

The Berlin Philharmonic was founded in Berlin in 1882 by 54 musicians under the name Frühere Bilsesche Kapelle (literally, "Former Bilsé's Band"); the group broke away from their previous conductor Benjamin Bilsé after he announced his intention of taking the band on a fourth-class train to Warsaw for a concert. The orchestra was renamed and reorganized under the financial management of Hermann Wolff in 1887. Their new conductor was Ludwig von Brenner; in 1887 Hans von Bülow, one of the most esteemed conductors in the world, took over the post. This helped to establish the orchestra's international reputation, and guests Hans Richter, Felix von Weingartner, Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler, Johannes Brahms and Edvard Grieg conducted the orchestra over the next few years. Programmes of this period show that the orchestra possessed only 46 strings, much less than the Wagnerian ideal of 64.



In 1895, Arthur Nikisch became chief conductor, and was succeeded in 1923 by Wilhelm Furtwängler. Despite several changes in leadership, the orchestra continued to perform throughout World War II. After Furtwängler fled to Switzerland in 1945, Leo Borchard became chief conductor. This arrangement lasted only a few months, as Borchard was accidentally shot and killed by the American forces occupying Berlin. Sergiu Celibidache then took over as chief conductor for seven years, from 1945 to 1952. Furtwängler returned in 1952 and conducted the orchestra until his death in 1954.

His successor was Herbert von Karajan, who led the orchestra from 1955 until his resignation in April 1989, only months before his death. Under him, the orchestra made a vast number of recordings and toured widely, growing and gaining fame. When Karajan stepped down, the post was offered to Carlos Kleiber, but he declined. Claudio Abbado became principal conductor after Karajan, expanding the orchestra's repertoire beyond the core classical and romantic works into more modern 20th-century works. He stepped down from this post in 2002 to conduct the Lucerne Festival Orchestra. During the post-unification period, the orchestra encountered financial problems resulting from budgetary stress in the city of Berlin. In 2006, the Orchestra Academy of the Berlin Philharmonic established the Claudio Abbado Composition Prize in Abbado's honour.

Sir Simon Rattle conducting the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in 2006

In June 1999, the musicians elected Sir Simon Rattle as their next chief conductor. Rattle made it a condition of his signing with the Berlin Philharmonic that it be turned into a self-governing public foundation, with the power to make its own artistic and financial decisions. This required a change to state law, which was approved in 2001, allowing him to join the organization in 2002. Rattle's contract with the orchestra was initially through 2012. In April 2008, the BPO musicians voted in favour of retaining Rattle as their chief conductor. From 2006 to 2010 the general manager of the orchestra was Pamela Rosenberg (de). In April 2008, the orchestra announced that Rosenberg would not continue as general manager after her contract expires in 2010. As of September 2010 the new general manager will be German media manager Martin Hoffmann (de).

In 2006, the orchestra announced it would investigate its role during the Nazi regime.[9] In 2007, Misha Aster published *The Reich's Orchestra*, his study of the relationship of the Berlin Philharmonic to the rulers of the Third Reich. Also in 2007, the documentary film *The Reichsorchester* by Enrique Sánchez Lansch was released. UNICEF appointed the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and Rattle as Goodwill Ambassadors in November 2007. On 10 January 2013 Simon Rattle announced that his tenure as artistic director and chief conductor would end in 2018.

Brahms

Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68

Herbert von Karajan / Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra



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

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- 1. Un poco sostenuto – Allegro – Meno allegro**
- 2. Andante sostenuto**
- 3. Un poco allegretto e grazioso**
- 4. Adagio – Più andante – Allegro non troppo, ma con brio – Più allegro**

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