



# Sviatoslav Richter: Notebooks and Conversations

*Bruno Monsaingeon*

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Sviatoslav Richter was a dazzling performer but an intensely private man. Though world famous and revered by classical music lovers everywhere, he guarded himself and his thoughts as carefully as his talent. Fascinated, author and filmmaker Bruno Monsaingeon tried vainly for years to interview the enigmatic pianist. Richter eventually yielded, granting Monsaingeon hours of taped conversation, unlimited access to his diaries and notebooks, and, ultimately, his friendship. This book is the product of that friendship.

Richter reveals himself as a man and an artist. Unsentimentally and with his characteristic dry humor and intelligence, the musician describes his poignant childhood and spectacular career, including his tumultuous early days at the Moscow Conservatory and his triumphant 1960 tour of the United States. His laconic recounting of playing in the orchestra at Stalin's surreal, interminable state funeral is riveting. Most important for music lovers, Richter discusses his influences and views on musical interpretation. He describes his encounters with other great Russian performers and composers, including Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Oistrakh, and Gilels. Candid sections from his personal journals offer his sober and unguarded impressions of dozens of performances and recordings--both his own and those of other musicians.

This volume offers readers the sizable pleasure of lingering in the thoughts and words of one of the most important pianists of the twentieth century. Unlike many other star performers, Richter was also an intellectual who had interesting things to say, particularly about the musician's proper role as interpreter of the composer's art. This alone makes the book worth reading. Sviatoslav Richter belongs on the shelves of everyone with a classical music collection and will also appeal to lovers of autobiography and admirers of Russian musical culture.

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