

## Great Pianists on Music & Arts

CD-1114(1) **Keyboard Giants Play Beethoven—Newly Discovered Broadcast Transcriptions from WWII:** BEETHOVEN: *Piano Concerto Nr. 3 in c, Op. 37*, Arthur Rubinstein, Philharmonic-Symphony, cond. Eugene Ormandy (1943). Beethoven: *Piano Concerto Nr. 4 in G, Op. 58*, Josef Hofmann, Philharmonic-Symphony, cond. Dimitri Mitropoulos (1943).

CD-1111(1) **Arthur Schnabel Performs Schumann and Schubert:** SCHUMANN: *Concerto in a for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 54*, Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, cond. Pierre Monteux, New York (13 June 1943). Schubert: *Trio No. 1 in B-flat, Op. 99, D. 898* with Szigeti & Fournier, Artur Schnabel on piano, London, Central Hall (1 October 1947). Schumann was previously unreleased, the Schubert was first released on LP RR-488 in 1981 by our predecessor organization, Educational Media Associates of America, Inc., and this is its first release on CD.

CD-1109(1) **William Kapell • Unissued Broadcasts.** RACHMANINOFF: *Concerto No. 2 in c for Piano & Orchestra, Op. 18*, New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, cond. Leonard Bernstein (18 Feb. 1951). Khachaturian: *Concerto in D♭ for Piano & Orchestra*, Philadelphia Orchestra, cond. Eugene Ormandy (8 Apr. 1944).

CD-1095(1) **Giesecking and the Late Romantics.** RACHMANINOFF: *Piano Con. Nr. 3*, Philharmonic-Symphony, Barbirolli (1939). Franck: *Symphony Var.*, ACO, Mengelberg (1940). Debussy: *Fantasia*, ACO, Mengelberg (1938).

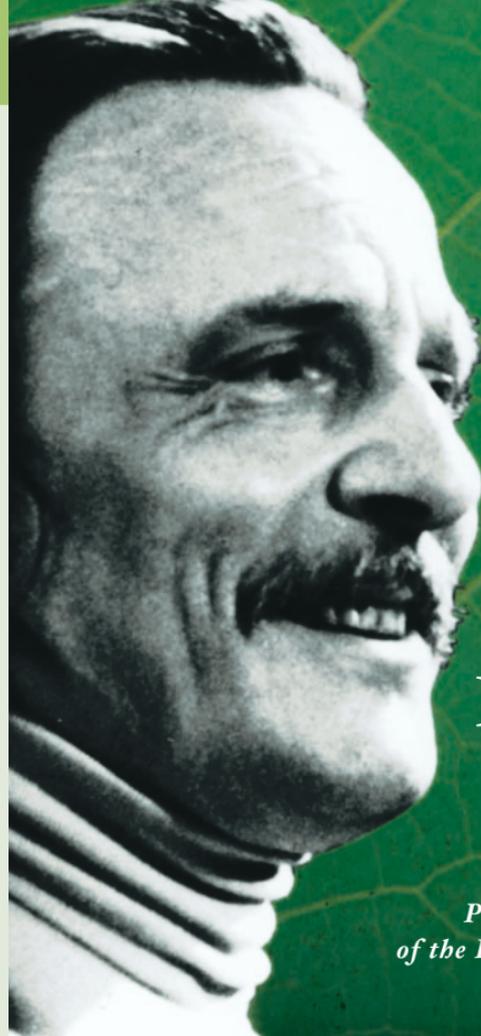
CD-1071(2) **Wilhelm Kempff: Rare Recordings (1936-1945) from the Collections of Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv and Norddeutscher Rundfunk.** CD 1: Recordings from the collection of Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv. MOZART: *Piano Concerto No. 21 in C, K.467*. Großes Leipziger Sinfonie-Orchester, cond. Hans Weisbach (3 April 1939, RRG). BEETHOVEN: *Piano concerto No. 5 in E♭ Major, Op. 73*, Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. Peter Raabe (1936; from DG 78s LM67082/86). CD 2: Broadcast recordings from Norddeutscher Rundfunk (Hamburg). BACH: *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in d minor* (10.10.1945). BACH: from Cantata No. 147. "Wohl mir daß ich Jesum habe," arr. for piano by Kempff (18.8.45). CHOPIN: *Berceuse, Op. 57* (10.10.45). CHOPIN: *Mazurka in f minor, Op. 7 No. 3* (18.8.45). CHOPIN: *Mazurka in C major, Op. 57 No. 2* (18.8.45). CHOPIN: *Fantasia Impromptu in c# minor, Op. 66* (10.10.45). Liszt: *Au lac de Wallenstadt* from Première année of Années de Pèlerinage (18.8.45). Liszt: *Eglogue* from Première année of Années de Pèlerinage (18.8.45). Liszt: *Au bord d'une* from Première année of Années de Pèlerinage (18.8.45). Liszt: *Il Penseroso* from Seconde année of Années de Pèlerinage (18.8.45). Liszt: *Sonetto 123 del Petrarca* from Seconde année of Années de Pèlerinage (18.8.45). Liszt: *Gondoliera* from Venezia e Napoli of Années de Pèlerinage (10.10.45). Faure: *Nocturne No. 6, Op. 63* (10.10.45). (A co-production with Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv and Norddeutscher Rundfunk).

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# Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli

TWO NEWLY DISCOVERED  
BROADCAST RECORDINGS

## MOZART

*Piano Concerto in d, K466*

Karl Munchinger, conductor  
Stuttgart Philharmonic Orch.,  
Stuttgart, Liederhalle, 22.II.1967

## BEETHOVEN

*Sonata No. 3 in C, Op. 2 No. 3*

Paris, Salle Pleyel, 11.II.1975

Premiere recordings issued by permission  
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TWO NEWLY DISCOVERED BROADCAST RECORDINGS

## MOZART

*Piano Concerto in d, K466 (1785)*

- 1) 1. Allegro 14:59
- 2) 2. Romanze 9:31
- 3) 3. Rondo: (Allegro assai) 8:00

Karl Munchinger cond. Stuttgart Phil. Orch., Stuttgart, Liederhalle, 22.II.1967

## BEETHOVEN

*Sonata No. 3 in C, Op. 2 No. 3 (1795)*

- 4) 1. Allegro con brio 10:53
- 5) 2. Adagio 6:38
3. Scherzo: Allegro 3:14
4. Allegro assai 5:17

From a recital in Paris, Salle Pleyel, 11.II.1975

Total: 58:38

*Thanks to Signora Giuliana Benedetti Michelangeli and Professor Gian Paolo Minardi for making this release possible.*

awesome command and authority with his sectionalized, overly studied accounts of the Chopin First Ballade and Second Scherzo. With the French Impressionists, Michelangeli's fusion of poetry and precision set Empyrean standards in this repertoire. His 1957 studio recording of the Ravel G Major concerto is a case in point. Michelangeli's seamless, eerily perfect "singing sword" trills in the first movement prove that one can indeed "bend" notes on a piano. Two years later, Michelangeli performed *Gaspard de la nuit* in the BBC studios, honoring Ravel's precise dynamic, pedaling and phrasing directives via inhumanly contoured gradations of touch and tone. Listen to Debussy's *Images* Books One and Two on DG, and you'll understand why Michelangeli regarded the piano pedals as the instrument's lungs.

Lastly, Michelangeli's reputation as a teacher plays a major role in his artistic legacy. He taught regularly up until the mid-1970s. The late Walter Klien recalled learning a lot concerning touch and the use of the pedal. "There are no lessons in the usual sense. A lesson would last an afternoon or a whole morning, you know. I didn't work technique with him, just expression, phrasing, breathing." Other students, like Martha Argerich, however, received less attention. On the subject of her former teacher, Argerich told writer Dean Elder, "Once he said to David Ruben from Steinway, 'Oh, I've done a lot for that girl.' And David said, 'But Maestro I know that you gave her only four lessons.' And he said, 'Yes, but I taught her the music of silence.' It's all very mysterious."

004 Jed Distler

A slightly different version of this essay appeared under the title "Cool Hand Arturo" in the April 2003 issue of *Gramophone*

music.” Harris Goldsmith accurately described “the patiently coaxed detail and ultraclarity of partwriting” in the pianist’s DG recording of Beethoven’s Op. 7 Sonata, where “inner lines emerge from the fabric with a spatial immediacy, the result of endless hours of drudgery and experimentation. Yet is it really desirable for each strand of sound to come forth in glorious technicolor? Must every detail unsubtly pounce upon the unsuspecting listener like a fierce panther upon its prey?”

Another bone of contention concerned Michelangeli’s frequent non-synchronization of the hands — a trait common to many Romantic pianists (in the same way today’s period instrument ensembles are fond of dynamic swells), but taboo among modern keyboard practitioners. His pupil, Renato Premezzi, suggested that Michelangeli employed this device towards structural and expressive ends, allowing the bass to set up and enhance the treble, adding dimension to the texture and sonority. Sometimes the effect proves disconcerting, but when it works, it works beautifully, such as in the pianist’s late recording of the Mozart C Major K. 415 Concerto. Listen to the slow movement, where Michelangeli offsets the right hand cantilena against the left-hand accompaniment to ravishing effect, suggesting two distinct pianos in different acoustic spaces. His earlier performance from 1953 (EMI), by contrast, is polished, yet conventional. Astute listeners may also catch the pianist’s idiosyncratic textual emendations: the Schumann *Carnaval*’s filled-in bass octaves, and a coda of his own making in Clementi’s B-flat Sonata Op. 12, No. 1. No 20<sup>th</sup> century pianist was more closely identified with Brahms’ *Paganini Variations*, yet Michelangeli had no qualms about regrouping Brahms’ original sequence, omitting a variation or two, making a cut in Book One’s finale, or rewriting a tricky rhythmic figure in order to ensure absolute note perfection.

No musical compromises, however, mark the frightening poise and proficiency that inform Michelangeli’s peerless way with Schumann’s *Faschingschwank aus Wien*, or hair-trigger scintillation that breathes fire and ice in Rachmaninov’s G Minor Concerto. Some will find it easier than others to reconcile Michelangeli’s

## His Artistic Legacy

A recent discussion with a pianist colleague broached the topic of “process pianists” versus “product pianists.” Process pianists thrive on spontaneity, audience contact, acoustics, the instrument itself and just plain being in the moment. Two antipodal process pianists, Vladimir Horowitz and Rudolf Serkin, never played twice the same way, nor do Martha Argerich, Daniel Barenboim, Alicia de Laroccha, Evgeny Kissin and Frederic Rzewski today. Process pianists, to be sure, are often perfectionists, but show up differently from product pianists. Product pianists think twice before moving, so to speak, and nearly nothing in their art happens overnight. To them, process usually occurs prior to rather than during concert time. Sergei Rachmaninov, Rosalyn Tureck and Dinu Lipatti typify product pianists; and, more recently, Krystian Zimerman and Piotr Anderszewski, both of whom emulate the late Glenn Gould’s painstaking approach to recording.

Whether or not Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli was the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s ultimate product pianist, his legendary and enigmatic standing in the international classical music arena continues to make good copy. In many respects, the pianist fuelled the flames of mystery that surrounded him. Even at the start of his career, Michelangeli had mastered the art of making himself scarce. Like Gould, Horowitz, Argerich and Richter, Michelangeli harbored a reclusive streak, did not enjoy the most robust health, and was prone to cancel engagements, or even whole tours, at the last minute. One wonders if Michelangeli cancelled more concerts than he actually played. He proved equally parsimonious in regard to the works he chose to perform in public, and it’s safe to say that Michelangeli had the smallest active repertoire of any great pianist. (In private, however, Michelangeli’s students and colleagues attested to the enormous amount of music he knew).

According to his wife’s memoirs, Michelangeli likened playing piano to being a waiter. “Waiters,” he said, “carry trays full of glasses with two hands and all goes well. But a pebble is enough to make them trip and cause everything to drop.” The “pebble” in question was often the piano itself. Like the princess distracted by the

small pea buried under fourteen mattresses, Michelangeli's hypersensitive fingers and exacting ears could ascertain the tiniest imperfections in a piano's action, tuning or voicing. "No piano in the world," he supposedly claimed, "is good enough for Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit*." In later years, Michelangeli traveled with his own Steinway Models C and D, and sometimes used both pianos in the same recital. His friend and frequent collaborator conductor, Sergiu Celibidache, witnessed four technicians "trying for a whole day to make his instrument playable for his ear, and his consciousness."

Although he was playing piano in public by age seven, Michelangeli claimed not to have liked the instrument, finding it "far too percussive." He recalled his childhood violin and organ studies in a 1977 *New York Times* article, saying how "out of these studies, I found my own way of playing the piano. I discovered that the sounds made by the organ and the violin could be translated into pianistic terms. If you speak of my tone, then you must think not of the piano but a combination of the violin and the organ." A shoulder ailment, however, forced him to give up the violin and concentrate on the piano. The boy progressed rapidly. During his mid-teens, Michelangeli introduced Schoenberg's piano music to Italian audiences. He programmed demanding fare like *Gaspard de la nuit*, Brahms's *Paganini Variations*, the Bach-Busoni *Chaconne*, Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto and Op. 111 Sonata, the Schumann and Grieg Concertos, plus Chopin's B-flat Minor Scherzo: all works that would remain his lifelong repertoire fixtures. He also spent a year at the Laverna monastery, but plans to become a Franciscan brother fell through.

In 1938, Michelangeli entered the second Eugene Ysaÿe International Music Contest in Brussels, where Emil Gilels won first prize. Michelangeli placed seventh, but his special qualities did not go unnoticed. His Grieg Concerto performance stood out. "The martial passages were handled in a marked manner, this affirming his transcendent, as well as transparent technique, especially in the rhythm," wrote the music critic from *Le Nationale* (30 May 1938). The next year Michelangeli won first prize at the Geneva International Competition, where

Ignace Jan Paderewski chaired the jury. One of the jurors, Alfred Cortot, crowned Michelangeli "a new Liszt". An incomplete recording of that composer's E-flat Concerto survives from the occasion, and Michelangeli's blazing, yet impeccably poised virtuosity, justifies Cortot's praise.

The pianist's first commercial recordings soon followed, and already he sounded like Michelangeli. His singular pianism appears fully formed, in addition to his remarkable powers of projection and concentration. The sheer beauty and control of sound he brought to his 1941 HMV Beethoven Op. 2, No. 3 Sonata totally transcends the work's purely pyrotechnical considerations. Notice, too, the slow movement of Bach's *Italian Concerto*, where the fullness of tone and specificity of shape make an indelible impression, as they also do in his Scarlatti playing. Pianist and writer, John Bell Young, aptly defined the components governing Michelangeli's imposingly groomed surface style, writing that "the cumulative power of his rhythm relies heavily on motivic definition and micro-dynamics, where even the smallest metrical (and motivic) units give way to discreet affective shading; to ignore this for a theory that a beautiful sound alone can hold a work together is nothing if not unintelligible."

Michelangeli's technical mastery has rarely, if ever, been questioned, yet critical consensus remains sharply divided over certain aspects of his musicianship. Even his friend and colleague, Sviatoslav Richter (no stranger to controversy himself!), wrote that "[Michelangeli's] fanaticism and the extreme instrumental standards he sets for himself prevent his imagination from taking flight, and stop him from expressing any real love for the work he's performing so impeccably." "He really is a modern pianist who tries to be Romantic, but he simply does not feel Romanticism," wrote Harold C. Schoenberg in the *New York Times*. "All his Romantic devices sound arbitrarily superimposed, and, as such, forced and artificial. In Michelangeli's playing there was no consecutive sweep. Lines were constantly being broken, and both the (Beethoven Op. 111) C Minor and the (Chopin) B-flat Minor Scherzo came out as a collection of details. The piano itself, and certain pianistic devices, appeared more important than the consecutive flow of the