
From The Schubert Club: An Artist of the Past

Adele aus der Ohe: a Liszt Student and Virtuoso

By LaWayne Leno



Adele aus der Ohe

The Schubert Club's International Artists Series began on a wintry evening in 1893. The concert had been announced in the *St. Paul Daily Globe*: "The ladies of The Schubert Club have undertaken the management of a series of four concerts. . . . the first will be held Saturday evening, March 4, with Adele aus der Ohe, the magnificent pianist, as the great attraction."

Just who was this 'magnificent pianist?' At the end of the nineteenth century she was hailed as one of the greatest pianists in the world, and was quite possibly the most famous pianist in America in 1893. Her inaugural concert could not have been a more auspicious start to what has survived as one of the finest concert series in America. The Schubert Club's International Artists Series could not have started with a bigger bang!

Aus der Ohe's Schubert Club concert was not, however, her first appearance in Minnesota, nor her last. She performed in Minneapolis and St. Paul in March of 1890 and it was during these concerts that she experienced a Minnesota winter first-hand, writing to friends in New York: "We (she and her sister Mathilde, her traveling companion) seldom experienced such cold as there was yesterday, in spite of bright sunshine." She would return to St. Paul to play for The Schubert Club twice more, on January 17, 1895 and a final concert on January 28, 1904.

At the time of her 1893 International Artists opening performance, she was in the midst of one of the busiest seasons of her career. Following her Minnesota concert, she continued on to California for concerts in Los Angeles and San Francisco and by the fall of that same year she was in St Petersburg, Russia. Tchaikovsky had

invited her to perform with him his Piano Concerto in B-flat minor at the same concert that featured the premier of his *Pathetique* Symphony. This concert sadly turned out to be Tchaikovsky's final performance—he died a few days later. Aus der Ohe played at his funeral.

Aus der Ohe's fascinating life story began in Hanover, Germany. She played her orchestral debut at the age of ten and became a student of Franz Liszt at the age of twelve. She continued to study with Liszt for the rest of his life and she endeavored to carry on the Lisztian tradition throughout her career. Her performances of Liszt's music were legendary. Her concert tours took her throughout Europe and America. A favorite of the



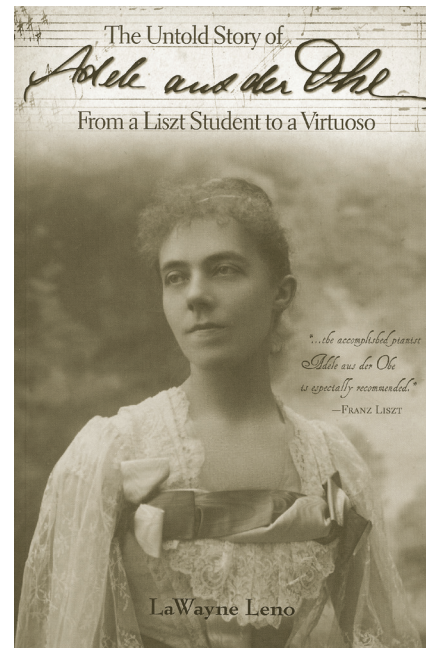
Program for the first concert in The Schubert Club's International Artist Series, March 4, 1893. Note the composers' names in the decorative border—Brahms was 59 years old at the time!



Boston Symphony, she performed with this venerable orchestra an astonishing 51 times. She was a composer as well as a friend and champion of many of the leading composers of her day, including Amy Beach, Edward MacDowell, Arthur Foote, and Henry Holden Huss. Her works were published by G. Schirmer in New York and Ries & Erler in Germany.

Adele aus der Ohe was an important figure in musical history and participated in many of the most notable musical events of her day. She was frequently called upon when an occasion required an especially significant performance. When Carnegie Hall in New York City was dedicated, the finest musicians of the day were selected for the opening festivities: Tchaikovsky as conductor and Aus der Ohe as soloist. When renowned conductor Theodore Thomas established the Chicago Symphony, he chose Aus der Ohe for the opening season, and when the Minneapolis Symphony (later renamed Minnesota Orchestra) was founded, Aus der Ohe was engaged to perform her signature concerto, the Liszt E-flat, in the opening season. In London, Aus der Ohe participated in the Diamond Jubilee concert honoring sixty years of Queen Victoria's reign, performing both the Schumann A minor and the Liszt E-flat piano concertos on the same program and in Berlin she was the featured soloist in the 400th Jubilee Soiree of the Royal Orchestra.

In her later years she lived and taught in Berlin, enduring the hardships of World War I and the Great Inflation that followed. Near the end of her life she befriended Sergei Rachmaninof; a series of lovely letters passed between them. She died in 1937.



"Magnificent pianist" Adele aus der Ohe, student of Franz Liszt and proponent of his music, was one of the foremost concert artists of her day when she performed for The Schubert Club in 1893.

LaWayne Leno tells the compelling story of Adele aus der Ohe in a book published in April 2012. Liszt scholar Alan Walker exclaimed: "Adele aus der Ohe has at last found her biographer. We cannot help but marvel at the shroud of neglect that descended on her career and obscured her from our view . . . Mr. Leno must be thanked for bringing Adele aus der Ohe out of the shadows . . . through his highly readable biography." Leno studied piano in North Dakota with Belle Mehus and Alma Mehus Studness, both of whom were students of Aus der Ohe in Berlin. This first-ever biography is titled *The Untold Story of Adele aus der Ohe: From a Liszt Student to a Virtuoso*, and is, in addition to a celebration of the 2011 bicentennial of Franz Liszt, also a celebration of the 150th birth year of Adele aus der Ohe!

The book is published by Beaver's Pond Press. For more information (and to purchase the book) go to adeleausderohe.com or amazon.com.