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Ан. Лядов

Анатолий Лядов
Anatoly Lyadov
(1855 - 1914)

Piano works
Vol. I - IV

Complete works for
Pianoforte solo

Original settings



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Comments

Biography of A.K.Lyadov

Anatoly Konstantinovich Lyadov was born on May 11, 1855 in St. Petersburg. His grandfather Nikolay was a conductor of the St. Petersburg Philharmonic, his father Konstantin worked at first as a violinist and from 1850 to 1868 as a conductor of the Mariyrlsky Theatre in St. Petersburg. Konstantin Lyadov was very talented, but his disordered lifestyle did not allow him to develop his talent. One of his relatives, Varvara Andreyevna Antipova, gave young Anatoly his first piano lessons. As a child Anatoly had a very good voice, but later in his mature years he never sang - he preferred instead to whistle and did it with the virtuosity of a good flutist. In 1870 Lyadov entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory, where he studied piano with Professor Loss, special theory, harmony, counterpoint and fugue with Professor Johansen and composition with Professor Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov. In 1878 Lyadov graduated from the Conservatory with a Small Silver Medal and was invited to be an assistant teacher of elementary classes for theory, later becoming professor at this institution, teaching special classes of harmony and composition. He also held a similar position in the Imperial Court Chapel. Together with Balakirev and Lyapunov he was commissioned by the Imperial Geographical Society to conduct research of the folksongs in various districts.

Lyadov composed many of his best pieces for piano. His compositions are delicate and graceful, and the influence of Chopin is clearly evident in these pieces. At the same time their distinctively Russian colouring and humorous character saves his music from the reproach of servile imitation. Some of Lyadov's piano pieces have been orchestrated and used for ballets in the repertoire of the Dyaghilev company in his "Russian Seasons" in Paris. (The ballet "Russian Fairy Tales", based on the "Eight Russian Folksongs" for orchestra, was used together with numerous orchestrated piano pieces).

Lyadov was often reproached with indolence by his friends, who thought so highly of his gift that they wished to see it used in large-scale works, but Lyadov knew his limits and preferred to work effectively within them, and perhaps his busy life as a teacher also prevented his undertaking large compositions and completing the ballet he had begun. He made three attempts to compose an opera and in 1877 began a string quartet. Nevertheless, his orchestral works, though not extensive, are beautifully finished and scored with a highest mastery.

A very special place in Lyadov's life belongs to Mitrofan Petrovich Belyayev, a very rich timber merchant, a famous lover of music and patron of arts. Belyayev in 1884 had founded a music publishing house in Leipzig in order to promote new compositions of Russian composers. In 1885 he had founded the series of Russian Symphonic Concerts in St. Petersburg and in 1891 the series of Russian Quartet Nights. For the first time Belyayev met Lyadov at one of the concerts, where Lyadov performed as a conductor. Belyayev valued Lyadov not only as a talented musician and composer, but also as a man devoted to his profession with a very modest attitude to his own compositions. Belyayev had decided that it was his sacred duty to help Lyadov in his struggle with the difficulties of practical life. This relationship served as an important moral support for Lyadov in the difficulties of life. When Belyayev was told that Lyadov was very lazy and put very little time into his composing, he tried to demand that Lyadov "compose and compose more". Belyayev received a letter from Lyadov: "... I'm very sorry that you see only one side of my character - "the good pal" - but I have other sides too. I will never tolerate violence or authority, even if it comes out of love or friendship... I will terminate any relationships immediately if they become uncomfortable for me... ". The first composition by Lyadov published by Belyayev in 1888 was the "Mazurka for Orchestra". It was performed on 5 December 1887 in Belyayev's Russian Symphonic Concerts under the baton of Rimsky-Korsakov.

The aesthetic position of Lyadov was very unusual for the Russian composers, writers and artists. In his letter to N. Korsakevich (5 January 1905) he wrote: "I may live comfortably without Tolstoi - I don't need him. He died for me long ago: since he started writing "for people" and becoming "a useful artist"... He is a man of "guts", not a man of spirit. By his opinion God and the arts ought to be useful. He is my enemy from head to heels. He is the same as Gorky. I am disgusted by Tolstoi and Gorky, by their "street" success and common philosophy. They have minds of "grass" not minds of "rose". These men help mankind to commit the greatest crime of the world - to level everybody". Later, about 1910 Lyadov was inspired by the philosophy of Nietzsche. In Nietzsche's works Lyadov found the support for his aspiration to individual freedom, based on his contempt of the masses. In the letter to O.Korsakevich (19 December 1911) Lyadov wrote: "If you would like to become free - destroy all inherited family customs and thoughts in yourself, become intellectually naked - and create yourself from the beginning". The only Russian writer whom Lyadov adored till the end of his life was Pushkin. "O Pushkin, Pushkin! Eternal, radiant, free artist - from head to heels! Only before him shall I kneel" (letter to N.Korsakevich, 30 July 1907). "I'm a "free bird". The word "must" will never force me to do anything. My desire is my law. Probably (or certainly) it's bad - but it's my nature" (from Lyadov's diaries, 29 April 1907).

Anatoly Konstantinovich Lyadov died of pneumonia on 28 August 1914 in Polynovka.

Edited by
Alexej Wilk

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