



AUDIOPHILE EDITION

Wolfgang Amadeus
MOZART

Piano Concerto No. 17
in G major, K. 453

Piano Concerto No. 27
in B flat major, K. 595

Walter Klien, Piano

Minnesota Orchestra
Stanisław Skrowaczewski

Wolfgang Amadeus
MOZART
(1756–1791)

	Piano Concerto No. 17 in G major, K. 453 (1784)	31:10
1	I. Allegro	11:59
2	II. Andante	11:26
3	III. Allegretto – Presto	7:43
	Piano Concerto No. 27 in B flat major, K. 595 (1791)	30:08
4	I. Allegro	13:53
5	II. Larghetto	7:58
6	III. Allegro	8:57
	Total Time:	62:10

Walter Klien, Piano
Minnesota Orchestra
Stanisław Skrowaczewski

The piano concerto was the category in which Mozart most consistently excelled, in which he most successfully combined elements of virtuosity and depth, of chamber music and symphonic style, of regard for his public and for personal expression. All but six of his piano concertos were written for his own use, and, as it happens, all six of the exceptions were written for female performers. In February 1776, while still resident in Salzburg, he composed the Concerto No. 7 in F major for three pianos and orchestra (K. 242) for Countess Lodron and her two daughters; two months later he produced the Concerto No. 8 in C major (K. 246) for another noblewoman, Countess Lützow, and the following January he wrote the first of his truly great concertos, No. 9 in E flat (K. 271) for a visiting Frenchwoman, Mlle Jeunehomme. In the remarkable year 1784, by then settled in Vienna and married to Constanze Weber, Mozart wrote no operas and no symphonies, but produced one string quartet (the beloved 'Hunt' Quartet in B flat, K. 458) and no fewer than six piano concertos, of which one (No. 18 in B flat, K. 456) was composed for the celebrated blind performer Maria Theresia Paradis, a goddaughter of the Empress, and two (No. 14 in E flat, K. 449, and No. 17 in G major, K. 453) were for one of the most talented of his own pupils, Barbara Ployer.

This remarkable production continued apace through 1786, by the end of which year the cycle initiated in 1784 comprised a round dozen concertos, but 1784 holds the record for the number of piano concertos Mozart created in any single year. All these 1784 concertos are stunning works, and of course, Mozart took those he wrote for Ployer and Paradis into his own repertoire. To a degree almost as remarkable as that shown by the three valedictory symphonies composed in the summer of 1788, each of these concertos has its own distinctive character which sets it apart from its companion works of the same year, and of these No. 17 in G major is perhaps the most intriguing of all. It was completed on 12 April 1784, and is scored for flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns and strings in addition to the solo piano.

If the keys of C minor, D minor and G minor held dramatic, passionate and tragic connotations for Mozart (who wrote only two symphonies and two concertos in minor keys), the key of G major may be said to connote an expansive good humour. It is in that vein, in any event, that this Concerto opens and closes. The opening of the first movement, indeed, is one of the most ingratiating and richly melodic such sections to be found in any of Mozart's works, and is hardly less remarkable for the colours achieved with such modest orchestral means. Nothing is held back; suspense has no part in the scheme of this music, which unfolds, as the eminently quotable Donald Francis Tovey observed, 'in the most intellectual vein of high comedy'. To which one need only add the further observation that neither the intellectual nor the comedic element here rules out warmth of heart.

For all the solid pleasure afforded by the first movement, it hardly prepares the listener for the altogether more profound character of the great *Andante* that follows. The music of the slow movement might be said to compensate for Mozart's inactivity in the realm of opera during the year in which this Concerto was composed: it suggests an extended aria or, more aptly a *scena* in its ruminative character, its dramatic pauses and the obligato passages for the various winds. Arthur Hutchings, in his book on the Mozart concertos, noted a resemblance to the soprano aria 'Et incarnatus est' in the great *Mass in C minor* (K. 427) left unfinished in 1783. Mozart used the variation form for the finales of only two of his piano concertos, this one and No. 24 in C minor (K. 491), which came along two years later. The theme of this enchanting *Allegretto* suggests to many listeners – by its general character more than any specific parallel – the music associated with Papageno in *The Magic Flute* (1791). Papageno, of course, was a bird catcher, and there happens to be an avian connection here, in that Mozart trained his pet Starling to sing something reasonably close to the theme on which the five variations are based. (For a time the work was even known as the 'Starling' Concerto.) The writing for the winds is almost

as captivating as the material for the piano itself, and the last of the variations, following an unexpectedly introspective episode in G minor, is an especially cheerful irruption, changing the tempo to *Presto* and leading to a coda which carries clear enough pre-echoes of the Papageno-Papagena duet.

After completing the aforementioned cycle of twelve Viennese concertos with No. 25 in C major (K. 503) in December 1786, Mozart waited some 14 months to write another piano concerto (No. 26 in D major, K. 537, the so-called 'Coronation' Concerto, February 1788), and then allowed nearly three years to pass before he brought this grand series to a close with No. 27 in B flat (K. 595), completed on 9 January 1791, and scored for the same instrumentation as No. 17. This work stands alone, not only in terms of its chronological separation from the other piano concertos, but because its content and character make it unique in this list of works.

This is the most deeply personal of all Mozart's concertos, but in most subtle ways. Here the overt drama of the two concertos in minor keys (No. 20 in D minor, K. 466, and No. 24 in C minor, K. 491) is replaced by what has been described variously as 'a more personal and notably resigned accent' and a feeling of 'subdued gravity'. The concert from 4 March 1791, in which Mozart gave the first performance of this work (not one of his own 'academies', but one given by the clarinetist Joseph Bahr), was his last such appearance before the Viennese public, and the valedictory nature of this music is all but impossible to overlook. Alfred Einstein wrote that 'it was not in the Requiem that Mozart said his last word... but in this work, which belongs to a species in which he also said his greatest.' Einstein noted further the appropriateness of the address of the hall in which the Concerto was introduced: the *Himmelfortgasse*, the 'Road to the Gate of Heaven'.

The first movement, like that of the Symphony No. 40 in G minor, is prefaced by a single bar which immediately sets the mood. The four themes presented in the opening *tutti* are notable not for their contrast, but for their consistency in terms of character. Alfred Orel pointed out references in this music to Osmin's aria from *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (1782) and the finale of the *Jupiter* Symphony (1788), with the suggestion that these 'serve, the first to contrast the theme's resignation with the old hope of victory, the second to recall past battles'. As if Mozart had – with his infallible taste and total absence of self-congratulatory display, to be sure – set the precedent for Richard Strauss's retrospective look at himself (at about the same age) in *Ein Heldenleben!*

In achieving and sustaining a sense of all-pervasive serenity with the simplest of means, the slow movement might be said to convey another aspect of resignation. The finale is dominated by a naive, childlike theme which Mozart was to use again, as soon as he completed the Concerto, for the song 'Sehnsucht nach dem Fruhling' (K. 596, dated 14 January 1791, better known by its first line, 'Komm, lieber Mai...'); in this work, however, the gaiety as well as the drama is somewhat subdued and touched by a certain poignancy which provides a bond between these elements.

Richard Freed

Walter Klien

Born in Graz, Austria, Walter Klien (1928–1991) started playing the piano when he was five years old. He studied with Josef Dichler at the Vienna Academy of Music and with Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli and Paul Hindemith. At an early age he won prizes at such important international piano competitions as the Busoni in Bolzano, the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud, in Paris and the Bösendorfer in Vienna. From 1954 he toured all over Western and Eastern Europe, North and South America, South Africa, Japan, the Far East and the former USSR, and made regular appearances at major festivals in Vienna, Edinburgh, Salzburg, Berlin, Bonn, Prague, Lucerne, Barcelona, Prades and Marlboro, US, where Rudolf Serkin made him a faculty member in 1972.

He performed with the majority of the world's top orchestras – the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonics, the Philadelphia and Cleveland Orchestras, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia, the London Philharmonic, the Royal Philharmonic and the London Symphony Orchestras – under such conductors as Eugene Ormandy, Joseph Keilberth, Erich Leinsdorf, Bernard Haitink and Jerzy Semkow. He recorded for Vox and its subsidiary Candide all of Mozart's piano works (for which he was awarded the Wiener Flötenuhr Prize in 1969), those of Brahms, all the Schubert sonatas, major works by Schumann, and Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* & B flat Rondo, which was his first recording with a major American orchestra (the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra).

Stanisław Skrowaczewski and the Minnesota Orchestra

Stanisław Skrowaczewski (1923–2017) began to play the piano and violin at the age of four, composed his first symphonic work at seven, gave his first public piano recital when he was eleven, and two years later played and conducted Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 with the Lviv Musical Association; two of his compositions were performed by the Lviv Philharmonic Orchestra in 1940. He studied composition, conducting, musicology and philosophy at the Lviv Musical Academy and University, completing his studies at the Conservatory in Kraków in 1945. A hand injury sustained during the war terminated his keyboard career, after which he concentrated on composing and conducting. He was appointed conductor of the Wrocław Philharmonic Orchestra in 1946 and in the following year won the Szymanowski Prize for Composition, which enabled him, with the help of a French government grant, to study composition with Nadia Boulanger and conducting with Paul Kletzki in Paris.

On returning to Poland in 1949 Skrowaczewski served as chief conductor of the Katowice Philharmonic Orchestra from 1949 to 1954 and of the Kraków Philharmonic Orchestra from 1954 to 1956. He took the first prize in the International Conductors' Competition of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome, in 1956, and as a result was appointed chief conductor of the Warsaw National Philharmonic Orchestra, Poland's leading orchestra. At the invitation of George Szell he made his American debut in 1958 with the Cleveland Orchestra, which led to engagements with the New York Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestras and to his appointment as music director of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra (now the Minnesota Orchestra) in 1960, the year in which he left Poland to settle in America. Skrowaczewski remained with the Minnesota Orchestra for 19 years, conducting it in a wide repertoire as well as touring and recording for the Mercury and Vox labels amongst others. He resigned from this post in 1979 to concentrate more on composing and guest conducting, but returned to a permanent position in 1984 when he was appointed chief conductor of the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester, serving until 1991. Following his departure, Skrowaczewski developed a close relationship with the Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra in Germany and was appointed conductor laureate of the Minnesota Orchestra.

The Minnesota Orchestra is a GRAMMY Award-winning orchestra, founded in 1903 as the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. During its existence it has been led by famous chief conductors such as Eugene Ormandy, Antal Doráti, Stanisław Skrowaczewski, Sir Neville Marriner and Eiji Oue.

Marc Aubort and Joanna Nickrenz – Elite Recordings

Marc Aubort was born in Switzerland and began working in the field of audio recording in the late 1940s, starting off with wire recorders. Over the years he has used many of the analogue and digital recording formats that were available, yet his overall technique and approach to recording remained unchanged. He used only two or sometimes three microphones rather than the multiple microphone set-ups that were becoming popular in the 1970s; he also became one of the first adopters of Dolby noise reduction technology. He explained: 'keeping in mind that you have two ears, two microphones are what you need for stereo'.

After having worked for the US label Vanguard making recordings in Europe, he moved to the US and started the independent company Elite Recordings in 1969 and invited Joanna Nickrenz to join him. Nickrenz was a concert pianist and had worked with several orchestras and chamber music ensembles. She was interested in the process of editing and joined Elite Recordings first as an assistant but soon became a full partner, producer and editor. She gained the nickname 'Miss Razor Ears' because of her phenomenal pitch and perfect knowledge of the scores.

In 1984 Marc Aubort and Joanna Nickrenz won the GRAMMY Award for 'Producer of the Year, Classical' and Nickrenz – who was nominated eight times over the years – received it once more in 1997. The 'Producer of the Year, Classical' category was introduced in 1979 and Joanna Nickrenz was the first woman to receive a nomination.

Elite Recordings worked with more than 45 conductors over 32 years but also with jazz and pop musicians such as Bob Dylan. Their fame became legendary and the recordings they made of American orchestras for Vox during the 1960s and 70s are outstanding and gained great popularity. For audiophiles they are among the finest sounding orchestral recordings in the history of classical music and have achieved collector status.



The recordings of American orchestras produced for VOX by the legendary Elite Recordings team of Marc Aubort and Joanna Nickrenz are considered by audiophiles to be among the very finest sounding orchestral recordings ever made.

Wolfgang Amadeus **MOZART** (1756–1791)

	Piano Concerto No. 17 in G major, K. 453 (1784)	31:10
1	I. Allegro	11:59
2	II. Andante	11:26
3	III. Allegretto. Presto	7:43
	Piano Concerto No. 27 in B flat major, K. 595 (1791)	30:08
4	I. Allegro	13:53
5	II. Larghetto	7:58
6	III. Allegro	8:57

Total Time: 62:10

Walter Klien, Piano
Minnesota Orchestra
Stanisław Skrowaczewski

**New 192 kHz / 24 bit ultra high definition transcriptions
of the original Elite Recordings analogue master tapes**