

Eugène Ysaÿe.

He gave several successful recitals in Spain during the 1916–1917 season, and soon toured Latin America. Along the way he developed a great flair for Hispanic music; Heitor Villa-Lobos went so far as to dedicate to Rubinstein his *Rudepoëma*, one of the toughest works in the repertory. Although Rubinstein would later be somewhat typecast as a Chopin authority, his readings of Falla, Granados, and Albéniz would always be equally idiomatic.

Rubinstein's international reputation grew quickly, although he was by his own account a sloppy technician. In the mid-1930s he withdrew again and drilled himself in technique. By 1937 he reemerged as a musician of great discipline, poise, and polish -- qualities he would mostly retain until his farewell recital in London in 1976, at the age of 89. Rubinstein's temperament had sufficient fire for Beethoven but enough poetry for Chopin; his tempos and dynamics were always flexible, but never distorted. His 1960s recordings for RCA of nearly all Chopin's solo piano music have been considered basic to any record collection since their release, and his version of Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* is another classic, as are his various late collaborations with the Guarneri Quartet.

Rubinstein became a naturalized American citizen in 1946, but he maintained residences in California, New York, Paris, and Geneva; two of his children were born in the United States, one in Warsaw, and one in Buenos Aires. He had married Aniela Mlynarska in 1932, but womanizing remained integral to his reputation as an irrepressible bon vivant. He maintained that the slogan "wine, women, and song" as applied to him meant 80 percent women and only 20 percent wine and song.

Still, there was a serious side to his life. After World War II, he refused ever again to perform in Germany, in response to the Nazi extermination of his Polish family. Rubinstein became a strong supporter of Israel; in gratitude, an international piano competition in his name was instituted in Jerusalem in 1974. His honors included the Gold Medal of the Royal Philharmonic Society of London, the U.S. Medal of Freedom (1976), and membership in the French Legion of Honor.

Beethoven "Emperor" Concerto

Arthur Rubinstein, piano
Erich Leinsdorf
Boston Symphony Orchestra



As is true of many of the composer's works with nicknames – e.g. the "Moonlight" Sonata, the "Spring" Sonata – the "Emperor" moniker attached to Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 in E flat major, Op. 73 (1809) is not the composer's own. Still, there is hardly an adjective that could more aptly evoke the work's impressive scale and majesty. Despite its considerable technical demands, the "Emperor" Concerto handily transcends the typical role of the concerto as a mere virtuoso vehicle. Indeed, it is virtually symphonic in conception; its E flat major key (the same as that of the "Eroica" Symphony), expansive form, and sometimes martial, always grand, character grant the concerto a place among the defining works in the composer's heroic vein. The first performance of the Concerto was likely that given by Friedrich Schneider in Leipzig on November 28, 1811.

The Concerto No. 5 is Beethoven's final essay in the concerto genre. He may have lost interest in concertante works at least in part because of his advancing deafness, which brought an end to his own career as a pianist. Tellingly, he himself never publicly played the Concerto No. 5, though he had written his four previous piano concerti for his own use on the concert stage. Moreover, the athletic, virtuoso ideal rarely fit the language of Beethoven's late works, even though some of the last piano sonatas are punishingly difficult.

In the Piano Concerto No. 4, Beethoven made a striking break with convention in commencing the work with a piano solo. In the opening Allegro of No. 5, he takes this idea to an extreme, providing the soloist with an extended cadenza, punctuated by tutti chords from the orchestra, that outlines in miniature the entire 20-minute movement. The main theme is marchlike and assertive; the somewhat more relaxed second theme first appears cloaked in mystery, in a minor-key version that soon gives way to the expected statement in the dominant major. The grandeur of the movement is colored by excursions to remote keys that, however, never fully thwart the powerful forward drive.

The lyrical and idyllic second movement, Adagio un poco moto, is one of Beethoven's

most tender and intimate statements. The piano predominates here -- not in a virtuoso context, but in a manner and texture that prefigure the nocturnes of Chopin. A long dominant pedal underpins a muted, even ethereal transition to the Rondo. In contrast to the noble magnificence of the opening Allegro, the Rondo is a movement of jubilant affirmation, evidenced at once by the upward-surgings, dance-like main theme. Though the ambitious conception of the Concerto remains ever at the fore in the Rondo, Beethoven nevertheless does not shy away from providing the soloist with passages of exceptional brilliance.

Warm, lyrical, and aristocratic in his interpretations, Artur Schnabel performed impressively into extremely old age, and he was a keyboard prodigy almost from the time he could climb onto a piano bench. He came from a mercantile rather than a musical family, but fixated on the piano as soon as he heard it. At age three he impressed Joseph Joachim, and by the age of seven he was playing Mozart, Schubert, and Mendelssohn at a charity concert in his hometown. In Warsaw, he had piano lessons with Alexander Róóycki; then in 1897 he was sent to Berlin to study piano with Heinrich Barth and theory with Robert Kahn and Max Bruch, all under Joachim's general supervision. In 1899 came his first notable concerto appearance in Potsdam. Soon thereafter, just barely a teenager, he began touring Germany and Poland.

After brief studies with Paderewski in Switzerland in 1903, Schnabel moved to Paris, where he met Ravel, Dukas, and Jacques Thibaud, and played Saint-Saëns' G minor concerto to the composer's approval. That work would remain a flashy Schnabel vehicle for six decades, and it was the concerto he offered in his American debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra in New York's Carnegie Hall in 1906. His under-prepared American tour was not especially well-received, though, so he withdrew to Europe for further study. Schnabel became an adept and sensitive chamber musician and accompanist; his 1912 London debut was accompanying Pablo Casals, and during World War I he toured with

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- 1 Allegro**
- 2 Adagio Un Poco Mosso**
- 3 Rondo**

Recorded by RCA 1964
Producer - Max Wilcox Engineer - Anthony Salvatore



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