

EMIL VON SAUER

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Emil von Sauer has the distinction of being one of the last pupils of Liszt.

Emil Georg Conrad von Sauer was born in Hamburg on 8 October 1862. He studied with Nicholas Rubinstein at the Moscow Conservatory from 1879-1881. He always said that the greatest influence on his life was Rubinstein to whom he dedicated his first concerto

In 1884, Sauer visited Italy and met Countess von Sayn-Wittgenstein who recommended the young man to Liszt who had been her lover. Sauer studied with Liszt for two years.

From 1882, Sauer made his living by successful tours as a virtuosic pianist which lasted until 1940. His first visit to London was in 1894 and to New York in 1899. During 1901 to 1907, he was director of the Vienna Academy to which post he returned in 1915. In 1917, he was raised to the peerage by the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy which added the nobility term ' von ' to his name. He was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Philharmonic Society of London. His first wife was Angelica Morales with whom he had two sons, Julio and Franz. At a time, he suffered from anti-German attitudes in parts of Europe and elsewhere.

He died in Vienna on 27 April 1942. He was 79.

He was a splendid concert pianist probably more at home with solo works than concertos. I recall the six Columbia records on 78s with the Liszt Piano Concerto no 1 conducted by Felix Weingartner. His performance of Liszt's Mazeppa from the Transcendental Studies is legendary and his Chopin Op 66 is memorable.

His Piano Concerto no 1 in E minor is a rarely performed gem which is natural as opposed to barn storming music. Its virtuosity is not contrived but the natural progression of the music. The work is very well written in all departments with gorgeous and varied thematic material.



The Piano Concerto no 2 is dedicated to the composer's mother. It is set in C minor and has a brief melancholy introduction before the music becomes majestic and scintillating. The scherzo is a real scherzo and the slow movement is sumptuous and glorious of a beauty that is beyond words. The orchestration is simply magnificent. As with Brahms's Second Concerto, the finale may not



work but it is still a very great work. When one considers the plethora of poor quality music that is regularly played and recorded, one is at a complete loss to comprehend why this work is ignored. Three friends who are all concert pianist have said that this concerto is vastly superior to Medtner and others, and almost as great as the genius of Rachmaninov.

There are many solo piano works such as a Concert Polka which is not in the cheap and unsophisticated style of Johann Strauss as a piece The Approaching Spring which, sadly, hints at Chopin or some feeble impressionism. But there is a wealth of fine music here and its neglect is totally unjustified.

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