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Chicago Concertos



Piano Concertos by Rudolph Ganz
and John La Montaine

Ramon Salvatore, piano
Chicago Sinfonietta/Slovak Radio Symphony
Paul Freeman, conductor

DDD

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CDR 90000 028

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING
PIANO CONCERTOS BY RUDOLPH GANZ (1877–1972)
AND JOHN LA MONTAINE (b. 1920)

Ganz: Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, Op. 32 (1940)* (25:10)

- ① I. March-like: Allegro alla marcia (7:35)
- ② II. Song-like: Andante piacevole quasi improvvisando (6:53)
- ③ III. Scherzo: Dance-like (animato) (4:13)
- ④ IV. Finale: Molto Allegro (6:12)

La Montaine: Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 59 (1989) (28:51)**

- ① I. Very slow, mysterious — Bold and rhythmic (13:10)
- ② II. Gently flowing, soaringly lyrical (5:19)
- ③ III. Slow — Moderate, incisive (10:09)

Ramon Salvatore, piano Paul Freeman, conductor

*Chicago Sinfonietta **Slovak Radio Symphony TT: (54:15)



This recording is dedicated to the memory of Ramon Salvatore.

CHICAGO CONCERTOS

notes by Stephen C. Hillyer

Though stylistically miles apart, the two concertos receiving their world première recordings on this CD are connected in several ways. Both composers spent significant periods of their lives in the Chicago area: John La Montaine while growing up in suburban Oak Park (he now resides in Hollywood, California), Rudolph Ganz during most of his last seven decades, as head of the piano department and, later, as president and president emeritus of Chicago Musical College. These multi-faceted musicians became formidable pianists. La Montaine, in fact, studied piano with Ganz for a short time during the Second World War while serving in the U.S. Navy. Both men became avid mountain climbers. The two composers also share the goal of writing music that appeals to a wide audience, infusing their work with enough ingenuity and substance to satisfy the most discriminating performer. But their differences are even more striking, particularly in how they develop musical ideas. Ganz is clearly a product of the nineteenth century, La Montaine of the twentieth. Ganz's

elaborately ornamented piano writing recalls Rachmaninov and Liszt, while La Montaine embraces a wide range of territory, from polytonality to pop.

Ganz: Concerto for Piano in E-flat major, Op. 32 (1940)

Rudolph Ganz (February 24, 1877 – August 2, 1972) was born in Zurich, Switzerland. He received his initial musical training at the Zurich Conservatory, and in 1899 traveled to Berlin to study piano with Ferruccio Busoni and composition with Heinrich Urban. Although Ganz had made public appearances as pianist and cellist as a child, his debut as a mature artist took place at a concert of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in December 1899, when he performed the Beethoven *Emperor* concerto and Chopin E minor concerto. The following year he conducted the Berliners in his own First Symphony.

In 1900, Ganz came to America, and from 1901 to 1905 taught piano at the Chicago Musical College, where he would return as director from 1929 to 1954. After 1905, he made concert tours in Europe and the United

States. In 1921 he became music director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, where he remained until 1927, having led its first recordings for the Victor label.

From 1938 to 1949 Ganz conducted the New York Philharmonic's Young People's Concerts and led the orchestra at Lewisohn Stadium during the summer season. He also presided over the San Francisco Young People's Concerts at this time and guest-conducted the symphony orchestras of Chicago (where he also frequently appeared as piano soloist), Los Angeles, and Denver.

Throughout this remarkably diverse and fruitful career, Ganz remained a tireless champion of contemporary music, which in his case meant anything from Saint-Saëns, Busoni, or Griegs in the early decades, to Bartók, Webern, and Cage later on. Ravel dedicated his most difficult piano piece to Ganz, the "Scarbo" movement from *Gaspard de la nuit*. Griegs did the same with his most popular work, *The White Peacock*.

Rudolph Ganz's own musical idiom is cosmopolitan, conservative, and—especially in the work at hand—uncommonly witty, as was the man himself. The most famous example of

the Ganz wit occurred in 1906 when he helped his friend Artur Rubinstein, then embarked on his first American tour, reply to a lady in Washington who had confused the young Pole with the venerable Russian composer Anton Rubinstein. She had requested that *Kammerlei-Ostrow* be included in his recital program. Since Rubinstein did not feel up to corresponding in English at that time, Ganz offered to reply for him. The Washington lady received the following cordial note:

Dear Madame:

Thank you for your kind letter. I would be delighted to play for you my celebrated *Kammerlei-Ostrow*. Unfortunately, it will not be possible. I am dead.

Sincerely yours,

A. Rubinstein

The Piano Concerto in E-flat was one of several works commissioned by the Chicago Symphony to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary; the others included Stravinsky's Symphony in C and compositions by Carpenter, Casella, Glière, Harris, Kodály, Miaskovsky, Milhaud, and Walton. The première took place in Orchestra Hall on February 20, 1941, with Ganz as soloist. Notable subsequent performances

were given by Mary Sauer and the Chicago Symphony under Jean Martinon in November 1968 (as part of a concert celebrating the Illinois Sesquicentennial), Sheldon Shkolnik and the St. Louis Symphony under Leonard Slatkin in July 1971 (to honor the fiftieth anniversary of Ganz's appointment as conductor of that orchestra), and on February 26, 1996, by Ramon Salvatore and the Chicago Sinfonietta under Paul Freeman, in observance of "Rudolph Ganz Day in Illinois" (February 24—Ganz's birthday—officially so designated "in perpetuity" by Gov. Otto Kerner in 1967). The composer supplied the following program notes for the world première:

Recalling my first appearances with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra [in the Auditorium Theatre] in the Fall of 1903 under Theodore Thomas, and realizing that I have had ten subsequent artistic cooperations, or may I say music-makings with Theodore Thomas' successor, my good friend, Dr. Frederick Stock, I feel most happy that he should have asked me to write a work for piano and orchestra as my contribution to the [Golden] Jubilee Season.

Here it is: A Concerto in four movements, the titles of the different

parts being: I. March-like; II. Song-like; III. Dance-like; IV. Finale (to avoid saying finale-like).

The principal theme of the March-movement is greatly developed in the middle section of the piece and for this reason does not appear in the Recapitulation. But it serves again as a final coda. The second theme (lyrical) contrasts the rhythmical figure of the March-theme. It is introduced by the piano and then repeated by the violoncellos in inverted form. A short coda leads into the development during which section the March-idea appears in both augmented and contracted form: The movement being in E-flat, the keys presenting the second theme and its repetition are respectively B-flat and G major. Dissonance, if any, is not for the purpose of appearing daring or particularly progressive. It is logically developed and should add spice to otherwise plain, straightforward musical expression.

The second movement permits the solo instruments to introduce the principal song-like idea which the string orchestra and a few single wind instruments continue in the same mood. A middle section is based upon a rhythmical figure taken from the first four notes of the main theme. 3/4-like figures char-

charmingly (or at least are supposed to) with the sterner attitude of the orchestra. A somewhat altered repetition of this part leads into a climax, during which different instruments boldly announce the return of the first subject in greatly augmented fashion. The abrupt ending of the climax is followed by a short cadenza which leads into the recapitulation of the main theme, again in G major, but played by woodwinds. However, the solo instrument picks up the melody after four bars. While the orchestra repeats its section of the song-like continuation, the piano decorates the picture with scale-like patterns in fast sixteenth triplets whereas the patterns during the earlier presentation were in sixteenths only. At the conclusion of the movement the elf-like charm-calls reappear, and are imitated by the hesitatingly mocking celesta. [A glockenspiel is used on this recording.] Then the sounds die down and quiet reigns.

The Scherzo is some kind of a patriotic outburst, some rather odd ode to the revered State of Illinois, and to Secretary Edward J. Hughes in particular. The accompaniment patterns of the beginning and of the middle section are musicalized Illinois automobile licenses, 230893

being my 1940 (in A minor) and 501127 being my 1941 (in A major) license. They serve as ostinati for nearly the entire Scherzo. It was my intention to use Dr. Stock's 1940 license as the trio pattern. My request for this important information was heeded too late for incorporation. The Scherzo was practically finished when the straggling number arrived. But Dr. Stock's license number is heard at the end of the movement as a longing, sad little viola solo—the latecomer's fate.

The Finale (in C minor) does not call for any particular description, the themes being very outspoken. The principal subject is rhythmic, the contrasting second theme necessarily lyrical. The development is climaxed by an augmentation of the second subject (four horns) accompanied by a rhythmical pattern-dialogue between the piano and the orchestra. A long crescendo built upon the first three notes of the opening bars of the concerto brings back the March-theme of the first movement in unison of all instruments including the solo piano. A final coda-Scherzo (6-8) is made up of the March-like subject (piano) and the second Finale Theme (pizzicato strings). The first bar of the concerto has the last word.

LA MONTAINE: Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 59 (1989)

John La Montaine was born March 17, 1920 in Oak Park, Illinois, and studied theory with Stella Roberts at the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago. At the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, he studied composition with Bernard Rogers and Howard Hanson and later worked with Bernard Wagenaar at Juilliard and Nadia Boulanger at the American Academy in Fontainebleau, near Paris. During Arturo Toscanini's last four seasons with the NBC Symphony (1950-54), La Montaine served as the orchestra's keyboard player, a stint immortalized in celebrated recordings of *La Mer* and *Iberia* in which the young composer can be heard playing celesta. La Montaine has been honored by two Guggenheim fellowships, commissions from the Ford and Koussevitzky foundations, and a season as composer-in-residence at the American Academy in Rome. His compositions range from symphonic to chamber music, from ballet to opera, from medieval to romantic to dodecaphonic and serial, to hymn and folk song. Two major song cycles for soprano and orchestra, *Song of the Rose of Sharon* and *Fragments from the Song of Songs*, have been widely per-

formed by Leontyne Price, Adele Addison, Eleanor Steber, and Jessye Norman. His First Piano Concerto, given its world première by Jorge Bolet and the National Symphony under Edward Mitchell in November 1958, won the Pulitzer Prize the following year, and in subsequent seasons was presented in Boston, Cincinnati, San Francisco, and elsewhere. His *Overture: From Sea to Shining Sea* was the first work commissioned for a U.S. presidential inauguration, that of John F. Kennedy.

La Montaine's music has won the admiration of critics and the affection of a wide public. But it is not represented on compact disc to the extent befitting a composer of his stature, a situation which fortunately has taken a turn for the better in recent years. 1992 brought Ramon Salvatore's widely-praised "Music in the American Grain" CD (Cedille CDR 90000 010), which contained the early Piano Sonata; this year has brought the Flute Concerto (Premier PR 1045), and at this writing, Citadel Records plans to reissue on CD the First Piano Concerto (formerly on CR1). Now Cedille offers the Fourth. One hopes that *Birds of Paradise* will eventually reappear on Mercury Living Presence. *Wilcoer-*

ness Journal, a symphony for bass-baritone, organ, and orchestra commissioned for the opening of Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., was recently released on CD and cassette by Fredonia Discs, the composer's own label (3947 Fredonia Drive, Hollywood, CA 90068).

Monroe Levin's essay "Music in the American Grain," written for the eponymous CD mentioned above, points out that La Montaine, like Robert Palmer and Hurter Johnson, relates more to the "Harris" half of the "Copland-Harris" School:

All three were, like Roy Harris, alumni of Howard Hanson's Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, where an inland variety of modernism prevailed. All tended to follow Harris (and Béla Bartók) in pursuing the elusive spirit of native folksong rather than quoting it directly. . . . There is joy and triumph in this music of Inner America, but little of Copland's urbane wit and irony.

La Montaine feels that all of his works, however diverse, are related one to another, and there are frequent references to material that appears elsewhere in his compositions.

La Montaine's Fourth Piano Concerto is that rarity in this century (or any

other, for that matter): a listener-friendly work that immediately appeals with memorable tunes and catchy rhythms, yet grows increasingly impressive with each rehearing, revealing skillful workmanship and a deep-seated musical logic. Commissioned for the Waterbury (Connecticut) Symphony's fiftieth anniversary, the concerto received its world premiere in April 1990 from that orchestra, with the composer as soloist, under the direction of Frank Brieff. (A fellow alumnaus of the NBC Symphony, Brieff served as principal violist under Toscanini from 1948 to 1952.) Ramon Salvatore gave the midwest premiere in October 1993 in Palatine, Illinois, with the Harper Symphony Orchestra led by Frank Winkler.

The concerto is in three movements. In the composer's note prefacing the score, La Montaine writes that the Fourth Concerto is "significantly based on three of my song settings: a popular song, a sonnet, and an incantation." (Texts follow these notes.)

The first movement opens with a slow, mysterious introduction scored for muted brass, suspended cymbals, crotales, and strings. The piano soloist then weaves a series of

ascending polytonal arpeggios derived from this introduction, a further variant of which will be heard in a cadenza-like passage toward the end of the movement. Both contrasting themes in this sonata-allegro movement are in F minor and are sometimes combined or interwoven. Theme A, which stems from a song La Montaine wrote for an African-American pop group, is harmonized by a series of descending parallel triads. Theme B comprises a syncopated saccato figure introduced by low woodwinds in canor. Following a short cadenza-like statement by the soloist marked *quasi recitativo*, piano and orchestra bring the movement to a decisive close.

Marked "Gently flowing, soaringly lyrical," the haunting theme of the second hovers between E major and the relative-minor key of C-sharp and also refers back to earlier work. La Montaine originally set the fifth ("Shall I compare thee") of his *Six Sonnets of Shakespeare* to this eminently singable tune, a melody which later appeared in his solo piano piece *A Summer's Day*. In the concertante setting that concerns us here, the expansive theme builds to a grandiose climax, the movement

eventually dying down to a *poco più lento* close.

The third movement begins, like the first, with a quiet, mysterious introduction (muted horns, strings, timpani). A sudden crescendo brings the music to a rapid boil, preparing the soloist's dramatic entrance. The two-segment principal theme (F-B-flat-B natural, followed by an insistent eighth-note motif) recurs several times during the course of the movement, rondo fashion. True to form, La Montaine had used this same motif earlier in his song *Invocation* and in the *Invocation for Jazz Band*. A reflective section follows, leading to a brilliant cadenza. The coda recalls theme A from the first movement, after which is heard a powerful *ritenuto* statement of the repeated-eighth-note motif, slowed now to quarter-note triplets, and leading to an affirmative, resounding close.

Stephen C. Hillier, a publications editor for Northwestern University, attended Chicago Musical College during the 1960s. For many years he was president of The Fritz Reiner Society (which is no longer active) and editor of its magazine, The Podium. Mr. Hillier's discography of French conductor-composer Jean Martinon was privately published in 1995.

The texts of the three songs are as follows:

Why not let me share that very special part
of you?

Why do fleeting hours to talk and touch
seem all too few?

Why do hidden thoughts and secret fears
keep us apart?

Why not share that special part? Why not
share your heart?

Night and day we stay away, it's always just
the same.

Why don't we agree to just forget this crazy
game?

Why, O why deny the growing love between
us two?

Let's stop this endless game of cat and
mouse and start anew.

Why not share that special part?

Why not share your heart?
— The Composer

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of
May,

And summer's lease hath all too short a date:

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;

And ev'ry fair from fair sometime declines,

By chance, or nature's changing course
untrimm'd;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,

Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest,

Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his
shade

When in eternal lines to time thou growest;

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

— Shakespeare

O shrewd and beak-ed Thoth, Scribe of the
Gods,

Inventor of numbers, Measurer of Time,—

O god of wisdom and magic, we invoke thy
calculating craft

To teach us the statistics of destruction
And the dimensions of oblivion.

O sun-clad Ceres, Goddess of fruitfulness
and plency,

Lover of all green things,

Custodian of eager bud and boastful harvest,

Stay with us,

Share with us thy creed of fruit trees and
grain,

And teach our soil the song of grass,

That it may forget the song of lead.

O red-bearded Thor, with iron gloves and
belt of strength:

Helper and defender in war, Thunderer,

Return to us, and bless us with the gentler
ways

Of an older barbarism.

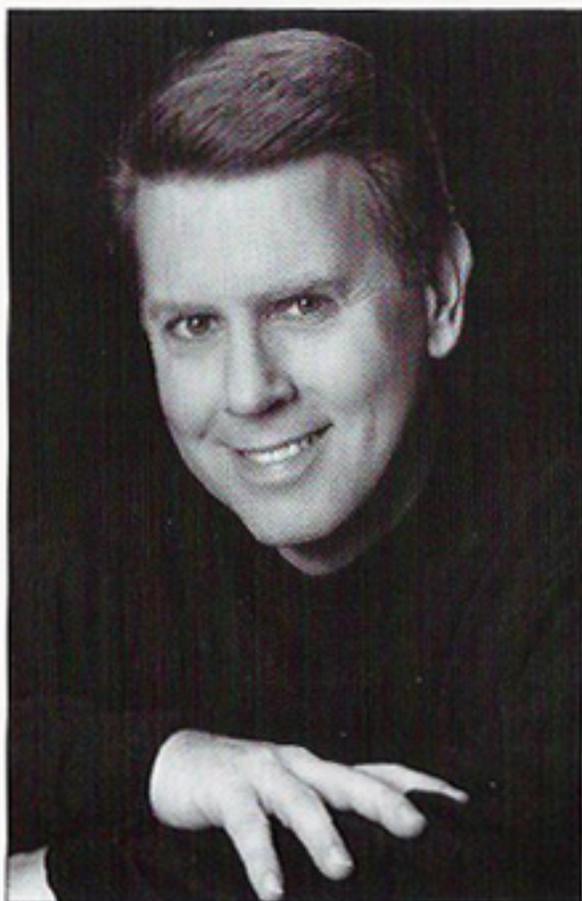
Confine us to the limited scourge of thy
magic hammer:

And forge us Nordic bolts

That we may un-remember the newer thun-
der.

— The Composer

*(written the week of the explosion of the first
atomic bomb)*



Ramon Salvatore
(1944-1996)

🎵 **About Ramon Salvatore** 🎵

Described by the *Chicago Tribune* as "one of Chicago's most important musical ambassadors," and lauded by *The New York Times* for his "bravura performances" and "splendid audacity" in programming, Ramon Salvatore commanded national attention as a pianist who combined rhythmic panache and warm lyric cogency with a pioneering spirit. Praised for his poetic standard repertoire performances, he also won acclaim as a musical trailblazer, exploring still-undiscovered American terrain: the virtuoso piano music of our nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

A recipient of a major grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1990, Mr. Salvatore presented a three-concert series titled "American Piano Music in the Grand Tradition" at New York's Weill Recital Hall, which he repeated at the Chicago Cultural Center. In that series, Salvatore uncovered over 120 years of masterly keyboard works that reflected international traditions, yet spoke with a distinctively American voice. Included were such diverse composers as Amy Beach, Paul Bowles, Aaron Copland, John Corigliano, Arthur Foote, John La Montaine, Hunter Johnson, Robert Palmer, Phillip Ramey, and Wallingford Riegger. Most of the music from that landmark series has been recorded and enthusiastically reviewed on the Cedille and Premier labels. Mr. Salvatore also presented recitals at the National Gallery in Washington, New York's Merkin Hall, Chicago's Orchestra Hall, the Dame Myra Hess Series in Chicago and Los Angeles, and Detroit's Cranbrook Series, and concertized widely abroad, giving recitals in Spain, Morocco, Scotland, and England.

Ramon Salvatore died on August 5, 1996. This recording is dedicated to his memory.

🎵 *Also with Ramon Salvatore on Cedille Records* 🎵

Copland Piano Music – Romantic & Modern — CDR 90000 021

"Salvatore's performances are very impressive . . . a must for Copland fans." — *Fortare*

Music in the American Grain — CDR 90000 010

"The performances are absolutely brilliant."

— *Chicago Tribune*

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