

PARIS RECORDINGS

1949 1953 1959

Ph. E. BACH *Solfegietto* J. S. BACH *Prelude et Fugue, Fantasie Chromatique et Fugue* COUPERIN *Soeur Monique, Tic-Toc-Choc*
 SCARLATTI *Sonata in G minor* BEETHOVEN *Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 1*
 BEETHOVEN *Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 1* SCHUMANN *Fantasiestücke Op. 12 (selections)* BRAHMS *Intermezzo, Op. 118 No. 6*
 DEBUSSY *Gradus ad Parnassum, Le petit Berger* Radio interviews

IDIL BIRET

Idil Biret's early Paris recordings • It was not long before the news spread in the French musical community that a young Turkish girl Idil Biret had arrived in Paris for her musical training and that the Turkish National Assembly had passed a law to provide support to her for this purpose. As Idil displayed her unique talent, she was proclaimed a prodigy by the musical luminaries of the time which caused the rise in public interest to meet and know this little girl. Hence, Radio France (RF) in Paris organized an interview followed by her performance at the end of 1949. There, Idil expressed her first impressions of Paris, sent a message to her grandmother in Istanbul and then played works by Bach, Couperin, Beethoven and Debussy. The same year she was introduced to one of the great pianists of the time, Wilhelm Kempff, who took an immediate interest in Idil (Kempff knew Turkey well and had given concerts there regularly since 1927 when he had met President Atatürk and had a long conversation with him about classical music there). He soon suggested to perform together with Idil in public. This event took place on 8 February 1953 in Paris at Théâtre Champs-Elysée. Idil stepped on the stage with Kempff holding her hand. Together they performed Mozart's *Concerto for two Pianos* with the orchestra of Societe des Concerts des Conservatoire conducted by Joseph Keilberth in front of an audience of 2400 people. The concert which was broadcast by RF was highly acclaimed in reviews that appeared in the French press. Soon after, Idil Biret was again invited to Radio France. Following the presentation of the concert with Kempff, she played works by Scarlatti, Bach, Debussy and Brahms. Later, in 1959, Biret recorded Schumann's *Fantasiestücke Op. 12* for her first LP in Paris. Selections from the Schumann work as well as all those of 1949 and 1953 (on acetate 78rpm records given to Biret) are in this LP.

The concert of Idil Biret with Wilhelm Kempff in Paris 8.2.1953
 "This concert went well, quite above our expectations, I must say happily. I am sending enclosed some of the reviews that I have which can give you an idea. There was such a demand for tickets that they had to put seats, about two hundred, on the stage while they never do so at orchestra concerts in Paris. Kempff acted like a father to Idil at this concert. Those speaking to each other between movements of the concerto all said 'when we close our eyes we cannot say whether its is Kempff or the child playing the piano' expressing their amazement...The concert was being broadcast live. Hundreds of people who could not find tickets and turned back from the door of the concert hall listened to it on the radio from their homes. The transmission was so good that Idil received many congratulatory letters from Germany, Switzerland and various cities in France, particularly from girls' schools. Unfortunately, our compatriots back home in Turkey could not listen to the broadcast..." From Münir Biret's letter to a relative



Kempff, Biret and Keilberth after the concert

"Idil was a huge success. Kempff, who plays marvelously, had already scored a triumph with Bach, but when he played with Idil, it was delirious. I don't know how many encores there were and people screamed when the pianos were removed, leaving no possibility of another encore... Basically, it was very good. Kempff's phrases were perfectly imitated, but there was nothing that let Idil that we know well sweat... I saw her arrive at the concert as calmly as if someone else were about to play..."

Mme J. Lautmann to her daughter Marie-Françoise, Idil's friend

Arthur Rubinstein with Idil Biret in Paris 1955 • In October and November of 1955 Arthur Rubinstein performed seventeen Piano Concertos in five concerts in Paris. Following the concerts the French TV invited him in December to participate in their program *Joie de vivre* and told him that he could bring other artists whom he admired. Rubinstein invited Idil Biret who was then thirteen years old. During the program, when Rubinstein was asked his view about Idil, he said "In my life I have seen and known many prodigies. But, none of them impressed me as much as a young Turkish girl I met in Paris. I was fascinated, I had tears in my eyes when she played". Whereupon the producer of the program said that the young Turkish girl had come to play for Rubinstein and Idil Biret played the *Intermezzo Op. 78 No. 1* by Brahms. At this point Rubinstein approached the piano and said, "What an outstanding gift and incomparable performer. I see this young girl as one who will be one of the few great artists of the future".



Rubinstein's words to Biret on his concert program

Emil Gilels meets Idil Biret in Paris 1957 • Emil Gilels heard Idil Biret in Paris in 1957 at Nadia Boulanger's home. When mentioning this, he said to me the following: "In the Soviet Union well known artists were assigned the duty of educating gifted youths. Artists like Idil appeared rarely, of course. I can say that I know the talented youths of our time from this age group. We all had the responsibility of taking at least five students and turning them into well known soloists. When I first heard Idil Biret play, I noticed that she interpreted the piano works on a different and very aesthetic level (1). She surprised me. I saw that Biret was able to connect with the audience in an altogether different manner. After this hearing, Idil's interpretation was firmly engraved in my mind. The following year, I was once again in Paris when I had concerts in France. I heard Idil play again (2). The contact Idil Biret had made with the piano and her approach to the composers in that year truly astonished me. I recognized all the signs of the course an extraordinary musical development was taking. And without consulting Goskonsert (concert agency of the USSR), I proposed to Idil a tour in the Soviet Union. I had come to know in one year the extent of her repertoire. What we had here was much more advanced than a gifted pianist with an extensive repertoire. Naturally, afterwards in Moscow I proposed to Goskonsert that Idil Biret should be invited to come to our country for a tour. So, Idil, despite her very young age (19) made a tour in the Soviet Union in 1960 (3). It was very important for me and my country to become acquainted with an extraordinarily talented artist whose virtuosity was recognized so early on (4)." Notes: (1) In 1957 Idil played Schumann's *Fantasiestücke Op. 17* (2) In 1958 Idil played Schumann's *Fantasiestücke Op. 12* (3) Goskonsert had organized an eight concert tour. After the success of the Moscow recital the tour was extended to sixteen concerts. (4) Idil Biret was the first Turkish artist to perform in the Soviet Union since 1917.

From article by Hayati Asilyazıcı - Aydinlik newspaper, Turkey

7.12.2016

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Side A

Radio Interview	01:48	(1949)
Ph.E. Bach <i>Solfegietto</i>	00:58	(1949)
Couperin <i>Soeur Monique</i>	03:31	(1949)
Couperin <i>Tic-Toc-Choc</i>	02:01	(1949)
Scarlatti <i>Sonata in G minor</i>	03:35	(1953)
Beethoven <i>Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 1</i>	03:40	(1949)
J.S. Bach <i>Prelude et Fugue C sharp major*</i>	03:38	(1949)
J.S. Bach <i>Fantaisie Chromatique et Fugue</i>	10:40	(1953)

Side B

Brahms <i>Intermezzo, Op. 118 No. 6</i>	03:54	(1953)
Debussy <i>Gradus ad Parnassum**</i>	01:53	(1949)
Debussy <i>Le petit Berger**</i>	01:54	(1953)
Radio Presentation	04:00	(1953)
Schumann <i>Fantasiestücke Op. 12 (Des Abends, Aufschwung, Warum, In der Nacht, Traumesirren)</i>	16:34	(1959)

* The Well Tempered Clavier Book I No. 3

** From the Children's Corner Suite

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PHOTOS ON COVER: IDIL BIRET AT HER PIANO IN ANKARA 1948 AND IN PARIS 1949 BY MÜNIR BIRET



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