

For Peter Roy Cook

A THIRD SET OF PIANISTS ...THE FEMALE STARS

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This is my third set of pianists and, again, they are not in any order or logical grouping to enable me to be spontaneous.

For easy reference, the pianists in this article are:

Gina Bachauer, Ann Schein, Claire Desert, Anne Queffelec, Helene Grimaud, Angela Hewitt, Alice Sarah Ott, Christina Kiss, Marie Catherine Girod, Donna Amato, Nadejda Vlaeva, Jitka Cechova, Daria Telizyn, Cecile Ousset, Ceceile Licad, Valentina Lisitsa, Zeynep Ucbasaran, Fabiana Biasini, Edith Farnadi, Anja German, Lise de la Salle

There is no doubt that one of the finest female pianists was Gina Bachauer who, sadly, is no longer a household name. She was an amazing pianist who combined a muscular strength and power with a delicacy of touch. Her technique was impeccable.

In a previous essay about pianists, I expressed my grave doubts about Kissin in the Brahms's Second Concerto. Listen to Bachauer play it and you will see my point. She is true to the score and brings out a wealth of detail. Every note is clarity itself and it makes Kissin's performance a travesty. Her playing can be full blooded and exciting and, by contrast, stunningly beautiful.

She was born in Athens on 21 May 1913 and was of Greek and Austrian descent. She was gifted as early as five years of age. Her first recital was when she was eight. She studied at the Athens Conservatory with Waldemar Freeman and then went to Paris to study with Alfred Cortot at the Ecole Normale de Musique. Her first concerto performance was in 1932 and the following year she won the Medal of Honour at the Vienna International Competition. Between 1933 and 1935 she had some lessons with Rachmaninov.

Her professional debut was with the Athens Symphony Orchestra under Dmitri Mitropoulos. During World War II she lived in Alexandria in Egypt, and played over 600 concerts for allied forces in the Middle East where she was deservedly loved.

She made her London debut in 1946 with Alec Sherman, who was her second husband. Her first American performance was to a small audience in New York in October 1950.

Among her pupils was Princess Irene, a close friend of the conductor Maurice Abravanel of the Utah Symphony Orchestra.

My late friend, the composer James Wilson, composed a piano sonata for her as 'only she could play it.'

She was superb in Mozart, incredible in both Beethoven and Brahms and Stravinsky admired her playing of his works above all others. She played Bach, Liszt, the Chopin concertos, Debussy preludes, Faure, Rachmaninov 2 and his preludes. Her two CD set with the conductor Stanislaw Skrowaczewski should be heard by all lovers of piano music.

She died of a heart attack in Athens on 22 August 1976 on a day she was to perform at the Athens Festival with the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington DC.

The International Piano Competition was set up in her memory in Salt Lake City in 1976 and attracts young pianists from all over the world. Her fans visit her house in Halandri and feed the stray cats as she did. In 1981 the Greek government published a stamp in her honour.

She was a big woman with a big heart and she must not be forgotten.

Ann Schein was born on 10 November 1939 in White Plains, New York. Her father was a lawyer and her mother a violinist. She spent her early life in Evanston, Illinois but moved to Washington DC when she was four. Her first major study was at the Peabody Conservatory under Mieczyslaw Munz. At the age of nineteen she performed the four scherzi of Chopin which won her acclaim. Two years later she began lessons with Arthur Rubinstein and, in 1962, made her Carnegie Hall debut. The following year she played at the White House for President Kennedy.

During the 1960s she had great success with Rachmaninov's glorious Piano Concerto no. 3 in D minor.

In 1980 she had given a series of recitals with all the major works of Chopin at the Alice Tully Hall. She

was a faculty member at the Peabody Institute from 1980 to 2000 when she retired. She was also a faculty member at the Aspen Music Festival and a much sought-after adjudicator at international piano competitions.

She is an accomplished chamber music player as in Mozart's Kegelstatt Trio K 498. She has recorded Berg songs with Jessye Norman, music for violin and piano with Jamie Laredo containing works by Copland, Ives, Lees and Kirchner, Stravinsky and Ned Rorem and a solo recital of music by Schuman, the Davidbundlertanze and the Humoreske, and a new recording of Chopin's Sonata no. 3 and the 24 preludes.

She is married to the violinist Earl Carlyss and they have two daughters.

Claire Desert entered the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris when she was just fourteen years old. She studied with Ventsislav Yankoff and Jean Hubeau and received prizes for her solo playing and for chamber music. She was granted a French government scholarship to study at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow with Eugeny Malinin. Returning to Paris she completed a second post graduate year in chamber music with Roland Pridoux.

She is a regular recitalist and has appeared with many famous orchestras in concert works. She regularly partners such artistes as Regis Pasquier, Anne Gastinel and Gerard Causee as well as the Parisii Quartet and the Moragues Quartet.

There is something special about her playing. It has to do with her personality which is of sincere humility. As well as being a first rate pianist, she is a first rate person. But I long to hear her play some of the classics.

Another gifted pianist is Anne Queffelec who was born in Paris on 17 January 1948. Her father was Henri Queffelec, a writer and her sister, Yann, is also a noted writer. She started the piano when she was five and later joined the Paris Conservatoire studying with Lelia Gousseau and Jean Hubeau winning the piano first prize in 1965 and the following year the first prize for chamber music. She continued her studies with Paul Badura-Skoda, the Austrian pianist, born 1927 and noted for his Mozart, and another Austrian pianist Jorg Demus, born 1928. She won the first prize in the Munich Competition in 1968 but came fifth in the Leeds International Competition in 1969 yet her performances deserved a better response.

She is an excellent recitalist and concert pianist but also a first class chamber player with such people as Pierre Amoyal, the violinist, Catherine Collard (pianist), Frederic Lodeon and Imogen Cooper (pianist).

She has performed in all parts of the world. She is renowned for playing the French repertoire such as the complete piano works of Satie and Ravel. Her Ravel is exemplary. Among the many other composers she excels with are Scarlatti, Bach, Mozart, Schubert, Liszt, Chopin, Faure and Debussy.

She is a truly delightful person and has good communication skills not only with the music but with audiences.

A really fine pianist is Helene Grimaud who was born in Aix-en-Provence on 7th November 1969 a descendant from the Sephardi Jews of Corsica on her mother's side, and the Berber Jews on her father's side. She fell in love with the piano at the age of seven and entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1982 studying with Jacques Rouvier. She won first prize at the Conservatoire in 1985 and with the Piano Sonata no. 2 of Rachmaninov won the Grand Prix du Disque of the Academie Charles Cros for that recording. In 1987 she gave a solo recital in Paris and a performance with the Paris Orchestra under Barenboim. This was in 1987.

She moved to Florida at the age of 21 and then lived near New York city. Later she spent some time in Berlin but now lives in Switzerland

She is renowned for her passion for wolves which she raises and studies. With her then partner, the photographer, J Henry Fair, she set up the Wolf Conservation Centre.

She is also interested in synesthesia which she experiences. This is a neurological condition in which, for example, letters or numbers are conceived as colours and days of the week and months of the year evoke personalities. Synesthesia is said to include the use of personal experiences in the creative process.

But it is her music that is our concern. One will never forget her appearance in London in September 2008 playing Beethoven's truly magnificent and deeply spiritual Choral Fantasia. Her integration with the orchestra and the controlled enjoyment she showed was a delight to watch. She has recorded solo recitals on the Denon label and, on Erato, the concertos of Schumann, Brahms 1, Gershwin and, on Teledisc, Rachmaninov 2, Beethoven 4 and, on DGG, Beethoven 5, Bartok 3, and works by John Corigliano and Arvo Part.

Her playing is noted for its clarity and her admirable commitment to all she plays which she clearly relishes. Her Bach tends to be powerfully dramatic which may not please the purists, but it is exciting. Her Emperor is sensational and deeply felt in the slow movement. Her facial expression shows how much she

loves the music and the vitality in the fast music is spell binding. She is an amazing technician and brings out detail. She gives master classes and has some shrewd observations such as Beethoven is a modern composer. You will have to listen for yourself to her explanation which makes complete sense. Although she has not said this, Beethoven introduced jazz in one of the variations in his Sonata in C minor Op 111.

Of all pianists she is one that to watch is the greatest visual delight as well as being a rewarding musical experience. She is loved everywhere. She is gracious to conductors, orchestral players and to audiences. One cannot say that of all performers.

Canada must be proud of their finest pianist, Angela Hewitt. She is also both a joy to watch and to hear. She is a complete performer but brings to her music a sensuality. Her brain and her fingers testify to her skill and technique and yet her performances have heart and every note counts.

She has performed in North America, Europe, Japan, Australia, Singapore, New Zealand, China, Mexico, Turkey and Russia and at festivals in Edinburgh, Osaka, Prague, Hong Kong and Oslo. Her London concerts sell out almost as soon as the tickets are available. In 2007-8 she performed Bach's complete Well Tempered Klavier all over the world

And yet in her formative years she also studied the violin and ballet. Her father was the cathedral organist in Ottawa and she was at the piano by the age of three, performed in public at the age of four and, at five, winning her first scholarship. She studied with the French pianist Jean-Paul Sevilla at the University of Ottawa. In 1978 she won first prize in the Viotti Competition and won other prizes and awards in Leipzig, Washington DC, Zwickau, Cleveland, La Scala, Milan and, in 1985, won the Toronto International Bach Piano Competition.

She was named Gramophone Artist of the Year in 2006.

Purists may not approve of her playing Couperin, Rameau and Bach on the piano but she also plays Handel and Haydn, Beethoven sonatas and piano music by Chabrier, the complete Nocturnes and Impromptus of Chopin, Schumann, Messiaen and the complete works of Ravel. With the German cellist Daniel Muller-Schott she has recorded Beethoven's Cello Sonatas and the Bach Gamba sonatas. Of the concertos in her repertoire there are seven by Bach, all of Beethoven including the superb Choral Fantasy, Haydn G major, Mendelssohn G minor and the Double Concerto with violin, 13 Mozarts, Schumann, Clara Schumann, two each of Chopin and Liszt, Grieg, Ravel G major and Dominic Muldowney's Concerto no.2

She began the Transimeno Music Festival held annually in Umbria, Italy.

She is a person of charm as well as immense talent, very stylish and a joy to both see and hear.

Alice Sarah Ott has many qualities. She plays with commitment and obvious enjoyment. There is logic and coherence in her playing but she does not suffer from infuriating histrionics like Lang Lang. Her Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody no. 2 is a very personal performance with a fine control of rhythm proving yet again that Liszt was the finest composer of music for the piano by far. There is tremendous energy in her playing almost of a gymnastic quality at times. While I cannot warm to the salon pieces of Chopin her performance of his Waltz in E minor is like nothing I have ever heard. She does not play it as effeminate and annoying tinkly music, but with power and precision. Her performances of Beethoven's Appassionata Sonata and the Waldstein Sonata appeals to a committed Beethovenian such as myself. In talking about the Liszt Transcendental Studies she explains that they are full of colour and emotion.

She was born in Munich in 1988 and began playing at the age of four. She won a first prize with distinction at the Jugend Musiziert at the age of seven and has won awards ever since. She is German-Japanese and studied with Karl Heinz Kaemmerling at the Salzburg Mozarteum.

Christina Kiss has specialised in Liszt. She was born in Budapest and studied at the Franz Liszt Academy and at the Juilliard School in New York where she was awarded the Gina Bachauer Prize. She received first prize at the Maria Canals International Piano Competition in Barcelona and first prize at Cincinatti's International American Music Competition and over 24 prizes since including the Athens Prize and the Van Cliburn Prize.

In 1990 at Carnegie Hall she introduced her Liszt cycle to rave reviews and hopes to finish the complete Liszt piano music by 2015. To date she has performed over 550 of his works and she also rightly acknowledges that Liszt was the greatest composer of music for the piano.

A pianist to admire is Marie Catherine Girod. She is my type of pianist with no gestures or flamboyance but with a dedication to and accuracy in the music she plays. She is also a teacher and a conservatory director. While she plays the standard repertoire she has introduced many to lesser known composers such as

Decaux, Tournemire and Lourie. Her performance of the Dutilleux sonata, arguably the finest French piano sonata, was spell binding.

Understandably she is in demand throughout Europe and a recital of hers is not an event but a rewarding experience.

She has been honoured twice with the Grand Prize of the Academie Nationale du Disque Francais and, in 1991, won the International Charles Cros competition and also became a Knight of Arts and Letters. She has recorded attractive piano works by the Polish composer Czeslaw Marek (1891- 1985) who studied with Kurt Weigel, Pfitzner and Leschetizky and the sonata of Pierre de la Breville (1861- 1949) who was a pupil of Cesar Franck.

Donna Amato teaches piano at the University of Pittsburgh, the city in which she was born. She made her debut with a orchestra at the age of fourteen and studied with the virtuoso Ozan Marsh and has received many honours and awards. In 1983 she visited Europe to continue her studies and studied with Louis Kentner in London, Gaby Casadesus in Paris and Guido Agosti in Sienna. In Italy she won the discretionary Diploma d'Onore. Then she went to Mexico to study with Angelica Morales von Sauer.

If she is not as well known as she should be, it may be because she generally performs works which do not have a great pulling power such as the sonatas of MacDowell, the works of Giacinto Scelsi, Leonardo Balada and Sorabji along with Nancy Gilbraiths' Piano Concerto no. 2.

As well as teaching in Pittsburgh she is a member of the faculty at Carnegie Mellon and Duquesne Universities.

Another interesting pianist is Nadejda Vlaeva. The pianist Lazar Berman has said that she has a God given talent. Hans Graf said that her musicality and the depth of her interpretations are amazing. Arnold Steinhardt of the Guarneri String Quartet said that she was one of those extraordinary people whom we hope for, but rarely see.

She won first prize at the Liszt Competition in Lucca, Italy, third prize in the Liszt Competition in Budapest and the Yamaha prize for the best performance of Brahms. She has worked in Weimar with the Bulgarian composer Dimiter Christov. Her disc of Liszt's music won the International Grand Prix du Disque. She has recorded Chopin's works for piano and orchestra and recorded the soundtrack music for the documentary film In Search of Cezanne.

The American composer Lowell Libermann composed his Nocturne no. 9 for her and his Variations on a theme of Schubert in consecutive years 2006 and 2007. She gave the first American performance of Bortkiewicz's Piano Sonata no. 2

She was born in Sofia and began playing the piano at the age of five. She studied piano at the Sofia Music School, Sofia Academy, the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam and the Manhattan School of Music with Antonietta Arsiova and Ruth Laredo. She has also worked with Lazar Berman.

Her repertoire is extensive with Bach, Scarlatti, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, Franck, Brahms, Saint Saens, Grieg, Lyadov, Liapunov, Debussy, Rebikov, Scriabin, Rachmaninov, Medtner, Friedmann, Stravinsky, Prokofiev and her concertos include Bach, Mozart K271 and K537, Beethoven 2 to 5, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, his two concertos, Grieg, Ravel G major, Rachmaninov 2, 3 and the Paganini Rhapsody and the Gershwin concerto and his Rhapsody in Blue. She lives in New York.

There is no better exponent of Czech piano music than the pianist Jitka Cechova. She was born in Melnik near Prague and was taught by Jan Novotny at the Prague Conservatory and by Peter Toperczer at the Prague Academy of Performing Arts. During her post graduate studies she studied with Eugen Indjic in Paris and Vitali Berzon in Freiburg.

She won prizes in piano competitions in Usti and Labem (1986) the Smetana Competition (1986, 1988 and 1990) the Chopin Competition in Marianske Lazne (1987 and 1989) and the Hummel Competition in Bratislava (1991).

She has toured throughout Europe and South Africa. A highlight was her concerts of Smetana's piano music at the Edinburgh Festival in 1988.

She is an excellent chamber music player. She is the pianist in the Smetana Trio with Jana Novakova and Jan Palenicek. She was the pianist in the premiere of Karel Janovicky's Piano Trio no. 2

She has recorded the Dvorak concerto and the concerto by Lukas, Liszt's Totentanz, the complete solo piano music of Smetana, piano trios by Dvorak, Tchaikovsky, Smetana, Fibich and Martinu.

There is a spontaneity and freshness in her performances.

Another advocate of the music of Liszt was the phenomenal Daria Telizyn. Unfortunately she only made three CDs namely Liszt Sonata, Il lamento and Le Leggierezza, Liszt Totentanz and Leilo and Tchaikovsky small pieces.

She was born in Toronto on 31 March 1960, some say 1961, of Ukrainian descent. Her father, Emil, is a widely known icon painter and church decorator (for example, he designed the altar mosaics at the the Ukrainian Catholic Church of St Athanasius in North Regina) and her late mother, Nina, was an actress and opera singer with the Zahrava Theatre. Daria began her musical education at the age of three at the Royal Conservatory of Music and then at the University of Western Ontario where she received her Bachelor of Music in 1980. She studied for two years at the Paris Conservatoire with Denyse Riviere who had been the assistant to Marcel Ciampi (1891 - 1980) and then at the Peabody Conservatory with Claude Frank (born 1925), a pupil of Schnabel, where she graduated with a Masters degree in piano performance in 1985. She moved to Washington DC and established herself as a fine pianist. All the reviews of her performances heaped praise upon her. She produced a strong and beautiful sound and a clarity in her playing. She performed her countryman Oscar Morawetz's Fantasy, Elegy and Toccata and when exciting virtuosity was required she unleashed a brilliance that knew no bounds.

She visited London, Paris and Kiev where she played Revutsky's Piano Concerto with the MNational Symphony Orchestra of the Ukraine, Frankfurt, Brussels, Toronto and Mexico. She toured Germany and Austria with the Washington Symphony Orchestra and the United States twice with the Kyiv Chamber Orchestra.

She enchanted audiences. The eminent Dutch critic, Jan van Voorthuysen wrote, " Even if I had only heard Liszt's notorious grand Sonata in B minor, I would have been convinced that I have heard one of the greatest pianists. Year ago I heard her first teacher more than once and I am sure he could not have equalled her, for he could not have equalled Horowitz or Andor Foldes, whereas Daria Telizyn did ! And with the greatest of ease! After having heard 10,000 concerts, after having written more than 8,600 reviews, after having heard the Liszt sonata countless times, I feel simply bound to declare that after Daria Telizyn's unbelievable performance I feel completely flabbergasted."

She moved to Florida and endured a series of illnesses. She picked up and went back to playing but this was short-lived and she had emergency surgery in Dunedin, Florida but, sadly, died on 21 March 2005, ten days short of her 45th birthday.

She was a woman of great beauty and spirit, a passionate Ukrainian with a talent that was unsurpassed.

You are urged to obtain her performance of the Liszt. It is the most thoughtful and beautiful performance you will ever hear.

On 2 June 2006 a benefit concert was held in her memory to assist young Ukrainian musicians at the University of Maryland in the William Kapell International Piano Competition.

See separate article on [Daria Tilizyn](#).

Because of back problems, the pianist Cecile Ousset has had to retire from the concert platform. This French pianist was born in Tarbes on 23 January 1936, gave her first recital at the age of five and studied at the Paris Conservatoire with the brilliant teacher Marcel Ciampi. At the age of fourteen she won first prize in her graduation class. She has since won many prizes and has performed throughout the world. She won the Grand Prix du Disque for her Brahms' Concerto no 2 with Kurt Masur. She is an adored teacher of young people and has given master classes all over the world. She is outstanding in the French repertoire and her EMI recordings have sold well. These include Saint Saens 2, Liszt 1, Rachmaninov 2, the Paganini Rhapsody, Greig and Mendelssohn 1 and, latterly, Rachmaninov 3, both Ravel concertos and the Gershwin works for piano and orchestra

She was deservedly a well-loved pianist and is still loved whether she is in Paris or in her beautiful medieval village of Puycelsi..

Cecile Licad was born on 11 May 1961 in Manila and began piano lesson with her mother Rosario and later with Rosario Picazo. She made her debut at the age of seven with the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Philippines. Then she went to the Curtis School of Music and studied with the legendary Rudolf Serkin. She was one of the youngest musicians to win the Leventritt Gold Medal in 1981 and her fame was spread abroad. Her repertoire is wide from Mozart and Beethoven to the Romantics, the impressionists Ravel and Debussy and the 20th century masters such as Bartok, Prokofiev and Shostakovich. She has also amused herself with the inferior music of Gottschalk.

She has worked with Murray Perahia, Peter Serkin and the cellist Alban Gerhardt and the major orchestras but not always with sympathetic conductors. Her Rachmaninov second with Solti was wayward due to Solti's erratic conducting. I rate her early performances to be very fine but, latterly, she has developed some awful facial distortions when playing and singing along with the music particularly in the banal music of Gottschalk.

In 2007 she gave a special performance with her son, Octavio Licad Meneses, who was nineteen at the time.

Valentina Lisitsa has been described as an electrifying pianist with a dazzling style. She was born in Kiev and started to play the piano at the age of three and gave her first public performance at the age of four. She studied at the Lysenko School of Music and then at Kiev University. She then moved to the USA eventually becoming a citizen of that country. She has performed all over the world and worked with such people as Ida Haendal, Lynn Harrell and with the magnificent violinist Hilary Hahn. Valentina lives in North Carolina which houses four concert grands, two cats, her son and her partner Alexi Kuznetsoff, but music is her truest passion. With William De Rosa she has recorded Rachmaninov's Cello Sonata and the Cello Sonata of Shostakovich, and, with Ida Haendal, Beethoven, Bach, Mozart, Dvorak and Wienawski and solo piano works by Liszt, Mozart, Beethoven Chopin and Weber to name a few.

Her concerto repertoire includes five Mozart concertos, the five of Beethoven and the Triple Concerto, Brahms 2, Bartok 3, Mendelssohn 1, Chopin 1, all the Rachmaninov, Grieg, the first three of Prokofiev, Ravel G major, Schumann, Shostakovich 1 and 2 and MacDowell 2.

Zeynep Ucbasarn is an exciting pianist who was born in Istanbul. She was one of the youngest people to be admitted to the Istanbul Conservatory at the age of four.

In 1987 she began her studies at the Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest studying with Wempleni Kornel, Katalin Nemes, who had been a pupil of Bartok, Balasz Kecskes and Istvan Lantos. She received her Teacher and Concert Artist Diploma in 1994 and continued her studies with Tibor Szasz in Hochschule fur Musik in Freiburg. She has degrees from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles (2000 and 2004).

She has given solo recitals in Turkey, Egypt, Hungary, England, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Switzerland, Belarus, Estonia, Slovenia, Lithuania and the USA

She was a prize winner in the American Liszt Society awards in 1996 and 2000 and has recorded the Liszt Sonata, works by Mozart, Scarlatti, Beethoven, Bernstein, Muczynski and Adnam Saygun. Her concerto repertoire includes Schumann, Grieg, Liszt 1 and Totentanz, three concertos by Mozart and Chopin 1.

Reviewers have written of her consummate mastery, natural and unforced playing and its crystalline clarity. She lives in Santa Barbara, California.

Fabiana Biasini is an amazing chamber music player. One can only admire her playing of Mozart's trio in C K 548 with Susanna Yoko Henkel (violin) and Elena Cheah (cello). The dexterity of her fingerwork can only be admired. But, as a soloist in her own right, she is equally amazing. She made her North American debut at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston. In 2001 she was the first woman to perform an official recital in Teheran since the 1979 revolution. In October 2005 she was chosen to perform at the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the United Nations.

She began her studies at the age of four in her native Italy eventually graduating with the highest honours from the Santa Cecilia Academy in Rome where she studied with Carla Ciudici earning the coveted biennial prize for outstanding musicianship. Further studies at the Accademia Chigiana resulted in her being awarded the Chigi- Saracini Award. She also studied at the Manhattan School of Music with Byron Janis and Miyako Lotto and worked closely with Nikita Magaloff and Alexis Weissenberg.

Her solo repertoire includes John Adams, Albeniz, Arensky, Babbit, Bach, Balakirev, Barber, Bartok, Beethoven, Berg, Berio, Boulez, Brahms, Cage, Casella, Castelnuovo -Tedesco Chopin, Debussy, Dallapiccola, Enesco, Gershwin, Ginastera, Philip Glass, Gould, Granados, Grieg, Haydn, Hoffman, Horowitz, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Morricone, Prokofiev, Rachmaninov, Ravel Schubert, Schumann and Webern.

This shows that she is neither restricted nor typecast and associated with only one composer or style. She has recorded a CD of works by Josef Hoffman.

It is lamentable that there are musicians, music lovers and lovers of piano music who have never heard of Edith Farnadi. She was born in Budapest on 25 September 1921 and began her studies at the age of seven at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music. She studied with Arnold Szekeley who also taught Louis Kentner. She was a child prodigy and made her successful debut at the age of nine. She played Beethoven's Piano Concerto no. 1 in C and directed the orchestra from the piano at the age of twelve. She received her Diploma from the Academy at the age of seventeen and won the Franz Liszt Piano Prize twice. She became a professor of

piano at The Liszt Academy in Budapest until 1942 and then toured in concerts and also performed with the Barylli Quartet. She also performed with two outstanding violinists of the day Jenő Hubay and Bronisław Huberman.

Her Liszt playing is unequalled. The Hungarian Rhapsodies are dashed off with precision and electrifying excitement. Her Totentanz slightly disappoints and her recording of the first two concertos of Tchaikovsky sparkle and she has the great advantage of having Hermann Scherchen as her conductor. The conclusion of the movements have the big chords at a slower pace but it adds to the grandeur. The Second Concerto is the truncated version and the speed in the finale is breath taking. She plays the Hungarian Fantasy of Liszt with her usual skill but Liszt's version of Schubert's Wanderer Fantasy is awful music and not worthy of her.

She died at the age of only 52 on 12 December 1973 although some give the date as 14 December.

Anja German was the winner of the 2007 Manchester International Concerto Competition for young pianists when she was 22. She comes from Slovenia and studied at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. She has won several prizes in Slovenia, the European Piano Teachers Association and the ZF Musikpreis International Competition in Germany and has given recitals throughout Europe. Her CD of Haydn, Schubert and Chopin is very good with unfussy ornamentation, the Schubert is a convincing performance although the piece leaves a lot to be desired, and the Chopin Scherzo no. 2 is worth hearing but Chopin was a poor composer and the piece is marked presto and when the middle section goes into three sharps it calls for a slower tempo which Chopin does not give or even state.

Lise de La Salle was born in Cherbourg in 1988. She showed an interest in the piano from a very early age and her main teacher became Pascal Nemirovski who taught her much of the Russian repertoire. She attended the Paris Conservatoire from the age of eleven and graduated with Honours in 2001 but continued with advanced studies. She had given her first public appearance at the age of nine and, at thirteen, played her first concerto, Beethoven's second. Much later she benefitted from help by Genevieve Joy the wife of Henri Dutilleul. She won a special prize at the 2004 Young Concert Artists International Auditions in New York and performed in Japan and Germany. She is a steady performer in that she does not show off and her solo playing is generally very good. Her solo Prokofiev Romeo and Juliette music is a little hesitant and I feel she struggles with Prokofiev's Piano Concerto no.1 but, to be fair, most people do, until you hear Gary Graffman's recording. Her Bach arranged by Liszt of the Prelude and Fugue in A minor is excellent although I wonder why Liszt or anybody else wants to change Bach. Left hand double octaves in the Fugue and a cadenza...oh dear, this is not Bach. He can stand on his own but, nonetheless, her performance builds up into excitement with a clarity of fingerwork. Her Mozart Variations on Ah vous dirai-je, Mama is entertaining and lively and Liszt's St Francis of Paule walking on the waves is compelling. She is young and very talented and has a bright future ahead of her.

Long may we be blessed with great pianists.

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