

George Szell (born June 7, 1897, Budapest, Hung., Austria-Hungary died July 30, 1970, Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.) Hungarian-born U.S. conductor. He made his debut as a pianist at age 11, and before his 20th birthday he had appeared with the Berlin Philharmonic as pianist, conductor, and composer. He established himself as an opera conductor in various German cities, including Berlin and Prague . When World War II broke out, he settled in the U.S., conducting at the Metropolitan Opera and then serving as musical director of the Cleveland Orchestra . There he imposed stern discipline but won his players' devotion by his own fierce dedication. Under his direction the orchestra became known for its precision in playing and was considered one of the world's finest.



Beethoven

Piano Concerto No 3

Egmont Overture

Leon Fleisher, piano
George Szell conducting the
Cleveland Orchestra

Leon Fleisher was among the leading American pianists of his generation, but was stricken with a debilitating condition in his right hand, which forced him to withdraw from public performance in 1965. He soon reappeared in repertory for the left hand alone and also turned to conducting, but until the late '90s rarely performed music for two hands. Since about 1995 he has been active as a two-handed pianist. Early in his career Fleisher had become identified with the concertos of Beethoven and Brahms, the sonatas of Mozart and Schubert, and works by American composers (Kirchner, Copland, and Sessions). In his one-hand period, he often turned to the Prokofiev Fourth and Ravel D major, both for left hand, and since his rehabilitation in the 1990s Fleisher has returned to much of his earlier repertory. Fleisher's recordings are available on many labels, including Sony, DG, Vanguard, Albany, Orfeo, and Archipel.

= Leon Fleisher was born in San Francisco on July 23, 1928. He began playing the piano at four and gave his first recital at six. He studied with keyboard icon Artur Schnabel from 1938-1948 and gave several remarkable debut concerts, including with the San Francisco Symphony in 1942 and with the New York Philharmonic in 1944, both under Pierre Monteux. Fleisher would later study conducting with Monteux.

Having won the Queen Elizabeth Competition in Belgium in 1952, Fleisher went on to achieve international acclaim over the next decade. In 1965 he withdrew from concertizing and sought out medical attention for his then-undiagnosed condition.

Fleisher began conducting in 1967, founding the Washington, D.C.-based Theater Chamber Players of the Kennedy Center. In 1970 he was appointed music director of the Annapolis Symphony and three years later became associate conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

In the early '90s Fleisher was finally correctly diagnosed with focal dystonia and began receiving effective treatments in 1995. Botox injections were added to his regimen in the new century, bringing further improvement. Fleisher gave his first recital at Carnegie in four decades in 2003, and the following year Vanguard released *Two Hands*, his first two-handed album in more than 40 years. In 2006 a documentary about Fleisher bearing the same title was released and nominated for an Academy Award. Fleisher has been on the faculty of the Peabody Conservatory (now Institute) since 1959 and has taught at Curtis Institute of Music and Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music.

Beethoven composed this work in 1799-1800, and introduced it at Vienna on April 5, 1803. The first sketches go back to 1797 -- after he'd composed the B flat Piano Concerto (published as No. 2), but before composition of the C major Concerto (in 1798, published as No. 1). Although Beethoven played the first performance of No. 3 in 1803 from a short score -- no one was going to steal it from him! -- he'd actually completed the music prior to April 1800, apart from a few last-minute adjustments. In other words, before he wrote the Second Symphony (Op. 36), the Moonlight Piano Sonata (Op. 27/2), or the Op. 31 triptych for keyboard.

The model for this startlingly dramatic concerto was Mozart's C minor (K. 491), which Beethoven played in public concerts. But "model" does not mean he merely imitated; indeed, the orchestra's traditional first exposition is so extensively developed that the soloist's repetition risks sounding anticlimactic. Otherwise, as Charles Rosen has written with formidable insight in *The Classical Style*, "There are many passages in the first movement, *Allegro con brio*, which allude to Mozart's concerto in the same key...particularly the role of the piano after the cadenza. But the striking development section, with [a] new melody half-recitative [and] half-aria, is entirely original, as is the new sense of weight to the form." Beethoven wrote down that cadenza several years later, to preserve the work's character and momentum, when implacable deafness seriously disadvantaged his public appearances at the keyboard.

To his contemporaries the slow movement came -- and can still come -- as a shock. Not only did he mark it *Largo* (which is to say very slowly), in 3/8 time, but chose the remote key of E major (four sharps, vs. C minor's three flats). Alone, the piano leads off for 11 measures, introducing both the main theme and ornamentation that accompanies it throughout. Here Beethoven anticipated the solo opening of his G major Fourth Concerto five years down the road, although in that work he dispensed with thematic decorations, beautiful as they were (and are) in the *Largo* of No. 3.

Characteristically, the finale is a rondo *Allegro*, again in tonic C minor, with a pair of principal themes introduced by the soloist. This movement is rich in humor yet also dramatic, with a passage midway in E major to remind us where we've been. Following another (but brief) cadenza, Beethoven switches to C major, accelerates the tempo to *Presto*, and gives the orchestra the last word.

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Concerto No. 3 In C Minor Op. 37

1. Allegro Con Brio 15:17

2. Largo 9:46

3. Rondo (Allegro) 8:31

4. Egmont Overture 8:42

Total Time: 42:16

Recorded at Severance Hall, Cleveland

Released 1961

by Epic records (Columbia) Producer: Howard Scott



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