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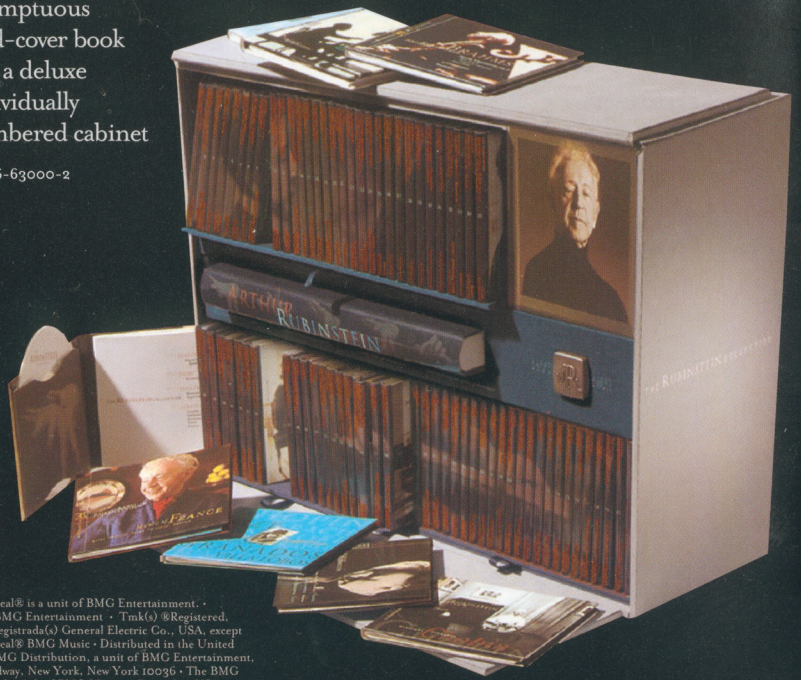

BEETHOVEN

PIANO SONATAS

ARTHUR RUBINSTEIN

OPP. *13* "PATHÉTIQUE" • *27 no. 2* "MOONLIGHT" • *57* "APPASSIONATA" • *81a* "LES ADIEUX"

ca. 1963
Collection of
Nela Rubinstein

THE RUBINSTEIN COLLECTION

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN
(1770-1827)

PIANO SONATAS

Op. 13 *"Pathétique"*
Op. 27, no. 2 *"Moonlight"*
Op. 57 *"Appassionata"*
Op. 81a *"Les adieux"*

Produced by Max Wilcox

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Sonata no. 8, Op. 13 ("Pathétique")
in C minor / c-moll / ut mineur (19:10)

1 Grave; Allegro molto e con brio (8:44)
2 Adagio cantabile (5:35)
3 Rondo: Allegro (4:42)

Sonata no. 14, Op. 27, no. 2 ("Moonlight")
Sonata quasi una fantasia
in C-sharp minor / cis-moll / do dièse mineur (15:24)

4 Adagio sostenuto (6:07)
5 Allegretto (2:36)
6 Presto agitato (6:34)
Recorded April 1962

Sonata no. 23, Op. 57 ("Appassionata")
in F minor / f-moll / fa mineur (23:50)

7 Allegro assai (9:22)
8 Andante con moto (6:30)
9 Allegro, ma non troppo (7:54)
Recorded January 25 & 30, 1963

Sonata no. 26, Op. 81a ("Les adieux")
in E-flat / Es-dur / mi bémol majeur (16:39)

10 *Les adieux*: Adagio; Allegro (7:34)
11 *L'absence*: Andante expressivo (3:23)
12 *Le retour*: Vivacissimamente (5:37)
Recorded April 1962

DISC TIME: 75:33

My piano teacher Heinrich Barth was a formidable personality. He was more than six feet tall and heavily built, but still quite quick on his feet. His grayish hair showed just a touch of baldness. A long Brahmsian beard, the color of salt and pepper, and a bushy mustache covered a rather weak mouth and chin; but his gold-rimmed glasses gave him a look of uncompromising severity. I was terrified by him…I had to take preparatory lessons from one of Barth's ex-pupils, Miguel Capllonch, a native of the Isle of Mallorca.…He was quite a different fellow. Still young, around thirty, he was a typical Latin, gay—with laughing blue eyes, a soft blond mustache, and a sunny disposition toward music. When he performed the classics, there was none of that frowning look, designed to show 'depth of feeling,' so prevalent among Germans and so much in favor with the critics. Music was a pure joy for him—and he knew how to share it with me. We would play with gusto a Schumann symphony arranged for four hands, or one or two Beethoven quartets, then eat some good chocolates, which he always had on hand, and for a happy finale, Capllonch would play some Spanish popular music… I loved it. [My Young Years, *by Arthur Rubinstein]*

These feelings expressed by Rubinstein make clear his very personal perception about making music, as well disclosing the difficult time he had with Professor Barth. Rubinstein came to accept and appreciate the importance of discipline, sometimes making reference to his "lacking" technique, but he never lost his sense of improvisatory abandon and great passion for freedom of expression.

Arthur Rubinstein toured the United States in the mid-1930s. Until then the pianists whom America idolized were Paderewski, Hoffmann, Rachmaninoff and Horowitz. In the face of this dangerous competition what criticism would be made of Rubinstein? 'They thought I had talent, feeling and an expressive touch, but they found me negligent in some respects: wrong notes, personal arrangements of difficult passages, conjuring tricks, the fact that I have preference to the spirit rather than the letter, etc. In reality I was depending on my natural talent and was not working in a careful enough way. I preferred living dangerously to spending hours polishing up runs and arpeggios. I was not precise enough. After I had rounded the headland of my fortieth birthday and had got married I recognized the dangers of a career exposed to chance like that and did not want to disappoint my wife. I worked hard, put a high polish on my technique and turned my attention to the details which until then had seemed to me to be of absolutely secondary importance. The second beginning of my career dates from there and it was fruitful and well founded. I changed from improviser to purist. Marriage brought me happiness.'

After his first journey to the United States he [Rubinstein] returned to Paris and resumed his life as an idler and a spendthrift. He got up late, two hours of piano practice, then an aperitif at Fouquet's, and off to the Cafés Concerts on the Champs Elysées and to Maxim's in the evening.

Following wise advice from composer Dukas, Arthur eventually packed his case and went back to his native land. Three months in the country set him to rights again. After that he moved to Warsaw and worked with concentration. [Essay excerpt, French music critic Bernard Gavoty]

Harvey Sachs points out in his biography of Rubinstein [*Rubinstein: A Life*, Grove Press, 1995]: "In later years Rubinstein often exaggerated the extent of his dilatoriness before 1934; one need only listen to his 1928 recording of the Chopin *Barcarolle* to realize that his technique was already superb, despite his admirable refusal to make it his primary concern. His internal security, born when he had fled from Barth's tutelage, was probably what made him speak deprecatingly about his technique....Once he married, he abandoned excessive preoccupation with social affairs and fully devoted himself to self-improvement. It was not a matter of irresponsible playing suddenly becoming responsible playing; it was a matter of a somewhat calmer way of life making greater concentration possible. Labunski [his brother-in-law] recalled in the 1960s: 'In place of an enormously gifted, promising young artist, he became the great master... grew in depth and in precision...The astonishing thing about it was that he never stopped growing, and each new performance is a revelation."

The four Beethoven Sonatas that comprise this volume of the Collection date from the early 1960s, 1962-63 to be exact. Rubinstein's Beethoven is more cohesive and firm than his Brahms or Chopin—his interpretive concept is uncompromising. Though he was never revered for his Beethoven, musical depth and wisdom abound. Celebrated conductor/pianist Daniel Barenboim, on whose life Rubinstein had great influence, takes issue with those who feel

that his mentor's Beethoven performances were lacking in some way. "Rubinstein had innumerable qualities, but two of them stand uppermost: one was his sense of rhythm—it was like a backbone—and of course for Beethoven, rhythm is capital; the other was his unique, full-bodied sound. These two attributes allowed the master to find successful solutions to whatever issue might arise in interpreting Beethoven's music...Even though Rubinstein maintained only a few of Beethoven's 32 sonatas in his concert repertory, he knew others intimately, especially the late sonatas."

The piano was Beethoven's instrument. He composed more piano sonatas than works in any other major form or genre. The development of the piano sonata passed from Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) and Mozart (1756-1791) to Beethoven. Beethoven's contributions in the development of the piano sonata are enormous and his expansion of the form, through his inexhaustible creativity, coincided with the growing interest in the pianoforte as a "new" instrument, with its increased expressive capabilities. The evolution of his piano sonatas attests to his genius as an innovator. Rubinstein only recorded seven of Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas—Op. 2, No. 3, the *Pathétique*, Op. 13 (three times), the *Moonlight*, Op. 27, No. 2 (only once), Op. 31, No. 3 (three times plus a 78 rpm of just the third movement), *Waldstein*, Op. 53, the *Appassionata*, Op. 57 (four times) and *Lebewohl* twice, all for RCA.

The Op. 13 Sonata, *Pathétique*, one of Beethoven's first period sonatas, marks his initial phase of romantic expression in terms of the piano—an essay in romantic lyricism—with an identifiable character of its own. In this Sonata Beethoven's tonal language, within principles of organic development and structural cohesion, conveys tragic opposition and suffering. The breathtaking silence of the long pauses is as powerful as the reverberation of anguished laments.

Written in 1798, the *Pathétique* was dedicated to one of Beethoven's most generous aristocratic patrons, Prince Lichnowsky.

Although published and dedicated independently, Beethoven's two Op. 27 sonatas share the distinctive title *"Sonata quasi una fantasia"* ("a sonata like a fantasy"), and as the title implies, is an experiment in form. Beethoven explores a new flexibility in which the rigidity of Classical structure is combined with the flexibility of the fantasia, resulting in a less-predictable sonata form and a more focused fantasia. The title "Moonlight" is not Beethoven's, but the result of an interpretation by the poetic, influential nineteenth-century figure Ludwig Rellstab: "It makes me think of a boat passing the wild shore of Lake Lucerne by moonlight" (c.1828). He, along with other Romantic writers, thought this sonata had an extramusical subject, though they differed on what it might be.

This Sonata always seizes the imagination of all music devotees. Excessive popularity can sometimes destroy a piece of music, but Beethoven's creative genius protects the *Moonlight* from this peril. The improvisatory quality is commanding. Distinguished 20th-century pianist Wilhelm Kempff referred to this Sonata "as the first precursor of impressionism. We see with our ears, hear with our eyes." Without question, poetry triumphs over formality in this work.

Beethoven once said, with his customary gruffness, about ten years after this Sonata was written, "Everyone is always talking about the C-sharp Minor Sonata [*Moonlight*], but I have written really better things." Perhaps so, but *only* Beethoven could be so bold to establish a scale of measurement for this or any other of his superior compositions. A critic reviewing the first edition of the *Moonlight* wrote, "It is hardly possible that anyone whom Nature has not denied any feeling for music will not be profoundly moved by the opening *Adagio* of this Sonata."

Op. 27, No. 2 is dedicated to Countess Giulietta Guicciardi (1784-1856), one of Beethoven's first piano students and one of several aristocratic ladies he unrealistically aspired to marry.

In the overall design of the *Appassionata* Beethoven exploits a relation between serene lyricism and tempestuous expression, symbolizing the ceaseless struggles that people are continually subjected to. Each movement reflects Beethoven's

dramatic talents. By the time Beethoven began work on this Sonata, his hearing was already significantly impaired and he was struggling to come to terms with the reality of his affliction.

> *The perfection of the Appassionata conceals a danger of a double kind. It is characterized by the emprise of reason over the forces let loose. The tumultuous elements are purified, confined within the strict forms of the classic discipline. These forms, indeed, are enlarged to admit of the entry of a whole world of passions. A sea of blood thunders within them: but the sea is closed with the pillars of Hercules. Beethoven, by a tenacious and superhuman tension, has sealed the hinges and put his shoulder to the gate.*
> [Music historian and Beethoven biographer Romain Rolland]

The *Appassionata*, dedicated to Count Franz von Brunswick, was published in 1807. In the same year Beethoven gave the manuscript of his F Minor Sonata to Marie Kiene Bigot (1786-1820), an accomplished pianist and music teacher (one of her pupils was Felix Mendelssohn). She was also the wife of Count Razumovsky's (one of Beethoven's significant patrons) librarian.

The title "Appassionata" was not Beethoven's choice, however he probably knew about it and did not offer an objection. It is an appropriate distinction for this very "passionate" Sonata which masterfully reflects the spirit of extra-musical heroism.

Les Adieux (chosen by the publisher) or *Das Lebewohl* ("Farewell," which Beethoven preferred as it reflected a more personal reference to a friend rather than to a general group) is the only one of Beethoven's piano sonatas that actually has a programmatic connection. It commemorates the Archduke Rudolph's (Beethoven's friend, student and patron) absence from Vienna after Napoleon's capture of the city in 1809. The three movements are titled: "The Farewell," "The Absence," and "The Return"—focusing on self-imposed departure, exile and reunion. This emotional progression determines the basic character of the Sonata. Beethoven acknowledged the programmatic nature of this piece, calling it a "sonata characteristica" and asked that the dates the Archduke left and returned to Vienna—May 4, 1809 and January 30, 1810—be printed in the score. Obviously Beethoven had enormous respect and affection for the Archduke.

Rubinstein identified with the Vienna of Beethoven. Reminiscing about his earlier days with friends in Vienna:

> *We bought flowers and drove to the cemetery to pay our homage to the great ones in music. A guide took us to the famous corner, and there we stood, in awe, holding our breath, surrounded by the graves of Haydn and Beethoven, Schubert and Brahms... Mozart's grave was there too, but only as a symbol—the wicked Viennese had let him be buried in a common grave. We couldn't utter a word, we were so overcome by the*

emotion of gratitude and love for these immortal geniuses. [My Young Years, *by Arthur Rubinstein*]

—Lynne S. Mazza

Lynne S. Mazza writes about music for a variety of publications throughout the United States.

THE ARTHUR RUBINSTEIN COLLECTION brings together all of his approved, commercially released recordings made between 1928 and 1976. They progress in approximate chronological order. All of the albums in The Arthur Rubinstein Collection were compiled from original sources. Disc-to-digital transfers were made, whenever possible, directly from metal stampers. Tape sources were transferred through CELLO playback electronics and remastered in 20-bit technology using universally compatible UV22™ Super CD Encoding.