

Herbert von Karajan was among the most famous conductors of all time -- a man whose talent and autocratic bearing lifted him to a position of unprecedented dominance in European musical circles. He was born on April 5, 1908 in Salzburg, Austria, to a cultured Austrian family of Greek descent (their original name was Karajannis). His musical training began at the Mozarteum Conservatory in Salzburg where he studied piano with Franz Ledwenke, theory with Franz Zauer, and composition with Bernhard Paumgartner, who encouraged Karajan to pursue conducting. Karajan graduated from the conservatory in 1926, and continued his studies at the Vienna Academy of Music and Performing Arts, where he studied piano with Josef Hofman and conducting with Alexander Wunderer and Franz Schalk. Karajan's conducting debut came on January 22, 1929, with the Mozarteum Orchestra in Salzburg. Consequently, the young maestro directed a performance of Strauss' Salome at the Salzburg Festspielhaus, and was named principal conductor of the Ulm Stadttheater, where he remained in that capacity until 1934.

The next fourteen years saw the young conductor's reputation grow rapidly. He was named music director of the Aachen Stadttheater (1934-1942), had his debut at the Vienna State Opera (1937), and accepted a position with the Deutsch Grammophon Gesellschaft (1938-1943). In 1939, Karajan was appointed conductor of the Berlin State Opera, and director of the Preussische Staatskapelle Symphony concerts. In 1948, he was appointed for life, to the position of director of the Chorale Society at the Society of the Friends of Music, in Vienna.

In 1948, Herbert von Karajan also served at the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia Orchestra, and La Scala, before succeeding Wilhelm Furtwängler as the music director of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra -- a union that would cement his reputation as one of the world's premier conductors. In 1955, Karajan brought that orchestra to the United States on the first of many international tours. The decade that followed saw Karajan accept several appointments, including those to the Salzburg Festival and the Vienna State Opera. In 1967, Karajan had his Metropolitan Opera debut, conducting a performance of Wagner's Die Walküre, and the same year, founded the Salzburg Easter Festival. In 1968, the Herbert von Karajan Foundation was founded to support the research of "conscious musical perception."

Herbert von Karajan was awarded the "Ring of the Province of Salzburg," Golden Grammophone, Arts Prize (Lucerne), Grand Prix International du Disque, Gold Medal of the Royal Philharmonic Society, German Golden Disc Prize, UNESCO International Music Prize, Olympia Prize of the Onassis Foundation, and multiple Grammophone awards, among others. He was elected to an honorary senate seat at the University of Salzburg. The maestro was also recognized with honorary degrees from a host of universities.

Karajan, along with Akio Morita and Norio Ohga (president and vice-president respectively, of Japanese Sony Group), unveiled and presented the Compact Disc Digital Audio System in 1981. In 1982, Karajan founded Telemondial S.A.M. with Uli Markle, in an effort to document the maestro's illustrious legacy on videotape and laser disc, and to help broaden the scope of "musical expression," through the use of modern technology. In 1984, Karajan recorded the complete Beethoven symphonies with film adaptation, made possible by his own Telemondial. In 1988, Deutsch Grammophone released a collection of one hundred "masterworks" recordings made by the conductor. Herbert von Karajan's discography is impressive to say the least, and will certainly endure in musical arenas, as some of the most valued interpretations of the repertoire available. Herbert von Karajan, often referred to as "general music director of Europe," died in Salzburg of heart failure July 16, 1989.



BRAHMS

SYMPHONY NO. 1 C-MOLL

Vienna
Philharmonic
*
HERBERT
VON
KARAJAN



Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, Op. 68, orchestral work by German composer Johannes Brahms that, with its lyricism and thematic unity, is widely regarded as one of the greatest symphonies of the Austro-German tradition. Nearly 20 years in the making, the composition premiered on November 4, 1876, in Karlsruhe, Germany.

Initially a pianist, Brahms became interested in composition and began working on his first symphony in the early 1860s. By the time he finished the piece, in September 1876, he had been living for more than a decade in Vienna, where Beethoven had produced many of his greatest works. Indeed, throughout his career as a composer, Brahms sensed the shadow of Beethoven looming over him and hoped to be considered on his own merits, without being compared to the man who would come to be widely regarded as the greatest composer in the Western classical tradition. Leery of Vienna's notoriously stern music critics and its equally opinionated audiences, who worshipped Beethoven, Brahms felt that his first symphony would have a better chance of succeeding outside of the city. He arranged for the work to premiere in Karlsruhe.

That performance went rather well, with the only discouraging words coming from Brahms himself, who described the new symphony as "long and not especially amiable." Brahms then scheduled a Vienna performance, and it was on that occasion that the Beethoven parallels

at last emerged. Celebrated Austrian music critic Eduard Hanslick compared the styles of the two masters, suggesting that Brahms had relied rather heavily on the serious side of Beethoven at the expense of what he called "heartwarming sunshine." Furthermore, he insisted that the regal string melody of the fourth movement was strikingly similar to the Ode to Joy in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125. German conductor and pianist Hans von Bülow, a student of Hungarian piano virtuoso and composer Franz Liszt, agreed with Hanslick's assessment and memorably tagged the piece "Beethoven's Tenth."

Such comparative remarks could not have pleased Brahms. Nevertheless, he likely found fulfillment in the high praise that the reviewers ultimately accorded the piece. Hanslick, for all his reservations, lauded the composition as "one of the most individual and magnificent works of the symphonic literature." He closed his review with these enthusiastic words: "The new symphony of Brahms is something of which the nation may be proud, an inexhaustible fountain of deep pleasure and fruitful study." That assessment still holds. With his Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, Brahms finally secured a place alongside Beethoven in the pantheon of great composers.

Brahms Symphony No. 1

Herbert von Karajan Conducts the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

1. Un Poco Sostenuto, Allegro 13:52
 2. Andante Sostenuto 9:13
 3. Un Poco Allegretto E Grazioso 4:58
 4. Adagio, Piu Andante, Allegro Non Troppo Ma Con Brio, Piu Allegro 17:32
- Total Time: 45:35

Transferred from 15ips 2-track tape

Recorded by Decca 1959

Producer: John Culshaw Engineer: James Brown

Venue: Sofiensaal, Vienna



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