

BEETHOVEN'S EMPEROR CONCERTO

22 – 25 JULY

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

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SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PATRON Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC

Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has evolved into one of the world's finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world's great cities. Resident at the iconic Sydney Opera House, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales, and international tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have earned the Orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra's concerts encompass masterpieces from the classical repertoire, music by some of the finest living composers, and collaborations with guest artists from all genres, reflecting the Orchestra's versatility and diverse appeal. Its award-winning education program is central to its commitment to the future of live symphonic music, and the Orchestra promotes the work of Australian composers through performances, recordings and its commissioning program.

The Orchestra's first chief conductor was Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed in 1947; he was followed by Nicolai Malko, Dean Dixon, Moshe Atzmon, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Zdeněk Mácal, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and Gianluigi Gelmetti. Vladimir Ashkenazy was Principal Conductor from 2009 to 2013, followed by David Robertson as Chief Conductor from 2014 to 2019. Australian-born Simone Young commenced her role as Chief Conductor in 2022, a year in which the Orchestra made its return to a renewed Sydney Opera House Concert Hall.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THIS CONCERT

Expect to enjoy yourself! Maybe your heart will beat a little faster. Maybe your hair will stand on end. It's hard to predict or describe how the vast sound of a symphony orchestra will affect each of us. Just bring an open mind and engage with the music – close your eyes, watch the conductor and the musicians, or just sit back and let the music take you away.



When do I clap?

Good question. Most pieces of music are broken up into different movements – usually, people only clap at the end of a piece, so there will be silent pauses between movements. On the next page you will see how many movements the pieces in this concert have, and the duration of each piece. But the simplest thing is to wait until the conductor turns around – or when everyone else starts applauding.

The conductor may leave the stage and come back on a few times, and acknowledge the different sections of the orchestra. You can keep clapping as long as you want to – and feel free to cheer and stomp your feet if you really enjoyed the concert!



Can I take photos or videos?

You can take photos and videos on your phone during the applause at the end of a piece of music. **Please switch your phone to silent, make sure the flash is off and dim the brightness of your screen so you don't distract other audience members.** And if you share it to your socials, tag us in your posts! We love seeing what people have captured.

Please leave professional and semi-professional camera gear at home and limit yourself to a phone camera inside the venue.



What happens at interval?

The interval will begin when the conductor leaves the stage and the lights go to their full brightness. You can choose to stay in your seat and wait, go to the bathroom, walk around or purchase food or drink from one of the foyer bars.

An announcement will play through the speaker system 10 minutes, 5 minutes and 1 minute before the concert resumes.

2026 CONCERT SEASON

BEETHOVEN’S EMPEROR CONCERTO

SIMONE YOUNG & JAVIER PERIANES

Simone Young conductor
Javier Perianes piano

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

Symphony No.1 in C major, Op.21 (1795–1800)

- i. Adagio molto – Allegro con brio
- ii. Andante cantabile con moto
- iii. Menuetto: Allegro molto e vivace
- iv. Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace

Piano Concerto No.2 in B flat major, Op.19 (1801)

- i. Allegro con brio
- ii. Adagio
- iii. Rondo. Molto allegro

INTERVAL

Piano Concerto No.5 in E flat major, Op.73, *Emperor* (1809)

- i. Allegro
- ii. Adagio un poco mosso
- iii. Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

Wednesday 22 July, 8pm
Friday 24 July, 8pm
Saturday 25 July, 8pm
Emirates Masters Series

Thursday 23 July, 1.30pm
Emirates Thursday Afternoon

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

Pre-concert talk
By Genevieve Lang in the
Northern Foyer at 7.15pm;
on the Lounge Level
at 12.45pm (Thurs)

Estimated durations
Symphony – 28 minutes
Concerto – 30 minutes
Interval – 20 minutes
Emperor – 40 minutes
The concert will run for
approx. 2 hours

Cover image
Simone Young
Photo by Ken Leanfore

We acknowledge the Gadigal
people of the Eora Nation,
the traditional custodians of
the land and water on which
we work and perform. We pay
our respects to their Elders
past and present.

ABC Classic
Friday’s concert will be recorded for broadcast
on 16 August at 1pm, and streaming online.

Emirates
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WELCOME

Welcome to **Beethoven's Emperor Concerto**, the sixth concert in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's Emirates Masters Series for 2026.

There is a reason why Beethoven's Piano Concerto No.5, nicknamed 'The Emperor', regularly features at the very top of the ABC's annual Classic 100 countdowns. It's one of those pieces that sweep you off your feet from the opening notes, full of energy and personality and completely irresistible.

This concert also gives us an opportunity to explore the musical world of Ludwig van Beethoven more deeply through his First Symphony and his Second Piano Concerto, both composed a few years prior to the *Emperor*. They show us a composer still searching for his place in the world, demonstrating a clear debt to the generation of composers before him – in particular to Mozart and Joseph Haydn.

Yet there are also flashes of the Beethoven we know and love 200 years later. It's like seeing an old photo of an old friend.

Speaking of old friends, what a joy it is to once again welcome Javier Perianes to Sydney. A feature of our concert seasons over the past five years, Javier's musicality and friendship have made him a favourite of the Orchestra – and of our audiences. He has worked with our Chief Conductor Simone Young many times both here and overseas, and it is our privilege to hear the fruits of their deep and abiding connection.

That connection exists between Emirates and the Orchestra, as well. Together we aspire to create unforgettable journeys and remarkable experiences, with a commitment to excellence at the very highest level.

We are immensely proud of our partnership, one of the most significant and enduring relationships in Australia's performing arts and Emirates' longest-running collaboration with a non-sporting organisation. This partnership reflects our shared belief in the power of connection: bringing world-class artistry to the global stage and enabling music to transcend borders, cultures and audiences. We're proud to support artists who inspire, unite, and connect with fans around the world.

As the Presenter of this Masters Series, Emirates proudly champions exceptional local and international talent, with a special focus on the Sydney Symphony's celebrated Chief Conductor, Simone Young AM.

We are delighted by the continuing success of our long-term partnership and trust you will enjoy this marvellous concert.

Barry Brown
Emirates DVP – Australasia

Emirates

Principal Partner

YOUR CONCERT AT A GLANCE

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827) **Symphony No.1 in C major, Op.21** (1795–1800)

Beethoven's First Symphony is a four-movement piece in the classical design – substantive outer movements, song- and dance-based movements in the middle – established by his teacher Haydn (who also provided the model of the slow introductions to the outer movements.) It is of modest dimensions compared to his later work.

The symphony premiered in Vienna in 1800, the year that saw the discovery of infrared radiation by William Herschel, the Treaty of Constantinople and the first coper coins in New South Wales.

Contemporary music included François Boieldieu's Harp Concerto, Franz Krommer's String Quartets Op.18 and Luigi Cherubini's *Le Deux Journées*.



A 1796 drawing of Beethoven at the age of 26 by Gandolph Stainhauser, engraved by Johann Neidl c.1801.

Piano Concerto No.2 in B flat major, Op.19 (1801)

This was the first concerto of Beethoven's to be heard in Vienna – in fact his first orchestral work to be heard there. Mozart was to the concerto as Haydn was to the classical symphony, and we hear something of Mozart in the buoyant 6/8 finale. The first of three movements shows a composer trying to balance the roles of orchestra and soloist; the middle slow movement is heartfelt and forward-looking.

It premiered in 1795, the year that saw the slave rebellion in Curaçao, the foundation of the Orange Order in Ireland and the Battle of Richmond Hill. Contemporary music included Joseph Haydn's Symphonies Nos.103 and 104, Giovanni Viotti's Violin Concerto No.24 and Antonio Salieri's *Palmira*.



Detail from a c.1804 portrait of Beethoven by German artist Joseph Willibrord Mähler (1778–1860). Source: Archiv für Kunst und Geschichte, Berlin/Wikimedia Commons.

Piano Concerto No.5 in E flat major, Op.73, *Emperor* (1809)

At first glance this seems like a work of triumph – Napoleon had been recently vanquished, after all. And it is frequently magisterial with much use of grand, sometimes military sounds, and extravagant solo writing throughout its three movements. Balancing these elements, though, are moments of retreat into silence.

It appeared, with Carl Czerny as soloist, in 1812, the year that saw war between Britain and the United States, the Battle of Borodino and the introduction of the 'holey dollar'.

Contemporary music included Franz Schubert's String Quartet Nos.1 and 2, William Crotch's *Palestine* and Gioachino Rossini's *La scala di seta*.



An 1815 portrait of Beethoven, also by Joseph Willibrord Mähler. Source: Vienna Museum/Wikimedia Commons.



Photo by Peter Brew-Bevan

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

SIMONE YOUNG AM conductor

Sydney Symphony Orchestra's Chief Conductor, Simone Young has previously held the posts of General Manager and Music Director of the Hamburg State Opera and Music Director of the Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg, Music Director of Opera Australia, Chief Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of both the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Lisbon and the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra. Her appointment as Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has recently been extended through until the end of 2029.

An acknowledged interpreter of the operas of Wagner and Strauss, she has conducted complete cycles of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the Bayreuth Festival, Vienna Staatsoper, Berlin Staatsoper, Hamburg Staatsoper and, in 2026, La Scala Milan.

Simone Young has an extensive and celebrated recording catalogue. Her first performance as Chief Conductor in Sydney, featuring Mahler's Symphony No.2 *Resurrection* and the world premiere of William Barton's *Of the Earth* was released worldwide on Deutsche Grammophon, and performances of Elgar & Vaughan Williams, *Das Rheingold* and *Gurrelieder* have been filmed for Sydney Symphony On Demand. Her Hamburg recordings include the *Ring Cycle*, *Mathis der Maler* (Hindemith), *Das Buch mit sieben Siegeln* (Schmidt) and symphonies of Bruckner, Brahms and Mahler. She has also recorded Benjamin Britten Folk songs and songs of Richard Strauss with Steve Davislim, and songs by Wagner and Strauss with Lisa Gasteen.

Simone Young's return invitations to the great orchestras of the world in 2026 include the Suisse Romande, the Orchestre nationale de Lyon, West German Radio Orchestra Cologne, Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France Paris, National Symphony Orchestra Washington, Los Angeles Philharmonic, the San Francisco and Montreal Symphony Orchestras, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, London and the BBC

Philharmonic Orchestra, Manchester. She also returns to ANAM, Melbourne to lead their orchestra in a 30th birthday celebration Gala performance.

Firmly established as one of the world's leading opera conductors, this year Simone Young returns to the Berlin Staatsoper (*Lohengrin* and *Nabucco*), La Scala Milan (the *Ring Cycle*) and conducts *Götterdämmerung* in concert, completing Sydney Symphony's *Ring Cycle*.

The presentation of Sydney Symphony Orchestra's *Ring Cycle* in concert, commencing in 2023, has played to sold out audiences, standing ovations and 5-star reviews. A second, feature-length documentary film, *Knowing the Score*, showcasing Simone Young and her career was also internationally released in 2023.

In 2025 Simone Young was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Sydney. Her many accolades also include the 2024 Conductor of the Year (British *Opera* magazine), Honorary Member (Ehrenmitglied) of the Vienna State Opera, the 2019 European Cultural Prize Vienna, a Professorship at the Musikhochschule in Hamburg, Honorary Doctorates from the Universities of Western Australia and New South Wales, Griffith University and Monash University, the Sir Bernard Heinze Award, the Goethe Institute Medal, the 2013 Helpmann Award for Best Individual Classical Music Performance and the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, France.



HELP US CHAMPION THE FUTURE OF MUSIC

The Sydney Symphony Fellowship Program has nurtured the next generation of orchestral musicians for almost 25 years.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

JAVIER PERIANES piano

The international career of Javier Perianes has led him to perform in the most prestigious concert halls with the world's foremost orchestras, working with celebrated conductors including Daniel Barenboim, Charles Dutoit, Zubin Mehta, Gustavo Dudamel, Klaus Mäkelä, Gianandrea Noseda, Gustavo Gimeno, Santtu-Matias Rouvali, Simone Young and Vladimir Jurowski.

The 2025/26 season features an array of high-profile concerts, including San Francisco, San Diego, Dallas and Baltimore symphony orchestras, Bamberger Symphoniker, Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo, Orquestra Sinfónica de Castilla y León, Teatro Real and Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte Carlo, Sydney and Tasmanian symphony orchestras. Perianes returns to Orquestra de la Comunitat València to play-direct all five Beethoven Concerti, and concludes the play-direct Beethoven cycle with Galicia Symphony.

Perianes frequently appears in recital across the globe, with performances this season at Heidelberger Frühling, Gulbenkian, Ostrava, Barcelona, Alicante, Scherzo Madrid, Bozar, Liege, Künzelsau and the Sydney Opera House. He also appears at prestigious festivals such as the BBC Proms, Lucerne Festival, Argerich Festival, Salzburg Whitsun, La Roque d'Anthéron, Grafenegg, Prague Spring, Ravello, Stresa, San Sebastián, Santander, Granada, Vail, Blossom, Ravinia and the Canary Island Music Festival.

As a natural and keen chamber musician, he regularly collaborates with violist Tabea Zimmermann. The duo will tour Germany and North America including dates at Carnegie Hall, Montreal Salle Bourgie, Princeton, Club Musical de Quebec and Library of Congress.

Career highlights have included concerts with Wiener Philharmoniker, Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Washington's National, Yomiuri Nippon and Danish National symphony orchestras, Oslo, London, New York, Los Angeles and Czech philharmonic orchestras, Orchestre de Paris, Cleveland, Orchestre



Photo by Igor Studio

Symphonique de Montréal and Swedish and Norwegian Radio orchestras, Mahler Chamber Orchestra and Budapest Festival Orchestra.

Perianes exclusively records for harmonia mundi. His most recent releases feature a selection of Scarlatti's Sonatas, Granados's *Goyescas* and Chopin's Sonatas No.2 and Nos.2 & 3 interspersed with the three Mazurkas from Op.63. In 2025, Euroarts released a documentary recorded with Perianes at the Reales Alcázares in Seville, showing the special relationship between Scarlatti and Albéniz, linked to the city of Seville.

Perianes was awarded the National Music Prize by the Ministry of Culture of Spain and named Artist of the Year at the International Classical Music Awards (ICMA).



c.1804 portrait of Beethoven by German artist Joseph Willibrord Mähler (1778–1860).
Source: Archiv für Kunst und Geschichte, Berlin/Wikimedia Commons.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Anthony Cane writes:

If the remains of a medieval fortress wall encircling Beethoven's home town of Bonn, close by the border with France, represented a psychological barrier to be transcended, so, too, did the Beethoven family's penurious dependence on the city's ecclesiastical prince, the Archbishop and Holy Roman Empire Elector.

Ludwig van Beethoven would live to break both those bonds. His compositions would become a cornerstone of Western music. Yet he would live to hear his late masterworks not with his ears but only, through a void of total deafness, in his imagination.

Young Ludwig learnt music from his father, Johann, a tenor in the service of the Electoral court, whose own father, also a singer, had been the Elector's Kapellmeister or music-director. Ludwig's first important teacher was the kindly court organist, Christian Gottlieb Neefe, to whom he became assistant orchestral harpsichordist (unpaid) at age 13. Already, probably at Neefe's instigation, the musical press had hailed him as a 'youthful genius' in the mould of the young Mozart.

The Elector, Maximilian Franz, son of Maria Theresia and brother of Marie Antoinette, also a devoted music-lover, allowed the 16-year-old Beethoven a brief visit to Vienna in 1787, where he is said to have extemporised at the keyboard for an amazed Mozart and possibly had a few lessons as well. By now earning a small income as music teacher to aristocratic families in Bonn, Beethoven so impressed Haydn with a cantata he had composed when the latter visited Bonn on his journeys to and from London in 1790 and 1792 that the Elector agreed to let him study with Haydn in Vienna. His admiring friend the young Count Waldstein, later the dedicatee of one of Beethoven's best-loved piano sonatas, famously farewelled him with the wish that he receive the spirit of Mozart, so recently deceased, from the hands of Haydn.

The music lessons in Vienna were no great sensation. It was probably less that the celebrated Haydn lacked time for correcting detail in Beethoven's routine exercises than differences of temperament – not least the

student's impatience and ambition, mistrustful even of the teacher's very international renown and celebrity. The more methodical Albrechtsberger also found Beethoven a difficult pupil.

Although Beethoven claimed that he never learnt anything from Haydn, he would nevertheless appreciate in later life that, far more than mundane counterpoint, his time with the great man had shown him what it meant to be original. It had shown him that musical form could liberate the creative spirit: that he could explore in music the range of human experience – all its passion and turbulence, the love and, above all, hope. This would be Beethoven's mission.

Beethoven would never see his hometown of Bonn again. Home, for the rest of his life, would be Vienna. And he would never again be a servant in the employ of an aristocratic court. In Vienna, he could freelance between any number of wealthy patrons – aristocrats from around the Austro-Hungarian Empire who kept palaces or townhouses in the imperial capital, among them the princes Lichnowsky and Lobkowitz, to whom Beethoven had introductions from Count Waldstein.

Not only was Vienna the heart of empire, it was also the musical centre of Europe. The nobility and aristocracy lavishly displayed their devotion to music by hosting glittering musical soirées, some with their own orchestras or wind bands. Thus, an outstanding young virtuoso known to have been court organist and pianist to the Emperor Franz's uncle in Bonn, as well as a pupil of Haydn, was welcome everywhere. Beethoven's success was immediate and unchallenged. In due course he would be chosen as piano teacher by none other than the Emperor's youngest brother, the 16-year-old Archduke Rudolph, soon to become his most devoted patron.

Beethoven's compositions began appearing in print as early as 1793 – initially variations for piano, then in 1795 his official Opus 1, a set of three piano trios dedicated to Prince Lichnowsky. Publication provided both income and protection against rivals – his 'enemies' – who heard his celebrated improvisations and attempted to pass off his style as their own. Publishers soon competed for his works.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Emulating Mozart, by 1795 Beethoven was appearing in public concerts as both composer and his own concerto-soloist. In March he premiered probably his Concerto No.2 in B flat, then in December, in a grand concert given by Haydn, played what may have been the first performance of his Concerto No.1 in C.

Giving his first public concert for his own benefit, in Vienna's Royal and Imperial Court Theatre (Burgtheater) on 2 April 1800, Beethoven the composer laid his musical cards on the table in the premiere of his First Symphony. As an earnest of the unsettling path he intended his symphonic career to pursue, he began a symphony in the purest key of C major with a discord. It was a beginning pregnant with promise.

Ominously, however, the young Beethoven, not yet 30, was already experiencing symptoms he would keep secret from even his closest friends for another year, symptoms of encroaching deafness which would end his career as a concerto virtuoso by Christmas week, 1808, when he gave the first public performance of his Concerto No.4. Though still able to accompany singers as late as 1815, Beethoven was stone deaf by 1818. Oblivious to thunderous applause for the scherzo at the premiere of the Ninth Symphony in 1824, he had to be turned towards the audience to acknowledge the acclamation. In his final years, visitors were forced to write to him in conversation-books. His last piano, preserved in the Beethoven House museum in Bonn, movingly testifies to the agony of his deafness in deep grooves worn by constant pounding on the keys for greater volume.

Despairing of his condition and its damaging effect on both his professional and social life, Beethoven admitted in a moving valedictory document known as the Heiligenstadt Testament, written in 1802 and found only after his death, that he would have contemplated suicide but for the supreme demands of his art. He wished to be remembered not as a misanthrope but as one whose deepest feelings were love of humankind and the desire to do good.

Beethoven's love attached in particular to women, usually aristocratic, often pupils. If not actually rejected by them, he always expected to be. Social barriers were an implacable obstacle. Perhaps only one woman reciprocated his passion and accepted him without reservation, one he addressed in a famous letter of 1812 as his 'immortal beloved'. If this never conclusively identified love was, as modern scholarship suggests, Antonie Brentano, and if she was prepared to leave her husband to live with Beethoven in Vienna, the hitherto remote prospect of a life of domestic bliss must suddenly have become more than he could personally or honourably contemplate. Beethoven never married.

Beethoven delivered heroically on the promise of his early symphonies and concertos in 1804 and 1805 with the dramatic C minor Piano Concerto, No.3, and a symphony of breathtaking magnitude and force, the *Eroica*. His only opera, *Fidelio*, dealing with tyranny and liberation, appeared unluckily just as French forces occupied Vienna in November 1805. Surviving only three poorly attended performances, it underwent extensive revision before finally making its mark in 1814 as the tide of war turned.

Premieres of both the Fifth and Sixth symphonies as well as the first public performance of the Fourth Piano Concerto, plus other works besides, challenged musicians and audience alike in an enormous concert Beethoven managed to mount for his own benefit in the bitter chill of Christmas week 1808. But soon Napoleon's army was again invading Vienna and Beethoven found himself hiding in his brother's cellar, pillows shielding his fragile hearing from the bombardment.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Already, however, he had been offered appointment as Kapellmeister to Napoleon's youngest brother, Jerome Bonaparte, styling himself King of Westphalia. Needing a reliable income in such difficult times, and prepared to commit himself to staying in Vienna, Beethoven secured his future through an annuity guaranteed by the Archduke Rudolph together with the princes Kinsky and Lobkowitz.

Beethoven's later life was disrupted by a four-year legal battle to win custody of his nephew Karl from his brother's widow. The victory allowed him a sense of the parenthood he had never enjoyed in his own right but was clouded by constant domestic upheaval and shattered when Karl attempted suicide.

His composing pursued an ever loftier course: the enormous *Hammerklavier* Sonata; the Ninth (Choral) Symphony, which affirms through Schiller's text his deep-seated belief in the brotherhood of mankind under a loving God; and, in a rare resort to conventional Christian usage, direct supplication to that loving God by means of the Latin Mass, the epic *Missa Solemnis*. The Mass stretched Beethoven's musical and spiritual imagination beyond any possibility of its being completed, as intended, for the Archduke Rudolph's installation as Archbishop of Olmütz (Olomouc) in Moravia.

Beethoven devoted his last years to a unique series of six string quartets which explore and extend the possibilities of the medium beyond all previous imagining. They include the extraordinary *Grosse Fuge* (Great Fugue), which would be the composer's last dedication to the Archduke Rudolph.

ABOUT THE FIRST SYMPHONY

Graeme Skinner writes:

Beethoven himself organised the concert at the Imperial Court Theatre, Vienna, on 2 April 1800, at which he introduced his first 'Grand Symphony'. He also played one of his (so far) two piano concertos, improvised reportedly 'in a masterly style', and paid tribute to his two great precursors by programming a symphony by the late Mozart and excerpts from Haydn's new oratorio, *The Creation*. Gottfried van Swieten, who wrote the words for Haydn's oratorio, was also one of Beethoven's most enlightened supporters. Swieten had encouraged first Mozart and more recently Beethoven to explore the music of Bach and Handel, whose fugues Beethoven went on to use as models during his intensive counterpoint studies with Haydn and Salieri. Beethoven duly dedicated the first printed edition of this symphony to Swieten, and its second movement begins in quasi-fugal form.

The sole critic to review the premiere thought the only flaw was 'that the wind instruments were used too much', so that the symphony sounded 'more like it was being played by a military band than an orchestra'. Actually Beethoven's 'band' of thirteen (woodwinds, brass and drums) was no larger numerically than that for Haydn's last symphony. But whereas Haydn usually let the strings predominate, Beethoven continually pushes the winds forward.

The sustained wind chords that open the short *Adagio* are the first occasion for the strings to be reduced to a supportive pizzicato. As the genial *Allegro* gets under way, other novelties include recurring episodes in which Beethoven gives the impetus to the orchestral basses, and, at the very end, an unusually insistent reiteration of the closing C.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

In characteristically egalitarian fashion, Beethoven passes over the first violins and lets the seconds start the *Andante* second movement. He also smuggles in trumpets and kettledrums (hitherto usually silent in slow movements), though their rumblings do little to disturb the prevailing serenity. The surging minuet is perhaps more reminiscent of the dancing horses of Vienna's Spanish Riding School than the Redoutensaal for which Beethoven also composed ballroom dances. The 'military band' shifts the scene decisively to the parade ground in the *Trio*.

Berlioz called the finale, with its curious *Adagio* upbeat from the violins, 'a genuine instance of musical childishness'. But Beethoven's Viennese audience would have been charmed: bright, energetic music from the same mould as Mozart's and Haydn's popular finales, proof that the brash newcomer (Haydn dubbed him 'the Grand Mogul') was cut out for success.

Beethoven's First Symphony is scored for pairs each of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; pairs of horns and trumpets; tuba and strings.

It was premiered on 2 April 1800 at the KK Hoftheater nächst der Burg in Vienna, conducted by Beethoven.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed the work in 1940, conducted by Georg Schneevoigt.

Other notable performances include those conducted by Bernard Heinze (1943 Beethoven Festival, 1950); Eugene Goossens (1944); Edgar Bainton (1946, 1949); Joseph Post (1949 Regional Tour); Kurt Woess (1955 Beethoven Festival); Nicolai Malko (1960); Dean Dixon (1965); Moshe Atzmon (1970); Willam van Otterloo (1978); Louis Frémaux (1982); Stuart Challender (1989); Steinberg, Pinchas (1993); Edo de Waart (1998, 2001); Gianluigi Gelmetti (2005, 2007); Vladimir Ashkenazy (2016) and with Andrew Haveron as violin-director (2022)

Our most recent performances were part of our 2023 Regional Tour, conducted by Simon Bruckard.

ABOUT THE SECOND PIANO CONCERTO

David Garrett writes:

When Beethoven sent the final version of this concerto to his publisher, he gave this estimate of its worth: 'The concerto I value at ten ducats...I do not give it out as one of my best'. No doubt Beethoven was admitting that he had not solved entirely to his satisfaction the problem of apportioning the roles between soloist and orchestra, in his first concerto to be played in Vienna. We also know that uppermost in his mind in composing it may have been consolidating his position as a virtuoso pianist, and that his admiration for the achievement of Mozart in composing piano concertos would lead him to judge his own efforts severely.

Fortunately, we can forget Beethoven's self-criticism and enjoy this fresh, unpretentious concerto. Mozart was a good model and we need not remind ourselves that Beethoven later achieved, in his Fourth and Fifth piano concertos, his own answer to the concerto challenge; we should imagine instead the young virtuoso glorying in his own powers, using this vehicle to conquer the Viennese public.

The occasion was a concert in the Burgtheater in 1795. Beethoven's playing in the salons of the aristocracy had already gained him a reputation as a solo pianist of extraordinary skill and daring, and a remarkable improviser – his skill in this direction may even have extended to his playing of the solo part in the concerto, for, when he was introducing a concerto himself, he did not bother to write out the solo part. Later Beethoven revised the concerto for performances in Vienna and Prague with different soloists, and he withheld it from publication until 1801, which explains why it is numbered 2 although it was written before the published No.1.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The concerto was the first ‘symphonic’ work of Beethoven’s to be heard in Vienna, and, not surprisingly, the orchestra spreads its wings at the outset. One commentator has identified as many as five themes before the piano comes in with a sixth. The crucial phrases are the opening ones: a short flourish from tonic to dominant and back, followed by a reflective lyrical phrase. Once the piano is in it dominates the discourse, with many passages obviously designed to show off Beethoven’s pianism – especially his legato runs, played with the thumb under, a technique he pioneered. The cadenza for this movement was not written until 1809, perhaps for Beethoven’s pupil the Archduke Rudolf.

The *Adagio* is a truly slow movement, whereas Mozart’s concerto slow movements are usually Andantes. As in many such movements in early Beethoven, the treatment of the theme by the piano becomes increasingly elaborate and decorative. The movement is distinguished by an eloquent – and prophetic – ending, where the soloist has a recitative-like utterance, marked *con gran espressione*, alternating with the orchestra’s statement of the theme in broken phrases.

The infectious last movement is a rondo in 6/8, whose hunting style is familiar from some of Mozart’s concertos in B flat; but it is more boisterous than anything in Mozart, mainly through Beethoven’s handling of the off-beat accents. The rhythmic placement of these accents is an important building block of the movement – they are shifted for effect at the beginning of the first couplet of the rondo, and in many other places. There is a pleasant surprise at the end, where Beethoven again follows Mozart’s precedent by introducing a new theme in the coda, a popular touch, followed by some Beethovenian humour. This is Beethoven the eloquent entertainer indeed, not much loved by his fellow-pianists, and we can see why if we compare this concerto he wrote to display his wares with the contemporary products of Hummel, Dussek, Clementi and others!

Beethoven’s B flat concerto is scored for flute, 2 oboes and 2 bassoons; 2 horns; strings and piano soloist.

It may have been premiered on 29 March 1795, at Vienna’s Burgtheater in a concert marking Beethoven’s Vienna debut – there is some confusion about precisely what concerto was performed at this event.

The Sydney Symphony first performed the work in February 1943, with Eunice Gardiner the soloist conducted by Bernard Heinze.

Other notable performances include Gardiner conducted by Eugene Goossens (1949); Hepzibah Menuhin/Kurt Woess (1955); Lili Kraus/Charles Mackerras (1963); Mindru Katz/Dean Dixon (1966); Daniel Barenboim/Moshe Atzmon (1970); Jorg Demus/Willem van Otterloo (1972); Elizabeth Powell/Otterloo (1976); Helen Osborne/Georg Tintner (1980); Gwenneth Pryor/Louis Frémaux (1981); Roger Woodward/Myer Fredman (1982); Paul Badura-Skoda/Frémaux (1982); Leif Ove Andsnes/Ion Marin (1997); Christian Zacharias/Edo de Waart (1998); Paul Lewis/Douglas Boyd (2009); Andreas Haefliger/David Zinman (2012) and Emanuel Ax/David Robertson (2014).

Our most recent performances were in August 2017, with Imogen Cooper as soloist conducted by Simone Young.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT THE ‘EMPEROR’ CONCERTO

Gordon Kerry writes:

In May 1809 Napoleon’s armies occupied Vienna for the second time and with considerable violence. Beethoven took shelter with his brother Caspar Carl and his wife Johanna and to protect his failing hearing spent the bombardment of 11 and 12 May with pillows over his ears in the cellar. Beethoven wrote to his publisher, ‘What a destructive, disorderly life I see and hear around me: nothing but drums, cannons and human misery in every form.’

Before, during and after the invasion and despite his misery, Beethoven managed to work. He composed the Op.70 piano trios and three piano sonatas including Op.81a, *Das Lebewohl* (or ‘Les Adieux’) which reflects Beethoven’s sorrow at seeing his young patron the Archduke Rudolf leaving Vienna, as did so many of the aristocracy during the invasion. He also composed the String Quartet Op.74, popularly known as the *Harp* Quartet, and completed the Fifth Piano Concerto (also dedicated to Rudolf). Curiously, most of these are in the key of E flat – the key of *The Magic Flute* and other music where Mozart sought to create a sense of solemnity, and one that Beethoven used at his most Promethean in works like the *Eroica* Symphony. These works don’t bear any obvious resemblance to one another: the transcendent serenity of the *Harp* Quartet seems miles away from the high style of the outer movements of the concerto. But all of these works break new ground in some way.

By this time Beethoven’s deafness made it impossible for him to perform with an orchestra, so the concerto’s first performance in Leipzig in 1811 was given by a young organist, Friedrich Schneider. At the Vienna premiere in 1812, Carl Czerny was soloist. Given the political circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the concerto is, in Alfred Einstein’s words, the ‘apotheosis of the military concept’ in Beethoven’s music. Biographer Maynard Solomon quotes Einstein as saying that the audience ‘expected a first movement in four-four time of a military character; and they reacted with unmixed pleasure when Beethoven not only fulfilled but far surpassed their expectations.’

In the Fifth Concerto, Beethoven solved the problem of how to exploit the soloist’s virtuosity without downgrading the role of the orchestra, while constructing the kind of musical argument and drama which was so crucial to the Classical style. This is achieved partly through masterstrokes like the very opening gesture: a single chord is sounded by the orchestra, to which the piano responds in such flamboyant style, creating a sense of uncertainty about how and when the orchestra will rejoin the music, and what form the actual thematic material will take.

A standard practice in much Classical music was to get louder and more agitated in the lead-up to a point of structural significance, but Beethoven made those moments even more dramatic. The overwhelming impression left by the first movement of the Fifth Concerto is of ceremonial grandeur and pomp – hence the nickname (not authorised by Beethoven) of *Emperor*. But the massive scale of the first movement is made possible by the frequent contrast of the ‘military’, with its characteristic march rhythms, and the reflective. Moreover, Beethoven prepares the movement’s climactic moments with what scholar William Kinderman calls ‘the withdrawal of the music into a mysterious stillness’. The piano’s opening flourishes, for instance, seem for a moment to be about to wander off into realms of improvisation before the energetic first theme is announced impatiently by the band. To prepare the moment of recapitulation, where the opening material returns, Beethoven again allows the music to become rarified and serene: a passage of ever-quieter scales and trills gives way to a pastoral dialogue between the winds and the bell-tones of the piano.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The short, central *Adagio* movement, rightly described as dreamlike by one writer, is in B major, which in terms of Classical tonal logic is a fair way away from the 'home' key of E flat. And its mood couldn't be further from the military episodes, despite its material being dominated by the scales and trills that featured in the first movement. It may have been a passage such as this that Australian poet Gwen Harwood was remembering when she wrote:

*Pain breaks upon these notes in splintering
trills; here, changed to song, wears the
calm aspect of divinity.*

A justly celebrated instance of 'the withdrawal of the music into a mysterious stillness' occurs at the transition from the slow movement into the finale. The transition is almost imperceptible – Beethoven changes a note here or there to subtly change the direction of the music as it seems to fade, and the piano begins ruminating on a common chord which will ultimately flower as the final movement's bounding theme, which again is contrasted with moments of deep calm. Whatever the misery in which Beethoven wrote this work, or its immediate political context, it turns out to be another ode to joy.

Notes by Anthony Cane © 2011 (Beethoven biography), Graeme Skinner © 2014 (Symphony No.1), David Garrett © 2014 (Piano Concerto No.2), Gordon Kerry © 2003 (Piano Concerto No.5)

Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto is scored for pairs each of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings and piano soloist.

Its premiere was on 28 November 1811 in Leipzig, with Friedrich Schneider as the soloist and Johann Philipp Christian Schulz conducting the Gewandhaus Orchestra.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra first performed the work in June 1939, with Arthur Schnabel the soloist conducted by Georg Szell.

Unsurprisingly it has been a frequent feature of our concert seasons, with notable performances including Solomon conducted by Edgar Bainton (1945); Claudio Arrau/Rafael Kubelik (1947); Hepzibah Menuhin/Paul Klecki (1948); Walter Giesecking/Eugene Goossens (1952); Louis Kentner/Goossens (1953); Paul Badura-Skoda/Bernard Heinze (1956); Arrau/Nicolai Malko (1957); Andor Földes/Heinze (1959); Daniel Barenboim/Heinze (1962); Alfred Brendel/Massimo Freccia (1963); Arrau/Ferdinand Leitner (1968); Vladimir Ashkenazy/Moshe Atzmon (1969); Tamás Vásáry/Antonio de Almeida (1972); Brendel/Paavo Berglund (1976); Jorge Bolet/Barry Tuckwell (1981); Roger Woodward/Myer Fredman (1982); Woodward/Charles Mackerras (1988); Peter Donohoe/Matthias Bamert (1991); Geoffrey Tozer/Yan Pascal Tortelier (1994); Arnaldo Cohen/Edo de Waart (at the 1996 Perth Festival); Christian Zacherias/De Waart (1998); Gerhard Oppitz/Gianluigi Gelmetti (2003 & 2007); Paul Lewis/Alain Lombard (2005); Jonh Chen/Ashkenazy (in Sydney and in Stresa, Lucerne and Wiesbaden on our 2010 International Tour); Emanuel Ax/David Robertson (2014); Haochen Zhang/Robertson (in Shanghai, Shandong, Beijing, Xi'an, Hangzhou, Shenzhen and Guangzhou on our 2014 International Tour) and Garrick Ohlsson/Ashkenazy (2016).

Our most recent performances were in 2018, with Nelson Freire conducted by Donald Runnicles.

Scoring and history by Hugh Robertson

THE MONARCH OF THE INSTRUMENT

Few composers are as closely associated with their instrument as Beethoven with the piano. But his pianos sound very different to the one you will hear in this concert...

By Kylie Burtland

Beethoven's life coincided with one of the most important events in the history of keyboard music; the superseding of the harpsichord by the piano. The *pianoforte*, as its name implies, was designed to play loud and soft, facilitating a whole new dimension of dramatic possibility for composers through the exploration of dynamics, and marking the beginnings of a keyboard revolution of expanding horizons and changing styles. The harpsichord, unable to perform the same gradations of loudness, simply lost its popularity.

The social revolution which occurred during Beethoven's life saw the pianoforte marketed en masse to the middle-classes – if pianos were played it was mainly by wealthy amateurs, women or professionals employed by aristocrats.

The mass market for pianos developed as technology improved and prices dropped. Playing the piano in private homes became a middle-class accomplishment, useful because, since the piano supplied its own harmony, you didn't need a whole ensemble to dance and sing to it. A voracious appetite arose among the middle classes for keyboard literature that was not too hard to play. Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*, possibly the greatest work for piano of the early 19th century, was an unexpected by-product of the publisher Diabelli's scheme for increasing this literature.

Manufacturers Streicher, Walter, Stein, Erard, Broadwood, Pleyel, Conrad and Graf began to realise the immensity of the potential market. The composer Clementi was another who jumped on this bandwagon, devoting the later part of his life to manufacturing and selling pianos. The Irish composer (and inventor of the Nocturne) John Field was one of his in-house keyboard demonstrators. Beethoven was often lent pianos by manufacturers who respected

his suggestions for improvements and used his fame and endorsements to publicise their instruments. His growing deafness, it seems, played quite a role in prompting his search for louder, stronger, more reliable instruments. Loudness was an issue for the professional pianist because it allowed for a wider range of dynamic and tonal expression. Reliability was even more important because the early wooden-frame pianos were temperamental and didn't hold their tuning as well as the modern steel-frame, and since they were light-weight and portable they were often moved and in need of constant tuning.

Indeed some of Beethoven's relationships with piano makers seem at times to have been more meaningful than those with his intimate friends. One letter to Johann Streicher's wife Nanette on August 1817 discloses much of what was on Beethoven's mind as hearing slipped away from him. He wrote, 'Dear friend, I am willing to look at this instrument tomorrow...But I must ask you to be patient with me. In my present circumstances I can no longer behave as I used to behave, although my name is still Beethoven.' One of Johann Streicher's more novel responses to Beethoven's plight was to develop an ear-trumpet attachment for Beethoven's pianos.

Academics and performers alike have been fascinated to know how Beethoven's pianos really sounded and were played. Pioneering work in the rediscovery of early keyboard performance practice was initially made by collectors and restorers of old pianos, but this has been ultimately unsatisfactory as the restored pianos don't really give a good indication of how early instruments would have sounded when they were brand new. Two schools of thought have developed amongst performers of Beethoven's piano works. Some practise on fortepianos so that even if they don't perform on original instruments they at

FEATURE ARTICLE

least develop a sense of what is appropriate for the music. Others like Alfred Brendel ignore the original instruments altogether and devise intellectual ways to make the music work in the modern context. Both schools agree however that an understanding of the early pianos is a useful tool for uncovering Beethoven's compositional intent since he clearly was working in a very different world of sound.

It cannot be denied that the construction advantages of the modern piano have been gained at the expense of the rich overtones and 'personality' of the different registers of Beethoven's pianos. One of the biggest differences between the modern Steinway and Beethoven's pianos is that the aesthetic has changed: designers today aim for a consolidated tone throughout all registers of the keyboard. Fortepianos were far more eccentric and had tone colours specific to each register: a bass register that was sonorous and powerful, a middle that was cool and clear, and a high register that could sometimes resemble a xylophone. Lost also was the tonal flexibility and timbral changes made possible by the pedals *una, due* and *tre corde*, of which Beethoven raved in his letters. (Illustrations of his pianos show he used up to six pedals.)

Study of these keyboards helps answer the scholarly controversy about the tempo that Beethoven's works may have been played. Everything – tempi, dynamics, tone – seems to result spontaneously from these keyboards and their varying sustaining ability. In this context facets of Beethoven's compositional motivations are illuminated.

Modern pianists must also confront the question of how to bring out the natural tonal contrasts of Beethoven's melodies on modern keyboards which simply aren't built to make these distinctions. Take for example a typical Beethovenian texture, block chords in the left hand and a melody in the right. On an early piano the difference in tone of the registers would naturally bring out the melody whereas on a modern piano pianists must struggle to adjust the dynamics in order to do this. Celebrated modern Beethoven interpreters Wilhelm Kempff and Artur Schnabel both preferred a Bechstein to a Steinway partly because of its distinct differences in tone between registers.

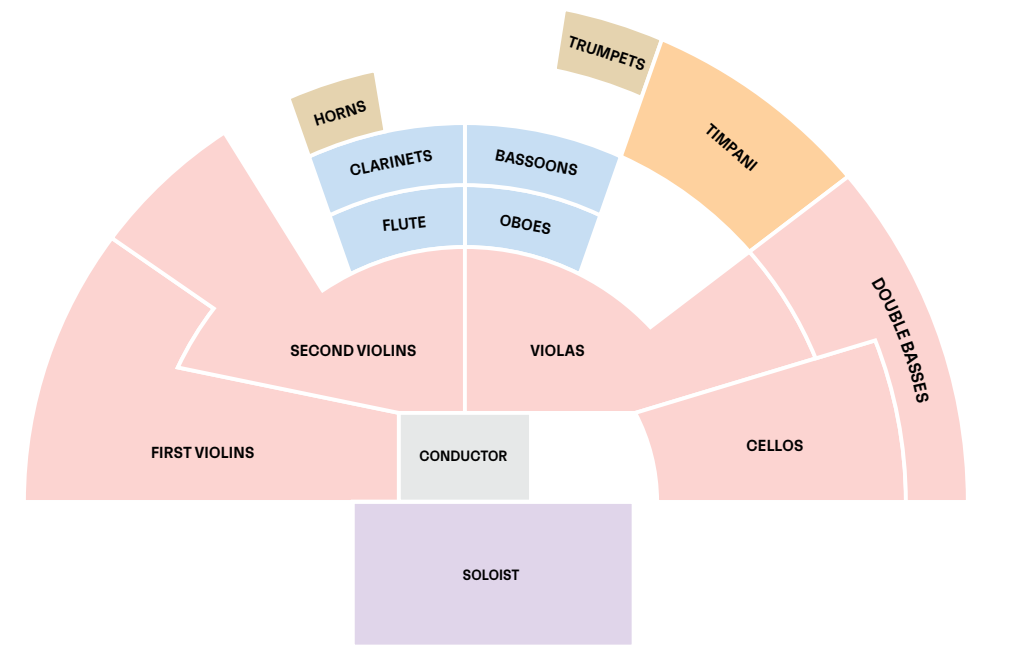
Although it increased in scale during Beethoven's lifetime, the compass of Beethoven's pianos was relatively small. In 1785, for example, pianos made by the Viennese maker Anton Walter had just over five octaves, a Broadwood of 1817 had six octaves and a Graf of 1825, the last piano Beethoven owned, extended the compass a fourth higher than that. The landmark sonata known as the *Hammerklavier*, written late in Beethoven's life, requires an increased range and couldn't have been played on the earlier keyboards that Beethoven used. Part of the genius of Beethoven's piano writing is this very symbiosis of concept and medium, a genius which despite limitations in early keyboard manufacturing led Beethoven consistently to make a virtue of necessity, making some understanding of 'original instruments and performance practice' almost a necessity for an informed interpretation of the repertoire.

Apart from smaller compasses, the pianos of Beethoven's day also had shallower actions and were quicker-speaking. The importance of this lies in the passages for which Beethoven has given pedalling instructions, such as in the *Waldstein* and the *Tempest* Sonatas: when these are played as written on a modern piano, they sound 'muddy', but on the early, quicker speaking piano they produce a clear and appropriate 'singing' tone. Pianists of Beethoven's time were more likely to be struggling to encourage sustain than to eliminate it. Clearly Beethoven's pedalling instructions need to be looked at in the context of his original instruments if there is to be clarity of texture on the modern piano.

Beethoven is believed to have been able to conjure a clear, fluent legato from his instruments. Willibrord Joseph Mähler, a contemporary of Beethoven, gave this description in 1803: 'Beethoven played with hands so very still; wonderful as his execution was, there was no tossing of them to and fro, up and down; they seemed to glide left and right over the keys, the fingers alone doing the work.' Stravinsky put it well: Beethoven was the 'Monarch of the Instrument'.

Kylie Burtland
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