Svyatoslav Richter

S. Richter was a Soviet pianist well-known for the depth of interpretations, virtuoso technique and vast repertoire.

He was born in Zhytomir into the family of a pianist, organist and composer, who had studied in Vienna. Richter’s mother was from a landowning family and once had been a pupil of her future husband.

In early 1920s Richter became interested in music and took up studying piano. He was largely self-taught His father gave him basic education in music.

At the age of 15, he started to work at the Odessa Opera, where he accompanied rehearsals.

On March 19, 1934 Richter gave his first recital. His formal studying of the piano started three years later when he decided to ask for an audition from Neuhaus, a famous pianist and piano teacher, at Moscow Conservatoire.

Richter’s vast repertoire ranged from Bach, Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven to Prokofiev, Shostakovich and Bartok. Schubert and Grieg, Scriabin and Rachmaninov sounded different when played by Richter. However the pianist never allowed his own personality to overpower the composers\* ideas or the national characteristics which had inspired a particular style. His first concern was the composer’s conception. Playing Bach, Schubert, or Grieg, he managed to reveal new features in music that has been known to public for years.

It is hard to list all his brilliant accomplishments; hard to say which piece he performed best.

Still another characteristic feature of the superb pianist should be noted: it was his irreproachable aesthetic taste which never yielded to oversensitivity. Richter’s vigorous art always enriched the listener, giving him main pleasures and unforgettable impressions.

Many critics called him “a great pianist in highest tradition of music", “a legend from Moscow”, “a breath-taking Interpreter”. He was the winner of many honors and awards of the USSR and abroad.