

Anatoly **LYADOV**



Complete Piano Music Volume One

- Biryulki, Op. 2*
- Six Morceaux, Op. 3*
- Arabesques, Op. 4*
- Etude, Op. 5*
- Impromptu, Op. 6*
- Deux Intermezzi, Op. 7*
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- Trois Morceaux, Op. 11*

Olga Solovieva, piano

ANATOLY LYADOV: THE COMPLETE WORKS FOR PIANO, VOLUME ONE

by Anastasia Belina

Anatoly Lyadov was the creator of a small but beautifully crafted body of works: a handful of orchestral and choral pieces, songs (both original and folksong arrangements), and piano music – which, with no fewer than 45 opus numbers and some unpublished works, amounts to some three-quarters of his entire output. But his life reflects a personal tragedy. Although enormously gifted as a composer and pianist, he was unable to find the strength to compose consistently and steadily; instead, his existence was plagued by frequent periods of inactivity and boredom, which stemmed from a general disillusionment and dissatisfaction with life. His letters are permeated with comments that show his heightened sense of time slipping away, of life not lived to the full, and of a genuine fear of facing its challenges:

What could be more terrifying than life? Even when one is happy, one is scared. Everything is a lie, everything is only temporary, there is nothing permanent... What horror!¹

How boring it is to live on this earth! Two–three friends and books – this is my only light.²

I am so bored that soon I shall scream out loud! And the worst thing is that I am bored without a good reason: there are no bad changes in my life. I often think probably this is the time to die.³

¹ Letter dated 25 April 1903; quoted in Viktor Valter, *Anatoly Konstantinovich Lyadov*, Kompozitor, St Petersburg, 2005, p. 129.

² *Ibid.*

³ Letter dated 28 August 1903, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 131.

And all this was written when he was not even fifty years old, with over a decade more to live, an age of maturity, mastery, experience, one at which many of his colleagues were composing their masterpieces.

Anatoly Konstantinovich Lyadov had been surrounded by music since his birth, on 22 April 1855, into a family that consisted of several generations of professional musicians. His grandfather was the conductor Nikolai Grigorievich Lyadov (d. 1839); his father, Konstantin Nikolayevich (1829–71), conducted at the Imperial Russian Opera in St Petersburg, and was much respected by Glinka. Konstantin Lyadov often took his young son to the rehearsals at the Mariinsky, where the future composer heard every single opera performed in the 1860s. He had a good voice, participated as an extra in the chorus in a number of operas and, with his father's encouragement, began to study music.

But with the death of Lyadov's mother when he was only six years old, stability and order disappeared forever from his family life. His father's job took him away from home, sometimes for lengthy periods, and the young Lyadov and his sister Valentina were looked after by the servants, who made sure the children were fed, cleaned and clothed, and even lent them money. The future composer missed his mother's love and acutely felt the lack of time spent with his father, emotions reflected many years later in statements similar to one made in a letter dated 1901: 'Love – in all its forms and manifestations – is my air, my bread, my water. For me, to live without love and not be loved is more dreadful than all illnesses, and more terrifying than death'.⁴

As a child, Lyadov was very creative: he liked drawing, inventing games, telling stories, playing the piano and improvising. One of his favourite activities in his youth was to play the piano in various styles, later including those of Mussorgsky, Wagner, Chopin, Cui, Nápravnik, Italian opera and Ukrainian music, among many others; Rimsky-Korsakov admiringly remembered Lyadov's refined piano-playing,⁵ and Ivan

⁴ Letter dated 25 March, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 127.

⁵ *Letopis moei muzykalnoi zhizni*, Soglasie, Moscow, 2004, p. 219; *My Musical Life*, trans. Judah A. Joffe, Eulenberg, London, 1936, p. 168.

Pomazansky recalled the magic with which he played excerpts from *Die Walküre*.⁶

In January 1867 Lyadov entered the St Petersburg Conservatory, where he studied violin, piano and elementary theory. Between 1870 and 1875 he studied piano as his first instrument, and in 1874 he began studying composition with Rimsky-Korsakov. His distinguished teacher reported that Lyadov had enormous talent but worked very little, and often missed classes – a manifestation of the poor discipline stemming from his father’s long absences. Lyadov himself knew his shortcomings, and often even asked his sister not to feed him until he had finished his homework. But his self-control frequently betrayed him, and even Valentina’s refusal to provide food was to no avail – he would go to his aunt’s house at meal-times instead. Eventually, this lack of personal discipline forced Anton Rubinstein, the director of the conservatory, to expel Lyadov at the end of his second year on the grounds of poor attendance.

In 1873 Lyadov met Mussorgsky, Cui and Balakirev, who all agreed that he had a promising career as a composer ahead of him. He quickly became close to the musicians of the Mighty Handful, and took part in many of their projects, one of which was an edition of Glinka’s works in 1876. He must have been much inspired by his interaction with the older composers, for when in 1878 he decided to return to the St Petersburg Conservatory he graduated with brilliant success. In fact, he recovered so much lost respect that, even before he finished his studies, he was appointed a tutor of elementary music theory and, upon graduating, he was entrusted with teaching all other theoretical disciplines – and, indeed, he taught at the Conservatory, as well as privately, until his death in 1914.

Although he carried out his duties with utmost professionalism, he nevertheless could not hide his dislike of teaching. He often looked bored and tired, and it was apparent that the artist in him detested having to spend most of his life teaching the same rudiments every year. His face would light up, though, when a student chanced to ask him about an interesting or important event in the contemporary musical life; and he would willingly

⁶ Quoted in Valter, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

spend time discussing what interested him the most.

Like many composers-teachers who have little time to devote to their projects during the year, Lyadov looked forward to summer months when he would be free to compose. But the letters from his summer vacations show that he rarely got down to composition, choosing instead to read. Reading was one of his fondest passions: he often remarked that he would be bored without good books, but lamented that they were rare to come by.⁷ Sadly, the prevalent mood of his life was that of deep dissatisfaction and emotional unrest. During the St Petersburg winters he craved the solitude of his summer life in the country, and in the summer he could not wait to get back to St Petersburg. Some of his typical summer letters, from as early as 1887, read: 'I eat, drink, sleep, read, and in the entr'actes I am bored';⁸ '[I am] alive and healthy, read a lot, compose a little, greatly bored, and slowly dying'.⁹

It is of little surprise, then, that Lyadov composed very little in comparison with his colleagues, in view of the teaching duties which placed so much demand on his time. He also composed only when he had inspiration which, it seems, visited him less often than he would have liked, and his letters often refer to his general lack of drive and interest in composition. But they are also full of deliberations about higher artistic ideals,¹⁰ showing a preoccupation with the creation of music for the sake of art, not for money or fame; tellingly, his papers contained no press cuttings or other testimonial to his public standing. This concern for music as a higher value may have combined with his lack of personal ambition to prevent him writing as much as he could have done. But one could also argue the contrary: in view of his lack of ambition, the fact that he composed as much as he did – and that his music is of such a life-affirming character – could be regarded as

⁷ Letter to Ivan Pomazansky, undated, 1908, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 148.

⁸ Letter to Pomazansky, dated 14 July 1895, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 45.

⁹ Letter to his sister, dated 23 June 1905, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁰ For example, on 9 June 1908 he writes: 'My ideal is to find the unearthly in the art' (*ibid.*, p. 97); the previous year, on 13 March, he states: 'All essence is in the acceptance that "beauty" is the queen of the world' (*ibid.*, p. 142).

a kind of triumph of the will.

His disdain for money was no mere pose: in spite of the material difficulties that accompanied him for most of his life, he refused to accept financial help from others. Even one of his close friends, the music publisher Mitrofan Belyaev, had little success with providing him with extra money. Lyadov once wrote to him:

My dear Mitrofan! I have a favour to ask of you: my fellow, please be my real friend, arrange it in some way or other so that I don't have to speak with you about the money – for me it is a terrible torment! You may pay for my works what you wish, I agree on any fee: if you find my work to be bad or short then pay me less, but without us having to talk about it. And the second request: please do not pay me more than you pay other composers [...].¹¹

When in 1901, after Belyaev's death, Lyadov discovered that his friend had left him a small annual pension, it was a source of much sadness to the composer, who felt this annuity came too late because he had lost the ability to work systematically. It was Lyadov's habit to carry his new works in his mind for a long time, and he did not always write them down. He often played them for friends and, when he eventually sat down to write the music, his ideas were already so crystallised in his mind, that he immediately wrote a clean copy, in calligraphic writing, which required no corrections. This method meant that invariably some of his compositions were never written down and thus were lost forever.¹² The loss of such music is most regrettable, because the surviving compositions show enormous musical talent, harmonic and melodic inventiveness, and fine control of musical form.

¹¹ 6 July (the year is not indicated), published in *ibid.*, pp. 39–40.

¹² The Second Piano Sonata of George Enescu and the first three of Leo Ornstein were lost in the same way.

Lyadov's first piano compositions date from the time he spent in close contact with Balakirev, who admired Schumann and Chopin and who instilled the same admiration in his younger colleague: Lyadov's early works all pay homage to them. His piano style is characterised by richness of thematic invention, by the beauty, grace and variety of the themes and a complete absence of banality. His harmonic language is always inventive, delicate, with a plethora of fresh ideas and immediately apparent refined taste. His mastery of miniature forms means that all his musical ideas are expressed succinctly. His textures are clear and lucid, and his polyphonic technique is exemplary. The Latvian composer Jāzeps Vītols – a friend of Lyadov's: he had been a fellow student of Rimsky-Korsakov and was a colleague on the teaching staff of the St Petersburg Conservatory – described his piano pieces as 'elegant ivory wares'.¹³ Russian piano literature was still very much at the early stages of its development at the time when Lyadov began to compose his first piano pieces, which began to build the repertoire of wonderful works that are known and cherished today.

Biryulki, Op. 2 (1876)

Biryulki are Lyadov's first compositions for solo piano, composed in 1876, the year in which he was expelled from the St Petersburg Conservatory. The title is sometimes translated as *Trifles* or *Jeux d'Enfants*, but *biryulki* are 'spillikins', used in the game now more usually known, more prosaically, as 'Pick-up-Sticks'.

In spite of the composer's youthfulness – he was only twenty – these are refined, polished and perfectly structured pieces that show his miniaturist's predilection for small form. A miniature requires of its composer the ability to represent in music the snapshot of a mood, picture, image, emotional state, all of which Lyadov was able to do in masterly manner. The first [1] and last [14] pieces in this cycle are lively, energetic works that, curiously, have musical ideas similar to those in Scott Joplin's *The Entertainer*. The rest pay homage to Schumann, particularly No. 6 [6], the opening idea of which was undoubtedly

¹³Quoted in *ibid*, p. 98.

inspired by ‘Soaring’ from the *Phantasiestücke*, Op. 12. The St Petersburg composer and critic César Cui wrote:

Biryulki is a collection of adorable little piano pieces that are imbued with the freshness and youthful inspiration of Schumann’s *Carnival*. [...] It is difficult to express in words all their thematic and harmonic treasures, all unusual completeness of filigree finish of the detail, their endless delicacy, beauty, and festivity.¹⁴

Six Morceaux, Op. 3 (1876–77)

This cycle consists of a charming Prelude in D major [15], followed by a vigorous three-voice Gigue in F major [16], where Lyadov’s treatment of voices, colour and harmony is again masterly. The G minor Fugue [17] is a well-crafted, delightful essay in counterpoint, its style in keeping with the traditional characteristics of the genre. The fanfare-like sonorities in the G major Mazurka [18] announce the opening of an imaginary ball: the piece is conceived as dance music, with infectious energy and dance rhythms. A second Mazurka, this one in B major [19], is framed by lively, forceful, and powerful music, with a contrasting middle section. A final, third Mazurka, now in C major [20], is graceful, light and delicate, with a dreamy soundworld suggesting, perhaps, that the images of the ball in the first of them were but a fleeting dream.

Arabesques, Op. 4 (1878)

This cycle of four *Arabesques*, dedicated to Rimsky-Korsakov, opens with a boisterous, energetic piece in C sharp minor marked *Allegro con fuoco* [21]; it contrasts with the light, graceful piece in A which follows – although it, too, has a contrastingly energetic, sombre middle section. No. 3 [23], in B flat major, opens with galloping rhythms that make way for a beautiful lyrical theme reminiscent of Schumann. Cui wrote that the fourth *Arabesque*, in E major [24], was ‘incomparable’, full of light, vigour and happiness:

¹⁴ César Cui, *Izbrannye pis'ma* (Selected Letters), ed. Izrail Gusin, Gosmuzizdat, Leningrad 1952, p. 277.

How wonderfully among these fireworks sounds the song-like second theme, with a fresh modulation in the middle. This Arabesque is the longest of the four, but it appears that it was written on one breath of inspiration.¹⁵

He added that the four *Arabesques*, which combined ‘virtuosity with musicality’, would be a worthy addition to any concert pianist’s repertoire.

Etude, Op. 5 (1881)

The *Etude*, Op. 5, dedicated to Balakirev [25], is a musical tableau in A flat major with textures as delicate as intricate lacework but which nonetheless exudes full-bodied Romantic lyricism. It reaches a bright, powerful culmination, after which the music unexpectedly vanishes into thin air, creating the impression of a painter who exhibits his picture and then rolls up the canvas, leaving his viewers with vivid memories of the colourful images. Anton Rubinstein valued this piece so much that he included it in his famous series of ‘Historical Concerts’ (1886), which explored the development of the piano literature from the beginning of the instrument until 1886, and which he played to thunderous acclaim all across Europe.

Impromptu, Op. 6 (1881)

As its title suggests, the D major *Impromptu* [26] has an improvisatory character, very much in the style of Schumann. Its bright melody appears like a butterfly and vanishes among the beautiful harmonic changes that culminate in the epilogue, based on the main theme. It remains true to its character: after a brief fluttering of its musical wings, this butterfly gracefully vanishes forever.

Deux Intermezzi, Op. 7 (1881)

These *Intermezzi* are dedicated to Vladimir Stasov, the aesthetic mentor of the Mighty Handful. The first, in D major [27], is built on two alternating moods, galloping rhythms

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

and high-spirited confidence, and a calm, lyrical sound-world of Schumannesque character. The vigorous and resolute second Intermezzo, in F major [28](#), with its fanfare-like exclamations and powerful, epic elements, bears a resemblance to Borodin's style, particularly that of his Second Symphony.

Deux Intermezzi, Op. 8 (1883)

The bustling, bubbling first Intermezzo, in B flat major and marked *Allegro con fuoco* [29](#), is permeated by the rhythmic ostinato motif that enables it to charge, decisively yet delicately, towards the climax. The second [30](#) is a slower version of the first (and thus inhabits the same key), with the addition of lyrical elements and introspective, pensive moods. It begins, *Allegretto*, with an improvisatory introduction and ends unexpectedly in brilliant and virtuosic passages that bring to mind Chopin's *Fantaisie Impromptu* in C sharp minor. Like the Op. 5 *Etude*, Anton Rubinstein included the first Intermezzo in the programmes of his Historical Concerts.

Deux Morceaux, Op. 9 (1883)

The charming and elegant *Valse* in F sharp minor [31](#) sounds wistfully nostalgic, and has an expressive, flexible melodic language and lucid textures. The following Mazurka in A flat major [32](#) creates an immediate contrast with its energetic beginning in folk style. It is built on alternating sections of robust folk-music idiom and more refined dance-style music, with a flash of brilliance in the virtuosic finale.

Trois Morceaux, Op. 10 (1884)

After the well-contained and measured D flat major Prelude [33](#), the robust opening of the first of two Mazurkas [34](#), this one in C major, brings back the musical images and moods of the previous Mazurka, Op. 9, No. 2 [32](#). It is likewise based on alternating styles – folk and the lyrical, singing qualities of the piano. The second Mazurka [35](#), in D major, is a delicate work, with a rhythmically interesting opening. It pays homage to

Chopin, as well as bringing flashes of Stravinskian rhythms and harmonies to end this short cycle.

Trois Morceaux, Op. 11 (1885)

These three works begin to show – more than Lyadov’s other early compositions – his association with the composers of the Mighty Handful and their nationalist musical style. The lyrical, gentle melody of the opening B minor Prelude [36] is clearly national in character; it is supported by undulating chords in the left-hand part. The first of another pair of Mazurkas, its title indicating that it is ‘in Dorian Mode’, appears as an intricate construction of virtuosic passages and powerful chordal textures, while the second, in F sharp minor, is obviously inspired by tradition folk-music idioms. The dotted rhythms in the lower register of the piano underpin much of the piece.

Dr Anastasia Belina is a Russian-born New Zealander who studied piano in Russia, gained First Class Honours in musicology from the University of Auckland, New Zealand, and received her doctorate in musicology at the University of Leeds. In her dissertation, A Critical Re-Evaluation of Taneyev’s ‘Oresteia’, she examines the full history of Taneyev’s opera: its composition, music, performances and critical reception. Dr Belina currently lectures in music at the University of Leeds, where she is also associated with the Leeds University Centre for Opera Studies. She is currently (2010) working on a book on Taneyev’s opera Oresteia.

Olga Solovieva – described as ‘excellent’ by Murray McLachlan in the magazine *Piano* and ‘outstanding’ by the critic of the *Niuwe Vlamse Muziek Revue* – was born in Moscow. She graduated from the Gnessin Academy of Music in 1998 (piano) and took a post-graduate course (chamber ensemble) in the same institution as an assistant to Professor Leonid Blok in 1998–2000. In 1999 she was a prize-winner in the Open National Taneyev Chamber Music Competition, and in 2000 she was a finalist at the XX International Chamber Music Competition in Trapani, Italy. At the XII International Tchaikovsky Competition (Moscow, 2002) she won a special prize and was awarded the special diploma ‘Best Accompanist’ (accompanying the cello). Since 2004 she has been a professor at the Gnessin Musical College.

As a soloist and member of a number of chamber ensembles Olga Solovieva has performed in several international musical festivals in Russia, as well in many concerts of classical and contemporary music in Moscow (in the Small and the Rachmaninov Halls of the Conservatory and the Tretyakov Gallery, among others), in Voronezh, Tver and in other Russian cities. She began to perform in western Europe in 2006 and has played several concerts in Belgium (not least in De Rode Pomp Hall, Ghent, as parts of the fourteenth and fifteenth International Russian Chamber Music Festivals, in 2006–7, and at the Festival der Voorkempen, Schilde, in 2009); her first appearance in Paris was in 2009. In 2010 she is invited to play the Boris Tchaikovsky Piano Quintet with the RTÉ Vanbrugh Quartet at the Fifteenth West Cork Chamber Music Festival.

Her wide repertoire includes solo and ensemble works by both western composers (Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Grieg, Chopin, Franck, Chausson, Bartók, Villa-Lobos and others) and Russian composers (among them Golovin, Mussorgsky, Myaskovsky, Prokofiev, Rachmaninov, Rubinstein, Shebalin, Shostakovich, Taneyev and both Boris and Pjotr Tchaikovsky). Among her recordings there are several CDs on such labels as Naxos and Albany Records. For Toccata Classics she has recorded two CDs with music by outstanding students of Shostakovich: music for solo piano by Herman Galynin (rocc 0076) – where allmusic.com praised her ‘crisp fingerwork and

a joyous sense of abandon and forcefulness' – and vocal and chamber works by Boris Tchaikovsky (rocc 0046).

My thanks to Pyotr Klimov for suggesting that I might consider recording the complete piano works of Lyadov. As I learned these pieces, I understood with what thoroughness, accuracy and attention to detail they were composed – Lyadov's art is that of the jeweller. In the early works one can hear the influence of Schumann and Chopin, but even here the typical 'Lyadovian' traits are always audible. In my view Lyadov's piano output is not only highly individual; it is of a quality that makes it both important for Russian music and of world significance.

Olga Solovieva



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ANATOLY LYADOV Complete Piano Music, Volume One

<i>Biryulki, Op. 2</i>	11:52	26 <i>Impromptu, Op. 6*</i>	1:27
1 <i>Presto</i>	0:51	<i>Deux Intermezzi, Op. 7</i>	4:45
2 <i>Allegro</i>	0:28	27 No. 1 (<i>Allegro vivace</i>)*	2:39
3 <i>Allegretto</i>	0:57	28 No. 2 (<i>Allegro energico</i>)	2:06
4 <i>Allegro con fuoco</i>	1:09	<i>Deux Intermezzi, Op. 8</i>	4:51
5 <i>Vivace</i>	0:46	29 No. 1 (<i>Allegro con fuoco</i>)*	2:02
6 <i>Allegro</i>	0:34	30 No. 2 (<i>Allegretto</i>)*	2:49
7 <i>Moderato</i>	0:50	<i>Deux Morceaux, Op. 9</i>	3:56
8 <i>Allegro moderato</i>	0:56	31 No. 1: <i>Valse</i>	1:29
9 <i>Allegretto tranquillo</i>	1:12	32 No. 2: <i>Mazurka*</i>	2:27
10 <i>Allegro</i>	0:52	<i>Trois Morceaux, Op. 10</i>	5:33
11 <i>Tempo di Valse</i>	0:56	33 No. 1: <i>Prelude</i>	1:31
12 <i>Prestissimo</i>	0:39	34 No. 2: <i>Mazurka in C major</i>	1:47
13 <i>Vivace</i>	0:28	35 No. 3: <i>Mazurka in D major</i>	2:15
14 <i>Presto</i>	1:16	<i>Trois Morceaux, Op. 11</i>	6:20
<i>Six Morceaux, Op. 3</i>	11:36	36 No. 1: <i>Prelude</i>	2:47
15 No. 1: <i>Prelude</i>	1:19	37 No. 2: <i>Mazurka (in Dorian Mode)</i>	2:03
16 No. 2: <i>Gigue</i>	2:08	38 No. 3: <i>Mazurka in F sharp minor</i>	2:30
17 No. 3: <i>Fugue (Moderato)*</i>	2:24	<i>Olga Solovieva, piano</i>	
18 No. 4: <i>Mazurka (Allegro)</i>	2:26	*First recording	
19 No. 5: <i>Mazurka (Allegro energico)*</i>	2:05	**First digital recording	
20 No. 6: <i>Mazurka (Allegro non troppo)*</i>	1:14	Opp. 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9: first complete recording	
<i>Arabesques, Op. 4</i>	10:21		
21 No. 1 (<i>Allegro con fuoco</i>)*	1:26		
22 No. 2 (<i>Allegretto</i>)*	3:46		
23 No. 3 (<i>Allegro grazioso</i>)*	1:59		
24 No. 4 (<i>Ad libitum – Vivace</i>)	3:10		
25 <i>Etude, Op. 5**</i>	2:55		



The Russian composer Anatoly Lyadov (1855–1914), a friend of Balakirev and the 'Mighty Handful' of Russian nationalist composers, is remembered these days chiefly for his *Musical Snuffbox*, once a favourite encore. Lyadov was indeed a miniaturist – but a far more productive one than his reputation for laziness suggests. His substantial output for piano – never previously recorded in its entirety – reveals a composer with an energetic keyboard manner reminiscent of Schumann, often coloured with a hint of Russian folk-music.

ANATOLY LYADOV Complete Piano Music, Volume One

1	<i>Biryulki, Op. 2</i>	11:52	27	<i>Deux Intermezzi, Op. 7</i>	4:45
15	<i>Six Morceaux, Op. 3</i>	11:36	29	<i>Deux Intermezzi, Op. 8</i>	4:51
21	<i>Arabesques, Op. 4</i>	10:21	31	<i>Deux Morceaux, Op. 9</i>	3:56
25	<i>Etude, Op. 5</i>	2:55	33	<i>Trois Morceaux, Op. 10</i>	5:33
26	<i>Impromptu, Op. 6</i>	1:27	36	<i>Trois Morceaux, Op. 11</i>	6:20

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