

Conductor Günter Wand was one of a handful of musicians who were working before World War II and whose career remained viable at the end of the twentieth century. In contrast to the best known of his peers, Sir Georg Solti and Rafael Kubelik, he was the opposite of the jetset, international conductor, and limited the number and scope of his engagements, primarily in Europe. Although Wand composed a small number of works, including ballet music, orchestral songs, and one cantata, he was known by most listeners as a conductor. His performances were noted for their precise attention to detail and special care in matters of stylistic propriety.

Wand studied at the Cologne Conservatory, initially as a composition and piano student. His conducting technique was almost entirely self-taught. He began his career in Wuppertal and Allenstein as a répétiteur and conductor, and was later made chief conductor in Detmold. In 1939, he was appointed a conductor, and subsequently first conductor, with the Cologne Opera, where he remained until the opera house was destroyed by Allied bombing raids in 1944. He then became conductor of the Salzburg Mozarteum Orchestra for the remainder of the war, until April 1945. With the end of fighting, he returned to Cologne to begin reconstructing the city's musical life, first as music director of the Cologne Opera, where he remained for three years (1945-1948), and as director of concerts, initially a 10-year appointment that was later extended for life. He taught music in the city, and became a professor at the Hochschule für Musik in 1948. He also became head of the Gürzenich Orchestra, a post he held until 1974.

Wand began making appearances as a guest conductor throughout Europe during the early 1950s, including his British debut with the London Symphony Orchestra in 1951. His special appearances included concerts in the Soviet Union and Japan. His professional life, however, remained centered in Cologne, where he was at the center of the revived city's musical life. In addition to his performances of the mainstream German-Austrian repertory -- Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, and Bruckner -- he was a major advocate of the works of such contemporary composers as Ligeti, Varèse, and Zimmermann, and recorded the music of Frank Martin and Anton Webern.

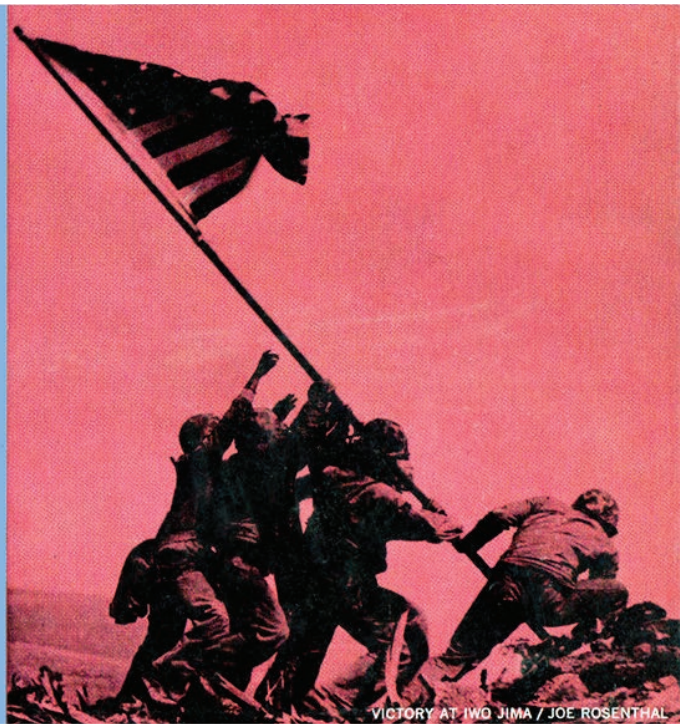
Wand resigned his Cologne positions in 1974 and moved to Switzerland, where he became a regular guest conductor of the Berne Symphony Orchestra. After 1974, he began working more closely with the various broadcast orchestras in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, and was also hailed for his performances of the operas of Mozart and Verdi. Wand recorded exclusively for RCA/BMG, including all of Bruckner's symphonies -- a major feat at the time -- with the Cologne Radio Symphony Orchestra, as well as Schubert's extant eight symphonies; and he later recorded the Schubert symphonies with the NDR symphony and the Berlin Philharmonic. From 1982 until 1991, he also took over the post of music director of the Radio Symphony Orchestra of Hamburg. Among his recordings are the complete Brahms and Beethoven symphonies. These recordings have attracted a substantial international following, acclaimed for their attention to the details of the written score and the spirituality of the playing.

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# BEETHOVEN: GÜRZENICH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF COLOGNE GÜNTER WAND, CONDUCTOR SYMPHONY NO. 5



VICTORY AT IWO JIMA / JOE ROSENTHAL

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67, orchestral work by German composer Ludwig van Beethoven, widely recognized by the ominous four-note opening motif—often interpreted as the musical manifestation of “fate knocking at the door”—that recurs in various guises throughout the composition. The symphony premiered on December 22, 1808, in Vienna, and it soon became a standard against which many other symphonies were measured.

Beethoven, Ludwig van Beethoven habitually worked on several compositions simultaneously. Shortly after finishing Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major (Eroica) in 1803, he began to write the piece now known as Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, but initial progress was slow, and it was not until 1807-08 that he worked on the piece with intensity. Meanwhile, he started to write another symphony, which is now known as Symphony No. 6 in F Major (Pastorale). Beethoven completed both of the symphonies at nearly the same time in 1808, and they premiered together on the same all-Beethoven program. At that first performance, however, the Pastorale bore the number five. Somewhere between premiere and publication, Beethoven renumbered the two compositions: the C minor became the Fifth Symphony, and the F major became the Sixth Symphony.

Music critics had little to say about the symphony in C minor at its premiere, but a year and a half later another performance of the work received a highly favourable review in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (“General Musical Journal”):

Glowing beams shoot through this realm’s deep night, and we become aware of immense shadows, which rise and fall, close in on us, and wipe us out but not the ache of unending longing, in which every pleasure that has surged in sounds of celebration sinks and goes under, and only in this ache—the love, hope, joy (self-consuming but not destroying) that wants to burst our breast with a full-voiced harmony of all passions—do we live on as delighted visionaries!”

Few reviewers in the 21st century write with such descriptive energy, perhaps because few music reviewers are novelists, composers, and painters. The reviewer in this case, however, was the consummate German artist E.T.A. Hoffmann.

Symphony No. 5 has undergone much analysis since Hoffmann’s colourful assessment, and its first four notes have drawn much attention. The pitches and rhythm of those notes—three Gs of equal duration followed by a

sustained E-flat (below the G)—partially outline a C minor chord and ultimately announce the home key of the symphony. Perhaps more significantly, they form the rhythmic and melodic anchor of the entire composition. Beethoven himself allegedly described the figure as “fate knocking at the door.” It is an evocative image, but the source of the attribution, Beethoven’s sometime friend Anton Schindler, was known for not letting facts get in the way of a good story. In any event, the notion of the “fate” theme, or “fate” motif, has remained a popular one.

Throughout the symphony’s sonata-form first movement, “Allegro con brio,” the core motif takes on various characters—sometimes foreboding, sometimes triumphant—as it migrates from one section of the orchestra to another, shifts to different pitch centres, and sounds at different dynamic levels. Late in that movement, a brief oboe solo offers a poignant contrast to the musical storm that surrounds it. The more lyrical second movement, “Andante con moto,” consists of two alternating themes in variation form. The general rhythm of the “fate” motif is salient in the movement’s second theme. The third movement, “Allegro,” is cast as a scherzo and trio. It begins gently, with a theme that uses the “fate” rhythm. That rhythm soon explodes into prominence before shifting to a bold and busy fugal climax in the trio section. The first moods of the scherzo then return very softly before the symphony plunges without pause into the blazing fourth and final movement. Like the third movement, the finale is labeled “Allegro,” and, like the second movement, it features the “fate” rhythm in its second theme. The finale returns to the sonata form of the first movement but concludes with a high-energy coda that increases in tempo and in volume as it races toward the symphony’s closing cadence.

The hallmark motif of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony has had tremendous appeal well beyond the realm of classical music. During World War II, for instance, Allied forces used it to signal a victorious moment, as its rhythm—short, short, short, long—matched that of the letter V in Morse Code. In the mid-1970s, American musician Walter Murphy released “A Fifth of Beethoven,” a popular disco recording based on the signature motif and other elements of the symphony’s first movement. The “fate” figure has also been featured in many films and has been used in television commercials to promote a range of products and services from liquor to convenience stores to an Internet browser. More than two centuries after its premiere, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5—especially its foundational four-note theme—has remained remarkably durable.

# BEETHOVEN: GÜRZENICH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF COLOGNE GÜNTER WAND, CONDUCTOR

# SYMPHONY NO. 5

1. 1st Movement: Allegro Con Brio
2. 2nd Movement: Andante Con Moto
3. 3rd Movement: Allegro - Scherzo
4. 4th Movement: Allegro - Presto

Transferred from a Omegatape 2-track tape • Date of Recording: 1957 • Recorded by Club Francais du Disque

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