

# Leonid Kogan

## Brahms Violin Concerto Saint-Saens Havanaise

**Kondrashin conducts the Philharmonia Orchestra  
Monteux conducts the Boston Symphony Orchestra**

Kogan was born in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine, the son of a photographer who was an amateur violinist. After showing an early interest and ability for violin playing, his family moved to Moscow, where he was able to further his studies. From age ten he studied there with the noted violin pedagogue Abram Yampolsky. In 1934, Jascha Heifetz played concerts in Moscow. "I attended every one," Kogan later said, "and can remember until now every note he played. He was the ideal artist for me." When Kogan was 12, Jacques Thibaud was in Moscow and heard him play. The French virtuoso predicted a great future for Kogan. Kogan studied at the Central Music School in Moscow (1934–43), then at the Moscow Conservatory (1943–48), where he studied as a postgraduate (1948–51). At the age of 17, and while still a student, he performed throughout the USSR. He was co-winner of the first prize at the World Youth Festival in Prague. In 1951 Kogan won first prize at the Queen Elizabeth Competition in Brussels with a dazzling performance of Paganini's first concerto that included an outstanding interpretation of Sauret's cadenza. His official debut was in 1941, playing the Brahms Concerto with the Moscow Philharmonic in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. His international solo tours took him to Paris and London in 1955, and then South America and the USA in the following years. Kogan had a repertoire of over 18 concerti and a number of concerti by modern composers were dedicated to him. In 1952, Kogan began teaching at the Moscow Conservatory, and in 1980 he was invited to teach at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena, Italy. Kogan, a brilliant and compelling violinist, shunned publicity. His career was always overshadowed by that of David Oistrakh, who was strongly promoted by the Soviet authorities. Kogan was made an Honoured Artist in 1955 and a People's Artist of the USSR in 1964. He received the Lenin Prize in 1965. Kogan married Elizabeth Gilels (sister of pianist Emil Gilels), also a concert violinist. His son, Pavel Kogan (b. 1952) became a famous violinist and conductor. His daughter, Nina Kogan (b. 1954), is a concert pianist and became the accompanist and sonata partner of her father at an early age. Kogan died of a heart attack in the city of Mytishchi, while travelling by train between Moscow and Yaroslavl to a concert he was to perform with his son. Two days before, he had played the Beethoven Concerto in Vienna. He was buried in Novodevichy Cemetery. Many speculate that Kogan played on all steel strings, though there is not an outright confirmation. While his close associates indicate he played on gut strings with a steel 'e', it is most likely that he used different combinations over the course of his career. Instruments[edit]

Kogan used two Guarneri del Gesù violins: the 1726 ex-Colin and the 1733 ex-Burmester. He used French bows by Dominique Peccatte. Kogan never actually owned these instruments; they were provided on loan from the Soviet government. Today they are worth more than \$4 million USD.



Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 77, three-movement concerto for violin and orchestra by Johannes Brahms that showcased the virtuosic talents of a longtime friend, the Hungarian violinist Joseph Joachim. Both men participated in its premiere (Brahms as conductor) in Leipzig on January 1, 1879. The work, which is known for its lyrical melodies and rich orchestration, melded the sense of grandeur present in Beethoven's Violin Concerto (which Joachim particularly loved) and the flavour of the Hungarian folk rhythms of Joachim's native land. The Brahms violin concerto has long been a favourite of virtuoso violinists.

Brahms began to write this work in the summer of 1878, while vacationing in the Austrian village of Pörtlach. Knowing Joachim's abilities as well as he did—Joachim and Brahms had performed together for decades—Brahms nevertheless sent him the first movement solo part, instructing him,

You should correct it, not sparing the quality of the composition... I shall be satisfied if you will mark those parts which are difficult, awkward, or impossible to play.

The violinist complied, starting a lengthy correspondence concerning the concerto. Their discussion continued until the concerto's premiere. Some listeners were skeptical of the new piece, which seemed as if it would prove to be beyond the abilities of most violinists. One observer, conductor and pianist Hans von Bülow, asserted that it was a concerto not for but "against the violin," and Brahms and Joachim continued to revise the work until its publication six months later. One feature of the work that remained was a passage in the second movement in which the violin soloist steps out of the spotlight to allow for an extended oboe solo. The 19th-century virtuoso violinist Pablo de Sarasate so objected to this that he refused to play the piece. Joachim, however, recognized that the oboe passage provided a deft contrast with the violin itself and did not protest.

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1. Violin Concerto in D major Allegro non troppo
2. Violin Concerto in D major Adagio
3. Violin Concerto in D major Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo - Poco più presto
4. Havanaise, Op.83

Brahms recorded 1958 by HMV - Saint-Saens 1957 by RCA

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