

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.



**TCHAIKOVSKY
VIOLIN CONCERTO
in D Major, Op35**

**DVOŘÁK
VIOLIN CONCERTO
in A Minor, Op 53**

**RUGGIERO
RICCI**

**LONDON SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA**

MALCOM SARGENT



Tchaikovsky composed this work in 1878. At Clarens, near Geneva, following both his mistake of a marriage and his suicide attempt, Tchaikovsky completed both *Onegin* and the Fourth Symphony early in 1878. After a round trip to Moscow in February for the symphony's premiere, he was visited at Clarens by the violinist Yosif Kotek. Tchaikovsky, in fondness for Kotek, sketched out a violin concerto in just 11 days and had finished scoring it two weeks later, including a new slow movement in place of one that both Kotek and Tchaikovsky's younger brother, Modest, considered to be weak.

Pyotr Il'yich dedicated the new concerto to Leopold Auer, the fabled Hungarian émigré who would teach two generations of Russian virtuosi. However, just as Nikolai Rubinstein had vilified the B flat minor Piano Concerto four years earlier, Auer declared this new one "unplayable" (though he too recanted, and became one of the work's champions). It was, therefore, a Viennese audience that heard the first performance with Adolf Brodsky and conductor Hans Richter on December 4, 1881. It was an insufficiently rehearsed and poorly accompanied performance, about which Eduard Hanslick wrote, "It brings to us the revolting thought that there may be music that 'stinks in the ear.'" Yet he also wrote in same review that "the concerto has proportion, is musical, and is not without genius."

In addition to its structural soundness, the concerto fairly teems with melodies, in such abundance that the orchestra's gorgeous opening tune never returns! Thereafter the soloist gets first crack at the rest of them, beginning with the "very moderate" principal theme. The second one is marked *molto espressivo*, after which the main theme returns, before the development section that ends in a showy solo cadenza, followed by the reprise and coda.

The *andante Canzonetta* ("little song") in 3/4 time with ABA form features

a G minor main theme (additionally marked *molto espressivo*) and a contrastingly quicker, Chopinesque second theme in E flat major. Without pause the next movement lifts off like an SST from the tarmac. It is a Trepak in rondo form, with two extroverted themes of folkloric character, capped by an extended coda that concludes the piece dervishly. No Russian composer before or since Tchaikovsky has ended a concerto with greater finesse or panache, not even Rachmaninov (who learned wherefrom to take his cue early on, with Tchaikovsky's blessing).

The Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 53 (B.108), is a concerto for violin and orchestra composed by Antonín Dvořák in 1879. It was premiered in Prague in 1883 by František Ondříček, who also gave the Vienna and London premieres. Today it remains an important work in the violin repertoire.

The concerto is scored for solo violin and an orchestra consisting of 2 flutes, 2 oboes 2 clarinets (in A), 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings. Its structure is the classical three movements of fast-slow-fast.

Dvořák was inspired to write the concerto after meeting Joseph Joachim in 1878, and composed the work with the intention of dedicating it him. However, when he finished the concerto in 1879, Joachim became skeptical about it. Joachim was a strict classicist and objected, *inter alia*, to Dvořák's abrupt truncation of the first movement's orchestral tutti. Joachim also didn't like the fact that the recapitulation was cut short and that it led directly to the slow second movement. It is also assumed that he was upset with the persistent repetition found in the third movement. However, Joachim never said anything outright and instead claimed to be editing the solo part. He never actually performed the piece in public.

Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto In D Major, Op.35

Dvořák Violin Concerto In A Minor, Op.53

Ruggiero Ricci Violin

Conductor Sir Malcolm Sargent The London Symphony Orchestra

Violin Concerto In D Major, Op.35

1 Allegro Moderato 17:51

2 Canzonetta, Andante 6:04

3 Finale: Allegro Vivacissimo 8:46

Total Time 32:41

Violin Concerto In A Minor, Op.53

4 Allegro Ma Non Troppo - Quasi Moderato 10:22

5 Adagio Ma Non Troppo 11:29

6 Allegro Giocoso, Ma Non Troppo 10:07

Total Time 31:58

Transferred from a London 4-track tape

Producer: Ray Minshull Engineer: Kenneth Wilkinson

Recorded January 1961 at Kingsway Hall, London



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