

Characteristic of Beethoven's music, the dramatic and structural implications of the concerto emerge at the outset, in a series of quiet timpani strokes that led some early detractors to dismiss the work as the "Kettledrum Concerto." Striking as it is, this fleeting, throbbing motive is more than just an attention-getter; indeed, it provides the very basis for the melodic and rhythmic material that is to follow. At over 25 minutes in length, the first movement is notable as one of the most extended in any of Beethoven's works, including the symphonies. Its breadth arises from Beethoven's adoption of the Classical ritornello form -- here manifested in the extended tutti that precedes the entrance of the violin -- and from the composer's expansive treatment of the melodic material throughout. The second movement takes a place among the most serene music Beethoven ever produced. Free from the dramatic unrest of the first movement, the second is marked by a tranquil, organic lyricism. Toward the end, an abrupt orchestral outburst leads into a cadenza, which in turn takes the work directly into the final movement. The genial Rondo, marked by a folk-like robustness and dancelike energy, makes some of the work's more virtuosic demands on the soloist.

At the prompting of Muzio Clementi -- one of the greatest piano virtuosos of the day aside from Beethoven himself -- Beethoven later made a surprisingly effective transcription of the violin concerto as the unnumbered Piano Concerto in D major, Op. 61a, famously adding to the first movement an extended cadenza that employs tympani in addition to the piano.

Francescatti

**BEETHOVEN
VIOLIN CONCERTO**

Bruno Walter
conducts the
Columbia Symphony Orchestra

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Though indeed of Italian background, violinist Zino Francescatti was a Frenchman, born in Marseilles in 1902. His real name was René-Charles Francescatti. Both his parents played the violin, and his father René had been a student of Paganini. The younger Francescatti performed the Paganini Violin Concerto No. 1 at his official Paris debut in 1925.

By that time Francescatti was already an experienced performer. He gave his first concert at age 5 and played the Beethoven violin concerto at 10. From his late teens he concertized regularly, and after arriving in Paris in 1924 he formed a duo with none less than Maurice Ravel and embarked on an international tour. In the 1920s and 1930s Francescatti toured the globe, although his U.S. debut didn't come until 1939, once again with the Paganini Concerto No. 1, in a New York Philharmonic concert.

Despite his fondness for Paganini, Francescatti was more identified with elegant, natural-seeming playing than with sheer virtuoso fireworks. Later in life he toured and recorded with the similarly fluid French pianist Robert Casadesus in duo repertory; they recorded a complete set of Beethoven's violin and piano sonatas, lyrical works ideally suited to their combined styles. Living in New York but often returning to France to perform and teach, Francescatti made durable recordings of several major repertory works, including the Beethoven concerto with conductor Bruno Walter and the Columbia Symphony Orchestra. Francescatti retired in 1976, moved back to France, and sold his prized Stradivarius instrument to Salvatore Accardo. In 1987 he used part of the proceeds to establish an educational foundation and a violin competition in the city of Aix-en-Provence.

Despite the deep-rooted European traditions exemplified in his playing,

Francescatti's memory has not been particularly well served by reissue houses. An exception, however, is the Bridge release *An Evening of Paganini* (Great Performances from The Library of Congress, Vol. 17), which won a Best Recording of the Year award from *Fanfare* magazine. The disc presents a 1954 Paganini recital Francescatti gave with pianist Artur Balsam. The Zino Francescatti in Performance two-disc set released by the Music & Arts label offers Francescatti concerto performances from the 1940s and 1950s with various orchestras.

Beethoven wrote his Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61 (1806), at the height of his so-called "second" period, one of the most fecund phases of his creativity. In the few years leading up to the violin concerto, Beethoven had produced such masterpieces as the Symphony No. 3, Op. 55 (1803), the Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 58 (1805-1806), and two of his most important piano sonatas, No. 21 in C major, Op. 53 ("Waldstein," 1803-1804), and No. 23 in F minor, Op. 57 ("Appassionata," 1804-1805). The violin concerto represents a continuation -- indeed, one of the crowning achievements -- of Beethoven's exploration of the concerto, a form he would essay only once more, in the Piano Concerto No. 5 (1809).

By the time of the violin concerto, Beethoven had employed the violin in concertante roles in a more limited context. Around the time of the first two symphonies, he produced two romances for violin and orchestra; a few years later, he used the violin as a member of the solo trio in the Triple Concerto (1803-1804). These works, despite their musical effectiveness, must still be regarded as studies and workings-out in relation to the violin concerto, which more clearly demonstrates Beethoven's mastery in marshalling the distinctive formal and dramatic forces of the concerto form.

BEETHOVEN

Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61

Zino Francescatti, violin

Bruno Walter Columbia Symphony Orchestra

1-Allegro ma non troppo (D major) 23:55

2-Larghetto (G major) 9:49

3-Rondo. Allegro (D major) 10:15

Total Time: 43:59



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