



MOZART

Piano Sonatas
Nos. 5 and 18

BEETHOVEN

Six Variations, Op. 34

Fifteen Variations and
a Fugue on an Original
Theme, Op. 35

“Eroica Variations”

Claudio Arrau

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791):

Piano Sonata No. 5 in G major, K. 283 • Piano Sonata No. 18 in D major, K. 576

Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827):

Six Variations in F major, Op. 34 • 15 Variations and a Fugue in E flat major, Op. 35

“Eroica Variations”

Claudio Arrau’s position among great pianists of the twentieth century may have been predestined. From the moment of his birth on 6th February 1903 in Chillán, Chile, hardly a day passed when Arrau was not exposed to music. His mother played and taught piano, and by the time he was three, the young prodigy could distinguish one composer from another. Blessed with perfect pitch, Arrau learned to read music before he knew the alphabet. At the age of five, he was ready for his début recital. The concert held at his home city’s municipal theatre, garnered nationwide attention and press, and the little pianist was hailed as “a second Mozart.” Arrau’s programme contained composers whom he would steadfastly champion during his next 83 years before the public: Schumann, Chopin, Beethoven and Mozart.

As a result of his youthful success, the Chilean government provided a stipend for the pianist to study in Berlin. Within two years after settling there, Arrau encountered the man whose teaching and overall influence had immeasurable impact on his career and life. Martin Krause was half a century older than Arrau when the unsung Chilean pianist Rosita Renard introduced Arrau to his future teacher and mentor. According to Nicholas Slonimsky in Baker’s *Biographical Dictionary*, Krause had played for Franz Liszt in 1883, “and for three years was in constant communication with the master and his pupils.” After writing a recommendation to admit Arrau into the Stern Conservatory, Krause devoted much time and energy to his protégé. He supervised Arrau’s practice regimen, looked after his general education and even planned his diet.

Krause also encouraged his student to study and absorb as wide a range of repertoire as possible. Arrau

disparaged the notion that one must be a specialist in order to make a career. “You must have the capacity to submerge yourself in different worlds,” Arrau told Horowitz. “Otherwise you are not a real interpreter, like an actor who plays himself. A real interpreter is somebody who is able to transform himself into something he is not.” Conversely, Arrau devoted much of his early career building to single-composer cycles. In Berlin in the 1930s, for instance, he performed all of Bach’s solo keyboard works in twelve concerts, and gave complete Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Weber sonata cycles as well. Arrau had toured the United States during the 1923/4 season, making a triumphant reappearance at Carnegie Hall in 1941. The concert’s success played no small part in landing the pianist an American recording contract, and the possibility of bringing large-scale works to the studio (his only pre-war recording as such was a splendid 1939 Schumann *Carnaval*, together with numerous short pieces by Liszt, Busoni, Stravinsky, Balakirev, and others). By the end of 1941, Arrau recorded Weber’s *C major Sonata*, plus the Mozart and Beethoven works on this disc.

The *Eroica Variations* was a long-time staple in Arrau’s active Beethoven repertoire. The teenage pianist included them in a recital held in the Berlin Beethovensaal on 11th March 1918. Yet the work was still relatively obscure at the time of the present recording, notwithstanding notable versions from Artur Schnabel and Lili Krauss available at that time in Europe. Following a Chicago recital, Rachmaninov congratulated Arrau backstage, commenting that he had never even heard of the *Eroica Variations* until Arrau’s

performance that day. Similarly, a sense of charting new paths dominated Beethoven's thoughts concerning both the *Eroica Variations* and its shorter companion *Variations on an Original Theme Op. 34*. In a letter to Breitkopf und Härtel, dated 18th October 1802, the composer wrote that both variation sets "have been worked out in an entirely new manner, each in another, different way. In them, every theme is elaborated in a manner peculiar to itself, different from that of the rest. Usually it is only others who tell me that I have had a new idea, as I never know it myself, but this time I myself must assure you that the manner in these two works is a complete innovation on my part." Beethoven conceived his *Op. 34* variations on a multi-tonal ground plan. The work's designated key signature, F major, applies only to the theme, the final variation, and the work's coda, while the remaining five variations are in D, B-flat, G, E-flat, and C minor. By contrast, the *Op. 35* set follows a more traditional key relationship agenda. The work commences with a starkly bold theme that generates fifteen variations, which unfold with brilliant dramatic contrast and elaborate momentum. These culminate in a fugue on the bass of the theme, followed by a coda in the form of two more variations. One might view the composition as a prototype for the finale of Beethoven's *Third Symphony*, whose variations are based on this very theme. Beethoven, in fact, first used this theme in the seventh of his twelve *Country Dances*, and also as the finale for his ballet *The Creatures of Prometheus*. Hence, the present composition's "Eroica" or "Prometheus" subtitles.

While Claudio Arrau arguably achieved his greatest postwar renown for his Beethoven interpretations, the piano music of Mozart proved something of a psychological stumbling block. In 1955 Arrau had scheduled a four-concert cycle encompassing all the sonatas, the four fantasies, two rondos, and various short works. As the performance dates approached, Arrau began experiencing memory lapses during his preparation, and subsequently cancelled the series.

Although five Mozart concertos were listed in his orchestral repertoire, he rarely played them, and not at all from 1964 until his death in 1991.

Be that as it may, Arrau eventually committed all the Mozart sonatas to disc in his last years. These weighty, seasoned performances strikingly contrast with the fiery, yet no less probing intensity of his earlier traversals of the *G major K. 283* and *D major K. 576* sonatas. His fingerwork scintillates, yet each note resonates like distinct pearls on a string. Arrau's former pupil and assistant Philip Lorenz heard his teacher give dry runs of the aborted Town Hall cycle, and gave Joseph Horowitz a revealing, first hand account of Arrau's singular pianistic approach to this composer. "You wouldn't have thought fingers could work so actively. It was a kind of playing I had never seen him do before, with the fingers pulled far back before striking. And he used a kind of flying staccato that was simply dazzling—he would throw his arms and hands at the keys, as if he were shaking water from the fingertips. The ornaments, too, were unbelievable—so fast and at the same time so correct." An organ-like quality seeps through Arrau's full-throated sonority: a far cry from the scaled down, "Dresden China Doll" sound world once deemed fashionable for Mozart's keyboard works. Arrau's fastidious attitude, however, was always channeled towards expressive ends. "Only the other day," Arrau wrote in an article for *Musical America*, "I read somewhere of a pianist being criticized for playing Mozart with, yes, if you please, 'too much feeling.' It takes all the feeling in the world only to begin to comprehend the soul of Mozart." Arrau considered the sonatas to be a mirror of Mozart's life. The gallant style pervades the G major sonata as well as the D major, where, Arrau observes, "Mozart strips his pianistic fabric to almost bare, naked outlines, and with their tone of abstract remoteness and lonely farewell, makes a last plunge into the aching roots of being in this world."

Jed Distler

Marina and Victor Ledin

Co-founders and principals of Encore Consultants, a highly regarded firm specializing in musical research, production and restoration work, Marina and Victor Ledin bring to the Naxos Historic series many years of broadcasting, archiving, preservation, research, restoration and publishing experience. Their archive includes extensive collections of one-of-a-kind photos of composers and performers, over 25,000 musical scores, and a similar quantity of rare 78rpm recordings. Their restoration philosophy is to present the great artists of the past in as clean sound as possible, utilizing the latest technology (CEDAR and SonicSolutions) in order to maximize the musical information and minimize the noise.

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Claudio Arrau (1903-1991):
1941 Mozart and Beethoven Recordings

MOZART: Piano Sonata No. 5			
in G major, K. 283 (189h)		14:47	
1	I Allegro	4:29	
2	II Andante	4:57	
3	III Presto	5:12	
(Recorded on 27th February 1941, New York, Victor Set M/DM-842 (18279-A (18282-A), 062714-1), (18279-B (18283-A), 062715-1) and (18280-A (18284-A), 062716-1))			
MOZART: Sonata No. 18			
in D major, K. 576		14:34	
4	I Allegro	4:47	
(Recorded on 25th February 1941, New York, Victor Set M/DM-842 (18280-B (18284-B), 062702-1))			
5	II Adagio	5:36	
(Recorded on 25th February 1941, New York, Victor Set M/DM-842 (18281-A (18283-B), 062703-1,2 (Unclear which take was issued – both take numbers are stamped on the disc))			
6	III Allegretto	4:01	
(Recorded on 27th February 1941, New York, Victor Set M/DM-842 (18281-B (18282-B), 062713-1))			
BEETHOVEN: 6 Variations			
in F Major, Op. 34		13:11	
7	Theme (Adagio)	1:41	
8	Variation I	1:35	
9	Variation II	0:59	
(Recorded on 24th and 25th February 1941, New York, Victor Set M/DM-892 (11-8130-A (11-8134-A), 060694-1,2 (24th) & 060694-1,3 (25th))			
10	Variation III	1:18	
11	Variation IV	1:46	
12	Variation V	1:45	
(Recorded on 25th February 1941, New York, Victor Set M/DM-892 (11-8130-B (11-8135-A), 062700-1,2,3))			
13	Variation VI and Coda	4:08	
(Recorded on 25th February 1941, New York, Victor Set M/DM-892 (11-8131-A (11-8136-A), 062701-1A,2))			
BEETHOVEN: 15 Variations and a Fugue in E flat major, Op. 35, "Eroica Variations"			23:34
14	Introduzione col Basso del tema: Allegretto vivace-Thema		3:15
15	Variation I		0:32
16	Variation II		0:45
(Recorded on 24th February 1941, New York, Victor Set M/DM-892 (11-8131-B (11-8137-A), 060685-1))			
17	Variation III		0:42
18	Variation IV		0:32
19	Variation V		1:02
20	Variation VI		0:32
21	Variation VII		0:37
22	Variation VIII		1:08
(Recorded on 24th February 1941, New York, Victor Set M/DM-892 (11-8132-A (11-8137-B), 060686-1))			
23	Variation IX		0:39
24	Variation X		0:38
25	Variation XI		0:47
26	Variation XII		0:42
27	Variation XIII		0:42
28	Variation XIV		1:26
(Recorded on 24th and 27th February 1941, New York, Victor Set M/DM-892 (11-8132-B (11-8136-B), 060687-1,2))			
29	Variation XV		4:50
(Recorded on 24th February and 18th December 1941 (December session 3A was issued), New York, Victor Set M/DM-892 (11-8133-A (11-8135-A), 060688-1,2,3))			
30	Finale. Alla Fuga: Allegro con brío		4:44
(Recorded on 24th February 1941, New York, Victor Set M/DM-892 (11-8133-B (11-8134-B), 060689-1,2,3))			

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Playing
Time
66:26

Claudio Arrau, piano

**MOZART: Piano Sonata No. 5
in G major, K. 283 (189h)**

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| 1 | I Allegro | 4:29 |
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in D major, K. 576**

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| 5 | II Adagio | 5:36 |
| 6 | III Allegretto | 4:01 |

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14:34

13:11

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| 24 | Variation X | 0:38 |
| 25 | Variation XI | 0:47 |
| 26 | Variation XII | 0:42 |
| 27 | Variation XIII | 0:42 |
| 28 | Variation XIV | 1:26 |
| 29 | Variation XV | 4:50 |
| 30 | Finale. Alla Fuga: Allegro con brio | 4:44 |

see enclosed booklet for full recording details

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