

# The Great Danish Pianist Victor Schiøler



**VOL. 4**

**Beethoven · Liszt · Gershwin · Palmgren**  
Works for piano and orchestra

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The composer and critic Kaikhosru Sorabji\* devoted a chapter of his recollections *Around Music* (1932) to typically forthright considerations of ‘The Modern Piano Concerto’. Regarding Reger’s contribution to the genre, composed in 1910 and now hardly encountered beyond recordings on account of its complexity and prolixity, Sorabji wrote: ‘The work has been heard twice in London, on both occasions played by that admirable young Danish pianist Victor Schiøler, who, in the face of an almost unanimous chorus of hostile criticism, with the most praiseworthy courage and independence of mind stood by what he plainly and quite rightly considers a great work, to the extent of repeating it at the very next season of concerts at which he first played it.’

A couple of pages later, Sorabji addresses himself to the concerto composed in 1920 by Joseph Marx in more sceptical terms: ‘Since it was written we have had a chance of hearing this work again owing to the enterprise of Victor Schiøler, who has already been mentioned in connection with the Reger Concerto, and this excellent artist forces one to recognize that at his hands, at least, the Marx Concerto is a fine work.’

Schiøler probably gave these performances in the mid-1920s; in 1929 he became head of the Royal Opera in Copenhagen and halted his touring activities for the next few years. His life and career have been covered in the essays introducing the first three volumes in this series, though it is worth repeating that

Schiøler enjoyed an internationally renowned career which was only put on pause by the rise of Nazi Germany and resumed in the 1950s. During that interval, Schiøler studied medicine, gained a degree in psychology and practised as a doctor in Stockholm, before returning to Copenhagen in 1945 and devoting himself once more to music.

Volumes 1-3 confined themselves to studio recordings, whereas Volume 4 presents Schiøler in concert. The Second Piano Concerto by Selim Palmgren was performed during a Finnish tour undertaken in 1962 by the Danish State Radio Symphony Orchestra, in conjunction with a ‘Danish Week’ on Finnish radio. The piece was something of a calling-card for Schiøler on tour: in 1925 he had taken it to England, giving performances at the Henry Wood Proms and in Bournemouth under the baton of Sir Dan Godfrey. Cast as a single-movement rhapsody in a loose-limbed, high-Romantic idiom, the concerto was composed in 1906-13, taking a Swedish folk dance as its principal melody, and carries a subtitle, ‘The River’, which refers to the Kokemaiejoki flowing through the Bothnian town of Pori, where Palmgren was born and spent his early years.

The Finnish tour also featured Schiøler as soloist in Grieg’s evergreen masterpiece: hardly a ‘Danish concerto’, but one written by Grieg while staying in the village of Søllerød near Copenhagen with his wife (and cousin), the Danish-born Nina Hagerup. Simultaneously

broadcast in Finland and Denmark, the concert was a great success, subsequently rebroadcast by Danish radio on several occasions.

Very late in life, Schiøler presented a popular series of programmes on Danish television, introducing classical music to beginners in the field. The last of these programmes was dedicated to Schubert. Ib Hansen sang *Der Wanderer* and then Schiøler played the Wanderer Fantasy, which he never recorded commercially. Probably recorded a couple of weeks in advance, the programme aired on 26 December 1966, and Schiøler died less than two months later. Thus, one cannot expect a note-perfect account of the first defining work of Romantic virtuosity from a mortally ill pianist. However, in both his spoken introduction and his performance, Schiøler illuminates the connections between song and fantasy with rare insight.

Schiøler refers in his introduction to Liszt's orchestration of the Wanderer Fantasy; back in 1942 he had made the first piano concerto recording in Denmark, with Liszt's own Hungarian Fantasy. Practical and commercial rather than artistic considerations likely explain such an unexpected choice: the fantasy could be accommodated on two 78rpm records, where even shorter piano concertos would occupy three discs and thus increase costs and decrease sales; the grand and barnstorming style of the fantasy could also be calculated to appeal to a wider public than, say the more refined language of Mozart. To judge from the very dry acoustic, the

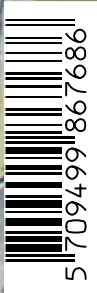
sessions probably took place in the theatre hall used by Danish radio before the opening of its radio concert hall in 1945. In 1947 Schiøler produced a sequel: the 'Emperor' Concerto of Beethoven, also accompanied by the Danish radio orchestra and issued on the TONO label, while Schiøler's activity with HMV/Columbia remained in abeyance because the war.

With *Aufschwung* by Schumann and the Hungarian Dance by Brahms on CD2 we encounter another effort of of Schiøler's to reach a mass audience, this time through a series of seven-inch 45rpm records. The innovation proved short-lived, however, and the additional space demanded by most classical works meant that by the time of Schiøler's death, seven-inch records were the exclusive domain of pop.

### *Claus Byrith*

\*Sorabji was born Leon Dudley in 1892 in Chingford, near London. His father's Parsi heritage was among the factors that prompted him to change his name. He began his career as a pianist of distinction but gave up public performance in the 1920s and became a critic notorious for the acerbic conviction of his published opinions. Perhaps more notorious still are his own, prodigiously demanding works, most of them written for piano, many still unpublished, though the five-hour *Opus Clavicembalisticum* is gradually gaining a reputation beyond an enthusiastic coterie of Sorabji devotees. He died in 1988.





DACOCD 867  
DACOCD 868

**2 CD**

MONO ADD

Total playing time

CD 1 79:53

CD 2 79:58

Compilation &  
transfers  
Claus Byrith

Digital sound restoration  
by CEDAR

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Jesper Buhl

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**DACOCD 867 CD 1**

**Victor Schiøler** (1899-1967), piano

**Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770 - 1827)

**Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 5,**

**E Flat Major Op. 73 35:31**

[ 1 ] Allegro 18:38

[ 2 ] Adagio un poco mosso 7:06

[ 3 ] Rondo. Allegro 9:48

The Danish State Broadcasting Orchestra

Conductor Carl von Garaguly

TONO X 25098 - 25102, Mtx 3050 - 59, Rec. 1947

Later on LPX 35006, Mtx 33004 - 05. The LP version is used for transfer.

**Franz Liszt** (1811 - 1886)

[ 4 ] **Hungarian Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra 14:55**

The Tivoli Orchestra

Conductor Thomas Jensen

TONO X 25000 - 01, Mtx 1616 - 19, Rec 1942

**George Gershwin** (1898 - 1937)

[ 5 ] **Rhapsody in Blue 9:08**

Jazz Concert Orchestra. Conductor Erik Tuxen

Polyphon Z.S. 60105, Mtx 1584HDK - 1585HDK, Rec 1941

**Carl Nielsen** (1865 - 1931)

**Sonata for Violin and Piano, A Major Op. 9 19:57**

[ 6 ] Allegro glorioso 8:06

[ 7 ] Andante 7:16

[ 8 ] Allegro piacevole e Giovanile 4:34

Emil Telmányi, Violin

HMV KALP 6, Mtx 2XCS 106-1N, Rec 1954



**DACOCD 868 CD 2**

**Ludwig van Beethoven**

[ 1 ] **32 Variations C Minor WoO 80 11:14**

HMV DB 20163 - 64, Mtx 2EA 15908 - 10, Rec in England 1951

**Franz Schubert** (1797 - 1828)

**Wanderer Fantasy Op 15 D760 21:26**

[ 2 ] Allegro con fuoco 6:36

[ 3 ] Adagio 6:22

[ 4 ] Presto 4:46

[ 5 ] Allegro 3:41

Live Recording on TV 1966

**Selim Palmgren** (1878 - 1951)

[ 6 ] **Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No.2,**

**The River 20:57**

The Danish State Broadcasting Orchestra

Conductor Thomas Jensen

Live broadcast from Helsinki, Finland 1962

**Frédéric Chopin** (1810 - 1849)

[ 7 ] **Polonaise A Flat Major Op 53 6:46**

TONO A 104, Mtx 1552 - 53, Rec 1942

[ 8 ] **Scherzo C Sharp Minor Op 39 6:54**

HMV DB5295, Mtx 2CS 2848 - 49, Rec 1950

**Franz Liszt**

[ 9 ] **Valse-Impromptu 4:46**

HMV DB 20165, Mtx 2CS 3049, Rec 1951

**Robert Schumann** (1810 - 1856)

[10] **Aufschwung** (from Fantasiestücke Op 12) 3:49

HMV 7EGK 1090, Mtx 7TCS 251 - A, Rec 1957

**Johannes Brahms** (1833 - 1897)

[11] **Hungarian Dance No 6, D Flat Major 3:29**

HMV 7EGK 1084, Mtx 7TCS 380 - A, Rec 1959

Cover painting: "La Cathédrale Engloutie"  
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