

The eminent Hungarian-born English conductor, Georg (actually György) Solti, studied piano and composition with Ernst von Dohnanyi, Zoltan Kodaly, Béla Bartók and Leó Weiner at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest, giving his first concert at the age of 12.

Georg Solti began working as assistant at the Budapest Opera in 1930 and was director of music there from 1934 to 1939. In the summers of 1936 and 1937 he was assistant to Arturo Toscanini at the Salzburg Festival, an encounter that left a deep impression on the young musician. After the outbreak of the Second World War, he emigrated to Zurich, resuming his career as a pianist. He won first prize at the Geneva International Competition in 1942.

Georg Solti's career really began after the end of World War II. For almost 25 years, he concentrated entirely on conducting operas. He was chief musical director of the Munich Opera from 1947 to 1951 and of the Frankfurt Opera from 1952 to 1961. Covent Garden excelled during his tenure as musical director (1961-1971). In 1951 he conducted for the first time in Salzburg (Idomeneo by Mozart). At the end of the 1950's he made his first recordings e.g. Der Ring des Nibelungen by Wagner with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1961 he was appointed as musical director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, but hardly ever worked in this position since the orchestra's management had appointed an assistant without asking him.

In 1969 Georg Solti took over as director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and his second career as a conductor of orchestral music began. He remained in this post until 1991. From 1972 to 1975 he was also director of the Orchestre de Paris. In 1973, Rolf Liebermann appointed him as musical adviser to the Paris Opera. From 1979 to 1983 he was director of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1983, in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the death of Richard Wagner, he conducted Der Ring des Nibelungen in Bayreuth but without achieving his customary high standard. He excels principally in the German and Austrian post-Romantic repertoire and in contemporary Hungarian music (Béla Bartók, Kodaly). In 1992 he took over from Herbert von Karajan as artistic director of the Salzburg Easter Festival (until 1994). In 1995 he was artistic adviser to the festival that replaced the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival.

Georg Solti did a large number of first performances, including works by Gilbert Amy D'un espace déployé (1973), Boris Blacher Requiem (1959) and Collage for Orchestra (1968), David Del Tredici Final Alice (1976), Gottfried von Einem Philadelphia Symphony (1961), Hans Werner Henze Heliogabalus Imperator (1972), Rolf Liebermann L'Ecole des femmes (second version) (1957), Witold Lutoslawski Symphony no. 3 (1983), George Rochberg Symphony no. 5 (1986) and Iannis Xenakis Noomena (1976).



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Eroica Symphony, byname of Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 55, symphony by Ludwig van Beethoven, known as the Eroica Symphony for its supposed heroic nature. The work premiered in Vienna on April 7, 1805, and was grander and more dramatic than customary for symphonies at the time. It was Beethoven's largest solely instrumental work.

It has been called the Bonaparte Symphony, called that by no less an authority than Beethoven himself. The occasion was a letter to the Leipzig-based publisher Breitkopf und Härtel, to which he wrote August 26, 1804, about this newest symphony, observing, "I think it will interest the musical public." Certainly, Napoleon was a name in the news at the time, and Beethoven was favorably impressed by the man's efforts to reform society so that the working classes would enjoy more equality. Writing a symphony inspired by the Corsican's spirit not only spoke to Beethoven's heart, but also to that of the general public. Besides, at the time, Beethoven was planning a concert tour to France.

At least, that was the case when the composer completed the symphony and sent that letter to his publisher. A few months later—specifically on December 2, 1804—Napoleon had himself named Emperor of France. According to his friend and student Ferdinand Ries (1784–1838), Beethoven greeted that news with fury: his hero had become a tyrant, and the composer would not dedicate a symphony to such a person. In disgust, the composer tore the title page from the symphony and cancelled the French tour.

He gave the symphony a new sub-title, Eroica, implying more of a general heroism than specific deeds. A further inscription added the thought "composed to celebrate the memory of a great man," seemingly referring to the earlier Napoleon, that idealistic young hero who now lived only in

memory. When the work was published in 1806, it was dedicated not to Bonaparte, but to Prince Franz Joseph von Lobkowitz (1772–1816), one of Beethoven's most loyal patrons. That Lobkowitz had offered to pay handsomely for the privilege even before Beethoven became disenchanted with Napoleon may well have precipitated the composer's action.

In one particular fashion, Symphony No. 3 remained Napoleonic. It was a hugely ambitious work that refused to stay within boundaries, stunning in its epic scope and emotional impact. The work premiered in Vienna April 7, 1805. Beethoven's friend and colleague Carl Czerny later recalled hearing an audience member call out, "I'd give another kreutzer if it would stop." That listener would not have been the only one in the concert hall who was overwhelmed. Audiences that had become accustomed to music being purely for entertainment suddenly faced a radical new idea, that like a literary masterpiece, a symphony could present its creator's image of the world. That concept lay at the heart of the Romantic revolution, of which Beethoven was one of the early adherents.

Four years later, Beethoven himself conducted the work at a charity concert at Vienna's Theater-an-der-Wien. By the time of the latter performance, France and Austria had fallen into war. The French had occupied Vienna, and French troops filled the streets. Napoleon was in town, but did not attend the concert. Whether the diminutive ruler ever knew of the work's connection to himself is uncertain.

Beethoven

Symphony No. 3 E FLAT MAJOR OP. 55

GEORG SOLTI conducts the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

- I. Allegro con brio 19:18**
- II. Marcia funebre: Adagio assai 16:28**
- III. Scherzo: Allegro vivace 5:35**
- IV. Finale: Allegro molto 12:34**
- Total Time: 53:55**

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