

THE GRAND ECCENTRIC OF THE CONCERT HALL

Vladimir Horowitz, the 'fire-eating virtuoso' who gives his 50th-anniversary concert at Carnegie Hall today, behaves like no other artist. But no other artist produces such music.

By Helen Epstein

Vladimir Horowitz performs no more than 20 times each year, only on Sunday afternoon at 4, and only in places he likes. He does not play in Denver because he finds the altitude disagreeable or in St. Louis because he thinks the acoustics of its hall compare badly with those of his bathroom. He does not play in Poughkeepsie, where "the public is not musical enough," or in Montana or Idaho, which he has no desire to see. He does not play in Europe because he dislikes flying long distances and, although he would like to visit Japan, the mere thought of getting there casts a pall over his large, extraordinary face. "You fly Friday and arrive on Saturday," he says, as if announcing a funeral. "You have to stay 10 days to be right again and that scares me."

The cities Horowitz chooses to visit must have a hall free both Sunday and a preceding day at 4 so that the pianist may rehearse, verify lighting, test the acoustics and position his piano accordingly. In Carnegie Hall, his chosen spot has, since 1965, been marked onstage by a "Horowitz screw," which other pianists look for when their pianos are positioned. The hall must, moreover, hold at least 1,800 people willing to pay up to \$25 per ticket, the highest single admission price regularly asked by any recitalist. "My expenses are very high," explains Horowitz, and indeed they are.

Wherever the 73-year-old pianist performs, he is accompanied by his wife, Wanda, the brisk, strong-minded daughter of the late conductor Arturo Toscanini; his well-heeled tour manager, Giovanni Scimonelli; his valet, advance man and truck driver, Duane Lewin, and his "baby," a gleaming Steinway concert grand that was a wedding present from the company in 1933.

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He stays only in hotels which exactly replicate the conditions of his New York City town house. His bedroom windows must be blacked out and the telephone disconnected so that Horowitz can sleep till noon. The living room must be large enough to hold a second concert grand. The kitchen must have an oven so that Horowitz's meals may be prepared as they are at home and, when the pianist gets fussy, as he did before a Miami Beach concert last year, he may refuse to perform unless a certain kind of food (in this case, fresh gray sole) is made available.

This afternoon, at 4, Horowitz is donating his services to a benefit concert for the New York Philharmonic. It is the 50th anniversary of his American debut and 25 years since he last performed with an orchestra. As usual, the pianist had certain requirements. In a blithe reversal of traditional concert protocol, Horowitz told the New York Philharmonic not only that he wanted Eugene Ormandy to conduct but also what he wanted the orchestra to play. Because Horowitz does not like Avery Fisher Hall ("I will never play there. Never!"), the Philharmonic will bestir itself to Carnegie Hall. And because Horowitz is under contract to RCA Records while the Philharmonic records for Columbia, that company has graciously ceded its recording rights, a gesture that will cost them one of the potentially best-selling classical records in recent times.

For a full 50 years now, Vladimir Horowitz has had it his way. When he first appeared on the American stage, in 1928, audiences went wild. "A mob is a mob; blood is blood," New York Times critic Olin Downes wrote. "The call of the wild is heard whether it is a savage beating a drum or a young Russian, mad with excitement, physical speed and power, pounding on a keyboard."

For the next seven years—the Depression years—Horowitz played to 350 sold-out houses in the United States, earning more than a quarter of a million dollars each season. Then, in 1935, he underwent what was variously re-

ported as an appendectomy, phlebitis and "a crackup." He disappeared into Switzerland, and when he began to play again in 1938, critics found his performances even better than before. For 15 years he dazzled audiences, provoking composer and critic Virgil Thomson to grumble, "If one had never heard before the works Mr. Horowitz played, one might easily have been convinced that Bach was a musician of the Leopold Stokowski type, that Brahms was a sort of flippant Gershwin who had worked in a high-class nightclub and that Chopin was a gypsy violinist." The majority of critics, however, adored him. "He has transformed himself from a fire-eating virtuoso into a self-critical, searching artist," wrote Howard Taubman in January 1953.

The following month, in Minneapolis, Horowitz canceled a recital and did not play again in public for 12 years. During this period, people said he was in a sanatorium, that he had become a drug addict, that he believed his hands were made of porcelain that would break if he touched a keyboard, and, not least, that he had died. The pianist did little to dispel any of these rumors. "I wouldn't be surprised if some originated in his own living room," says a close associate.

In 1965, Horowitz made front-page news simply by returning to the stage. "He has the best sense of promotion I've ever come across in any artist," says his press agent. "He's aware of the dangers of overexposure. The whole image he projects is that you never know whether or not his hands will fall off." In 1968, Horowitz caught cold in Boston and retired for another three years. Since 1972, however, he has been concertizing regularly in places like Ann Arbor and Bloomington, adding thousands of "the young people" to the public which has grown old with him.

"I don't know of any other artist who grips an audience the way he does," says Harold Schonberg. "There's a kind of inner tension, an electricity, in the man that's scary. It's like you're fooling around with 10,000 volts. You know this artist is unique. There are a

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Photograph by Ernst Haas.

Horowitz in his Manhattan town house. "I want, when I cry on the piano, when I laugh, that the public also cries and laughs. It takes time but in the end they will be with me."



lot of good ones but Horowitz is unique."

Up close, Vladimir Horowitz is a surprisingly slight man with shrewd, lively eyes. His hands are not particularly large, nor are his fingers unusually long. His ears are enormous. He likes to talk and does so with great animation, in a throaty voice that can rise dramatically from a whisper to a roar. Musical anecdotes are the core of his conversation and when he is asked a question that forces him to reflect, his eyebrows go up and he smiles. "This is not a stupid question," he allows, his English smothered by the thick Russian accent he has retained more than half a century after leaving his native city, Kiev, in the Ukraine.

"I'm from a rich family," he says with dignity. "My father was very important figure in Kiev. An engineer—he represented big companies like Westinghouse. He was a little bit snob and he was half-Jewish. The pogrom in Kiev in 1905 nearly killed me. They told me the bullet came through the window. But my family never thought about leaving. We were living in aristocratic quarters where many Jews did not live. . . . My mother was a pianist. She had four children so she gave it up but she first taught me to play the piano."

He began to play at age 6. When he was 9, he fell in love with the music of Rachmaninoff (who later became a good friend and said no one played his music as well as Horowitz) and, within a year, had memorized all of it. The next year, he memorized the transcriptions of Wagner's "Tannhäuser," "Lohengrin" and "Parsifal." "I was supposed to play for my teacher what students today still play: prelude and fugue or suite of Bach, sonata of Mozart, sonata of Beethoven," he says. "But I was bringing my teacher the modern music. . . . Today when you don't know something, you go to buy a record. Then there were few records and no radio. I heard most and I still love today bel canto Italian singing. Tetravzini. Caruso. I was listening to those records from morning till night."

Horowitz turned 13 the year of the Russian Revolution. "At the time I began conservatory in Kiev," he says, "the best musical forces from Petersburg and Moscow came to the Ukraine to escape the Bolshevism and because we had food and there they had famine. When I had my final examination they were all seated like judges in the Supreme Court but instead of nine there were nearly 40. When I finished my last piece, the whole 40 people stood up and were applauding. That was never before in the history of the conservatory. They made me know I was above the typical pianist. But I wanted to be composer, not pianist. I wanted to study composition."

"I am a product of the Revolution. In 24 hours came the soldiers. They took everything. They threw my piano through the window. Through the window, my dear. Into the street. They took everything. All the clothing in the closets. I'm an old trooper. I remember lots of things. We were the bourgeois and they were the proletariat. Hun-

dreds of people I knew were killed. I could have been killed, too. Then we lived with three families in three rooms."

"I am a product of general privation. Pushing out of that gave me the dynamism. When I came to New York, they said 'unleashed from the steppes' and all that business. That gives you dynamism! A feeling of wanting to make a place for myself. This is something young people today are lacking. They're a little bit phlegmatic, a little bit complacent. For us it was important to do something and be somebody. I had a zest for living. I wanted to go somewhere. My father had lost all he had and I had to help him. He helped me all the time and I had to help him back. I could not continue to study. I began to concertize."

At 2:30 Sunday afternoon in the Prime Minister's Suite of the Sutton Place Hotel in Toronto a few months ago, Vladimir Horowitz began to prepare for his second recital of the season. Although the pianist now earns up to \$45,000 each time he plays, whereas in Russia, in the early 20's, he was often paid in butter or flour, his idea of what an artist should be has remained unchanged. "Without false modesty, I feel that when I am on the stage, I'm the king, the boss of the situation. I have to look like that," he says. "In Mozart's time, a little gesture was reverence. Lace, a little snuff, a little black spot on the face. If you play Mozart, you must be close to what the composer was at that time. Look at Chopin! He was a dandy—he picked out every silk! Liszt too. The public pays money and they want to see and hear something esthetic. It's not the Barnum circus. It's esthetic."

On the day of a concert, Horowitz rises at about noon. He has his breakfast, ignores his piano and does not say a word to anyone. At 2:30, he begins, slowly, to wash, shave and dress. "I think about the small details. To put on the socks that they don't press me. To see the shoes are closed. The fly is closed. If they are open, they are terrible. Not to be nervous. Not to rush. All the movements quiet. I don't think about music at all because, you know, the tragedy of the artist is like Pagliacci. At a certain time, you have to be inspired, wanting to play and being in good form. It could be at 4—just at 4—that I could have a stomachache. So I am trying to be very quiet. Nobody should interfere with me and if anyone interferes he gets such a scandal that he never heard."

Horowitz dresses in afternoon formal attire: black pants with faint white stripes, a white shirt, gray vest, one of his hundreds of bow ties and a black cutaway. "The moment I feel that cutaway—the moment I am in uniform—it's like a horse before the races. You start to perspire. You feel already in you some electricity to do something. At this moment, I am already an artist. I feel a pressure to be on time. I like to be 10, 15 minutes early to warm up the fingers. I am a general. My soldiers are the keys and I have to command them."

By 3:30, Toronto's Massey Hall is filling up with concertgoers, some of whom have come from Montreal and Ottawa to attend the recital, although its only advertisement has been a small newspaper notice. By 4 o'clock, 2,765 of the hall's 2,765 seats and an extra 150 places on stage are occupied. There is a feeling of festivity and of tension in the chatter that fills the hall. At 4:10, Mme. Horowitz and a friend hurry to the two remaining seats. The lights dim. There is utter silence.

"The only minute which is unpleasant is the minute I stand in the wings, just before coming in," says the pianist. "But, you know, I happen to be a little nearsighted which makes me happy because I don't see the public. I see just the piano and about three rows. I don't want to see the public; I want to feel them."

As soon as he appears, there is a surge of movement, people leaping to their feet, cheering, applauding. The pianist smiles, bows, sits down quickly at his piano. Again, there is total silence. He begins to play.

"Once I sit down," he says, "I transform myself. I see the composer. I am the composer. The music gives me that sense. It needs a lot of concentration to achieve and a lot of electricity. Then, the current has to reach the public and wrap them. I want when I cry on the piano or when I laugh, that the public also cries and laughs. That is my goal. It takes time to achieve. So with me, the longer the recital progresses, the more people are with me. I can measure it by the silence. To applaud loud is very easy but it is when they are silent that you are doing something. Sometimes I feel they are not with me and I am unhappy. So I gradually try to seduce them. If I don't succeed with one piece, I try another, with another sound, from another century, with a more spectacular playing. What's important is contrast. Always contrast. And if the audience is not with me, then for 10, 15 minutes there is a little hole. But in the end—unless I am not feeling well—they will be with me."

Horowitz is not a mannered performer. His body remains immobile as he plays, his face impassive, as if he were looking down at a display case in a department store. There is no sign of emotional strain. Instead, each of his musical phrases is so informed by tension that it becomes as direct and comprehensible as speech. This clarity is coupled with a sensualist's veneration for the sheer beauty of sound. "The sound came before the word," the pianist is fond of repeating, and critics agree that no one coaxes more kinds of sounds from a piano than Vladimir Horowitz.

"He's very much influenced by the human voice," says Gary Graffman, who was one of the pianist's few students. "He made me listen to opera, to the way great singers did certain phrases, where they breathe, how they breathe, and then wanted me to try to imitate that kind of approach, to Chopin and Schumann especially. A preoccupation with sound characterizes the Russian school of string players and pianists while the German

approach (like that of Horowitz's contemporary friend Rudolf Serkin) is more concerned with form. He hears sounds and he wants to reproduce them. It's a combination of a fantastic technique and an extraordinary power of communication."

"What separates Horowitz from everyone else is his characteristic, deeply individual piano sonority," writes the concert pianist and Commentary music critic Samuel Lipman. "His secret would seem to consist in Horowitz's way of controlling a Steinway concert grand of a loudness and brilliance that in anyone else's hands would reduce an audience to a shattered wreck. The advantages of such a piano—highly different as it is from the usual rich, mellow and quietly brilliant Steinway—are not only in its carrying power and easy articulation of rapid passages; still more important is the resulting differentiation of bass, middle and treble registers. This differentiation enables the melodic line to be highlighted and the piano's extreme dy-

namic contrasts to be used without blocking the audibility of the pitches being played."

Fifteen minutes into the first half of the Toronto recital, nearly 3,000 people are listening so attentively that even a stifled sneeze becomes an outrage, evoking thoughts of violence toward the offender. Horowitz himself claims that he has never, not in 50 years, sneezed during a concert, and feels that if he can refrain, everyone else can, too. "But they don't. They cough. Sometimes there is the flu. Sometimes I have bad public, and then I don't go back to this town."

At intermission, his valet helps him undress and he lies down to nap for 15 minutes in the dark. His blood pressure goes down; he says he forgets he has performed. When he gets up, he puts on a new shirt, combs his hair and inspects his appearance. "He does this without thinking," says Mme. Horowitz. "He feels he represents people who have a certain name, like Chopin, Beethoven. To come out in turtleneck and blue

jeans is lack of respect to the public and lack of respect to the composer. When you go to a concert, you are looking up, and when you look up, you want to see something a little bit different, a little bit better."

When Horowitz returns to the stage, his welcome is even more clamorous. Then, once again, there is a hush before he begins. In the first half, he had played two sonatas, one by Mozart, one by Chopin. Now, he plays smaller pieces by Fauré, Rachmaninoff, Scriabin and, again, Chopin. "Sometimes," he says, "there can be more music in a five-minute piece than in piece for one hour. A mazurka of Chopin can be greater than symphony of Mahler." The audience, meanwhile, has begun to be "wrapped by electricity." As the pianist finishes a piece of music, there are smiles, perceptible sighs, a moment of unguarded relaxation before the burst of applause.

"To compare me or any other pianist with Horowitz is a sacrilege, a profanity, like spitting on a saint in church," Russian pianist Lazar Berman has said. "His playing defies analysis," says the Salt Lake City piano teacher and Horowitz archivist Caine Alder. "The reason for his large following of pianists, piano teachers and piano students 'transcends anything he does musically or technically,'" says the concert pianist and Commentary music critic Samuel Lipman. "His is the last great demonic piano career. . . . The last musician whose success his colleagues consider supernatural."

After four encores, Horowitz retires to his dressing room. He sits behind a small desk like a general in a war movie while a small group of well-dressed men stand around him in a semicircle shifting their weight from foot to foot, as shy as small children. They are managers, representatives of his record company, other musicians who have come to pay their respects.

"We want you in Italy," says a silver-haired RCA representative from that country. "La Scala is waiting for you. The young people are waiting."

"You must come to England, Maestro," says a man with a British accent. "I must, ummmh" repeats Horowitz. "I am afraid you will be disappointed. I don't like Festival Hall. It's such a huge country, America. There are so many places to play."

After a few minutes, Mme. Horowitz indicates with a nod that the audience is over, and the men troop out into the hall. Horowitz puts on a black overcoat and his black felt hat. He, Madame, Scimonelli, his manager Harold Shaw, and the local impresario Walter Homberger move out the stage door past a flash of cameras and scattered applause to a waiting limousine. When they arrive at the hotel, Horowitz goes to bed right away. "I sleep half an hour. I wake up. I dine. I feel," he claims, "like there was no concert."

At home in New York, Horowitz follows a rigid routine. Unlike other artists, he does not teach, does not have a heavy schedule of concerts, does not set

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Top: Vladimir Horowitz with Wanda, Arturo Toscanini's daughter, on their wedding day in Milan—1933. Bottom, from left: Horowitz with violinist Nathan Milstein, cellist Gregor Piatigorsky and conductors Toscanini and Bernardino Molinari.

HOROWITZ

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foot in a recording studio (his records are all retouched live performances). Every day, he rises at noon, has breakfast, and works for an hour with his secretary. Then he works at the piano, naps for half an hour and, at 3:30, has lunch. He eats no meat, drinks no alcohol, allows himself a maximum of six cigarettes per day ("I have tremendous willpower. Tremendous!"). Then he takes his daily 40-block walk, returns home, answers phone calls and goes to bed for half an hour before dinner.

Horowitz gives interviews, entertains and transacts personal business at 9:30 at night in his warm, elegantly cluttered living room. Interviewers are apprised of protocol. "We are not like Lenny Bernstein. We do not want to be in People magazine," says Mme. Horowitz. The caller enters on the ground floor of the Horowitzes' five-story town house and mounts the stairs to the living room, where Madame and Scimonelli are sitting. A few minutes later, the pianist descends the stairs, impeccably dressed, a perky bow tie grazing his chin, all smiles and cordiality. He sits down. The rest of us sit down. "You know," he says, crossing his legs, "this article for me is not important; I have made my career. For you is important, for your career. You will write good article, uunnhh?" Then he settles back on the plump black chintz sofa and talks till nearly 1 in the morning.

"Every year," he says, "I work on something new. I have a challenge to myself to learn something I have never played before. To see if my mind is right, the reflexes are still right. This year, I play two pieces of Fauré. First of all, I studied the whole composer. I play everything he wrote. Ensemble music, everything, I play myself—not listen to recordings. Records are not the truth. They are like post cards of a beautiful landscape. You bring the post cards home so when you look at them you will remember how beautiful is the truth. So I play. I'm a very good sight reader. The texture of the music talks to me, the style. I feel the music, the spiritual content of his compositions.

"I know also everything about the composer. I always believe the composer and not what the others write about him. I read the letters of Fauré, what he was thinking. They gave me the character of the composer. What he liked in music, what he didn't like. The first time I play a new piece of music, I listen. I think: There is something here, something is hidden. I read it again the next day. Then two days I leave it alone. Then I repeat the third day. Five days. Six days. And then I am in that music just like I play 'Tea for Two'!"

The pianist breaks off into a throaty giggle. "When I play a piece, every note is clear in my mind. Otherwise I cannot do it. Never. Even from the great composers there are pieces I don't like and I will never play them. Even Robert Schumann, I love him but

there are lots of pieces that are hackneyed and I will never play because they don't speak to me. Maybe it's my fault. Is possible. I don't blame Mr. Schumann. But I don't do it. I have a kind of inner integrity which dictates what to do and what not to do. If a composer is too intellectual, like some modern composers, I don't get it. A concert is not a lecture. I myself introduced in 40's and 50's modern music. I played the first performances of three sonatas of Prokofiev, of sonata of Barber and lots of small pieces of Barber. But the music new? You can write a fugue like Bach and you can write a fugue like, pardon me, Hindemith.

"For me, the intellect is always the guide but not the goal of the performance. Three things have to be coordinated and not one must stick out. Not too much intellect because it can become scholastic. Not too much heart because it can become schmaltz. Not too much technique because you become a mechanic. Always there should be a little mistake here and there—I am for it. The people who don't do mistakes are cold like ice. It takes risk to make a mistake. If you don't take risk, you are boring. These youngsters who win a competition are like the assembly line. Every trill is so perfect but everyone is the same and in 10 minutes you will be bored and go home.

"The critics don't like it when you do mistakes. I read all the critics but they don't influence me. After a concert, I remember everything I did. Some times I play very good and the critics don't know it. But I will tell you now something a little bit conceited: Even when I play not as good, it's good enough. I know it, you see, but the audience doesn't know it and sometimes the critics don't know it. For myself, if I succeed to play all the notes, if I succeed to play all the value of the notes, if I succeed with all the colors, then I know it is a success. It's like a painting. Here you plan a little rose, here a little blue, and some parts you don't know what the colors will be. When I finish, I hear the whole thing in my mind, and I see it is beautiful."

Modern recording techniques have eliminated the problem of "succeeding to play all the notes," and Horowitz uses them to their fullest advantage. He has final approval over every aspect of his records, from their production and appearance to the wording of the copy advertising them. He now records for RCA but until 1974, the pianist was under contract to Columbia Records largely because of his friendship with the late Goddard Lieberson. "At CBS, Horowitz had a higher yearly guarantee than any other artist, including Leonard Bernstein," says a man there. "He also was the only artist whose contract read that he had to sign a test pressing before we could release it. The following kind of situation would occur, and I am not exaggerating. We would record a piece, splice the various takes

and send him a copy. He says, 'That's pretty good but I play the trill better elsewhere.' So you find the trill and put it in. Then, a week later, he says, 'I think I play a more exciting coda on another take.' So you go back, find the coda and put it in. You finally get the master tape so that the performance is good. You send him that. You go over to his house at 9:30 at night. Then he says, 'You know, slow movement could be 1 db lower.

"Now 1 decibel is the smallest level of differentiation—it can barely be detected. The technical term for this kind of thing is bull. But it's Horowitz so you go back, remix the slow movement and make it 1 db lower. Finally, he's happy. The next step is a test pressing, something which very rarely occurs apart from dealings with Horowitz. The factory actually presses six to 12 records and, instead of going ahead with the next 1,000, one of them is sent to Horowitz. He listens to it at home. Then he'll say, 'You know, is a little bit noisy on the second side.'

"So you make the plant stand on its head, take the record apart and make a new one. You press six more. You send him one to listen to. You go to his house again at 9:30 and then he says, 'You know, I don't think I like the way I play the second movement.' Now you have to go all the way back to the beginning of the process and start again. No other artist in my experience behaves this way."

Horowitz is also demanding of his audience, though less so, certainly. "The public is a very strange animal," he says. Singly, they sometimes don't understand anything but when they are all together, they understand. I love to play in Chicago. Boston is good. Washington is very good, cosmopolitan. What a wonderful city is Ann Arbor—the colleges are the aristocracy of the public. In New York, you never know who is in the audience. There are too many aristocrats there. They have money and I have a name, so even if they sleep for one hour, they have to be there. There are too many students who listen only to particular things and criticize already in advance. New York has the most intellectual and knowledgeable public—but they are not always in Carnegie Hall. They cannot always get tickets." But he says the public has learned a great deal about music in the 50 years he has been playing, primarily because of records and radio.

"The artists have also changed," he says. Now when they want a success, they ruin their chance because of the planes. They can sing in San Francisco in the afternoon and Los Angeles in the evening. They do four or five concerts a week. The question is not physical fatigue. It is that when you play all the time, you are giving. You need time to get back something, you need time to think, time to absorb. . . . In the 20's and 30's, we would meet and discuss the music, why you do this and why you do that. Now colleagues don't meet together so much. They are all traveling, and they are all enemies. There's no communication. The youngsters are afraid, and they're busy all the time."

Horowitz breaks off to recite a prov-

erb in Russian. "Everyone goes to the forest," he translates, "but some go for a walk, to be inspired, and others go to cut down the trees." He repeats the Russian two more times and stares gloomily across the room. Horowitz sees himself as a link in a human chain of pianists that reaches back 150 years. "Now the chain has been broken," he says. "That's the way it goes today."

"I am a little bit like an old-fashioned spinster who says, 'In my time, things were better,' " he says when asked how he spends his leisure time. "I don't open the radio too much. It's too much noise. I never look at television. I love theater. A Russian who doesn't love theater? But I must tell you, these eight years there is not so much good theater. I don't go to concerts. I don't want to be unconsciously influenced, and also, that is the time I dine. I read all the classics: Dickens, all the Russians, Proust, Victor Hugo, you name it. But the modern literature, that which is written today, I don't read. It's too much for me. It takes too much time. I prefer to go to the discothèques. I like to see how the young people behave. You can see anything today; it's not like in my time when everything was under the table. Now it's on the table. But I talk more than I do. I go once every two or three months. I put the earplugs in my ears and I look at it. Even when I walk in the street, I have a good time. When I go to Greenwich Village, it's like another town. I sit there like in the opera. It's funny, you know?"

It is midnight at the Horowitzes' and the pianist has put his feet up on the couch. "There are very few things that make me suffer. Only physical pain. I had pain when I lost my cat. And my daughter, when she died, and when I lost my mother. I suffer frustration that I wanted and never became a composer. I have no time now. You can't combine both. When Liszt played, he composed unbelievably badly. Schubert, the worst of all. I think the most important thing in a man's life is health—mental and physical. If you have both these things then you can do anything. When you get older, something happens to you, and of that I am a little bit frightened. I had bronchitis now, you know, and I needed a little bit more time to get better. But I don't have the time. That Rachmaninoff concerto is so difficult. I need the time to practice."

It is nearly 1 o'clock in the morning and Horowitz looks as fresh as I do at noon. "You will write good article, uunnhh?" he asks. Then he quotes the composer Domenico Scarlatti, who, in an introduction to 30 harpsichord pieces published in 1738, wrote: "Show yourself more human than critical and your pleasure will increase." "I think that is beautiful," says Horowitz. Then he frowns, and says nothing more. As I take my leave, say good night to Mme. Horowitz and Scimonelli, he sits musing on the black chintz couch.

"You know the pianist, Michelangelo?" he asks suddenly.

"From records," I say.

Horowitz shakes his head. "That one," he says. "I think he is a little bit meshuga." ■