



# Teresa Carreño's Russian Visits

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*Maria Milinowski, former professor of music at Vassar College, dates Teresa Carreño's first meeting with Anton Rubinstein at London in July 1868. He gave her some lessons later that year (Teresa Carreño "by the grace of God" [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940], pp. 86-87). Relying on Carreño's diary that starts with January 1891, Milinowski records a January 28, 1891, entry at St. Petersburg: "Saw Rubinstein for the first time after twenty years."*

*According to the same diary, she dined with him at his house every free night during her brief stay that month at St. Petersburg (ibid., p. 212). On the whole, she herself felt that her first Russian tour lasting into February 1891 was none too successful. The following article, documented from Russian contemporary sources rather than her diary, usefully supplements Milinowski's reportage.*

ON THE INVITATION of the Russian Musical Society transmitted by Leopold Auer,<sup>1</sup> Teresa Carreño arrived at St. Petersburg in mid-January 1891 for her first Russian concerts. Already during the week preceding her Russian début January 24, she created an extraordinary impression on several who heard her at a rehearsal playing a fugue that she had herself composed.<sup>2</sup>

Among those present in the Hall of Nobles (today D.D. Shostakovich Leningrad Philharmonic) for her capacity-house first concert were Anton Rubinstein, César Cui, and the composer-director Vojtěch Glavač. Auer conducted the orchestra in a program containing works by Beethoven, Weber, Liszt, Rubinstein, and Chopin. Typical of the encomiastic reviews was the reaction of the renowned critic Nikolai Feopempovich Solov'ev who qualified her as a most exceptional pianist whose playing breathed supreme passion and energy.<sup>3</sup>

Her impetuous southern temperament is everywhere in evidence. Her technical equipment that knows no limits enables her to infuse everything she interprets with notable purity combined with loftiest idealism. Never before have we heard the Chopin [A flat] Polonaise communicate so uniquely personal a message. No other great pianist that we have heard matches her rubato and her impetuosity in this work.

Among St. Petersburg dailies *Novoe vremia* of January 26, 1891, typified newspaper enthusiasm with such lines as these: "Her vivacity and her originality keep her interpretations constantly attractive. She never tires the listener."

<sup>1</sup>Leopold Auer, *Sredi muzykantov* (Among musicians) (Leningrad, 1927), p. 127.

<sup>2</sup>*Birzhevye vedomosti*, January 19, 1891.

<sup>3</sup>*Novosti i birzhevala gazeta*, January 26, 1891.



On January 29 she gave her second solo concert at St. Petersburg.<sup>4</sup> Next she played two concerts at Moscow. On February 2 she played in the Sixth Symphonic session of the Moscow section of the Russian Musical Society and on February 7 she gave a solo concert. No less enthusiastic was the Moscow press than had been the St. Petersburg.<sup>5</sup> However, the biographical data paraded in newspapers by even some respected critics called her a native of either Spain or of Mexico. *Russkii listok* of February 4 gave the most correct biography.

Her hope of touring other cities of Russia in the fall of 1891 did not materialize. Because of her other commitments, her next Russian visit had to be postponed to the fall of 1896. On November 23, 1896, she played the Rubinstein D minor piano concerto in the Great Hall of the St. Petersburg Conservatory at the opening fall symphony concert sponsored by the Russian Musical Society. According to *Novosti i birzhevaia gazeta* of November 25, 1896, "she maintained to the last bars her eminently personal style, interpreting perfectly every smallest detail." After her St. Petersburg concert of January 22, 1898, her admirers crowned her with laurel and the St. Petersburg dailies unanimously classed her as a star of the first magnitude.<sup>6</sup> She earned similar praise when she played in Moscow at the end of November, 1899.<sup>7</sup>

Whom did she meet in Russia? Anton Rubinstein, of course (who had given her a few lessons at London in the spring of 1868 when they first met), Cui, Tchaikovsky, Alexander Siloti, and Anna Esipova. Both Leopold Auer and Sergei Rachmaninoff attended her concerts.<sup>8</sup> She met also the diplomat and critic Platon L'vovich Vaksel' (1844-1919), whose articles on Portuguese music had been published in Madeira and Lisbon (and in the Mendel-Reissmann lexicon [see *Riemann Musiklexikon, Ergänzungsband Personenteil L-Z*, 1975, 882]), and P.L. Peterson, piano manufacturer.<sup>9</sup> The Central State Archive of Literature and Art, Fond 2430, Opis' 1, Nr. 1502 and M.I. Glinka Central State Museum of Music Culture, Fond 146, Nr. 4882, preserve Carreño's photographs and autographs acceded to her Russian admirers. The Lenin-grad State Institute of Theater, Music and Cinema, Fond 17, Opis' 1, Nr. 12, sheet 7, and Nr. 76, page 1-2, contains documents that certify Alexander Siloti's having invited her to take part in programs planned for early 1915. The outbreak of the first World War prevented her, however, from appearing that year.

M.L. Presman's *Vospominaniia o Rakhmaninove (Recollections of Rachmaninoff)* (Moscow, 1961), I, 214, recalls Carreño's 1891 visit in these terms: "In those years, the musical horizon of Moscow was illumined by three brilliant stars, the delicate and refined Anna Esipova, the brilliant and daring Sophie Menter [1846-1918], and the remarkable Teresa Carreño. Never shall I forget the latter's playing of the Grieg Concerto and of Liszt's Sixth Hungarian Rhapsody."

Carreño notably influenced Boleslav Leopol'dovich Īavorskii = Yavorskii (1877-1942), pianist and composer, musical theorist, and distinguished educationist. The Department of Manuscripts of the M.I. Glinka Central State Museum of Music Culture (GTsMMK) preserves Yavorskii materials that frequently mention Carreño. In

<sup>4</sup>*Birzhevye vedomosti*, January 28, 1891.

<sup>5</sup>*Moskovskie vedomosti*, February 4, 1891.

<sup>6</sup>*Birzhevye vedomosti*, January 24, 1898.

<sup>7</sup>*Russkaia muzykal'naia gazeta*, 1899, Nr. 47, p. 1211.

<sup>8</sup>Auer, *op. cit.*, p. 143; A. Alekseev, *Rakhmaninov* (Moscow, 1954), p. 146.

<sup>9</sup>Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books, M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library, Fond 123 (Vaksel', P.L.) Nr. 494, sheet 5; *ibid.* Vaksel' collection, Opis' 1, Nr. 35, sheet 28.





his *Moi vospominaniâ o pianistakh* (*My Memories of Pianists*) (1927) he cites her as an "insuperable authority."<sup>10</sup> In his *Stat'i, vospominaniâ, perepiska* (*Articles, reminiscences, correspondence*) (Moscow, 1972), I, 376, his letter to Anatolii Vasilevich Lunacharskii (1875-1933) that contains a review of the book *Voprosy sotsiologii muzyki* (*Aspects of music sociology*) (published in 1927) cites her.<sup>11</sup> When explaining the principles of piano playing to his pupils, Yavorskii always invoked the practice of famous pianists, especially Teresa Carreño.<sup>12</sup> In a draft of his *O fortepiannoï tekhnike* (*Piano technique*) he even placed her on the same plane as Liszt, Chopin, and Rubinstein, and wrote that the memory of her playing would live forever.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup>GTsMMK, Fond 146, Nr. 4308, sheet 26, 27; Nr. 4312, sheet 10, 12, 45; Nr. 4882, sheet 1-11; Nr. 290, sheet 1-2.

<sup>11</sup>Yavorskii, *Stat'i, vospominaniâ, perepiska* (Moscow, 1972), I, 376.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 170, 186.

<sup>13</sup>GTsMMK, Fond 146, Nr. 286, sheet 32.