



LEV VINOCOUR

# BIOGRAPHY



Lev Vinocour has left audiences and critics throughout the world in „no doubt that he is one of the finest piano virtuosi of our time“. „Dazzling“, „unsurpassable“, „phenomenal“, have become commonplace epithets for critics attempting to put into words his literally breath-taking musicianship. The 2009 German encyclopaedia “The great pianists of the present” lists Vinocour among the “rare species of intellectual virtuosi”.

His pianistic art does not rely on the cliché-ridden type of romantic piano playing. A German critic recently wrote about his performance of Chopin’s Etudes: „what Vinocour unveils is so unusual and new, that even a connoisseur of these works meets with a listening experience of a very special sort“. It is not surprising, therefore, that he has been likened on several occasions to such pianistic giants as Martha Argerich and Friedrich Gulda.

Born in St. Petersburg and Moscow Conservatoire trained, the pianist first came to the attention of the musical world through a long string of international competition successes. Since that time, Lev Vinocour has been a regular soloist on many of the major platforms throughout all continents.

He moved to the West in 1993 as Junior Fellow in Keyboard Studies at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, Great Britain and subsequently became a student of the famous pedagogue Karl-Ulrich Schnabel at the prestigious “Fondazione Internazionale per il Pianoforte” on the Lake of Como in Italy. He made his début at the age of thirteen with the Leningrad Philharmonic and Evgeny Mravinsky, the first of many renowned conductors with whom he was to appear. More recently he has performed under the baton of such conductors as Semyon Bychkov, Libor Pesek, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Markus Stenz and Eliahu Inbal. Since settling in Germany in 1996, Lev Vinocour has enjoyed particularly close links with the Radio Symphony Orchestra of Cologne, the Czech Philharmonic Prague and the Tchaikovsky -- Symphony Orchestra Moscow.

Lev Vinocour has been a frequent guest at most German and many major European festivals.



Highlights have included appearances at the Schleswig-Holstein-Musikfestival, MDR--Musiksommer, Rheingau-Festival, the Schubertiade, Festival Van Vlaanderen, Klavierfestival Ruhr, Yokohama Piano Festival, Schumannfest Düsseldorf, Rheinisches Musikfest, Kissinger Musiksommer, Festival International de Luxembourg in Echternach and Settimani Musicali di Ancona to name just a few.

As a chamber musician he is a regular partner of the Tokyo String Quartet and their mutually warm relationship has led to rapturous receptions from audiences and critics alike. Recent performances were described as "an hour of glory for chamber music", „exemplary“, and last but not least „seamless music making“.

In the capacity of recitalist, chamber musician and concerto soloist, Lev Vinocour has broadcast extensively through the mediums of television and radio throughout the world. His studio recordings made in 1990s include Tchaikovsky's „The Seasons“, a double CD album of the Complete Piano Transcriptions by Prokofiev (reissued in 2007 for the

US market), and virtuoso paraphrases on the works of Johann Strauss II. To quote just a few critics: „fascinating playing from outstanding Russian pianist“ (Gramophone); "undoubtedly Vinocour belongs to the pianistic élite" (Musik und Theater, Zürich); "stylistically immaculate" (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung); „extraordinary scintillating interpretation" (Scherzo, Barcelona); "it is hard to imagine greater poetry and tenderness" (Le Monde de la Musique).

A triple CD album of Schumann's Complete Etudes was awarded the ‚Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik“ in 2003.

His 2005 Liszt project in Weimar, which involved 14 different recital programmes in the space of as many weeks, received the highest possible praise. This Herculean venture had been considered impossible.

In 2007 he created another musical sensation with performances of his own reconstruction and orchestration of a piano concerto in F major, written by Robert Schumann between 1830 and 1832 but left in a disorderly and unfinished state.



A Sony / RCA Red Seal triple CD album of Schumann's Complete Works for Piano and Orchestra with Lev Vinocour and the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra was released in 2010 on the eve of the 200th anniversary of this great romantic composer's birth. This collection, containing ten such works, of which only three are well known, was identified as one of the highlights of Schumann festivities and subsequently sold out within a very short time.

The last decade has seen Mr. Vinocour devoting an increasing amount of his time to the works of Peter Tchaikovsky. Alongside countless concert performances of the concerti, chamber and solo music, Lev Vinocour has recorded several CDs. The most recent, released in 2008 by Sony / RCA Red Seal to great critical acclaim ("L'ensemble brille de talent et d'intelligence" *Le Monde de la Musique*), contains two piano suites from the ballet „Sleeping beauty". He is also involved in Schott's New Edition of the Complete Works of Peter Tchaikovsky, a joint venture between the Russian and German Academies of Science.

In 2011 Vinocour's career took an unexpected, but not entirely surprising turn. In the TV film "Franz Liszt. The final years" (ZDF/ORF), he played the protagonist under the direction of the renowned Guenther Klein. This was followed, in April 2012, by a biographical film broadcast as part of the series "Mountains and Spirits" by Swiss film maker Beat Kuert. From October 2012 the international TV channel 3sat is broadcasting on a weekly basis a series called "Sonata for two", which was specially created for Lev Vinocour. Here, the pianist, together with the presenter Nina Brunner, traces the footsteps of the great composers, bringing many serious and also some amusing facts to light.

It is this unique combination of depth of feeling, intellect, wit, intuition and virtuosity that makes Lev Vinocour's pianistic art so distinctive and has won the hearts and minds of audiences throughout the world, from Iceland to the Cape of Good Hope.

Summer 2012