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Arthur Rubinstein Chopin Ballades & Preludes

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The first impression in playing through Rubinstein's performance of the *Preludes*, is one of tremendous vitality and brilliance: it is an essentially masculine interpretation with none of Gulda's tendency to dream over the quieter numbers, or of Novacs' waywardness. The piano tone is harder and brighter than in the two previous recordings—and somewhat shallow—and there is a change in level, beginning with No. 22, which robs both it and the last prelude of their dynamic force, but is less prejudicial to No. 23, which Rubinstein plays with great delicacy. His florid runs in No. 24 are curiously smudgy. I did not care for the heavy accentuation on the second beat of No. 1 (Novacs is best here?) and the booming bass A flats in No. 17 are perhaps too heavily accented: but Rubinstein is the only one of the three pianists to realise Chopin's intention of a haze of tone (created by the bass notes) above which the treble melody is to sound *sotto voce*.

The left-hand part of No. 3 is beautifully crisp and the *molto agitato* of No. 8 is superbly realised, with the alto melody sounding clearly through the florid treble part. No. 10 is as sparkling in tone as No. 11 is delicate, though the bass notes in the latter hardly sound at all.

No. 12 is taken at a speed which puts it only just on this side of coherence—undeniably exciting though it is—and I think Gulda succeeds best in the nocturne-like prelude following it. Rubinstein realises the full significance of the stormy prelude that follows and is splendid in the fiery outbursts of Nos. 16 and 18, and again in the ebullience of No. 19: and his playing of No. 20, those deeply emotional 13 bars, is most moving.

As a whole, this masterly performance is the best we have had so far of Chopin's great work.

A.R., *The Gramophone*, April 1955 - review of HMV LP issue of Rubinstein's *Chopin Preludes*

Transfer notes

Rubinstein's 1959 stereo recording of the *Chopin Ballades* was well made for its time - this XR remastering adds some extra flesh to the bones of a recording which occasionally lacks body, without substantially altering the tone. Following this with the 1946 recording of the *Preludes* involved a lot of work in curing pitch flutter, dealing with surface noise, and making major improvements to piano tone. In most of the preludes this is highly successful, with clean, clear tone and a very believable instrument, capturing brilliantly the superb nuances of Rubinstein's playing. Some sides proved more tricky, however, with variable surface noise and an occasional tendency to peak distortion in the higher registers. This is of course Rubinstein's only complete studio recording of the *Preludes*, and is widely regarded as one of the finest recorded performances by one of Chopin's finest exponents. This new XR remastering strips a good few years off its age, bringing us closer than ever to those amazing performances. A.R.

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STEREO

Rubinstein

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Chopin

4 Ballades
24 Preludes



Arthur Rubinstein piano

Studio recordings, 1946, 1959

Rubinstein plays Chopin

4 Ballades

- 1 No. 1 in G minor, Op. 23 (9:23)
- 2 No. 2 in F major, Op. 38 (6:42)
- 3 No. 3 in A flat major, Op. 47 (7:19)
- 4 No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52 (10:52)

24 Preludes, Op. 28

- 5 No. 1 in C major - *Agitato* (0:46)
- 6 No. 2 in A minor - *Lento* (1:55)
- 7 No. 3 in G major - *Vivace* (0:50)
- 8 No. 4 in E minor - *Largo* (1:47)
- 9 No. 5 in D major - *Molto allegro* (0:29)
- 10 No. 6 in B minor - *Lento assai* (1:49)
- 11 No. 7 in A major - *Andantino* (0:52)
- 12 No. 8 in F sharp minor - *Molto agitato* (1:44)
- 13 No. 9 in E major - *Largo* (1:17)
- 14 No. 10 in C sharp minor - *Molto allegro* (0:31)
- 15 No. 11 in B major - *Vivace* (0:35)
- 16 No. 12 in G sharp minor - *Presto* (1:00)
- 17 No. 13 in F sharp major - *Lento* (3:34)
- 18 No. 14 in E flat minor - *Allegro* (0:26)
- 19 No. 15 in D flat major - *Sostenuto* (4:31)
- 20 No. 16 in B flat minor - *Presto con fuoco* (1:00)
- 21 No. 17 in A flat major - *Allegretto* (3:37)
- 22 No. 18 in F minor - *Molto allegro* (0:42)
- 23 No. 19 in E flat minor - *Vivace* (1:20)
- 24 No. 20 in C minor - *Largo* (1:34)
- 25 No. 21 in B flat major - *Cantabile* (1:51)
- 26 No. 22 in G minor - *Molto agitato* (0:42)
- 27 No. 23 in F major - *Moderato* (1:06)
- 28 No. 24 in D minor - *Allegro appassionato* (2:17)

Arthur Rubinstein piano

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XR remastering by
Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Arthur Rubinstein

Chopin Ballades

Recorded 28/29 April 1959,
Manhattan Center, New York City
Issued as RCA LP LSC-2370
A stereo recording

Chopin Preludes

Recorded 11, 18 & 25 June 1946
RCA Studio 2, New York City
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