

Dvorak by Rubinstein and the Guarneri Quartet

Dvořák: Quintet in A (Op. 81). Artur Rubinstein, piano; with the Guarneri Quartet. RCA stereo, LSC 3252, \$5.98.

Of the several collaborations with the Guarneri Quartet that have enabled Artur Rubinstein to acquaint still another generation with his unique abilities as a chamber music performer, this is, by all odds, my favorite. That is not because it is, necessarily, of higher truth or greater beauty than their prior performances of Schumann and Brahms, but rather for quite another reason.

The catalogues abound with Rubinstein performances of other music by Schumann and Brahms, but where

does one look for an example of his artistry vis-à-vis the works of Dvořák? High and low, I'd say, with no chance of finding it. Of course, for those with the proper esteem for Dvořák's chamber music, intimations of what Rubinstein might bring to it are not wholly lacking. It can be found in his unique recordings with Heifetz and Feuermann of the great trios by Schubert, with whom Dvořák has more affinity than with any other composer.

What that means in purely practical terms is a touch of the tonal lightness and dynamic flexibility to blend with the kind of string writing practiced by Dvořák, whether soft or loud. Being the man of discretion and taste that he is, Rubinstein is never guilty of either underestimating the importance of his younger associates or overestimating his own. Nevertheless, when the moment comes for the piano to assert itself, Rubinstein is not the least bit diffident. Those two rhythmic chords late in the first movement with which he answers their prior pronouncement by the strings is the kind of an echo that thunder is to lightning, a perfect illustration of the mailed fist in the velvet glove.

Though the Dvořák Quintet is not among the first in which public performers turn (Cesar Franck's is apt to outrank it, as well as Schumann's and Brahms's), it has enjoyed the attention, on records, of ensembles including such pianists as Clifford Curzon, Jacob Lateiner, György Sandor, and Peter Serkin. What Rubinstein and the Guarneri players bring to their collaboration are qualities of warmth, affection, enthusiasm, and insight that match precisely those attributes of human warmth, musical affection, hu-

man enthusiasm, and spiritual insight that make Dvořák unique. Certainly, the Andante in the mood of the Bohemian "dumka" (a dance alternating from sad to gay, slow to fast) adds to something of greater fervor, simply conveyed, than in any other recording. The balance of sound is excellent.

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