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ARTHUR
RUBINSTEIN

MOZART

PIANO CONCERTOS

NOS.

17K453

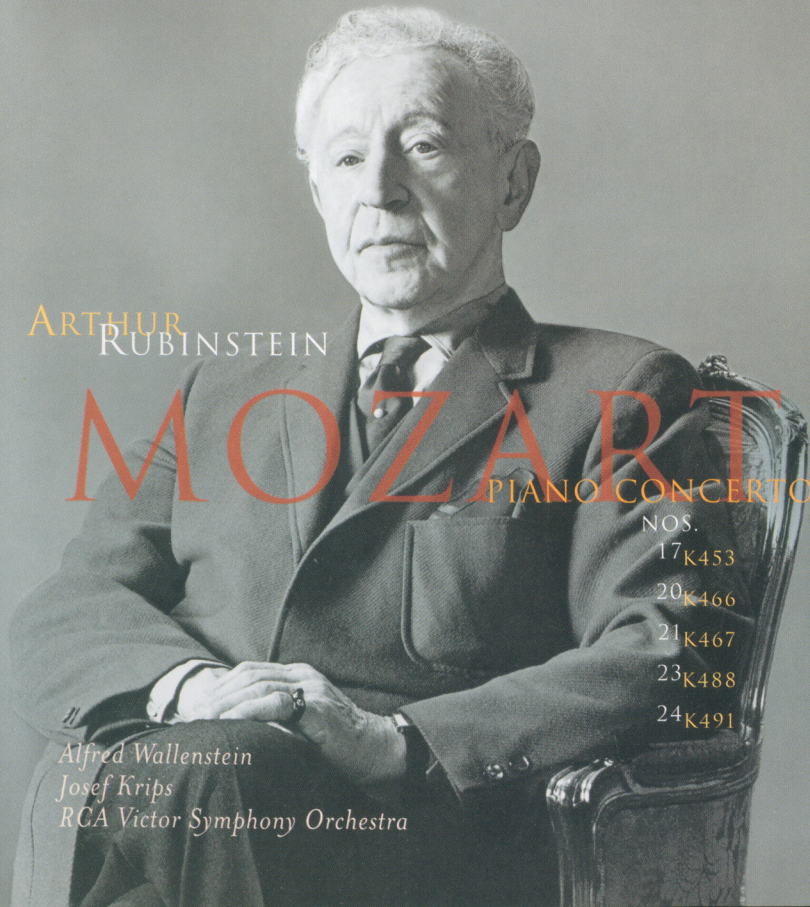
20K466

21K467

23K488

24K491

Alfred Wallenstein
Josef Krips
RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra





Arthur Rubinstein with Alfred Wallenstein, wife Aniela, producer Max Wilcox
John G. Ross / Courtesy of Max Wilcox

Wolfgang Amadeus

MOZART

THE RUBINSTEIN COLLECTION

(1756-1791)

PIANO CONCERTOS

No. 17, K.453

No. 24, K.491

No. 20, K.466

Josef Krips, *conductor*

No. 21, K.467

No. 23, K.488

Alfred Wallenstein, *conductor*

RCA VICTOR SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



Josef Krips
BMG Classics



Produced by Max Wilcox

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disc

I (77:54)

NO. 17, K. 453

in G / G-dur / sol majeur

(32:01)

cadenzas: MOZART

1 Allegro (12:19)

2 Andante (11:42)

3 Allegretto (7:54)

Recorded March 30, 31, 1961

NO. 20, K. 466

D minor / d-moll /

ré mineur (30:50)

cadenzas: BEETHOVEN

4 Allegro (13:52)

5 Romance (9:04)

6 Allegro assai (7:51)

Recorded April 1, 1961

NO. 21, K. 467

C / C-dur / ut majeur

(28:03)

cadenzas: ARTHUR RUBINSTEIN

(unpublished)

7 I. Allegro maestoso (14:45)

(continued on cd 2)

disc

2 (72:36)

NO. 21, K. 467

(CONCLUSION)

1 II. Andante (6:32)

2 III. Allegro vivace assai (6:43)

Recorded April 1, 1961

NO. 23, K. 488

in A / A-dur / la majeur

(26:54)

cadenzas: MOZART

3 Allegro (11:24)

4 Adagio (7:21)

5 Allegro assai (8:06)

Recorded March 30, 31, 1961

NO. 24, K. 491

C minor / c-moll /

ut mineur (32:14)

cadenzas: JOHANN NEPOMUK HUMMEL

6 Allegro (14:39)

7 Larghetto (8:21)

8 Allegretto (9:10)

Recorded April 12, 1958

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↔

UNLIKE HIS CONTEMPORARY ARTUR SCHNABEL, WHO GAVE MOZART A GREAT DEAL OF SPACE IN PERFORMANCES AND RECORDINGS, ARTHUR RUBINSTEIN MADE RELATIVELY FEW FORAYS INTO THE MOZART REPERTOIRE. The two artists resembled each other, however, in their conviction—not common in their day—that Mozart was neither a delicate flower nor a miniaturist, but rather a full-grown, flesh-and-blood man who painted vast musical canvases.

“Mozart and Haydn have just as much emotion in them... as any Beethoven had,” Rubinstein told an interviewer in 1962. “For me Mozart can express in a few bars more than Beethoven in a whole movement of a sonata. I adore Mozart; he is my great, great, great, deep love. The thing is simply that Mozart was able to put all his heart and soul, his musical talent, his genius, into the forms, into the mould...” (H. Brandon, article in *The Sunday Times*, London, 11 February 1962.) In other words, according to Rubinstein, Mozart was able to say all he wanted to say without breaking the barriers of what the pianist described as “severe classicism,” whereas Beethoven had to extend music’s structural boundaries before he managed to find his own creative voice.

From a strictly historical point of view, this opinion is unfair to both composers: Mozart treated the traditional classical forms with great freedom and expanded some of them considerably, and Beethoven demonstrated his strong individuality even in his earliest published works, although those works were not revolutionary in form. On the other hand, Mozart’s innovations were subtle and did not draw attention to themselves, whereas Beethoven’s were explosive and controversial. And Rubinstein’s statement is interesting, in any case, because in it he clearly voices his preference for Mozart over Beethoven. His explanations matter less than the motivation behind them.

Oddly enough, Rubinstein’s adoration of Mozart did not translate itself into a thorough exploration of the composer’s vast keyboard output. In 1894, at the age of seven, he played a Mozart sonata during his first public appearance, as part of a charity event in his native Lodz, Poland, and three years later a private performance of the composer’s Rondo in A Minor, K. 511, before the celebrated violinist Joseph Joachim, resulted in a full scholarship to study with Heinrich Barth, one of Berlin’s most highly respected piano pedagogues. Of the sonatas, however, there is little

if any trace in Rubinstein's later repertoire, and the Rondo was the only one of Mozart's solo piano works that became a relative staple in his recital programs, as well as the only one that he recorded. When asked why he did not play more Mozart, Rubinstein would often reply by quoting Schnabel's well-known dictum, to the effect that Mozart is too easy for beginners and too hard for accomplished pianists.

At various times in his career Rubinstein often played those of Mozart's chamber works that include the piano, but mostly at private gatherings. Of the twenty-seven piano concertos, he is known to have performed only six, and one of the six (B-flat Major, K. 595) was a rarity for him. All of the remaining five are contained in the present album, and all of these recordings were made in 1961, when Rubinstein was at the summit of his fame and the peak of his artistic maturity.

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+~+ These five works were part of the great series of piano concertos that Mozart wrote, mainly for his own use, in Vienna during the 1780s. In the composer's hand-written catalogue of his compositions, No. 17, K. 453 bears the date April 12, 1784; it was commissioned by Mozart's pupil Barbara von Ployer and was first performed by her in Döbling, near

Vienna, two months later. No. 20, K. 466 and No. 21, K. 467 were completed one month apart—February 10 and March 9, 1785, respectively; the former was first performed by Mozart on the very day of its completion (his father reported, in a letter, that at 1 o'clock that afternoon the copyist was still preparing a fair copy of the manuscript), and the latter one day after the 29-year-old composer had put the finishing touches to it. No. 23, K. 488 and No. 24, K. 491—masterpieces created in a burst of energy while the composer was in the midst of work on *The Marriage of Figaro*—were finished even more closely together, on March 2 and 24, 1786. The date of the first performance of K. 488 is not known, but K. 491 was likely played for the first time by the composer on the day of its completion, like K. 466. Each of the five works consists of a quick-paced but not vertiginous first movement, a somewhat slower but by no means weighty middle movement and a brilliant finale.

Rubinstein's interpretation of the Concerto in G Major, K. 453, is on the cautious side, but the tempos have a natural feel to them and the lightning-quick Mozartian transitions from carefree cheerfulness to dead seriousness are perfectly grasped. Attentive listeners who had the good

fortune to hear Rubinstein play the Concerto in D Minor, K. 466, in the concert hall will find that their memories of his extraordinary way with this extraordinary piece are reinforced by the present recording: he managed to strike just the right balance between elegant poise and dramatic intensity, and one would be hard put to find a jauntier approach than his to the lighthearted subordinate theme in the finale.

Equally straightforward and refreshing is Rubinstein's performance of the Concerto in C Major, K. 467. The first movement's playfulness is perfectly captured, and one is grateful for the restraint he brings to the second movement, which has been over-interpreted and indeed overplayed by legions of pianists since 1966, when it was used as a symbol of Romantic angst in the soundtrack of the popular Swedish film *Elvira Madigan*.

The Concerto in A Major, K. 488, was the centerpiece of the thirteen-year-old Rubinstein's official debut concert, in Berlin in 1900, and his performance of it elicited a prophetic remark from the critic of the *Vossische Zeitung*: "The youngster's wonderful talent revealed itself at its deepest and purest in the rendition of Mozart's Concerto in A Major. He who can play Mozart so successfully is a chosen one among the elect."

Rubinstein never forgot this statement, and indeed it often haunted him when he was feeling guilty about not studying hard enough. K. 488 became the most frequently played piece in Rubinstein's Mozart repertoire and a great favorite in his concerts with orchestra. It is also the only Mozart concerto of which he made more than one authorized recording—three, in fact: in 1931, with John Barbirolli and the London Philharmonic; in 1949, with Vladimir Golschmann and the St. Louis Symphony; and the one heard here, whose details are rendered with loving attention to sound and structure. This is also true of his recording of the Concerto in C Minor, K. 491. Although it is true that there is less abandon in these two recordings than Rubinstein brought to most of his public performances of these concertos, they nevertheless provide a good idea of how his performances sounded: the "live" tempos tended to be slightly faster and there were a few eminently forgettable wrong notes from time to time, but the overall impression was of a full-bodied Mozart—a Mozart who, as Rubinstein said, "put all his heart and soul" into his music.

—Harvey Sachs

Harvey Sachs' books include biographies of Arturo Toscanini and Arthur Rubinstein. He writes for many of the best-known North American and European newspapers and magazines.



THE ARTHUR RUBINSTEIN COLLECTION

brings together all of his approved, commercially released recordings made between 1928 and 1976. They progress in approximate chronological order, with the earliest recordings appearing in volumes 1-9, and the last in volume 81. 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.



Alfred Wallenstein

John G. Ross / BMG Classics