

The eminent Greek-born English pianist of Austrian descent, Gina Bachauer showed her aptitude as a pianist at age 5. She gave her first recital in Athens, at the age of 8. She entered the Athens Conservatory, where her teacher was Waldemar Freeman. She then went to Paris, where she took lessons with Alfred Cortot at the École Normale de Musique. In 1933 she won the Medal of Honor at the Vienna International Competition. Her first concert with an orchestra was in 1932, when she was 20 years old. Between 1933 and 1935 she received occasional instructions from Sergei Rachmaninov in France and Switzerland.

In 1935 Gina Bachauer made her professional debut with the Athens Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Dimitri Mitropoulos. She was also piano soloist in Paris in 1937 with Pierre Monteux. During World War II she lived in Alexandria, Egypt, and played 630 concerts for the Allied Forces in the Middle East. In January 1946, she made her London debut with the New London Orchestra under the direction of Alec Sherman, who became her 2nd husband. Her first American appearance took place in New York in October 1950. Only 35 people attended this concert, but she received unanimous acclaim from the critics, and her career was assured. She was also the piano teacher of Princess Irene, a close friend of Maurice Abravanel, and often appeared with the Utah Symphony Orchestra. She died of a heart attack in Athens on the day she was to appear as soloist with the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington, D.C., at the Athens Festival.

The uncommon vigor of Gina Bachauer's technique suggested comparisons with Teresa Carreno. Her repertoire ranged from Mozart to Igor Stravinsky. In both standard and modern works, she displayed impeccable taste.

In 1976 the Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition was founded in Salt Lake City., in honour of the famous pianist. It attracts young pianists from all over the world each year. Today the house in which Bachauer lived in the Athens suburb of Halandri still stands, neighbours with fond memories of the pianist take care of the grounds. The house is visited by numerous fans from around the world, who feed the stray cats just as Bachauer did when she was alive. In 1981 the Greek government honored the famous pianist by publishing a stamp in her honor.



Chopin Piano Concerto No 1

Gina Bachauer, piano

Antal Dorati / London Symphony Orchestra

Chopin, the son of a French father and a Polish mother, was born the same year as Schumann (one later than Mendelssohn, one before Liszt). Before consumption killed him in his 40th year, he had developed both an elegantly sensual pianism and a keyboard oeuvre without expressive parallel. His twin gods were Bach and Mozart (as if Haydn, Beethoven, and Schubert never existed); in turn he influenced keyboard composers for nearly a century after -- Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, Dvorák, Debussy, Scriabin, Rachmaninov, and Ravel.

Although we cannot ignore developments in piano manufacture, especially by Pleyel of Paris, it was Chopin's artistry that prompted Schumann to write in 1830, "Hats off, gentlemen! A genius!" Parisian critics, who were then Europe's most cosmopolitan, dubbed him "the Ariel of the piano," although in his lifetime he played in public only 50 times, just once a solo recital, and for audiences usually no larger than 100 listeners.

Before his emigration to Paris in 1831 he had composed six works for piano and orchestra (but nothing orchestral after those), including two concertos published in reverse order. The E minor was issued in 1833, the F minor "Second" in 1836 although Chopin composed it in 1829, when he was 19. Both reflect his infatuation with Vincenzo Bellini's operas, especially *Norma*, whose ornamentation he adapted and personalized, to the extent of basing his theme-and-variations slow movement in Concerto No. 1 on embellishments.

In the classical style that Mozart bequeathed to Beethoven, principal themes of the Allegro maestoso are introduced by the orchestra, at uncommon length which adds admirably to the suspense. Once the piano enters, it dominates. Although the opening subject is marked maestoso, subsequent ones are glowingly lyrical and gorgeously ornamented, even before their development in E minor/major. There is a coda but no cadenza per se (although the entire solo part may be likened to a cadenza).

Chopin wrote, during the composition of the Larghetto (E major/C sharp minor) homage to Bellini, "I am using muted strings -- I wonder how they will sound?" He described it as having "a romantic, calm, and rather melancholy character...a kind of moonlight reverie on a beautiful spring night." There is no pause before --

The main theme of the Rondo: Vivace in E major has been called both a polka and a Krakowiac; beginning in E major, Chopin modulates to A major for the episode. Before a dashing conclusion, he ventures into E flat, then B major in the episode's return.

The concerto is altogether a prize although its orchestration is neither artful nor brilliant; nonetheless this compares favorably with Schumann's or Hummel's in a well-conducted performance, and the piano writing is nonpareil.

Chopin Piano Concerto No 1

Gina Bachauer, piano

Antal Dorati / London Symphony Orchestra

1 Allegro Maestoso 19:46

2 Romanze Larghetto 9:43

3 Rondo Vivace 10:09

Total Time: 39:38

Recorded by Mercury Records 1963



For more info e-mail us:
admin@highdeftapetransfers.com
or visit our website:
www.highdeftapetransfers.com