



**Newsletter of the**  
**International**  
**Kartinki s Vystavki**  
(Pictures at an Exhibition)

**Association**

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In this issue:

Byron Janis on his recording of Pictures  
IKVA issues its first CDs!  
Review of Nino Cocchiarella

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## **Archive holdings pass the 700 mark**

In the long interval since the last newsletter of IKVA, a delay occasioned by the extremely full plate of its president, the holdings of the IKVA have grown to more than 700 different known recordings and arrangements of *Pictures at an Exhibition*. There is no doubt that the 1000 mark will be passed eventually, especially given the number of new recordings of the work appearing each month. There are likely at least 200 performances of some or all of this work that are as yet unknown to its president and archivist. Perhaps some of our members will know of recordings of performances or arrangements not yet found on the updated lists that are being sent out with this newsletter, and will share them with the editor so that they may be added to the master lists. The editor's guess of 200 extant but as yet undiscovered recordings of the work is occasioned by the fact that virtually every time he finds time to browse on the internet for even a half hour, he is able to find another previously-unknown recording. A recent browsing (for example) on Ebay turned up a recording of the Ravel orchestration by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. (This recording is not yet listed, as it has not yet been received from Australia).

Sometimes recordings turn up in other ways. Recently I was attending a National Society of Arts and Letters recital which featured the young American pianist, Nino Cocchiarella. After hearing some outstanding performances of Chopin and Debussy, I went up to congratulate the pianist and discovered he had some CDs of his performances for sale, including a recording of *Pictures*. You will not have to be Sherlock Holmes to figure out which of his CDs I purchased. Listening to it shortly thereafter, I was greatly impressed with it, thus the review in this issue.

With so many Pictures having been recorded by now, the reader might be wondering how I choose which performances to review. I confess that I have no system per se. However, I will usually review only performances that are first rate: Why bother wasting time on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> rate performances, whether of the piano or orchestral versions! I will probably eventually review at least one performance of each orchestration of the piece, however, so the reader will know something about the various arrangements. (I might have to live to be 102 to cover them all....)

An exciting development is IKVA's first issues on its own CD label of *Pictures* (see below). I plan to issue only performances that are not available anywhere else, and since I have quite a number of private tapes and transcription disks on LP of the work, I will be making these available to members of IKVA. They will be offered nowhere else. Each CD will come in a jewel box with attractive tray cards and labels, and will be available for a nominal price to members. All monies received from the sales of these CDs will go into acquiring new recordings for IKVA's archive. If any IKVA members have tapes or private recordings of unusual arrangements or interesting performances of any version of the work, please contact me and I shall be pleased to make a suitable trade of something we have for your tape or other source for the performance.

### **Byron Janis on recording *Pictures***

In New York in the summer of 1957, I recorded Moussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, his major work for piano. Several days after finishing, I went to the studio to listen to the different takes. I happened to choose the ones for the final recording on a Friday. Returning to the studio on Monday I was shocked at what I heard. Everything sounded lifeless and heavy—too slow. I know we hear things differently on different days, but this was too much. I asked the crew if they had heard the difference. To my relief, they had. They were as perplexed as I until one of the engineers cried out, "I know what the problem is—the air conditioner was turned off over the weekend and the speakers have been badly affected by the room's heat and humidity." There was no point in listening any further until the air conditioner could dry everything out. We enjoyed a purposefully long lunch before returning to the studio and to the tapes. As if by magic, the Friday performances were back! Shortly afterward, I was told that the air conditioners would have no more weekends off.

From *The Sounds of Music*

[Editor's note: Janis' recording of *Pictures* was never issued on LP, but eventually showed up on Mercury CD 434 346-2. He gives the recording year above as 1957, but on the CD, the recording date for the work is given as September, 1961. It is possible that Janis' memory is faulty, given that it seems unlikely that he should have recorded the work twice, with no mention of a 2<sup>nd</sup> recording. If any of our readers can shed any further light on this, we will publish such clarification.]

### **IKVA's First CD Issues!**

IKVA is delighted to be able to offer two first-time recordings of *Pictures* exclusively to its membership. The price is \$12.00 **postpaid anywhere in the world**. All issues will come with jewel boxes and tray cards. We accept Visa, Mastercard, Paypal and money orders payable in US dollars. Our mailing address is 3052 Ramble Rd. West, Bloomington, IN 47408 USA.

IKVA CD 001: Mussorgsky-Ravel: *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Walter Goehr, Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra (from Concert Hall Binaural Tape CHT/BN-3. Goehr's recording appeared in mono (only) on a 10" Musical Masterpiece LP. The binaural (stereo) tape version is very rare, and gives a much better sonic representation of the work than does the LP. Goehr, of course, made his own orchestration of the work, but regrettably he never recorded it, as far as is known. The present performance is quirky in spots, but has just about the most beautiful saxophone solo I've ever heard in *Il vecchio castello*. The *Ballet of Chicks* is also particularly well-played, and the listener will be treated to a rather spiky *Promenade 3*. **\$12.00**

IKVA CD 002: Mussorgsky-Ravel: *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Geoffrey Simon, Albany Symphony Orchestra. Live performance from November 23, 1988 (with announcements). Recorded in the world-famous Troy Music Hall, this performance is quite straight forward, but makes a very fine impression. Simon has been conductor of orchestras around the world, including a stint with the Albany Symphony. He is also the founder of the Bloomington Symphony Orchestra (in 1969), and comes back to conduct that orchestra from time to time. Quite simply, he is the finest conductor I have played under (I am second violin section leader of the BSO). **\$12.00**

**See also the attached expanded list of duplicate recordings of *Pictures* for sale. Some items are rare!**

## Review of Nino P. Cocchiarella

Mussorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition*

Schumann: *Fantasy, op 17*

Mr. Owl Productions 2006

Available from [www.mrowlproductions.com](http://www.mrowlproductions.com)

Nino Cocchiarella is a young and talented rising star on the classical piano scene. He studied with Menachem Pressler and Edward Auer before setting out on the concert circuit, which keeps him fairly busy these days. He began studying piano at the age of 5, making his debut in his own piano concerto at the age of 15. He still calls Bloomington, Indiana, his home even in the midst of his burgeoning career.

His approach to *Pictures* is quite his own. In live performance, he plays the work with projected nature scenes from Indiana taken during hikes through his home area. Musically, most of what he does with this masterpiece works extremely well. His opening Promenade is quite up-tempo as is appropriate to lead into the vigorous and ominous *Gnomus*. Here he uses a good bit of pedal which serves to give a distant ambience. *Il vecchio castello* sounds appropriately mournful, while the ride in the Polish oxcart *Bydlo* is a rather bumpy affair—again, quite appropriate to the style of the piece. *Ballet of Unhatched Chicks* conveys well the peeping that one hopes to hear in this piece. *Goldenberg and Schmuyle* has exactly the right improvisatory quality that makes this section work. It is very sensitively played.

There are only 2 sections of the piece where I think that Nino misses the mark: His *Tuileries* is a little too careful. It doesn't quite sound like children quarreling. I would say the same about *Limoges*: It simply doesn't sound frantic enough. These women are not bargaining and gossiping—they sound more like they are crocheting! On the other hand, *Baba-Yaga* comes off quite sinisterly, as one would desire, even if it is also a bit tame (I think all pianists should listen to the Stokowski orchestration of this movement before learning the piece!) His *affretando* at the end of some of the phrases works very well to create the mood that Mussorgsky is expecting.

All-in-all, this recording is well worth considering for acquisition by the *Pictures* enthusiast. I would be very interested in seeing & hearing his live rendition with the accompanying photographs. Perhaps his interpretation has been molded by these photos in addition to Hartman's pictures.

The Schumann *Fantasia* is also very sensitively and musically performed. There are one or two places that for my taste, I would have used a bit less pedal (in part because of the rather live venue in which the recording was made), but other than that, I can find no faults in this beautiful interpretation.

*Send me your review of your favorite performance of Pictures for publication in a future issue of the IKVA Newsletter!*