

Sophia Lisovskaya

Piano



Sophia Lisovskaya was born in Moscow into a family of professional musicians. Having shown early promise she gave her first public performance at the age of six in Moscow's Museum of Fine Art, one of Sviatoslav Richter's favourite venues, and has since continued to follow the grand tradition of the old Russian School with a lineage of professors leading directly back to the great figures of Neuhaus, Sofronitzky and Scriabin. Indeed, to quote The American Record Guide:

“...coming close to the standard set by Sofronitzky and Richter for these pieces. These are outstanding performances.”

First formal distinction came at the age of 13 when she won first prize in the All Soviet Competition: “New Names” performing Chopin's 2nd piano concerto with the former Ministry of Culture Symphony Orchestra, whilst studying at the Tchaikovsky Junior

Conservatoire of Music. Sophia completed her musical education in the West, taking up the offer of a full scholarship at London's Royal Academy of Music in 1994 and gaining a scholarship from London's Philharmonia Orchestra in 1996. In parallel with her studies, Sophia Lisovskaya's career continued to blossom from her teens onwards with engagements such as her tour in South America performing Rachmaninov's 4th concerto in Buenos Aires (at the Teatro de Colon), Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. She subsequently performed throughout Europe including appearances at St. James' Palace (London), the Vasteras Concert Hall (Sweden), and Wigmore Hall (London).

Since then, Sophia has performed numerous concerts all over the UK, including making a return to London's Wigmore Hall where she performed a recital focusing on the late works of Chopin as well as works of the great Russian composers. Continuing to expand her Russian repertoire Sophia also gave her debut in Sweden on tour performing Rachmaninov's 2nd piano concerto. Her debut in the legendary “Great Hall” of the Moscow Conservatoire, performing the premiere of Bruch's Double Piano Concerto with the Moscow State Chamber Orchestra in their Winter Proms season, was a huge success and she has made a number of broadcasts including live performances on National Swedish Radio, BBC Radio 3 and Moscow Radio. Previous engagements have also included Sophia's concert to open the London Festival Orchestra's “Virtuoso Pianists” concerto series (performing Schumann's piano concerto), her return to tour Russia giving several performances with the Novosibirsk Philharmonic Orchestra under their music director maestro Katz for their 50th Year Jubilee Concert, and performing with the Queensland Orchestra in Australia. At a Gala Concert in Latvia Sophia performed Shostakovich's 2nd Piano Concerto and she has given recitals in Milan (in the prestigious Sala Verdi for the Società dei Concerti), London (St John's, Smith Square) and Moscow, and returned to Sweden for an extended recital tour.

Closer to home, Sophia continues to expand her UK audience, performing up and down the country. She has recently performed at St. George's, Bristol and Chipping Campden Music Festival and her UK engagements in the current season include a recital at the Swaledale Festival.

Sophia continues to pursue her pianistic career upholding her strong belief and commitment to artistic integrity. Her repertoire is broad although her childhood love of Russian composers has never left her and indeed her debut CD was a recital disc of the composer Scriabin, which was released on the Swedish label BIS. Critical acclaim again praised her traditional Russian approach with Michel Le Naour of Le Monde de la Musique writing:

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“There is no denying that Lisovskaya possesses the sensitivity and technique that allows her to step beyond the technical pitfalls Scriabin’s music is littered with.”

Her live performances are invariably described as original and powerful, with particular praise reserved for her ability to make a strong impact on audiences with her unique, recognisable sound. The Music Director of the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra and the Zurich Opera House, Maestro Vladimir Fedoseev refers to Sophia Lisovskaya as “A pianist with a special poetic gift”.

Since performing with her father during her childhood, Sophia has enjoyed collaborating with other artists. Earlier in her career, Sophia’s involvement in chamber music took her to many festivals including the Bregenz Festival, the Josseff Otten Festival, and the Ascona Music Festival. More recently she performed in Moscow’s first Schubertiade at the new “Music House” concert hall in Moscow with Russia’s leading chamber musicians. Here in the UK she enjoys creative partnerships with artists such as the Barbirolli Quartet.

2011 is an exciting year for Sophia Lisovskaya as she makes her debut in China with a tour which includes venues in Guangzhou and Beijing. She also performs in France, Russia and Italy (Associazione Sala Greppi - Bergamo).

In addition to her devotion to music, Sophia is passionate about the visual arts and has studied History of Art. She was therefore particularly delighted to accept a recent invitation to perform at the opening night of the Giacometti Centre in Switzerland.

Views and Reviews

Sophia Lisovskaya at the Wigmore

Russian pianist Sophia Lisovskaya, who studied at the Royal Academy of Music, presented a rewarding recital at the Wigmore Hall on 1 May. Bach’s *First Partita* BWV 852 opened up a faultless technique. The liquid flow of the *Allemande* still had depth with phrasing and dynamics finely balanced. If the *Corrente* flowed like a torrent, bouncy, light yet with a complex drama permeating throughout, then the repose of the *Sarabande* stemmed the flight with tiny hints of rubato effectively shaping the movement. Her trills throughout were a perceptive part of the music aided by a meticulous skill that never wavered.

Lisovskaya’s interpretative power was no better felt than in the works of Scriabin. Full of expression and dramatic edge, her choice of five *Preludes* from Opuses 11 and 16 were distinctly coloured. No 6 of the former, dark and penetrating, No 1 of the latter, delicate and refined. The sensuality of *Vers la flamme* was countered by a great moment of tension built up with remarkable composure. Lisovskaya’s performances were powerful indeed, embracing Scriabin’s kaleidoscopic detail.

Whatever physical limitations Schumann may have possessed in his desire to fulfill evermore expressive keyboard sonorities Lisovskaya demonstrated her ability to overcome them in his *Fantasy*. The warmth of her playing seized the gamut of emotion contained in the work to produce a lucid yet unmistakably mature account to end her stunning recital.

David Alker, Musical Opinion

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American Record Guide

Here is another pretty young Russian pianist, and this one has genuine talent. Lisovskaya was trained in Moscow and London and has appeared in the major European cities, but apparently not yet in the US. Apart from Sonata 4, composed in 1903, the 26 pieces are presented in the order written - from Opus 2 of 1888-89 to *Vers la Flamme* of 1914 - which allows her to show the development of Scriabin's style. It's devilishly hard to convey adequately his unique mix of mysticism and sexuality, and I'm impressed by how well she does it. She's technically sound and plays with strength, well-judged tempos, nicely rounded phrases, and a good sense of tone and colour. She's appropriately lyrical in the early works and manages the surging ecstasies of the sonata and *Vers la Flamme* with power and beauty, coming close to the standard set by Sofronitzky and Richter for these pieces. These are outstanding performances, recorded in exceptionally good sound.

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More Opinions

"The beauty of Lisovskaya's playing is ravishing."

Stefan Dettlinger, Piano News

"Moscow-born pianist Sophia Lisovskaya has what it takes to bring this music to life: a beautiful, robust sonority, plus secure, well-drilled fingers that can take care of anything and make it sound easy."

Jed Distler - Classics Today

"There is no denying that Lisovskaya possesses the sensitivity and technique that allows her to step beyond the technical pitfalls Scriabin's music is littered with."

Michel Le Naour, Le Monde de la Musique

"(Rachmaninov's) introspective fifth Prelude (Op. 32) was a work of art under Lisovskaya..."

Musical Opinion

"I like her in the dreamy little pieces...Lisovskaya can certainly be sensitive."

Adrian Jack, BBC Music Magazine

"Take for example the Rachmaninov Piano Concerto no. 2. With the inherent dynamics and resolute touch that Sophia Lisovskaya proved to command, she still gave the piano parts full justice, as in the assiduous chords of the final phrases in the first movement. But surely the most delicious passages were those that she performed with smaller constellations, or with the strings just as an accent, like in the opening of the second movement. And surely it would have been delightful to hear the piano alone afterwards, in an ever so short encore, chiefly to get a further experience of Sophia Lisovskaya's intimate relation to the piano. Not even thirty years of age, she already possesses a natural authority as a musician, but in a humble and discreet manner"

Birgit Ahlberg-Hyse, Västmanlands Läns Tidning, Sweden

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