

CARLOS KLEIBER
A DEEPLY PRIVATE MAN

a film by Georg Wübbolt



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Moving Images

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Carlos Kleiber, the eccentric and reclusive conductor was a fabled perfectionist who was known as much for the rarity of his appearances as for the brilliance of his interpretations.



Kleiber has achieved cult status in music circles and has built a loyal fan base, but he never made it to a household name. In complete contradiction to his contemporary Herbert von Karajan, Carlos Kleiber refused to participate in the international music business – he showed a strong reluctance to record company moguls, corporate sponsors, agents and journalists – in fact he refused most interviews.

His reclusiveness started in earnest in the early 1980s, when he walked out on a Vienna Philharmonic rehearsal and soon after broke with Deutsche Grammophon. It's hard to say what circumstances prompted that behavior. Kleiber's music making was supreme, but there were, perhaps, other things in life. Carlos Kleiber was a deeply private man, hugely devoted to his family, who loved to read, study and write. As he once told Leonard Bernstein: 'I want to grow in a garden, I want to have the sun, I want to eat and drink and sleep and make love, and that's it.'

But that notwithstanding, he certainly was a complex figure: it is said that he didn't conduct regularly because he didn't have to as he was entitled to ask for extraordinary high fees. Then again, his actions may have been motivated by fear as he was suffering from phobias. He had a complex about never measuring up to his famous conductor father, Erich Kleiber. Carlos inherited the striving for perfection, and he never felt good enough about his work. He could dig deep into scores with the result that he only performed a fraction of musical repertoire, while actually he had an enormous amount of knowledge about countless works. Musicians still go into raptures that making music with Carlos Kleiber, whether in rehearsal or performance, was incomparable.

His performances were renowned for their hyperaware intensity. They were minutely expressive and dizzyingly dangerous. Everybody wanted to be a part of these exclusive musical moments, but only a fortunate few could enjoy. Carlos Kleiber left the classical-music world wishing for more at the age of 74 in 2004 after long illness.

The film uncovers some of the mysteries and tries to clear up preconceptions of one of the most elusive conductors: what were the real reasons he cancelled that often? It sheds light on the relationships with his family, including his father and mother, traces the developments of his career and covers the 'mythologizing' that started during the lifetime of the maestro.

Carlos Kleiber has always been a major mystery to the world and probably even to himself too. He disposed to close the door to his closest family circle for any biographers and his children indeed respect his wish. This is why the filmmaker has to do his research amongst the conductor's musical companions, collaborators and friends.

Interviews will be shot with Otto Schenk, Dr. Otto Staindl, friend and attending physician of Carlos Kleiber, members of the Wiener Philharmoniker, the Münchener Philharmoniker, the Berliner Philharmoniker, singers like Julia Varady, Plácido Domingo, and Helen Donath, furthermore: Sir Peter Jonas, Martin Engstroem and Hans Hirsch (both formerly Deutsche Grammophon) and others. Many of them own letters or small notepads by Kleiber, documentary reproductions, photographs or private video copies of rehearsals and concerts. In addition to this, his rare records are milestones and extracts of them will certainly be included in the film.

shot in HD | length: 60 min.
from the creators of 'Herbert von Karajan: Maestro for the Screen'

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