

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.



# Brahms

## Piano Concerto No 1

in D minor, Op. 15

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.

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1. Maestoso 21:30

2. Adagio 14:47

3. Rondo: Allegro Non Troppo 11:04

Total Time: 47:21

**Recorded at Severance Hall, Cleveland, January 1958**

**by Epic records (Columbia)**



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