

Mp3 Neil Chotem - Pianoganini



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Piano jazz and pop with a classic touch. One Piano-- for four to six hands. 18 MP3 Songs CLASSICAL: Contemporary, EASY LISTENING: Mature Details: Born in Saskatoon in 1920 of Russian Jewish immigrants, who settled in Saskatchewan in the 1900s. Neil's father was a butcher by trade, quite a successful one at that. But it was his mother who first took Neil to music school. His father although not a musician, loved music and bought a Heintzman piano for \$1700. A small fortune in the '20's. Together they contributed much energy and encouragement toward this very young pianist, his musical aspirations, and his quite obvious talent. Neil gave his first piano performance at the tender age of five. At the age of thirteen he was auditioning for pianists Joseph Levine, Carl Friedberg, Alexandre Siloti and Harold Samuel. Later his Mother pulled Neil out of his first music school, for it was not challenging enough for this five year old pianist. She took him to Lyell Gustin., a noted performer and teacher, who dedicated himself to music. Neil remembers this man with much fondness, and relates a typical story, of how one day, Neil who was always trying to impress Lyell, ventured that he counted the number of pieces by Chopin he could play by memory, it was 129, and Lyell's response was, "yes but he wrote 169." Neil made his first recording in a studio in Minneapolis, for the sum of twenty five dollars. The pre-war years were filled with more study, radio recitals for the CBC in Winnipeg, concert tours and solo piano appearances with symphony orchestras across western Canada. In the 1940's Neil moved to Montreal, because he thought it would be the place where he could further his career. For then Montreal was the entertainment capital of Canada. Here he started composing, arranging. and conducting his music for the then Radio Broadcasting Commission of Canada, later to become the CBC. At one time he was writing, composing arranging and conducting live radio broadcasts for fourteen radio programs per week for drama as well as a nightly Jazz Trio program on radio station CKAC. At the same time he was becoming

recognized for his piano talents, and gave countless recitals and concerts. In 1942 Neil enlisted in the RCAF, where his musical talents were quickly recognized, and was soon found entertaining airmen in Europe, and also spent a few years in war torn England and Europe with road-show companies entertaining the troops. He met and worked with many other notable composers and musicians, on similar missions, guest'd with Robert Farnon and gave recitals for the BBC. His reputation as both a composer, pianist and conductor soon grew, and after the war, back home in Canada, his career started to take off. He was in demand in radio, and then in the 50's in television. He hosted his own radio and TV shows on the CBC. At the same time he was continually practicing the piano, giving important recitals, played with many symphony orchestras, such as the MSO. He also became an accomplished arranger of symphony music, and was always in demand in this venue. Today Neil still arranges for some of the world's great symphony orchestras, as well as some leading contemporary pop performers and groups. In the 60s 70s and 80s, Neil was kept active, composing, arranging and conducting for CBC radio and TV programs, appearing on his own weekly TV show Music From Montreal, gave many recitals and appearances with eastern symphony orchestras followed with cross Canada tours organized by Gilles Lefebvre for Jeunesses Musicales. Neil's career continued with Montreal as his home base, often collaborating with contemporary groups such as 'Harmonium,' fulfilling commissions by symphony orchestras, composing and conducting music for television such as the CBC series Empire Inc and Chasing Rainbows. Then Neil was confronted with one of his most interesting challenges. Harry Belafonte had been convinced by the impresario Sam Gesser to do a cross Canada tour, with some of the leading symphony orchestras. The idea was for Mr. Belafonte to appear with his group as well as with the orchestras. It was to be a fund raising tour for the orchestras. Well Mr. Belafonte agreed, on the condition that Gesser be responsible for getting the symphony orchestras arrangements of some of his repertoire. Sam and Neil had worked together on many occasions before. Neil had done a quite successful Gordon Lightfoot tribute album, of Lightfoot music set for symphony orchestras a few years before. So Sam thought Neil would be a natural for the Belafonte arrangements, and probably could also convince Neil to conduct. So a few of the Lightfoot pieces were sent to Belafonte, who must have been impressed, for he insisted that Neil not only arrange but also conduct the entire tour. Needless to say much to the delight of Sam Gesser. The tour was quite the success, Neil and Belafonte had great times on and off stage, in fact on a couple of performances Belafonte managed to get Neil to sing his big hit

'Dayo'....quite a feat !.....quite a performance...! It evidently brought the-house-down. Today Neil lives in St Lambert a suburb in Montral, with his 'conjoint' Francoise Riopelle, where they have collaborated on many dance theatre productions, and so consequently rarely gets to dote after his grandchildren. He still practices his piano every day, and is considering recording another CD. He also still teaches music, and often speaks fondly of some of his students. A score for another film is in-the-works, and his phone is always ringing with projects and good friends. As you can see this is but a sketch of this incredible Canadian, there are countless episodes in his career, the problem will be sorting out the best ones. He is a man who those Canadians who have yet to meet, enjoy, and savor this entertainer, are in for a treat. His is a compelling story of a quiet talented Canadian doing what he does best...what he likes best...usually with people who love him, who respect him, and just simply revel in his presence. This is Neil Chotem...

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