and clarinetist Patrick Messina.

His piano and chamber works are made available by publishing houses Composers, Muzyka, and Jurgenson, and have been performed by Alexander Vinnitsky, Alexander Rudin, Daniel Hope, Nicolas Stavy, the Szymanowski and Zemlinsky Quartets, Moscow State Symphony Orchestra,

The time honored cliché "Good things come in small packages" most decidedly applies to the three groups of works comprising this release. One usually thinks of Beethoven as a master architect who fashioned large forms out of the simplest and smallest base material. Yet the opposite holds true concerning his Bagatelles, where the music's brevity, economy and seeming simplicity of gesture usually imply a larger, more cosmic design than what appears on the surface of things. The composer told his publisher Schott that he considered his Op. 126 Bagatelles (his final piano pieces) "probably the best I've written." Although they often are performed separately, usually as encores, it is evident that Beethoven viewed the cycle as an entity in itself. Indeed, the American musicologist Lewis Lockwood pointed out how the key relationships between the pieces progress in a succession of descending major thirds. The music abounds with contrasts in dynamics and mood, and one can find fascinating parallels to other late-period Beethoven works; note, for, example No. 3's high-register melodic elaboration that evokes similar passages in the Op. 106 "Hammerklavier" slow movement, or how No. 2's elliptical phrases and petulant accents relate to the Op. 135 Quartet's motivic compression.

*Davidsbündlertänze* is arguably the most daring, creative and unified of Schumann's piano cycles. It certainly is his most personal. The "Davidsbünd" frequently comes up in Schumann's music criticism, and refers to an imagined army of musical progressives fighting conservatives. Similarly, Schumann alternately ascribes the cycle's eighteen pieces between his twin alter egos, the volatile, impulsive Florestan and the dreamy, poetic Eusebius. Composition began nearly a week after the composer's secret engagement to pianist Clara Wieck, with a main theme derived from a mazurka included in her own *Soirées Musicales* Op. 6. In a letter to Clara, Schumann said that these pieces were more urgently dedicated to her than anything else he had composed. He cited the music's "many wedding thoughts," and that the composition represented "an entire Polterabend," which is the German word for a wedding eve party where old crockery is smashed to ensure the newlyweds luck. Beneath the title, Schumann placed an old German proverb that translates: "Always and forever/delight and pain are linked/remain pious in delight/and bear pain with courage." These words certainly befit the music's rapid alterations from giddy joy to aching lyricism.



Although the keys of G Major and B Minor dominate, the fourteenth and fifteenth pieces detour into E-flat Major, while Schumann opts for C Major as the key of the wistful concluding waltz.

The piano miniature genre prevails throughout Prokofiev's early keyboard works, most of which typify the brash confidence, caustic humor and percussive undercurrents we normally associate with his approach to the piano. Written between 1912 and 1914, Prokofiev's five *Sarcasms* teem with character, vitality and experimentation. The opening piece, marked *Tempetoso*, might be described as an upbeat polytonal circus march with a surprise quiet ending. Acerbic arpeggiated gestures prevail in the second piece, while No. 3 features Prokofiev's stock-in-trade propulsive rhythms. The filigree in No. 4's high-register writing may strike some listeners as a foreshadowing of Olivier Messiaen's language, yet the strange repeated chords sequences toward the end are pure Prokofiev. The final piece begins in grand motoric style, contrasted by a central *Andantino* ostinato section. This leads into rumbling repeated chords that appear to be building momentum as they unfold, only to gradually dissipate into thin air.

— Jed Distler

# NIKITA MNDOYANTS

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at Steinway Hall, New York City

Producer: Jon Feidner

Engineer: Lauren Sturm | Editing: Kazumi Umeda

Mixing and Mastering: Daniel Shores

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Piano: Steinway Model D #519920 (Hamburg)

Piano Technician: Lauren Sturm

# NIKITA MNDOYANTS

Winner of the 2016 Cleveland International Piano Competition, Nikita Mndoyants debuts on the Steinway Label with an electric program. His performances are "flawlessly paced, beautifully detailed and emotionally powerful"  
(*Dallas Morning News*)

## LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN BAGATELLES FOR PIANO, OP. 126

1770 – 1827

- |                            |                     |                            |
|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 I. Andante con moto 3:01 | 3 III. Andante 2:41 | 5 V. Quasi allegretto 2:18 |
| 2 II. Allegro 2:47         | 4 IV. Presto 3:58   | 6 VI. Presto 4:01          |

## ROBERT SCHUMANN DAVIDSBÜNDLERTÄNZE, OP. 6

1810 – 1856

- |                        |                            |                                 |
|------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 7 I. Lebhaft 1:43      | 13 VII. Nicht schnell 4:15 | 19 XIII. Wild und lustig 2:51   |
| 8 II. Innig 1:23       | 14 VIII. Frisch 1:16       | 20 XIV. Zart und singend 2:26   |
| 9 III. Mit Humor 1:26  | 15 IX. Lebhaft 1:39        | 21 XV. Frisch 1:52              |
| 10 IV. Ungeduldig 0:49 | 16 X. Balladenmässig 1:38  | 22 XVI. Mit gutem Humor 1:31    |
| 11 V. Einfach 2:20     | 17 XI. Einfach 1:53        | 23 XVII. Wie aus der Ferne 3:42 |
| 12 VI. Sehr rasch 1:44 | 18 XII. Mit Humor 0:45     | 24 XVIII. Nicht schnell 1:58    |

## SERGEI PROKOFIEV SARCASMS

1891 – 1953

- |                            |                                  |                             |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 25 I. Tempestoso 2:12      | 27 III. Allegro precipitato 1:46 | 29 V. Precipitosissimo 3:12 |
| 26 II. Allegro rubato 1:20 | 28 IV. Smanioso 2:02             |                             |

PLAYING TIME: 64:41



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