



BEETHOVEN
Piano Concerto No. 2

SCHUBERT
Waltzes

RACHMANINOV
Cello Sonata

William Kapell
Edmund Kurtz, Cello
NBC Symphony Orchestra
Vladimir Golschmann

Recorded 1946-1952

William Kapell (1922-1953)

Beethoven (1770-1827): Piano Concerto No. 2

Schubert (1797-1828): Waltzes

Rachmaninov (1873-1943): Cello Sonata

When William Kapell was killed in a plane crash at the age of 31 on 29th October 1953 the world was robbed of a great talent. He learnt the piano with Olga Samaroff, one-time wife of Stokowski, at the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music and then at the Juilliard School. At the age of nineteen his career took off when he won the Philadelphia Orchestra's Youth Competition. He also won the Naumberg Award which supported his New York debut at Town Hall where he also gained the award for most outstanding musician under thirty. He then toured North and South America, Europe and Australia.

With his dynamic performances and Byronic beauty, it is not surprising that RCA Victor signed Kapell in 1944. Although he played a wide repertoire that included Bach, Mozart, some Beethoven, Chopin, Copland, Barber, Debussy and more, he became known for his performances of the romantic Russian repertoire, in particular Rachmaninov's *Second* and *Third Concertos* and the *Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini*, Prokofiev's *Third Concerto* and Khachaturian's *Piano Concerto*. All the most eminent conductors of the day wanted to collaborate with Kapell, and he performed concertos with such illustrious names as Eugene Ormandy, Leopold Stokowski, Leonard Bernstein, Fritz Reiner, and Serge Koussevitzky.

By 1946 the 24-year-old Kapell had already stunned audiences with his performances of large romantic piano concertos by Rachmaninov, Prokofiev and Khachaturian and had recorded the Khachaturian *Piano Concerto* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Serge Koussevitzky in April 1946. Two months

later Kapell gave a performance of Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat, Op. 19*, at Carnegie Hall with the NBC Symphony Orchestra and Vladimir Golschmann. Although he played Bach and Mozart, he rarely programmed the works of Beethoven. As a teenager, like many gifted adolescents, Kapell played Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor Op. 37*, but during his short adult career tended to avoid the *Piano Sonatas* and *Piano Concertos* with the exception of the early *Piano Concerto No. 2*, which was actually written before *Concerto No. 1 in C major, Op. 15*, but published later. It still has traces of Mozart's style, and this could be what appealed to Kapell.

The day after his Carnegie Hall performance of the Beethoven Concerto, Kapell returned to the hall with the same orchestra and conductor to record the work for RCA Victor. He had first worked with the Russian conductor Vladimir Golschmann in 1942 when Golschmann was conducting the St Louis Symphony Orchestra with whom he was principal conductor from 1931 to 1957. Although of Russian descent, Golschmann was born in Paris in 1893 where he studied, later promoting the works of *Les Six* and working for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. From 1947, when he took American citizenship, Golschmann remained in the United States where, after a long career, he died in 1972. At the time of the recording with Kapell the pianist was very much under the influence of Horowitz's style of playing, yet his performance of the Beethoven *Concerto* has a clarity and conviction closer to that of Artur Schnabel. Kapell received advice from Schnabel, but apparently this was not until after 1947. Abram Chasins wrote of Kapell's

spontaneous charm and crisp precision in this work, and he certainly seems to give a performance that is for all seasons. One can only speculate as to whether Kapell would have matured into the kind of artist who could interpret the late sonatas of Beethoven.

A year after Kapell recorded the Khachaturian *Piano Concerto*, he made one of his few chamber music recordings of Rachmaninov's *Cello Sonata in G minor, Op. 19*, with Edmund Kurtz. Kapell loved the music of Rachmaninov and whereas Rachmaninov was austere in countenance, outwardly appearing the opposite of the emotional music he wrote, Kapell seemed to epitomize the heart and soul of Rachmaninov's music with his romantic and rhapsodic persona. His natural affinity with the music of Rachmaninov made the death of the composer feel like a personal loss. On the day Rachmaninov died in 1943 Kapell was working on the *Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini* and was moved to write, "I am comforted that every day I can open the covers of some wonderful and magic world that he expressed in music. He shall never die for those who can play his works or for those fortunate enough to want to hear them". The piano part of the *Cello Sonata* is, not

surprisingly for Rachmaninov, of great difficulty, yet not only does Kapell surmount the technical obstacles with ease, he gives a musical reading that is undeniably one of chamber music rather than that of soloist or accompanist. Born in St Petersburg in 1908, Kurtz fled to the United States during the Second World War. He was principal cellist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra until 1944, when he resigned to pursue a solo career. Both Ernst Krenek and Darius Milhaud dedicated works to Kurtz, who died in London in August 2004.

Schubert's *Waltzes* and *Ländler* were popular in the 78rpm recording era and various groups of these works had been recorded by Marcelle Meyer, Alfred Cortot, Eduard Erdmann, Robert Casadesu and Monique de la Bruchollerie. The eight short works reissued here are practically the only representation of Kapell in Schubert. At the height of his career, weeks before his death, Kapell programmed Schubert's *Piano Sonata in A major, D. 959*, at his concerts in Australia, but unfortunately did not record the work.

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Producer's Note

The Beethoven Concerto and Rachmaninov Sonata were originally recorded simultaneously on wax 78 rpm masters and 33 1/3 rpm lacquer discs. Since the lacquers were quieter (though not completely noise-free) and had a wider frequency range, they were used as the basis for 45 rpm and LP releases. The present transfer of the Beethoven was taken from an LP, while the Rachmaninov came from a set of 45s. The second side of the Rachmaninov (the last half of the first movement) appears to have been originally dubbed from a noisier source than the lacquers, perhaps from a 78 rpm pressing, and a change in sound quality will be noticeable here. The Schubert works were taken from their original LP release.

Mark Obert-Thorn

8.110767

GREAT PIANISTS • KAPELL

BEETHOVEN: Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat, Op. 19

27:24

1 Allegro con brio

13:19

2 Largo

8:45

3 Rondo: Allegro scherzando

5:20

NBC Symphony Orchestra • Vladimir Golschmann

Recorded 24th June, 1946 in Carnegie Hall, New York City

Matrices: D6-RC-6004-1, 6005-1, 6006-2A, 6007-2A, 6008-1, 6009-1 and 6101-1A

First issued on RCA Victor 11-9618 through 11-9621 in album M-1132

SCHUBERT:

4 Waltz in B major, D. 145, No. 2

0:55

5 Waltz in B minor, D. 145, No. 6

1:07

6 Waltz in E major, D. 365, No. 26

0:38

7 Waltz in F major, D. 365, No. 32

1:01

8 German Dance in B flat, D. 783, No. 6

0:35

9 German Dance in B flat, D. 783, No. 7

0:44

10 Waltz in F major, D. 365, No. 34

0:47

11 Ländler in D major, D. 734, No. 1

0:59

Recorded 3rd July, 1952 in the RCA Studios, Hollywood

Matrices: E2-RC-0226-1, 0227-1, 0228-1, 0229-1, 0230-1, 0231-1, 0232-1 and 0234-1

First issued on RCA Victor LM-1791

RACHMANINOV: Cello Sonata in G minor, Op. 19

31:08

12 Lento - Allegro moderato

9:17

13 Allegro scherzando

6:15

14 Andante

5:48

15 Allegro mosso - Meno mosso - Moderato - Più vivo

9:48

Edmund Kurtz, Cello

Recorded 23rd and 24th April, 1947 in RCA Studio No. 2, New York City

Matrices: D7-RC-7455-1C, 7456-1A, 7457-2, 7458-1A, 7459-1, 7460-2A, 7461-1 and 7462-1

First issued as RCA Victor 12-0572 through 12-0575 in album M-1261

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn
Special thanks to Langdon F. Lombard for providing source material

Playing
Time
65:17

BEETHOVEN • SCHUBERT RACHMANINOV

William Kapell (1922 -1953)

Edmund Kurtz, Cello *

NBC Symphony Orchestra • Vladimir Golschmann †

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KAPELL : Beethoven, Schubert, Rachmaninov

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BEETHOVEN (1770-1827):

Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat major, Op. 19 †

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Allegro con brio | 27:24 |
| 2 | Largo | 13:19 |
| 3 | Rondo: Allegro scherzando | 8:45 |
| | Recorded on 24th June 1946 | 5:20 |

SCHUBERT (1791-1828):

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|------|
| 4 | Waltz in B major, D. 145, No. 2 | 0:55 |
| 5 | Waltz in B minor, D. 145, No. 6 | 1:07 |
| 6 | Waltz in E major, D. 365, No. 26 | 0:38 |
| 7 | Waltz in F major, D. 365, No. 32 | 1:01 |
| 8 | German Dance in B flat, D. 783, No. 6 | 0:35 |
| 9 | German Dance in B flat, D. 783, No. 7 | 0:44 |
| 10 | Waltz in F major, D. 365, No. 34 | 0:47 |
| 11 | Ländler in D major, D. 734, No. 1 | 0:59 |
| | Recorded on 3rd July 1952 | |

RACHMANINOV (1874-1942): Cello Sonata in G Minor, Op. 19 *

- | | | |
|----|--|-------|
| 12 | Lento - Allegro moderato | 31:08 |
| 13 | Allegro scherzando | 9:17 |
| 14 | Andante | 6:15 |
| 15 | Allegro mosso - Meno mosso - Moderato - Più vivo | 5:48 |
| | Recorded 23rd-24th April 1947 | 9:48 |

When William Kapell was killed in a plane crash at the age of 31 on 29th October 1953 the world was robbed of a great talent. Kapell played a wide repertoire, though he became best known for his performances of Khachaturian, Prokofiev, and Rachmaninov, with whose music he felt a special affinity. Kapell's performance of Rachmaninov's *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, one of his few chamber music recordings, combines ardour with intimacy. His recording of Beethoven's *Second Piano Concerto* affords a rare opportunity to hear the spontaneous charm and crisp precision he brought to a composer whose music he rarely programmed in concert.

MADE IN
THE EU



Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

Special thanks to Langdon F. Lombard for providing the source material for this release.

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Cover Photograph: William Kapell, circa 1949 (Private Collection)

