January 29, 1982

My dear Mr. Rubenstein,

I am an ardent admirer, like millions of others over the world, of your great genius, and it pleased me so much to read in the morning paper that you had celebrated your 95th birthday in good health and with your customary vigor. How wonderful! But then, after having read your two autobiographical volumes, I would expect nothing less.

Is it possible that you would have known Selmar Janson (Yanson) in your early days in Berlin? Like you, he was taken to Joseph Joachim at the age of five and studied with Xaver Scharwenka, Sally Leibling and Eugen D'Albert before coming to the United States. For many years he was Piano Professor at Carnegie Institute of Technology, now Carnegie-Mellon University, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He was a brilliant pianist, fine teacher and he concertized often in his early years in the U.S., introducing Tchaikowsky's Second Piano Concerto with the N.Y. Symphony under Walter Damrosch here in the city.

He was my beloved teacher for the four years I spent at Carnegie Institute, and I think that I should have tried to celebrate the centennial of his birth last year by getting together some of his old pupils. Just a couple of months ago an article by Harold Schonberg appeared in the N.Y. Times about the pianist Earl Wild. And Mr. Schonberg wrote that Selmar Janson was Earl's first important teacher.

Having read that you had played for Scharwenka I thought that perhaps your paths had crossed in those long-ago days. If you could possibly recall with your almost uncanny memory anything about Selmar Janson I would feel not only grateful but honored to hear from you.

May you have many more fine years, listening to music, something you admitted on a television interview you just now have time for--after a lifetime of making music for others.

With devotion,

Mercedes C. Monjian

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