

Born on Beethoven's birthday in 1936, Piero Gamba began his career as a rare child prodigy among conductors and was the subject of a fictionalized Italian dramatic film, *La Grande Aurora* (1946), in which the nine-year-old conductor rather nervously played himself. This project was undertaken in response to Gamba's debut under the nickname "Pierino Gamba" in 1945 at a public rehearsal, leading the Rome Opera Orchestra in Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*. Although the film was a popular success, Gamba's career as an adult conductor had a hard time getting off the ground; nonetheless, he toured extensively in the postwar period and made his British debut in 1948. Gamba did earn a reputation for sensitive handling of concerto accompaniments, appearing as conductor on several of pianist Julius Katchen's recordings with the London Symphony Orchestra.

Gamba settled in Madrid in 1952 and worked mostly on a journeyman basis until he was appointed music director for the Winnipeg Symphony, a position Gamba held between 1971 and 1980. Gamba was also music director of the Adelaide Symphony from 1982 to 1988. Since about the mid-'90s Gamba has lived in Punta del Este, Uruguay, and appears occasionally with South American orchestras. Piero Gamba has recorded with world-renowned artists such as Luciano Pavarotti and Ruggiero Ricci.

Facts about this Recording

Recording Info: Transferred from London 4-track tape

Producer: Erik Smith Engineer: Cyril Windebank

15-16 Jan 1957 Kingsway Hall

Mendelssohn And Bruch Violin Concertos

Ruggiero Ricci, violin

London Symphony Orchestra Conducted By Pierino Gamba



Ruggiero Ricci was born in San Bruno, California, the son of Italian immigrants who first named him Woodrow Wilson Rich. His brother was cellist George Ricci, originally named George Washington Rich (1923–2010). His sister Emma played violin with the New York Metropolitan Opera. His father first taught him to play the violin. At age seven, Ricci studied with Louis Persinger and Elizabeth Lackey. Persinger would become his piano accompanist for many recitals and recordings.

Ricci gave his first public performance in 1928 at the age of 10 in San Francisco where he played works by Wieniawski and Vieuxtemps. He gained a reputation for being a child prodigy. At the age of 11, he gave his first orchestral performance, playing the Mendelssohn concerto, and soon after he had his highly successful debut at Carnegie Hall.

In the 1930s Ricci studied in Berlin with Georg Kulenkampff, where he learned a "German style" of playing in the tradition of Adolf Busch. He also studied with Michel Piastro and Paul Stassevich.

He served in the US Army from 1942 until 1945, where he was an "Entertainment Specialist". In 1947, Ricci was the first violinist to record the complete 24 Caprices, Op. 1, by Paganini, in their original form. Ricci's first recording was on the Shellac recording label (he later made three other recordings of the Caprices). After his time in the military, he uncovered many pieces by 19th-century composers that he would perform solo. He also performed the world premieres of pieces by many contemporary composers, including the violin concertos by

Gottfried von Einem, Carlos Veerhoff and Alberto Ginastera.

Aside from performing over 6,000 concerts in 65 countries during his 70-year solo career, Ricci also made over 500 recordings, on every major label. He taught violin at Indiana University, the Juilliard School and the University of Michigan. He also taught at the University Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria. Ricci held master classes in the United States and Europe. He wrote *Left Hand Technique*, a pedagogical volume for violin published by G. Schirmer.

Ricci owned many precious instruments, including the Guarneri Del Gesù violin known as the

ex-Bronisław Huberman of 1734, a fine Storioni, a Luiz Bellini, a Curtin & Alf, a David Bague and a couple of Regazzi. He played, on September 18, 1997, his fourth recording of the Paganini Caprices on Paganini's own Guarneri, *Il Cannone*, on loan to him by the City of Genoa, Italy.

On August 6, 2012, Ruggiero Ricci died of heart failure at his home in Palm Springs, California, aged 94.



Felix Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64, is his last large orchestral work. It forms an important part of the violin repertoire and is one of the most popular and most frequently performed violin concertos of all time. A typical performance lasts just under half an hour.

Mendelssohn originally proposed the idea of the violin concerto to Ferdinand David, a close friend and then concertmaster of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. Although conceived in 1838, the work took another six years to complete and was not premiered until 1845. During this time, Mendelssohn maintained a regular correspondence with David, who gave him many suggestions. The work itself was one of the foremost violin concertos of the Romantic era and was influential on many other composers.

Although the concerto consists of three movements in a standard fast-slow-fast structure and each movement follows a traditional form, the concerto was innovative and included many novel features for its time. Distinctive aspects include the almost immediate entrance of the violin at the beginning of the work (rather than following an orchestral preview of the first movement's major themes, as was typical in Classical-era concertos) and the through-composed form of the concerto as a whole, in which the three movements are melodically and harmonically connected and played *attacca* (each movement immediately following the previous one).

The concerto was well received and soon became regarded as one of the greatest violin concertos of all time.

The concerto remains popular to this day and has developed a reputation as an essential concerto for all aspiring concert violinists to master, and usually one of the first Romantic era concertos they learn. Many professional violinists have recorded the concerto and the work is regularly performed in concerts and classical music competitions.

Mendelssohn also wrote a virtuoso Concerto for Violin and String Orchestra in D minor between 1821 and 1823, when he was 12 to 14 years old, at the same time that he produced his twelve string symphonies. This work was "rediscovered" and first recorded in 1951 by Yehudi Menuhin.

Max Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 26, is one of the most popular violin concertos in the repertoire. It continues to be performed and recorded by many violinists and is Bruch's most famous composition.

The concerto was first completed in 1866 and the first performance was given on 24 April 1866 by Otto von Königslow with Bruch himself conducting. The concerto was then considerably revised with help from celebrated violinist Joseph Joachim and completed in its present form in 1867. The premiere of the revised concerto was given by Joachim in Bremen on 5 January 1868 with Karl Martin Rheinthal conducting.

Bruch sold the score to the publisher N. Simrock outright for a small lump sum — but he kept a copy of his own. At the end of World War I, he was destitute, having been unable to enforce the payment of royalties for his other works because of chaotic world-wide economic conditions. He sent his autograph to the duo-pianists Rose and Ottilie Sutro (for whom he had written his Concerto in A-flat minor for Two Pianos and Orchestra, Op. 88a, in 1912), so that they could sell it in the United States and send him the money. Bruch died in October 1920, without ever receiving any money. The Sutro sisters decided to keep the score themselves, but they claimed to have sold it, and sent Bruch's family some worthless German paper money as the alleged proceeds of the alleged sale. They always refused to divulge any details of the supposed purchaser. In 1949, they sold the autograph to Mary Flagler Cary, whose collection, including the Bruch concerto, now resides at the Pierpont Morgan Public Library in New York.

Mendelssohn And Bruch Violin Concertos

Ruggiero Ricci, violin

London Symphony Orchestra Conducted By Pierino Gamba

Mendelssohn

1. Concerto In E Minor For Violin And Orchestra - Allegro Molto Appassionato
2. Concerto In E Minor For Violin And Orchestra - Andante
3. Concerto In E Minor For Violin And Orchestra - Allegro Molto Vivace

Bruch

4. Concerto No. 1 In G Minor For Violin And Orchestra - Vorspiel - Allegro Moderato
5. Concerto No. 1 In G Minor For Violin And Orchestra - Adagio
6. Concerto No. 1 In G Minor For Violin And Orchestra - Allegro Energico

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Mendelssohn & Bruch - Ricci, violin London Symphony Orchestra Gamba

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