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## Clifford Curzon Beethoven Piano Concertos 4 & 5

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# Clifford Curzon

plays

## Beethoven

### Piano Concertos Nos. 4 & 5

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The death of Sir Clifford Curzon on September 1st [1982] is a loss to the musical world out of all proportion to the modest number of recordings he made. It would be fruitless to compare him with other artists. When I first met and started to work with him more than 20 years ago, he was already an institution.

Because of his astonishingly fastidious approach to any score, accompanied by his highly sensitive musicianship and unique musical humour, his work became a criterion by which other performances have come to be judged. To him, every performance was something new, and no two were ever the same. It reminded me of those fascinating films one occasionally sees when a photograph is taken at regular intervals during the growth and life of a plant, which more than anything else illustrate the sheer vibrancy as well as the constant change which is at the heart of nature. This was the reason he made so few recordings, for he refused to consider any performance as being remotely definitive, and believed passionately in the evolution of a composer's work through performance after performance.

Curzon's first recording was made on April 1st, 1937 when he recorded the Schubert/Liszt *Wanderer Fantasy* with the Queen's Hall Orchestra conducted by Sir Henry Wood. His recording career extended over the next 40 years almost exclusively with Decca, culminating in the live recording of the *Theme and Variations* from Schubert's *Trout Quintet* with members of the Amadeus Quartet in The Maltings, Snape during the Benson and Hedges Music Festival from September 28th to September 30th, 1977.

He did not like the recording studio at all, and refused to allow the use of the customary red light which normally indicates that the tape machine is running. More recently he flirted with the idea that the only way to record was to "catch the performance on the wings", but although he was scheduled to record two more Mozart concertos with the Concertgebouw Orchestra and Bernard Haitink in January 1984 in live performance, it was the first time he had consented to the experiment. The results would have been fascinating in relation to his other recordings, which to him became outdated by the further musical discoveries he always made after the record was completed. Of course this would have applied to the live recording as well...

Ray Minshull (Decca Executive Vice-President) - *Gramophone, October 1982 (obituary of Sir Clifford Curzon - excerpt)*

#### Transfer notes

These two recordings straddle Decca's move in the mid-50s from mono to stereo - the mono Fourth Concerto here is presented in Ambient Stereo, retaining a central mono sound but allowing full ambience some realistic stereo spread. Both recordings were rather constrained and a little boxy in sound, something that XR remastering has largely cured. Viennese orchestral pitch was notably high in the Fifth Concerto, something I've confirmed with electrical hum analysis - both original pitches have been accurately and precisely restored.

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Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra  
Hans Knappertsbusch  
Studio Recordings · 1954 & 1957

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BEETHOVEN PIANO CONCERTOS 4 AND 5  
CURZON, VIENNA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA, KNAPPERTSBUSCH

## Beethoven Piano Concertos

### Piano Concerto No. 4 in G, Op. 58

- 1 1st mvt. - Allegro moderato (18:37)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Andante con moto (5:02)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Rondo (Vivace) (10:21)

### Piano Concerto No. 5 in F flat, Op. 73 "EMPEROR"

- 4 1st mvt. - Allegro (20:08)
- 5 2nd mvt. - Adagio un poco mosso (8:18)
- 6 3rd mvt. - Rondo (Allegro) (10:36)

**Clifford Curzon Piano**  
**Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra Hans Knappertsbusch**

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XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Transfers from Decca ECS 752  
and Decca SXL 2002

Cover artwork based on a photograph of  
**Clifford Curzon**

### Piano Concerto No. 4

Producer: **Victor Olof**  
Engineer: **Cyril Windebank**  
Recorded 4-5 April, 1954  
Grosser Saal, Musikverein, Vienna  
Presented in Ambient Stereo

### Piano Concerto No. 5

Mono Producer: **John Culshaw**  
Stereo Producer: **Erik Smith**  
Mono Engineer: **Gordon Parry**  
Stereo Engineer: **James Brown**  
Recorded 10-15 June, 1957  
Sofiensaal, Vienna  
Presented in Stereo

Total duration: **73:02**

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