



Newsletter of the
International
Kartinki s Vystavki
(Pictures at an Exhibition)

Association

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Elias-Axel Pettersson

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Piano recording count: 337

Arranged performance count: 593

Arrangement count: 307

Arrangement Count Surpasses the 300 Mark

IKVA has surpassed a substantial milestone in its archive, which now contains 307 different arrangements of *Pictures*. Included among these are a dozen jazz arrangements, and about the same number of rock versions. The universal appeal of this work is strongly suggested by the number of non-classical performers and arrangers who have undertaken a setting. I have Google alerts notifying me of any new mention of *Pictures* on the Internet or on anyone's blog sites, and am amazed at the almost daily mention of the piece by someone on his/her blog site. I hope to update the Wikipedia article on *Pictures* when I have some time. Fewer than half of the arrangements are listed there. There are now about 40 each of orchestral and band versions, too, including a fairly recent orchestra version by Michael Allen that received its premiere with the Boulder Philharmonic this past year.

I have also undertaken a large project, to compile an encyclopedia devoted entirely to *Pictures*. In it will be a concert roster of every performance of the piece that I can dig up, a listing of contemporary painters who have been influenced by *Pictures* (you'll find a sample at the end of this newsletter), a roster of biographies of all of the arrangers of the piece, articles devoted to a discussion of various aspects of the work, and much more. This encyclopedia will, like these newsletters, be published on-line, and since it will exist only in electronic format, it will be constantly updated. It will probably be at least a year before it is large enough to make it worth sending out to our membership, but I think you will all enjoy the fruit of my labor when I get it to that point.

Review of Elias-Axel Pettersson

Bach: Prelude & Fugue in F# Minor

Beethoven: Piano Sonata No. 26 in Eb

Janáček: Sonata 1.X.1905

Scriabin: Etude in D# Minor

Mussorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition

Chopin: Etude in C Minor "Revolutionary"

It is always exciting to see a new generation of talented performers coming along up to take the place of the older generation, which obviously will not be around forever. Elias-Axel Pettersson proves that he is a worthy member of the new young generation of pianists by the excellent pianism on display throughout this varied recital. His natural instinct for the difference in approaches demanded by, say, Bach and Mussorgsky, or Janáček and Beethoven, is readily evident, for each piece was compellingly presented, producing a most satisfactory total effect at the conclusion of the CD.

Pettersson's rendition of *Pictures* is impressive from the very beginning: The first *Promenade* is paced exactly right, neither too fast, nor too slow, as is common among many pianists. Some seem to want to prove that they can play it faster than anyone else, while others linger over it, forgetting what exactly this introductory section is supposed to represent. Pettersson's pacing through the entire cycle, in fact, is dead on. His reading doesn't seek to be original at the expense of the performance tradition of the piece, but he does include some very nice individualistic touches nonetheless. Among these are just the right amount of *affrettando* at the end of "Ballet of Chicks" (again, usually either under or overdone), and a slight hesitancy at the recap of the beginning theme of "Baba-Yaga." After more than 300 recordings of the piano version, a reviewer can become quite jaded with this piece, but Pettersson succeeds in keeping one's interest throughout the entire score, no matter how many times one has heard it.

The contrast between movements is also particularly effective, especially going from "Tuilleries" to "Bydlo." Pettersson also adds a few notes for emphasis in several places in the work.

I can express only two minor quibbles: Like most pianists, he doesn't quite capture the frenetic atmosphere to suggest the frantic wheeling and dealing that is supposed to be going on in "Limoges", and his "Baba-Yaga" isn't quite menacing enough. But these are very minor complaints in light of the excellence of this rendition, and it could well serve as your only recording of *Pictures*, if (heaven forbid) you required only one piano version in your collection.

David DeBoor Canfield

Review of Alex Rostotsky
Time when Fish Think of the Past
Geolink 004002

Given the number of non-classical arrangements of *Pictures*, it is evident that this work crosses lots of musical boundaries. One proof of this is Alex Rostotsky's treatment of "Rich Jew, Poor Jew," on the CD under review. Rostotsky is a well-known jazz musician in post-Soviet Russia. He is a colleague of Alexander Rosenblatt, whose work, *Waltzing with Mussorgsky* has gained international acclaim. Rostotsky's versatility and superb musicianship, as composer, vocalist, and performer on the electric bass and synthesizer, is well on display in this CD. The rhythmic drive of the CD's first piece, "African Village" could hardly form a greater contrast than it does with the beautiful ballade, "A Swan is Swimming by" that immediately follows it. Rostotsky's treatment of Goldenberg & Schmuyle is introduced by a hint of the poor Jew's tune, before launching into the main theme of the rich Jew. After these statements that follow Mussorgsky's original quite closely, Rostotsky's ensemble takes over in elaborating and improvising on these motives according to traditional jazz style. I was especially impressed with the clarinet solo performed by Ivan Volkov.

This CD is a pleasure to listen to from beginning to end, and can teach provincial Americans, who sometimes think that they "own" jazz, that much outstanding work is being done in this idiom in many other parts of the world.

David DeBoor Canfield

Rodriguez, Cristina, Colombian artist, born in 1964, who knew Mussorgsky's composition well, decided to research the original inspiration of the piece, the pictures of Victor Hartmann. She was surprised to find that the richness and depth of Mussorgsky's music was not matched, in her opinion, in the works of Hartmann. Perhaps Mussorgsky's music was enriched as much by his affection for, and memories of, his good friend, as by the

quality of the works. Rodriguez decided in a sense to reverse the story; to start with Mussorgsky's music, and produce ten paintings from the ten movements. The ten paintings became Cristina Rodriguez's degree show in 1987, and set her on her career as a narrative painter. It was formative also in that Cristina Rodriguez worked closely with the space for her exhibition, producing works that related to it; a video about the story; the design of the invitation. For Rodriguez, the exhibition itself has always to be a memorable experience.

Pictures at an Exhibition, 1987
based on the concert of Modest Mussorsky
Fundacion Alzate Avendano, Bogota, Colombia

For further details of a painting, and to see it larger, please click on an image:



Gnomus



Il Vecchio Castello



Tuileries



Bydlo



Ballet of the Chicks
within their Shells



Two Polish Jews.
One Rich. One Poor



Limoges. The Market



Catacombs



The Hut of the Baba Yaga



The Great Gate of Kiev