

BEETHOVEN CONCERTO NO.4

OP.58 IN G MAJOR

Beethoven wrote his fourth concerto, op.58 in G major, in 1805 – 1806, and premiered it himself in 1807. The proportions for the first movement are Classical, but enlarged. He follows Mozart's example in K271, the "Jeunehomme" concerto and begins with piano solo, rather than the orchestra; in the fifth concerto he will take the idea a step further and begin with a piano cadenza rather than a theme. The piano writing here is very innovative, and the majority of it is in the high register, played softly and delicately, giving this concerto a spiritual, unearthly essence. The second movement is unusually short, and gets its power from the austere, extreme dialogue of contrasts between *tutti* and *solo*; on one hand, the orchestra plays a stern, *unisono* line countered by the piano's *legato* and emotional responses. The third and final movement follows immediately, and is a very Classical and up-beat rondo.

The cadenzas I will be playing today are by Leopold Godowsky, the pianist and composer of whom Rachmaninoff said, "he is the only musician of his age to give a lasting, real contribution to the development of piano music." Godowsky took Beethoven's piano writing and injected it with twentieth-century steroids: trills become double trills, scales and arpeggios in single notes become parallel octave, third, or sixth passages; and so on. But Godowsky's real contribution is the ingenious ability to write pianistic counterpoint. In the most entertaining example, he combines the main theme:



With the second theme:



To arrive at:



But elsewhere the writing is even more complicated, for instance in this passage where he combines the transitional theme from the exposition (A):



With a passage from the development (B):



And still another passage from the exposition (C):



To arrive at a new creation, inspired by Beethoven, but transformed into a different character entirely:



The end of the cadenza is a stroke of genius; a mysterious trill hovers over the transitional theme, with a flowing, unidentifiable harmony underneath; these all resolve seamlessly into the orchestra's re-entrance.

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