

compact disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC141

BRAHMS

PIANO CONCERTO No. 2

IN B FLAT, OP. 83

WILHELM BACKHAUS, PIANO

VIENNA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

CONDUCTED BY CARL SCHURICHT

PRISTINE
AUDIO
XR

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PIANO CONCERTO No. 2

WILHELM BACKHAUS

VIENNA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

CARL SCHURICHT

RECORDED IN MAY, 1952

- 1 1st mvt. - Allegro non troppo (16:31)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Allegro appassionato (8:17)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Andante (11:39)
- 4 4th mvt. - Allegretto grazioso (9:24)

Recorded in at the Großer Musikvereinsaal, Vienna, 25-26 May, 1952

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Transfer and XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, January 2009

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Wilhelm Backhaus

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BRAHMS: PIANO CONCERTO No. 2

WILHELM BACKHAUS, PIANO

VIENNA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA, SCHURICHT

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Wilhelm Backhaus ('Bachaus' on some record labels) (March 26, 1884 – July 5, 1969) was a German pianist and pedagogue.

Born in Leipzig, Backhaus studied at the conservatoire in Leipzig with Alois Reckendorf until 1899, later taking private lessons with Eugen d'Albert in Frankfurt am Main. He made his first concert tour at the age of sixteen. In 1905 he won the Anton Rubinstein Competition with Béla Bartók taking second place. He toured widely throughout his life - in 1921 he gave seventeen concerts in Buenos Aires in less than three weeks. Backhaus made his U.S. debut on January 5, 1912, as soloist in Beethoven's 5th Piano Concerto with Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony Orchestra. In 1930 he moved to Lugano and became a citizen of Switzerland. He died in Villach in Austria where he was to play in a concert.

Backhaus was particularly well known for his interpretations of Ludwig van Beethoven and romantic music such as that by Johannes Brahms. He was also much admired as a chamber musician.

According to some critics, Backhaus was one of the first modern artists of the keyboard (see Alfred Cortot for his antithesis) and played with a clean, spare, and objective style. In spite of this analytic approach, his performances are full of feeling. One of the first pianists to leave recordings, he had a long career on the concert stage and in the studio and left us a great legacy. He recorded virtually the complete works of Beethoven and a large quantity of Mozart and Brahms, and he was also the first to record the Chopin etudes, in 1928; this is still widely regarded as one of the best recordings. Backhaus plays them smoothly and softly, overcoming their technical challenges without apparent effort. A live recording from 1953 includes seven of the Etudes, Op. 25 and shows the changes that occurred in his playing style over the years. His technical command is the same, but he is more relaxed and confident and more willing to let the music speak for itself.

His 1939 recording of Brahms' Waltzes, Op. 39, runs just over thirteen minutes; it is difficult to imagine anyone actually dancing to this version, but it is exhilarating nevertheless. His studio recordings of the complete Beethoven sonatas, made in the 1960s, display awesome technique for a man in his seventies, as do the two Brahms concertos from about the same time. His live Beethoven recordings are in some ways even better, freer and more vivid.

His chamber music recordings include Brahms's cello sonatas, with Pierre Fournier, and Franz Schubert's Trout Quintet with the International Quartet and Claude Hobday.

NOTES FROM WIKIPEDIA - FULL NOTES ON THIS RECORDING CAN BE FOUND AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM