

Artur Balsam · Concerto Album

Disc A (65:24)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(1756-1791)

Piano Concerto No. 8 in C major, K. 246 (23:04)

- 1 I Allegro aperto (7:37)
- 2 II Andante (8:05)
- 3 III Rondo: tempo di menuetto (7:22)

Artur Balsam, piano
Winterthur Symphony Orchestra
Walter Goehr, conductor

Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770-1827)

Piano Concerto in D Major, Op. 61A (42:07)

- 4 I Allegro ma non troppo (23:42)
- 5 II Larghetto (9:44)
- 6 III Rondo (8:41)

Artur Balsam, piano
Winterthur Symphony Orchestra
Clemens Dahinden, conductor

Disc B (75:52)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Piano Concerto No. 13 in C Major, K. 415 (24:56)

- 1 I Allegro (with cadenza) (9:59)
- 2 II Andante (7:22)
- 3 III Allegro (7:37)

Artur Balsam, piano
Concert Hall Symphony Orchestra
Henry Swoboda, conductor

Johann Nepomuk Hummel

(1778-1837)

Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 85 (27:06)

- 4 I Allegro moderato (13:40)
- 5 II Larghetto (4:27)
- 6 III Rondo (8:59)

Artur Balsam, piano
Winterthur Symphony Orchestra
Otto Ackermann, conductor

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach

(1714-1788)

Piano Concerto in D Minor, H. 427 [Wq23] (1748) (23:24)

- 7 I Allegro (8:56)
- 8 II Poco andante (7:31)
- 9 III Allegro assai (6:57)

Artur Balsam, piano
Winterthur Symphony Orchestra
Victor Desarzens, conductor

If Artur Balsam's musical life does not conform to a discernable career path or progression, it is because he was remarkably unambitious. Not in the sense of lacking enterprise—the record of his performances is staggering—but because he had no apparent interest in fame or fortune, and did not care about the prominence of his role on the concert stage. Balsam certainly achieved critical recognition, but the broad range of his abilities, unusual for any time, was barely acknowledged. Today, as his recordings are being reissued and historic live performances are being released, listeners are reevaluating Balsam's reputation and beginning to recognize the full measure of his achievements.

Artur Balsam only hoped to be immersed in music and play with wonderful artists. In that, he achieved his dream and earned the lifelong admiration of his fellow musicians.

1906

Born in Warsaw on February 8, 1906, Artur Balsam came from a middle-class Jewish family. Although his grandfather was a violinist in the Warsaw Opera Orchestra, his father was a clerk in a textile factory. He and his sister Halina, two years older, were given whatever advantages their parents could afford. Artur began piano lessons at eight and made his formal concert debut playing the *Concerto in D Minor* of J.S. Bach at the age of 12 in Lodz, where his family had moved.

Artur met his future wife, Ruth Miller (born January 23, 1906 in Lodz), at the Conservatory



Artur Balsam and his sister, Halina, 1910

at Lodz in 1920. They were both fourteen and were studying with the same teacher, Professor Lewandowski. Ruth, an accomplished pianist who performed Rimsky-Korsakoff's *Piano Concerto on a Russian Theme* in her graduation year, was amazed that Artur could effortlessly sight-read the material she would have to work on to prepare for her lessons. "He had the lesson before me, and I was always in the corridor waiting." In 1928 when Artur left for studies at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin, Ruth's parents, who were well-off and socially more prominent, were relieved. They hoped the separation would end their daughter's infatuation with the pianist, whom they considered talented but unlikely to be a good provider.

1928

Balsam's abilities weren't immediately recognized at the Hochschule. Assigned to study with Curt Börner, rather than the more renowned Leonid Kreutzer or Artur Schnabel, he exceeded his teacher's requirements without much effort. He flourished in Berlin, taking advantage of every opportunity to listen to and make music. Artur was in awe of the city and wrote enthusiastically about his experiences to Ruth, describing the wonderful performances he heard and urging her to visit. He kept a record of every concert he attended: the date, time, place, artists and repertoire.

Balsam was particularly impressed by the violin students at the Hochschule, and offered to substitute for another pianist—without pay—just for the opportunity to accompany them. Ruth recounted that "The violinist Roman Totenberg was a student of Carl Flesch. Artur played with him in a concert attended by Flesch, who said 'My God, where did he find him? Let him come to my class.' And because of that, Artur played quite a lot for his students."

In his second year, Balsam won First Prize (and a Grotrian-Steinweg piano) at the 1930 International Piano Competition in Berlin. The following year he was

awarded the Mendelssohn Prize for his chamber music performances with Totenberg in Munich. The notoriety brought Artur to the attention of the Hochschule's more distinguished teachers, Kreutzer and Schnabel, who each offered him free lessons—in private, since he was still a student of Börner. Thus Balsam found himself the servant of three masters, none of whom knew about the others.

He was rescued from this predicament when Yehudi Menuhin came to Berlin in need of an accompanist. Flesch advised Menuhin's father, "There is a student in our school, and I don't think you can find anyone better." As Balsam recounted, "So I went to see Menuhin. He was fourteen and I was twenty-four. I had been in Berlin for three and a half years, and was about to take my graduation examination—although those things were not so important in those times. He gave me the



Artur with his teacher Börner, 1929

first movement of the *Kreutzer Sonata*, and he liked it because I knew it even though I had never played it. And then suddenly, within a few days, I was engaged by Yehudi Menuhin's father for a concert in Rome in January of 1932." Balsam left the Hochschule, graduating to the concert stages of Europe and America as partner to the young violin prodigy. As Ruth liked to say, "Artur never did things like other people. Instead of starting at the bottom, he started his career at the top."

1930s

Menuhin considered Balsam "one of the best musicians I have known," describing him in his autobiography, *Unfinished Journey*, as "shy away

from the piano, full of vitality and authority in front of it. He needed music as he needed oxygen, and had come to Berlin to breathe, to study, to miss not one concert, recital or public rehearsal.” He recalled that Balsam “passed his days in practice and listening and every spare minute with his head buried in a pocket score,” noting that, for pleasure, “He copied music, fashioning each note with careful love.”

Balsam’s new musical (and financial) position now made him a suitable son-in-law, and the Balsams married in 1933, making their home with Ruth’s parents in Lodz while Artur toured. With the worsening political situation, many Jews were beginning to emigrate from Germany. Hitler had assumed power when the Balsams saw him at the opera—“twice in one week, alone and with Goebbels,” Ruth remembered. “It was at *Arabella*, with Fürtwangler conducting, and Strauss was there, sitting in another box. Frieda Leider, who was Jewish, was still singing at this time. We could go to the opera because we were Polish Jews, but German Jews could not. They were restricted from everything.” Accustomed to a long history of anti-Semitism in Europe, very few could have imagined what was to come.

Artur played exclusively with Menuhin for two seasons, and then was dropped without explanation. Perhaps he was mentioned too frequently in the reviews. Balsam declined to accept a lucrative subsequent contract from Menuhin’s father that would have prevented him from playing or recording with anyone



Ruth Balsam

else. Now a highly desirable partner, in 1936 he began to play with many of the finest violinists of his generation, including Erica Morini, Jeanette Neveu, Zino Francescatti, and Nathan Milstein. His professional relationships with both Milstein and Francescatti lasted for about 25 years.

Trapped by the war

Returning to Paris in 1939 after an American tour with Milstein, Balsam asked his wife, who was in Lodz, to meet him. Traveling under the new restrictions imposed on Jews (and against her family’s wishes), Ruth had to go first to Copenhagen. Expecting to return to Lodz after a month or two, she brought no pictures of her family. Her stay was unexpectedly extended to six months when Hitler invaded Poland and she and Artur were trapped by the war.

At first, they were unaware of the immediate danger. Artur was more concerned about practical matters: “We could hardly even get a newspaper to read what was going on. I didn’t even see a piano for six months!” He wasn’t about to advertise his presence. “Our friends did not have a piano, and I would not dare to ask someone to let me play—especially being a Polish pianist.”

According to Ruth, “The French were mad as hell at us because they thought they were fighting for the Poles. It was not pleasant even to talk Polish in the street.” From America, Milstein pulled whatever strings he could, and the Polish government, in exile in France, decided to send Artur to join him on another American tour. “Otherwise, nobody could leave the country, especially a man of military age. But they sent him, ‘pour faire la propagande artistique’ for six months.” Ruth was to remain in Paris, where she would have been forced to return to Poland except for the intervention of the American philanthropist Rosalie Leventritt, who arranged for her to travel with her husband—thus saving her life.

Since the English Channel had been mined and movement throughout Europe was risky or impossible, a special visa was required to allow them to travel to Naples, where they finally obtained passage. On January 1, 1940, they set sail on the *Rex*, the last civilian ship to depart Italy for the United States—and thereby escaped the Holocaust that was to destroy both their families.

1940s

Immediately after arriving in New York, Balsam departed on tour. “The first concert I played was in Albany, New York, with Milstein, three days after we arrived. We didn’t rehearse, we just played—and it was a wonderful concert.”

Ruth, who was left with less than \$10 and spoke no English, stayed in New York to face an uncertain future in an unfamiliar country. She did not expect to remain in the U.S. “Six months later Germany took over France, and there was nowhere to go back to. The U.S. government wanted to deport us.” Then someone maliciously informed the Immigration Department in Washington that Balsam was a tailor, and Artur would have to prove his identity and occupation. Although this was not difficult to do, relatives in New York who might have spoken for them refused to acknowledge them—the cause of life-long bitterness in Ruth.

During this time, Ruth had received news of their families from the ghetto, which, although the postcards could not hint at the terrible events



Artur Balsam, Warsaw, Poland 1938

they were later to learn of, failed to reassure her. Her adored brother Viktor, seven years older, had remained in Lodz with their parents. A doctor with a wife and young child, he became Chief Physician of the 200-bed ghetto hospital, and Director of the Department of Health in 1941, remaining until the last 68,561 inhabitants of Litzmannstadt (as Lodz was renamed) were deported to concentration camps on July 31, 1944. None of Ruth’s or Artur’s immediately family survived; Viktor Miller died in the first Nazi death factory in Poland, Chelmo, in 1944.

Although Artur returned to perform in Poland after the war, Ruth would not accompany him. “Then in 1968 they invited me again, but when I went to the embassy to get the visa, they refused me. They didn’t want me because I was Jewish. We would never go back.”

From Balsam’s arrival in America, his growing renown was evident. He would later joke “I played with everybody you can think of with the exception of Heifetz—but that’s a great exception.” In the 1941 edition of *A Guide to Recorded Music*, Irving Kolodin compared Heifetz and Milstein in Beethoven’s G major Violin Sonata, concluding “Balsam’s contribution is so fine, the partnership so successful, that the preference must be given to them. One can only speculate what the quality of Heifetz’s performance might have been had he the assistance of a pianist as able as Balsam.” It was not difficult

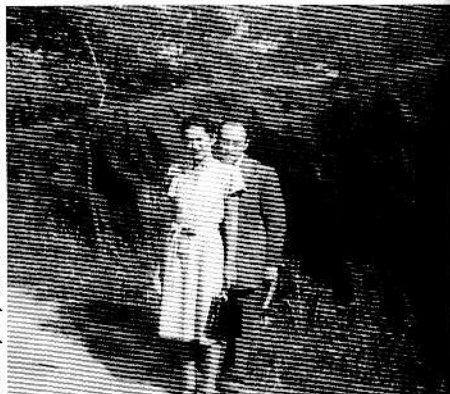


Nathan Milstein & Artur Balsam

to understand how Balsam became the accompanist of choice of touring soloists. He performed with many of the most famous musicians of the 20th century, among them violin virtuosi Oistrakh, Kogan, Goldberg, Fuchs, Shumsky, Szigeti and Stern, and cellists Garbousova, Fournier, Rostropovich and Nelsova.

In the mid-1940s, Balsam found steady employment as pianist with the NBC Orchestra under Toscanini for five years. He played with the orchestra as needed (once, on the triangle), and participated in many chamber concerts with his NBC colleagues. A video of the Brahms *Liebesslieder Waltzer* from the 1948 television concert shows the esteem Balsam had for the Maestro. The admiration was mutual, as Toscanini offered Balsam the chance to play a concerto by Martucci with the orchestra. But Balsam did not care for the work and turned him down—missing what might have been career-building opportunity.

The Balsams settled permanently in New York, becoming American citizens in 1948. While they remained essentially European, they found in New York the cultural capital of the world, and in America the freedoms that have attracted immigrants throughout history. Several decades later, when the Library of Congress invited Ruth to make her husband's archive part of the collection of the United States of America, she said it was her proudest moment.



Ruth & Artur Balsam in Central Park, NY 1945

1950s

By 1949, their modest apartment in the West 70s could barely contain the growing accumulation of music, books and records. In the summers, the rooms became stiflingly hot, and they sometimes slept on the roof—or even in Central Park, a block away. Unthinkable today, it provides an insight into the way people were once able to live.

Ruth found a spacious apartment on Manhattan's Upper West Side, at 258 Riverside Drive and 98th Street (the monthly rent was \$135 in 1950), which was their residence for a half-century. The large living room, with built-in bookcases and cupboards, had a hundred-year-old oriental carpet, windows on two sides, views of the Hudson River, and, in the last seven years of Artur's life, two pianos: the Steinway "M" he had played for 40 years, and a new Grotrian concert grand he selected as a gift from his wife.

An adjacent guest room doubled as Artur's study, where he wrote letters, paid bills, collected stamps and copied scores. Ruth's portrait, painted by Nathan Haendel (the violinist Ida Haendel's father), gazed back at Artur from across the room as he worked at his desk. The "Hall of Fame," where numerous warmly inscribed, framed photographs of Artur's colleagues were displayed, led to a dark-paneled dining room, with a Steinway upright where Ruth did her teaching—the scene of many dinner parties and frequent teas.

Balsam was now performing in virtually every role available to a pianist—as an accompanist, chamber musician, orchestral player, and soloist—all without any self-promotion. While no one could doubt that he had an objective sense of self-worth, Balsam was unusual among artists striving for recognition. He didn't object to the label 'accompanist'—pervasive but inaccurate when applied to a pianist playing sonatas—and he suffered no pangs of insecurity if his perceived role were

supportive of other artists. All that mattered was the music. It didn't matter if his accomplishment earned only a paragraph or a mere sentence. Yet Balsam carefully saved the programs and the reviews that comprised a record of his career, almost as if he were observing someone else.

Ruth freely admitted her frustration, saying "He never would do even that much"—indicating a pinch—"for his career." She and Artur were amused when Francescatti posed for publicity photos, wearing a chef's cap, and with a dog on a leash—when they knew he could neither cook nor had a pet. Artur could never have done anything like that, but Ruth thought he might at least have followed Zara Nelsova's example and kept up a correspondence with concert presenters. However, "He would never want to push himself. If they didn't come to him, it didn't happen." But they did come.

The Library of Congress

In addition to the touring artists who engaged him for their New York concerts, Balsam had been appearing as a guest with several notable string quartets, including Guilet and Pascal, since the mid-1940s. Following his first concert with the Budapest Quartet in 1946, the members autographed a photograph inscribed to "the most punctual colleague we ever had, but also one of the finest chamber music players, Artur Balsam, in



"Trout" Quintet rehearsal at the Coolidge Auditorium, 1956
l. to r. Misha Schneider, Artur Balsam
Joseph Roisman, Julius Levine, Boris Kroyt

remembrance of a wonderful concert." A favorite collaborator, Balsam appeared eight times with the quartet between 1951-58, while they were in residence at the Library of Congress. These concerts, which featured Balsam in the great piano quartet and quintet repertoire that he rarely recorded, were taped for radio broadcast and preserved in the Library's archives. The Library engaged Balsam for many other programs—twenty-four in all, from 1951 to 1975—playing sonatas with Milstein, Goldberg, Kroll, Totenberg and violist Boris Kroyt, an all-Paganini program with Francescatti, and chamber music with the Claremont and Juilliard quartets and the Albeneri Piano Trio—which became Balsam-William Kroll-Benar Heifetz.

Solo career

Balsam had already been recording chamber music for Concert Hall Society when he was invited to record piano concerti with the Winterthur Symphony



Balsam (2nd left) with conductor Swoboda (center)

Orchestra in Switzerland in the early 1950s. He made the transition to soloist effortlessly. "I never worried about a solo career. When I started to record, sometimes I played a Beethoven or Mozart concerto with a small orchestra. I played from day to day, whatever they wanted to record." Remarking on her husband's facility Ruth said "People wouldn't believe how he worked. Someone else was supposed to play the piano version of the Beethoven *Violin Concerto*, and they

said to Artur, 'He's not coming. Can you do it in two days?' And he did it. He even rewrote the cadenza."

The Winterthur sessions were opportunities to explore the lesser-known works of well-known composers, as well as neglected but deserving works. Among the former in this concerto collection are the two Mozart and the Beethoven; C.P.E. Bach and Hummel represent the latter. The Beethoven and Hummel performances are revelations; in listening to the C.P.E. Bach we are reminded that his music influenced generations of composers; and it is a pleasure to hear the nascent qualities of Mozart's mature concerti in these engaging earlier works.

Balsam eventually recorded sixteen concerti for Concert Hall at Winterthur, including the C.P.E. Bach *Concerto in D Minor*, eight Mozart concerti, and such works as MacDowell's *Woodland Sketches*, and Hindemith's *Concertmusic for Piano, Brass and Harps*, Op. 49. His personal favorite was the Hummel *Concerto in A Minor*. Balsam believed—literally—that the pianist must know the score: what every instrument was playing, how the texture should sound, what part should be dominant. It is doubtful that many pianists have written out a conductor's score and full set of instrumental parts as Artur Balsam did for many of the concerti in this collection.

The Mozart performances may well have brought him to the attention of the BBC, where he was invited to play six Mozart concerti in 1956, commemorating the 200th anniversary of the composer's birth. He returned the following year to play the late piano sonatas of Beethoven, and continued to perform chamber music, concerti, and solo works there until the 1980s. His concerto career launched, Balsam appeared as a soloist with the Royal Philharmonic, the London Symphony, the Philharmonia of London, Milan and Warsaw, the radio orchestras of Berlin, London and Zurich, and many other European and American orchestras.

Kneisel Hall, Blue Hill, Maine

Balsam took on an important new role in 1953 when he joined with violinist Joseph Fuchs and his violist sister Lillian to resurrect the summer school begun by Franz Kneisel in 1902 and continued until his death in 1926. For the next 39 summers, Balsam coached student chamber ensembles and performed with his colleagues at Kneisel Hall (and at the University of Maine at Orono from 1969-1972), influencing generations of young performers—including Murray Perahia, Emanuel Ax, Elmar Oliviera, and Timothy Eddy among others. Ruth often assisted Artur. She continued teaching year-round in New York until the mid-1980s. "My husband couldn't understand why I accepted beginners and amateurs, so I reminded him that these students would someday be his audience!" Not all of her students were amateurs; 13-year-old Lorin Hollander inscribed his first album "To Ruth Balsam, my first teacher, who helped me discover the piano."

Manhattan School of Music

Balsam was nearly 60 before his schedule permitted him to consider undertaking a full-time teaching position. Although financially comfortable, the Balsams were hardly 'well-off.' Ruth usually paid her own way when they traveled. Once the expenses of touring (transportation, hotels, commissions) were deducted, the gain was modest. Even Artur's earnings from accompanying were a mere fraction of the fees paid to the 'soloist.' Ruth recounted that Artur was paid only \$25 for an early recording with Milstein, who received several thousand dollars. Her husband was philosophical: "You can have records and no money, or you can have no records."

A teaching position brought benefits and stability, so Balsam joined the faculty of the Manhattan School of Music in 1965, where he was both an instructor in

piano and chamber music. Although he had associations with several other schools, including Boston University and Eastman School of Music, he settled into the position at Manhattan, teaching until 1992.

Balsam was often impressed by the technical abilities of young performers, but he quickly became bored if the musical substance was not there, the playing was self-indulgent, or the piano was treated in too percussive a manner. Not one to offer constant praise—or criticism—he could find the single detail which, when properly executed, affected the entire performance. Intellectual discussions were of little interest to him; vague and verbose theories bored him. What Balsam did singularly well was to demonstrate. He did not require that his students play like him or adopt his interpretations, but a ‘picture’ being worth a thousand words, his observation of every nuance in the score, the singing quality of his tone, and his un-self-referential musicianship were powerfully persuasive. Balsam’s playing emphasized the lyrical qualities that he loved so much in voice and strings. If a student failed to hear (or did not listen), Balsam left it at that. No amount of words would produce a result that a student could not intuit. He was never patronizing to his students—you were privileged to be a musician, and no further encouragement was needed. He was not inclined toward effusiveness: when he was pleased, it was evident from his intense concentration and the occasional mild compliment, “Very good.” If the lesson took place at his apartment, an invitation to tea indicated his satisfaction; to be offered additional cookies signified high praise! Balsam had no interest in promoting his students’ careers and, unlike many teachers, refused to be drawn into Byzantine institutional politics. His colleagues trusted him: when their students, who had coached with Balsam in chamber ensembles, asked for private lessons, Balsam, perhaps remembering his young experiences, turned them down.

1970s

Following a concert Balsam played with Joseph Fuchs in 1971, *New York Times* critic Harold Schonberg recognized him as “the best (as well as the dean) of American accompanists” in a review and a thought-provoking article, “Artur the Accompanist—From Hired Hand to Partner.” He observed that “What he has, which so few pianists have, is the ability to assert himself without becoming overpowering. That is because of his tone. Mr. Balsam is incapable of making an ugly or percussive sound, and his touch is velvet even in the most massive sonorities. Add to that a flawless technique, and you have a pianist who can stand up to Mr. Fuchs as one superb musician to another.”

Although Schonberg admits “There probably has not yet been born a virtuoso who will admit the accompanist to full parity,” he believed that things were changing, that “Musicians, on the whole, are most interested in the music than in themselves.” Ruth Balsam was not so optimistic. While she knew Artur was acknowledged as a first-class musician by his peers, she felt he was still treated as second-class. And although her husband’s career continued apace, with engagements with the Concerto Soloists in Philadelphia (now the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia), The Beethoven Society, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Mostly Mozart, and the BBC, where he joined Murray Perahia in the Mozart *Duo Concerto*, she saw him transitioning into a role of elder statesman.

Balsam was comfortable in that role. He participated in many music festivals, including Banff, Aldeburgh, and Music Mountain, and was a jurist at the Rubinstein, Montreal, Leeds and Naumburg international competitions.

1980s

Despite health issues, Balsam continued to perform and teach at Manhattan

School and Kneisel Hall. Although his concert appearances became less frequent, he was no less dedicated, now performing works by Chopin (which he had waited to play for many years) and revisiting the late Beethoven sonatas, to which he brought structural clarity and an astounding beauty. From 1988-1990, with the support of Gideon Waldrop, the composer and educator who was briefly Manhattan School's President, Balsam directed a new chamber music program for piano, winds and strings. (I had the privilege of being the co-director). Having coached individual ensembles for many years, here Balsam worked instead with a class of a dozen or more students that brought together pianists, string and wind players who then formed mixed ensembles—giving each player the opportunity to participate in different groups over the semester. Balsam coached ensembles with and without piano and occasionally joined his students, Marlboro-style, in concert.

1990s

He celebrated his 85th birthday in 1991 in concert with The Music Project, performing Dvorak's *Piano Quartet in E-flat*, and played the Mozart *Quintet for Piano and Winds* with the same ensemble the following November.

Artur Balsam made his last public appearance performing a Haydn trio with The Music Project in Carnegie (Weill) Recital Hall on February 14, 1993—a week after his 87th birthday. Critic Fred Jarvis remarked: "At the age of 87 Balsam can not only play, but he still commands a fluid, pearly line, aristocratic simplicity, and the willingness to let personality and even humor shine through. His phrasing exuded a jocund radiance which went far past technique and idiom."

Remarkably, although suffering from Alzheimer's disease, which impaired his memory and his ability to communicate, he had no difficulty reading music. His handwritten copy of the Mozart Adagio in B minor was always nearby, and he con-

tinued to play until he was hospitalized for pneumonia. He died on September 1, 1994.

Within a few months, Ruth Balsam began a second career as President of The Artur Balsam Foundation for Chamber Music, working to ensure that her husband's artistry and principles would continue to inspire young musicians. Under her guidance, the Foundation supported the preservation of Artur Balsam's performances, archives at The Library of Congress and the International Piano Archives at the University of Maryland, releases of historical performances on Bridge Records, scholarships at Manhattan School and Kneisel Hall, and chamber music workshops based on her husband's classes.

At the time of her death in 1999 at age 93, Mrs. Balsam was involved in the preparation of a biography about her husband, the development of a curriculum leading to a degree in chamber music, and plans for a duo-competition to recognize pianists and instrumentalists as equal partners in chamber music. The Foundation continued until 2005, realizing most of Mrs. Balsam's projects.

The Foundation's first endeavor was Artur Balsam's memorial, a concert held in Spring, 1994 at Manhattan School of Music, which established the scholarship in his name, and featured performances by several of his chamber music and piano students, as well as his colleagues cellist Zara Nelsova, and violinists Roman Totenberg and Joseph Fuchs (then 96). At the end of the program, the piano and Balsam's photograph dominated the empty stage as his remarkable performance of variations from Rachmaninoff's *Trio élégiaque*, Op. 9—from a concert at the Library of Congress with members of the Budapest Quartet, not heard since 1951—filled the hall.

Of the many tributes Balsam received from his students and colleagues, perhaps Murray Perahia expressed it best: "Artur Balsam was more than just a wonderful pianist, chamber music player and recitalist. He was a figure to whom music

meant his whole life. Music for itself, not for money, not for fame, but simply music. In that he was a noble example and more than that a very dear friend. He is sorely missed, as his qualities are very rare.”

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach: Piano Concerto in D Minor, H. 427 [Wq 23] (1748)

The most famous of J.S. Bach’s sons, Carl Philipp Emanuel was known as *the* Bach in the mid to late 18th century, until eclipsed by his father’s renaissance in the next. His music has enjoyed a resurgence since the second half of the 20th century, and his 1753 treatise, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, on “The True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments,” is still an important resource for determining how ornamentation was executed in the late Baroque and early Classical periods.

Although associated with the French *style gallant*, German *empfindsamer Stil* (“sensitive style”), and subsequent *Sturm und Drang* (“storm and passion”) movement, Bach was not really a proponent of a single style or trend. Like his contemporaries, who wrote in reaction to Baroque complexities, he favored the new classicism—but freely used elements which furthered his aesthetic sensibility. This is most clearly seen in his keyboard music, which includes more than 250 solo pieces and concerti. Played on whatever instrument was at hand, his expressive and dramatic works were especially well suited to the tonal possibilities of new piano.

What sets him apart is his technique of thematic development, which brought a new structure to the sonata, and influenced composers from Haydn to Beethoven. Charles Rosen, in *The Classical Style*, observed that the ‘surprising’ elements of Haydn’s style can be traced to music of the 1750s, 1760s, and Emanuel Bach. While concluding that “C.P.E. Bach’s grandeur lacks breadth just as his passion lacked wit,” Rosen nonetheless expresses admiration for his daring, noting that, next to Bach, “Haydn appears like a cautious, sober composer: his irregularities of

phrase and modulation are almost tame compared to the elder man.” Mozart’s estimation was somewhat higher, acknowledging Bach’s role in the development of the sonata, symphony and concerto: “He is the father, we are the children.”

Written in 1748, the *Concerto in D Minor* departs from sonata-form in its opening movement, instead developing motives based on a single subject. The dramatic themes, intense mood, and sustained minor-mode harmonies look toward Beethoven more than Mozart, whose first minor-key concerto, K. 466 (also in D Minor), wasn’t written until 1785.

Balsam, who recorded several of Emanuel Bach’s solo keyboard works for Musical Heritage Society and the BBC, is comfortable in the idiom, playing the ornaments elegantly, but avoiding improvisation. Balsam’s playing captures the intensity of the first movement; his poetic rendering of the *Poco Andante* embodies the expressive style of the period, handled, as the composer suggested, “with moderation” rather than over-elaboration. The finale is a virtuosic delight, moving from minor to major and changing moods fluently, before an almost abrupt conclusion in the minor.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Piano Concerto No. 8 in C Major, K. 246 (1776)

Piano Concerto No. 13 in C Major, K. 415 [387b] (1782)

Mozart’s earliest concerti, Nos. 1-4 (K. 37 and K. 39-41), are essentially student works. All were written in Salzburg in 1767, probably at his father Leopold’s direction, and are transcriptions of sonata movements by other composers—including C.P.E. Bach—in the rococo style. Another set (K. 105), from 1771, adds string parts to sonatas of J.C. Bach. These early Classic works are more compatible with Mozart’s developing style. His ‘original’ piano concerti begin with No. 5 (K. 175) in

1773 and continue through No. 27 (K. 595) in 1791.

Completed in April 1776, *Concerto No. 8 in C Major* (K. 246) is a re-working of the *Concerto for Three Pianos* (K. 242) in F Major. One of four concerti written in 1776 and 1777, Mozart's innovations are immediately apparent. The greater sustaining ability of the early piano affords a more legato melodic style, and the left-hand part is more developed. Mozart's orchestration also shows a greater variety of textures.

In 1777, then 21, Mozart began a year-long search for employment, traveling with his mother. Both he and his father had been dismissed by the prince-archbishop of Salzburg, Hieronymus von Colloredo. After Munich, they stopped in Augsburg, where Mozart was impressed by J.A. Stein's pianos: "In whatever way I touch the keys, the tone is always even. It never jars, it is never stronger or weaker or entirely absent." His comments reveal much about the kind of sound he sought to produce.

The three piano concerti written in 1782, K. 414, 413 and 415, were intended to both demonstrate his proficiency as a pianist and be accessible to amateurs. Mozart provides a clear-eyed assessment in a letter to his father in 1782: "These concerti are a happy medium between what is too easy and too difficult; they are very brilliant, pleasing to the ear, and natural, without being vapid. There are passages from which connoisseurs alone can derive satisfaction, but these are written in such a way that the less learned cannot fail to be pleased, although without knowing why."

Copies were offered to subscribers before publication; with the removal of the winds, the works could be performed as piano quintets. In fact, Mozart added bassoons, trumpets and timpani to an orchestra that already included oboes and horns, and although his compositional technique began to

emphasize structure, with less elaboration and leaner textures, his handling of the winds added color and richness to the sonority.

Mozart played the *Piano Concerto No. 13 in C Major* (K. 415) at his first public concert in Vienna, March 3, 1782. Published in Vienna in 1785 (as Op. 4, No.3), the work featured an atypical first movement, a sonata-rondo with a double exposition, and a rondo-finale which included two Adagio sections in the minor. Mozart had achieved his immediate goal and, with his marriage to Constanze Weber on August 4, was entering into a happy and productive period in his life.

Mozart scholars have noted a stylistic change in the composer's music from 1784, which focuses on larger, more complex and more difficult works. It is certainly true of the fourteen piano concerti which were to come. But Artur Balsam's fascination with Mozart extended to all of his works. In addition to performing (and recording) virtually all of his solo, chamber music, and piano concerti, Balsam edited and wrote cadenzas for several—including the 'student' works, Nos. 1-4, and the first 'original' concerti, No. 5 (K. 175) and No. 6 (K. 238). (Published by G. Schirmer).

Balsam explained "How I play Mozart" in a 1962 article for *Records and Recording*: "The texture of Mozart's piano writing is so lean, so transparent, with hardly any chords, that a typically 'pianistic' treatment does not seem to me to be the right one, if only for the reason that this approach can lead to many exaggerations, especially in regard to tonal values." As examples of his approach, Balsam writes "Since I want my Mozart to be at all times 'singing,' I will never choose extremely fast tempi; for the same reason they can never be dragged—no Andante too slow; no Allegro too fast." Dynamic extremes are similarly avoided: "Nothing in Mozart ought to be whispered. In my Mozart playing there is never a pronounced, startling contrast intended between a full piano and a relaxed, full but

singing forte." He warns that "one cannot 'dig into' Mozart at the keyboard. The artist must aim at producing a beautiful tone quality quite distinct from the usual range of sonorities employed by other composers. In a sense he must forget that he is playing the piano."

All of these qualities are evident in Balsam's Mozart playing—as well as the joy and pure pleasure he takes in these delightful early works.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) **Piano Concerto in D Major, Op. 61A (1806)**

Most of the concerti of the 19th century were compared (usually unfavorably) to those of Beethoven. Following on Mozart, he continued to make innovations in form, expand the role of the orchestra, and utilize the soloist more as protagonist of his musical ideas than as virtuoso. In that regard, the *Violin Concerto in D major*, Op. 61, was a particular challenge. The concerto dates from 1806, and one of Beethoven's sketchbooks has themes from it and the *Fifth Symphony* side-by-side, indicating that he worked on both compositions concurrently. The conception is clearly symphonic.

Dedicated to his childhood friend Stephan von Breuning (with whom he had had a falling-out and recent reconciliation), it was written for the violinist Franz Clement, who felt the work did not sufficiently exploit the violin's unique qualities. Beethoven worked closely with Clement to bring more bravura elements to the solo part, but he was not entirely satisfied with the result, making later revisions before publication.

The public reaction was initially positive, although critics expressed reservations about the "discontinuity" and repetitiousness of some of the musical

motifs, but the work didn't achieve wide popularity until it was revived by the twelve-year-old Joseph Joachim in 1844. Violinists continue to have reservations about the part; Nathan Milstein complained that "all the passages are crafted as if written for the piano."

Although musicians commonly refer to Beethoven's five piano concerti, the *Piano Concerto in D Major*, Op. 61A, is much more than an arrangement for convenience or profit. When he reworked the solo part again as a piano concerto (dedicated to von Breuning's wife), Beethoven returned to his original conception, much to his satisfaction.

The work is a brilliant example of Beethoven's compositional technique. Although the structure and orchestration remain unchanged, he demonstrates that the musical ideas can be effectively presented using the timbral possibilities of the piano. In the delicacy of the writing, with its melodies in the upper ranges, the piece most often recalls the *Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major*, Op. 58, written a year earlier. One of many striking features, the unusual first movement cadenza is written with timpani accompaniment, based on the concerto's opening bar.

The beauty of Balsam's playing and range of expression throughout seems more informed by the *Fourth Piano Concerto* than the violin source. Premiered in 1807 with the composer as soloist, the concerto was soon overshadowed by the original version for violin, and is rarely performed. If history has judged the *Violin Concerto* a masterpiece, the piano version should be given its due.

Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837): Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 85 (1816)

Of his many Winterthur recordings, Artur Balsam's favorite was the Hummel *Piano Concerto in A Minor*, Op. 85. It may seem a curious choice, given

that Hummel's music had largely fallen into neglect. Irving Kolodin's 1941 *Guide to Recorded Music* lists exactly two works by the composer, a *String Quartet in G* and a *Rondo* for piano solo. Even a decade later Hummel's recorded works remained scarce. But Hummel's elegant Romanticism, appealing melodies, and virtuosic elaboration bring out the colors of the piano in ways that Balsam found affecting and satisfying to perform.

A student of Mozart (with whom he lived for two years, from the age of seven), Hummel's gifts as a performer and improviser were quickly recognized. While his works are classic in form, his facility led him to adopt a florid pianistic style that influenced Chopin and Liszt. His compositions, predominantly for the piano (he wrote no symphonies), include sonatas, many fine chamber works, and eight concerti—several of which were in Chopin's repertoire.

If Hummel's music has more superficial brilliance than depth, it requires a virtuoso pianist to keep the listener engaged. In the *Piano Concerto in A Minor*, Artur Balsam handles the varieties of pianism and abrupt changes in character with customary aplomb, and always a singing tone.

~ Dan Berlinghoff

Dan Berlinghoff received two degrees from the Juilliard School, where he studied piano with Irwin Freundlich and Beveridge Webster, accompanying with Samuel Sanders and chamber music with Lillian Fuchs. As pianist and artistic director of The Music Project, he toured the U.S. and performed more than 100 concerts in New York City (1976-98). He became Artur Balsam's doctoral student at Manhattan School of Music in 1986, co-directed a chamber music class with Balsam (1988-90), and served as executive director of the Artur Balsam Foundation for Chamber Music from 1994-2004.

Otto Ackermann was born in 1909 in Bucharest. He became a Swiss citizen and was director of the Bern and Zurich (1948-53) Opera Houses. His reputation as a conductor was made through his recordings with EMI, especially in London, Paris and Vienna. His recordings of Lehar and Johann Strauss operettas with Elisabeth Schwartzkopf, many with the Philharmonia Orchestra, are especially noteworthy. During the 1950's, he was active conducting broadcasts with the South West German Radio (and other German Orchestras), the Zurich Tonhalle and Netherlands Radio. He made a number of recordings for EMI, Decca, Concert Hall, and International Recordings Guild. He died in 1960 during his tenure as director of the Cologne Opera (1953-1960).

Henry Swoboda was born 1897 in Prague. He studied at the Conservatory under Vaclav Talich, at the Charles University, and in Vienna with Richard Robert. He was an assistant conductor at the Prague Opera (1921-23), conductor at Dusseldorf and Elberfeld, a conductor and program organizer with the Prague Radio (1931-38). Henry Swoboda died in 1990.

Clemens Dahinden was an outstanding Swiss musician. As violinist he appeared in many European music centers, both in recital and with orchestra. As a chamber musician he performed with many leading soloists and with the Winterthur String Quartet.

Walter Goehr, the German born (1903, Berlin) English conductor and composer studied theory with Schoenberg at the Prussian Academy of Arts in Berlin. From 1925 to 1931 he was a conductor with Radio Berlin, composing for it the opera *Malpopita*. In 1933 he went to England and was known professionally as George Walter until 1948. He was music director of the Columbia Gramophone Company from 1933 until 1939. From 1945 to 1948 he was conductor of the BBC Theatre Orchestra. He was also conductor of the Morley College concerts from 1943 until his death in 1960, Sheffield, England. Goehr conducted the first performances of Britten's *Serenade* (1943), Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* (1944), Seiber's *Ulysses* (1949), and Alexander Goehr's *The Deluge* (1959); and the first British performance of Mahler's *Symphony No. 6* (BBC 1950). Walter Goehr was the father of the prominent German-born English composer and teacher (Peter) Alexander Goehr.

Victor Desarzens was born on October 27, 1908 in Castle-in Oex, in the Swiss Canton of Vaud. He died on February 13, 1986 in the Villette (Lavaux). After traditional and musical studies in Yverdon-les-Bains and Lausanne, he became a violonist in l'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. He founded a chamber ensemble which became, in 1942, the Chamber Orchestra of Lausanne, which he directed until 1973. In 1950, he became director of Musikkollegium de Winterthur, a post that he occupied until 1975. Desarzens was, with Ernest Ansermet, one of the pioneers of musical life in French-speaking Switzerland.

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Photo of 'Trout' Quintet rehearsal at the Coolidge Auditorium, 1956 courtesy of June Schneider
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