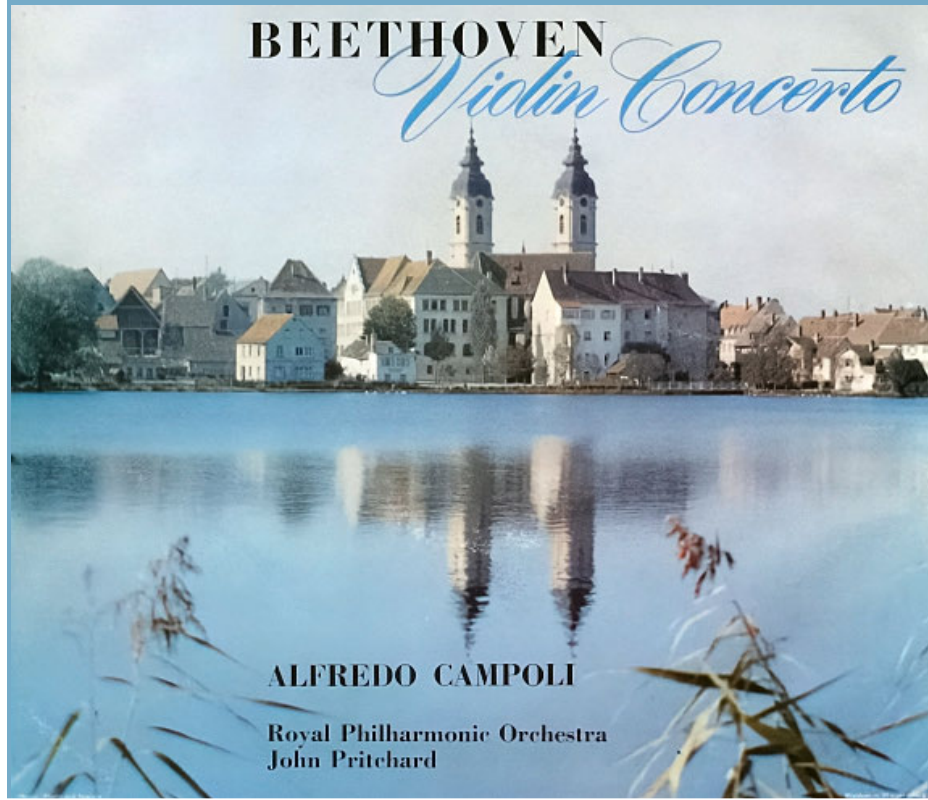


Alfredo Campoli was born in Rome in 1906, both his parents being professional musicians. In 1911 the family moved to London, where Campoli was taught by his father, and by the time of his Wigmore Hall début in 1923, he was already secure in 11 major concertos. Although he subsequently toured with Melba and Clara Butt, Campoli turned his attention to light music, and during the 1930s became a household name for his many recordings and broadcasts, especially with his Salon Orchestra. Usually billed only under his surname, he also maintained a concert career, and played Paganini's Concerto in D (arranged by Kreisler) at a Promenade Concert in 1937. After the Second World War he returned to the "serious" classics, and soon established an international reputation. He made his American début at Carnegie Hall in 1953 and visited Russia twice in 1956, on the second occasion with the LPO. Campoli's large repertoire, and included the major Classical and Romantic works as well as works by Moeran, Ireland, Bax and Walton; in 1955 he gave the first performance of Bliss's Violin Concerto, which was written for him. His extraordinary beauty of tone and phrasing, often likened to bel canto singing, was combined with an impeccable technique and an eloquently expressive approach to interpretation. A larger-than-life figure, keen on tennis and bridge and usually sporting a large cigar, Campoli recorded for Decca for over 40 years. He died in 1991 at his home in Berkshire, England.



BEETHOVEN

Violin Concerto



ALFREDO CAMPOLI

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
John Pritchard

In 1806 Beethoven was persuaded to write his monumental violin concerto in D Major, Opus 61, for Franz Clement, leader of the theater orchestra at Wien. Clement had been a child prodigy, and was considered to be a remarkable violinist with a prodigious memory, but was, as well, something of a charlatan in that some of his public performances were said to be circus-like. He performed the Beethoven Concerto by sight-reading (though there is some dispute about this) with an unrehearsed orchestra, and he divided the work up, inserting a sonata of his own after the first movement, playing his sonata with the violin up-side-down, and on one string. The first performance was a benefit concert for Clement, but it is not known whether Beethoven consulted Clement about the violin part. The piece, written in haste, was not met with very enthusiastic reviews (Möser wrote that the thematic material was commonplace, confused, wearisome and too repetitious) and the work had only three performances between 1806 and 1844.

Piano concertos were more popular during that time, and Beethoven was persuaded to write a piano version, which was published the following year, a year before the composer subjected the violin concerto to a final revision. There was no known exchange between the composer and the performer after the initial performance. No violin cadenzas were written by Beethoven, though he wrote cadenzas for the piano version, and violin cadenzas were subsequently written by Joachim, David, Kreisler and many other celebrated violinists. One can really better understand why there is no definite edition of the work, considering the composer's indecision and haste and how improvised the première of the work was.

In 1828 Pierre Baillot played the nearly forgotten violin concerto of Beethoven, which, since its première in 1806, had received only one performance, in Berlin, in 1812. The fourteen-year-old Henri Vieuxtemps played it in Vienna in 1834. However, it did not begin to find its first interpreters and admirers until Joseph Joachim performed it in London in 1844 under the direction of Mendelssohn; both artists were vitally interested in stimulating appreciation of the classical masters. As late as 1855, Louis Spohr (who rejected the late works of Beethoven), said to Joachim after a performance of the Beethoven Concerto that he supposed it was fine in its own way, but he would rather hear Joachim play a "real" violin piece.

This negative judgment was conditioned by the artificial bravura practices of the early 19th century; concertos were written for the purpose of displaying the player's pyrotechniques, sometimes leading to music which was bizarre, sentimental and eclectic. Spohr wrote his first five violin concertos before Beethoven completed his, and neither Spohr nor his contemporaries gave attention to the merits of Beethoven's Concerto. The Beethoven Concerto was not a display piece, and found slow acceptance by virtuosos, who had, during that era, their own concerti primarily in mind, with the desire to showcase their particular virtuosic strengths. Beethoven's towering musical concepts, mirroring the spirit of reform, democracy and revolution, and his idiomatic treatment of the violin and pianistic thinking, had to wait for a later era to be appreciated.

Ludwig Van Beethoven Violin Concerto in D

Alfredo Campoli Violin

John Pritchard Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

1-Allegro ma non troppo 22:16

2-Larghetto 10:04

3-Rondo 9:36

The Beethoven Violin Concerto recorded by EMI 1962



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Beethoven Violin Con Campoli

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