

IRENE SCHARRER

The complete
electric and
selected acoustic
recordings

THE MATTHAY PUPILS



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1. PURCELL/HENDERSON **Toccatà Prelude** from Suite No 1 – . . . D 1373; matrix Cc 11232-3; recorded 7 October 1927 (4.27)
Sarabande from Suite No 2 – **Minuet** from Suites Nos 1 and 8
2. PARADIES **Toccatà in A major** from Sonata No 6 D 1120; matrix Cc 7120-4; recorded 23 December 1925 (1.58)
3. SCARLATTI **Sonata in D minor** L366 (Kk1) D 1120; matrix Cc 7120-4; recorded 23 December 1925 (1.30)
4. SCARLATTI **Sonata in C minor** L352 (Kk11) D 1120; matrix Cc 7585-2; recorded 23 December 1925 (1.31)
5. SCARLATTI **Sonata in C major** L104 (Kk159) D 1120; matrix Cc 7585-2; recorded 23 December 1925 (2.16)
6. BACH/HESS **Jesu, joy of man's desiring** E 489; matrix Bb 14724-7; recorded 18 January 1929 (3.26)
7. BOYCE/CRAXTON **Gavotte** E 489; matrix Bb 11348-2; recorded 5 September 1927 (2.47)
 from Sonata No 12 for two violins and continuo
- MOZART **Sonata in G major** K283
8. Allegro D 1372/3; matrices Cc 9565-1, 14722-4 & 9567-2 (3.43)
9. Andante recorded 28 December 1926; 18 January 1929 & 1 January 1927 (3.43)
10. Presto (3.56)
11. MENDELSSOHN **Spinning song** Songs without words, Op 67 No 4 (1.33)
12. CHOPIN **Etude in G flat major** Op 10 No 5 'Black Key' D 1303; matrix Cc 11233-3; recorded 5 July 1927 (1.36)
13. CHOPIN **Waltz in E minor** Op posth E 486; matrix Bb 9564-1; recorded 20 December 1926 (2.26)
14. CHOPIN **Impromptu No 1 in A flat major** Op 29 D 1087; matrix Cc 7584-2; recorded 23 December 1925 (3.54)
15. CHOPIN **Fantaisie-Impromptu** Op 66 D 1087; matrix Cc 7141-4; recorded 13 December 1925 (4.27)
16. SINDING **Rustle of spring** Op 32 No 3 D 1303; matrix Cc 11234-1; recorded 5 July 1927 (2.24)
17. DEBUSSY **Arabesque No 2 in G major** E 486; matrix Bb 9563-1; recorded 20 December 1926 (3.03)

The Columbia Electrics 1929–1933

18. MENDELSSOHN **Andante and Rondo Capriccioso** Op 14 DB 306; matrices WA 10497-4/10498-4 (6.04)
 recorded 24 September 1930
19. LISZT **Hungarian Rhapsody No 12** S244/12 abridged 9920; matrices WAX 5261-1/5262-2 (8.00)
 recorded 12 November 1929
20. VERDI/LISZT **Rigoletto – Paraphrase de concert** S434 DB 76; matrices WA 9738-1/9739-1 (6.38)
 recorded 12 November 1929
21. CHOPIN **Fantaisie-Impromptu** Op 66 DX 456; matrix CAX 6603-2; recorded 5 December 1932 (4.18)
22. CHOPIN **Etude in E flat major**, Op 10 No 11 DB 1224; matrix CA 13819-3; recorded 21 July 1933 (3.25)
23. CHOPIN **Etude in C minor** Op 10 No 12 'Revolutionary' DX 456; matrix CAX 6602-1; recorded 5 December 1932 (2.46)

1. CHOPIN **Etude in A flat major** Op 25 No 1 'Aeolian Harp' DB 1348; matrix CA 13920-3; recorded 14 September 1933 (2.28)
2. CHOPIN **Etude in G flat major** Op 25 No 9 'Butterfly' . . . DB 1348; matrix CA 13920-3; recorded 14 September 1933 (1.03)
3. CHOPIN **Etude in G sharp minor** Op 25 No 6 DB 1348; matrix CA 13818-3; recorded 21 July 1933 (2.14)
4. CHOPIN **Etude in A minor** Op 25 No 11 'Winter Wind' DX 624; matrix CAX 6898-1; recorded 28 July 1930 (3.44)
5. CHOPIN **Etude in C minor** Op 25 No 12 DB 1224; matrix CA 13817-2; recorded 21 July 1933 (2.46)
- CHOPIN **Trois Nouvelles Etudes** 1839
6. No 1 in F minor DX 624; matrix CAX 6924-2 (2.27)
7. No 2 in D flat major recorded 14 September 1933 (1.54)
8. CHOPIN **Scherzo No 2 in B flat minor** Op 31 . . . DX 433; matrices CAX 6604-3/6605-2; recorded 5 December 1932 (6.57)
9. LITOLFF **Scherzo** from Concerto Symphonique, Op 102 DB 1267; matrices CA 14108-2/14109-2 (5.46)
LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA / HENRY WOOD recorded 30 October 1933

A selection of HMV acoustics 1912–1924

10. SCARLATTI **Sonata in G major** L387 (Kk14) D 543; matrix HO 4536-2 af [part]; recorded 11 September 1920 (1.27)
11. BACH **Prelude and Fugue No 3 in C sharp major** BWV848 D 576; matrix Cc 344-1; recorded 6 July 1921 (3.34)
12. CHOPIN **Nocturne in C minor** Op 48 No 1 abridged 05629; matrix HO 2231 af; recorded 12 October 1916 (4.35)
13. CHOPIN **Prelude in F sharp minor** Op 28 No 8 E 255; matrix Bb 536-1; recorded 6 October 1921 (2.07)
14. CHOPIN **Etude in F minor** Op 25 No 2 D 82; matrix HO 256 az [part]; recorded 19 September 1912 (1.29)
15. CHOPIN **Funeral March** from Sonata No 2, Op 35 05622; matrix HO 2388 af; recorded 11 December 1916 (3.39)
16. CHOPIN **Waltz in D flat major** Op 64 No 1 'Minute' . . . 05541; matrix HO 260 z [part]; recorded 19 September 1912 (1.46)
17. SCHUMANN **Intermezzo** from Fäsehingsschwank aus Wien, Op 26 05591; matrix HO 2224 af; recorded 12 October 1916 (2.34)
18. LISZT **Gnomenreigen** S145/2 05660; matrix HO 2390 af; recorded 11 December 1916 (2.50)
19. LISZT **Fantasia on Hungarian Folk Themes** S123 abridged 05536/7; matrices z 6574 f/z 6573 f (7.41)
NEW SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA / LANDON RONALD recorded 14 September 1912
20. SAINT-SAËNS **Allegro scherzando** from Concerto No 2 in G minor, Op 22 abridged . . . 05573; matrix HO 1232 ac (4.06)
NEW SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA / LANDON RONALD recorded 13 November 1915
21. DEBUSSY **Reflets dans l'eau** Images, Book 1 No 1 D 914; matrix Cc 4305-2; recorded 4 March 1924 (4.07)
22. DEBUSSY **Poissons d'or** Images, Book 2 No 3 D 914; matrix Cc 4306-2; recorded 4 March 1924 (3.45)
23. SCOTT **Danse negre** 05571; matrix HO 1067 ac [part]; recorded 20 September 1915 (1.39)
24. GOODHART **"Tipperary" – Five Variations** 05576; matrix HO 1371 ac; recorded 17 December 1915 (3.28)

IRENE SCHARRER

THE COMPLETE ELECTRICAL RECORDINGS 1925–1933
AND A SELECTION OF HER ACOUSTICS 1912–1924



Tchaikovsky's B flat minor Concerto with Miss Irene Scharrer as the soloist, was wildly received. It was a great rendering and also a great reading on the part of Mr. Ronald ... The pianist scored a great ovation, her part was full of vitality, in fact a veritable tour de force. The technical difficulties were swept away as though they did not exist. The masculine vigour she was able to introduce stamp her as a pianist without a rival amongst the fairer sex.
—*Musical Standard*, 31 October 1914

THUS, A LONDON MUSIC JOURNAL reported on the collaboration of Irene Scharrer and her close friend Sir Landon Ronald, three months after the start of World War I. If the prose seems a bit Victorian, it serves to illustrate the stature of the then twenty-six-year-old Scharrer, a remarkable pianist whose achievements are far too little remembered by today's musical public. James Little, the *Standard's* reviewer, also praised the concert as a beacon to a nation that was then 'passing through a dark cloud and living in abnormal times'. And indeed, before, during, and immediately after the War, Scharrer reigned as one of the icons of British pianism, for of all the Matthay pupils, she was far the most recognized for the warmth she imparted to highly demanding, virtuosic works.

The youngest child of Tobias and Ida Henrietta (Samuel) Scharrer, Irene was born in London on 2 February 1888, and not long after, her mother, an accomplished pianist, was commuting to Tobias Matthay's new home on Brighton Road in Purley, at the urging of her elder sister Maud. As the grandchildren of Liverpool watchmaker Moses Samuel (1795–

1860) – whose descendants founded the H Samuel jewellery chain – Maud, Ida, and their seven siblings lived comfortably. Maud had begun lessons with Matthay at the Royal Academy of Music in 1886, and the Samuel family soon became among his most ardent admirers. One afternoon, Irene, then aged six, accompanied Ida on one of her Purley visits, but as Jessie Matthay recounts in her biography of her husband, the child's attempt to greet the master with a formal bow was thwarted when a rug mercilessly slid across the polished floor, causing her to land feet first! However, she proved remarkably gifted, and after she reached the age of 10, Irene's beloved 'Uncle Tobs' became her only teacher.

In the autumn of 1900, at the age of 12, she won one of the scholarships recently created by the RAM to honour the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, and in subsequent years she also won the (Cipriani) Potter Exhibition and the Erard Scholarship, so that over time her studies were fully underwritten by awards and prizes. She arrived at the Academy on the same day as Arnold Bax – another Matthay pupil – but the student who soon became her closest

friend, Myra Hess, did not appear for another two years. The girls met through their mothers, who were already friends, and Ida may have convinced Lizzie Hess to send her daughter to St. Leonard's, a girls' school that Irene already attended.² Despite the two-year age difference, the girls soon became inseparable, and after Myra also began studying with Matthay (who had now relocated to Hampstead), they sometimes even scheduled their lessons together at his Arkwright Road home. Jessie later recalled:

While waiting for their lessons, they would often indulge in high jinks on the two studio pianos, extemporising simultaneously in a wildly exciting manner, making rhapsodies out of everything.³

Years later, Bax remembered them as two 'very small and eternally giggling girls', but Irene's temperament was far more extroverted than Myra's, and as she blossomed into an extraordinarily attractive young woman, it seemed natural to most that she should devour the thunderous works of Liszt and Chopin with ease. In October of 1904, at the age of sixteen, she made her Bechstein Hall debut while still an RAM student, but *The Times* was not altogether flattering, suggesting that her virtuosity was still a bit empty, and counselling that 'music means a good deal more than she now seems to imagine'.⁴ Nevertheless, fifteen months later, after she performed both the Liszt E flat and the Saint-Saëns G minor Concertos with Henry Wood and the Queen's Hall Orchestra, the *Musical Times* praised her 'delightfully sympathetic and delicate' passagework, which she dispatched with 'fascinating clearness and lightness',⁵ and un-

flattering reviews soon virtually disappeared. Her self-confident assertiveness was in evidence behind the scenes as well, since despite the fact that she was a mere seventeen, she demanded that Wood, at least briefly, relinquish his baton to her teacher, so that Matthay's youthful 1882 overture *In May* could be debuted on the same programme – a work he had been struggling unsuccessfully to premiere for nearly twenty-five years.

Soon hailed as a rising star, she was particularly acclaimed for her Chopin Etudes, performances that amazed even Vladimir de Pachmann,⁶ and she often thrilled audiences with her effortless rendition of the 'Black Key' from Opus 10. While still a teenager – aboard a steamer with a small piano – she once accepted a challenge from Alexander Mackenzie, the principal of the RAM, to transpose it a semitone higher, astonishing those present by extemporaneously creating a 'white key' extravaganza.⁷ Thus, it scarcely surprised anyone that her first commercial recording session made at the Gramophone studios on 23 July 1909, shortly after her twenty-first birthday, should include the 'Black Key', which she paired with a remarkable rendition of Mendelssohn's 'Bee's Wedding' (the *Song without words* Op 67 No 4 known more commonly as 'Spinning Song'). Landon Ronald, who was also an outstanding pianist, had then been working for the company for nine years, and both he and Scharrer remained with the firm long after it began issuing records under the HMV label that year.

Not surprisingly, her earliest HMV collaborative venture, on 14 September 1912, featured Ronald and the New Symphony in an abridged

version of Liszt's familiar *Hungarian Fantasy* – the earliest acoustic recording in this set (all of which appear on Disc 2). Though only twenty-four, Scharrer makes a commanding impression, and her passagework glistens with brilliance, but – heeding Matthay's advice – a brilliance that always bubbles, and never stings. Five days later, her rendition of the Chopin F minor Etude from Opus 25 (sharing a side with her first recording of the Etude Op 25 No 1) is nothing short of miraculous. She is completely faithful to the *presto* tempo marking (as well as to Chopin's dynamics, which rarely rise above a *piano*), but – again illustrating Matthay's tenets – every note is musically intended, and the listener is never captivated by sheer speed so much as by a luminous clarity. The same is true with the familiar 'Minute' Waltz, which appeared on the disc's B side, and which – for those interested – extends here to 1.47, with art again trumping mere athleticism. Despite the distance of nearly a century, the acoustic technology has preserved the extraordinary *jeu perlé* of her finger-work, which is never blurred by pedal. The same is true with Scott's popular *Danse nègre*, which she recorded on 20 September 1915, and which had been published a mere seven years earlier, as well as with her ebullient – if slightly abridged – reading of the Scherzo from Saint-Saëns' Second Concerto, for which she joined Ronald two months later on 13 November.

On 21 December 1915, about five weeks after she recorded the Saint-Saëns, Irene married an Eton housemaster, Samuel Gurney Lubbock, in a ceremony that occurred just four days after she recorded some of the demanding

'Tipperary' variations composed by organist Arthur Goodhart (1866–1941) – another Eton graduate. Jack Judge's familiar music-hall song was first published in 1912, and within three years, it had become so popular – especially with British infantrymen – that Goodhart published two sets of piano variations from which Scharrer chose five for her recording. The third presented here – loosely reminiscent of Chopin's F sharp minor Prelude – was even dedicated to her. By then the War had raged for sixteen months, and no doubt both Lubbock (who remained close to his former students long after their graduations) and Scharrer were eager to support the War effort, even partially disrupting their wedding plans so that a favourite ditty might offer a degree of consolation to young men fighting far from home.

Though he was fifteen years Irene's senior, Gurney Lubbock, educated at Eton and Cambridge, fully supported her career. To many, the pairing seemed an unlikely match, since her marriage required her to relocate to The Manor House on the Eton campus, where, surrounded by the boys Lubbock mentored, she was over an hour away from London. But she took to it well, eventually even teaching privately at their residence, and often performing for the students – who, from all reports, adored her. On 16 October 1917, she gave birth to their son, Ian Gurney Lubbock, and though travel was soon back to normal after the War, she deferred extended trips for a few more years to accommodate the birth of their daughter, Rachel Gurney Lubbock, who appeared on 5 March 1920. It may bear witness to Lubbock's strong appreciation of aes-

thetics – his speciality was classics – that both of his children pursued careers in the theatre.⁸

About a year before Ian was born, on 12 October 1916, she delivered an emotionally powerful reading of the Chopin C minor Nocturne, pairing it with a hauntingly beautiful rendition of the Intermezzo from Schumann's *Faschingsschwank aus Wien*. One of her specialities was the Chopin B flat minor Sonata, and two months later, she set down the Funeral March, which, at 3.39, precluded a repeat of the sombre march section. But what she did record commemorates the poignant beauty inherent in this often hackneyed work, especially the *cantabile* soprano line of the trio, where her exquisite rubato nearly overpowers through its emotional intensity – though she rarely rises above a *piano*. In the same session, she chose Liszt's *Gnomens-reigen* for the B side, and her seemingly reckless abandon (including some fascinating ornamentation beginning at bar 14) perfectly captures the spirit, if not always the letter, of the composer's virtuosic etude.

In September of 1920, when Rachel was just five months old, Irene recorded a G major Scarlatti Sonata that Myra often performed (and later recorded), and the following July, she offered the C sharp major Prelude and Fugue from Book I of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, reminding us that she excelled not only as a large-scale Romanticist, but as a superb miniaturist. Her mastery of dynamic gradations was unexcelled, as she amply demonstrated three months later in the demanding F sharp minor Chopin Prelude, as well as in the last acoustic recordings which appear in this set – from 4 March 1924 – two of

Debussy's most sophisticated works, drawn respectively from *Images* I and II. Her *Reflets* is a miraculous study in shape as well as colour, and her *Poissons d'or* demonstrates that her tonal palette was so developed that she could have easily carved a niche as a specialist in Impressionist music had she chosen.

Here we may pause to reflect on what might have been. Throughout the acoustic period, but particularly in the last of these sessions in 1922 and 1924, Scharrer recorded a variety of works that never made it to commercial release. Possibly, some of these were musical or technical failures, but with the later dates, it's quite likely that the only reason these titles never appeared was that the arrival of electrical recording made them commercially uncompetitive. These sessions included a complete Schumann G minor Sonata (the largest work she recorded), excerpts from the same composer's *Papillons* and *Fantasiestücke*, a d'Albert Scherzo, Rachmaninov's Prelude Op 23 No 5 and a clutch of additional works by Chopin. It is to be hoped that, somewhere, test-pressings of these works may still survive.

As HMV's electrical era dawned, Irene was seriously contemplating an American tour. She had originally planned to go as early as 1914, but the War intervened, and since she refused to leave her children until they were older, she did not play in New York until February 1926. She brought major repertoire with her – she even played the Beethoven Fourth with Klemperer and the New York Symphony – but regrettably, many of the works she performed abroad were never placed on

disc. However, in December 1925, shortly before she sailed, HMV did capture a few of her smaller encores with the newer microphone technology. On 13 December, she recorded Chopin's familiar *Fantasie-Impromptu* (all HMV electrics are on Disc 1), a remarkable essay in colour and sensitivity, and two days before Christmas in an extended session, she recorded three Scarlatti Sonatas and the popular *Toceata* of Domenico Paradies. While the A major tonality of the Paradies introduces the D minor Scarlatti very effectively, all four of these are arguably a bit pushed in tempo by today's standards of Baroque interpretation. Still, the delicacy and control she brings to them is impressive. At the same session she recorded a masterful Chopin A flat *Impromptu*, which HMV released as the A side to the *Fantasie-Impromptu* that she had recorded ten days earlier. When she played the A flat in New York about fourteen months later, the *New York Times's* Olin Downes was captivated, observing that she caught not only its 'lyricism and improvisational character', but the 'slowly vanishing fragrance' of its 'elusive' ending.⁹

As her touring schedule soon became more intense, her recording sessions became less frequent. She recorded little in 1926 and nothing at all until five days before Christmas, when she paired the posthumous Chopin E minor Waltz with the second Debussy Arabesque. Eight days later, she began recording Mozart's familiar G major Sonata, K283. For whatever reasons, this became quite an extended project, for although the issued first movement dates from this session, Scharrer returned to the work during sessions in 1927, 1928 and 1929. The first movement is

graceful in its figurations, but purists will no doubt take issue with her extreme tempo. The issued matrix of the third movement was recorded four days later – on New Year's Day 1927 – and here her *presto* tempo is far more consonant with the composer's markings, although the large-scale dynamics often suggest textures more reminiscent of Beethoven than Mozart. (Still, it should be noted, her interpretation was not that far out of line with the approach taken by many pianists who performed Mozart at this time.) The *andante* second movement was originally issued using matrix Cc 9566-2 from the same session as the third. However, the set was later issued using the matrix included here, recorded on 18 January 1929, and this may be the most successful movement of all, for here she delivers a performance that exquisitely captures Mozart's *cantabile* lines. Whether there are any other issued permutations, including material from the 1928 sessions where the whole sonata was re-recorded, remains to be seen; during this period it was not unusual for the same catalogue number to be re-pressed using different matrices.

Nearly thirty years after their first meeting, Myra Hess still remained her closest friend, and at the same January session, Irene recorded the popular Bach-Hess transcription of the chorale from Cantata 147, *Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben*, which had been published by Oxford three years earlier as 'Jesus, Joy of Man's Desiring'. Myra had first recorded it in 1928 for Columbia, and although the several recordings she made of it over the years will no doubt remain definitive, Scharrer's performance is remarkable, especi-

ally with respect to the hidden voices she discovers in the tenor line. Transplanting earlier keyboard music to the piano became a vogue in England after the War, as evidenced by Matthay's student Harold Craxton (1885–1971), who received acclaim in 1922 for a Wigmore Hall programme he devoted entirely to the Elizabethan Virginalists. Craxton soon acquired a reputation as an English Baroque-Classical specialist as well, and in September of 1927, Irene recorded his transcription of the Gavotte from William Boyce's Sonata No 12 for two violins and continuo, published only the previous year by Oxford University Press. A month later, she offered an arrangement by Glasgow organist Archibald M Henderson of several Purcell dances, which had been published by Bayley & Ferguson in 1923. Although no attempt is made to replicate harpsichord textures, both recordings are fascinating studies in colour and rhythmic vitality, and criticisms that today might be lodged concerning stylistic authenticity are more than offset by her extraordinary musical sensitivity.

But Irene Scharer's defining legacy as a recording artist may well rest with her Chopin Etudes, which – allowing for the limitations imposed by earlier technology – compare favourably with the most esteemed interpretations extant. Regrettably, she recorded only nine of the twenty-four, and they were never undertaken as a set, but issued separately over two decades. Had different decisions been made both by the artist and her label(s), she might have left a body of work that would have seen frequent reissues, but until now, even the nine she left have never appeared in a single collection. Her earliest Etude was

the 1912 acoustic recording of the F minor from Op 25 already discussed, and she re-recorded the 'Black Key' study (along with the Mendelssohn 'Spinning Song' and Sinding's familiar 'Rustles of Spring') for HMV in July of 1927. Despite a few missed notes, at 1.36, the performance is a remarkable display of both finesse and warmth, as she continually engages the ear with a fresh lyricism extracted from the alto and tenor voices. The remaining seven Etudes were all issued on the Columbia label, whose ranks she joined late in 1929. On 28 July 1930, she recorded the 'Winter Wind', one of her encore specialties, and arguably one of the most demanding of the 24. But the difficulties inherent in the right-hand passage-work seem not to exist for her, as one's ear is irresistibly drawn only to the lyrical *cantabile* voicing of her left hand. Her 'Revolutionary', recorded over two years later – her only Etude from 1932 – is so overpowering that the last fifteen measures alone might ensure her standing as a major artist.

The remaining Etudes were all recorded in 1933, and on 21 July, she made a masterful recording of the 'double thirds' study from Opus 25. Opinions may differ, but this must surely rank as one of the finest 'thirds' Etudes ever committed to disc, and she toys with it effortlessly, transforming it into a fantasy of kaleidoscopic colour. In the same session, she included the 'rolled chord' E flat from Opus 10, and the C minor ('Ocean') from Opus 25. Both were great favourites of Matthay, who experimented endlessly with their voicing and accentuation possibilities, and Irene also finds hidden vocal lines beneath Chopin's soprano arpeggiations. Her last Etudes were recorded

about two months later, when she paired the A flat 'Aeolian Harp' with the G flat 'Butterfly' from Opus 25 – both released on a single side. The 'Harp' is a miraculous study in voicing and texture, and her 'Butterfly' begins as if floating on a cloud. At the same session, she recorded two of the 'Nouvelle' Etudes and both are masterpieces. Her F minor demonstrates tone production as Matthey taught it – that the key should always be accelerated and never struck, so that the sound could penetrate without harshness – and her D flat provides an intoxicating array of beguiling voices.

Perhaps Columbia had one day intended to issue more of her Etudes, but Irene made only one recording following her September 1933 session, when she joined Wood and the LSO a month later for the Scherzo from Litoff's *Concerto Symphonique*, a sparkling, often spine-tingling performance that seems to have sold very well. In addition, her other Columbia discs were arguably some of the finest she made. In a single session on 12 November 1929, she recorded two enormous Liszt works, the twelfth Rhapsody and the *Rigoletto* paraphrases, both of which are breathtaking in their execution, and two years later, she virtually recomposed the often hackneyed Mendelssohn Andante and Rondo Capriccioso, creating in essence, a minor masterpiece. Three months later, her B-flat minor Chopin

Scherzo (another Matthey favourite) again discovers new voices and textures where others often see only the obvious, and her re-recording of the Fantasie-Impromptu in the same session offers improved sound engineering over the HMV version she recorded seven years previously.

The motivation behind Scharrer's decision to abandon a successful recording career at the height of her powers (she was then only forty-five and far from retirement) are not altogether clear, but some have suggested that the Litoff recording—its success notwithstanding – heralded a very difficult period in her personal life. Though all the surrounding circumstances may never be known, within months, after thirty-six years of service, Lubbock resigned from Eton, the institution he loved, to accept a post at Farnborough School in Hampshire, and eventually the two of them separated. As always, Irene remained totally devoted to her two children, who were now teenagers, but for whatever reason, she began to tour less and she never recorded again. But today's audiences can be grateful that the highpoints of her recorded legacy can now be so readily obtained and appreciated.

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¹ Jessie Henderson Matthey, *The Life and Works of Tobias Matthey* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1945), 31.

² See Marian McKenna, *Myra Hess: A Portrait* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1976), 12. ³ Jessie Matthey, 40.

⁴ *The Times*, 28 Oct. 1904, 4. The student days of Irene and Myra are discussed in far greater detail in my *England's Piano Sage: The Life and Teachings of Tobias Matthey* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 204–210.

⁵ *Musical Times*, 1 Mar., 1906, 190. ⁶ See Jessie Matthey, 43. ⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Years later, Rachel acted under the name Rachel Gurney, and eventually even appeared on television. In the early 'seventies, she was widely seen in the UK and America on the popular London Weekend Television series *Upstairs, Downstairs*, portraying the first Mrs Bellamy – who met her demise on the Titanic. ⁹ Olin Downes, 'Irene Scharrer's Recital', *New York Times*, 13 Feb. 1927, 28.

IRENE SCHARRER

Discography of issued Acoustic Recordings 1909–1924
later replaced by electrical recordings and not reissued in this set

LISZT Hungarian Rhapsody No 12 (abridged)	05526; D 86 (matrix 3534 f) 23/7/09
CHOPIN Etude in G-flat major, Op 10 No 5	05532 (matrix 3535 f) 23/7/09
MENDELSSOHN Spinning song (Songs without words, Op 67 No 4)	
CHOPIN Etude in A flat major, Op 25 No 1	D 82 (matrix HO 256 z [part]) 19/9/12
MENDELSSOHN Rondo Capriccioso, Op 14	D 87 (matrix HO 257 z) 19/9/12
LISZT Liebestraum No 3	05540 (matrix HO 258 z) 19/9/12
<i>This title was not remade in the electrical era, and although it was listed in early catalogues as issued as a single-sided disc, we have not been able to locate a copy. It is possible the disc was never issued; if it was, it is thus the only example of Scharrer's published recorded repertoire that we have been unable to represent in this set.</i>	
CHOPIN Etude in A minor, Op 25 No 11	05538 (matrix HO 259 z) 19/9/12
CHOPIN Etude in G flat major, Op 25 No 9	D 83 (matrix HO 260 z [part]) 19/9/12
CHOPIN Fantaisie-Impromptu, Op 66	05583 (matrix HO 1063 ac) 20/9/15
CHOPIN Etude in G sharp minor, Op 25 No 6	D 84 (matrix HO 1067 ac [part]) 20/9/15
CHOPIN Etude in G flat major, Op 10 No 5	D 85 (matrix HO 1375 ac) 17/12/15
MENDELSSOHN Spinning song (Songs without words, Op 67 No 4)	
CHOPIN Etude in E flat major, Op 10 No 11	D 82 (matrix HO 2392 af) 11/12/16
SCARLATTI Sonata in C major, L104 (Kk159)	D 543 (matrix HO 4536-2 af [part]) 11/9/20
CHOPIN Waltz No 14 in E minor, Op posth.	E 255 (matrix Bb 342-1) 6/7/21
DEBUSSY Arabesque No 2 in G major	D 576 (matrix Cc 343-1) 6/7/21
PURCELL (arr. Henderson) Toccata Prelude from Suite;	D 622 (matrix Cc 1210-2) 11/4/22
Sarabande from Suite No 2; Minuet from Suites Nos 1 and 8	
SINDING Rustle of spring, Op 32 No 3	D 622 (matrix Cc 1211-2) 11/4/22
CHOPIN Fantaisie-Impromptu, Op 66	D 86 (matrix Cc 4304-3) 4/3/24

NB The information in this list, and in the track-listing, cannot be regarded as completely definitive as it appears that in several cases different 'takes' (matrix numbers) were issued under the same catalogue number. Some works were revisited, even years apart, and the later recording, presumably of better sound quality, substituted for the earlier. In other cases, foreign issues of a given work would feature a matrix not otherwise used.



Irene Scharrer (left) and Myra Hess
with Tobias Matthay
at his High Marley home, August 1943

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer:

Mark Obert-Thorn

Executive Producer:

Michael Spring

Special thanks to Donald Manildi
for his discographic assistance

Front cover photograph
courtesy of Malcolm Binns

ADD

Duration 2 hours 38 minutes

APR 6010

IRENE SCHARRER

The complete electric and selected acoustic recordings

COMPACT DISC 1 (79.53)

The HMV Electrics 1925–1929

PURCELL/HENDERSON, PARADIES, SCARLATTI, BACH/HESS,
BOYCE/CRAXTON, MENDELSSOHN, CHOPIN, SINDING & DEBUSSY

The Columbia Electrics 1929–1933

MENDELSSOHN, LISZT, VERDI/LISZT & CHOPIN

COMPACT DISC 2 (78.06)

The Columbia Electrics 1929–1933 CONTINUED

CHOPIN & LITOLFF

A selection of HMV acoustics 1912–1924

SCARLATTI, BACH, CHOPIN, SCHUMANN, LISZT,
SAINT-SAËNS, DEBUSSY, SCOTT & GOODHART

TOBIAS MATTHAY (1858–1945) is the greatest piano teacher Britain has produced. From the 1890s to the 1930s, first at the RAM and then also at his own school, he almost single-handedly produced a generation of concert pianists who launched an English piano tradition. York Bowen was an early pupil, but those best remembered are a group of female pianists; Harriet Cohen, Myra Hess, Irene Scharrer and Moura Lympany, all of whom will feature in this APR series.



IRENE SCHARRER (1888–1971), though perhaps the least remembered of the major Matthay pupils, was the earliest to record, beginning in 1909 at the age of 21. That in itself is a credit to her early fame, which she established through an extrovert, but always musical, virtuosity. She excelled in such works as the Chopin Etudes, nine of which are included here.

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer:
Mark Obert-Thorn



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