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**BRAHMS**

Violin Concerto

**YEHUDI MENUHIN**



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Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra  
**RUDOLF KEMPE**

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# BRAHMS

## Violin Concerto

### in D major, Op. 77

YEHUDI MENUHIN  
Berlin Philharmonic  
Orchestra  
conducted by  
Rudolf Kempe

#### SIDE ONE

1st movement: *Allegro non troppo - Cadenza*  
(by Kreisler) - Tempo 1

#### SIDE TWO

band 1 - 2nd movement: *Adagio*  
band 2 - 3rd movement: *Allegro giocoso, ma non*  
*troppo vivace -*  
*Poco più presto*

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English audiences were among the very first to recognise the genius of the Brahms violin concerto. Brahms was not a great traveller, for the most prosaic of reasons. He feared sea-sickness and was a poor linguist. He visited Holland and Switzerland where there were few if any language difficulties, and he loved Italy. But he could not be persuaded to cross the Channel.

One of those who made strenuous efforts to induce Brahms to visit England was Friedrich Chrysander, the well-known Handel scholar. In a letter dated 10th

November 1879, after referring to Brahms's "English friends", he said, "You may well call them that, as they have twice listened to your violin concerto with great intelligence; while the good Hamburgers the other day . . . still didn't know how they ought to take it."

Born in Hamburg in 1833, Brahms was 46 when the violin concerto was first performed in 1879, at a Gewandhaus Concert in Leipzig with Joachim as soloist and the composer conducting. He was then at the summit of his career as an orchestral composer. The first two symphonies and the first piano concerto had already been written and the other two symphonies, the second piano concerto and the double concerto followed during the next eight or nine years. He died in 1897.

Brahms loved Vienna, which he first visited in 1862 and in which city he ultimately took up permanent residence. But he also loved his "summer holidays" elsewhere, sometimes by the sea but more often inland among the hills, lakes and rivers, and he never seems to have been happier than during the holidays he spent at Pörschach, on the Wörthersee, where three of his most genial compositions were for the most part written. He found there not only a pleasant place in which to work but also a society, both local and visiting, which was greatly to his taste.

Brahms first went to Pörschach in 1877 and the second symphony was the result. In 1878 he went again, and wrote the violin concerto. His last holiday at Pörschach was in 1879 and produced the gracious first sonata for violin and piano. He did not go again because the village was becoming too popular with tourists for his liking.

At first, soloists, with the exception of Joachim for whom it was written and who was frequently consulted on technical matters during its composition, fought shy of the new concerto. It was "outrageously difficult"; it was "not a concerto for the violin but against the violin". Later Huberman said that it was neither for nor against the violin but "for violin against orchestra—and the violin wins". Even Sarasate would have nothing to do with the new concerto. Now, of course, it has taken its rightful place alongside the Beethoven concerto at the very top of all compositions for violin and orchestra.

1st Movement—*Allegro non troppo*. The opening *tutti* is of considerable length. At the outset, bassoon, violas and cellos announce a serene melody which rises and falls within the range of the D major triad. This is not fully developed, however, until after the soloist has entered. Then follows a flowing subject first heard on the oboe, and later a more purposeful and energetic theme. These are all worked up with considerable passion before the soloist enters with an *arpeggiando* cadenza to restate the first subject and discourse on the other material already heard from the orchestra. Some emphatic double-stopping by the soloist leads to the second subject, after which the solo instrument introduces an entirely new and very beautiful theme. The music gradually sinks to a contemplative *pianissimo* but the exposition ultimately ends quite stormily to make way for the development section, which the soloist starts off with a rather angular little tune. Solo instrument and orchestra combine to build up an exciting climax before the cadenza is reached. Brahms

did not write his own cadenza and the one played here is that written by Kreisler. The coda, which is based on the opening theme, starts quietly but ends in triumphant exaltation.

2nd Movement—*Adagio*. The second movement is one long song, a song of peace, calm and content, but less a song for the soloist with orchestral accompaniment than one for the orchestra embroidered by the solo instrument.

The movement has often been criticised as too slight for its context but Sir Donald Tovey, in his "Essays in Musical Analysis", hits the nail on the head with the very middle of the hammer when he says, "the reason why some critics have thought it too slight is the very reason why it is gigantic". Possibly the composer's own denigration of this movement led to the criticism. It would appear that Brahms originally intended the work to have four movements. In a letter he states, "the middle movements have gone, and of course they were the best", and then adds, "I have written a feeble *adagio* for it".

The principal theme is first given out by the oboe and it is to be noted that from the beginning to the end of the movement the soloist never plays it in its entirety. A particularly lovely passage is that in which a modified form of this theme is the subject of a conversation between the solo instrument and the horn.

3rd Movement—*Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace*. The finale is in rondo form and its Hungarian flavour may well be in compliment to Joachim who was Hungarian by birth (and arranged some of Brahms's Hungarian Dances for violin solo). Both the first and second subjects are lively and vigorous and they are tossed about between soloist and orchestra. A gentler and more gracious mood is introduced in the middle but jollity soon reasserts itself, and after a cadenza and a march-like episode three loud chords announce the end of a magnificent work, which while never stooping to virtuosity for its own sake, taxes to the full the power and dexterity of the greatest of violinists.

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**STEREO**  
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**BRAHMS** 1

**VIOLIN CONCERTO IN D MAJOR, Op. 77**  
1st Movement: Allegro non troppo—  
Cadenza (by Kreisler)—Tempo I

**YEHUDI MENUHIN (Violin)**  
**BERLIN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA**  
conducted by **RUDDLF KEMPE**

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STEREO

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2

BRAHMS

VIOLIN CONCERTO IN D MAJOR, Op. 77

1. 2nd Movement: Adagio. 2. 3rd Movement: Allegro  
giocoso, ma non troppo vivace—Poco più presto

YEHUDI MENUHIN (Violin)  
BERLIN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA  
conducted by RUDOLF KEMPE

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