

Fritz Reiner was one of the most acclaimed conductors of the 20th century -- noted for the vast range of his repertoire, which included both symphonic and operatic pieces spanning from the traditional canon to contemporary material, he was also an influential educator who counted among his pupils Leonard Bernstein. Reiner was born in Budapest, Hungary, on December 19, 1888; despite earning a law degree from the University of Bucharest, he pursued a career in music, and at age 21 was named chorusmaster of the Budapest Opera. A stint as conductor with the Budapest Volksoper followed before Reiner was chosen in 1914 to serve as principal conductor of the Royal Opera in Dresden, where he collaborated with Richard Strauss on productions of several of the composer's early operas.

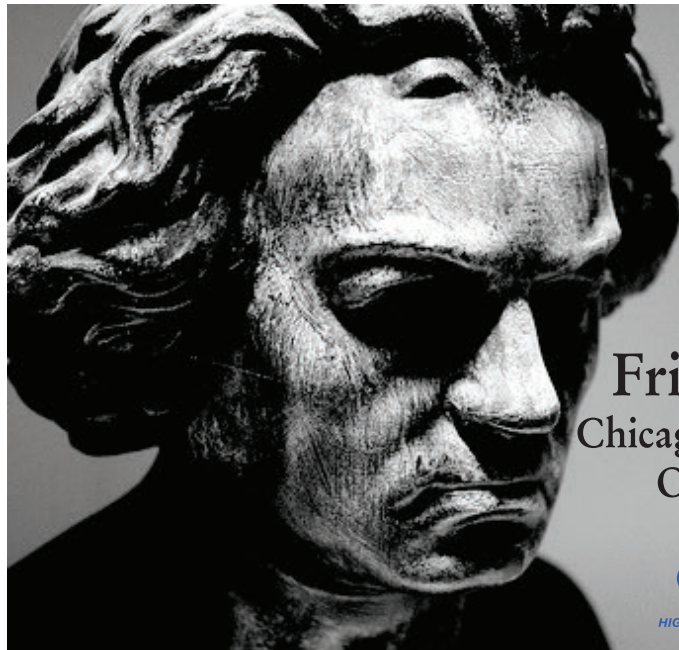
In 1922 Reiner left Europe to relocate to America, settling in Cincinnati, OH, and signing on as conductor with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra; a decade later he was tapped to head the orchestral and opera departments at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music, where his students included Bernstein. After next serving as the music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony between 1938 and 1948, he served five years with the Metropolitan Opera. While Reiner's frequent migration might have been attributed largely to a restless creativity, he was also a notoriously difficult personality who frequently alienated those around him -- many of the musicians under his command openly loathed him, although he inevitably inspired the best work of their careers.

Reiner's own best work was undoubtedly his tenure with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, which he elevated into one of the most celebrated ensembles in the world. Moving over to the CSO in 1953, he not only established the orchestra as a top-flight live attraction but also as a popular recording entity -- the countless albums they made for RCA's Living Stereo series during Reiner's decade-long tenure were much acclaimed by collectors for both the power of the performances and the unusually high fidelity of the recordings themselves. Releases like Fritz Reiner Conducts Richard Strauss and Fritz Reiner Conducts Bartók in particular remain definitive interpretations of the composers in question. Health problems forced Reiner to resign his position in 1962, and he died in New York City on November 15 of the following year.



BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 9



Fritz Reiner
Chicago Symphony
Orchestra



The Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125 "Choral" is the final complete symphony of Ludwig van Beethoven. Completed in 1824, the symphony is one of the best known works of the Western classical repertoire, and has been adapted for use as the European Anthem. It is considered one of Beethoven's masterpieces and one of the greatest musical compositions ever written.

The symphony was the first example of a major composer using voices in a symphony. The words are sung during the final movement by four vocal soloists and a chorus. They were taken from the "Ode to Joy", a poem written by Friedrich Schiller in 1785 and revised in 1803, with additions made by the composer.

The Philharmonic Society of London originally commissioned the symphony in 1817. Beethoven started the work in 1818 and finished early in 1824. However, both the words and notes of the symphony have sources dating from earlier in Beethoven's career.

The title of Schiller's poem "An die Freude" is literally translated as "To Joy", but is normally called the "Ode to Joy". It was written in 1785 and first published the following year in the poet's own literary journal, Thalia. Beethoven had made plans to set this poem to music as far back as 1793, when he was 22 years old.

In addition, the symphony also emerged from other pieces by Beethoven that, while completed works in their own right, are also in some sense sketches for the future symphony. The Choral Fantasy Opus. 80 (1808), basically a piano concerto movement, brings in a chorus and vocal soloists near the end to form the climax. As in the Ninth Symphony, the vocal forces sing a theme first played instrumentally, and this theme is highly reminiscent of the corresponding theme in the Ninth Symphony (for a detailed comparison, see Choral Fantasy). Going further back, an earlier version of the Choral Fantasy theme is found in the song "Gegenliebe" ("Returned Love"), for piano and high voice, which dates from before 1795.

The introduction for the vocal part of the symphony caused many difficulties for Beethoven. Beethoven's friend Anton Schindler, later said: "When he started working on the fourth movement the struggle began as never before. The aim was to find an appropriate way of introducing Schiller's ode. One day he [Beethoven] entered the room and shouted 'I got it, I just got it!' Then he showed me a sketchbook with the words 'let us sing the ode of the immortal Schiller'". However, Beethoven did not retain this version, and kept rewriting until he had found its final form, with the words "O Freunde, nicht diese Töne" ("O friends, not these sounds").

Beethoven was eager to have his work played in Berlin as soon as possible after finishing it, since he thought that musical taste in Vienna was dominated by Italian composers such as Rossini. When his friends and financiers heard this, they urged him to premiere the symphony in Vienna.

The Ninth Symphony was premiered on May 7, 1824 in the Kärntnertortheater in Vienna, along with the Consecration of the House Overture and the first three parts of the Missa Solemnis. This was the composer's first on-stage appearance in twelve years; the hall was packed. The soprano and alto parts were interpreted by two famous young singers: Henriette Sontag and Caroline Unger.

Although the performance was officially directed by Michael Umlauf, the theatre's Kapellmeister, Beethoven shared the stage with him. However, two years earlier, Umlauf had watched as the composer's attempt to conduct a dress rehearsal of his opera Fidelio ended in disaster. So this time, he instructed the singers and musicians to ignore the totally deaf Beethoven. At the beginning of every part, Beethoven, who sat by the stage, gave the tempos. He was turning the pages of his score and beating time for an orchestra he could not hear.

BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 9

Fritz Reiner • Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Featuring: Florence Kopleff, Donald Gramm, Phyllis Curtin, John McCollum
CSO Chorus

- I. Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso 15:58
 - II. Molto vivace 10:46
 - III. Adagio molto e cantabile - Andante moderato 16:46
 - IV. Finale: Presto 24:27
- Total Time 67:57

Transferred from a RCA 4-track tape • Recorded 1961 • Venue Chicago Symphony Hall
Producer Richard Mohr • Engineer Robert Layton



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