



## **RACHMANINOV** **Piano Concerto No. 3**

**LISZT Paganini Etude**  
**No. 5 in E major**  
**(‘La chasse’)**

**SCHUBERT-LISZT**  
**Liebesbotschaft**

**Vladimir Horowitz**

London Symphony Orchestra  
Albert Coates

**Historical Recordings 1928-1930**  
Includes three previously unpublished sides

## Great Pianists: Vladimir Horowitz: The First Recordings

Born in the Ukraine in 1903, Vladimir Horowitz entered the Kiev Conservatory at the age of nine, his teachers being Sergey Tarnowsky and Felix Blumenfeld. He played in Russia from 1920, but then left the country in 1925. After his Berlin and American débuts in the late 1920s he had a unique career, involving four periods of retirement from the concert stage and many triumphs. His last concerts were given in the mid-1980s and he died in New York in 1989.

Horowitz made his début in Berlin in January 1926; the hall was half empty as he was an unknown. At his début in London in 1927 he was unhappy about the halls he played in, the Albert Hall was too large and the Aeolian Hall too small. He arrived in America for the first time on 6th January 1928. His greatest wish was to meet Rachmaninov, but the composer had already heard good reports of Horowitz's performance of his *Third Concerto* in Paris, and had asked to hear him. Two days after his arrival in New York, Horowitz went to the basement of Steinway's at West 57th Street and played the concerto, with the composer at the second piano providing orchestral accompaniment. Although Rachmaninov did not express wonderment to the young pianist, he later told friends that Horowitz 'pounced with the fury and voraciousness of a tiger. He swallowed it whole, he had the courage, intensity, the daring'. Four days later Horowitz made his American début with Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto No. 1* conducted by Thomas Beecham, who was also making his American début. This famous occasion, in which conductor and soloist had completely different views of the work, was attended by executives from RCA Victor. Horowitz's début solo recital in February was not an unqualified success, with Olin Downes finding that 'with the exception of the *Mazurkas*, the Chopin failed in a measure to impress the audience'. A few weeks later, however, Horowitz was at the RCA Victor studio in Camden, New Jersey for his first recording session. From the March and April sessions the released titles included a Chopin *Mazurka* and the popular and endlessly amazing *Variations on themes of Carmen*, which RCA was keen to record, as he had

played it as an encore to his recital début. Unfortunately the piano was out of tune for both sessions. After his second tour of America the next sessions were in early January 1929 but none of these recordings were approved for release.

Of particular interest on the present compact disc are three hitherto unpublished sides, and to hear any new Horowitz material is exciting, especially from this early period in his career. These are not just alternative takes of pieces already released, but two of them are of works that Horowitz never otherwise recorded, and dropped from his repertoire not long after recording them. *Liebesbotschaft*, from the January 1929 sessions, is given a romantic reading with long vocal lines, and quite why Horowitz rejected this recording is difficult to understand, although after his second tour he was overwrought and exhausted, and did not make any further recordings for a year. His recording of *La chasse* is fascinating. When the French pianist Jeanne-Marie Darré was in Budapest around 1922 she heard a Horowitz recital, and later, in 1931 when she recorded Liszt's Paganini Etude *La chasse*, she played the rarely heard 1838 version rather than the version published in 1851. She had said about the 1922 concert, 'Horowitz was really my inspiration. I realised then that music and the piano were the most important things. For me he is the greatest'. Now that Horowitz's recording of the work has been published we can hear that he also plays the 1838 version, so could it be that Darré had been influenced by hearing Horowitz in this version of the work? Of the other titles, the Paganini Etude in *E flat* is in the arrangement by Busoni, and the *F major Etude* of Chopin would be recorded more successfully in England in November 1932. Dohnányi's *Capriccio* had already been recorded for Victor by Rachmaninov in 1921, but as this was an acoustic recording no doubt the company wanted an electrical version of this popular piece in their catalogue. Horowitz makes his only appearance as a composer with his Debussy and Stravinsky inspired *Danse excentrique*, carrying on the tradition of pianists who liked to play encores of their own composition. One title that seems unsuccessful is

the harsh and frenetic performance of Liszt's *Valse oubliée*, (amusingly referred to as 'Valse Jubilee' on the Victor documentation) which Horowitz seems to turn into a 'valse macabre'.

At the beginning of his career the *Third Concerto* of Rachmaninov became Horowitz's calling card. Although it had been dedicated to Josef Hofmann, he and many other pianists did not play the work at this time. Horowitz played it in 1927 with Karl Muck in Hamburg, and in Boston in March 1928 with Koussevitzky. A report stated, 'Not satisfied with the usual decorous hand-clapping, the audience cheered, yelled and pounded the seats in enthusiasm'. During the 1929–30 season when he toured America with the *Third Concerto*, Horowitz played it with Frederick Stock in Chicago, Fritz Reiner in Cincinnati, Walter Damrosch in New York, Pierre Monteux in Philadelphia, and Koussevitzky in Boston. In May 1929 he played it in

Berlin with the Concertgebouw Orchestra and Mengelberg, and later played it in England with the same conductor. It was then that HMV decided to record the work, and the Russian-born Albert Coates conducted the sessions at Kingsway Hall in December 1930. It still remains one of the outstanding versions of this work on disc despite a memory lapse in the last movement. Also at this session Horowitz recorded the *Toccata, Op. 11*, by Prokofiev, and the sessions were probably a tolerable experience for Horowitz, as he chose to record only in England for the following six years. The concerto would become something of a trademark for Horowitz; he recorded it again in 1951 with Fritz Reiner, and chose the work to celebrate the golden jubilee of his American début in 1978 with Eugene Ormandy.

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## Mark Obert-Thorn

Mark Obert-Thorn is one of the world's most respected transfer artist/engineers. He has worked for a number of specialist labels, including Pearl, Biddulph, Romophone and Music & Arts. Three of his transfers have been nominated for Gramophone Awards. A pianist by training, his passions are music, history and working on projects. He has found a way to combine all three in the transfer of historical recordings.

Obert-Thorn describes himself as a 'moderate interventionist' rather than a 'purist' or 're-processor,' unlike those who apply significant additions and make major changes to the acoustical qualities of old recordings. His philosophy is that a good transfer should not call attention to itself, but rather allow the performances to be heard with the greatest clarity.

There is no over-reverberant 'cathedral sound' in an Obert-Thorn restoration, nor is there the tinny bass and piercing mid-range of many 'authorised' commercial issues. He works with the cleanest available 78s, and consistently achieves better results than restoration engineers working with the metal parts from the archives of the modern corporate owners of the original recordings. His transfers preserve the original tone of the old recordings, maximising the details in critical upper mid-range and lower frequencies to achieve a musical integrity that is absent from many other commercially released restorations.

## Producer's Note

The present disc contains all of Vladimir Horowitz's commercially released recordings made up to the end of 1930, including three previously unpublished sides. The issued recordings were transferred from prewar U.S. Victor copies, ("Z" pressings in the case of the Rachmaninov concerto, and both "Z"s and "Gold" label pressings for the solo items), while the unpublished items came from vinyl test pressings. The Scarlatti side contained pitch fluctuations in the original disc, which I have attempted to correct here.

**Mark Obert-Thorn**

The Naxos historical label aims to make available the greatest recordings in the history of recorded music, in the best and truest sound that contemporary technology can provide. To achieve this aim, Naxos has engaged a number of respected restorers who have the dedication, skill and experience to produce restorations that have set new standards in the field of historical recordings.

## Vladimir Horowitz: The First Recordings

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <b>① CHOPIN: Mazurka No. 21 in C sharp minor, Op. 30, No. 4</b>   | <b>3:41</b> |
| Recorded 26th March, 1928 in Victor Studio No. 1, Camden, New Jersey<br>Matrix no. BVE-43412-1. First issued on Victor 1327   |             |
| <b>② DEBUSSY: Serenade for the Doll (from Children's Corner Suite)</b>  | <b>3:05</b> |
| Recorded 28th March, 1928 in Victor Studio No. 1, Camden, New Jersey<br>Matrix no. BVE-43414-1. First issued on Victor 1353   |             |
| <b>③ SCARLATTI: Capriccio in E major, L375</b>  | <b>2:37</b> |
| Recorded 2nd April, 1928 in Victor Studio No. 1, Camden, New Jersey<br>Matrix no. BVE-43413-3. First issued on Victor 1353    |             |
| <b>④ BIZET-HOROWITZ: Variations on Themes from Carmen</b>   | <b>3:35</b> |
| Recorded 2nd April, 1928 in Victor Studio No. 1, Camden, New Jersey<br>Matrix no. BVE-43411-5. First issued on Victor 1327    |             |
| <b>⑤ DOHNÁNYI: Capriccio (Concert Etude in F minor, Op. 28, No. 6)</b>  | <b>2:14</b> |
| Recorded 4th December, 1928 in Victor Studio No. 1, Camden, New Jersey<br>Matrix no. BVE-49156-3. First issued on Victor 1455 |             |
| <b>⑥ SCHUBERT-LISZT: Liebesbotschaft (from Schwanengesang), S560</b>  | <b>3:08</b> |
| Recorded 4th January, 1929 in the Victor Studios, New York<br>Matrix no. BVE-49614-3. Previously unpublished                  |             |
| <b>⑦ LISZT: Valse oubliée No. 1, S215</b>   | <b>2:19</b> |
| Recorded 25th February, 1930 in Liederkrantz Hall, New York<br>Matrix no. BVE-49155-3. First issued on Victor 1455            |             |
| <b>⑧ LISZT-BUSONI: Paganini Etude No. 2 in E flat major ('Octave')</b>  | <b>3:12</b> |
| Recorded 4th March, 1930 in Liederkrantz Hall, New York<br>Matrix no. BVE-58689-1. First issued on Victor 1468                |             |
| <b>⑨ LISZT: Paganini Etude No. 5 in E major ('La chasse') (1838 version)</b>  | <b>3:27</b> |
| Recorded 4th March, 1930 in Liederkrantz Hall, New York<br>Matrix no. BVE-58672-4. Previously unpublished                     |             |

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|----|---|-------|
| 10 | <b>CHOPIN: Etude in F major, Op. 10, No. 8</b><br>Recorded 4th March, 1930 in Liederkrantz Hall, New York<br>Matrix no. BVE-58688-2. Previously unpublished   | 2:19  |
| 11 | <b>HOROWITZ: Danse excentrique</b><br>Recorded 4th March, 1930 in Liederkrantz Hall, New York<br>Matrix no. BVE-58687-1. First issued on Victor 1468  | 2:26  |
|    | <b>RACHMANINOV: Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30</b>   | 33:52 |
| 12 | Allegro ma non troppo   | 14:29 |
| 13 | Intermezzo: Adagio  | 8:05  |
| 14 | Finale: Alla breve  | 11:13 |
|    | Recorded 29th and 30th December, 1930 in Kingsway Hall, London<br>Matrix nos. Cc 20723-3, 20724-3, 20725-3, 20731-2, 20726-2, 20727-2A,<br>20728-2, 20729-1A and 20730-2. First issued on HMV DB 1486 through 1490<br>Albert Coates / London Symphony Orchestra |       |



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## The First Recordings

Vladimir Horowitz  
(1903-1989)Playing  
Time  
65:56

- |              |  |              |
|--------------|--|--------------|
| <b>1</b>     | <b>CHOPIN:</b> Mazurka No. 21 in C sharp minor, Op. 30, No. 4  | <b>3:41</b>  |
| <b>2</b>     | <b>DEBUSSY:</b> Serenade for the Doll (from Children's Corner Suite)                                   | <b>3:05</b>  |
| <b>3</b>     | <b>SCARLATTI:</b> Capriccio in E major, L375   | <b>2:37</b>  |
| <b>4</b>     | <b>BIZET-HOROWITZ:</b> Variations on Themes from Carmen  | <b>3:35</b>  |
| <b>5</b>     | <b>DOHNÁNYI:</b> Capriccio (Concert Etude in F minor, Op. 28, No. 6)                                   | <b>2:14</b>  |
| <b>6</b>     | <b>SCHUBERT-LISZT:</b> Liebesbotschaft (from Schwanengesang), S560<br>(Previously unpublished)         | <b>3:08</b>  |
| <b>7</b>     | <b>LISZT:</b> Valse oubliée No. 1, S215  | <b>2:19</b>  |
| <b>8</b>     | <b>LISZT-BUSONI:</b> Paganini Etude No. 2 in E flat major ('Octave')                                   | <b>3:12</b>  |
| <b>9</b>     | <b>LISZT:</b> Paganini Etude No. 5 in E major ('La chasse')<br>(1838 version - previously unpublished) | <b>3:27</b>  |
| <b>10</b>    | <b>CHOPIN:</b> Etude in F major, Op. 10, No. 8 (Previously unpublished)                                | <b>2:19</b>  |
| <b>11</b>    | <b>HOROWITZ:</b> Danse excentrique   | <b>2:26</b>  |
| <b>12-14</b> | <b>RACHMANINOV:</b> Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30  | <b>33:52</b> |

The legendary pianist Vladimir Horowitz enjoyed a long career, from his Berlin début in 1926 to his final recitals in the 1980s. The present release includes previously unpublished recordings of the Paganini *Etude No. 5 'La chasse'* in the rarely heard 1838 version, *Liebesbotschaft*, dropped from Horowitz's repertoire shortly after this recording and Chopin's *Etude No. 5 in F major*, alongside all the commercially released recordings made up to the end of 1930.

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

A complete tracklist can be found in the booklet

[www.naxos.com](http://www.naxos.com)Cover Photograph: Vladimir Horowitz in the 1930s  
(Lebrecht Collection)

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