The Life and Legacy of Samul Feinberg

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THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF SAMUIL FEINBERG

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DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this paper culminating my Doctorate of Musical Arts Degree to my family. The 3 M’s in my life: Momma, Meme and Marko and my dear wife Becky. Without your love, support and dedication I would not be who I am today. My wife Becky who has endlessly supported me and helped me along the way. My mother Marlene who gave me the gift of music and always says, “Just do it.” My grandmother Meme and grandfather Marko who helped raise me and teach me the essence of life.
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ABSTRACT

Samuil Feinberg (1899-1962), a modern day Liszt, has not been given the credit he deserves. Living under the Stalin Regime, he was neglected and repressed. This pianist, composer and pedagogue lived an artistic life that is worth studying and reviving. Heavily influenced compositionally by Scriabin, Feinberg played an important role in continuing the Russian revolutionary avant-garde style between 1915 and 1930. Feinberg went through two compositional periods, the first being a more virtuosic experimental style and the second a more conservative, contrapuntal and folk influenced style. Feinberg had a deep connection to Bach and transcribed many of his pieces in the romantic style. Feinberg’s own compositions are mainly for piano solo and also include several songs and three piano concertos.

Feinberg is regarded as one of the greatest Russian pianists of the 20th century, a man who never compromised his compositional style and intentions. Feinberg always stayed true to the text he was performing. His recordings are a testament to the “golden-age” style of playing also represented by Godowsky, Paderewski, Neuhaus and Rachmaninoff. The “Golden-Age” style of piano playing started from Paderewski at the end of the 19th century and continued until the mid 20th century. “Golden-Age” piano playing is characterized by the effects created at the piano by the great pianists of this time. The main features of “Golden-Age” pianists included a bel-canto singing style, tonal and timbre variety, virtuosity, melodic long lines, flexibility, improvisational style,
and rhythmic freedom. ¹ Feinberg’s contributions to the Russian piano school are immense, himself being a protégé to Goldenweiser at the Moscow Conservatory and later training future Russian pianists. Feinberg’s pedagogical legacy is also continued through his book “Pianism as Art”, which he requested to have published posthumously. Feinberg always stressed the importance of the organic connection between the artist and his art, never separating the two.

This paper focuses on Feinberg’s life, legacy, performance style, compositional style, and includes translated interviews/correspondence with and about Feinberg that give a clear impression of him and his pedagogical teachings. Multiple appendices with significant details regarding Feinberg are included. These include his extensive discography (both his performances of works of other composers and other performers recordings of his compositions), a catalog of works and sample concert programs. The author includes an analysis of material in the appendices; including Feinberg’s interviews, correspondence and pedagogical writings. Further analyses are included of Feinberg’s playing through his recordings. The author hopes that this discovery of Samuil Feinberg, the pianist, composer and pedagogue, will further aid his historical legacy and bring more attention to his music.

¹ Dubal, David. The Art of the Piano: Its Performers, Literature, and Recordings.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION ................................................................................................................... iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................................................... iv
ABSTRACT ......................................................................................................................... v
LIST OF EXAMPLES ....................................................................................................... ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ........................1
  Purpose of Study ........................................................................................................ 2
  Limitations of study ................................................................................................. 2
  Related Literature .................................................................................................... 3
  Methodology .............................................................................................................. 4
CHAPTER 2: LIFE AND PERFORMANCE STYLE ........................................................ 5
  Analysis of Feinberg’s playing through his recordings ........................................ 11
  Bach ....................................................................................................................... 12
  Beethoven .............................................................................................................. 16
  Chopin...................................................................................................................... 17
  Liszt.......................................................................................................................... 17
  Scriabin ..................................................................................................................... 18
  Compositional Style ............................................................................................... 18
CHAPTER 3: PEDAGOGICAL INFLUENCE, ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSLATED
  INTERVIEWS, PEDAGOGICAL WRITING ............................................................ 46
| Example 2.1 | Prelude Op.8 No.1, mm. 1-2 .................................................................19 |
| Example 2.2 | Prelude Op.8 No.2, mm. 1-4 .................................................................20 |
| Example 2.3 | Prelude Op.8 No.3, mm. 1-3 .................................................................21 |
| Example 2.4 | Prelude Op.8 No.3, mm. 18-19 ..............................................................22 |
| Example 2.5 | Prelude Op.8 No.4, mm. 1-9 .................................................................22 |
| Example 2.6 | Prelude Op.8 No.4, mm. 30-34 ...............................................................23 |
| Example 2.7 | Prelude Op.8 No.4, mm. 55-59 ...............................................................24 |
| Example 2.8 | Second Sonata Op.2, mm. 1-6 .................................................................25 |
| Example 2.9 | Third Sonata, Mvt.2, mm. 1-2 ...............................................................27 |
| Example 2.10 | Third Sonata, Mvt.3, 1st fugue theme, mm. 85-88 ............................27 |
| Example 2.11 | Third Sonata, Mvt.3, 2nd fugue theme, mm. 101-106 .......................28 |
| Example 2.12 | Third Sonata, Mvt.3, Non-thematic material mm. 124-128 ..........28 |
| Example 2.13 | Third Sonata, Mvt.3, Non-thematic material mm. 171-174 ..........29 |
| Example 2.14 | Liszt’s Dante Sonata, Opening Material, mm. 1-6 .......................30 |
| Example 2.15 | Sixth Sonata, Op.13, mm. 1-6 ...............................................................31 |
| Example 2.16 | Ending of Sixth Sonata, mm. 290-291 .............................................32 |
| Example 2.17 | Sonata No.12, Mvt.1, mm. 1-9 .........................................................34 |
| Example 2.18 | Sonata No.12, Mvt.2, mm. 1-4 .........................................................35 |
| Example 2.19 | Sonata No.12, Mvt.3, mm. 1-6 .........................................................36 |
| Example 2.20 | Sonata No.12, Mvt.3, mm. 31-34 ......................................................36 |
| Example 2.21 | Sonata No.12, Mvt.3, mm. 72-79 ......................................................37 |
| Example 2.22 | Lermontov Song, Op.28 No.4, mm. 1-2 | 38 |
| Example 2.23 | Bach’s Chorale Prelude BWV 659, mm. 1-14 | 40 |
| Example 2.24 | Feinberg’s transcription of Bach’s BWV 659, mm. 1-10 | 41 |
| Example 2.25 | Bach’s Chorale Prelude BWV 663, mm. 1-7 | 42 |
| Example 2.26 | Feinberg’s transcription of Bach’s BWV 663, mm. 1-12 | 43 |
| Example 2.27 | Feinberg’s transcription of Bach’s BWV 663, mm. 63-70 | 44 |
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Samuil Feinberg contributed greatly to the musical art through his compositions, recordings and teaching. He was an important exponent of the Russian Piano School and the traditions that it embodies. Descending from a lineage of famous musical pedagogues such as Goldenweiser, Pabst and Sokolov, Feinberg laid the foundation for future generations of pianists and composers. Feinberg’s music has considerable inherent value that is worth reviewing and which could enhance concert programs. The study of his music explains much about the foundations of Soviet culture and its consequent suppression and decline under Stalin’s rule. Due to Feinberg’s misfortune of living during Stalin’s regime and partly due to the many famous composers working in Russia at that time, his music has not had the lasting impact that it deserves.

Scriabin played a major role in influencing the compositional style of Feinberg. With the death of Scriabin in 1915, a new group of Russian avant-garde composers came forward, being encouraged to create new revolutionary music, including Feinberg, Gnessin, Krein, and Veprik.² Unfortunately, the government of Stalin controlled the role art played in society, which impacted composers in many respects. During the period of time from 1900 to 1929, Russia experienced many brief but prolific artistic movements including Symbolism, Social Realism and Abstract Art. After the October Revolution,

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new music composed was required to be written for either chorus or vocalist causing a
decline in instrumental and chamber music. The desire for Social Realism created two
opposing factions: The Association for Contemporary Music (ACM) and The Russian
Association of Proletarian Musicians (RAPM). The Association for Contemporary
Music focused on featuring forward-looking composers including Feinberg, Mosolov,
Myaskovsky and Roslavets, while The Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians
caused the limitations of these composers.3 Years later we realize that this decade of the
1920’s was an important evolutionary time for music. Feinberg was responsible for
premiering many of his peers’ works on his own concert tours. This period, called the
“Silver Age” laid the foundation for the worldwide reputation of Russian culture that
flourished following decades of isolation.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this paper is to promote more in-depth research about Feinberg’s
performances and music. It includes a directory of all of his recordings, recordings of his
compositions, reviews of his pieces, interviews and translations of his pedagogical
writings.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Source materials on Feinberg’s life and work are limited. Recordings of his
works are few in number. There are a few recordings of Feinberg playing compositions
by traditional composers, as well as a handful of interviews/correspondence in Russian
that have been translated into English. Robert Rimm is currently in the process of
translating Feinberg’s “Pianism as Art”. Feinberg’s final wish was for his students to

publish posthumously his pedagogical writings. There are a handful of theses written on Feinberg’s individual works and transcriptions, but not solely devoted to him and his legacy, which is the objective of this thesis. This paper includes analyses of Feinberg’s Four Preludes, Second Sonata, Third Sonata, Sixth Sonata, Twelfth Sonata and two Bach Organ Chorale Prelude transcriptions.

**RELATED LITERATURE**

The literature written on the life and works of Feinberg is limited in quantity and does not do justice to his output or artistic contributions. The most comprehensive biographical sources are by Larry Sitsky, written in 1994: *Music of the Repressed Russian Avante-Garde, 1900-1929*, Robert Rimm’s *The Composer-pianists: Hamelin and the Eight*, and Christopher Barnes’ *The Russian Piano School*.

Other books that include references to Feinberg include Schwarz’s *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia 1917-1981*, Hakobian’s *Music of the Soviet Age 1917-1987* and Sabaneyeev’s *Modern Russian Composers*. One of the most valuable sources is the translated interviews of Feinberg as well as his pedagogical writings. A particularly helpful source is Dr. James Loeffler’s written contribution to the revival of Jewish composers and their music.

Recordings of Feinberg’s piano music today are more prevalent than biographical material. Jascha Nemtsov is an important pianist who has contributed to recording Feinberg’s piano music as well as other neglected Russian composers. Today pianists like Nikolaos Samaltanos, Marc-Andre Hamelin, Victor Bunin and Christophe Sirodeau are performing, recording and giving world premieres of many of Feinberg’s pieces, including all the sonatas as well as the first piano concerto. Feinberg’s music is
published by Universal Editions and is also available online through the Petrucci Music Library IMSLP.

METHODOLOGY

In order to conduct this analysis all available books, articles, and websites concerning Feinberg have been investigated and consulted. Feinberg’s recordings and his own compositions were studied thoroughly, in order to understand his performance and compositional style. The English translations of Feinberg’s correspondence/interviews relating to his artistic beliefs were reviewed extensively in order to help with the understanding of his pedagogy. This research will show the importance and need for Feinberg’s music to be revived, studied and performed.
CHAPTER 2

LIFE AND PERFORMANCE STYLE

Samuil Yevgenyevich Feinberg was born on May 26, 1890 in Odessa and died on October 22, 1962 in Moscow. Feinberg had a superb musical education, having been taught by the most famous musical pedagogues at the time in Russia. His first teacher was A.F. Jensen, who encouraged him to study composition and piano. Feinberg played four-hand piano literature with Jensen, allowing him to study the symphonic and chamber repertoire and influencing his future compositional style. Starting in 1904 Feinberg studied piano with Alexander Goldenweiser at the Moscow Philharmonic School and eventually at the Moscow Conservatory. Feinberg’s relationship with Goldenweiser was the most important musical bond he shared, proving to be extremely influential. Goldenweiser expressed throughout his life his affection and admiration for Feinberg. Feinberg also studied composition with N.S. Zhilaev at the Moscow Conservatory. The table/tree included at the end of the paper shows the lineage of Feinberg in the Russian tradition of piano instruction.

Feinberg’s rich musical lineage can be traced back all the way to Beethoven. At the Moscow Conservatory during the first half of the 19th century there were two major schools of piano playing linked back to Beethoven, and his student Carl Czerny. The first school was founded by Safonov who studied with Leschetizky, one of Czerny’s pupils. Safonov’s most famous students were Scriabin and Medtner. The other school
originated with Anton Door, a pupil of Czerny who studied with Pavel Pabst. Anton
Door taught Liapunov and Goldenweiser. The Moscow Conservatory’s two main pillars
of piano tradition during Feinberg’s time were Goldenweiser and Neuhaus. Both these
pedagogues were great musicians and performers, although not composers. This is the
difference between Feinberg and his teachers: his ability to create new music. Feinberg
had a vision for a modern musical landscape, continuing the tradition laid by Scriabin.

Feinberg showed from a very young age a tremendous gift at the piano, coupled
with superb technique and unyielding stamina. This is exemplified by his graduation
program at the Moscow Conservatory, which featured works by Handel, Mozart, Franck
and the recently completed Rachmaninoff Third Piano Concerto. Colleagues at the
Moscow Conservatory said Feinberg handled the Rachmaninoff Third Concerto with
immense sweep and control. Feinberg expressed an admiration of the 18th century
repertoire, especially Bach. On Feinberg’s jury program at the conservatory, he elected
to offer all 48 Preludes and Fugues from Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier as his program.
It is said that the piano faculty created slips with forty-eight numbers and keys on them
and chose randomly which preludes and fugues for him to play. This musical wizardry
prompted much discussion not only in the conservatory but also throughout musical
Moscow. This also attracted attention from music critics, including one from the Russian
Register saying:

“It was interesting to note that the exam of the ninth virtuoso class on May 16th
started at 6 pm and was going until sunrise. Ensembles could start only at half
past one in the morning, after solo performers had finished. Among the people
who took the exam was one Mr. Feinberg (class of Pr. Goldenweiser) who
prepared by heart forty-eight preludes and fugues of Bach. There are known only
two or three cases of such phenomenal music memory. K. Tausig played all of

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them and could even transpose them into any key. Also Kaun in Berlin. And that, I believe, is all.”

Tatiana Nikolaeva, another pupil of Goldenweiser, accomplished the same feat of performing Bach’s complete Well-Tempered Clavier from memory a few years after Feinberg.

Beginning in 1912, Feinberg started his concert career as a virtuoso pianist touring Europe. Feinberg’s keyboard repertoire was vast and included all of Beethoven’s and Scriabin’s sonatas, as well as the complete Well-Tempered Clavier of J.S. Bach. Feinberg was the first Russian pianist to record and perform the complete Well-Tempered Clavier in concert. He also performed large-scale romantic works by Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff. Feinberg enlisted briefly in the Russian military in 1914, but soon returned to Moscow after becoming ill. After returning to the Conservatory, he resumed teaching from 1922 until his death in 1962. Feinberg became Head of the Piano Department at a very young age, alongside the other great Soviet piano pedagogues Neuhaus, Igumnov and his teacher, Goldenweiser. Feinberg’s contribution and legacy to piano pedagogy is cemented in his two major works: “Pianism as Art” and “Destiny of Musical Form”. The “Destiny of Musical Form” is a theoretical, methodical book about the foundations and hierarchy of music.

The American Music critic Carl Engel wrote in the 1925 Musical Quarterly: “The most outstanding examples of Scriabin’s succession are the compositions of Samuil Feinberg. He has a powerful talent. Probably, he is a genius. He is a person of abundant imagination and rich technique. Modernity of his music is based on a solid foundation.”

Feinberg went to Paris in November 1925, and was invited to perform in Austria and

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5 Ginsburg, 1984, 42.
6 Sabaneyeff, Leonid. Modern Russian Composers. 164.
Germany multiple times. In 1927 Feinberg concertized throughout Germany showcasing and premiering music of Scriabin, Stanchinskiy, Myaskovsky, Prokofiev, Polovinkin, Goedicke and Catuar, as well as his own compositions. Feinberg recorded for Deutsche Grammophone in Berlin and gave the very first live radio concert on this tour. Feinberg’s fascination with Bach lasted a lifetime. On Feinberg’s 1929 Germany tour, he programmed many of Bach’s pieces, including his own transcriptions of the Chorale Preludes. Reportedly, as a pianist, Feinberg acquired a reputation for unmatched stamina, repeatedly playing all of Scriabin’s ten sonatas and Beethoven’s complete violin sonatas with Boris Sibor together on two evenings. Alexander Borisovich wrote in his diary from 1926; “The phenomenal gift of Feinberg never ceases to amaze me. His mental organization and technical skills are really phenomenal…Feinberg plays like a devil…His fabulous talent strikes me fresh each time…Musically his brain works significantly better than mine, and I always have the feeling that I am behind him.”

In 1938, Feinberg was honored as a world-class pianist by serving on the jury of the Brussels Ysaye Competition with Rubinstein, Emil von Sauer, Casadesus and Gieseking. Feinberg also heavily promoted contemporary music, including giving the Russian premiere of Prokofiev’s 3rd Piano Concerto and the 5th Concerto as well as the Third, Fourth and Fifth Piano Sonatas and the “Tales of the Old Grandmother”. Prokofiev commented to Myaskovsky about his yet unplayed 5th sonata: “If Feinberg plays it, success can be taken for granted.” Feinberg was able to satisfy the requirements of many different composers and styles. For example, at the age of 23, he performed Scriabin’s 4th Piano Sonata for the composer. Scriabin criticized almost all

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7 Paperno, Dmitrii. *Notes of a Moscow Pianist*, 126.
8 Ibid., 128.
interpretations of his own music describing them as stylistically too hard an approach and insufficiently expressive, however, Feinberg’s playing of Scriabin’s music had grace, wit, dynamic invention and subtlety of tone. David Dubal writes in *The Art of the Piano*:

“His Scriabin playing is not to be missed, so improvisationally beguiling, with fluttering pedals purring and limpid, its incisive inner details somehow make for structural pillars. Reckless, languorous, erotic, Feinberg is driven by ecstasy, and the devil takes due notice. Mark Pakman wrote, “He infused every piece with a principal idea and character. Feinberg often accumulated enormous intensity in the very beginning of a musical phrase and then gradually let it subside. His timing was remarkable.”

In the 1920’s, Feinberg regularly attended musical soirées dedicated to contemporary Russian music at the home of musicologist and music editor, P.A. Lamm. Lamm featured young Russian composers and musicians at these avant-garde events. A regular attendee was the composer Miaskovsky. This setting of contemporary music was a hotbed of inspiration for Feinberg and his interest in modern music, both as a performer and composer. At each soiree, a different piece recently composed was featured and performed. If the piece was symphonic, then it would be arranged for piano four hands. Given with Feinberg’s experience of four-hand repertoire going back to his teacher Jensen, he had an unparalleled sight-reading ability. Rachmaninoff’s Third Symphony and Shostakovich’s Fourth Symphony were premiered at Lamm’s events. Lesser known composers that Feinberg performed were Stachinskiy, Kataur, Gedike, and Alexandrov. Feinberg also performed his own compositions at Lamm’s. He felt at home attending these soirees, where he met artists similar to himself that both performed and composed music. Feinberg always approached new music from this dual perspective as both performer and composer. The flexibility and improvisational style that Feinberg

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9 Ibid., 129.
possessed proved beneficial to each composition he played. Miaskovsky wrote to Prokofiev in 1923:

“There is an outstanding pianist here who can play your compositions superbly — Feinberg. Of course, you would object to some things in his interpretation. He brings what may be foreign elements in his performances — emphasizing refinement and nervousness. However, his enthusiasm, temperament and superior technique do their own, and his performance emerges as distinctive but persuasive. I like one of his remarks about the Fourth Sonata and some other pieces. He finds that after Liszt only you make new discoveries and conquests in piano technique and color. Even Scriabin, in his opinion, did not bring novelty in attitude towards the piano.”

Miaskovsky goes on to continue his praise of Feinberg’s approach to Prokofiev’s music, written in 1923: “Feinberg performs your first concerto and other compositions (fourth sonata, Last dances and many others) excellently and he finds that after Liszt you are making real discoveries in piano style, sound, and generally in piano magic.”

Miaskovsky wrote:

“You are writing about the constant lack of success of your Fifth Sonata. I notice it is not able to take root somehow, but I would explain it differently. It is not a “performance-oriented” piece that one would understand from the very beginning, but it is also clear to me that it is nevertheless one of your best sonatas. It is, to tell you the truth, less effective than the Third, but is a more sophisticated and deeper composition. I rank it somewhat higher than your Second Sonata, which I like very much, and almost on the level of the Fourth. It will find its recognition here, as soon as Feinberg performs it, because the way he ran through it was outstanding: terrifically flexible and prominent in phrasing, singing-like and unusually fresh in color.”

Robert Rimm writes about Feinberg’s approach to Scriabin and Prokofiev:

“He was the bridge - the most important link - between the two distinct factions of the celebrated Russian school of pianism, which pitted Scriabin’s mystical, sexual, opiate music against Prokofiev’s dynamism and percussive approach to composition. Feinberg was the pianist both composers admired above all. This management of such diametrically opposed styles, reflecting his eager absorption

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12 Ibid., 164
13 Ibid., 165.
of all manner of culture from painters and architects to writers and composers, made him a respected and enduring artist.”

Elements of the Russian piano school are exemplified by Feinberg’s playing. These include achieving extreme contrasts, variety of touch and sound, sharp rhythmic feeling, and most importantly a personality on stage. Feinberg believed artistry and mastery are inseparable; in fact he authored a book with this exact title.

ANALYSIS OF FEINBERG’S PLAYING THROUGH HIS RECORDINGS

The “Golden-Age” style of piano playing Feinberg exemplified stems from the Russian piano tradition he was taught by Goldenweiser. This tradition was continued until the mid 20th century by other Russian pianists, including Godowsky, Neuhaus, Hoffman and Rachmaninoff. The generation after Feinberg that continued the Golden-Age style piano playing included Gilels, Richter, Gornostaeva, Naumov, Viardo, Lifschitz and Itin.

Feinberg possesses the “Golden-Age” ability to create remarkable amounts of tonal varieties/timbers and effects from the piano, and consistently clear layering of voices. What impresses the most about Feinberg’s recordings is his bel-canto like singing tone, a unparalleled legato long line, improvisational freedom and sheer virtuosity when needed. Feinberg always is faithful to the text of each composition he performs.

The following analysis of Feinberg’s recordings depicts his style and approach to various composers. Throughout Feinberg’s recorded performances of Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Mozart, Schumann and Scriabin, one is drawn to the depth of sound Feinberg

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achieves at the keyboard. Reminiscent of the “Golden-age” style, Feinberg throws caution to the winds with his interpretations, taking risks in his performances. Feinberg has something very personal to say about each composer he performs, no two works sounding alike. He is never struggling with the instrument, and has complete control over sound, timbre and dynamics. When Feinberg approaches virtuosic passages in any piece, he is able to create bravura and sweeps of phrase. A certain freedom and overall improvisational playing distinguishes Feinberg’s recordings, especially in the case of his Bach. Feinberg’s singing tone in Chopin, mystical colors in Scriabin, and orchestral sound and rhythmic force in Beethoven make a unique impression. It must be noted that although Feinberg had a very large repertoire, he was only able to record a small amount of it during his lifetime. Out of the 32 Beethoven sonatas, he recorded only six, and out of the ten Scriabin sonatas, only two. Luckily, we have his complete Well-Tempered Clavier.

BACH

Feinberg’s recordings of J.S. Bach display an individuality confidence and a strong sense of character. In the Prelude and Fugues and the Chromatic Fantasy, Feinberg brings a heavily romantic approach to Bach. He is able to convey the romanticism of Bach’s music with consistent pedaling (more than usual), depth of touch, rubato and freedom.

Feinberg generates washes of sound with the Fantasy from the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 903, creating effects similar to an organ. He seems to connect to Bach’s music through the improvisational character of this work. The long diminished arpeggios sound almost like a harp under Feinberg’s fingers. In the fugue,
Feinberg shapes and shades the phrasing of the theme while keeping its rhythmic intensity. All the voices throughout the fugue are heard clearly, mimicking a choir coming from different parts of a church. Feinberg’s rhythmic intensity is apparent throughout. Overall, one gets the sense of Feinberg’s strict playing during the fugue with a more improvised, organ-like approach in the fantasy.

In Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier Book I, Feinberg again creates organ-like effects with the preludes and contrastingly strict rhythmic results with the fugues. He was the first Russian pianist to record and perform in concert the complete Well-Tempered Clavier. He felt a great connection to Bach’s music, especially the prelude and fugues that allowed him to showcase both his expressive virtuosic side and strict rhythmic precision. He plays the C Major prelude in a more calm tempo than typically played. The organ like effect Feinberg creates in the prelude enhance the rich harmonic colors. He takes the fugue also in a more relaxed tempo than usual, while the thematic voices come out precisely throughout.

In the Prelude and Fugue No. 2 in C minor, Feinberg’s approach contains individuality and spontaneity. The prelude is played dry without pedal and has rhythmic intensity throughout. The tempo of the prelude is also faster than normally heard. In the fugue Feinberg emphasizes the different registers, bringing out the variety of tonal qualities from the keyboard, imitative of an organ.

The Prelude and Fugue No. 3 in C♯ major allows for a variety of different touches from the performer, which Feinberg takes advantage of. The contrast of articulations he uses, especially the left hand’s portamento style, brings life to the prelude. He does not rely on the pedal to connect the sounds, instead using an advanced finger legato to shape
and phrase the line. He plays the fugue with lively energy and light touch bringing out the uplifting character.

The Prelude and Fugue No. 5 in D major allows him to show off his virtuosic technique with its quick note values and fast tempi. He plays the prelude dry with no pedal, articulating the quick 16th notes. He brings out the French overture dotted rhythm in the fugue, performing with conviction and nobility throughout.

The Prelude and Fugue No. 24 in B minor is one of the longest prelude and fugues in Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier. The overall character is somber, enhanced by the slow tempo. He relies on expressive intimacy here, phrasing each line with delicacy, taking a choral approach. He uses an impressive legato touch resulting in long lines without any accents. The bass lines he brings out in the fugue emulate the sounds of a cello. The nuances in color shadings he achieves between the major and minor harmonies show the mastery of a seasoned virtuoso.

Feinberg’s creative approach to composition and performing stems from his love of Bach. His brother Leonid recounts him waking up every morning and playing through Bach’s chorale preludes. This daily artistic creativity displays Feinberg’s discipline and commitment to his art, both as a performer and creator. At this time when Stalin had a repressive hold on composers’ music including Feinberg’s, musicians resorted to other ways of expressing themselves. This was when Feinberg turned to the music of Bach and began his transcriptions of the chorale preludes and other pieces.

Feinberg’s transcriptions of Bach’s Organ Preludes are extremely popular today and heard in concert more than his own compositions. The reason for this could be because of the shear virtuosity required for his own compositions, compared to the

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15 See Appendix A
accessibility of his Bach transcriptions. Feinberg dedicated himself to recording in the studio the last six years of his life. The recording Feinberg made of the Bach-Feinberg Organ Prelude (Chorale) in A major, BWV 662 "Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr" was a recording made days before he died. Feinberg’s recording showcases his “golden-age” intimate personal sound.

Reviews of Feinberg’s performances of Bach’s music are highly positive:

“Feinberg recorded three different settings of this chorale within a space of ten years, Allein Gott in der Hoh sei Her BWV 662, After recording track 4, Feinberg had only a few more days to live. The more spontaneous earlier reading lays greater emphasis on romantic embellishment of the cantus whereas the later account is almost transcendent in its spirituality.”

Another reviewer states:

“Rare performances of a master playing in an Imperial style that remained untainted during the drabness of the Soviet dictatorship’s aesthetic….His recording of Bach’s Well Tempered Clavier remains unsurpassed, unique for being strict with the Preludes while taking the Fugues greater freedom….Feinberg’ s interpretations of the keyboard works of Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Scriabin, and others were startlingly original - he typically offered quite a different approach to each composer's music.”

Dubal writes in The Art of Piano:

“Serious students should closely study these performances. Technically he can perform miracles; musically they are like no other Bach you have heard. It is Bach as a Russian Romantic, and even purists and Baroque authorities may be unwillingly swept away. Richter wrote, “He played Bach after his own fashion, not like Bach but like late Scriabin…This didn’t stop him from having lots of admirers, which is entirely justified, as he was a great musician.” Feinberg, speaking of Bach on the piano, said, “We cannot fully imitate harpsichord colors. However, the contemporary piano enables us to make every phrase, every voice expressive by strengthening or weakening the sound. The piano is not a percussion instrument: It is like a chorus of strings.”

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16 Dubal, David. The Art of the Piano: Its Performers, Literature, and Recordings. Pg.105
18 Ibid., 89.
BEETHOVEN

Feinberg also had a deep connection to Beethoven, whose 32 sonatas he performed multiple times throughout his life. Feinberg’s recording of the Sonata No. 23 in F minor, Op. 57 "Appassionata" was completed in the late 1930s and sets a high standard for this popular work. The first movement, Allegro assai, is impressive, played faster than usual. Feinberg’s consistent precision of tempo throughout the movement exemplifies the strict Russian style, and Feinberg also displays his virtuosic technique, tackling difficult passages with ease. Feinberg also impresses with his conservative use of pedal throughout the first movement. The rhythmic intensity of the repeated notes emulate orchestral timpani. Feinberg brings out different registers of the keyboard, emphasizing orchestral effects. The dotted rhythm of the second theme is played with precision consistently throughout, compared to the contrasting liberal flexibility most pianists employ. Overall, Feinberg makes the first movement sound brighter in timbre and tonal quality compared to other recordings. Many popular recordings make the first movement sound darker in character compared to Feinberg’s. Feinberg has complete control over the voicing of the chorale theme of the second movement. Imploring a warm bell-like quality to the theme. At the moment of the last rolled diminished chord of the andante con moto, you can hear Feinberg growl on the recording as he plays. He described in his pedagogical book “Pianism as Art” the organism between the performer and the music is always inseparable. Here at the final chord before the finale, it is evident how engaged Feinberg is with the music. Feinberg performs the finale of the “Appasionata” with great intensity and precision. The bravura performance Feinberg gives of the finale is astonishing, using very limited pedal, with consistent rhythmic
precision, flawless runs and dramatic intensity.

**CHOPIN**

Romantic piano music infused with strict counterpoint, such as in Chopin’s ballades, suited Feinberg perfectly. Chopin’s 4th Ballade in f minor, Op.52 has hundreds of available recordings from legendary pianists, including Rubinstein, Ashkenazy, and others.

The true bel-canto singing style Feinberg produces with the fourth ballade makes this recording stand out. Feinberg is able to create beautifully shaped lines with a legato touch, never accenting the ends of the phrases. Compared to other pianists’ approaches to the tempo, such as Ashkenazy’s slower tempo, and Richter’s quick tempo, Feinberg’s pace sits comfortably in the middle with a moderato approach. The harmonic shadings Feinberg achieves here are impressive as well. The voicing of the chorale middle section sounds like a choir under Feinberg’s fingers, particularly due to his organ-like approach.

**LISZT**

Of Feinberg’s various recordings of romantic works, Liszt’s Mephisto Waltz is considered one of his highest achievements. Feinberg is able to create the effects Liszt intended with flawless ease. An example is the opening passage with the low bass repeated fifths, which Feinberg transforms into growls reminiscent of orchestral timpani. The range of sounds and dynamics Feinberg gets from the piano is compelling, almost comparable to an large orchestra. Feinberg sparingly uses the pedal as well. With such minimal use of the pedal, Feinberg miraculously is able to execute all the octaves, tremolos, arpeggios and passagework. Feinberg is able to synchronize his perspectives as a pianist and composer when approaching Liszt’s lyrical themes, understanding how they
evolve naturally out of the musical material. This is clearly evident with Feinberg’s bravura performance of the Mephisto Waltz.

SCRIABIN

Feinberg, who played for Scriabin, understood the mysticism of his music and virtuosic effects needed to master it. Feinberg’s music was influenced by Scriabin’s experimental style. His legendary recording of Scriabin’s Sonata No.4 Op.30 is highly ranked among recordings of this piece. Scriabin felt Feinberg is able to organically bond together the score and the piano. Feinberg creates a world of nuanced colors immediately in the opening section, achieving a contemplative mood. What makes Feinberg’s recordings of Scriabin stand out from the rest is his ability to unite the character of the music with extreme color shadings and rhythmic precision. At times in the second section of the sonata, it sounds like Feinberg is improvising the music. Feinberg is considered one of the greatest Scriabin interpreters.

COMPOSITIONAL STYLE

Feinberg’s compositional style started out as a reflection of Scriabin’s with intense chromatic writing and thick textures and experimentation with serial techniques, while later in life his compositions became more diatonic. Most of Feinberg’s compositions are for solo piano, including 12 sonatas, three piano concertos, two fantasias, two suites, two romances, and organ transcriptions. He also wrote “Classical Period” cadenzas, as well as numerous arrangements of folk songs including the “25 Chuvash Songs”, as well as original songs for piano and voice with setting of texts by Pushkin and Blok. His piano pieces are extremely difficult with feverish tempi creating exhilarating effects. Feinberg composed most of his pieces during the 1920s while being
a member of The Association for Contemporary Music (ACM). Between 1915 and 1925, Feinberg wrote seven piano sonatas, suites, fantasias and romances. Due to Stalin’s political repression on artists and the influence from the conservative-social realist party: The Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians (RAPM), Feinberg’s creative output suffered between the years 1930 and 1950.

Feinberg’s Four Preludes Op.8 are reminiscent of Scriabin’s style with their extreme anxiety and powerful expression. Sitsky comments in *Music of the Repressed Russian Avant-Garde*:

“Feinberg’s art is darker than Scriabin’s, and there is not that striving toward light; neither is there a declared program of any kind because Feinberg preferred to leave such matters to the imagination of the listener. Sabanayeef declared that Feinberg was similar to Schumann, Poe, and Dostoevsky, thus suggesting that he was an obsessed personality as a composer. Like Scriabin, Feinberg used the full sweep of the keyboard, but he tended to arrive at his complex web of textures by polyphony, not as Scriabin, by harmony.”

The first prelude in the Op.8 set is marked Allegretto in the key of G major with a thick texture throughout containing four voices (Example, 2.1).

![Example 2.1. Prelude Op.8 No.1, mm. 1-2](image)

Reminiscent of Scriabin, Feinberg creates washes of sounds with the virtuosic chromatic sequences. Feinberg writes patterns/motives that dominate the first prelude;

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ex: mm.1’s triplet rhythm in the left hand against the quintuplet sixteenths in the right hand recurs throughout the entire prelude. The form of the prelude is ABA rounded binary. It is clever how, after all the chromatic dissonant passagework in the prelude, Feinberg ends with a simple G Major chord. This could be associated with his admiration and connection to Bach’s music. Bach is famous for using the Picardy third in the final chord of many minor key pieces.

The second prelude is more experimental than the first with its additive rhythms, and its absence of a tempo marking or tonal center. The misterioso marking at the beginning may pay homage to Scriabin. Feinberg writes in mm.1 an open fifth a and e chord in the left hand against a melodic phrase consisting of a falling half step, rising diminished seventh and a falling fifth. The chromatic five-note 32nd cluster played by the left hand introduced in mm.1 serves as a rhythmic cell that dominates the prelude (Example, 2.2).
Example 2.2. Prelude Op.8 No.2, mm. 1-4

Feinberg pushes the boundaries of dynamic contrast to the extreme by using ppp dynamic marks through fff. Feinberg alternates between patterns of perfect fifths with augmented fourths in the B section before returning to the A section material. The return of the A section shows Feinberg’s experimental style; he combines the original material with the B section theme, creating a mysterious effect.

Prelude three is written in quasi F# minor/A major with hints of a dominant/tonic scheme (Example, 2.3).

Example 2.3. Prelude Op.8 No.3, mm. 1-3

Feinberg creates a virtuosic basso ostinato/toccata style with a repeating descending line alternating between the left hand and right hand against a melody line with octaves. The prelude is monothematic. The Tumultuoso indication at the beginning is another example of influence from Scriabin. Feinberg uses the full range of the keyboard, delineating a clearer texture, as observed by his use of three staves (Example, 2.4).
Example 2.4. Prelude Op.8 No.3, mm. 18-19

A low e acts as a dominant pedal point for the last 18 bars of the prelude, resolving on the final note.

The final prelude is written in a Chopinesque manner featuring a clear eight bar phrase melody against a syncopated accompaniment and bass line. The texture is the thinnest out of the four preludes, with only two voices at times. Feinberg writes con moto and sempre rubato above the melody line resembling the style of Chopin (Example, 2.5).

Example 2.5. Prelude Op.8 No.4, mm. 1-9
The key appears to be E flat major/c minor, but the melodic line wanders through e-flat minor as well. The melody is marked p, in contrast to its later return at ff. The bass line does not define the key of E Flat major, with its chromatic non-chord tones, but forms a melodic line in the bass mirroring the right hand. The left hand bass notes are almost intervallically identical with the right hand melody line while also being in canon. The middle section looks Chopinesque with a continuous arpeggio line in the right hand extending over the keyboard while the left hand plays the A section melody line, but in inverted form (Example, 2.6).

Example 2.6. Prelude Op.8 No.4, mm. 30-34

The texture becomes more dense for the return of the A section. Feinberg brings the third voice back with a bass line outlining e-flat minor with g flat. The Scriabin/Chopinesque style Feinberg employs in this prelude is evident when he prepares the return of the A section with a slow gradual crescendo to a ff now with both hands playing the melody in a new thicker texture with double octaves. The hands imitate each other in parallel motion, in contrast to the contrary motion in the opening section (Example, 2.7).
Example 2.7. Prelude Op.8 No.4, mm. 55-59

The prelude ends with diminuendo and calando markings while the bass line is now outlining E-flat major with g-naturals, finishing with an E-flat major harmony.

In his piano sonatas, Feinberg retained the one-movement model through much of his life. The complexity of his superimposed rhythms in different registers of the keyboard are evident in the sonatas. The formal structure is unified through the development of thematic material. The first sonata already exemplifies Feinberg’s Scriabinesque style with extreme virtuosity, long extended harmonic motions, reliance on sequences, and an expressionist style. Sabaneyeff declares:

“First, Feinberg is chiefly a composer of harmonies and rhythms. He is almost no melodist at all. They are rudimentary and frequently intangible. Musical fabric is bizarrely wavering and turbulent. These compositions are some sort of tonal tempests and whirlwinds, not music. He is a composer who recognizes virtually no slow tempo. His visions are dynamic and madly precipitous recalling the hallucinations of a sick man. The destruction of the rhythmic web and substance occasionally frightens the auditor with its abnormality.”

Feinberg believed in a theory of unintoned sounds influenced by Scriabin. Feinberg described this as the perception of sounds that are not sounded in reality but merely in the imagination of the performer and the audience; colors evoked from the

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20 Ibid., 166.
music come to the performer in a mystical sense. Feinberg felt the world of sensitivity between the notes on the page must be conjured up by the performer in his soul. This romantic/mystical ideal can be related to the ideas of E.T.A Hoffmann and Schuman as well. In comparison to Scriabin’s mysticism, Sabanayeff states “Feinberg does not set out to produce definite states, they happen with him “by themselves,” and in his make-up there are incomparably sharper traits of obsession, psychopathism and entangling of sensations than in Scriabin.”

The second sonata, Op. 2 (1915) displays traits similar to the writing of Schumann with its lyrical melodic lines. The sonata is in one movement and is more accessible technically than most of his other works. The chromatic texture infused with complex cross-rhythms sound almost like a written-out rubato (Example, 2.8).

Example 2.8. Second Sonata Op.2, mm. 1-6

21 Sabanayeff, Leonid. Modern Russian Composers. 167.
22 Ibid., 168.
Feinberg relies heavily on sequential patterns throughout the piece. The sonata starts in A minor with a principal theme that rises and falls over the span of fourteen bars. The theme is accompanied by triplets, which turn into running sixteenths. The harmonies are rich with depth of sound and imploring low bass notes. The harmonic rhythm is fairly slow, with infrequent changes. The development section brilliantly prepares the recapitulation by showing the principal theme in the left hand. In the recapitulation, before the secondary theme, Feinberg creates complex cross rhythms resulting in thick textures for five voices. One marking that stands out is his tempo indication doppio movimento; a marking rarely used, calling to mind Chopin’s B flat minor sonata. In the coda, Feinberg creates a diatonic atmosphere revolving around the tonic key of a minor, bringing the work to a final close.

The longest of Feinberg’s piano pieces is his third sonata, written in three movements. The avant-garde first movement has no time signature, creating a feeling of improvisation. Sitsky writes about the third sonata: “The visual impact is initially a shock. There is a dense, almost impenetrable jungle of note and accidentals, liberally sprinkled with double sharps and the like. This happens because Feinberg did not abandon the key signature, although the music constantly wavers and modulates.”

The second movement is a funeral march titled Lugubre e maestoso. The influence from Chopin’s sonatas (especially the “funeral march” sonata) is evident in Feinberg’s sonatas with his choice of movement, headings and tempo markings (Example, 2.9).

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As seen in the second sonata with the tempo indication of doppio movimento, Feinberg uses this indication multiple times in the third sonata. The key relationships between the movements are innovative; and too extreme. The first movement is in g-minor while the second and third are a half-step higher in g-sharp minor. Feinberg inserts an extremely virtuosic four-voice chromatic double fugue, eight pages in length, in the development section of the third movement. The accompanying non-thematic material is similar to a Scriabin or Chopin etude with unison chromatic octaves meant to be played at fast tempi. The most weight and emphasis in the sonata is given to the final movement (Examples, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13).
Example 2.11. Third Sonata, Mvt.3, 2nd fugue theme, mm. 101-106

Example 2.12. Third Sonata, Mvt.3, Non-thematic material mm. 124-128
Example 2.13. Third Sonata, Mvt.3, Non-thematic material mm. 171-174

Feinberg’s sonatas, unlike Scriabin’s, do not specifically utilize extra-musical ideas. Sabaneyeff writes: “Scriabin seemed to concern himself with the elevation of the human spirit, with a journey from darkness to light. Feinberg simply presented us his sound-world, which was probably more limited than Scriabin’s, certainly darker, and certainly more pessimistic.”

Feinberg’s fourth sonata is a haunting and possessed piece starting out as homage to Scriabin with a rising motive. This sonata displays the extreme virtuosic style that Feinberg was comfortable with.

Feinberg’s sixth sonata is his masterpiece, composed in 1923. In September 1925 the sixth sonata was chosen to be played at the International Society for Contemporary Music Festival in Venice. The romantic feel to the sixth sonata is reminiscent of Liszt and Rachmaninoff. The harmonic language is more traditional then previous sonatas and conveys a program that establishes the mood of the piece. The quotation on the first page comes from Spengler’s book *The Decline of the West*, stating: “Terrifying symbols of fleeing time, whose tolls echo day and night from innumerable towers over Western

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24 Ibid., 190.
Europe, and are perhaps the most overpowering utterance of which a historical world-
awareness is at all capable.” This quote is perhaps a direct attack on the Soviet
propaganda machine. A contemporary writer characterized Feinberg’s sixth sonata “The
grotesque and nightmarish world is the exact reflection of our era of wars and
revolutions…in the unhealthy and delicate psyche of a great artist.”

The programmatic atmosphere of the sixth sonata and its thematic material evokes Liszt’s Dante Sonata.

Liszt’s Dante Sonata, inspired by a reading of Dante’s “Divine Comedy” was written in
1849, almost 70 years before Feinberg’s sixth sonata. Both the Dante Sonata and
Feinberg’s Sixth are in one continuous movement with various relating thematic sections.

The opening material of Feinberg’s sixth sonata starts with “misteriososo” sparse
whole notes descending with perfect fourths and augmented fourths, reminiscent of
Liszt’s opening descending augmented fourths. Feinberg repeats the pattern of
descending fourths two times, exactly as Liszt does, and also transposes the thematic
material up a whole step. The Precipitato indications are reminiscent of a tempo marking
Liszt used in the Dante Sonata (Examples, 2.14, 2.15).

Example 2.14. Liszt’s Dante Sonata, Opening Material, mm. 1-6

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Example 2.15. Sixth Sonata, Op.13, mm. 1-6

Feinberg uses the opening material intervals of a perfect fourth and augmented fourth as a pervading structural foundation throughout the sonata. The principal theme is in the key of b minor while the secondary theme is an interval of a fourth away to f minor. Throughout the sonata Feinberg implores extremes of character, dynamics,
technique and tempi, stretching the gamut of possibilities. The chromatic thematic material is reminiscent of Liszt’s Dante Sonata. The end of the sonata, much like Liszt’s Dante Sonata, concludes with a resolution of the dissonant augmented fourths that dominate the piece to a final cadential major chord. Feinberg’s sixth sonata resolves from the turmoil of the b minor theme to a final B Major chord at pppp. It is peculiar that Feinberg chooses the lowest B on the keyboard to end the piece, reminiscent of another Liszt masterpiece, the B minor sonata (Example, 2.16).

Example 2.16. Ending of Sixth Sonata, mm. 290-291

Feinberg’s ingenuity and innovation is evident in the sixth sonata. Feinberg bases the entire piece on selected intervals, resulting in a monothematic thematic structure. The inherent technical difficulties are so infused with the musical material; it is a unique challenge to perform. The specific musical atmosphere and various changes of characters demanded in the score can only be achieved with a mastery of the technical challenges.

The seventh sonata from 1924 is similar to Scriabin’s seventh. Both sonatas are reflections of the tormented body and spirit. Russian writer Victor Bunin said of the seventh sonata, “The rhythmic and melodic fluctuations create a mood of anxious
 indefiniteness resembling a wary wandering in the dark.” Feinberg felt strongly about not pursuing publication of some of his second period progressive works (he was always cautious about self-promotion), including the Seventh Sonata, which was not published until 1970.

It was in 1929 that Feinberg’s former composition teacher and current editor Nikolai Zhiliayev was jailed due to the rule of Stalin. Starting in 1930, Feinberg was no longer allowed to leave Russia except for two occasions when he served as a competition jury member in Vienna, in 1936 and in Brussels in 1938. He developed to his second compositional style during this time. His music did not resemble the standards of Stalin’s socialist realism. In response, he composed more progressive pieces that were relatively simple and diatonic. This repression unfortunately created a deadening effect of his earlier works, resulting in their disappearance. His Piano Concertos No. 2 (1944) and No. 3 (1947) were composed in this new style.

From 1936 until his death in 1962, Feinberg composed in a more conservative manner. He still preserved his sensitivity of expression and continuously displayed his fondness for contrapuntal technique. This second compositional style exemplified greater simplicity, diatonicsm and a greater emphasis on melody, reminiscent of Prokofiev.

Feinberg’s last piano sonata, No.12 Op. 48 (1961-62) pays homage to the composers he adored most, each movement being a tribute to them. He referenced Mozart and Chopin (1st mvt), Ravel and Schumann (2nd) and Brahms (finale). This sonata, with its experimental movements and conglomeration of styles, shows Feinberg’s

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experimental neo-classical style in his late period. Compared to the earlier sonatas with their extremes of register, technique and dynamics, the last sonata is very conservative in certain respects relating to the thin texture and simple harmonic language.

The first movement, titled Sonatina, is in the key of F Sharp Major with an allegro marking. The texture is fairly thin with two voices throughout, melody and accompaniment (Example 2.17).

Example 2.17. Sonata No.12, Mvt.1, mm. 1-9

The harmonic rhythm is very classically patterned with harmonic changes every four bars. The movement is diatonic throughout, consistently having a tonal center. The principal theme is repeated throughout the movement.
The second movement, Intermezzo, is in the key of b minor. The form is a standard ABA. Compared to the first movement, the intermezzo has more variety in tempo markings, dynamics, keys and quicker note values (Example 2.18).

Example 2.18. Sonata No.12, Mvt.2, mm. 1-4

The accompaniment pattern that starts in the left hand alternates between hands throughout the movement. Measure 12 contains the first distant key modulation to b flat minor and then c sharp minor. Before the return of the A section, there are two modulations to a minor and b flat minor.

The third movement, titled Improvisation, is in the key of f-sharp minor with a tempo marking of tranquillo. It begins with a unison simple progression that could be considered a rondo theme and returns three times throughout the improvisational movement (Example 2.19).
Example 2.19. Sonata No.12, Mvt.3, mm. 1-6

The phrases are consistently two bars long. The character changes at the andantino section with modulations to distant keys include G Major and C Sharp Major. Feinberg hints back to his earlier sonatas with the extreme use of registers, by employing a wide range in this section (Example 2.20).

Example 2.20. Sonata No.12, Mvt.3, mm. 31-34
Feinberg inserts a coda that combines the principal theme with the andantino material at measure 72 in the distant key of d sharp minor. The movement ends in the key of F Sharp Major reminiscent of the first movement’s key, bringing the sonata full circle from where it began. Feinberg combines his later diatonic style with the earlier experimental avant-garde technique in this final movement to great effect (Example 2.21).
Feinberg also wrote a few miniature pieces for the piano including the Op.15 Preludes and Op.19 Humoresque. These pieces are mainly diatonic and tonal. Feinberg wrote the Op.15 Preludes using infusions of folk songs mainly due to the constraints imposed by the Stalin regime to create simple music at the time. The Humoresque could have been in homage to Schumann’s Humoresque.

In addition to piano music, Feinberg composed multiple song cycles. It is noteworthy to point out that Feinberg’s interest in folk music goes back to 1912 when he was a member of the St. Petersburg Jewish Folk Song Society. Feinberg’s Chuvash Songs can be considered inspirations from Jewish folk song. In addition, Feinberg’s connection to his Jewish roots is evident through his 7 Song settings of Lermontov Op.28, especially No.4 being: “Hebrew Melody” which incorporates the Jewish scale throughout (Example 2.22).

![Example 2.22. Lermontov Song, Op.28 No.4, mm. 1-2](image-url)
The Jewish scale has evolved into being defined as an harmonic minor scale with altered second and sixth scale degrees (flatted). It is interesting to point out that between 1920 until 1960 Jews accounted for about 45% of the Soviet performers and fifteen of the 23 piano teachers at the Moscow Conservatory were Jewish, including Feinberg.²⁷

Feinberg’s affection for the Russian poet Blok comes across in his song cycles set to his texts. More than creating simple melodies, Feinberg establishes moods that relate to the mystical writings of Blok. Feinberg’s continuous deconstruction of rhythms, evident in these songs, is reminiscent of Schumann’s rhythmic style.

Similar to Bach, Feinberg transcribed pieces from previous composers. He took small dance pieces from 17th and 18th century Italian composers and arranged them for solo piano, always staying true to the text. His transcriptions of Bach’s Organ Chorale Preludes are exceptional. He creates elegant keyboard transcriptions of the chorale preludes by setting them in an intimate chamber style. Instead of creating Lisztian extremely thick textures and obscuring the chorale theme, he modestly keeps the left hand’s octaves open without filling them in, keeping the texture lucid. A good example is the transcription of “Nun komm’ der Heiden Heiland” BWV 659. In addition, he does not alter harmonies nor add new notes to the chorale theme; he stays consistently true to the text with all 13 chorale prelude transcriptions. Contrasts to his own compositions (especially the virtuosic early sonatas), the transcriptions sit comfortably in the hands. (Example 2.23, 2.24).

Example 2.23. Bach’s Chorale Prelude – “Nun komm’ der Heiden Heiland” BWV 659, mm. 1-14
Example 2.24. Feinberg’s transcription of Bach’s Chorale Prelude BWV 659, mm. 1-10
The few differences in Feinberg’s masterful transcription of “Allein Gott in der Hoh’s sei Ehr” BWV 663 compared to Bach’s original are the keys, meter, time signature, tempo markings and repeat signs. Bach’s original key is A Major and the time signature is 4/4, with no repeats and no tempo adjustments. Feinberg transcribes the chorale prelude in the key of G Major and the time signature is 3/2. Bach starts the chorale with an upbeat pickup while Feinberg starts on the downbeat. Feinberg includes a repeat sign for the first half of the chorale and puts an adagio tempo marking for the final section of the chorale (Examples 2.25, 2.26, 2.27).

Example 2.25. Bach’s Chorale Prelude – “Allein Gott in der Hoh’s sei Ehr” BWV 663, mm. 1-7
Example 2.26. Feinberg's transcription of Bach's Chorale Prelude BWV 663, mm. 1-12
Example 2.27. Feinberg’s transcription of Bach’s Chorale Prelude
BWV 663, Adagio Section, mm. 63-70

Harris Goldsmith wrote in the liner notes of Volodos’s CD debut of Feinberg’s transcriptions:

“I have left the biggest surprise for the last. The eminent virtuoso, Samuel Feinberg, remained hidden behind the unlamented Iron Curtain and is sadly unknown to western ears. A few fine recordings…introduced us to an obviously major artist with a lyrical style and beautiful singing tone…As with Liszt’s Beethoven and Berlioz piano reductions, Feinberg’s Tchaikovsky recasting is deeply respectful of the original, yet infused with genius and inspiration. It is really quite remarkable to hear how much of the ravishing instrumental detail has been retained by a mere ten fingers: the feathery cross-rhythms at the beginning
are there; and so are the off-beat violin notes; the squealing downward scales for strings and winds in alternation; the thwack of the bass drum; and even an approximation of the climactic cymbal crashes. No doubt about it: This amazing arrangement… is truly golden age pianism.”

CHAPTER 3

PEDAGOGICAL INFLUENCE, ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSLATED INTERVIEWS, PEDAGOGICAL WRITING

Samuil Feinberg’s teachings as a piano pedagogue played a significant role in the lives of many Russian pianists from the past as well as for future generations. The teachings of Goldenweiser influenced Feinberg and molded him as a pedagogue. His most famous pupils include Emelianova, Merzhanov, Natanson, Roschina and Eschenko.

In 1922, Feinberg started teaching at the Moscow Conservatory, a remarkable accomplishment for any pianist at that time. His fellow piano professors included his own teacher Goldenweiser as well as Neuhaus and Igumnov. We can learn much about Feinberg’s pedagogy through his own playing style. Feinberg would not single out mere technical exercises in a piece: instead he would focus on the entire artistic composition as a whole. He exemplified control, restraint and discrimination in repertoire choices both for himself and his students. Feinberg gave his pupils the same repertoire he played, including many standard classical pieces as well as contemporary compositions. Popular pieces his students performed included sonatas by Scriabin, Prokofiev, Miaskovsky and works by Medtner as well. It is interesting to point out that Feinberg rarely gave his pupils his own compositions, probably due to their extreme difficulty.

With regard to Romantic repertoire, Feinberg was fond of Chopin and Schumann especially the 3rd sonata in f minor, but tended to avoid certain virtuosic music. Feinberg said about Liszt’s Dante Sonata: “a genius in idea, though overburdened with
passages”.29 Feinberg would play and give his students select Liszt pieces, including the b minor sonata, Mephisto waltz and concerti, but avoided the transcriptions and paraphrases. Feinberg urged his pupils to learn pieces that have not been already branded by many interpretations, but to create their own approaches to lesser-known romantic music.

Bunin describes Feinberg’s approach to teaching:

“He would always follow sheet music during his work with students. He would not say much, but would mostly show. If he liked a piece — and he would usually give pieces he liked — he would become engaged, ecstatic about some place, delve into details and bring them to the students’ attention, making them accustomed to finding and appreciating strong sides of the piece, and on the other hand — properly reacting to weak ones, if they were there. He had an astonishing ability to momentarily capture everything most important in an unfamiliar piece of work and to develop this quality in students themselves. He tried not to assign works that were alien to him. Sometimes, he would even leave the classroom, because it was too torturous for him to listen to such works.”30

Feinberg took his creative approach as a composer and performer and applied it to his teaching. He proved to be an innovator that helped his students with more than mere technical mastery, but musical artistry and individuality through his continuous dedication.

Bunin describes Feinberg’s student Natanson’s recollection of him:

“When I first went to his class, I had already heard from Ostrovsky that the teacher “had some screws loose in his head.” Indeed, my first impression was strange and confusing. I was used to the German school — play exercises, etudes, learn everything slowly. Here everybody played insanely fast, and he was even faster! His opinions about music astonished us by their boldness and ran counter to conservatory traditions. He was searching for the new always and everywhere.”31

29 Feinberg 1984, 32.
30 Bunin, 1999, 55.
31 Ibid., 57.
Barnes comments in *The Russian Piano School* about Feinberg’s approach to learning and performing pieces:

“What exactly does reading the musical text mean? Many people might think that I regard the composer’s markings as being of primary importance—those governing tempo, expression, and other nuances. But in fact I am referring only to the actual notes themselves. This musical notation in itself tells a pianist so much that if he is capable of assimilating it then all the composer’s other indications regarding performance become self-evident…This means that interpretation (depends)…only on the notes themselves, which any true performer can read, hear, and make perfect sense of.”

Feinberg was not fond of warm up exercises or technical lesson books. He would stress the importance of incorporating the technique of different passages with musical content. One of Feinberg’s most famous students was Merzhanov who in 1945 shared the first prize of the All Union Musical Performers Competition with Sviatoslav Richter. Feinberg’s other notable students include Roschina and Eschenko, who both won prizes in the 1950 Prague International Piano Competition. Feinberg’s class of pupils participated regularly in competitions with pupils of Neuhaus. Feinberg’s class was known for their strict demeanor and elegant piano playing, while Neuhaus’s class incorporated more of the romantic flashy style.

Feinberg’s extensive book on piano playing, “Pianism as Art”, is currently being translated from Russian to English by Robert Rimm and will be completed in the spring of 2017.

**ANALYSIS OF APPENDICES A AND E**

After reading through the excerpt of Feinberg’s pedagogical writing “Pianism as Art” as well as his interviews/correspondences, a strong impression of this musical titan and innovator is confirmed. Feinberg was a person of many talents who was

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32 Barnes, Christopher J. *The Russian Piano School*: London, 93.
33 Ibid., 94.
unfortunately neglected as a composer. Feinberg’s legacy lives on primarily through his recordings and and pedagogical teachings.

Feinberg always believed in the continuity between the artist’s life and his work, never separating one from the other. This is clearly exemplified in his interview with Psychologist A.V. Vitsinsky. He says he was never separated from the piano at any period in his life. His earliest memories of his musical training with Goldenweiser shows disciplined practice regimen of learning new repertoire, covering a full program in the span of two to three months. Feinberg had a miraculous memory, being able to recall all 48 prelude and fugues from Bach’s Well Tempered Clavier at his graduation jury at the Moscow Conservatory.

Feinberg believed in the continuous study of old repertoire while actively learning new pieces. He relates the idea of this intuitive creative process to an art song, saying, “there is a natural link between thought and musical image…an emotional state can correspond to various musical ideas.”

A passage from Feinberg’s pedagogical writings involves his beliefs relating to the inspirational basis of a composer’s works. Feinberg states, “The basis of any great composer’s works stems from an inspirational high point in their life…their compositions did not come about just by some formal process.” Feinberg goes further by giving the example of Beethoven’s Appasionata sonata, stemming from Beethoven’s own inner urge and feelings, which filled the prescribed form.

Feinberg says:

“Regarding my own creativity, I always feel that if I am working on some composition a big part of my real emotions, my real life are in it, that my creative process is not remote from life and the emotions. There can be such vivid artistic impressions, sometimes happening in life. If you are a real artist, I advise my
students to take a more formal point of view first, because the rest is inevitable. If something is happening in your life, you feel it musically.”

One is able to conclude after reading the excerpts from Feinberg’s “Pianism as Art” that he is a master teacher who meticulously plans a successful progression for his students. Feinberg urges his pupils to study the score before producing any sound. He believes only then will the pupil’s playing become a creative act that turns the world of musical images into actual sound. Feinberg describes virtuosic playing as the result of a victory of intellect over earthly matter, resulting in the listener seeing clearly the spirit and essence of the musical art. The continuity of the artist and his work goes hand in hand as Feinberg describes in “Pianism as Art:”

“Sometimes the most prosaic attempts lead to unexpected artistic discoveries, while an inspired breakthrough requires long, unrelenting work for triumphal practical results. Everything in the work of an artist is important and illuminated by the grand aesthetic goal. It is hard to distinguish in art between carefully worked out techniques, which form the daily labor of an artist, and the more rare, enlightening and intuitively found paths and solutions. There are no accomplishments that have not been preceded by many steps in developing mastery and an understanding of the principles of the creative method. It is commonly objected that the path of a creative artist is different from the usual conscious behavior of man that it is built of unconscious, intuitive acts, like the path of a lawless comet in the predictable circle of planets. However, much can be accounted for in the domain of artistic instinct; a constant, stable logic of artistic interactions can be found, just as a comet’s orbit can be marked on a map of the stars.”

Feinberg gives credit to his compositions for his pianistic skills. He realized the moment of activating the sound image influences and enhances the kinetic process with regard to Beethoven’s Appasionata Sonata, which Feinberg played many times; he said this work is rewarding only when you are finding new sound and new conceptions. Feinberg’s brother Leonid describes his practice regiment starting with his own

34 See Appendix A
35 See Appendix A
transcriptions of Bach’s Chorale Preludes; “playing with exceptional perfection in the morning hours, tuning himself up for a long rewarding musical day.”

Feinberg did not count how the number of hours he spent at the piano. He often repeated that it is always essential to practice with desire, to love the instrument, and to be able to rest while playing “like a big bird is resting while gliding in the air.” Right before a concert, Leonid describes Feinberg as always being in a happy mood. Feinberg describes the artist-performer appearing in front of the audience as an “important, gifted, complete individuality with an active mind, a rich inner world, and the special mastery of musical form that may be called the gift of artistic vision.” The artistic inspiration that Feinberg believed in does not completely reject the mind, which corrects the free imagination during moments of creative impulse. The most fruitful hours of creation may coincide with those of rigorous critical thinking. Feinberg says: “One should not merely live and feel in art, one has to live through a great deal and endure a great deal.” Feinberg believes the artist changes with the times as well, stating that the artist is alive only as long as his performing concepts remain unfinished and transformed along with modern musical art. The artistic development is constantly ongoing and benefits from exposure to all the arts.

36 See Appendix A
CONCLUSION

Through the extensive interviews included here as well as recordings, reviews, and Feinberg’s pedagogical writings, we are able to come to a better understanding of Feinberg’s life and work. Feinberg showed from a very young age an extraordinary talent that developed into a cultured, spiritual and experimental composer. Feinberg was a modest man with many friends in the Moscow Conservatory who thought extremely highly of him. He was always cautious of self-promotion, which hindered his compositions from becoming more mainstream. Feinberg always believed in the continuous intertwined relationship between the artist and his art. Tatiana Nikolaeva wrote, “Each of his sonatas represent a poem of life.”

Feinberg’s early compositional style inclined toward the Scriabinesque style, while later evolving into a more diatonic musical language. While his heart and performing style were cemented in 19th century romanticism, Feinberg lived a multifaceted life as a pianist, pedagogue and composer, through his transcriptions, cadenzas, miniature pieces and song settings. With the examples of the virtuosic piano sonatas, we see Feinberg push the boundaries of piano technique even further than previous composers. He was a piano pedagogue who taught future generations of pianists and composers. Feinberg wrote two books on the subject of piano playing including “Destiny of musical form” and “Pianism kak iskusstvo: Pianism as Art”.

Pianism as Art was originally published in Moscow in 1965, and now is in the process of
The evolution of Feinberg's compositional style may be the cause of why he is not well known today. He did not compose an extensive output of music, instead mainly focusing on a small amount of virtuosic piano pieces, written before World War II. Due to the repressive Stalin regime, modern experimentalist composers such as Feinberg were not able to thrive in society.

In comparison to Scriabin, Feinberg the man was:

“Very much a man of this world, with all the qualities to inspire tremendous loyalty among fellow professors, students, composers, audiences…he showed genuine interest in all people around him. His modesty allowed openness to new thoughts and ideas, reflected in a huge repertoire of historic and contemporary works. The self-centered Scriabin rarely played music other than his own, thought that his way was the only possible way, and showed scant interest in those around him. He possessed the otherworldly attitude of a dreamer, albeit with the tools and means of a master craftsman. Feinberg’s charisma represented the attainment of power to Scriabin’s hunger for it, urgency to Scriabin’s mania. They did share a central compositional tenet in their desire to go well beyond previously set limits, to express, in Alexandrov’s words, “that which has not yet found its voice but is longing to do so.” Music by the great humanist and the great mystic remains starkly relevant to our present society, perpetually seeking balance through life’s universal, unanswerable questions.”

Feinberg was a great master of the piano who expanded its capabilities through his virtuosic sonatas. He had a life-long admiration for Bach, evident through his transcriptions and recordings of the Well-Tempered Clavier. As a piano pedagogue, Feinberg was dedicated to teaching at the Moscow Conservatory and continued in the tradition of his great teachers. He also left an infallible legacy as one of the great Russian pianists of the 20th century, evident through his magnificent recordings. A former student of Feinberg says, “Feinberg was an extremely cultured, educated, intellectual, honest and decent person. His great knowledge and respect for people gave him an ability to win

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favor through his artistic and personal nature.” 38 During the repressive period in Russia of Socialist Realism, Feinberg was still able to stay true to his own style and art by creating music for future generations to experience. An all around Renaissance man, Feinberg is deserving of a revival of his music and recordings.

38 Ibid., 85.
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**ARTICLES**


**INTERNET SOURCES**


APPENDIX A

INTERVIEWS/CORRESPONDENCES (Translated from Russian to English)

(The treasures of documented interviews from the past help the current and future
generations better understand and relate to that specific individual. In the case of Samuil
Feinberg, we are able to witness his cautious language, in response to the repressive
Stalin Regime in his interview with psychologist Vitsinsky. The candid and revealing
interviews included here between Feinberg and his brother, and Feinberg and his teacher
Goldenweiser give the reader a better description of this exceptional man.)

INTERVIEW OF FEINBERG BY PSYCHOLOGIST A.V. VITSINSKY:

[The following conversation with Feinberg was conducted by the psychologist A. V.
Vitsinsky in Moscow on January 23, 1946, transcribed by a stenographer and
Feinberg’s comments are highly speculative. He frequently interjects
“perhaps…but…maybe.” As all of his non-didactic writings and speeches were
made with caution, restraint, and bore obligatory references to the Soviet
dictatorship, this unique text remains his most candid.]

My parents didn’t study music but they enjoyed it. My father was a highly educated
(Ph.D) lawyer. I was six years old when I started to teach myself and play by ear. It was
discovered that I had perfect pitch and could identify any note, but I didn’t start formal
studies until I was 10 years old. I grew up in Moscow.
When I was ten I started to study more or less formally: before that they tried to teach me
but it was sporadic. In the beginning I had my sister’s teacher, Sofia Abramova
Gourevich. She played wonderfully. Her mother was very musical but more interested in
salon music. The whole family was musical and treated me very affectionately due to my
abilities. Sofia Abramova taught me a little bit but I was on my own before I was 10,
improvising and only playing by ear. I read music and even remember one example: they
assigned me a Beethoven Sonatina G major but by mistake I bought the easy Sonata in G
(op 49): That was a big step forward.
I don’t remember exactly when, perhaps at ten or eleven, I began lessons with A. F.
Jensen, working with him systematically. He gave me a lot. He made us [Feinberg and his sister] play four-hands so we got acquainted with Beethoven and other classics. But I was familiar with Mozart, Beethoven and Haydn much earlier than Chopin or Tchaikovksy: other classics came even later. Our home wasn’t so musical that people would come over. My childhood memories are more connected with Beethoven. It was a joke in Russia that kids are sitting on the 2nd volume of Beethoven sonatas and playing from the 1st. It was the same with me: I played from the 1st volume because the 2nd was too difficult.

I studied with great interest but was a bit distracted and sometimes was just plain lazy. I could improvise for hours with great passion, but practicing exercises for hours wasn’t for me. I was always careful with my teachers and learned what they assigned. Jensen was a student of Prof. Shishkin and when I started at the Conservatory, Shishkin was still teaching. I studied with Jensen up to age 14, afterwards with Goldenweiser.

**Did you come to Jensen with habits formed while you played alone?**
Yes, with dilettantish playing, as I could easily play Beethoven sonatas. But it was a big mess because Jensen immediately started teaching things which I felt were easy. I don’t recall him being very demanding. I easily and quickly memorized all those little pieces so the main work was fulfilling my teacher’s more exacting directions. Jensen believed I should be raised on the classics. We were playing a lot of Bach, Beethoven and Mozart. When I turned 13 he gave me a gift – the complete volumes of Chopin in Mikuli’s edition. He thought that even Chopin should be approached with caution, for in some pieces there is a sickly beginning capable of influencing the healthy development of a musician. Jensen took a very conservative position. From age 12 I went to concerts very often: I heard D’Albert, Reisenauer, Hofmann, and other eminent musicians.

**At that time was there a very serious attitude toward your musical education? Did you consider becoming a professional musician?**
Yes. When I started with Jensen it was clear that I would become a professional musician. But my parents had a very serious attitude and never overestimated my abilities. They tried to give me everything necessary: concert tickets, scores, and an instrument. I remember that in the early stages of my education a fine piano appeared—very expensive and somehow difficult for my parents, but they did everything to nurture a real musician and never showed me off, pampered me, or lavished praise. Such things didn’t exist.

When I was about 12, I wrote a certain composition. My father tried to talk me into writing it out but at that time I thought that if you’ve composed something, why write it down? It is ready anyway. But as my father was interested to see if I could manage to, I did. It was like a Nocturne, in F# minor, somewhere between Mendelssohn and Heller. E-sharp took the place of F-natural.

**Did your parents think you needed to develop this side of your talent, or guide you in this direction as well?**
Yes, Jensen constantly reminded my parents about that. He said it was necessary for me to start theory classes but I was a Gymnasium student and had its lessons to study, so I
didn’t have enough time left for composing. In 1905, I was fifteen and started studying with A. B. Goldenweiser. He sought to force me to study more professionally. Goldenweiser suggested that those classes shouldn’t be private but at the Philharmonia’s music school, where he was a professor. I started to work there, mixing Gymnasium with Music School, but those studies were interrupted by the 1905 Revolution. The Philharmonic society’s Board of Directors took a very reactionary position and the most progressive professors left, including Goldenweiser. In 1906, he became a professor at the Moscow Conservatory and as his student I got in too.

**Compared to Jensen, what was new in your studies with Goldenweiser?**

Do you want me to define my work with Goldenweiser?

That will be very desirable in order to understand your road of development and if you are not against it, maybe you will tell us which kind of atmosphere and interests were at the Conservatory at that time, the kinds of people and surroundings?

I don’t want to talk about it because I will be compelled to talk about people who are still alive.

**But what were you playing? What kind of music left the deepest traces in your memory? What were your programs in your 8th and 9th years?**

This kind of biography will be of no interest to anyone. I was meeting with a lot of people who gave me something and I gave them something but I don’t want to talk about it. Goldenweiser continued with the classics, above all Beethoven, Mozart and Bach. I started to work on the Well Tempered Clavier with him which I later played at the graduation exam. I also played Liszt and Chopin, but less. Goldenweiser now does not use this method any more, since at that time he was a very young teacher, 32 years old, and his inclinations were towards the classics. Perhaps that explains how when I later started to study Liszt and Chopin, I had some difficulties which I was overcame by myself, after the Conservatory. But it is important to note that when I was about to graduate, Goldenweiser assigned me the 3rd Rachmaninoff Concerto. The rules then were that the whole program should be prepared no more than 2-3 months before graduation and Goldenweiser adhered to these rules. When I was finishing 9th level my graduation program included not only the 48 Preludes & Fugues by Bach, (I studied both books during the year and was only repeating them here) but also a Handel Concerto in Stradal’s transcription, an Adagio by Mozart, Chopin’s Nocturne in C minor, the 4th Sonata of Scriabin, then Franck’s Prelude Choral & Fugue, then Rachmaninoff’s 3rd Concerto, all prepared in a very short time.

While studying at the Conservatory (and Goldenweiser remembers this), it was clear that I learned very quickly. If he assigned me 2 Preludes & Fugues by Bach on a Tuesday to be ready and memorized for Friday, I was able to. I remember I once needed to learn the 8th sonata of Scriabin very fast, which I had never heard played or seen the score to. I learned it in 4 days, a record for me. Now I would never try to study such a work in so few days. Now my perception of everything is less intense. I memorized things very fast in a short period of time and could prepare them for a concert, but then I would forget them very fast. But the works I needed to repeat at a young age I remembered for life, for
example, Preludes & Fugues of Bach, most of Beethoven’s Sonatas, all that I played in my youth. If I hear something, I don’t have at all the ability to play it by ear, yet I remember things very well if done consciously, actively, and studied thoroughly on my own. Then I remember it quickly and permanently, but if I need to grab something quickly, that is not easy.

**So, when you must rely on the ear alone, it is not easy to remember?**

When I’m studying thoroughly it also involves the ear, because everything I remember I can reproduce in my inner ear. There I am working actively, trying to get acquainted with the work thoroughly and practically. I don’t have a good visual memory. When I play the same piece in different editions it never interferes as I don’t always know where I am through a visual perception of the text. My memory of course – aural memory and inner hearing, is always connected to a feeling of movement. I always know where the sound lies and with which finger it is produced.

**What if the movement is isolated? Have you ever studied away from the instrument?**

I never did. and never use this method, but it can be very good. There are a few methods I respect very much in spite of my never using them so I cannot recommend them because I’ve never tried them myself. It never happened that I was away from an instrument for any period. I was never forced to read a score by eye only.

**Which composers made such a strong impressions on me to serve as an impulse to create and improvise?**

Of course first of all the classics, Bach and Beethoven, they are the most important. Then Chopin – he influenced me enormously. From the time when Jensen gave me the scores as a gift I was deeply into Chopin. But then I was very conservative and didn’t have a development like others, who could play Scriabin’s late compositions by age 12. My musical development was more gradual. It didn’t matter what I encountered- I had a cautious attitude towards everything new, especially at certain times when someone frightened me with Wagner and Liszt. Chopin or Schumann never frightened me as I always thought of it as beautiful music which I simply didn’t know well enough. The same with Tchaikovsky: He attracted me but I played him less. To play Tchaikovsky symphonies with my sister was more difficult than to play Beethoven or Mozart.

I had a new friend who was a passionate Wagnerite but he obviously indicated excerpts which failed to involve me. That happens very often. Wagner’s music always left an antipathic impression on me, not from its complex harmony but simply because it impresses me as being in poor taste. Wagner has such melodies, of which the harmonization still seems unpleasant. But I value Wagner very highly for other qualities. The same with Liszt. First he scared me with his Rhapsodies, which seemed very coarse musically: only much later did I understand his worth. I started to value Liszt after the Conservatory when I was studying the B minor Sonata.

I also became acquainted with Scriabin in the Conservatory. I was very attracted to his music but he seemed to me at the time a difficult composer, like Medtner. Also at that time I underestimated Rachmaninoff despite my attraction to him and liking his music.
Did you only study the piano at the Conservatory?
Only the piano.

Did you perform at evening recitals?
I was in very good standing with Goldenweiser so he always chose me to play, even at symphonic concerts. For example I played Chopin’s E minor concerto with Issay Dobrowen. He played the first movement, and I the second and third. That was a symphonic concert conducted by Ippolitov-Ivanov at the Great Hall, called the Rubinstein concert. If you are interested in the psychology of creativity, I can enlighten you.

Have images ever appeared which relate to your creative process as a composer?
I would say it like this: First of all, creativity is planned. In this case we clearly see the connection in a desire to put some idea, thought, picture into music. There is vocal creativity first of all, where we have a word. I need to mention that in my songs I went through a conscious realization of this or that idea or image in the text. For example, I have a song based on a poem by Blok, then the name of the poem... there is no way around Singing Blizzards. In this case I was not thinking that I must depict a blizzard but somehow, sounds in the accompaniment, provided what was necessary.
I was extremely interested in this occurrence and even thought that we can use definitions such as a hidden plan as opposed to a conscious plan. Of course what I value most in music is hidden planning, when certain ideas suddenly and unexpectedly reach very vivid and complete resolutions.
If you were to ask me to explain this, I could not. Only after time passes do I clearly know how in certain cases an impression influenced me in a particular composition. In songs this is an intuitive creative process in which the word finds adequate expression in sound, however it is difficult to say if we can have the perspective of something being wrong or right. That I think is more likely related to the philosophy of art. We should not deny a natural link between thought and a musical image because there is a flexible connection between them showing how the same musical image corresponds to different meanings, emotions and their opposites.
An emotional state can correspond to various musical ideas. The philosopher Schopenhauer talked about it sometime ago: he had a special interest in this matter. Wagner also wrote on it in his theoretical works.
At a recent lecture I called this connection epigraphic in the same way an epigraph is sometimes able to open, more or less, a fullness. It is the same when a text can be set by different composers who grasped the main thought of the poem very differently. All of this can be very true, right, and emotionally persuasive.
But I allow for the moment of conscious depiction. For example, in Liszt’s [Legende no.1] Predication aux oiseaux, he depicts the chirping of birds, or in Au bord d’une source, the splash of a stream. It is hard to imagine that Liszt didn’t notice that, for it is clear that the idea of depiction is at work here.
But sometimes there are compositions where the meaning is revealed unexpectedly, even to the composer himself. It happens in some Romantics. With Schubert and Schumann you wouldn’t find an external depiction but rather, an inner connection. That is what I call hidden planning and I think that it is not only in songs but in all of music, in each
composition. Yet a composition cannot be written without the inner urge, without the inner goal. These inner qualities will not be present with a formal goal only. I cannot imagine such a composition, however I can easily let myself think that composers need a formal perspective to let these inner feelings appear and realize themselves, and immediately, after this perspective, we have a meaning which fills a given form. Without that I cannot imagine a real musical artist, and even more, a composer.

I was never this sort of Formalist. Once, yesterday, I was playing the Appassionata on the radio and the announcer asked if I thought Beethoven had a certain image of an idea. I said that I didn’t gain such knowledge from Beethoven’s biographies and also many things remain unclear to me, but I cannot imagine that the moment would never come when a certain melody, theme or musical depiction would correspond to a certain thought or image. I realize that this will be very subjective, but for that moment, it will be necessary. For example, in a lyrical poem by Tiutchev [Blessed is one who visited this world in its woeful moments] this is a brilliant thought but I can feel it deeply only in this precise case. And this case is not the only one which gives us the possibility to open up the meaning but in this very moment, the main thoughts of the poem are opening with a special force. And I am sure that a performer without a formal attitude towards interpretation needs to have those moments. Those moments should not necessarily come to him on stage: they can come while he is studying at home. As a pianist you have this experience, because all of a sudden, the thought and idea of a work become exceptionally clear and bright, as the idea connects with something. And if our perception is such, we have more of a basis to think that the composer was also inspired by a high point in his life and his composition was not just a formal process.

Regarding my own creativity, I always feel that if I am working on some composition a big part of my real emotions, my real life are in it, that my creative process is not remote from life and the emotions. There can be such vivid artistic impressions, sometimes happening in life. However if I were to teach composition, I would more likely recommend to my students not to wait for this inner voice which forces a person to work and accomplish an idea. On the contrary, I would advise them to take a formal point of view because the rest is inevitable if you are a real artist. From my point of view, if you are a real musician and you react to, say, the sound of thirds, it would occupy a certain place in your life. And the opposite too, for if something is happening in your life, you also feel it musically.

**Does it apply to performance practice?**
Yes it can apply to performance practice but I don’t think we can fully separate musical performance from people who write creative compositions. I don’t think it is normal: maybe [Heinrich] Neuhaus is right: In his last article he said that Richter is a hidden composer. It is as if you fill a certain container up to its brim, you are never sure that it wouldn’t go over. And if you think that performing is a creative moment, which is overflowing together with a certain performing goal, then the creative moment always allows us to sometime feel itself in a thematic improvisation, a new reading of the text or something not always connected to performing.

**What is the inner relationship between your activities of creation and performance?**
About my creative activity . . . what can I say? Unfortunately my creative work was very
often interrupted by such difficult responsibilities as performance goals and teaching – that I was absolutely knocked out of the composition world. Creative work needs the same cultivation, even more than performing work. I can tell you the terrible feelings I experienced. When you have a musical thought but it is not fully formed for a final draft, you doubt that you are at a certain edge and are afraid to forget something very important or notate it incorrectly, but at the same time you need to leave this work because you have other commitments.

I should say that one of the most unpleasant musical feelings is when a composer is afraid to forget an important theme or idea, however I never forget anything valuable. My ideas all reappeared but unfinished compositions resulted because of this. For example I performed the 1st Piano Concerto in 1930. There were a few places with which I was not totally satisfied. If I would have revised those unsatisfactory parts at that time, I would have finished it, but now time has passed and I don’t want to go back to this circle of ideas, so the Concerto remains a composition which I don’t play only because of those few bars. In spite of many requests during those years, I refused to play it. I need to rework the orchestration and I don’t want to return to those thoughts.

But if we judge by how fruitful your composing and performing activities have been, we can say that in your case, both directions, more or less, harmoniously intervened in complementing each other.

I don’t think it’s exactly like this. It only seems to be harmonious, but no: performing reflected on composing, yes, but it slowed it down very much. I don’t know: maybe I didn’t lose anything valuable this way, but I have moments when I regret that I gave too much to performing. Yet on the contrary, I cannot say so [about composing effecting performance], as I noticed that along with the appearance of my compositions, my abilities as a pianist were improving. For me it was absolutely clear that my pianism and technical mastery of the instrument owe a lot to my composing. I am always surprised why good composers sometimes don’t play the piano well. I remember a very long time ago I spoke with Goldenweiser about a very successful performance of his and he replied that he wasn’t practicing before, but only composing. And that is exactly what helped me wonderfully. You are writing, seated at the table, and when you get to the piano after, you realize you are playing better. Somehow this moment of activating the sound image influences the kinetic process.

What is the creative process when you are at the instrument?
I create and compose at the instrument. Very often I need to get the major impulse when I am at the keyboard because a lot of ideas form without an instrument. Sometimes a plan comes without an instrument, sometime the major theme comes this way, but before I touch the keyboard, everything seems very remote to me. I become moved by music only when I am perceiving it through its actual sound. I need sound, not to understand where a chord is resolved or something like that, but so I can feel the sound’s elemental force. As a performer, what do want to mention as being most important? I only can say that when I look back at my work, at my interpretive path, clearly it always gave me new possibilities as a performer. It is a great pity that it naturally ended so early: so that with age, more and more difficulties will appear which pianists never experience in their youth. Because of our great experience, we can overcome a lot of difficulties by known
methods. I for example could not play trills and need to use certain forces which you do not need. I know that because many different pianists . . . let's say an occurrence such as Gilels, who appeared like a meteor which demonstrated absolutely phenomenal digital and motor abilities. But if we want to talk about Gilels' technique, we cannot say that five years ago he didn't have the technique he has now. We don't feel that, even if he were to tell me that he once lacked something which he now has. If he is playing the same work we cannot say that before he didn't grasp something and now does. I did not have this. On the contrary, if I will select any of my periods as a pianist, it seemed to me that in each period I was gaining something new, something which before I didn't have on a great scale, and the one who can prove this is Goldenweiser. I remember when I finished Conservatory at 21, in 1911, I came to Goldenweiser about 1916-1917 to show him what I had done during that time. He was stunned by my success and progress in the technical field. This way, at age 27, I was much better technically than at age 21. By age 32 I was playing incomparably better technically than at age 27. Of course a certain age comes when you stop progressing, naturally. In truth, I think that I can even make some progress now but of course it's more difficult. Obviously, my views on pianism were correct because I achieved results from them. If I were to look from this point of view at what I'm doing now, when I'm working on a new work and compare it with what I did when I was 17 or 18, the feeling now is that I was only wasting time then. In other words, I didn't understand many principles or facets of pianism which are absolutely clear now. But if we compare it with the results I gain in my current way of overcoming this or that technical difficulty, then we see I had wasted a lot of time.

Do you attribute your success which took place between 1927-32 only to the work you did on technique or was it a result of the combination of all the different work you did and in this case was it connected with your playing for Goldenweiser? Or were you consciously working on perfecting your piano abilities?

I need to say that I was never self-assured as a pianist. I was very attentive to how others worked and studied. At a certain time in my life, my teachers gave me a lot, but maybe I studied not only from these teachers. This period of acutely perfecting my technique corresponded with working independently. Things which I could not achieve at the Conservatory came with ease. Earlier my attention was given to those areas, for example, Goldenweiser noticed a gap in my finger technique, so he made me work on Czerny's Studies, but in spite of my diligent application, it brought no result. Later, I found those studies so easy that I didn't need to play them. But at that time I did all of them (op. 740). Obviously something else is important here.

What else? Some special exercise or some different approach?

An absolutely different attitude towards fingers and finger technique. One matter of great importance to me is this: If something seems very difficult to me, I always try to find some simplicity. I cannot imagine that there are such difficulties for which is there is not some simple method. If I cannot get something, I will think it over: What is behind it? I think, look, and seek: What kind of movement is necessary here? Any finger difficulty is resolved this way in the end.
Is simplification a result only on the basis of a rational division and rethinking of the inner structure of a difficulty?

Yes, of course. In this case I need to say that I am no fan of convoluted ideas on technical work. Let’s take a composition such as my 2nd sonata. This is one of the most difficult creations for piano. I wrote it in about two weeks. When it was finished I played it flawlessly. Maybe later when I returned to the sonata, I needed to refresh a few things, but in the beginning I had a totally free command of it and I think that this instinctive understanding of the inner meaning of the sonata is one of the main foundations for a genuine playing technique. Then the ability to sight-read and score reading develops your technique, but sometimes you sit and work on an Etude and you can think as much as you want whether or not to lift a finger – this Liszt/Busoni work [unspecified] would not help at all. Genuine technique should be linked to a real image, maybe a genuine sound image with an understanding of your own capability and shortcomings. Maybe composers who do not play well enough get the sound image easier but with an insufficient understanding of their pianistic abilities and their shortcomings. But such great composers as Rachmaninoff, Medtner and Scriabin were wonderful pianists. They came to their pianism through their own compositions. Long ago, [Nikolai] Zverev [teacher of Rachmaninoff and Scriabin] was upset that Rachmaninoff was improvising instead of playing scales: maybe Rachmaninoff was right? A lot of pianists are reaching a high peak not because they are working so much but in spite of working so much. Especially if you take archaic systems of pianism: those systems are complexes of the most unsuccessful methods and we can only be surprised how genuine pianists surmounted them. If we only imagine how Liszt was taught by Czerny, this system of placing different objects on the hands to create an immobile wrist! I recently saw one school where they recommend a certain way to place the elbow and play. I tried to play this way – everything interests me.

As a pianist, how is your own system developing?

Usually I try simply just to play. I should say that not everything even things which seem very difficult, turn out badly. Sometimes very difficult spots come out fine right away, and only then a new row of difficulties appears. In general I would say that my work on a piece is more likely a fight with future difficulties rather than the desire to master difficulties at first. This trill in the Appassionata’s beginning came out nicely but then didn’t go well! Then I needed some kind of method to overcome this problem. Many pianists complain that it’s not hard to get through the difficulties but to preserve the solutions and habits which they gained during their work.

If we’ll take for example an absolutely new composition which you never played or heard?

I will try just to play it less than fully and until I wouldn’t feel any difficulties such as tired hands, leaps, other things.

Would you play a tempo from the score right away?

Yes, I read scores pretty well. I don’t think you need to play in a slow tempo if you can play it fast. Later, if you have imprecisions, then it can be played slower or with other methods – it depends how well your mechanism is in order.
Are you playing a work as a whole or in pieces?
Of course I am forced to play it in pieces because if I find a passage that I wouldn’t pass by, I will try to master it.

So are you learning a composition sectionally while working out the score?
It is more likely this way: I think for example it is harmful to write in fingering too early. It should be gradually introduced during the process of playing. Students make a mistake if they immediately write fingering in. By the way, it is dangerous before the performance to play in a slow tempo because you can start playing by mistake with different fingering and not with the same hand. I use the slow tempo for a certain goal: when it seems that I still have some imprecision, unevenness, or inadequate tone.

Does it apply to certain passages or to the whole composition?
No, to play the whole work slowly is a torture and unnecessary. I am surprised by some pianists: not everything is similarly difficult. Even Etudes have different goals depending on which place you are. This slow playing is torturous because you want to play in a natural tempo. That’s why I only play certain passages slowly.

Do you remember at a certain meeting Neuhaus was talking about a method of slow motion?
Yes. That was a successful comparison but if I am looking through the lens I am looking at the separate sections. Let’s take Liszt’s B minor Sonata. What is the sense to teach the beginning of the 1st page slowly? I remember when my teacher forced me to play like this, to take the Adagio slower than written.

But some pianists now do the same thing.
This is torture. Adagio is written this way and performed in order to be perceived in this precise tempo. I understand that an Andante con moto or appassionato will be better understood if it will be played slower, but an adagio or largo is the opposite. In a slow tempo they are distorted.

What are the forms of practicing before a concert?
That depends on the circumstances of life. Ideally if I have a concert in 2 weeks I always try to work more in the first week than the second as I often feel I gain good results at the performance because I started to work early on. On the contrary, some slips at the concert can be explained by my having overworked right before the concert. I’m not brave enough to perform in public a composition which I did not play at all. But sometimes if you know a work quite well, it might be better not to play it at all before a concert. I often notice that when I remember a composition which I didn’t play for a relatively long time but had worked on in the past very thoroughly, sometimes the first performance came out very well right away. Then comes the moment when you start working on it and for unknown reasons it is even coming out worse and then afterwards this work again gives a good result. So it is very difficult to understand the correlation between work and result. Here we have somehow a very complex curve. Recently while playing an encore, [Beethoven’s] Sonata in C# minor, op.27, no.2, it sounded worse because the previous day I had worked on details in it. And if in a Beethoven recital I sometimes play it as an
encore without working the previous day, then the result is much better. But this cannot be recommended. You just need to listen to yourself so you would not overdo it before a concert. You need enough time to start getting ready for a concert.

In the days preceding your concert do you work mostly on the whole thing or details, separate fragments, certain passages?
Of course part of it is the playing itself, but such playing when I go back every minute to certain details which seem to me inadequately played. I recently thought that there are such works which I have played for a long time already, such as the Appassionata: if I wouldn’t conceive a new idea on how to play it, then this work wouldn’t have any meaning for me. The work is rewarding only when you are finding some new sound and your own new conceptions.

During rehearsal in the concert hall, are you playing the work from beginning with the idea not to go back to anything despite its outcome?
Sometimes I give myself this goal: to play if not all, then maybe one part from beginning to end, because only then can you find what is a bit difficult or easy for you with a more precise and accurate judgment.

Are you working on special exercises or technical work each day?
In principle, I do not deny the benefit of a good exercise. I even think it might be good to do that but unfortunately I don’t have time for this work. I think we need to understand it as follows: if we can’t get a certain spot right, we need to find the means and approach for it to come out. It’s always some pieces which don’t come out. If I cannot do the trill in the Appassionata, then I learn the end of the trill and that is my technical work. I am polishing these seven notes absolutely slowly in order to know that in the end we have these seven notes and that it started to come out. Also one of the methods is to learn the ends of these passages, the fragments from which these passages are built from. With each difficulty you need to pay attention to what this problem consists of, to the most important moments. I would advise learning the simpler things which rest on the foundation of this difficulty.  

INTERVIEW FROM LEONID FEINBERG (BROTHER) ABOUT SAMUIL

“Samuil always started his day with Bach’s chorale preludes, in his own arrangements. Samuel tuned himself up for a long musical day by playing with exceptional perfection in the morning hours. He did not count how many hours he spent at the piano, and never complained about fatigue, even when his practice exceeded the norm, usually six hours. He often repeated that it is essential to get used to practice with desire, to love the instrument, and to be able to rest while playing — ‘like a big bird is resting while gliding in the air. Every composition is built to offer time for rest.’ Samuil did not, however, play

any scales or arpeggios. He believed that the composition itself should give spiritual and technical satisfaction. Usually, he did not allow himself to play any musical jokes or parodies, but sometimes during parties, he would improvise and entertain the guests; his forms, harmonies, technique, and native intelligence were nevertheless always perfect. It created admiration and fascination for members of the musical word.

After playing Bach for about an hour, he would move to his own work as a composer or a pianist. Samuil never played pieces in slow tempo. If he found a difficult passage, he would polish particular spots or several measures meticulously and then quickly move back to fast tempo. I cannot recall any moments of confusion, chaos, stops or the necessity of improvisation to cover memory slips at Samuil’s concerts. Obviously, I can say he was preparing for concerts by performing at home. His complete security on the stage was mainly a result of the correct homework and time management when preparing for a new program; as a concert drew closer, he would spend less time on a program. The literature was prepared in advance, after which the artist just simply maintained it in a good shape. Samuil recommended to “behave well” before a concert, that is, do not get nervous or tired, do not be distracted and do not practice a lot. Right before a concert, while wearing a tailcoat, he was always in a happy mood. Before the concert, when playing in a green room, Feinberg never warmed up with compositions from the concert program. The goal of the pre-concert playing was to be able to concentrate and play perfectly —no mistakes whatsoever; that he always accomplished.”

CORRESPONDENCES BETWEEN FEINBERG AND GOLDENWEISER:

Feinberg to Goldenweiser, July 14, 1949:

It has been a year and half since I had to completely abandon not only composing but also any concert activities, due to unfair accusations of formalism. I have not heard any word of genuine sympathy and consideration from you. When we meet you talk to me the way people talk to strangers on subjects nobody is interested in... Such relationships, created without fault of my own, are very hard on me because I feel obligated to you as my teacher and a person who was always warm and friendly to me...

You must have noticed that in the last half year, despite all my troubles and difficulties, I practically never turned to you for any help or advice. Considering the hard times I’m going through now, it is clear that I would hardly bother you with any requests in the future...

I would not want to sadden you by this letter. Even less, I wanted to reproach you in any way... However, some things are better to be spoken out so not to think about them any longer.

With love and respect, C. Feinberg.
Goldenweiser to Feinberg, July 22, 1949, in response to Feinberg’s letter:

Dear Samuil Evgenievich,

Last Tuesday in Moscow I received your letter which, in contrary to your wishes, made me very sad.

All my life I constantly try to do everything I can, not only for people who are close to me, but also for those who are distant...

Here is my letter I wrote to Kaftanov, after you and Grisha [G.P. Ginsburg] were not appointed as members of the Conservatory Council: “Dear Sergey Vasilievich, as the oldest professor of the Moscow conservatory, I cannot but express my surprise and deep distress by the fact of the exclusion of professors C. Feinberg and G. Ginsburg from the Conservatory Council.

Samuil Feinberg is a world-class pianist, an exceptionally cultured musician, and a person of distinguished nobility who enjoyed common respect. He was always an active member of the Council, and his advice was always taken into consideration by the Council.

Gregory Ginsburg is an outstanding pianist, a profound artist, and alongside Oborin, one of the best pianists of the middle generation of the Conservatory’s faculty. I have no doubt that a great number of professors of the Conservatory share my attitude towards this fact.

Both these professors are my best and most favorite students. I regard not including them in the Conservatory Council as a bitter insult inflicted on me at the twilight of my life and at the end of almost half a century of my work at the Conservatory.

Feinberg and Ginsburg are the best carriers of our pianistic school traditions. It will be inexpressibly hard for me to enter the Council from which they were undeservedly excluded.

My friend, Samuil, if I don’t say anything that does not mean I don’t do anything... Unfortunately, the legend that I can change anything I want has not grounds... I always loved you and I do love you now.

Yours,

Goldenweiser.

Feinberg replied to Goldenweiser, July 30, 1949:

I am glad to admit that my reproach for you changing your attitude towards me is baseless. All my life I have got used to bowing to your authority as one of the greatest
musicians whom I’ve met. My obviously excessive demands can be explained by natural feelings of the pupil towards his teacher and that can excuse some phrases in my letter.

However, I should repeat, that what for many musicians was a hard blow but at the same time a great stimuli for further activity, was for me, in my modest position as a pianist, pedagogue, and composer, was utter annihilation—a deletion of all my past creative life.

With love, Samuil Feinberg
APPENDIX B: DISCOGRAPHY

FEINBERG’S OWN RECORDINGS OF VARIOUS CLASSICAL PIECES:

*Feinberg-First Recordings 1929-1948 Bach, Beethoven, Scriabin, Label Arbiter
#118, Audio CD April 1, 1999

Contents:
Johann Sebastian Bach
   Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue d-moll, BWV 903 (1948)
   Well tempered clavier book 2,
      No. 15 G-Dur, BWV 884 (late 1930’s)
      No. 19 A-Dur, BWV 888 (late 1930’s)
      No. 20 a-moll, BWV 889 (late 1930’s)
Johann Sebastian Bach = Samuil Feinberg
   Chorale Prelude, BWV 711 (1929)
   Chorale Prelude, BWV 649 (1929)
   Concerto nach Vivaldi a-moll BWV 593 1st. mov. (1929)
Ludwig van Beethoven
   Piano Sonata No. 23 ("Appassionata") Op. 57 (late 1930’s)
Robert Schumann
   Waldszenen Op. 82-8 (late 1930’s)
   Waldszenen Op. 82-7 (late 1930’s)
Franz Liszt
   Consolation No. 5 (late 1930’s)
   Consolation No. 6 (late 1930’s)
Anatol Konstantinovich Lyadov
   Idylle, Op. 25 (1947)
Samuil Feinberg
   Suite (4 pieces in etude form), Op. 11 (1923)
Alexey Vladimirovich Stanchinsky
   Prelude in form of Canon (1929)
Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin
   Mazurka fis-moll, Op. 25-7 (1947)
   Etude, Op. 42-3 (1929)
   Fragilité, Op. 51-1 (1929)

*Samuil Feinberg in sound and sight, Label: Arbiter - #146, Audio CD (2005)

Contents:
Johann Sebastian Bach
   Fantasia and Fugue a-moll, BWV 904 (1962)
Sinfonia in A-Dur, BWV 798 (1952)
Toccata D-Dur, BWV 912 (1962)
Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin
Piano Sonata No.5 (1948/1/22 live)
Sergei Rachmaninoff
Preludes Op.23-1, 3, 7, 8 (1952)
Etude Tableau Op.39-9 (1952)
Franz Liszt
Consolations No.1, 2 (1952)
Frederic Chopin
Ballade No.4, Op.52 (1961)
Johann Sebastian Bach/Franz Liszt
Fantasia and Fugue g-moll, BWV 542 (1952)
Johann Sebastian Bach/Samuil Feinberg
Prelude and Fugue e-moll, BWV 548 (1962)

*Samuil Feinberg Concerto No.2 Suite No.2 Label: Melodiya (MEL CD 10 01005)
Audio CD (2006)
Contents:
The USSR State Symphony Orchestra
Conductor Nikolai Anosov
Samuil Feinberg
Concerto for piano and orchestra No. 2, Op. 36 (1946)
Samuil Feinberg
Suite for Piano No. 2, Op. 25 (1939)
Ludwig van Beethoven
Piano Sonata No.11 op.22 (1960)

*The art of Samuel Feinberg Vol.1 J.S.Bach Well-Tempered Clavier Label:
Contents:
Disc I - Book I No.1 - 17
Disc II - Book I No.17 - 24, Book II No.1 - 9
Disc III - Book II No.10 - 24
(Recorded in 1958-1961)

*The art of Samuel Feinberg Vol.2 Beethoven Piano Sonatas no.4, 11, 30 Label:
Contents:
Ludwig van Beethoven
Piano Sonata No.4 op.7 (1961)
Piano Sonata No.11 op.22 (1960)
Piano Sonata No.30 op.109 (1953)

Contents:
Johann Sebastian Bach
  Toccata in D major BWV 912
  Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue in D minor BWV 903
  Aria variata alla maniera Italiana BWV 989
  Fantasia and Fugue in A minor BWV 904

Johann Sebastian Bach/Samuil Feinberg
  Largo from Sonata in C major BWV 529
  Allein Gott in der Hoh' sei Ehr' BWV 662
  Wer nur den lieben Gott lasst walten BWV 647
  Allein Gott in der Hoh' sei Ehr' BWV 663
  Allein Gott in der Hoh' sei Ehr' BWV 711
  Prelude and Fugue in E minor BWV 548


Contents:
Ludwig van Beethoven
  Piano Sonata No.4 op.7
  Piano Sonata No.11 op.22
  Piano Sonata No.19 Op.49-1
  Piano Sonata No.20 Op.49-2

*Russian Piano Masters - S.Feinberg/Beethoven Samuil Feinberg 1 Label: Tri-M (DMCC-24030)

Contents:
Ludwig van Beethoven
  Piano Sonata No.4 op.7 (1961)
  Piano Sonata No.11 op.22 (1960)
  Piano Sonata No.30 op.109 (1953)

*Russian Piano Masters - S.Feinberg/Bach Samuil Feinberg 2 Label: Tri-M (DMCC-24031)

Contents:
Johann Sebastian Bach
  Partita No.1 B-dur BWV 825 (1948)
  Toccata D-dur BWV 912 (1947)
  Fantasia and fugue a-moll BWV 904 (1961)
  Toccata c-moll BWV 911 (1948)

Johann Sebastian Bach/Samuil Feinberg
  Choral Prelude BWV 663 (1962)
  Choral Prelude BWV 711 (1952)
  Prelude and fugue e-moll BWV 548 (1948)
*Russian Piano Masters - S.Feinberg/Schumann Samuil Feinberg 3 Label: Tri-M (DMCC-24032)
Contents:
Robert Schumann
    Allegro h-moll op.8 (1952)
    Humoreske B-dur op.20 (1953)
    Waldscenen op.82 (1950)

*Scriabin and Scriabinians Label: Russian Season - #788032 Audio CD (November 11, 1997)
Contents:
Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin
    Mazurkas Op.3 No.1-7 (1952)
    Preludes (24) Op. 11 No.1,13,14
    Prelude in G sharp minor, Op. 22/1
    Mazurka in F sharp major, Op. 40/2 ; Op. 57/1
    Etudes (12) Op. 8 No.12 in F sharp major, Op. 32/1
    with Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin Preludes (5) Op. 15 No.1-4
    Preludes (5) Op. 16 No.1-5
    with Alexander Goldenweiser Mazurkas (10) Op. 3 No.1-7
    with Samuil Feinberg Preludes (24) Op. 11 No.2,5,8,11,12
    Preludes (6) Op. 13 No.1-6
    Etudes (12) Op. 8 No.2,5
    Etude in C sharp minor Op. 2/1
    Vers la flamme, Op. 72
    with Heinrich Gustavovich Neuhaus
    Other Pianists: Scriabin, Goldenweiser, Neuhaus, Sofronitsky

*Russian Piano School - Samuil Feinberg - Label: Melodiya - Audio CD (February 27, 1996)
Contents:
Johann Sebastian Bach/Samuil Feinberg
    Largo from Trio sonata No. 5, BWV 529(1962/10/13)
    Chorale Prelude, BWV 711 (1952/6/2)
    Chorale Prelude, BWV 662 (1952/6/2)
    Chorale Prelude, BWV 662 (1962/10/4)
    Chorale Prelude, BWV 647 (1962/10/13)
    Chorale Prelude, BWV 663 (1962/10/13)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
    Piano Sonata No. 4 in E flat major, K. 282 (1953/10/1)
    Piano Sonata No. 17 in D major K. 576 (1952/7/26)
    Prelude and fugue in C major, K. 394 (1951/5/17)
    12 Variations on an Allegretto, K. 500 (1951/5/17)
Contents:
Samuil Feinberg – piano, recorded in 1958 – 1961
  Disc I - Preludes and Fugues I - XII
  Disc II - Preludes and Fugues XIII - XXIV
  Disc III - Preludes and Fugues I - XII
  Disc IV - Preludes and Fugues XIII - XXIV

Contents:
Moscow State Conservatoire, 1998
Johann Sebastian Bach
  From DAS WOHLTEMPERIERTE KLAVIER, book II:
  Prelude and Fugue No.1 in C Major, BWV 870
  Prelude and Fugue No.2 in C minor, BWV 871
  Prelude and Fugue No.3 in C sharp major, BWV 872
  Prelude and Fugue No.4 in C sharp minor, BWV 873
  Prelude and Fugue No.5 in D Major, BWV 874
    (October, 1950)
Johann Sebastian Bach/Samuil Feinberg
  Chorale ("Allein Gott in der Hoh sei Ehr"), BWV 662
    (September 22, 1950)
Frederic Chopin
  Ballade No.4 in F minor, Op.52
    (September 22, 1950)
Anatoly Alexandrov
  Nocturne in A major, Op.3 No.1
  Waltz in A minor, Op.3 No.2
    (September 8, 1952)
Recorded in Studio of the Moscow State Conservatoire
Samuil Feinberg
  From PIANO CONCERTO No.2 in D major, Op.36:
    2nd. mov. Andante
    4th. mov. Allegro con brio
    (June 18, 1960)
The Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, conductor Yuri Silantiev
Live in Grand Hall of the Moscow State Conservatoire
*Samuil Feinberg A selection of his finest recordings Vol.2 A.Scriabin Label: Arlecchino - (ARL 50)
Contents:
Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin
  Piano Sonata No.2 Op.19
  Piano Sonata No.4 Op.30
  Mazurkas Op.25-2,3,8,9
  4 Pieces Op.51
  Piano Concerto Op.20

*Samuil Feinberg A selection of his finest recordings Vol.3 R.Schumann Label: Arlecchino - (ARL 125)
Contents:
Robert Schumann
  Humoreske B-dur op.20
  Allegro h-moll op.8
  Waldscenen op.82

*Feinberg plays Tchaikovsky / Chopin / Liszt Label: Harmonia Mundi - CD (HMC 5175)
Contents:
Piotr Tchaikovsky
  Sonata Op.80
Frederic Chopin
  Three Mazurkas Op.59
  Tarantelle Op.43
Franz Liszt
  Mephisto Waltz

Melodiya LP List-

D 418
Contents:
Scriabin
  Concerto (A.Gauk /Radio so.)

D 2810
Contents:
Beethoven
  Sonata No.19, 20, 30

D 2900
Contents:
Tchaikovsky
  Sonata Op.80
D 3781
Contents:
Bach
Partita No.1

D 5106-11
Contents:
Bach
Das Wohltemperierte Klavier Book I

D 5268-73
Contents:
Bach
Das Wohltemperierte Klavier Book II

D 06321
Contents:
Beethoven
Sonata No.4, 11

D 08543
Contents:
Bach
Two Toccatas BWV 911, 912, Fantasia and Fugue BWV 904, Fugue BWV 944,
Aria and Variations in Italian Style BWV 989

D 08873
Contents:
Scriabin
9 Mazurkas Op.25, 4 Pieces Op.51, Sonata No.4

D 8885
Contents:
Scriabin
10 Mazurkas Op.3

D 011057
Contents:
Schumann
Humoresque, Allegro Op.8, Waldscenen No.4, 7,
Liszt
Mephisto Waltz
D 011379
Contents:
Bach
   Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue BWV 903,
Bach/Feinberg
   Choral Preludes BWV 662, 663, Prelude and Fugue BWV 548, Largo from Organ
   Sonata BWV 529

D 012201
Contents:
A. Alexandrov
   Nocturne Op.3-1, Waltz Op.3-2

M10 42461
Contents:
"The World's Leading Interpreters of Music"
Bach
   Two Preludes and Fugues BWV 887, 873, Toccata BWV 911,
Scriabin
   4 Mazurkas, 4 Pieces Op.51, Sonata No.4

M10 45519
Contents:
"The Art of Feinberg Vol.6"
Feinberg
   Concerto No.2 (N. Anosov / State so.)

CM 03035
Contents:
Scriabin

CM 03037
Contents:
Scriabin
   Sonata No.2, 4, 10 Mazurkas Op.3

C10 16859-64
Contents:
"The Art of Feinberg Vol.1-3"
Bach
   Aria and Variations in Italian Style BWV 989, Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue
   BWV 903,
Bach/Feinberg
   Largo from Organ Sonata BWV 529, Choral Preludes BWV 663, 647,
   Prelude and Fugue BWV 548
Beethoven
   Sonata No.4, 20, 30,
Schumann
   Humoresque, 6 Pieces from Waldscenen, Allegro Op.6

C10 20431
Contents:
"The Art of Feinberg Vol.4"
Chopin
   Mazurkas No.36, 37, 38, Tarantella
Liszt
   Mephisto Waltz,
Tchaikovsky
   Sonata Op.80

C10 20433
Contents:
"The Art of Feinberg Vol.5"
Scriabin
   Mazurkas Op.3-1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, Fantasia Op.28, Sonata No.2, 4

R10 01071-4
Contents:
"120th Anniversary of A. Scriabin"
Scriabin
   Sonata No.2

RECENT RECORDINGS OF FEINBERG’S COMPOSITIONS

*SAMUIL FEINBERG - Piano Sonatas No.7-12 Piano: Nikolas Samaltanos (No.9, 10 and 11) Piano: Christophe Sirodeau (No.7, 8 and 12) Label: BIS (2004, BIS-CD-1414)
Contents:
   Piano Sonata No.7 Op.21
   Piano Sonata No.8 Op.21a
   Piano Sonata No.9 Op.29
   Piano Sonata No.10 Op.30
   Piano Sonata No.11 Op.40
   Piano Sonata No.12 Op.48

*SAMUIL FEINBERG - Piano Sonatas No.1-6 Piano: Nikolas Samaltanos (No.1, 4 and 5) Piano: Christophe Sirodeau (No.2, 3 and 6) Label: BIS (2003, BIS-CD-1413)
Contents:
   Piano Sonata No.1 Op.1
   Piano Sonata No.2 Op.2
Piano Sonata No.3 Op.3
Piano Sonata No.4 Op.6
Piano Sonata No.5 Op.10
Piano Sonata No.6 Op.13

Contents:
The complete solo Bach transcriptions by Samuil Feinberg (1890-1962)
  Prelude and Fugue in E minor BWV548
  Prelude
  Fugue
  Largo from Trio Sonata No 5 BWV529
  Thirteen Chorale Preludes
  Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr BWV663
  Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr BWV711
  Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr BWV662
  An Wasserflüssen Babylon BWV653
  Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott BWV720
  Von Gott will ich nicht lassen BWV658
  Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten BWV647
  Kommtst du nun, Jesu, vom Himmel herunter BWV650
  Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend BWV655
  Jesus Christus, unser Heiland BWV665
  Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland BWV659
  Ach bleib' bei uns, Herr Jesu Christ BWV649
  Valet will ich dir geben BWV735
  Concerto in A minor (after Vivaldi) BWV593
  Allegro, Adagio, Allegro

Contents:
Feinberg
  Berceuse Op.19a

*Samuil Feinberg Piano Concerto in C Minor Piano: Vladimir Bunin Label: Consonance (1994, 81-0002)
Contents:
Feinberg
  Piano Concerto No.3 in C minor Op.44
*Hideyo Harada First Prize Schubert Competition 1991 Piano: Hideyo Harada
Label: DIVOX (1995, CDX-25209-2)
Contents:
J.S.Bach/Feinberg
  Largo from Trio Sonata No.5 BWV 529
Feinberg
  Suite No.2 Op.25
  Piano Sonata No.6 Op.13

*XXth Century Russian Piano Music Scriabin/Roslavetz/Lourie/Feinberg Piano:
Christophe Sirodeau Label: Arkadia (1994, AK 152.1)
Contents:
  Piano Sonata No.6 Op.13
  3 Preludes Op.15

*The Art of Maria Grinberg Vol.6 - Transcriptions - Piano: Maria Grinberg Label:
DENON (COCD-80473, 1976/2/5)
Contents:
J.S.Bach/Feinberg
  Largo from Trio Sonata No.5 BWV 529

*KAINRATH Prokofiev Feinberg Mussorgsky Piano: Peter Paul Kainrath Label:
aura (1999, AUR 423-2)
Contents:
Mussorgsky/Feinberg
  Serenade from Songs and Dances of Death
Feinberg
  Three Preludes Op.15
  Piano Sonata No.11 Op.40

Contents:
J.S.Bach/Feinberg
  13 Chorales No.8 (Schubler Chorales No.6 BWV 650)
Feinberg
  Berceuse Op.19a

*Vadim Rudenko/ Kapustin Piano Sonata No.9, etc Piano: Vadim Rudenko Label:
Tri-M (2002, DICC 26075)
Contents:
Tchaikovsky/Feinberg
  Scherzo from Symphony No.6
Contents:
Tchaikovsky/Feinberg
   Scherzo from Symphony No.6
J.S.Bach/Feinberg
   Largo from Trio Sonata No.5 BWV 529

Contents:
J.S.Bach/Feinberg
   Largo from Trio Sonata No.5 BWV 529

Contents:
Tchaikovsky/Feinberg
   Scherzo from Symphony No.6

Contents:
Tchaikovsky/Feinberg
   Scherzo from Symphony No.6

Contents:
   4 Preludes Op.8

Contents:
   4 Preludes Op.8
   Piano Sonata No.6 Op.13
   Piano Concerto No.3 in C minor Op.4
APPENDIX C:

CD REVIEWS

As with my own impressions of Feinberg’s pianistic skills included earlier, there is a common consensus between these CD reviews that his piano playing is unmatched in its depth of sound, virtuosity and naturalness. The following reviews of Feinberg’s recordings confirm the high level/excellence of his playing. The second section includes reviews of recent recordings of Feinberg’s compositions. It is very interesting to read current reactions to his pieces which are now becoming more available as pianists are attempting to play these extremely difficult compositions. The reviews for his compositions, including some world premieres, comment on the untouched musical genius in Feinberg’s compositions, which are now finally being realized.

REVIEWS OF FEINBERG’S PLAYING OF VARIOUS CLASSICAL PIECES

Review of:
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
The Well Tempered Clavier BWV 846-893 (1722, 1744)
Samuil Feinberg (piano)
Recorded Moscow 1958-61
CLASSICAL RECORDS CR 065 [3 CDs: 74.34 + 75.12 + 72.20]
By: Jonathan Woolf

I was last aware of Feinberg’s 48 on Russian Disc back in the mid-nineties. Its stature has survived over forty-five years’ scrutiny, a period that is admittedly significantly less than Edwin Fischer’s pioneering set – which, though older, has always much more widely available – but that still attests to the hold it has exercised over admirers and
detractors alike. Naturally one can be both pro and contra Feinberg throughout the course of nearly four hours but one’s admiration for the immensity of his achievement will be undiminished.

Collectors will have one of the previous transfers of the set. Many will have encountered the Russian Disc, though this became increasingly difficult to obtain. This new transfer doesn’t sound very different from previous incarnations. The original recording, I always thought, was made in 1959 but the years of recording as given here are 1958-61. It wasn’t in any case a conspicuously successful recorded set up, lacking a certain amount of clarity and definition but it is certainly serviceable.

The performances are remarkable and consonant with the corpus of Feinberg’s Bach recordings from the early German discs (on Arbiter) to the final recordings made weeks before his death, of which the Feinberg arrangements of Chorale Preludes are some of the most moving performances known to me.

Salient features are the profound humanity of his approach, the warmth of his playing, the constant tempo and dynamic changes and fluctuations, pervasive rubati and rallentandis. Tempi can frequently be very fast though usually – but not invariably - melodic lines are projected with clarity. He seeks to convey meaning through phrasal plasticity, to sculpt through peaks and troughs of dynamic gradations and to explore the serious nobility of many of the Preludes through the noblest of touches. Such qualities can be heard in the Prelude of the C minor of Book I; in the Prelude of the same book’s C sharp minor he is joyous, intensely alive to the swinging rhythm generated by retardation and acceleration of the rhythm. The beauty of his voicings is plainly audible in the Prelude of the C sharp minor, its density of utterance in the same key’s Fugue. The occasional rushing of the D major Prelude can be contrasted with the kind of rolled chord legato of the Prelude of the E flat minor, though it’s fair to say that Feinberg’s ethos involves an appreciation of contrastive tempi for some of its most immediate impression.

The measured exultance of the Prelude of the A flat major is wondrous. If the momentarily confused voicings of the Fugue in B flat major disconcert one should be aware that Feinberg’s vision is a personal one, embracing the florid as well as the patrician. His fluid tempi and beauty of tone enhance his playing of the Prelude in C major, which opens Book II. Playing of this level of expressivity will occasionally veer toward over-animation but the D major Fugue illustrates the components that go toward such visceral playing – alternation of tempi, richly characterised phraseology, exceptional voicings. If one listens to the Prelude of the F sharp minor one can feel that remarkable ability to increase tension through this myriad of means, to galvanise and build up blocks of dynamism and then to release and dissipate the tension. In his hands inspiration comes fully formed.

Richter and Feinberg occupy differing traditions in the 48 and lucky the collector who can enjoy both, with Fischer, on their shelves. A more modern recording will be necessary but for Feinberg admirers no collection is complete without this recording. The notes are rather concise but there are small but excellently reproduced photographs.
Review of:
Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)
Mazurkas, Opp. 3 and 25
Samuil Feinberg (piano)
rec. 1950s, venue not specified
Track-Listing at end of review
MELODIYA MELCD1002192 [62.52]
By: Stephen Greenbank

Track-Listing-
Ten Mazurkas, Op. 3
No. 1 in B minor [3.44]
No. 2 in F sharp minor [2.11]
No. 3 in G minor [1.58]
No. 4 in E major [3.57]
No. 5 in D sharp minor [4.04]
No. 6 in C sharp minor [2.19]
No. 7 in E minor [3.28]
No. 8 in B flat minor [2.38]
No. 9 in G sharp minor [2.56]
No. 10 in E flat minor [5.31]
Nine Mazurkas, Op. 25
No. 1 in F minor [2.44]
No. 2 in C major [3.29]
No. 3 in E minor [2.07]
No. 4 in E major [3.57]
No. 5 in C sharp minor [3.43]
No. 6 in F sharp major [2.45]
No. 7 in F sharp minor [4.56]
No. 8 in B major [2.45]
No. 9 in E flat minor [3.28]

The name Samuil Feinberg (1890-1962) has never had much prominence among classical music listeners. He was born in Odessa and studied at the Moscow Conservatory with Alexander Goldenweiser. In 1922 he joined the faculty and remained in post until his death. He forged a three-pronged career as pianist, composer and pedagogue. Despite his obscurity in the West, in Russia he was ranked alongside such distinguished pianists as Sofronitsky, Goldenweiser, Ginsburg and Neuhaus. As a composer he produced a substantial output of piano, vocal and chamber works, though I have never heard any of them. Unfortunately, in the Soviet Union, his compositions did not match up to the ideals of social realism, and consequently were rarely performed. As a pianist, he shunned the idea of promoting himself through his own music.

In the early years of the twentieth century, Feinberg met Alexander Scriabin, who was very impressed with the young man’s playing. The pianist’s discography contains,
amongst other things, Scriabin piano sonatas, the piano concerto and the two sets of mazurkas under review here.

Listening to the first mazurka of Op. 3, one wouldn’t be too far off the mark in thinking that it was by Chopin. The same goes for the next few. In fact throughout the opus, one feels the influence of the Polish master. As one progresses to the next set, Scriabin veers away from Chopin’s influence and finds his own voice. Yet, these works are not stamped with the fingerprints of waywardness, chromaticism and mysticism that are a distinguishing feature of his later music; they are a more easy and comfortable listen. The Mazurkas show Scriabin’s progressively evolving harmonic development.

Feinberg’s is a romantic approach, with poetic insights and the application of subtle rubato. Despite the age of the recordings, the beauty of tone shines through, with sensitive pedal response to harmonic shifts, and myriad tonal shadings. Nuance and inflection is intuitively realised. Like many of his other recordings, these are distinguished by virtuosic prowess and technical polish.

Rarely programmed, these delightful works are suffused with a wealth of imagination and compositional skill. More pianists should take them up, and this CD has certainly won me over.

Review of:
Samuel Feinberg (1890-1962)
First recordings 1929-48
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D minor BWV 903
Well Tempered Clavier Book II:
Prelude and Fugue No. 15 in G BWV 884
Prelude and Fugue No. 19 in A BWV 888
Prelude and Fugue No. 20 in A minor BWV 889
Chorale preludes arranged Feinberg:
Allein Gott in der höh sei her BWV 711
Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten BWV 647
Concerto after Vivaldi in A minor BWV 593 arranged Feinberg – First Movement
Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)
Sonata in F minor Op 57 Appassionata
Robert SCHUMANN (1810-1856)
Waldszenen Op. 82:
Jagdlied (No. 8)
Vogel als prophet (No. 7)
Franz LISZT (1811-1886)
Consolation Nos. 5 and 6
Anatole LIADOV (1855-1914)
Idylle Op. 25
Feinberg’s Well-Tempered Clavier, a titanic recording, would be enough to keep his name imperishably alive in the annals of great Bach playing. A pupil of Goldenweiser, of whom he wrote with typical acumen and intellectual elevation, Feinberg was an associate and early exponent of the music of Scriabin (who admired the pianist greatly) – the Scriabin discs on this Arbiter disc are I believe the only extant Feinberg recordings of the composer’s music. He was also an avowed proponent of contemporary Russian composers – Miaskovsky, Stanchinsky and Prokofiev prominent amongst them though there were of course many others. Amongst Russian pianists he was one of the leading exponents of Bach and Beethoven and was an influential figure not least as a profoundly important teacher.

Before the export ban on musicians in the early thirties Feinberg could travel to Germany where he gave recitals and recorded for Polydor. Arbiter’s attractive programme notes – which consist in the main of a fascinatingly incisive and detailed transcription of a 1946 interview between the pianist and A V Vitsinsky – also include a sample programme from a 1929 Berlin concert. No doubt to promote his recent recordings – or maybe as a trial run for the recordings themselves the Vivaldi-Feinberg Concerto, Appassionata and Stanchinsky’s Prelude in Canon Form are all, as it were, on the menu. I first came to Feinberg not through these early discs or even through the Well-Tempered Clavier but through the Chorale Prelude recordings of the 1950s and 1960s. In particular the 1962 discs, recorded barely a week before the pianist’s death from cancer, possess a transformative and transcendent beauty impossible to convey in mere words. And of these the recording of Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr is charged with such spiritual depth that it is numbing in its intensity (it may still be available on BMG 74321 25175 2 as part of the Russian Piano School series). Therefore in the light of my relative familiarity with the later Feinberg it has been a notably instructive experience to listen to these, his first records, but ones made when he was by no means a callow youth. He was nearing forty when he first went into the Berlin recording studios.

His Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue with which the recital begins was actually recorded in Moscow in 1948. It is dramatic and romantic, a leonine traversal but one sensitively shaped. It rises to peaks of declamatory grandeur whilst retaining utter fluency and levels
of characterisation. More Russian discs follow; the Prelude in G from the late 1930s is occasionally overstressed (some rather heavy accents) but he brings out the occasionally gritty inwardness of the A minor Fugue. When we turn to those 1929 Polydors we encounter a rather more galvanic artist. *Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten* for example is exceptionally thunderous and outsize and his Appassionata one of the most driven you will hear. The opening Allegro assai is fissure laden but very exciting (there was clearly a tough side join at 3.00) and whilst the slow movement is not overburdened with sentiment it’s still affectingly done. The finale is not always intact technically but blazes defiantly – a heroic maybe somewhat intemperate reading at times but unignorable as an artistic statement whatever ones reservations.

His Schumann will divide opinion; it sounds rather brisk to me (*Jagdlied* especially) and *Vogel als prophet* lacks mystery. His Liadov however is exquisitely limpid and of the four tiny movements of his own Op 11 Suite – in etude form and dedicated to his revered teacher Goldenweiser - the highlight is the last, a *Tranquillo e cantabile* of elliptical tracery and Scriabinesque elusiveness. Stanchinsky was a composer Feinberg promoted; he plays the Prelude in canon form with admirable clarity and forthright projection. The three Scriabin pieces, barely seven minutes’ worth of music, are as I said the only known survivors of his extensive repertoire. It’s tempting to overemphasize his direct line to authorial imprimatur but listening to the way in which Feinberg binds the F sharp Mazurka is as memorable as the way in which he most movingly conveys its ultimately unresolved tension. His elegance is demonstrated with unambiguous assurance in the last piece of this disc, *Fragilité*, another 1929 Polydor.

Transfers are first class, the printed interview offers rich rewards to the attentive listener and the disc restores to circulation an admirable selection of repertoire, catching him in early to late middle age. He had not yet reached the true plateau of his greatness but this is Feinberg, forceful and sensitive, and an artist very well worth getting to know.

**REVIEWS OF CDS RECORDED BY RECENT MUSICIANS PERFORMING FEINBERG’S PIECES**

**Multiple reviews of:**
**BIS-CD-1414 Feinberg - Piano TT 79’40**

Samuil Feinberg

- Piano Sonata No.7, Op.21
- Piano Sonata No.8, Op.21a (1924-34)
- Piano Sonata No.9, Op.29 (1939)
- Piano Sonata No.10, Op.30 (1940-43)
- Piano Sonata No.11, Op.40 (1952)
- Piano Sonata No.12, Op.48 (1962)

Nikolaos Samaltanos, piano (Sonatas Nos.9, 10 & 11)

Christophe Sirodeau, piano (Sonatas Nos.7, 8 & 12)
Samuel Evgenievitch Feinberg was famous in his lifetime as a virtuoso pianist and respected teacher, and somewhat less as a composer of great imagination and skill. The piano sonatas presented on this disc reveal two stylistic sides of Feinberg: the elaborate, intensely chromatic fantastic of Sonatas No. 7 and No. 8; and the more diatonic, elegant academic of the Sonatas No. 9-12. Listeners will be reminded of Skryabin in the first two works, for that composer's influence was strong on Feinberg until 1934. During the repressive Stalinist years and until his death, Feinberg either maintained silence or published more accessible works that passed party scrutiny. His later style, safely within conservative Soviet guidelines, was influenced by Prokofiev, but elements of Feinberg's earlier wildness still appear in his unpredictable modulations and ambiguous tonality. Nikolaos Samaltanos and Christophe Sirodeau divide the six sonatas between them, and deliver them with equal levels of enthusiasm and sensitivity. Sonatas No. 7, No. 8, and No. 9 receive their world-premiere recordings here, and the revelation of these exciting works is an important step in restoring Feinberg's reputation, long overdue. The recording is satisfactory, though it has a recital hall resonance that suggests distant microphone placement.

- Blair Sanderson, All Music Guide 2004

Although Samuel Feinberg (1890-1962) is best known today as one of the great Russian pianists of his (or any) generation, his reputation as a composer has been neglected. He mainly concentrated on vocal music and works for his own instrument, including 12 sonatas for piano solo. Having recorded the first six for BIS, pianists Christophe Sirodeau and Nikolaos Samaltanos once again split the labor for the rest (Samaltanos plays Nos. 9, 10, and 11; Sirodeau plays 7, 8, and 12). The influence of Scriabin's later period decisively permeates Feinberg's style in its restless keyboard textures and harmonic density, with hints of the Futurist movement to come. If anything, Feinberg's piano writing often sounds more complex, like Godowsky transcribing Scriabin, or Szymanowski adding side comments.

The Seventh and Eighth sonatas, both three-movement works, exploit the piano to the hilt, not just in the super-virtuosic outer movements but also in the slow central movements' organ-like sonorities. Sonatas 9, 10, and 11 return to the single, continuous-movement form that Feinberg favored in earlier works and that Scriabin perfected in his last five sonatas. Here, however, the musical language has become more diatonic and superficially accessible (think later Prokofiev), although the technical difficulties hardly abate. Sirodeau and Samaltanos clearly believe in these fascinating albeit uneven works and imbue them with all the dynamic contrast, tonal variety, and technical finish they require. Even the largest, most intractable, note-packed climaxes (such as the Eighth sonata's concluding Allegro) are fully voiced and never banged out. Sirodeau's booklet annotations discuss Feinberg's music in thorough and refreshingly balanced detail, and the sonics are ideal.

- Jed Distler, ClassicToday.com 2004
Samuil Feinberg's (1890-1962) piano sonatas are some of the best kept secrets of 20th century Russian piano music. Few classical music listeners have even heard of Feinberg. Perhaps his name, hyphenated with Bach's, may appear from time to time on various Bach transcription recordings. Other than that, his original music, notably his 12 colossal piano sonatas, have not been discovered until now. The previous volume in this series showcases Feinberg's first Six Sonatas, where the influence of Scriabin is pronounced. Actually, Feinberg has his own voice and his music is far from derivative. These works are highly virtuosic and the technical demands make even Scriabin's sonatas sound lightweight. Feinberg also treads darker paths of expression with greater depth than Roslavets and a biting potency that surpasses Scriabin.

After digesting the last six sonatas on the present recording, I am convinced that Feinberg's oeuvre is the Lost Atlantis of Russian music. While his piano music shows some stylistic hints of Scriabin, Roslavets and other Soviet composers, Feinberg's music is its own breed. Nothing I've heard really compares to it. The Seventh Sonata, for instance, covers a vast range: melancholic impressionism, polyphonic density, and frightening turbulence. Underneath the gorgeous music is excellent motivic unity and thematic ideas. The transfixing eeriness of the "Larghetto" moves perfectly into the dramatic "Epilogue." Feinberg's Eighth Sonata is a magnificent tapestry of expressive power: the first movement is surreal and melancholy; the contrasting "Andante" has a nostalgic air while the "Allegro" is a nightmarish final statement.

Feinberg's efforts to say something new in each of his sonatas reminds me of Beethoven. Where Feinberg's Seventh and Eighth Sonatas are like diverse siblings, the single-movement Ninth is terra incognita. It begins in the upper registers of the piano in a frisky and scherzoish manner, as if Mendelssohn's elfin writing has been updated for the 20th century. Feinberg journeys away from his customary darkness and further into a magical realm. He creates interesting sonorities of pianissimos with fortissimos and simultaneous sforzandos in the highest and lowest registers of the piano. But in an unbelievable turn of events, Feinberg's skittish writing becomes a tour-de-force of virtuosity and drama. The tempo and activity increase to heights of madness culminating in a whirlwind of descending scales that sound like the product of two pianists. Then a powerful and transcendent harmonic sequence takes over, and I'm left breathless every time I hear it.

Feinberg's ability to do so much in one sonata continues in the Tenth, a single-movement powerhouse of a composition. There is a capricious but wonderful array of emotions present: fear, hope, death, pain, and triumph. The greatest moment evolves from the funeral march in the center of this work: a sublime series of descending chords and rip-roaring octaves that function for expressive purposes and not decoration. The emotional power Feinberg achieves in a matter of seconds is phenomenal. So where does Feinberg venture in the last two sonatas? The Eleventh emerges from darkness and into happier thoughts. It's amazing that this work dates from 1952 because it sounds far more "Romantic" as if recalling late Liszt. Even the Twelfth shows greater simplicity with its three compact movements; it was written in the last year of Feinberg's life and shows imaginative structure and music content.
Bottom line: Fans of Scriabin, Myaskovsky, Roslavets, Alexandrov or any Russian piano music must familiarize themselves with Feinberg's music. Like Alkan, Feinberg is a forgotten pianist-composer and a genius, I think. His piano music is some of the most rewarding specimens I've ever encountered in the Russian piano literature.”
- “Hexameron” (Amazon reviewer)

The second volume of the piano sonatas of Samuel Feinberg (1890-1962) is just as remarkable as the first. Feinberg is of course primarily known as one of the great pianists of the twentieth century, but as this two-volume series for BIS has shown he was also a first-rate, often strikingly original composer. Stylistically there is more than a little late Scriabin here, which is not particularly surprising, but Feinberg generally takes it more than a step further. The textures are glittering though often dense and wild, and the torrents of notes often gain momentum to the extent that "maelstroms of sound" becomes a not inappropriate description. Though the harmonic language is fundamentally late- or post-romantic in the manner of other fin de siècle composers such as Godowsky, there are also foreshadowings of the developing Russian futurism (the Mossolov sonatas, say, are not too far away), and the music is generally agitated, edgy and turbulent, though grand and powerful.

Among these six later sonatas three (nos. 7, 8 and 12) are cast in three movements; the rest are single-movement works. The seventh and eight sonatas are wildly virtuosic studies in sonorities taking us to the borders of tonality. In the following three works the language is more traditionally diatonic, perhaps, and as such perhaps more immediately approachable, but it is certainly no less original and the demands on the performers are surely as dizzying (listen to the absolutely amazing section where, seemingly, the bottom falls out of the universe in the eighth sonata - you will hear what I mean). The twelfth sonata is somewhat more modest in scope and language, but darkly mysterious and intensely rewarding nonetheless.

As on volume one Nikolaos Samaltanos and Christophe Sirodeau divide the works between them - Sirodeau takes the three-movement works 7, 8 and 12, and Samaltanos the rest. It is somewhat hard to tell the extent to which their approaches are different, since the works they take are relatively different to begin with. What is not unclear, however, is that we get some first-class playing. Yes, there are moments when both pianists seem a little taxed by the technical challenges, but at no point is the listener prevented from marveling at the glittering textures or failing to catch the deeply embedded themes and gestures. The sound is excellent, and this is, to sum up, a magnificent release. Urgently recommended.
- “J.D.” (Amazon reviewer)
Feinberg's 1st Piano Concerto, long thought lost, turns out to be one of the great forgotten masterpieces of early Soviet times, and one of the finest works by one of the most significant composers of the era, to boot. Feinberg performed the piece twice in the 1930s and it was then misplaced, to be rediscovered by the present soloist in the 1990s. This recording is from the work's only other performance to date, in 1998. Beginning unassumingly, diffidently, with a statement of the principal theme that pervades the entire piece, the concerto rapidly darkens in mood and embarks on a tragic, epic journey of over a half-hour's duration, alternating moods of uneasy tranquility, devastating despair and apocalyptic vehemence. After trying out elements of all three, the music abruptly plunges to the depths in one of Feinberg's most memorable inspirations; a vast, inexorable, nightmarish cortège in which the piano - reduced to a concertante, yet fiendishly difficult role - spasms like a sparking dynamo trapped within a huge, decaying yet implacable machine; a truly terrifying episode, comparable to the first movement of Mahler 6 or the cumulative climaxes of Pettersson 8. This subsides into a funeral march of the utmost bleakness, which Feinberg adapted and extended from his formally odd, highly inventive 3rd Sonata, the gloom alleviated by reconciliatory passages for the orchestra. Dynamic, driven music follows, leading via a brittle, angry fugato to the work's explosive cadenzas, before dying away into a semblance of calm before the final climax, suggesting victory, though hard-won. Perhaps surprisingly, as Feinberg is usually thought of as a successor to Scriabin, the influence of Busoni is very strong; there is more than a little of Doktor Faust in both the atmosphere and musical phrase-shaping of the piece, and of Busoni's own concerto in the conflict between concertante writing and extreme virtuosity of the solo part. The solo works - several also receiving their world première recordings - fascinatingly chart Feinberg's compositional evolution. Pre-eminent is the extraordinary 2nd Fantasia, a haunted and violent work from 1919. With the passage of time the Scriabin influence grows and recedes, and the later pieces - a beautiful, tragic song transcription from the 1950s and the enigmatic, aphoristic 'Children's Album' - the composer's penultimate work, unpublished in his lifetime - betray an understated,
scholarly melancholy, far removed from the rumors of impending Armageddon present in the earlier works, yet no less telling on a personal level. A revealing and important release for our ongoing reappraisal of this major figure.

-Courtesy Records International

Review of: AIR-CD-9038

Samuil Feinberg

Songs (WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS)

Rita Ahonen (mezzo-soprano)

Sami Luttinen (bass)

Christophe Sirodeau (piano)

Contents:

Zaklinanie (Incantation) op.4, No.1
I ya opyat zatih u nog (Snezhnaya noch) (Once more I'm silent at your feet - Snowy Night) op.7, No.2
V bezdeistvi mladom (In Youthful Indolence) op.7, No.3
Drug moi milyi (My Beloved) op.16, No.2
Tri kliucha (Three Springs) op.26, No.5
Sozhzhennoye pis'mo (The Burned Letter) op.26, No.7
Plennyi rytzar (The Imprisoned Knight) op.28, No.2
Son (The Dream) op.28, No.3
Yevreiskaya pesnya (Hebrew Melody) op.28, No.4
Russalka (The River Sprite) op.28, No.5
Net ne tebia... (No, it's not you I love so hotly) op.28, No.6
Vykhshu ia odin... (Onto the Highway, on my own, I walk) op.28, No.7
Maritsa, op.47
Ne pravda li my v skazke (We're living in a story) op.14, No.1
Ona rosla za dalnimi gorami (Beyond the distant mountains she grew up) op.14, No.2
Sapho … Kogda… Golos vetra (When... The Voice of Wind) op.14, No.4
Naprasko ya begu k Sionskim vysotam (In vain I hasten onto the heights of Sion) op.16, No.3
Yevreiskaya pesnya (Hebrew Melody) op.27
Biedstvie (Evil)

Available from Records International

This recital comprises the bulk of Feinberg's song output (leaving aside a handful for other voices), all - astonishingly - receiving their world premiere recordings. Seven of them, in fact, were never published in the composer's lifetime, and for several of these this recording is the world premiere performance. Only far too recently revealed as one of the most original and consistently inspired composers of 20th-century Russia and the Soviet Union through his masterly cycle of Piano Sonatas (recorded on BIS) and last year through the rediscovery of the astonishing 1st Piano Concerto (recorded on Altarus AIR-CD-9034), the one missing component of our reappraisal of the composer was actually the most consistent aspect of his output, song. Throughout, Feinberg emerges as possessing a remarkable gift for melody, and his complete mastery of the piano shows in
accompaniments of the utmost sensitivity, exquisitely judged to provide harmonic and dramatic underpinning to the vocal line. The predominant mood of the songs, and the texts - by some of the greatest Russian poets - that he chose to set, is of that particularly Russian brand of philosophical melancholy, which seems to have matched the nature of the man himself and provided his most natural and eloquent means of expression. The songs for bass include several of unforgettable dramatic intensity, among which an inventive and compelling setting of Rimbaud's 'Le Mal' stands out. Among the mezzo songs are to be found masterpieces of lyrical expression, from the emotionally wrenching 'Burned Letter' (after Pushkin) to the otherworldly resignation of the final Lermontov setting of Op.28, with its Four Last Songs or Das Lied von der Erde sense of final farewell, to Feinberg's invented folksong style of uncanny authenticity in the 'Maritsa' cycle. Christophe Sirodeau is well known for his passionate and expert championship of Feinberg's music; here he is joined by two stars of the European opera house and concert stage - both from Finland, steeped in the Russian tradition - in performances of passion, clarity and nuance. New translations of all the poems are included in the booklet, alongside an essay on the poets by the translator (Russian literature specialist Frank Jude), and detailed notes on the music by Christophe Sirodeau.”

-Courtesy Records International

Multiple reviews of:
*SAMUIL FEINBERG - Piano Sonatas No.1-6 Piano: Nikolas Samaltanos (No.1, 4 and 5) Piano: Christophe Sirodeau (No.2, 3 and 6) Label: BIS (2003, BIS-CD-1413)

Contents:
- Piano Sonata No.1 Op.1
- Piano Sonata No.2 Op.2
- Piano Sonata No.3 Op.3
- Piano Sonata No.4 Op.6
- Piano Sonata No.5 Op.10
- Piano Sonata No.6 Op.13

The music of Samuil Evgenievitch Feinberg is hypnotic in the extreme, most obviously close to Scriabin in mystical mode. All credit to BIS (who already are doing sterling work for the composer Nikos Skalkottas) for releasing this magnificent disc, with superbly detailed annotations by Christophe Sirodeau, one of the two pianists featured on the disc, and a composer himself. Both Sirodeau and Samaltanos contributed to the Skalkottas/Feinberg concerts held in Paris in 1999. Intriguing, also, to have two such fine pianists’ reactions to the same composer’s music. Rather than dwell on any immediate differences, it seems truer to the spirit of the disc to point out both artists’ obvious dedication to and love of this music, two facets that result in this disc being the special release it is. It is certainly on my short-list as one of my ‘Discs of the Year’.

The shifting colours of the First Sonata are a fair indication of this composer’s sound-world. Shifting colours here both in the sense of Samaltanos’s keyboard touch, which is magnificent in its scope, but also in the harmonic language the composer uses. There is a lingering intensity about this statement, as the harmonies move from Scriabinesque to Bergian. The violent end of this short (6’50) Sonata comes as a surprise. Although
contemporaneous with the first Sonata, the Second (both date from the year of Scriabin’s death) exhibits a wide frame of reference. The booklet notes point us towards Medtner and early Szymanowski. Similarly in one movement, it comes across as a single flow of consciousness. The pianist here, Christophe Sirodeau, realises the fairly unrelenting intensity while demonstrating an approach generally softer than that of Samaltanos - more identifiably Gallic, perhaps?

The Third Sonata, although it was composed in 1916, had to wait until 1974 for publication! The Marcia funebre and the fugato were reused in his Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 20. Much larger in size (three times as long as the First Sonata), it speaks of extremes of utterance that, technically, pose no problem to Sirodeau. Quasi-consonant harmonic arrival points act as markers or as the notes would have it, ‘life-buoys’. The prelude is dark, and harmonically advanced in the manner of late Liszt, while the similarly dark chordings of the Marcia Funerebre make this experience hard work for both pianist and listener. The third movement, curiously and confusingly, is also called ‘Sonata’. The reference point that kept on cropping up was Steven Osborne’s excellent Hyperion disc of Kapustin (CDA67159).

Feinberg dedicated his Fourth Sonata to Miaskovsky. The impulsive, thrusting nature of the music is again reminiscent of Scriabin, almost, at his most elusive. Samaltanos returns, using a gentle touch now. In his booklet notes, Sirodeau refers to Bulgakov’s magnificent novel The Master and Margarita, with its unlikely parade of horror/comic ‘happenings’, as a point of reference. It is easy to see what he is getting at although Feinberg comes without the laughs. Feinberg’s harmonic logic ensures a stream of free-flow washes from first to last. For some reason, on each playing of the disc it was at this point that I mentally remarked on the excellence of the recording. Perhaps this one is just that bit superior to the rest? The recording date for Sonatas 1-5 is merely given as ‘Spring 2002’.

Samaltanos is the featured pianist in the Fifth Sonata of around 1920-21. At first it reminded me of Scriabin’s Fourth Piano Sonata, where harmonic drug-hazed meanderings meet elusive prestissimi. However Feinberg inhabits a world of his own - the figure of Ravel simultaneously hovers over the opening. The Allegro main section is relatively violent, featuring determined arpeggios. It is magnificent, because of the surety of Feinberg’s compositional hand; always, you are aware that the guiding voice is that of a Master.

The Sixth Sonata is probably the finest work in the present set. It takes in a world of references - the bell-like tolling of the opening seems to recall Debussy’s ‘Cathédrale engloutie’ (Préludes I); but Janácek and Schoenberg both vie for attention, all sitting alongside a perceptive use of the B-A-C-H motif. Some of the reiterated block chords (around 6’) even sound like gestures from early Stockhausen electronic music! The performance (Sirodeau) is miraculous. It is here that virtuosity reaches its peak.

The structure of the Sixth Sonata is determined by its ideas - there is no recap as such, just a sense of continual evolution. As Sirodeau writes, ‘the composer seems to find
himself on the tip of an apocalyptic sword ... and the listener remains imprisoned by the spirit of confusion and even of irreparable tragedy that dominates this work.' Often dark and violent, but also containing passages of Messiaen-like luminosity, this is a tour de force, a piece that simply refuses to let the listener go. The very close is typical in its thought-provoking way, leaving the listener hanging in the air.

The present issue is not really one to listen to straight through, not if you’re really listening - it would simply be too tiring. Enjoy the Sonatas one at a time, and enjoy the voyage of discovery.

- Colin Clarke / MusicWeb 2004

Samuil Feinberg (1890-1962) is not a name most classical listeners are likely to come across. Music scholars would probably not even recognize him as a composer, but as the pianist who first concertized Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier in Russia. Beyond that, classical pianists may only recall Feinberg as a transcriber of Bach and Tchaikovsky's "Scherzo" movement from the 'Pathetique' Symphony. I certainly never stumbled across his name until reading Robert Rimm's The Composer-Pianists: Hamelin and The Eight. Rimm's flowery and Romantic writing on Feinberg elevated my curiosity. Feinberg's oeuvre is small and compact, with a few preludes, fantasies, and songs separating his monumental 12 Piano Sonatas. I took a gamble by purchasing this recording without sampling any of the music...

... and not since Hamelin's recording of the Alkan: Symphony for solo piano have I been so mesmerized and deeply moved by music that is virtually unknown to most musicologists and art-music connoisseurs. I find the "genius" description cliché, but I think Feinberg's early sonatas deserve the classification: they are works of startling originality and expressive power. The expressivity of Beethoven and the Mahleresque "symphony as a world" concept merge together in Feinberg's music. It's tempting to compare Feinberg's sonatas to Scriabin's or Roslavets' as another reviewer of this recording has done. The turbulent Russian Romantic idiom of Scriabin certainly resides in Feinberg's music. And the melancholic impressionism of Roslavets can also be heard. Yet somehow Feinberg's sonatas still sound like no other. Perhaps Robert Rimm makes the best differentiation: "Feinberg's brand of musical poetry does not explore the rarefied, ephemeral, or sensuous [as in Scriabin], but rather focuses on the deeper psyche and problems of man."

I could string together the following words to describe these six sonatas: intense, virtuosic, intellectual, impressionistic, esoteric, tormented, eerie, and beautiful. Feinberg's first two sonatas are cast in single movement forms and both last a little under 10 minutes. These works are most akin to Scriabin and are brimming with gorgeous lyricism and lush piano writing. The Second Sonata is Feinberg at his happiest, which means brooding nostalgia. But the Third Sonata is a masterpiece, featuring an innovative three-movement formal structure of "Prelude," "Funeral March" and the "Sonata" itself. The "Funeral March" is a titanic force of despondency comparable to Liszt's darker works and Scriabin's "Funebre" movement from his First Sonata. Feinberg employs a variety of musical symbols, including a "Death" motif (a stark and effective use of fifths) that later
becomes the main thematic thread of the "Sonata" movement, which is an unbelievable 13-minute "Allegro appassionato" of stupefying virtuosity. The "Sonata" has a dense texture and constant motion that truly requires a rare brand of virtuosity. The technical challenges can be heard; they are jaw-dropping. But if that wasn't enough of an obstacle for the pianist, there is the unrelenting cerebral complexity and emotional angst to interpret and convey. Christophe Sirodeau, the pianist who plays the work, calls this "Sonata" movement "a veritable hurricane of destruction." He refers to the stormy piano writing as sounding destructive, but I wouldn't be surprised if many a pianist's hands were destroyed in the process of playing this behemoth.

The Fourth and Fifth sonatas also exude an abundance of compositional imagination and expressive content. The Fifth Sonata has moments where the texture transcends the sound world of the piano. Feinberg may be writing in a tonal language but it still sounds darker and more alien than much of the atonal music of his contemporaries. Perhaps Feinberg's greatest work and one of the finest 20th century piano sonatas I've ever encountered is the Sixth Sonata. It is analyzed extensively in the liner-notes where it is praised as "an acknowledged masterpiece." Feinberg opens with a faint series of tritones and then unfurls with the most nightmarish expressions and musical rhetoric. There is a haunting section that evokes tolling bells far more potently than even Rachmaninov. But the greatest moment occurs in the explosive and apocalyptic climax that brings the work to a quiet and tragic end.

Bottom line: I passionately encourage the fortunate browser who finds this recording to buy it. Fans of Scriabin, Roslavets, Szymanowski, Myaskovsky, Liszt, Medtner or Rachmaninov will surely consider Feinberg worthy. These sonatas are not academic or salon music but abstruse and dark "poems of life" as the pianist Tatyana Nikolayeva called them.

-"Hexameron", Amazon reviewer

A CD you'll never regret buying. Feinberg is one of the few composers able to write true mystic music that reflects the deep mysteries of the soul. The Sixth Piano Sonata is without question a masterpiece, and in my opinion a revelation and testament to the power of music. Pay attention to the main theme at the outset: down a perfect fourth, and then down a tritone; this theme is ingrained everywhere throughout the piece; very very impressive. Now, I am a fan of Hexameron, but I must disagree on one point: this music is not tonal. There are chords used in tonal music, especially in the first, second, and third sonatas, but they are not used functionally. On occasion, you could use roman numeral analysis perhaps in the first or second, but this really would be like seeing only the trees, and not the forest; and ultimately a disservice to Feinberg's complex and original language. Technically, Feinberg's sixth is in "B minor"; but Feinberg is really just paying lip-service to this idea. Major and minor chords are really just a choice of punctuation. Schoenberg's Ode to Napoleon ends on an E-flat major chord, but does that mean his piece, secretly, all along, was in the key of E-flat major and is tonal? Good heavens no! Also, I disagree with the Rimms quote: "Feinberg's brand of musical poetry does not explore the rarefied, ephemeral, or sensuous [as in Scriabin], but rather focuses on the deeper psyche and problems of man." Scriabin's music has nothing to do with the
sensous; this is a complete misunderstanding. Scriabin's music is 100 percent about the Spiritual life of man. It is not some shallow evocation of a hedonist. It is the music of a man who was tired of this earthly material existence, and with his Mysterium, planned to dematerialize the world and bring all of mankind in to the eternal state of ecstasy. Ecstasy; Which has nothing to with physical pleasure and everything to do with complete Peace through spiritual fulfillment. This is the exact same idea as Christian heaven. His idea of course was impossible, but one I am sympathetic to. During his middle period Scriabin did make some references to voluptuousness and kisses etc. but these references are few. Predominately, the notes in his scores were ones that reflected his spirituality. Scriabin was first and foremost a mystic, and not a sensualist. If you want proof, read Scriabin: Artist and Mystic, written by Scriabin's brother-in-law; himself a philosopher and very close to Scriabin.

- “Neongrapes”, Amazon reviewer

Review of Feinberg- J.S Bach The Well-Tempered Clavier
Label: Pristine Audio
Review Date:
2014
Media Format:
CD
Mastering:
DDD
Catalogue Number:
PAKM063

Samuil Feinberg’s magnificent Russian recording of Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier (taped 1958-61) commands a range of keyboard colour that at times compares to Rachmaninov. Accompanying voices either quietly murmur or boldly spring to the fore, faster preludes and fugues suggest an unstoppable rhythmic force, and the overall impression is of a great musician whose profound understanding of each separate piece allows for a wide range of tone perspectives.

My knowledge of the cycle was based on two earlier transfers, by far the best from Russian Disc, with a sonically inferior set issued by Dante Lys as a poor alternative. Pristine Audio more approximates the Russian Disc option, though the quality isn’t entirely consistent from work to work (the preludes and fugues are separately tracked, by the way) and there’s a certain amount of added ambience. But for most of the time Bach and Feinberg are well enough served for the glories of the music and its performance to emerge unscathed.

Just a handful of pointers might be of use. Feinberg is at his most disarmingly lyrical in the C sharp minor Prelude from Book 2 – also a good sampling of the expressive way he balances the right and left hands, stressing counter-melodies in the way that Horowitz might have done. In the E flat Prelude from the same book, Feinberg nudges the bass forwards while achieving marked crescendos and diminuendos. His ability to loosen the rhythmic frame without allowing the musical line to bend too far is beautifully exhibited.
by the D sharp minor Fugue – another case where colour is paramount. The D minor
Prelude from Book 1 canters quietly into dynamic action, and the D sharp minor Prelude
is played with the sort of intensity you’d expect in Bach’s Passion music. This is a
wonderful ‘48’, no doubt about that – essential listening and fully on a par with such
great vintage piano alternatives as Fischer, Richter, Loesser and Tureck.

- Anonymous reviewer
APPENDIX D: CATALOG OF WORKS

PIANO -

Op. 1  Sonata No.1 (1915)
Op. 2  Sonata No.2 (1915)
Op. 3  Sonata No.3 (1916-1917)
Op. 5  Fantasia No.1 (1917)
Op. 6  Sonata No.4 (1918)
Op. 8  Four Preludes
Op. 9  Fantasia No.2 (1919-1924)
Op. 10 Sonata No.5 (1921)
Op. 11 Suite - Four pieces in the form of etudes (1923)
Op. 13 Sonata No.6 (1923)
Op. 15 Three Preludes (1922)
Op. 19  Humoresque (1932)
Op. 24 No.1  Chuvash melodies (1923)
Op. 45 Rhapsody on Kabardino-Balkarian Themes
Sonata No.7 (1924)
Sonata No.8 (1933)
Suite No.2 (1936)
Sonata No.9 (1939)
Sonata No.10 (1940)
Sonata No.11 (1954)
Sonata No.12 (1960)
VOCAL-

**Op. 4** Two Songs for voice and piano (1926)

**Op. 7** Three settings of A. Blok for voice and piano

**Op. 14** Two settings of A. Blok for voice and piano

**Op. 16** Two settings of A. Pushkin for voice and piano

Songs of the Western People (arrangement of folk songs) (1933)

25 Chuvash Songs for voice and piano (1937) (winner of prize, 1946)

10 Pushkin settings

**Op. 28** Seven Lermontov settings

CHAMBER-

**Op. 12** Allegro and Scherzo for violin and piano

ORCHESTRAL/CONCERTI-

**Op. 20** Concerto for piano and orchestra (1931)

**Op. 36** Concerto No.2 for piano and orchestra (1944) (winner of Stalin prize)

**Op. 44** Concerto No.3 for piano and orchestra (1946-1951)

TRANSCRIPTIONS AND ARRANGEMENTS-

**J.S. Bach:**

Thirteen Chorale Preludes

1. Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr' (BWV 663)
2. Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr' (BWV 711)
3. Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr' (BWV 662)
4. An Wasserflussen Babylon (BWV 653)
5. Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott (BWV 720)
6. Von Gott will ich nicht lassen (BWV 658)
7. Wer nun den lieben Gott läßt walten (BWV 647)
8. Kommst du nun, Jesu, vom Himmel herunter (BWV 650)
9. Trio Super: Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend' (BWV 655)
10. Jesus Christus, unser Heiland (BWV 665)
11. Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland (BWV 659)
12. Ach, bleib' bei uns, Herr Jesu Christ (BWV 649)
13. Fantasia super: Valet will ich dir geben (BWV 735)
Largo from Trio Sonata No.5 (BWV 529)
Concerto in A minor after Vivaldi (BWV 593)
Prelude and Fugue in E minor (BWV 548)

Beethoven:
Two Cadenzas to Piano Concerto No.4 (1st and 3rd movements)
Fugue from String Quartet Op. 59

Borodin:
Nocturne from Second Quartet No.2
Scherzo from Second Quartet No.2

Corelli:
Two Sarabandes

Frescobaldi:
Canzona
Capriccio – Pastorale

Locatelli:
Concerto

Marcello:
Prelude
Sonata
Three pieces from Cantata

Mozart:
Cadenza to Piano Concerto No. 21

Mussorgsky:
Serenade from "Songs and Dances of Death"
The Garden of Don

Tchaikovsky:
Symphony No.2; Andantino Marziale
Symphony No.5; Waltz
Symphony No.6; Scherzo
Three Songs for Children Op. 54
APPENDIX E:

EXAMPLES OF FEINBERG’S CONCERT PROGRAMS

One program from Petersburg on May 18, 1924 is representative:
Myaskovsky: Sonata no.2
Alexandrov: Sonata no.3
Prokofiev: Sonata no.4
Scriabin: Sonata no.5
Feinberg: Sonata no.6

Four other recitals reveal his diverse repertoire:

Small Hall, Moscow, May 5, 1925
Scriabin: Sonatas nos. 1, 4, 5, 6, 7

Small Hall, Moscow, May 9, 1925
Scriabin: Sonatas nos. 2, 3, 8, 9, 10

Berlin, March 12, 1929
Vivaldi-Bach-Feinberg: Concerto in A minor
Bach: Toccata in D
Beethoven: Sonata op.57 “Appassionata”
Feinberg: Sonata no.7 and Two Preludes (Op. 8, Op. 15)
Stanchinsky: Two Preludes in Canonic Form
Scriabin: Fifth Sonata

Moscow, October 15, 1934
Handel: Suite in F
Schumann: Allegro op.8; Waldszenen (2 pieces)
Chopin: Sonata in B minor, Op. 58
Feinberg: Adagio Op. 24; Sonata no.8
Taneyev: Prelude & Fugue
Liszt: Feux Follets; Leggierezza
APPENDIX F:
AN EXCERPT FROM FEINBERG’S “PIANISM AS ART”

Translated from Russian to English by: Lenya Ryzhik and Steven Emerson

If we imagine the entire path of a composition, from its origins to its completion in a real interpretation, we see a line passing from infinity, through the finite elements of the written score, and back to infinity. The original stimuli of art are infinitely complex, the sound elements that need to be written as notes are finite, and the number of interpretations that appear out of them is endless. Performance depends on an uncountable number of reasons and conditions. Performing style changes with the tastes and moods of the times, responding to new audiences’ demands. Each new performer introduces special, individual qualities into his playing. Therefore it is extremely difficult to fix the character of any performance in strict and precise terms. The author himself envisions the inevitable variability of future performances of his composition. He equips his work with detailed directions to the performer, striving to avoid the total dissipation of his intentions in the numerous individual interpretations to come. However, two difficulties arise. The composer understands that restricting the performer’s will and freedom of interpretation hinders the natural expression of the artist-performer. Overly pedantic adherence to the author’s directions may rob the artist’s playing of the necessary freedom and persuasiveness. Everyone remarks on the value and exacting precision of Beethoven’s performance directions, yet even these often slow down and obstruct the natural flow of an interpreter’s ideas. The overly frequent variations of dynamics and force of sound that are fixed in the shadings of the score may destroy a performer’s internal conviction as to the correctness of his choice of interpretive ideas, and rob his playing of unity and logical development. How often a composer softens his directions with terms such as mezzo, poco, non troppo, so as not to make the stipulated performance shading sound like a teacher’s directive or unsolicited advice. Nevertheless, in the real world one sees that a natural and logical flow of playing is most often disrupted precisely where there are the composer’s or editor’s indications.

Another difficulty, possibly the most important one, lies in the dichotomy between pre-imagined ideas of sound, and the realized work. This dichotomy treacherously awaits both the composer and the performer throughout the entire creative process. It is easy to make a mistake as to future interpretation while sitting at one’s desk, writing down and playing the work in one’s mind. Introducing tempo markings and shadings, the composer either recalls his own playing or imagines the ideal effort of a performer-interpreter. In both cases his imagination can mislead him, presenting only a partial rendering of the actual performing process which depends on various factors: the creation of sound, the overcoming of technical difficulties, and most importantly - the possibilities and
restrictions of a concrete instrumental style. One is led to the conclusion that the flow of an imagined sonic thread follows its own rules and principles, and is not necessarily identical to real sound. Imagined sounds are somehow lighter - independent of the technical, material aspects in playing. Notes stressed in the author’s mind may not need to be played any more loudly: it suffices for the composer to stress them in his own mind. An accent stressed in the realm of the imagination may not always be transferred adequately to performance.

Illusion and reality always complement and affect each other in music. The mutual penetration of these two elements permeates the sound fabric. Both the compositional concept and interpretive style are built upon a synthesis of imagined and real sounds. The very perception of music is related to these differing varieties of sound. Many of Schumann’s shadings - stress, softening and accents - belong to the category of mentally stressed sounds, more speculative than empirical. Sound elements that occur in reality and imagined ones, intended for the mental ear only, can complement each other but can also be contradictory. Their struggle sometimes increases the tension of the perceived musical fabric.

**The Creative Freedom of a Performer**

Regarding the creative freedom of a pianist, one should underline the need for a musical image that is nurtured by the mental ear. Reading of the score should come before the production of sound. Each note should be first heard in the mind and only later realized. Then the pianist’s playing becomes a creative act that turns the world of musical images into actual sound.

The music lives before and after the actual sound, in constant development. The musical memory connects the preceding sounds with their later development, joining the future and the past, and creating the image of a whole musical form. The charm and poetry of a solo performance are in the fact that the transition from inner image to real sound is achieved by the individual will of an artist. The performer’s art blends the inner life of a musical image and the external form of sound. The elastic reality of art and its shadow are synthesized in a united creative process.

The competition between the soloist and the orchestral accompaniment in a concerto invariably underlines the difference between objective accomplishment and the dreamy vision of the soloist. The orchestral part is closed in a concrete circle. The orchestra always “knows everything,” like the chorus in a Greek tragedy. The soloist’s interpretation is full of unsolved mysteries, hopes, fears, expectations. Threads from the past lead the performer into the realm of an unresolved future. The entire art of the soloist is to address not only the hearing but to a greater extent the imagination and sympathy of the audience. It is up to him to stress or leave in shadow, accentuate or soften details in the landscape of the musical form. This is the source of the word “rubato”: stealing. An outstanding artist-performer appears in front of the listener as an important, gifted, complete individuality with an active mind, a rich inner world, and the special mastery of musical form that may be called the gift of artistic vision. The score of a composer is not a marching order “to be performed!” for a gifted soloist. A performer must resolve the
entire depth of the ideas contained there. How often carefully notated shadings, accents, tempo changes reveal not simply a positive characteristic of sound but rather the untold sides of the author’s concept. How many directions we find in Schumann, Chopin, Scriabin, even Beethoven that a pianist should follow not in a real sound but by addressing the subtlest hints to the imagination of a listener!

The observations of composers performing their works are instructive; the phrasing in their own performances, following their own directions, often turns convex lines into concave, the prescribed tempo and dynamic markings are violated. Such substitutions may only be explained by the dominance of the author’s imagination over the actual sound.

The gradual acquisition of realistic qualities of sound leads to drastic changes in the musical images. Therefore the inviolate reading of the score a priori - before touching the instrument - may not give the complete scope of the interpretation to come. The performer gradually limits the composer’s concept to the practical possibilities of the instrument, upon mastering it with the mental ear. Being in the center of the musical forces he creates the sound while simultaneously being carried by the sound field. The will of the playing artist expresses itself in overcoming and restraining the capriciousness of the sound matter: his creative will alternatively accepts and rejects the sounds produced by the instrument.

We describe playing as emotional exactly when this struggle reaches an incredible stress. A flawless performance of difficult passages does not always satisfy a listener even though he acknowledges the mastery of the pianist. The playing truly overcomes the listener when the struggle of the inner image and its outside covering becomes apparent. Virtuosic playing becomes the victory of intellect over earthly matter, and the listener sees clearly the spirit and essence of the musical art. Otherwise the most precise and refined mastery seems mechanical, like a player-piano as a substitute. Gifted playing is a dialectic process where the inner world of sound constantly acquires new qualities as it is being realized.

A vital, effective and impressive art cuts various paths and uses different, sometimes contradictory means to achieve its artistic goals. It is hard to distinguish in art between carefully worked out techniques which form the daily labor of an artist, and the more rare, enlightening and intuitively found paths and solutions. Both are necessary, “inspiration is a guest that does not like to visit the lazy,” as was said by a great Russian composer. Sometimes the most prosaic attempts lead to unexpected artistic discoveries, while an inspired breakthrough requires long, unrelenting work for triumphal practical results. Everything in the work of an artist is important and illuminated by the grand aesthetic goal. There are no accomplishments that have not been preceded by many steps in developing mastery and an understanding of the principles of the creative method. The goal of art theory is to slowly reclaim everything accessible to understanding, generalization and logical development, from the realm of the seemingly unknowable. It is commonly objected that the path of a creative artist is different from the usual conscious behavior of man, that it is built of unconscious, intuitive acts, like the path of a lawless comet in the “predictable circle of planets.” However, much can be accounted for
in the domain of artistic instinct: a constant, stable logic of artistic interactions can be found, just as a comet’s orbit can be marked on a map of the stars. The pianist’s art is often treated simplistically - in light of the laws of physiology and in connection with the anatomical build of the hand - or as an incomprehensible process lying purely in the domain of intuitive human actions. This simplicity is often related to the fact that many performers with insufficient knowledge of the practice of art prefer to rely on general accomplishments seen from a motoric-apparatus perspective. Others, having scaled the highest summits of art, forget the many mistakes and difficulties that they have experienced, and have overcome through ceaseless productive thinking. The superstitious theory that a clear, conscious understanding of all the stages of a creative path might hinder the freedom and immediacy of artistic thought - is sometimes invoked. In reality, artistic inspiration cannot completely reject the mind - the intellect that corrects the free flight of imagination in even the most precious moments of creative impulse. The most fruitful hours of creation may coincide with those of rigorous critical thinking. In some way, one has to balance “pure mind” and “pure intuition” in one’s work. The artist’s wisdom ideally helps and guides his inspiration, preventing it from turning into the baseless ecstasy so reasonably condemned by Pushkin. Finally, an artist does not perpetually exist in an exalted state of mind, in which artistic discoveries follow one after another. He spends many hours in everyday, but necessary, practice - hours when he needs both a clear mind and wise guidance.

The dynamics of artistic will play an enormous role in the development of a performer’s artistic self, but they should not be identified with thoughtlessness and a careless wish for on-stage elation. One should not merely live and feel in art, one has to live through a great deal and endure a great deal. This extra qualifier equally applies to thought, as much is reconsidered while artistic images build. And there is another danger: that the mind may overlook what is most important in art and overestimate the secondary and unnecessary. How often do musicians dogmatize random qualities of interpretation, or irrelevant details of a performance, especially if these features are found in the playing of a great artist! Humans are sometimes guilty of mannerisms and posturing, but those things do not hold the key to a great master’s charm. The strength of analytic thought and sharpness of observation do not lie in canonizing outer, random tricks, but in capturing the essence that lies at the core of mastery, which is invisible at a superficial glance. The purpose of deep critical thought is to grasp the invisible and make it tangible. On the other hand one should be careful not to fall under the dogmatic spell of theoretical preconceptions.

What can be the best hope of a researcher undertaking the task of untangling the specifics of such a refined art as piano playing? This art has no detailed theoretical system. This art constantly changes its favored forms and tastes, its technique and common trends. Almost all theoretical concepts have to retreat when confronted with the practice of outstanding masters of pianism, overwhelmed by the contradictions and complexity of live phenomena. This leads to an almost uniform and quite understandable skepticism on the part of expert practitioners, who tend to reject the universality of any “theory” and confine themselves to a “working hypothesis.” Hence the most we can hope for is to capture at least some universal trends and general principles, which may lead a
conscientious pianist toward the steady development of his art. Anything that might be said of such a dynamic art may be of only passing value, as any principle or technique bows out to new stylistic logic. However, an artist changes with the times as well. He is alive as an artist only as long as his performing concepts remain unfinished, as long as they are transformed along with modern musical art as well as developments in other arts. Therefore, the contradictions which the reader finds in these notes should be attributed to the difficulties which inevitably accompany any attempt to fix and stabilize live artistic development.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{40} http://arbiterrecords.org/catalog/samuil-feinberg-in-sound-and-thought/
APPENDIX G:

TABLE/TREE OF RUSSIAN PIANO SCHOOL LINEAGE LINKING TO FEINBERG

(accessed from University of Maryland College Park Piano Archives Website http://www.lib.umd.edu/ipam/great-pianistic-traditions/later-russian-schools/later-russian-schools)