

Rachmaninoff

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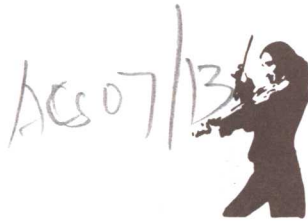


Life And Times
Rachmaninoff,

RACHMANINOFF

his life and times

Robert Walker



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To my son Paul

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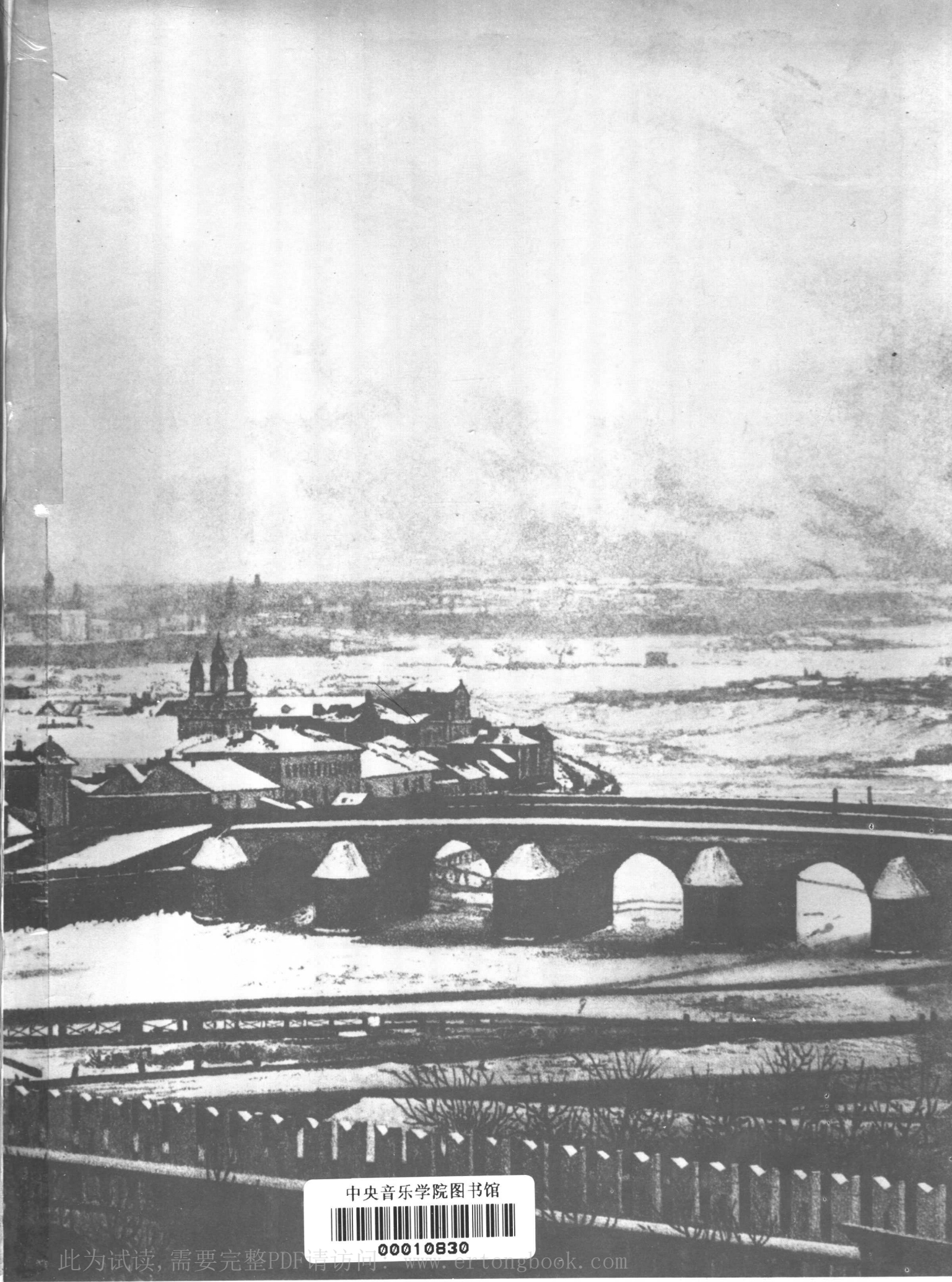
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Front endpapers:
View from the Kremlin
overlooking Moscow

Back endpapers:
Rachmaninoff in recital, Washington,
D.C., December 9, 1934 (left);
manuscript page of Piano Concerto
No. 4



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Sergei Rachmaninoff

Foreword

This book is the story of a great composer's life, told against the background of the country into which he was born, and against the times during which he lived. It has been written, therefore, with the general reader and music-lover, rather than the specialist, in mind. The popularity of Rachmaninoff's music has never fallen, but the success of two or three works tended to obscure his other achievements as a composer. It is perhaps only since the centenary in 1973 that the full achievement of this remarkable musician has been revealed to the public at large. At one time, Rachmaninoff's greatest works — the symphonies, the *Symphonic Dances*, the songs, the *Night Vigil*, the opera *The Miserly Knight* — were virtually unknown, but thanks to the dedicated work of Soviet musicians, recordings and publications of this music have been made available to all. Rachmaninoff was one of the first great musicians to pursue an extensive recording career, for nearly a quarter of a century, and these recordings, apart from being priceless historical documents, played an important part in Rachmaninoff's life. I trust the attention given to them here will set this part of Rachmaninoff's work into greater perspective.

For the courtesy, time and information given to me, I sincerely thank the late Leopold Stokowski, and Eugene Ormandy, Vladimir Horowitz, Arthur Rubinstein, Abram Chasins, Robert Simpson, Leslie Sote, Oleg Vassiliev and his colleagues in the USSR, Jack Pfeiffer, Paul Myers, David S. Levenson, Anthony Pollard, Edward Johnson, Michael Scott, John Snashall, Bryan Crimp, R. Temple Savage, Jim Fuller, Hilary C. Thomson, Peter Wadland, Christopher Ford and Denis Hall. My thanks are also due to those organisations who have kindly permitted the use of copyright photographs and material.

In transliterating Russian names into English, no attempt has been made to be completely consistent: I have used those forms most familiar to English-speaking people, and where alternatives exist I have endeavoured to use the forms adopted by the persons concerned. At the time of Rachmaninoff's birth, the Julian calendar used in Russia was twelve days behind the Gregorian, used in the West. On January 1st, 1901 it increased to thirteen days, but came

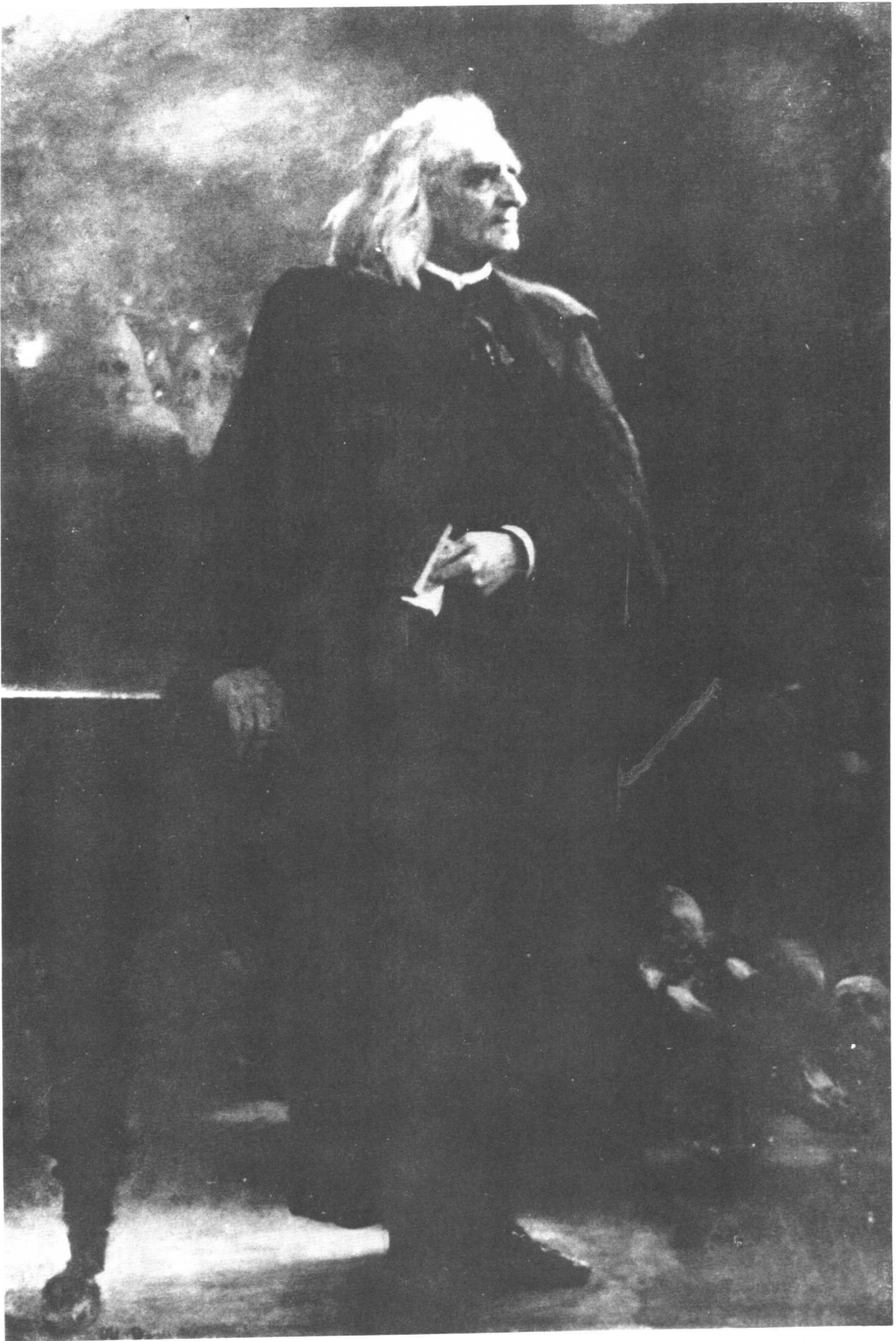
into line with the Gregorian calendar after the Revolution of 1917. Consequently, for events concerning Rachmaninoff's life which took place in Russia until that time, dates are given in both forms.

No biographical study of Rachmaninoff, however brief or however lengthy, can be undertaken without acknowledging the endeavours of previous authors in this field. The work of Bertensson and Leyda deserves pride of place, but to a greater or lesser degree I owe thanks to all who have published earlier studies of this great composer and great human being. Finally, I wish to express my deep gratitude to my wife Lynn, whose loving patience and encouragement during the writing of this book have been invaluable.

RMW
London SE12
September 1979



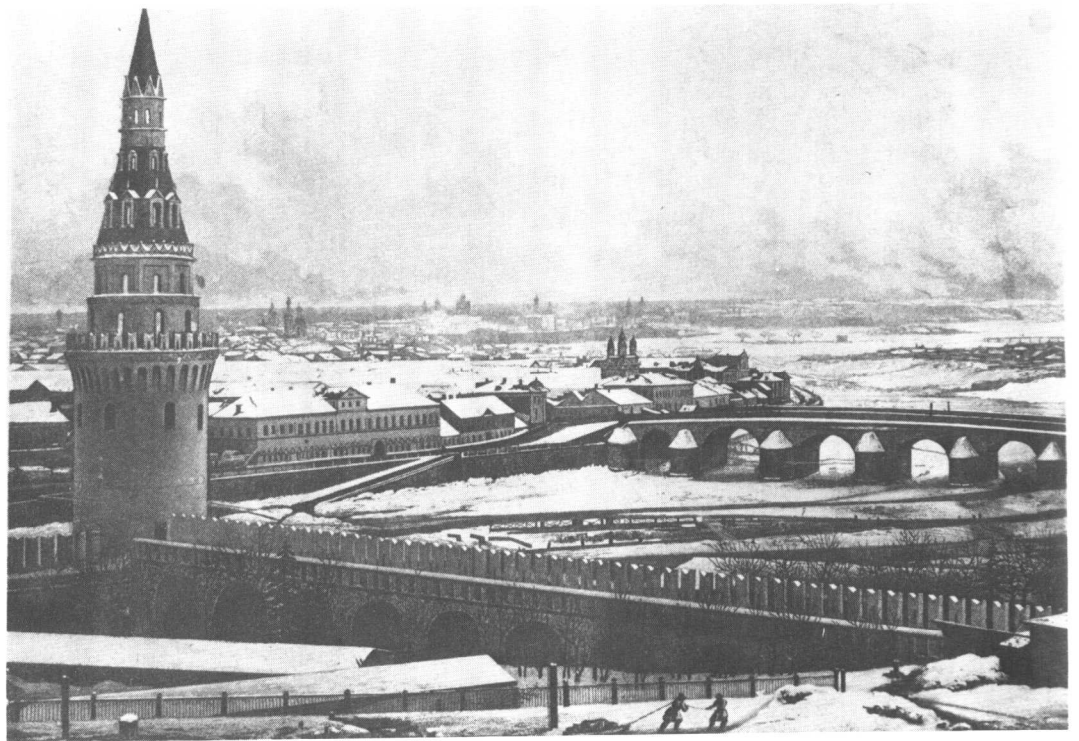
Sergei Rachmaninoff
1873-1943
Photo: RCA



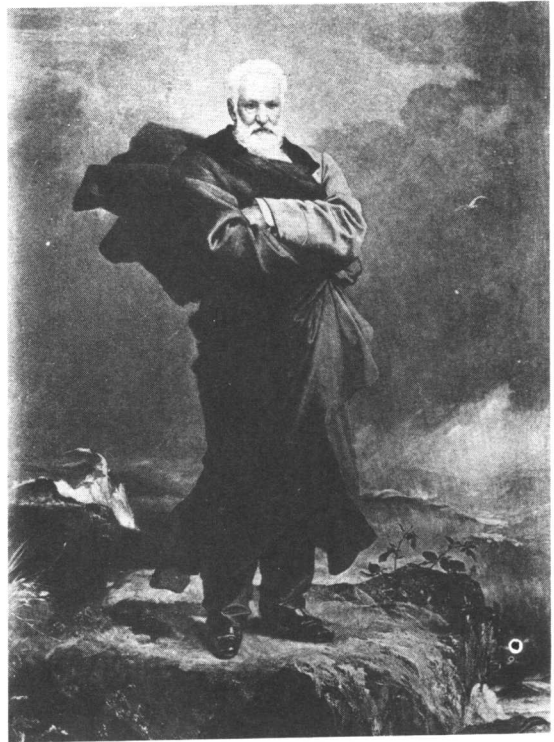
Franz Liszt (1811-1866)



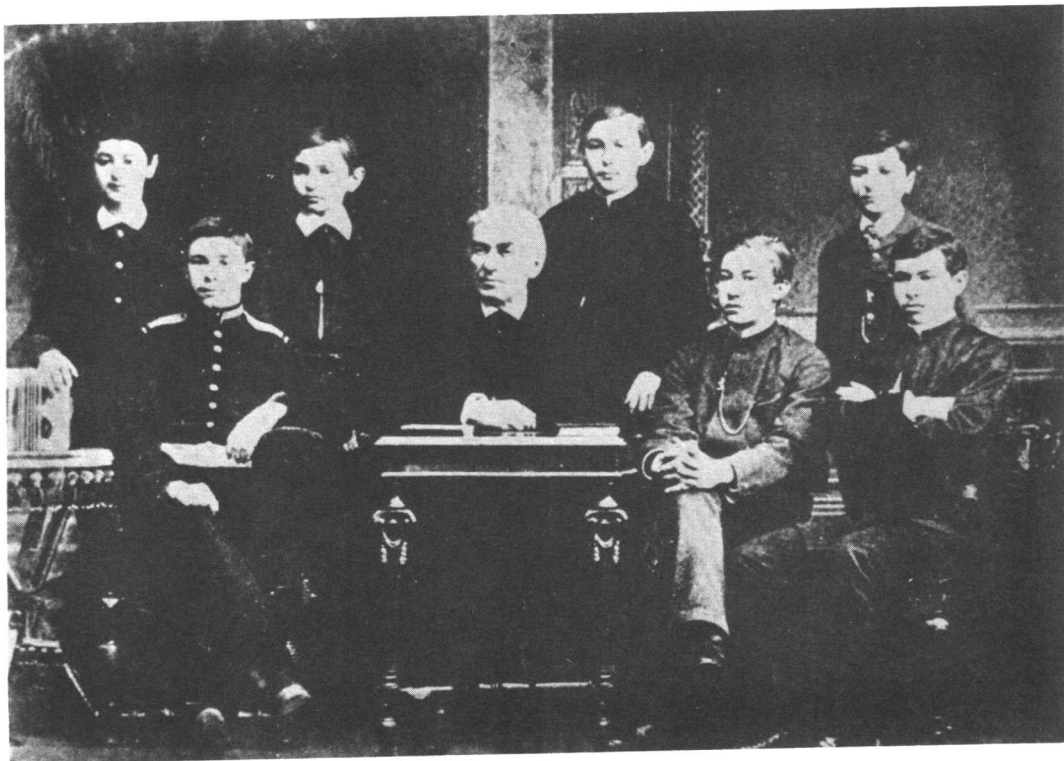
Alexander Siloti with Peter Tchaikovsky



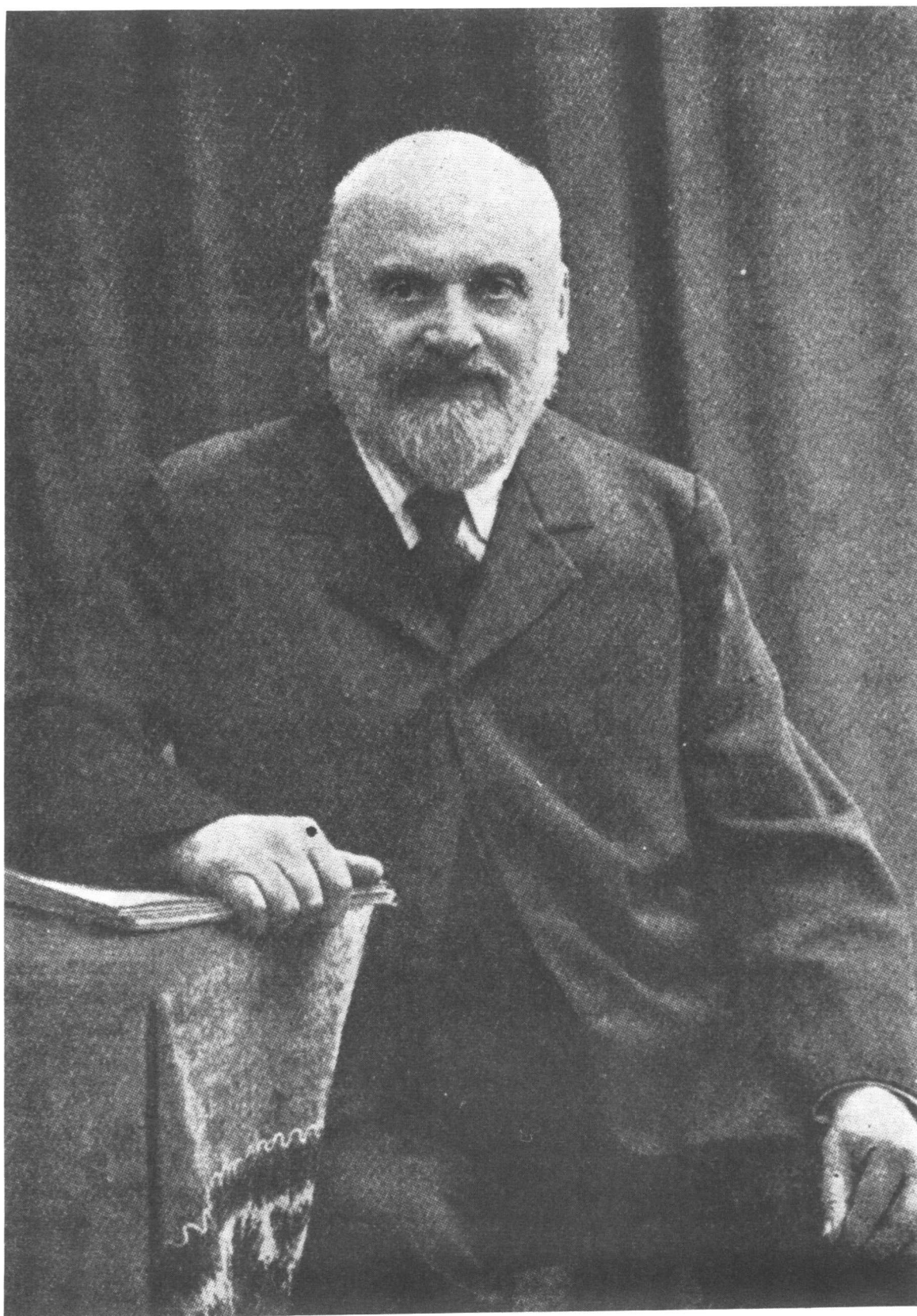
A tower of the Kremlin overlooking the Moscow River



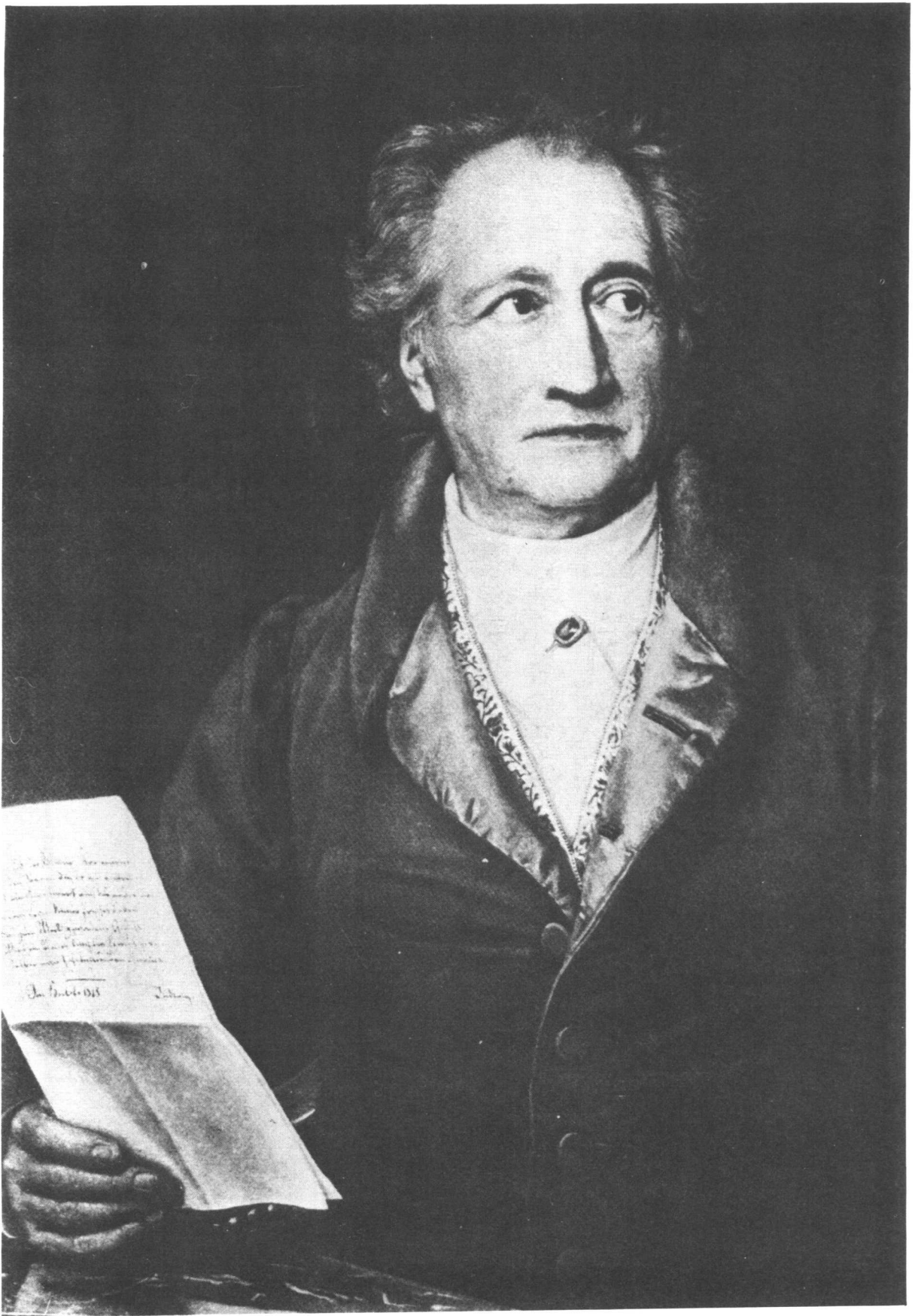
Victor Hugo (1802-1885)



Nikolai Zverev with his pupils in 1866 including Rachmaninoff at Zverev's left and Scriabin in cadet uniform



Mily Balakirev (1837-1910)



Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)



Peter Jurgenson (1836-1904)