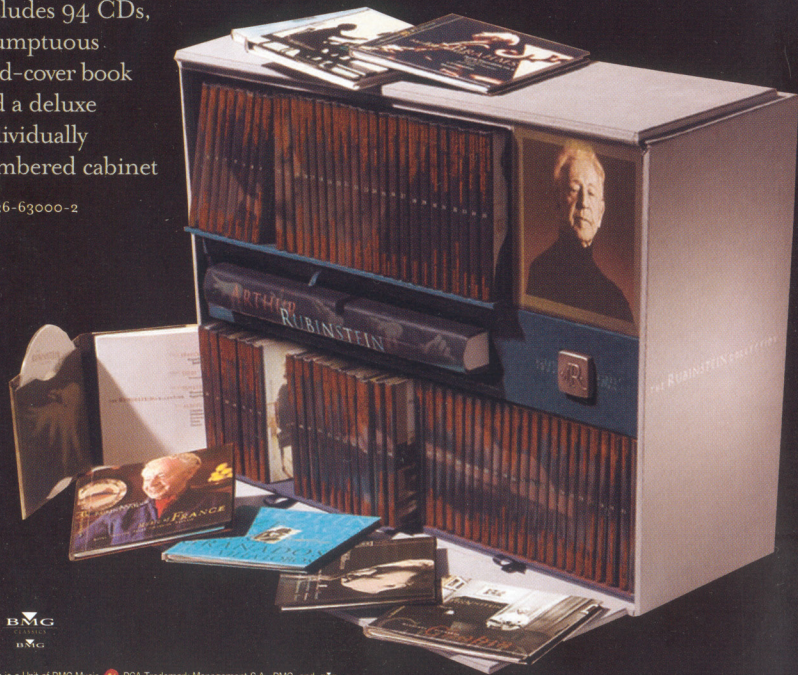



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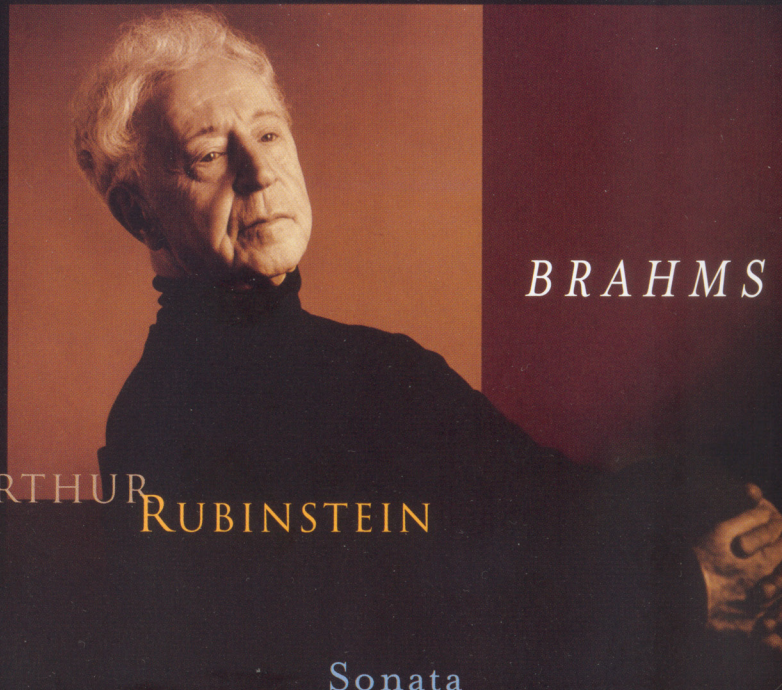
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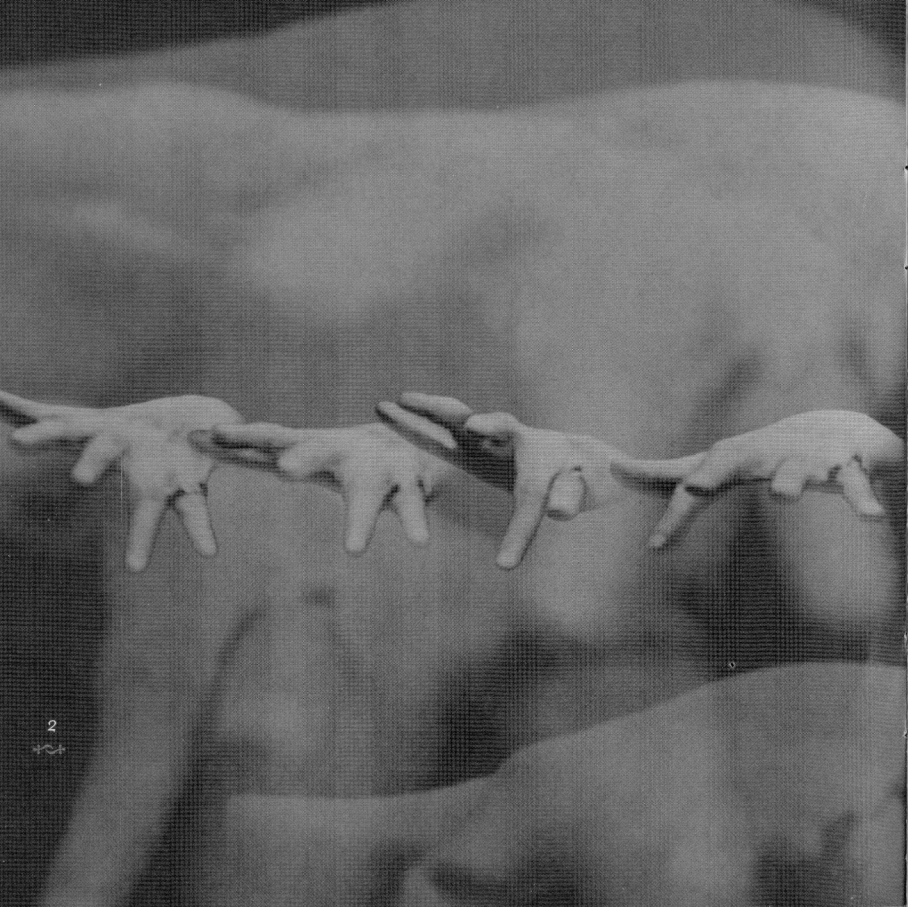


BRAHMS

ARTHUR RUBINSTEIN

Sonata opus 5

Ballades opus 10



Johannes
BRAHMS
THE RUBINSTEIN COLLECTION (1833-1897)

Piano Sonata no. 3, Op. 5

Intermezzo, Op. 116, no. 6

Romance, Op. 118, no. 5

4 Ballades, Op. 10





Arthur Rubinstein, producer Max Wilcox, 1961
John G. Ross

PIANO SONATA NO. 3, OP. 5

in F minor / f-moll /
fa mineur (3:41)

- 1 Allegro maestoso (9:11)
- 2 Andante (10:23)
- 3 Scherzo - Trio (4:15)
- 4 Intermezzo (3:00)
- 5 Finale (7:39)
Recorded December 17, 1959
- 6 Intermezzo, Op. 116, no. 6
in E / E-dur / mi majeur
(2:52)
- 7 Romance, Op. 118, no. 5
F / F-dur / fa majeur (3:41)
Recorded December 31, 1959

FOUR BALLADES, OP. 10

- 8 no. 1, "Edward" in D minor /
d-moll / ré mineur (3:57)
- 9 no. 2 in D / D-dur /
ré majeur (5:46)
- 10 no. 3 in B minor / h-moll /
si mineur (3:57)
- 11 no. 4 in B / H-dur /
si majeur (7:24)
Recorded June 10-12, 1970

DISC TIME: 62:47



Produced by Max Wilcox

Sonata, Intermezzo, Romance recorded at the
American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York City
Recording Engineer: John Crawford

Ballades recorded at RCA Italiana Studios, Rome
Recording Engineer: Franco Finetti

Reissue produced by Harold Hagopian
Engineer: Hsi-Ling Chang

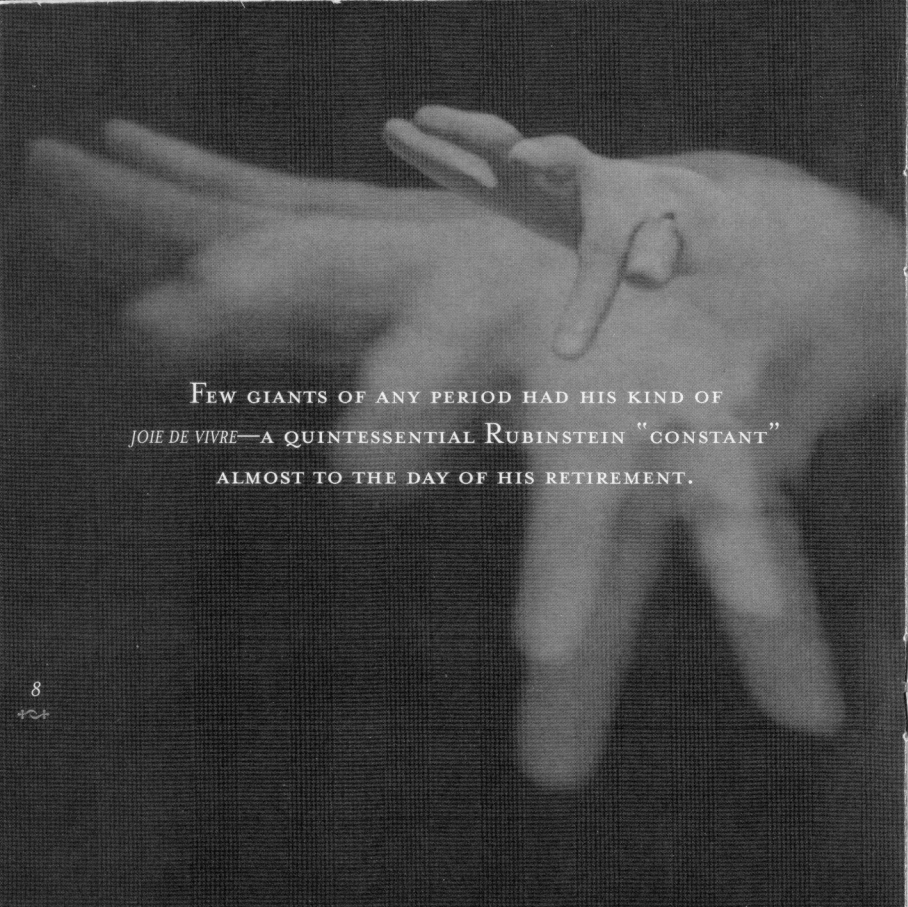
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FEW GIANTS OF ANY PERIOD HAD HIS KIND OF
JOIE DE VIVRE—A QUINTESSENTIAL RUBINSTEIN “CONSTANT”
ALMOST TO THE DAY OF HIS RETIREMENT.

ARTHUR RUBINSTEIN WAS FOND OF REMINDING US THAT ALTHOUGH HE WAS CELEBRATED AS A CHOPIN SPECIALIST, HIS LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE MUSIC OF BRAHMS WAS OF EVEN LONGER STANDING AND, IF ANYTHING, OF GREATER FERVOR. As a musically precocious child, Rubinstein attracted the attention and interest of Joseph Joachim, the great violinist for whom Brahms, a friend of forty-five years, had written his Violin Concerto. Joachim played through the master's three violin and piano sonatas with his young protégé and undertook sponsorship of the burgeoning *Wunderkind's* musical education, thereby igniting an enthusiasm for Brahmsian “tradition” that was to continue, unabated, for more than eighty years.

It is, however, fascinating to hear the differences between Rubinstein's potent Brahms interpretations and those of other master pianists—such as Wilhelm Backhaus and Wilhelm Kempff—likewise steeped in the composer's idiomatic ambiance. All the more so, indeed, because Kempff, like Rubinstein, had been a pupil of the same renowned

pedagogue, Heinrich Barth. While both Kempff and Rubinstein, as opposed to the more gruff, more monochromatic Backhaus (his teacher was Eugen d'Albert), to be sure, shared a certain love for color, Kempff's readings adhered to a distinctly Teutonic angularity; conversely, Rubinstein accustomed us to a curvaceous geniality and suavity. Both approaches were, in their own ways, richly, and satisfyingly, eloquent.

All the items heard in this particular compendium are, chronologically, "late" Rubinstein—the F Minor Sonata, the E Major *Intermezzo* and F Major *Romance* all bearing a 1959 vintage date and the four Ballades, Op. 10 taped at a Rome session in 1970—so you will have to look elsewhere for examples of the younger firebrand's earlier, more slapdash and flamboyant *Sturm und Drang*. But while some of the former fiery *passione* has, especially in the Ballades, cooled into something more temperate and considered (gone, too, are the reckless fistfuls of wrong notes that some will say endearingly pepper the 1929 B-Flat Concerto with Albert Coates and the London Symphony Orchestra [*Rubinstein Collection*, volume 1], an eternal youthfulness of spirit remains very much intact. Few giants of any period had his kind of *joie de vivre*—a quintessential Rubinstein "constant" almost to the day of his retirement.

Brahms composed his F Minor Sonata in 1853 at the time he conquered the affections of Robert and Clara Schumann. A significant advance, structurally, over his two earlier piano sonatas (in C Major, Op. 1 and F-sharp Minor, Op. 2; one wonders how many more such attempts were destroyed by the notoriously self-critical young genius), Op. 5 might justifiably be described as a bona fide masterpiece of early maturity. In this second of his two recordings (an earlier mono-only version from a 1949 Hollywood session can be found in volume 21), Rubinstein's sophistication goes a long way toward smoothing over some of the awkward moments. Working with a new producer, Max Wilcox, the pianist gives every impression of being in a state of benefaction, the piano he was using seems ideal, and the glorious acoustics of New York's Academy of Arts and Letters yields an ingratiating subtly nuanced piano tone that is a significant advance over the more limiting recorded sound of a decade earlier. If the artist's affinity for this, one of his stalwart chestnuts in the concert hall, was apparent enough from the first version, the stereo remake—an improvement in every way—gives us that empathy perfected into sublime mastery. From the earliest days of Percy Grainger and Harold Bauer, the Op. 5 Sonata has fared handsomely

on records and Rubinstein's valedictory interpretation, even in such exalted company, represents, as the French would say, "la crème de la crème."

Without in any way diminishing the breadth and integrity of the music (note how the youthful Brahms was already achieving his own unique "orchestral" sonority by utilizing not only the middle, but also both extremes, of the recently expanded keyboard), Rubinstein tempers gruffness with effusions of worldly sophistication. His chosen tempos, though they might seem leisurely, are all mercurial and animated—triumphantly evading any suggestion of stolidity in the outer movements. But for this admiring listener, the highspot of Rubinstein's vernal interpretation is his swashbuckling *alla burlesca* way with the work's *Scherzo* and its songful central *Trio*; if ever the quintessential Rubinstein was captured for posterity, it is here.

One likewise warms to the horizontal flow that adds a unique third dimension to the chorale-like E Major *Intermezzo*, Op. 116, No. 6 and to the *Romance*, an account that "sings" with the naturalness of a rapturous nightingale.

The Ballades, from an earlier phase of Brahms' creativity, evoke an altogether less benign kind of tone-painting (No. 1 is inspired by the

gruesome Scottish folk tale "Edward" found in Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* wherein a mother queries her son, *Dein Schwert, wie ist's von Blut so rot?* ("Your sword, why is it so red with blood?").

Appropriately, Rubinstein's interpretations are somewhat more massive and austere. These are remarkable piano offerings from an artist 82-years-young; few have enjoyed a more rewarding Indian Summer.

—Harris Goldsmith

Harris Goldsmith—musicologist, critic, pianist and author—writes extensively on music. His articles appear in many respected periodicals, including The Strad, The Musical Times, Musical America, High Fidelity, Keynote and The New York Times. His byline has appeared on many recordings, in both a literary and pianistic capacity. Mr. Goldsmith currently teaches piano and piano literature courses at the Mannes College of Music in New York City.



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.



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