

MOZART

Piano Concerto No. 27 in B-flat Major, K. 595

Peter SERKIN

Rochester Philharmonic

Joseph SILVERSTEIN



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Piano Concerto No. 27 in B-flat Major,
K. 595

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|---|---------------|-------|
| 1 | I. Allegro | 14:21 |
| 2 | II. Larghetto | 10:04 |
| 3 | III. Allegro | 9:03 |

Peter Serkin, *piano*
Rochester Philharmonic
Joseph Silverstein, *conductor*

Recorded in December 1986 at Eastman Theatre,
Rochester, New York

Producers: **Steve Vining** and **Peter Serkin**

Engineers: **Steve Vining** and **Gary Rice**

Originally released as Pro Arte CDD 277 in 1987

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 27 in B flat major, K. 595* is his last such work, and its more restrained, lyrical nature proved a strong contrast to the virtuosic showpieces that had preceded it and built his reputation as both a concert artist and composer in Vienna.

By the late 1780s Mozart's financial situation had declined and his popularity in Vienna had waned. Much of his income at the time was derived from writing dance music as court composer, although he continued to compose significant works in other genres. The K. 595 Concerto was completed on January 5, 1791, according to an entry in the composer's personal catalog, after a gap of almost three years from his previous piano concerto – the longest break in the genre after he had settled in Vienna. It would be not only his final piano concerto but the last piano concerto that was performed in public during his lifetime.

Historic sources are vague about the exact date of its premiere, although the most recent research points to 4 March 1791, at a concert given un a restaurant across the street from Mozart's home at the time. The concert was associated with the clarinetist Joseph Beer; additionally,

vocal selections were performed by Aloysia Weber (the sister of Mozart's wife Constanze).

The orchestral opening is serene rather than overtly theatrical, with a sighing main theme and a few more martial or rhythmic interruptions. Harmonically, the movement is more adventurous than its surface calm suggests, with early excursions into minor keys and daring modulations in the development, giving a subtle sense of unease beneath the serenity. The scholarly consensus is that this movement ushered in what would have been a new level of maturity in Mozart's style.

The second movement Larghetto unfolds in a style that has often been compared to a hushed, introspective operatic aria for piano with an almost vocal cantabile line.

The Rondo-variations finale is related to the song "*Sehnsucht nach dem Frühling*" ("*Komm, lieber Mai*"), K. 596, giving the finale a simple, folklike charm. The principal theme of the Larghetto reappears as a secondary idea in the finale, an early example of crossmovement unification that became more common in the 19th century. Mozart also shakes up the traditional rondo form with not one but two solo cadenzas that build to returns of the theme, and emphasizes one moment in which the theme appears in the "wrong" key.

NOTES ON THE ARTIST

Pianist **Peter Serkin** (24 July 1947 – 1 February 2020) was one of the greatest players of his generation. His career was marked by innovation, bold repertoire choices, and introspection as a champion of a wide range of repertoire – from baroque to contemporary.

In 1958, at age 11, Serkin began studying at the Curtis Institute of Music, where his teachers included the Polish pianist Mieczysław Horszowski, the American virtuoso Lee Luvisi, as well as his own father, Rudolf Serkin. Following his first public performance in the summer of 1959 at the Marlboro Music Festival, and a New York debut that same fall, he quickly became a fixture on the American music scene. He would further his studies with music theorist Ernst Oster, flutist Marcel Moyse, and pianist Karl Ulrich Schnabel.

Serkin won a Grammy in 1966 at age 19 for Most Promising New Classical Recording Artist, and earned further nominations for Mozart concertos and Messiaen works. In 1968, shortly after having married

and become a father, he paused his career amid personal pressures, living in Mexico before recommitting after hearing Bach on the radio in 1971. He co-founded the chamber ensemble Tashi in 1973 with Ida Kavafian, Fred Sherry, and Richard Stoltzman. Throughout his career, he championed recent and new music by composers including Olivier Messiaen, Toru Takemitsu, Oliver Knussen, and Peter Lieberon.

Serkin appeared with the world's major symphony orchestras, including those of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, as well as with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Berlin Philharmonic, the London Symphony and Philharmonic, the New Japan Philharmonic, the English Chamber Orchestra, and the Vienna Symphony. He made numerous recordings, early on as a chamber player for Vanguard and Columbia Masterworks, then primarily as a solo artist for RCA Victor Red Seal and later for independent labels including New World and Pro Arte. His later artistic collaborations included high-profile appearances with Yo-Yo Ma and the Guarneri Quartet. His discography spanned Bach to Wuorinen, earning awards worldwide, including the Deutsche Schallplattenpreis. He taught at Juilliard, Curtis, Yale, and Bard College Conservatory, influencing many prominent pupils including Simone Dinnerstein.

Serkin pioneered the use of period fortepianos, recording late Beethoven sonatas on both modern and historical instruments as well as Schubert dances in a series of acclaimed recordings for Pro Arte.

Joseph Silverstein (21 March 1932 – 21 November 2015) began his career as a violinist, becoming one of the most distinguished such American musicians of all time. He began studies at the Curtis Institute of Music at age 12, and his teachers included Efrem Zimbalist, William Primrose, Josef Gingold, and Mischa Mischakoff. Following completion of his studies at Curtis, Silverstein played as a section musician with the Houston Symphony Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Denver Symphony Orchestra, before joining the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1955 as a section second violinist – the youngest musician in the orchestra at the time.

In 1959, he won a silver medal at the Queen Elisabeth Music Competition, and in 1960 he won the Naumburg Award from the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation. In 1962, Silverstein became BSO concertmaster, a position he held for 22 years, and in 1971 was appointed the orchestra's assistant conductor.

Silverstein enjoyed a late career as a conductor. He succeeded Maurice Abravanel as music director of the Utah Symphony in 1983 and served in that position for fourteen seasons.

In addition to teaching in Boston, he served as a professor of violin at the Curtis Institute of Music.

Beyond his many recordings as concertmaster for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Silverstein made numerous recordings with the Boston Symphony Chamber Players for RCA Victor Red Seal and Deutsche Grammophon, and as a conductor for Pro Arte, harmonia mundi France, and Tudor.

Audra Fendrick

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