



MOZART

**Piano Concerto
No. 27, K.595**

**Concerto for
Two Pianos, K.365**

Rondo, K.511

Artur Schnabel

Karl Ulrich Schnabel

London Symphony Orchestra

John Barbiroli • Adrian Boult

1934 - 1946 Recordings

Artur Schnabel (1882-1951)

MOZART: Piano Concerto No. 27 • Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra

Born in Lipnik, Austria in 1882, Artur Schnabel was barely ten years old when he began studies with Theodore Leschetizky in Vienna. After his adult debut in Vienna in 1897 Schnabel decided to move to Berlin, making his debut in that city the following year. As a teenager Schnabel made a living from teaching as well as from performing on tour with instrumentalists, all the while composing music. He performed the *Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 83*, by Brahms (Naxos 8.110665) with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and Artur Nikisch and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, while at the age of 22 he played the same work at his London debut with the Hallé Orchestra and Hans Richter. On returning to Berlin Schnabel and his wife, the soprano Therese Behr (1876–1959), became the centre of musical life in the city. During the 1920s he taught at the Hochschule für Musik and toured Europe, as well as the Soviet Union four times and America twice. For the centenary of Beethoven's death Schnabel performed the complete 32 *Piano Sonatas* in seven recitals in Berlin and over the next few years repeated this marathon undertaking in London and New York. After a tour of Australia in 1939, rather than return to Europe, Schnabel decided it was safer to go to America, where he taught at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and took American citizenship in 1944. He gave his final recital at Hunter College in January 1951 and died in August of that year.

Although Schnabel played virtuoso repertoire at the beginning of his career, including Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 23*, and Liszt's *Piano Sonata in B minor*, he quickly became associated with certain composers, particularly Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann and Brahms. He recorded little Bach and his complete recordings of this composer were recently issued on a single compact disc, (Naxos 8.111286). Of Mozart's work Schnabel only made commercial recordings of three of the *Piano Sonatas* and five of the *Piano Concertos* with the *Concerto for Two Pianos*. At the beginning of February

1934 he was in London where he performed no less than three of Mozart's piano concertos in one concert at the Queen's Hall, playing the *C major K.503*, the *D minor K.466* and the *B flat K.595*. Then, as now, it was unusual to have three of Mozart's concertos in one programme, and one review of the concert began, 'Three piano concertos by Mozart make a monotonous programme, because in the concertos written chiefly for his own playing Mozart's easy acceptance of the stylistic conventions of his day is more marked than in his other symphonic works.' It was obviously not too monotonous, however, as the reviewer continued that the concert 'can be recorded as an evening of unsullied musical enjoyment'. During the same month Schnabel performed both of Brahms's piano concertos and during April gave a recital with violinist Bronislaw Huberman at the Queen's Hall.

Not long after his concert of three concertos, Schnabel made his first recording of a Mozart piano concerto, the *Piano Concerto in B flat, K.595*, on 2nd May 1934 at Abbey Road Studio No. 1. Schnabel was in the midst of recording all the Beethoven *Piano Sonatas*, but he completed the recording of this Mozart concerto in one session where he was joined by the London Symphony Orchestra and John Barbiroli. The concerto was recorded out of sequence, the *Larghetto* being recorded first, then the first movement, then the last. One possible reason for this could be that the engineers wanted to get the best possible balance and piano tone set by using the right hand piano melody of the *Larghetto*, which was indeed caught extremely well in the recently opened, well equipped Abbey Road studios – almost to the detriment of the left hand. Schnabel pupil Konrad Wolff wrote, 'In slow movements Schnabel tried to play as slowly as possible – he explained that the difficulty, contrary to what happens in *presto* music, increases with decreasing speed – without ever losing the tension between successive notes or the coherence of harmonic progressions. How often he would shout: 'Take your

time!' His recording of the *Larghetto* from Mozart's last piano concerto K.595, shows his faculty of stretching phrases in this way.' The piano sound in the third movement is a little more distant and reverberant, so it is probable that the microphone was placed nearer the piano for the *Larghetto* and moved further back for the other two movements. (It should be mentioned that Schnabel used for this recording a Bechstein piano, which has a tone quite different from the Steinway he used for the later recording of the Mozart *Rondo*). The sliding violins at the opening of the concerto give a rather queasy feeling, but once Schnabel enters things get on track. The moulding of the slow movement's melody is chastely done: one could apply a comment on Schnabel's Beethoven playing here, that it 'was always securely founded on an intellectual basis to which the sensuous and emotional appeals of the music were secondary and consequent'. The last movement is taken at a pace so fast as to make Schnabel scramble over some semiquaver passages, but the overall sense is one of breathless jollity.

On 28th October 1936 Schnabel and his son Karl Ulrich were at Abbey Road Studio No. 1, again with the London Symphony Orchestra, where they recorded Bach's *Concerto for two keyboards in C major, BWV 1061* (Naxos 8.111286). The other work recorded at this session was Mozart's *Concerto for two pianos in E flat, K.365*. Karl Ulrich (1909-2001) had made his Berlin début ten years before and went on to perform two piano recitals with his wife Helen Fogel. The recording of the Mozart was straightforward with two takes being made of each side, the issued recording being all from first takes. Again, the last movement is taken at a fast

pace, the oboes at the first entry of the pianos having difficulty keeping up.

Schnabel spent the Second World War in the United States and in May 1946 returned to London to give a series of concerts at the Albert Hall, as German bombs had destroyed the Queen's Hall. He played all of Beethoven's *Piano Concertos* in three concerts and also gave three recitals. The last concert was on 1st June and between 4th and 7th June Schnabel recorded at HMV's Abbey Road studios. The main works were Beethoven's *Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 4*, but before this, he recorded Mozart's *Piano Sonata in F major, K.332*, and the *Rondo in A minor, K.511*. When he had played the *Rondo* at one of the recent Albert Hall recitals, one critic found that 'such intensity of expression seemed misplaced when applied to Mozart's delicate *Rondo in A minor*', but a work of such intimacy when heard in the cavernous Albert Hall would no doubt have required a certain emphasis of delivery to get it across. Although one contemporary reviewer found his recording less poetic than the one made by Paderewski for HMV in 1937, Schnabel beautifully shapes the phrases and avoids sentimentality or overt intensity of expression.

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Producer's Note

The sources for the present transfers were an American Victor Red Seal "Scroll" label set for the *B flat Concerto*, a British HMV for the *Rondo*, and a combination of prewar Victor "Gold" label pressings and laminated Australian HMVs for the two-piano concerto.

Mark Obert-Thorn

GREAT PIANISTS • ARTUR SCHNABEL

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756 – 1791)

- Piano Concerto No. 27 in B flat major, K.595** **31:31**
- ① Allegro 12:57
- ② Larghetto 10:53
- ③ Allegro 7:41
- London Symphony Orchestra • John Barbirolli**
Recorded 2nd May, 1934 in EMI Abbey Road Studio No. 1, London
Matrix nos.: 2B 6894-1, 6895-1, 6896-1, 6891-2, 6892-1, 6893-2, 6897-2 and 6898-1
First issued as HMV DB 2249 through 2252
- ④ **Rondo in A minor, K.511** **9:41**
- Recorded 4th June, 1946 in EMI Abbey Road Studio No. 3, London
Matrix nos.: 2EA 11030 and 11031
First issued as HMV DB 6298
- Concerto in E flat major for Two Pianos and Orchestra, K.365** **24:01**
- ⑤ Allegro 9:12
- ⑥ Andante 8:21
- ⑦ Rondeau: Allegro 6:28
- Karl Ulrich Schnabel, piano**
London Symphony Orchestra • Adrian Boult
Recorded 28th October, 1936 in EMI Abbey Road Studio No. 1, London
Matrix nos.: 2EA 4097-1, 4098-1, 4099-1, 4100-1, 4101-1 and 4102-1
First issued as HMV DB 3033 through 3035

Artur Schnabel, piano

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn
Special thanks to Nathan Brown, Donald Manildi, Charles Niss
and the International Piano Archives at the University of Maryland (IPAM)

ADD

Playing
Time
65:13

W. A. MOZART

Artur Schnabel (1882-1951)

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1	Allegro	12:57
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	Concerto in E flat major for Two Pianos and Orchestra, K.365	24:01
5	Allegro	9:12
6	Andante	8:21
7	Rondeau: Allegro with Karl Ulrich Schnabel, <i>piano</i> London Symphony Orchestra • Adrian Boult Recorded 28th October, 1936 in EMI Abbey Road Studio No. 1, London	6:28

Not long after his February 1934 London Queen's Hall concert comprising three Mozart concertos, Schnabel made his first recording of a Mozart piano concerto, *No. 27 in B flat major, K.595*, at the recently opened and well equipped Abbey Road Studios. Completed in one session, this recording is notable not only for the excellence of its sound but for the moulding of the slow movement, taken at a slow tempo, but without any loss of the tension between successive notes or of the coherence of harmonic progressions. Schnabel's recording of the *Concerto for two pianos*, with his son Karl Ulrich, is made up entirely of first takes. In the *Rondo in A minor, K.511*, Schnabel beautifully shapes the phrases and avoids sentimentality or overt intensity of expression.

MADE IN
GERMANY

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