

its technical bravura, in a context of clever and vigorous continual development.

Ruggiero Ricci, (born July 24, 1918, San Francisco, California, U.S.—died August 6, 2012), American violinist known especially for his performances and recordings of Niccolò Paganini's works.

Ricci was born into a musical family and studied as a child with Louis Persinger. He gave his first concert in San Francisco at the age of 10. After further study with Mischel Piastro and Georg Kulenkampff, he made a European tour in 1932. From 1933 to 1937 he studied with Paul Stassevitch, reaching maturity as an accomplished virtuoso with command of the 19th-century bravura repertoire. Playing his 1734 Guarneri violin, he appeared regularly in Europe and America. He premiered the concertos of Alberto Ginastera (New York, 1963) and Gottfried von Einem (Vienna, 1970) and introduced the rediscovered Concerto No. 4 of Paganini to American audiences (1971). He taught at Indiana University, the Juilliard School, and the University of Michigan.

PAGANINI / CONCERTO No 2
SAINT-SAENS / CONCERTO No 1
RUGGIERO RICCI violin



CINCINNATI SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA / DIR: MAX RUDOLF



Paganini composed his second violin concerto about eight years after the first when his fame as a virtuoso soloist had been fully established. It is perhaps for this reason that the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 2, in B minor, Op. 7 -- subtitled "La Campanella" ("The Bell," after the persistent use of a triangle in the famous theme of the final movement) -- focuses more on pure melodic content and thematic development than virtuoso flourish. Indeed, in this piece, perhaps more than any other, we see Paganini's virtues as a composer shining forth. Of course, there are technical displays, but the focus is on the unity of the concerto and its effect as a dramatic, indeed operatic, piece of music. Paganini had an immense fondness for Italian opera, especially the music of Rossini (who, in turn, rejoiced that Paganini had not become an opera composer). Rossini's influence is especially marked in the opening movement of the Concerto No. 2, which bears a remarkable resemblance to the overture to Rossini's Barber of Seville. However, the rondo theme of the final movement is its most interesting feature. This brilliant theme has a marked gypsy feel and is a fine example of pure virtuosity harnessed to the service of a grand musical idea. The theme was used

by pianist-composer Franz Liszt in his influential *Études d'exécution transcendante d'après Paganini*. The overall structure of the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 2 is very precise, with each theme either presaging or echoing another, and echoes of the work resound in many later concertos of the Romantic era.

This Concerto reveals several of Saint-Saëns' characteristic progressive traits, particularly the cyclic development of themes throughout a piece and inventive formal compression. It was usually regarded by his contemporaries as a work in a single movement, a typical concerto Allegro with a lyrical Andante inserted in the middle. But the closing section, though marked "reprise," is not literally a repeat of the opening; it elaborates and reorders the themes. So, though all three sections are connected and related, they can easily be heard as the three movements standard for most 19th-century concertos, just in an original mashup.

The main Allegro material is bright and athletic in a confident, impulsive-but-graceful way. The Andante is soulful without angst or overbearing emotion - an elegantly spun instrumental song. The finale is dazzling in its recreation of the opening and

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Paganini Concerto No. 2 In B Minor For Violin And Orchestra, Op. 7
1 Allegro Maestoso 12:33

2 Adagio 5:54

3 Rondo ("La Campanella") 7:38

Saint-Saens Concerto No. 1 In A Major For Violin And Orchestra, Op. 20

4 Allegro-Andante Espressivo-Allegro 11:00

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