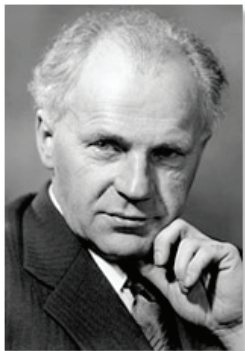


Wilhelm Backhaus was born in Leipzig, Germany, on March 26, 1884. He made a concert debut there at the age of eight, and studied at the Leipzig Conservatory with Reckendorf. In 1899 he left Leipzig to study with Eugène d'Albert in Frankfurt am Main. He made a major debut tour in 1900 and quickly gained a fine reputation as a player and as a teacher. His American debut was on January 5, 1912, in New York, playing the Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 5 with Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony Orchestra. In 1930 he moved to Lugano and acquired Swiss citizenship. Backhaus established a teaching career there and continued to make concert tours throughout his long life. His last U.S. appearance was in New York in 1962, at age 78; reviews judged that his powers were undiminished. He died on July 5, 1969, in Villach, Austria, where he had gone to make a concert appearance.



Especially during the later phase of his career, he had a remarkably high reputation as a pianist whose devotion to the composer's intentions was total and unselfish. His performances were in the classic line of those that strove to present the music in one broadly viewed arc of concept and logic, embracing not just single movements but entire works. His recorded output ranges from Mozart through the main Classical and Romantic repertoire. It is not surprising that his work was particularly excellent when he encountered those composers who built large-scale, logically constructed classical works, such as Beethoven and Brahms; in reference to his recordings of such works, terms like "magisterial," "exemplary," and "direct" have often been employed by reviewers. Late in his life he came to be regarded as a Beethoven specialist, and he recorded virtually the entire corpus of keyboard works of that master, as well as extensive groups of Brahms and Mozart, and works by Schumann, Grieg, Chopin, and Liszt, including concertos and solo works. He also made some chamber music recordings, notably of Brahms' cello sonatas with Pierre Fournier, and a notable account of the Schubert "Trout" Quintet.

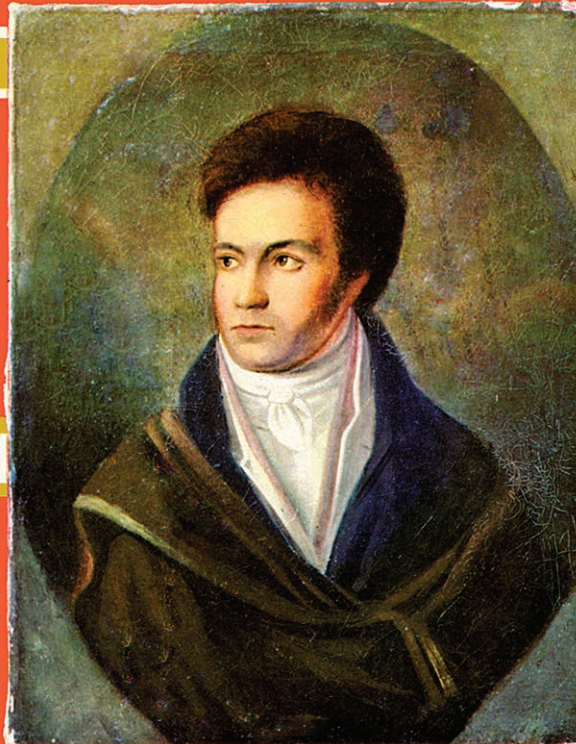
BEETHOVEN



Piano Concerto No. 1 • Piano Concerto No. 2

BACKHAUS

Vienna Philharmonic Schmidt-Isserstedt



Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1

Although Beethoven performed on many such private occasions during his first few years in Vienna, his official Viennese debut did not occur until April 1800, when he was the featured soloist and composer in a Hofburgtheater concert given late on a Wednesday afternoon. The program included Beethoven's Septet, his Symphony no. 1, and his opus 15 Piano Concerto (which was to become known as his first concerto) along with a Mozart symphony and selections from Haydn's oratorio *The Creation*. (Elizabeth Schwarm Glesner) Composed in 1797 (after the second concerto, op. 19), Concerto no. 1 for piano will be interpreted on numerous occasions in the concerts Beethoven held in German cities and in Prague.

Part I – *Allegro con brio*, constructed like a sonata begins with the presentation of the two themes by the orchestra: the first one is of great joy, tuned by an orchestral tutti and is generously linked to the second theme that is softer and more lyrical.

Borrowing a technique from Mozart's manner of composition, the piano does not start with the theme presented by the orchestra, but with an innovative musical idea, and the themes proper are later presented by the instrumental soloists.

Part II – *Largo* – has at its core a very musical theme first presented by the unaccompanied instrument and later by the whole orchestra.

Part III – *Allegro scherzando* – is constructed as a rondo and begins with the refrain, a musical theme with a prominent dancing character.

The concerto was first performed by the composer himself at his Viennese debut in April 1800. This Piano concerto was not Beethoven's first attempt at the genre. Actually it was his third piano concerto, but since it was the first to be published it remained known as Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1.

Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 2

The first version of this concerto dates from 1795, but it is finalized three years later. The concert was first performed by Beethoven in the Burgtheater, Vienna on March 25, 1795 and was dedicated to Carl Nicklas Edler von Nickelsberg. It was published in 1801, by which time he had also published the Piano Concerto No. 1 in C major, although it had been composed after the B-flat concerto. Apparently the composer thought little of this work as he referred to it as "not one of the best" when he submitted the concerto to a publisher. However the work was quite successful, contributing to Beethoven's ascent as one of Vienna's new musical talents. Part I – *Allegro con brio* – is constructed like a sonata and the themes are first presented by the orchestra. The composition reflects the influence of both Haydn and Mozart. Hence, after the presentation of the first theme by the orchestra, the piano starts with a new thematic idea rendered in an acute register.

The second theme has a lyrical character and is first tuned by the orchestra and later by the instrumental soloists.

Part II – *Adagio* – starts with the presentation of the theme by the orchestra, rendering the tenderness and softness Beethoven was capable of.

Part III – *Allegro molto* – is constructed like a rondo-sonata with a theme taken from the Viennese folklore, through its rhythm rendering the onomatopoeic images of spring.

Both the first and second piano concerti bear Mozart's influence and are considered to be some of Beethoven's more "classical" compositions. The influences will fade away gradually as Beethoven composes his latter piano concertos. Piano concerto No. 5 will be the proof of the unique and revolutionary style Beethoven possessed as a composer.

Beethoven Piano Concertos No. 1 & 2

Wilhelm Backhaus, piano

Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

Beethoven: Piano Concerto No.1 In C Major, Op.15 31:31

1 1st Mov.: Allegro Con Brio 13:28

2 2nd Mov.: Largo 9:13

3 3rd Mov.: Rondo; Molto Allegro 8:50

Beethoven: Piano Concerto No.2 In B Flat Major, Op.19 27:19

4 1st Mov.: Allegro Con Brio 13:19

5 2nd Mov.: Largo 7:41

6 3rd Mov.: Rondo; Molto Allegro 6:19

Concerto No. 1

Producer Erik Smith Engineer: Alan Abel
16-22 Apr 1958 Sofiensaal, Vienna

Concerto No. 2

Producer Erik Smith Engineer James Brown
29&30 Jun 1959 Sofiensaal, Vienna

Transferred from a 4-track tape



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