Beethoven wrote the cadenza for the Second Concerto during his last period, and it is very much in the style of his piano writing for the *Hammerklavier* Sonata and other late keyboard works.

It is touching that during his last years, Beethoven's fondness for his earliest concerto caused him to return to the work and give us this brilliant cadenza, with its late-period harmonic and contrapuntal complexities. How characteristically uncompromising of Beethoven that his obvious pleasure with his youthful music led him not to the composition of a cadenza in his earlier style but to one in his most mature manner.

Max Wilcox

Rubinstein and Barenboim in the control room during a break in the recording sessions

Beethoven Concerto No. 1 in C

The Concerto in C is known to us as Beethoven's first but in fact was not. To the surprise of nobody familiar with the unsystematic proliferation of his larger works, it happens that this concerto was not even his second. The work was composed, or at least completed, in the year 1798, at which time Beethoven still harboured lively expectations of a career as a piano virtuoso. Unquestionably the Concerto figured importantly in his personal concert plans, and the fact that it is actually his *third* essay in the form is therefore of more than chronological interest.

Beethoven's first attempt at a piano concerto was a juvenile work in E flat titled *Un Concert pour le Clavecin ou Fortepiano composé par Louis van Beethoven âgé de douze ans*. The manuscript survives minus its orchestration; due to Beethoven's lifelong misapprehension about his age – he was probably 14 when he wrote it, not 12 – it has been tentatively attributed to the year 1784.

Some 13 or 14 years elapsed before Beethoven essayed the Concerto in C. Despite his unfailing confidence, he seems to have undergone at this point a bout of rather touchy self-appraisal regarding his composing generally and his piano concertos in particular. To begin with, even those critics who admired his piano playing were not being terribly prescient about his compositions. Adjectives like "bizarre," "strange," "harsh" and "obstinate" (not to mention historically stupefying remarks like "Beethoven may be able to improvise, but he does not know how to write variations") were becoming familiar to him from the critics of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*.

Moreover, Beethoven was just then aware as never before of the unapproachable genius of Mozart; given his personal ambitions as a virtuoso, he was particularly aware of it in terms of writing for piano and orchestra. One of the few biographical anecdotes we have from this period concerns a walk that Beethoven took with the pianist-composer John Baptist Cramer at an Augorten concert during a performance of Mozart's Concerto in C minor (K. 491). Beethoven stood still to listen, delightedly directed Cramer's attention to certain details of the Mozart work and exclaimed, "Cramer, Cramer! We shall never be able to do anything like that!"

Under these circumstances, the business letters in which we first learn of the Concerto in C are somewhat more moving – and even somewhat more amusing – than they seem on the surface to be. Writing in December 1800 to the Leipzig publisher Hoffmeister, Beethoven in an almost self-deprecating vein, offers him, along with other large works, "A concerto for pianoforte which I do not claim to be one of my best, as well as another one which will be published here by Mollo (this for the information of the Leipzig critics), because I am for present keeping the better ones for myself until I make a tour."

The work published by Mollo in March 1801 was in fact our so-called first Concerto in C, Op. 15. The B flat Concerto ("not ... one of my best") was published at the end of the year by Hoffmeister as the second, Op. 19, but it was actually written, at the latest, in the year 1795, two or three years *before* the Concerto in C.

In April 1801 Beethoven informed Breitkopf & Härtel that Mollo and Hoffmeister were publishing a number of his new works. But since Breitkopf & Härtel was also the publisher of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, Beethoven adds a remarkable expostulatory passage in which it becomes clear that his deprecation of his first two concertos is at bottom largely a wish to disarm the unfriendly critics noted above: "In this connection I wish to add that one of my first concertos, and therefore not one of the best of my compositions, is to be published by Hoffmeister and that Mollo is to publish a concerto which, indeed, was written later, but which also does not rank among the best of my works in this form. This is only a hint for your *Musikalische Zeitung* with regard to criticism of these works ... You should recommend to your Herren critics great care and wisdom especially in the products of younger composers. Many a one may have been frightened off who otherwise might have composed more. As far as I am concerned, I am far from thinking that I am so perfect as to be beyond criticism, yet the howls of your critics against me were at first so humiliating that when I compared myself with others I could not get aroused, but remained perfectly quiet ..."

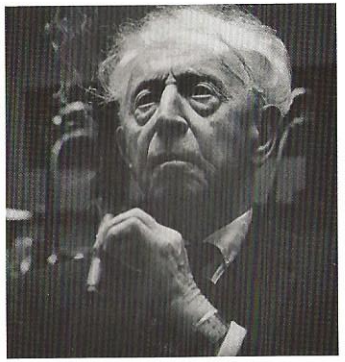
As history loudly records, the discreet and retiring Beethoven visible in that last phrase proved to be anything but permanent. The Concerto in C had, in any case, long since been put to successful use by Beethoven the pianist. In Tomaschek's autobiography we read that "In the year 1798 ... Beethoven, the giant among pianoforte players, came to Prague. He gave a largely attended concert at the Konviktssaal, at which he played his Concerto in C major, Op. 15 ..."

Beethoven's critical tide turned with the Fifth Symphony, after which it was perhaps inevitable that critics should begin to discover that the Concerto in C is "Mozartean." With this contention it is difficult to disagree, but perhaps too much can be made of the fact. As in Mozart, the piece undeniably begins with a long orchestral exposition. Also as in Mozart, the second movement owes much

to Italian cantilena. But in this work we also sense certain sturdy muscularities, we are arrested by certain flashes of intensity that reveal a Beethoven en route to *his* kind of concerto. In the concluding movement – as jauntily infectious a Rondo as he ever wrote – the future Beethoven all but arrives. In conception this Rondo is perfectly traditional, alternating tuttis and solos in quite the usual manner. Yet it exhilarates us with a kind of alfresco verve that is not entirely explained by its folkish elements, delightful as they are. Somewhere in even these genial measures lurks an unpredictable spirit that, despite its youthful reverence for Mozartean precedent, is indeed Beethoven, not Mozart.

Robert Offergeld

sleeve note from the original LP 'Beethoven Concerto No. 1' (1976)



Mr. Rubinstein plays the last of three cadenzas Beethoven composed for the first movement. It was written several years after this concerto was published and closely resembles the keyboard range and pianistic style of the *Waldstein* Sonata. From what we have learned from contemporary reports, it is very much in the style of Beethoven's fabled improvisations, and Donald Francis Tovey is among the many who consider it Beethoven's most brilliant and characteristic concerto cadenza.

Mr. Rubinstein used Ferruccio Busoni's edition of the cadenza, and the changes from Beethoven's text include: double instead of broken thirds and sixths at measures 8-11 and 13-16, with the single bass notes augmented to octaves; the chordal figures beginning at measure 74 are changed to the arpeggios and 16th-note figurations Beethoven used at measure 20, and 16 measures of quite uninteresting material are eliminated near the end, a change both Busoni and Franz Kullak felt Beethoven might well have made if he had prepared this cadenza for publication.

Max Wilcox

Beethoven Concerto No. 2 in B flat

No. 1 is No. 2, and No. 2 is No. 1 – confusing but easy to straighten out. Beethoven composed No. 1 after the Second Concerto but then recalled the Second and revised it so that in the end the concerto composed later was published first. Perhaps, then, we may begin by discussing his first composed concerto, the B flat. He produced this for an important occasion: his first public appearance. The dates were 29 and 30 March 1795. He was invited to participate in the two annual concerts given for the benefit of the widows and orphans of the Society of Musicians. It was, as the programme stated, "A Grand Musical Academy" employing "more than 150 participants." The concert opened with a symphony by a young man who was a pupil of Salieri's, one Antonio Cartellieri, and closed with an oratorio called *Gioas, King of Judea* by the same composer. Obviously a pupil of the famous Salieri would be awarded the more important part of the proceedings. Yet to Beethoven it represented a respectable debut; he had been in Vienna only three years, and though his quality had been recognised by such cultivated musical patrons as Prince Lichnowsky and Prince Lobkowitz, and though he had come to be appreciated as a teacher, he was as yet unknown to the general public. Well, then, it was an important opportunity, and he was to bring forth a sample of his talent. Nevertheless – or perhaps *because* the opportunity was important – Beethoven could not bring himself to finish composing the piece. How characteristic of him! He hated to let go, his desire for perfection forcing him to clutch his works as long as possible, to ponder over and over again if there were a better way, a greater means of expression. His sketches provide eloquent proof: they look like the plan of a battlefield after the battle has been fought. Erasures, new writing over the old, crossings out, corrections of corrections make the page almost illegible. Time and time again he would hold back a "finished" composition because to him it was *not* finished, and he made so many changes in one part of the Fifth Symphony that he had no room for the final version, which he then scribbled on the margin of the page. One is reminded of Leonardo's maddening procrastination, of Flaubert's writing 4,000 pages for the 400 of *Madame Bovary*.

At any rate, Wegeler reported that "not until the afternoon of the second day before the concert did he write the Rondo [third movement] ... In the ante-room sat copyists to whom he handed sheet after sheet as soon as it was finished." Beethoven was suffering from a severe colic, probably out of nervousness. Wegeler: "I relieved him with simple remedies as far as I could." The *Wiener Zeitung* of 1 April reported that "the famous Herr Ludwig von* Beethoven reaped wholehearted approval from the public." No doubt Beethoven, perhaps still a little pale from his colic attack, did play superbly.

He was dissatisfied with the work, and he began to retouch it, probably reworking the Rondo altogether. When he offered it for publication he spoke of it as something that "I do not consider one of my best efforts." All the same, it is a finely worked concerto, with an Adagio of emotional power and a merry, engaging finale.

Three years later Beethoven, then 27, was in Prague, and for that appearance he composed the C major Concerto, making greater demands on his own virtuosity. He enriched the scoring, adding clarinets, trumpets and timpani.

Too much has been made of the Haydn and Mozart influence on these first two concertos. Certainly it is there – yet as one listens closely one hears the new voice, though not as yet speaking with its own full eloquence.

George R. Marek

sleeve note from the original LP 'Beethoven Concerto No. 2' (1976)

**von*, not *van*. They made him an aristocrat, Viennese style.