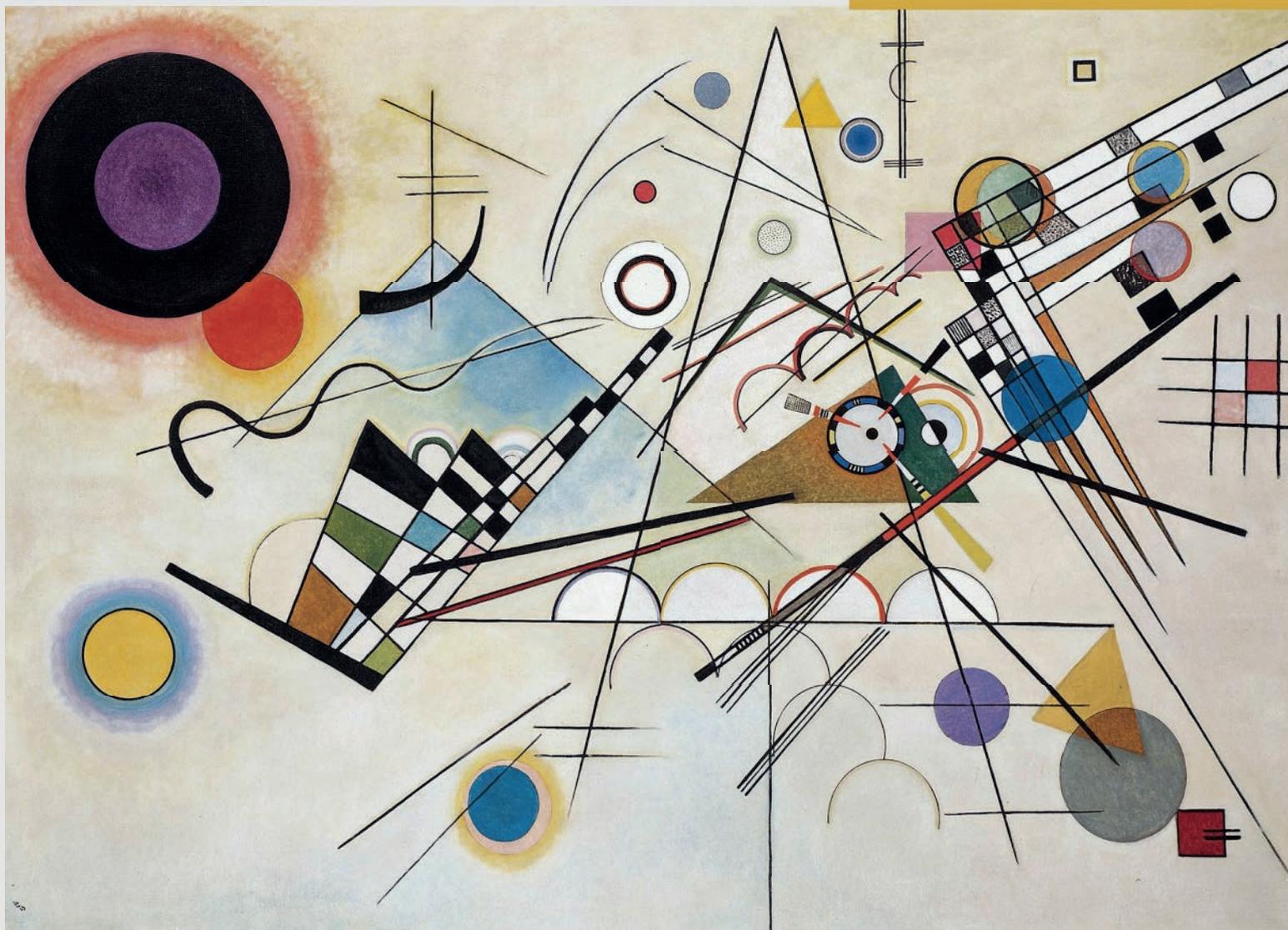


The Piano Music of

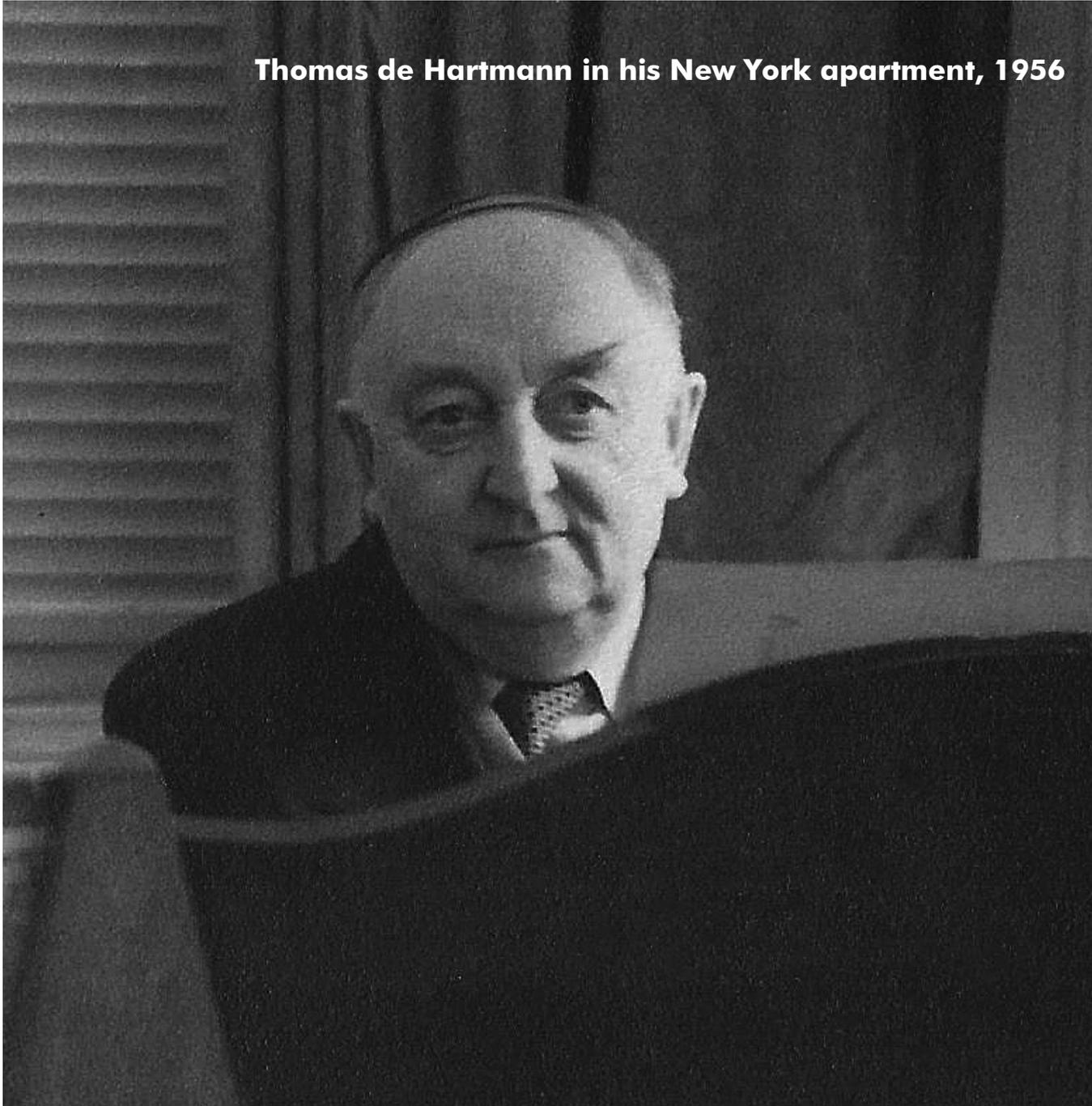
# Thomas de Hartmann



Elan Sicroff, pianist



**Thomas de Hartmann in his New York apartment, 1956**



# Music of Thomas de Hartmann (1885-1956)

Elan Sicroff, pianist

DISC ONE (66:46)

## **Trois Morceaux Op. 4 Nos. 2 and 3 (1899)**

*Dedicated to Mme Titania Bernardelli, née comtesse Kapnist*

1	No. 2 Mazurka	2:31
2	No. 3 Impromptu	3:32
<b>Three Preludes Op. 11 (1904)</b>		<b>3:46</b>
3	I Molto cantando	1:28
4	II Un poco agitato	0:49
5	III Andantino	1:29
<b>Twelve Russian Fairy Tales Op. 58 (1937)</b>		<b>20:24</b>
6	Introduction	1:51
7	I Verlioka the Monster	1:04
8	II The Little Peasant as Big as a Thumb, with Moustaches Seven Miles Long	1:05
9	III Ivan Tsarevitch	1:31
10	IV The Witch's House on Hen's Legs	1:39
11	V The Wonderful Gusli	1:31
12	VI Baba Yaga the Witch Goes a-Galloping Through the Forest in Her Mortar, Pounding it With Her Pestle and Sweeping Away All Trace of Herself With a Broom	0:54
13	VII Alenooshka's Lullaby	1:03
14	VIII The Seven League Boots	1:01
15	IX The Princess of Whom One Never Tires of Admiring	2:24
16	X Kasstchei the Deathless	1:33
17	XI The Ride of Ivan Tsarevitch and the Princess on the Back of the Grey Wolf to the Kingdom of Marvels	1:38

18	XII	The Solemn Entrance of Ivan Tsarevitch and the Princess into the Kingdom of Marvels	3:10
		<b>First Piano Sonata Op. 67 (1942)</b>	21:01
19	I	Moderato	8:15
20	II	Aria	6:09
21	III	Finale	6:37
		<b>Two Nocturnes Op. 84 (1953)</b>	
22		The Music of the Stars - “Look into the depths of eternity”	5:37
23		The Dance of Life - “The banality of life that cannot be conquered by man”	9:59
		<b>DISC TWO (59:19)</b>	
		<b>Six Pièces Op. 7 Nos. 1, 5 and 6 (1902)</b>	9:12
		<i>Dedicated to Mme Annette Essipoff</i>	
1		No. 1 Prelude	2:08
2		No. 5 Nocturne	4:28
3		No. 6 Novelette	2:36
		<b>Divertissements from Forces of Love and Sorcery Op. 16 (1915)</b>	7:29
4		Prelude, Le Triton	1:11
5		Gavotte	1:24
6		La Grenouille (The Frog)	1:14
7		Menuet	1:53
8		Marche Turque	1:47
9		<b>Humoresque Viennoise Op. 45 (1931) <i>Hommage à Johann Strauss</i></b>	5:14

	<b>Lumière noire Op. 74 (1945)</b>	7:13
10	I Fantastico e rubato assai	1:17
11	II Andante funebre	3:38
12	III Allegro giocoso e molto ritmico	2:18
	<b>Musique pour la fête de la patronne Op. 77 d'après Degas (1947)</b>	9:49
13	I Polka	1:45
14	II Valse langoureuse	2:28
15	III Quadrille	5:36
	<b>Second Piano Sonata Op. 82 (1951) Dedicated to P. D. Ouspensky</b>	20:24
16	I Moderato	10:43
17	II Larghetto	4:21
18	III Finale	5:20

Recorded at Studio 1, Muziek Centrum van de Omroep (MCO), Hilversum, Netherlands  
between October 2011 and June 2015.

Music Supervisor and Chief Recording Engineer, Guido Tichelman.

Assistant Recording Engineer, Bastiaan Kuijt.

Editing, mixing & mastering at Azazello Audio Suites, Haarlem, Netherlands, Guido Tichelman

Produced by Gert-Jan Blom

Cover image : W. Kandinsky. Composition VIII 1923

Cover design by Ben Marder [www.penwave.com](http://www.penwave.com)

© & © TDHP, 2016

Issued under exclusive licence from the copyright holder by Wyastone Estate Ltd.

This compilation © Wyastone Estate Ltd, 2021

[www.wyastone.co.uk](http://www.wyastone.co.uk)

The series of CD releases of the music of Thomas de Hartmann is largely the work of the Thomas de Hartmann Project, a group of dedicated volunteers and individuals joined by the common goal of bringing Thomas de Hartmann's music to public attention. The contribution of time, effort and money from many individuals and organizations has made this release in its present scope possible. Gratitude goes out to the musicians and staff for donating many unpaid hours, and to not-for-profit organizations such as the Miller's River Educational Cooperative and Wyllaned. Special gratitude goes to Efrem Marder and Wally De Backer for keeping the project afloat with substantial donations.

**The Thomas de Hartmann Project**

Elan Sicroff - Artistic director, Pianist

Gert-Jan Blom - Researcher, Producer

Robert Fripp - Executive Director

Stefan Maier - Advisor

Efrem Marder - Advisor

Isaac Richardson - Copyist

William Szal - IT Specialist

Special thanks to:

- Thomas A. G. Daly, executor of the Estate of Thomas de Hartmann - for additional research and making photographs and historical documents available.
- The Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University - for access to the Thomas de Hartmann papers.
- Mar Codina, Anneke Janssen, Marynka Nicolai-Krylova, Tsarina Marynkova, Jelena Popovic, Possible Productions, Charles Rademaker, Thida Schatborn, Naomi van Schoot, Koos Smolenaars, Jet Steinz and Lada Valesova.

For more information about Thomas de Hartman's life,  
his music and recordings visit  
[www.thomasdehartmannproject.com](http://www.thomasdehartmannproject.com)  
and  
[www.sicroff.com](http://www.sicroff.com)

The primary aim of *The Thomas de Hartmann Project* is to make publicly available the compositions of Thomas de Hartmann; today a music as strangely inaudible as the composer is invisible, outside small groups familiar with de Hartmann's musical collaborations with G.I. Gurdjieff.

Gurdjieff was de Hartmann's teacher for twelve years of close contact. A familiarity with their sacred music, and practices within the corpus of Gurdjieff's teaching, is not necessary to appreciate de Hartmann's compositions in a purely musical sense; but adds depth to both performing, understanding and appreciating the music.

Elan Sicroff, as student of J.G. Bennett, pianist for Movements classes over nearly forty years, and the personal acquaintance of Mme. De Hartmann, is rarely qualified in this undertaking.

**Robert Fripp**

Thursday 4th February, 2016

Worcestershire, England.

Robert Fripp is an English guitarist and composer. He is a founding member of the rock band King Crimson (1969) and the initiator of Guitar Craft seminars (since 1985).

---

## *A Composer's Life*

JOHN MANGAN *Senior Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Yale University.*

Even for the most promising young composer, steering one's career in the direction of success may be likened to walking through a mine-field: one false step can bring the promise of obscurity. Cast this quandary against a backdrop of social and political upheaval and the chances of oblivion are greatly multiplied. Indignities of time and place can go a long way toward quelling a composer's voice, no matter how unique. Despite such affronts, the music of Thomas Alexandrovich de Hartmann (1885-1956) has endured. The de Hartmann papers in the Yale University Music Library reflect a life of early successes followed by constant struggle in the wake of two World Wars and the Russian Revolution.

Born in Ukraine to a family of Russian aristocrats, de Hartmann showed an inspired ability for music by improvising melodies at the piano before the age of five. At age nine, following the death of his father and in keeping with family tradition, de Hartmann was sent to the military

academy in St. Petersburg. There he found a sympathetic supporter in the director of the academy, who recognized the unusual musical talent of the young de Hartmann and allowed him to pursue informal musical studies alongside his military training. In 1897, at the age of eleven, de Hartmann began his formal training in music as a composition student of Anton Arensky, renowned former professor of composition at the Moscow Conservatory and then current director of the Imperial Chapel in St. Petersburg.

After Arensky's death, de Hartmann studied counterpoint with Sergei Taneieff, whose previous students had included Alexander Scriabin, Sergei Rachmaninoff, and Reinhold Glière. De Hartmann later entered the St. Petersburg Imperial Conservatory, then under the directorship of Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakoff, where he studied piano with Anna Essipova-Leschetizky. He received his artist's diploma in 1904.

In 1906 de Hartmann's four-act ballet *La Fleurette Rouge* was performed in the Imperial opera houses of Moscow and St. Petersburg, with Vaslav Nijinsky, Anna Pavlova, and Michel Fokine dancing the principal roles. The work was favorably received, and the young de Hartmann found quick approbation within the culturally elite circles of Russia.

The success of *La Fleurette Rouge* led to the publication of de Hartmann's first songs, piano pieces, and works for chamber ensemble. The Moscow-based publishing house of Jurgenson, whose catalogue included works by Ludwig van Beethoven, Robert Schumann, Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky, and Richard Wagner, agreed to handle the task.

Tsar Nicolas II attended *La Fleurette Rouge* in St. Petersburg and he too regarded the work and the composer favorably. Shortly thereafter, the Tsar allowed de Hartmann to defer his military service so that he might pursue a full-time career in music. Seizing the opportunity, de Hartmann immediately departed for Munich to study with the famous conductor and former pupil of Wagner, Felix Mottl.

In 1908 Munich was a magnet for artists of all kinds - a center of creative activity surpassed only by Paris and Vienna. Not long after his arrival, de Hartmann attended an art exhibition that displayed works by the then unknown painters Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, and Wassily Kandinsky. De Hartmann later recounted: "Music in Germany had reached an impasse ... it seemed clear to me that the new forms and techniques had to be found, and more than anything else I wished to find my own way. Soon I found it through the art of painting." De Hartmann was

introduced to Kandinsky by mutual friends. Although Kandinsky was twenty years the composer's senior, the two formed a strong bond of friendship that lasted until Kandinsky's death, a friendship reflected by the numerous letters in the de Hartmann papers from Kandinsky as well as de Hartmann's personal reflections upon the artist's death.

Kandinsky's quest for the abstract in visual art was analogous to de Hartmann's search for new compositional techniques in music. Further, Kandinsky believed that exact equivalents could be found within the color spectrum for individual musical pitches. As their friendship developed, de Hartmann became increasingly intrigued by the scope of Kandinsky's creative vision. De Hartmann was fascinated by the artist's assertion that any means of expression was permitted if it helped the artist convey his "inner sound".

Kandinsky soon introduced de Hartmann to Alexander Sacharoff (1886-1963), a young Russian dancer. Sacharoff, who had little interest in classical ballet, was creating new forms of dance that combined everyday movements with broader, more expressive gestures. Sacharoff's choreography with de Hartmann's musical accompaniment was cause for much discussion around Munich in 1910. With Kandinsky, this multifaceted triumvirate began holding all-night sessions of collaborative improvisation with de Hartmann at the piano, Kandinsky shouting out dramatic scenarios based loosely on Russian folklore, and Sacharoff interpreting the music and storyline in dance. This exploration of the interrelatedness of their creative media led first to a setting of the Greek legend *Daphnis and Chloe* and later, in 1909, to the creation of the seminal one-act opera *Der Gelbe Klang* (*The Yellow Sound*). Neither work was staged at that time.

In 1912 de Hartmann published an article entitled "Über die Anarchie in der Musik", which appeared in the avant-garde periodical *Der Blaue Reiter*, published by Kandinsky and Franz Marc. De Hartmann posited that in the process of artistic creativity external laws do not exist. "In all the arts, and especially in music, every means that arises from an inner necessity is right ... the correspondence of the means of expression with inner necessity is the essence of beauty in a work." Kandinsky's influence on de Hartmann's conceptual understanding of creativity was never more palpable.

During a return visit to St. Petersburg, de Hartmann had met and later married Olga Arkadaevna Schumacher (1885-1979), the daughter of a prominent government dignitary. The young couple returned to Munich, but World War I soon intervened and de Hartmann was ordered back to his regiment in St. Petersburg (Petrograd, by then).

Throughout his life, de Hartmann had been preoccupied with the search for a higher level of spiritual understanding: “Without inner growth, there is no life for me.” Kandinsky, also concerned with higher planes of understanding, believed art to be “one of the most powerful agents of the spiritual life.”

In 1916 de Hartmann’s spiritual life was profoundly affected when, in a prostitute-filled cafe on the Nevsky Prospect in St. Petersburg, he was introduced to George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1877-1949). De Hartmann later wrote in his and Olga’s extraordinary memoir *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff*, “After this meeting, my life became a sort of fairy tale.” Olga de Hartmann amplified: “Mr. Gurdjieff was an unknown person, a mystery. Nobody knew about his teaching, nobody knew his origin ... but whoever came into contact with him wished to follow him, and so did Thomas de Hartmann and I.” And follow him they did. They remained in his immediate orbit and under his spiritual tutelage for the next twelve years, with Thomas serving as, among other things, accompanist and composer-in-residence, while Olga served as Gurdjieff’s personal secretary.

Gurdjieff, having spent much of his life traveling to spiritual centers in the Middle and Far East, appeared in St. Petersburg in 1913 under a cloak of mystery and intrigue. He was a nomadic Georgian mystic, the core of whose wisdom was centered around the idea that man was not born with an immortal soul. With the right kind of spiritual work, however, an immortal soul could be formed. Pre-World War I Europe was fertile ground for the kind of occultism and mysticism that proposed the creation of a utopian epoch. Gurdjieff’s ideas, coupled with an intensely compelling personality, won him a great number of devoted followers.

In 1917 revolution brought an end to Tsarist rule in Russia, and with it, chaos and uncertainty. De Hartmann craftily secured travel papers through his crumbling military contacts, and he and Olga immediately left St. Petersburg. They headed for the Caucasus hoping to make a *rendez-vous* with Gurdjieff which they did, in Essentuki, and thereafter began a period of intense spiritual work, traveling through the Caucasus, first to Sochi, and later to the imperial stronghold of Tiflis (Tbilisi).

There, de Hartmann was reunited with his friend Nicolas Tcherepnin, who was head of the conservatory, and immediately invited de Hartmann to take over the composition class. De Hartmann also became artistic director of the Imperial opera house in Tiflis. Thomas de Hartmann now had students, an orchestra and opera company for which to write and conduct, and a commission to compose incidental music for the Moscow Art Theatre.

Thomas and Olga shortly after they were married, 1906



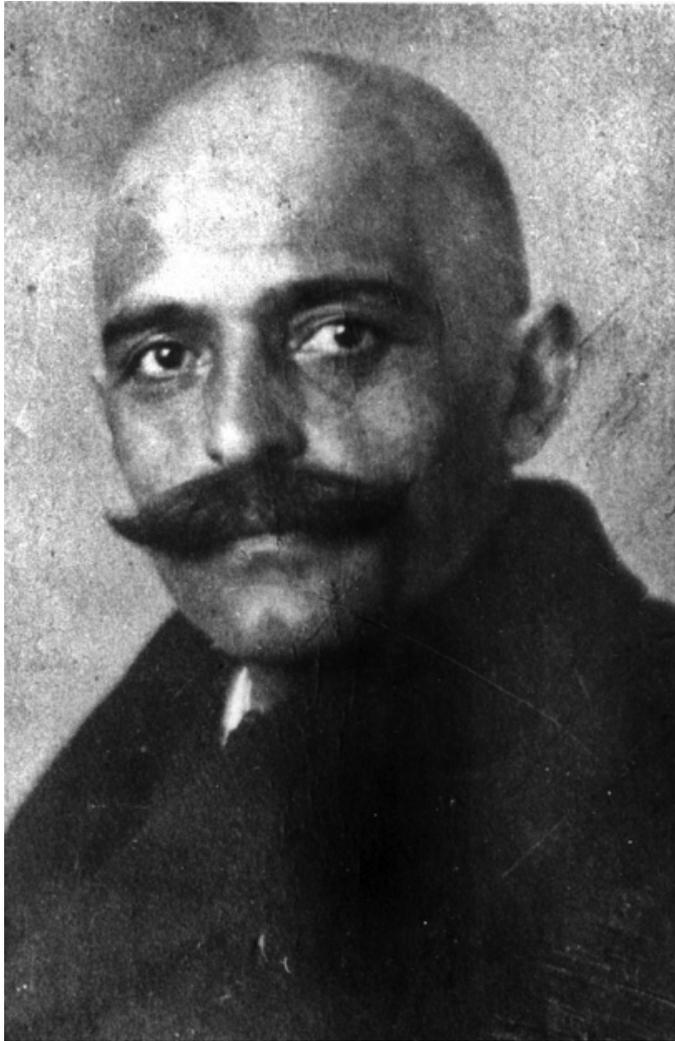
In 1920 the de Hartmanns followed Gurdjieff to Constantinople, where Thomas continued an active musical life, organizing an orchestra made up largely of Russian musicians displaced by the Revolution. Just prior to the outbreak of civil war in Turkey, again seeking refuge, the group went to Berlin where they remained for a short time before landing in Paris, on 'Independence Day', 1922. The group rented an estate in nearby Fontainebleau - the Prieuré of Avon. It was there, in a former monastery, that Gurdjieff's teachings and his legacy were established.

Despite rigorous manual and spiritual labor on the Fontainebleau estate de Hartmann found time to compose, producing in 1923 an orchestral score for a demonstration of the *sacred gymnastics* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. The minor success of the performance provided impetus for the planning of future performances in the United States. With the usual last-minute uncertainty to which they had become accustomed, Gurdjieff's troupe sailed for New York in January of 1924. Demonstrations took place in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and in Chicago where the success was sufficient to occasion a return engagement in New York at Carnegie Hall.

Members of Der Blaue Reiter: Kandinsky, seated, de Hartmann, far right, Munich, 1911



L to R:  
Maria & Franz Marc,  
Bernhard Koehler,  
Heinrich Campendonk



George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1877-1949)



Thomas de Hartmann's publicity photo as 'Thomas Kross' for the film company Synchro-Ciné, Paris c. 1930

De Hartmann and Alexander Schneider of the Budapest String Quartet rehearse the Sonata for Violin and Piano Op. 51, in the presence of Pablo Casals.



They performed the work on 8 March, 1952 in Princeton, New Jersey.

Returning to Fontainebleau on the night of 8 June 1924, Gurdjieff sustained a near-fatal injury in an automobile accident, and with his ensuing convalescence financial matters at the estate quickly deteriorated. In an effort to keep the teetering ship upright and afloat, de Hartmann put aside any residual aristocratic pride and accepted commissions to compose film music (pseudonymously as Thomas Kross).

Gradually, Gurdjieff's situation improved and he began to compose, with de Hartmann, a series of new pieces: "Mr. Gurdjieff sometimes whistled or played on the piano with one finger a very complicated sort of melody-as are all Eastern melodies ... to grasp these melodies and write them down in European notation, required a kind of *tour de force* and very often - probably to make the task more difficult for me - he would replay it a little differently." The best-known material from their work together is the *Sacred Music*, solo piano pieces composed purely for the sake of listening and meditation.

The de Hartmanns remained with Gurdjieff until 1929 when, for unexplained reasons, he severed ties with all of his oldest students. Although they never saw Gurdjieff again, their experiences with the spiritual leader remained important to them for the rest of their lives.

The de Hartmanns, having left behind most of their wealth when they fled Russia, were now faced with the unfamiliar task of supporting themselves. Through teaching, and with Belaieff Editions retaining him with a small stipend, he was able to earn a modest living. He continued his friendship with Kandinsky and found a new and supportive friend in the cellist, Pablo Casals.

With the Nazi occupation of France, the de Hartmanns were, once again, forced from their home. Displaced by the advancing army, they sought refuge in an abandoned building where, miraculously, they found a piano in working condition. De Hartmann continued to work, principally on his opera *Esther*. Several concertos for various instruments, a symphony, and a cello sonata were also completed during this period. Many of these works were performed in Paris after the war, including the piano concerto, which de Hartmann himself performed under the auspices of the Concerts Lamoureux with Eugene Bigot conducting.

In 1950 the de Hartmanns moved to New York City. Before long, de Hartmann began to receive occasional offers to lecture and teach. One opportunity took him to London, where he gave a series of lectures outlining his belief in the interrelatedness of the arts. The American design visionary Frank Lloyd Wright heard of these lectures and invited de Hartmann to work with the

students at Taliesin West in Arizona. It is not surprising that Wright was interested in de Hartmann's work, given that Wright had married, in June of 1928, Olgivanna Hinzenberg, one of Gurdjieff's most loyal former pupils. De Hartmann accepted the invitation.

Once again in New York he continued to compose, and performed occasionally. On 16 April 1956 an American debut concert of de Hartmann's music was scheduled to be performed in New York's Town Hall, but on 28 March, he died suddenly of a heart attack. Olga de Hartmann lived her final years at the center of a group of Gurdjieff followers in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In 1979, within days of shipping the last of her husband's papers to the Yale University Music Library, she died at the age of 94.

De Hartmann's output as a composer included four symphonies, several operas, concertos, sonatas, and songs with texts by Marcel Proust, Paul Verlaine, James Joyce, and Percy Bysshe Shelley, as well as fifty-three film scores. By his early twenties he was one of the best-known living composers in all of Russia. His music was enthusiastically supported by performers and conductors such as Leopold Stokowski, Eugène Bigot, Pablo Casals, Paul Tortelier, and Jean-Pierre Rampal. The fragmented path his life was to follow brought him into direct contact with some of the most intriguing personalities of the century. The turbulent historical events through which he lived may, however, have kept de Hartmann's music from reaching a wider audience. With the de Hartmann papers now widely available for scholarly examination, the opportunity is ripe for a new look at this composer's unique contributions.

*This essay is reprinted in shortened form from Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association, Vol. 53, No. 1 (September 1996), by permission of the Music Library Association, Oberlin Conservatory*



Thomas at his home  
in Courbevoie, in 1930

## Notes on the Music - Disc One

### **Trois Morceaux Op. 4 Nos 2 and 3 (1899)**

Opus 4, 5 (Three Romances for soprano) and 7 belong to the category of 'salon music' popular in the late 19th century. This music of the upper class features relatively small romantic works written for the piano, which are often virtuosic or sentimental. The young Thomas de Hartmann (he was fourteen when he composed these) grew up in this aristocratic milieu. The **Mazurka** is in the style of Chopin, with the traditional counterpoint found in this form. The **Impromptu** is surprisingly adventurous harmonically, in places even quite dissonant. At the same time the music remains essentially romantic. The influence of Annette Essipoff-Leschetizky, his piano teacher and one of the great pianists of the 19th century, is evident from the virtuosic writing.

### **Three Preludes Op. 11 (1904)**

These short pieces represent the beginning of de Hartmann's experimentation with new musical forms. Within a few years he has moved away from the salon style. The romanticism remains, but influences from Scriabin and the Impressionists are now apparent. This eclecticism will be the pattern for the remainder of his life. De Hartmann did not consign himself to a single school of composition, but rather made use of a multitude of techniques and styles to express his ideas. Russian Romanticism predominates in the **Molto cantando**, but the changes in rhythmic pulse also give this miniature an improvisatory character. It is only 18 measures long, with 14 changes of time signature. Impressionist in style, the second prelude explores tonal ambiguity. This produces a sense of instability and it is not until the very last note of the piece that the key becomes clear. The third prelude, **Andantino**, shows the influence of Scriabin's early work, explores complex rhythmic divisions and an unusual approach to counterpoint.

### **Twelve Russian Fairy Tales Op. 58 (1937)**

In his introduction to the printed edition of the Twelve Russian Fairy Tales, de Hartmann writes:

“One of the aims of this collection is to bring Western man in touch with the world of Russian fairy tales through music. Their charm is due not only to the fantasy of the images, the interest in the story, the sparks of humour, the popular spirit and wisdom - all of which elements are found generously

sprinkled through these tales - but they are infinitely beautiful because they have already many elevated and profound ideas. It is not merely by chance that mention is incessantly made of the Kingdom of Marvels, the Kingdom of Light and Life whose task it is the hero's to reach. It is said that the Kingdom is very far off and that it is almost impossible to reach; but the hero aided by the forces of Supernatural wisdom surmounts all the difficulties and succeeds in penetrating there. Full of charm is the image of the hero, Ivan Tsarevitch, who saves from death the Princess whose beauty one never tires of admiring. What characterizes these Tales, is that the charm and attraction which Ivan Tsarevitch exercises depends neither on his beauty nor his virile strength, but on his spirit and on the manner in which he plays the 'gusli' (a kind of Russian zither) by whose sounds even the sea-monsters are charmed.

The pieces in this collection are accessible to children, but before giving them, the author advises the professor to play them to the children himself. It is very important that the imagination of the child should be struck by the fantastic image of the Tales and that the child himself has the desire to re-create the story on the piano."

The orchestral version of several of the *Twelve Russian Fairy Tales* was performed and narrated by Leopold Stokowski during a children's concert with the Houston Symphony in 1956.

### **First Piano Sonata Op. 67 (1942)**

This work marks the beginning of de Hartmann's later style. Modernism and bitonality prevail, although melody is always present and the music never becomes abstract. The fully romantic palette, which has been de Hartmann's trademark since his studies with Arensky, is used sparingly to express relief from the many episodes that depict effort and struggle.

### **Two Nocturnes Op. 84 (1953)**

The **Two Nocturnes** explore the heights and depths of human experience. 'Music of the Stars' evokes the mystery of the night sky. Stars, constellations, meteors, and the Milky Way are vividly depicted on a background of billowing sound clouds, giving an impression of endless space. Towards the end a recitative gives a cryptic message in an oriental mode, before closing with a last glimpse at the stars.

**'The Dance of Life'** uses the melody from 'Lullaby of Broadway' (1935), a popular song by Harry Warren and Al Dubin, harmonized with dissonant chord clusters. The symbolism is clear: on the surface life is filled with hopes and dreams, but underneath there is tension and discord. The theme is subjected to ever more frenetic variation. Halfway through the skies open, and all is well ... for about a minute. Then the madness returns, leading to a crash '*Comme un rire infernal*'. At the end the theme is reiterated, not without irony: will one have to go through this all over again?

## Notes on the Music - Disc Two

### **Six Pièces Op. 7 Nos. 1, 5 and 6 (1902)**

De Hartmann composed the **Prelude** in the style of Schumann and dedicated it to his piano teacher Annette Essipoff-Leschetizky. The published score contains an arpeggio at the end that extends six notes beyond the limit of the piano keyboard. His composition teacher Anton Arensky alluded to this in a letter to the composer Sergei Taneieff, saying "Now he knows his instrument better, but his attention is still inclined to wander." In the early twentieth century P. Jurgenson was the largest publisher of classical music in Russia. Some of Thomas de Hartmann's early works were published by this prestigious house. The beginning of the **Nocturne** might have been written by Frederic Chopin or John Field. The romantic harmonies (with 9th and 11th chords) and soaring melody in the second section of the piece anticipate the style that de Hartmann would apply to his film scores in the 1930s. In the **Novelette** the influence of Modest Mussorgsky is very evident.

### **Divertissements from Forces of Love and Sorcery Op. 16 (1915)**

This work was an opera in the style of a 17th century *bergerette*. *Forces of Love and Sorcery* was originally written for string quartet, harpsichord or piano, soprano, tenor and vocal quartet or small chorus, and dancers. De Hartmann transcribed five of the movements for piano solo. The original is a larger work, some 18 minutes in length. It was performed by the St. Petersburg Marionette Theatre in 1915. The following fragments from the libretto illustrate how the five piano pieces included here were used.

Divertissement part I, Harpsichord - Tritons and Frogs

“In order to win the heart of the sweet Chloris, Zoroastre uses his magic tricks to abduct her and bring her to his cave where he commands his servants - frogs, bats, water spirits and devils - to perform for them.”

Divertissement part II, Harpsichord - Menuet and Gavotte

“Chloris sits on a divan in the cave, next to Zoroastre. Rocks and boulders covered with rich tapestries and shawls form the only *decor*; the shadows of snakes, spiders and bats flicker on the walls. The Devils are dancing and bow gravely with their horns to them.”

Divertissement part III, Harpsichord - Marche Turque

“A military parade closes the evening. It is a fantasy, organized by the Janissaires\* and the Turkish cavalry of Zoroastre. Chloris becomes more and more uncomfortable until at last she is really frightened. As only gods can prevail over magicians, she decides to pray to the most powerful god: Juno, the protector of the young.”

The opera then continues with the ‘Prayer of the Shepherdess’ in which Chloris begs Juno to save her from Zoroastre, for she loves only Merlin. Juno comes crashing down from the heavens on a golden chariot drawn by golden, winged horses, and with her magic sceptre she makes the cave, the sorcerer and his devils disappear. Chloris and Merlin get married and live happily ever after.

\* The Janissaries were an elite infantry unit in the Turkish army, composed of Christian slaves. The military order was founded in the fourteenth century by the Ottoman Sultan Orhan Gazi (1281-1360), who went to the Bektashi dervish brotherhood to ask for a blessing for his new army. Hadji Bektash gave the name ‘Yeniçeri’ or ‘New Army’ to the group, and down through history Bektashi Babas (holy men) accompanied the Janissary troops in the capacity of chaplains.

**Humoresque Viennoise Op. 45** (1931) *Hommage à Johann Strauss*

Thomas de Hartmann wrote the following program notes for the *Humoresque Viennoise*:

“Johann Strauss received permission in Heaven for returning for a time to the Earth and he is very astonished that nobody dances Vienna waltz anymore, but foxtrot. So he wishes also to improvise on piano a foxtrot. He begins, passes to

a blues, a slow, and unconsciously he passes to a waltz. He remarks it and sorrowfully returns to the Heaven.”

Throughout his career, de Hartmann was interested in dance. In 1907, he composed his first ballet *La Fleurette rouge* (*The Scarlet Flower* Op. 9), and two years later worked with Alexander Sacharoff on *Danses plastiques* Op. 10 and with Wassily Kandinsky on *Der Gelbe Klang* (*The Yellow Sound*) which incorporated painting, music and dance. During his years with Gurdjieff he composed music for the ballet ‘The Struggle of the Magicians’ and for the Sacred Dances or Movements. The dance form is frequently found in his works, some of which appear on these CDs: Four Dances from *Esther* Op. 76; *Musique pour la fête de la patronne* Op. 77, and ‘The Dance of Life’ from the Two Nocturnes Op. 84.

### **Lumiere noire Op. 74 (1945)**

- I Fantastico e rubato assai. *When a very poor Negro died, he was taken to Paradise where he was given coffee with cream and great many cakes.*
- II Andante funebre. *Meanwhile his dark brothers put his dark body into the dark earth.*
- III Allegro giocoso e molto ritmico. *His soul, in a very bright and very white light, danced with the angels.*

These three short piano pieces, which contrast black and white surrealistically, tell a very touching and naïve story. De Hartmann uses the Negro spiritual and blues-idiom spiced up with bitonality and modernism. The theme from the third movement is a recognizable paraphrase of the song ‘Shortnin’ Bread’ which is often thought of as a traditional plantation song, although it was actually composed in 1900 by James Whitcomb Riley. De Hartmann performed *Lumiere noire* live on the air at WNYC in New York on 22 February 1956, about a month before he died.

### **Musique pour la fête de la patronne Op. 77 d'après Degas (1947)**

These three short pieces make an ironic commentary on the underbelly of French society. They are inspired by Edgar Degas’ painting by the same name, which depicts a scene from a brothel in which the *filles de Joie* throw a party for their patroness. The title of each movement evokes a different aspect of this painting: the ‘Polka’ with its light-hearted self-abandonment, the seductive ‘Valse langoureuse’, and the mad ‘Quadrille’ in five parts, which quotes Ravel’s *Tombeau de Couperin* as well as Chopin’s ‘Funeral March’. Just before the end of the Quadrille the mood changes suddenly. According to de Hartmann’s own program notes

“ ... a fantastic monster appears inside a cafe where there is much dancing and drinking. It is the real Patron of the Feast: Death. Imperceptibly the women put on masks and you now see old, unhappy creatures whom life has brought to such an existence and death.”

The music for this last section is similar to that of ‘Remorse of Conscience,’ No. 21 from Gurdjieff’s ‘Thirty-Nine Series’ of Movements for which de Hartmann composed the music in 1950, after his teacher's death. The melody lasts for less than a minute before the piece ends with a big crash.

**Second Piano Sonata Op. 82 (1951) *Dedicated to P. D. Ouspensky\****

De Hartmann: “In philosophy there is a conception of the Fourth Dimension. This philosophical idea can be considered as a poetic thought, as a poetic feeling - and this is the basis for the sonata”.

The Second Piano Sonata was one of the pieces to be performed in a program of music by Thomas de Hartmann in New York’s Town Hall on Sunday, April 15, 1956. Unexpectedly, the composer died of a heart attack on March 28th. The previous evening he had performed his sonata with tremendous force for a group of musical friends who were unable to attend the concert that was to take place in two weeks.

\* P. D. Ouspensky (1878-1947) was one of Gurdjieff’s most important pupils. A mathematician and writer interested in the latent spiritual potential in man, his early books ‘The Fourth Dimension’ (1909) and ‘Tertium Organum’ (1912) attracted the attention of the Russian intelligentsia. In 1915 he met Gurdjieff in Moscow and worked closely with him until 1924. His book ‘In Search of the Miraculous’, published in 1947, is an important exposition of Gurdjieff’s ideas, and has been responsible for attracting many people to his teaching.

Ingrid Pape-Sheldon



**Elan Sicroff** is one of the leading interpreters of the Gurdjieff/de Hartmann music, which was the result of a unique collaboration in the 1920s in which the sacred and folk music of the East was arranged for piano. In the 1960s he studied with Jeaneane Dowis, who was a protégée and assistant to Rosina Lhevinne at the Juilliard School. From 1973-75 he attended the International Academy for Continuous Education at Sherborne in Gloucestershire, England, as a student and later as Director of Music. The Academy was run by J. G. Bennett, a leading exponent of the teachings of George Ivanovich Gurdjieff. In 1974 Mr. Bennett contacted Mme. Olga de Hartmann, widow of the composer, who introduced Elan to the music that Thomas de Hartmann composed in the classical idiom. Between 1975 and 1979 Elan studied with her and performed many of de Hartmann's works. In 1982 he made a tour of the U.S., which included performances in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Boston. Since then he has given numerous recitals in the U.S., Canada and Europe.

### **Also Available by Elan Sicroff**

**NI6411 The Chamber Music of Thomas de Hartmann**  
Works for Violin, 'Cello, Double Bass, Saxophone quartet and Flute.

**NI6413 The Songs of Thomas de Hartmann**  
Works for Soprano and Piano setting poems by  
Achmatova, Shelley, Zota, Ronsard, Zhukovsky, Pushkin, Joyce,  
Moreux, Gual, Kapnist, Janov, and Balmont



The de Hartmanns visiting Frank Lloyd Wright in Arizona during the early 1950s. Olga and Thomas stand either side of Lloyd Wright, center, with members of Lloyd Wright's family and several of his students