



LINN

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

PIANO CONCERTOS 3, 4 & 5

SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Sir Charles Mackerras conductor Artur Pizarro piano



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van Beethoven**
Piano Concertos
3, 4 & 5

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Scottish Chamber Orchestra



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Scottish
Chamber
Orchestra

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------|
| 1. Allegro con brio | 17.05 |
| 2. Largo | 9.00 |
| 3. Rondo allegro | 9.05 |

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

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------|
| 4. Allegro moderato | 17.56 |
| 5. Andante con moto | 4.25 |
| 6. Rondo vivace | 9.47 |

'Emperor' Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 73

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 7. Allegro | 19.51 |
| 8. Adagio un poco mosso | 6.04 |
| 9. Rondo: Allegro, ma non troppo | 9.51 |

Total Running Time: 103 minutesz

Recorded at Perth Concert Hall, UK
from 2-5 November 2008

Produced by James Mallinson

Engineered by Philip Hobbs

Post-production by Julia Thomas

Original cover image 'Der Wanderer über
dem Nebelmeer' (The Wayfarer above a
Sea of Fog) c.1818, Caspar David Friedrich
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Ludwig van Beethoven

Piano Concertos 3, 4 & 5

When Beethoven wrote a set of three works such as violin sonatas or string quartets, he normally gave them strongly contrasting characters. Although his last three piano concertos were not created as a set (they spanned about a decade in their composition), they nevertheless exhibit a similar level of contrast. No. 3 is stormy and agitated; No. 4 is gentle and lyrical; and No. 5 is grand and majestic – so much so that in English-speaking countries it has gained the nickname 'Emperor'. Thus they could hardly be more different in mood, yet each one in its own way is thoroughly characteristic of the composer.

One of Beethoven's earliest sketches for Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37 dates from about 1796 and shows him already experimenting with new sonorities, with a prominent motif being allocated to the timpani part, which normally played only an accompanying role in orchestral music at the time. However, little progress was made on the work until 1800, when it was taken up in preparation for a concert that April. Unfortunately it was not completed in time and Beethoven had to substitute a different concerto (probably No. 1). He finally completed No. 3 in 1803 and at its first performance that year he played the piano part largely from memory as he had still not had time to write it out in full. His page-turner at the premiere, Ignaz von Seyfried, reports having had to turn

pages that were largely blank apart from a few hieroglyphs that only Beethoven could read!

Although the first movement is stormy in character, it has a beautifully lyrical second subject and Beethoven cunningly transformed this theme almost beyond recognition to form the main theme of the sublime slow movement. This evokes a completely different and more exalted world, in the remote key of E Major, with a reduced orchestra and muted strings. The key of C minor returns in the finale, but there is one brief excursion back to E Major, as if recalling that exalted world before the music ends in a blaze of glory, in a triumphant C Major.

The Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58 breaks with all previous tradition by beginning with solo piano instead of the usual extended orchestral ritornello. This unexpected opening signals that the relationship between piano and orchestra is going to be closer than normal; although the orchestra quickly takes over for its customary ritornello, it does not conclude with the usual cadence; instead it breaks off mid-phrase, with the piano re-entering quietly, in contrast to its dramatic entrance in No. 3.

The slow movement is unusually brief and scored just for strings and piano, which engage in a dramatic dialogue throughout. Initially the strings sound angry, but the gentle pleading of the piano gradually softens them until they die away to a hushed pianissimo. The similarity to the 'taming the Furies' by Orpheus is unmistakable and has led many

to assume that this is what Beethoven was attempting to portray. Yet there is no reference to Orpheus in anything written or said by Beethoven about the movement, and it seems unwise to narrow the music down to a single myth; better, surely, to regard the music as emblematic of all situations where anger is calmed by gentleness, of which Orpheus and the Furies form just one instance.

One factor that brings particular tenderness to the first two movements of this concerto is the absence of trumpets and drums. In the finale, these finally burst in and create a sense of much greater exuberance, although there are still many gentler passages that remind us of the mood of the rest of the work.

Although the concerto was composed predominantly in 1806, it was not publicly premiered until December 1808 when it was featured in a four hour all-Beethoven concert. On that occasion Beethoven played the concerto very '*mischievously*' according to his pupil Carl Czerny, adding many more notes than were printed; sketchy indications of these extra notes are found in one of Beethoven's manuscripts. Nevertheless the work has become known, like No. 3, in its printed version, with the only addition in both cases being cadenzas that Beethoven composed in 1809 for another of his pupils, Archduke Rudolph.

The success of the 1808 concert may have induced Beethoven to begin another concerto almost immediately, early in 1809. However, his increasing deafness meant that he was never to play the 'Emperor'

Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 73 in public and although he began a sixth piano concerto in 1815, he reached only part way through the first movement before laying it aside.

In No. 5, Beethoven again breaks with tradition by introducing the piano very early, but this time provides ornate decoration to three emphatic orchestral chords before the main theme gets under way. The second subject is heard first in the minor but then reappears, transformed in the Major, and is later heard sounding like a majestic march. In this form, it is accompanied only by two alternating chords, so that the two timpani between them can play the entire bass line (if the music is in the right key). Therefore, as in No. 3, Beethoven gives the timpani an important part to play.

Another feature that recalls No. 3 is that the theme of the slow movement is again a disguised version of the second subject of the first movement – that march theme is now transformed into a serene, hymn-like melody. Again, Beethoven uses a remote key – this time B Major – and omits the trumpets and timpani.

The music eventually modulates back to E-flat Major, with a tentative hint of the theme of the next movement, thus providing a seamless join to the finale. Here the theme is announced by the piano before being taken up by the orchestra. The main bass line for this theme uses only two notes, the same two as in the march theme in the first movement, and so it can again be played in its entirety by the timpani.

Even in the final coda the timpani have an important part to play. In an extraordinary passage for just solo piano and timpani, the latter picks up an accompanying figure that had previously been played only by other instruments. Beethoven's remarkable level of invention, whether of thematic manipulation, key relationships or orchestration, remains in evidence right to the very end.

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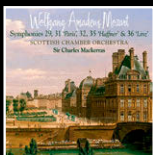
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