

As Richter once put it, "My repertoire runs to around eighty different programs, not counting chamber works." His repertoire ranged from Handel and Bach to Szymanowski, Berg, Webern, Stravinsky, Bartók, Hindemith, Britten, and Gershwin. It is perhaps instructive, although baffling, to note the works he did not play: they include Bach's Goldberg Variations, Beethoven's Waldstein and Moonlight sonatas and Fourth and Fifth piano concertos, Schubert's A-major sonata D. 959, Prokofiev's Third piano concerto, Chopin's first piano concerto and second sonata and Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3. Richter worked tirelessly to learn new pieces. For instance, in the late 1980s, he learned Brahms's Paganini and Handel Variations, and in the 1990s, several of Debussy's études and Gershwin, and works by Bach and Mozart that he had not previously included in his programs.

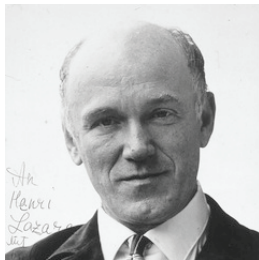
Central to his repertoire were the works of Schubert, Schumann, Beethoven, J. S. Bach, Chopin, Liszt, Prokofiev and Debussy. He is said to have learned the second book of Bach's The Well-Tempered Clavier by heart in one month.

He gave the premiere of Prokofiev's Sonata No. 7, which he learned in four days, and No. 9, which Prokofiev dedicated to Richter. Apart from his solo career, he also performed chamber music with partners such as Mstislav Rostropovich, Rudolf Barshai, David Oistrakh, Oleg Kagan, Yuri Bashmet, Natalia Gutman, Zoltán Kocsis, Elisabeth Leonskaja, Benjamin Britten and members of the Borodin Quartet. Richter also often accompanied singers such as Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Peter Schreier, Galina Pisarenko and his long-time companion Nina Dorliak. Richter also conducted the premiere of Prokofiev's Symphony-Concerto for cello and orchestra. This was his sole appearance as a conductor. The soloist was Rostropovich, to whom the work was dedicated. Prokofiev also wrote his 1949 Cello Sonata in C for Rostropovich, and he and Richter premiered it in 1950. Richter himself was a passable cellist, and Rostropovich was a good pianist; at one concert in Moscow at which he accompanied Rostropovich on the piano, they exchanged instruments for part of the program.

Approach to performance

Richter explained his approach to performance as follows: "The interpreter is really an executant, carrying out the composer's intentions to the letter. He doesn't add anything that isn't already in the work. If he is talented, he allows us to glimpse the truth of the work that is in itself a thing of genius and that is reflected in him. He shouldn't dominate the music, but should dissolve into it." Or, similarly: "I am not a complete idiot, but whether from weakness or laziness have no talent for thinking. I know only how to reflect: I am a mirror . . . Logic does not exist for me. I float on the waves of art and life and never really know how to distinguish what belongs to the one or the other or what is common to both. Life unfolds for me like a theatre presenting a sequence of somewhat unreal sentiments; while the things of art are real to me and go straight to my heart."

Richter's belief that musicians should "carry ... out the composer's intentions to the letter", led him to be critical of others and, most often, himself. After attending a recital of Murray Perahia, where Perahia performed Chopin's Third Piano Sonata without observing the first movement repeat, Richter asked him backstage to explain the omission. Similarly, after Richter realized that he had been playing a wrong note in Bach's Italian Concerto for decades, he insisted that the following disclaimer/apology be printed on a CD containing a performance thereof: "Just now Sviatoslav Richter realized, much to his regret, that he always made a mistake in the third measure before the end of the second part of the 'Italian Concerto'. As a matter of fact, through forty years -- and no musician or technician ever pointed it out to him -- he played 'F-sharp' rather than 'F'. The same mistake can be found in the previous recording made by Maestro Richter in the fifties."



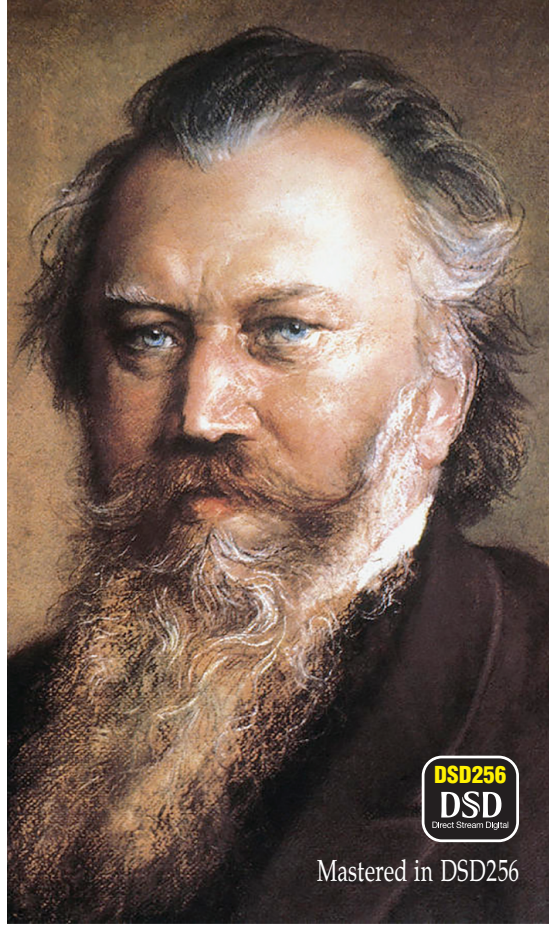
Brahms

Piano Concerto No.2

Sviatoslav Richter, piano

Erich Leinsdorf

Chicago Symphony Orchestra



Mastered in DSD256

The Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major, Op. 83 by Johannes Brahms is separated by a gap of 22 years from his first piano concerto. Brahms began work on the piece in 1878 and completed it in 1881 while in Pressbaum near Vienna. It is dedicated to his teacher, Eduard Marxsen. The premiere of the concerto was given in Budapest on November 9, 1881, with Brahms as soloist, and was an immediate success. He proceeded to perform the piece in many cities across Europe.

The piece is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets (B-flat), 2 bassoons, 4 horns (initially 2 in B-flat bass, 2 in F), 2 trumpets (B-flat), timpani (B-flat and F), and strings. (The trumpets and timpani are used only in the first two movements, which is unusual.)

The piece is in four movements, rather than the three typical of concertos in the Classical and Romantic periods:

Allegro non troppo

The first movement is in the concerto variant of sonata form. The main theme is introduced with a horn solo, with the piano interceding. The woodwind instruments proceed to introduce a small motif (borrowed, perhaps unconsciously, from the opening of the first movement of his Serenade No. 2) before an unusually placed cadenza appears. The full orchestra repeats the theme and introduces more motifs in the orchestral exposition. The piano and orchestra work together to develop these themes in the piano exposition before the key changes to F minor (from F major, the dominant) and the piano plays a powerful and difficult section before the next orchestral tutti appears. The development, like many such sections in the Classical period, works its way from the dominant key back to the tonic while heavily developing themes. At the beginning of the recapitulation, the theme is replayed before a differing transition is heard, returning to the music heard in the piano exposition (this time in B-flat major / B-flat minor). A coda appears after the minor key section, finishing off this movement.

Allegro appassionato

This scherzo is in the key of D minor and is in ternary form. Contrary to Brahms' "tiny wisp of a scherzo" remark, it is a tumultuous movement. The piano and orchestra introduce the theme and develop it before a quiet section intervenes. Soon afterwards the piano and orchestra launch into a stormy development of the theme before coming to the central episode (in D major). The central episode is brisk and begins with the full orchestra before yet another quiet section intervenes; then the piano is integrated into the orchestral effect to repeat the theme of the central episode. The beginning section returns but is highly varied.

Andante

The slow movement is in the tonic key of B-flat major and is unusual in utilizing an extensive cello solo within a piano concerto (the source of this idea may be Clara Schumann's Piano Concerto, which features a slow movement scored only for cello and piano). Brahms subsequently rewrote the cello's theme and changed it into a song, *Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer* ("My Slumber Grows Ever More Peaceful") with lyrics by Hermann Van Lingg. (Op. 105, No. 2). Within the concerto, the cello plays the theme for the first three minutes, before the piano comes in. However, the gentler melodic piece that the piano plays soon gives way to a stormy theme in B-flat minor. When the storm subsides, still in the minor key, the piano plays a transitional motif that leads to the key of G-flat major, before the cello comes in to reprise, in the wrong key, and knowing that it has to get back to B-flat major, the piano and the orchestra make a transition to finish off the theme in its original home key of B-flat major. After the piano plays the transitional motifs, the piano quickly reprises the middle section in a major key before the final coda is established.

Allegretto grazioso

The last movement consists of five clearly distinguishable sections, which introduce and develop five different themes.

The first section (bars 1 to 64) presents themes 1 and 2. The first theme (also the "main theme") (1-8) is first played by the piano and then repeated by the orchestra. The second theme (16-20) is likewise presented by the piano and repeated - and expanded - by the orchestra. Finally, a kind of development of the first theme leads on to the next section.

The second section (65-164) contains the next three themes. Theme 3 (65-73) is very different from the previous ones, due largely to its minor setting and its distinctive, Hungarian rhythm. Theme 4 (81-88) is still in a minor and theme 5 (97-104) is in F major. These three themes are each repeated back and forth several times, which gives the section the character of a development.

The third section (165-308) can be seen as a reprise of the first; it is built on the first two themes, but a striking new element is given in 201-205 and repeated in 238-241.

The fourth section (309-376) reprises themes 3, 5 and 4, in that order.

The final section, the coda, is built on the main theme, but even here (398) Brahms presents a new element, restating the main theme in triple rhythm (a device he used earlier to end his violin concerto) over a little march, first played by the piano, then answered by the orchestra, which trades themes with the soloist before the final chords.

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- 1. First Movement: Allegro Non Troppo 16:34**
- 2. Second Movement: Allegro Appassionato 8:30**
- 3. Third Movement: Andante 12:30**
- 4. Fourth Movement: Allegretto Grazioso 8:37**

Please Note: In the interest of preserving the superb sound quality of these historic recordings, they have been preserved in their original, pristine state for maximum fidelity. Transferred from commercially released, analog reel-to-reel tapes (some of which are more than 50 years old), the recordings themselves can be subject to certain "artifacts" which are an inseparable part of the original analog recording process, such as tape "hiss" or other defects, and these may be audible on certain music tracks.

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