BOSTON PHILHARMONIC 40TH ANNIVERSARY 80TH BIRTHDAY

FEBRUARY 2019

BEETHOVENCoriolan Overture

Piano Concerto No. 5 "Emperor"

Symphony No. 5

BENJAMIN ZANDER conductor

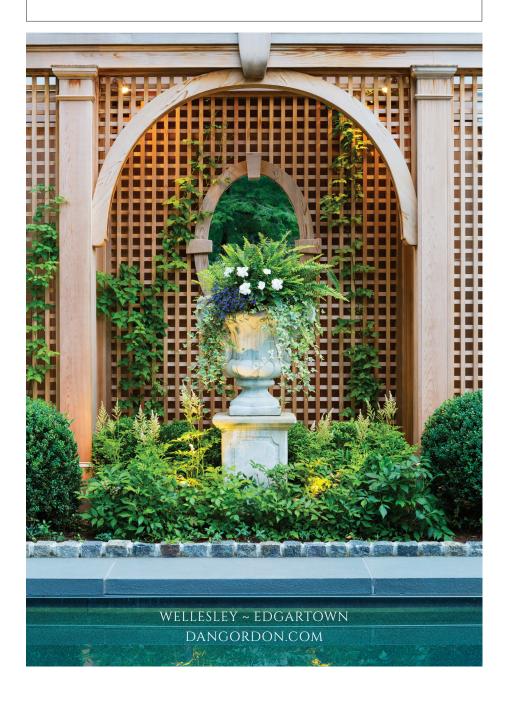
ROBERT LEVIN

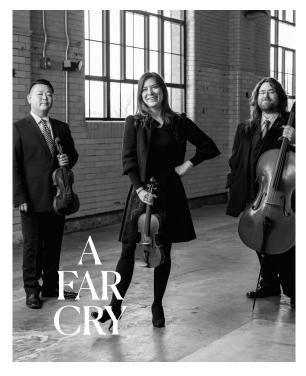
piano

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SEASON TWELVE 2018/2019

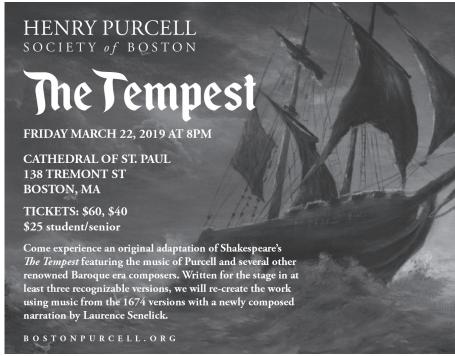
GRAVITY

NEC'S JORDAN HALL APRIL 12, 2019 - 8PM

Pärt: Silouan's Song Xenakis: Aroura Kernis: Música Celestis Bartók: Divertimento for String Orchestra Golijov: Tenebrae



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HISTORY OF THE ORCHESTRA

In 1979, ninety-six enthusiastic players, professionals, students, amateurs, a dynamic, probing conductor named Benjamin Zander, and an impassioned donor and amateur musician named Seymour Rothchild joined together to found the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra. Today, the musicians represent the original spirited blend and account for the passion, high level of participation, and technical accomplishment for which this ensemble is celebrated. The professionals maintain the highest standard, the students keep the focus on training and education, and the gifted amateurs—including doctors, lawyers, teachers, and computer programmers—remind everybody that music-making is an expression of enthusiasm and love.

The Boston Philharmonic's message rings loud and clear—music making is a privilege and a joy, and above all, a collaborative adventure. The orchestra's season includes performances at New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Sanders Theatre at Harvard University, and the historic Symphony Hall. The BPO performs with a wide range of soloists from highly gifted performers at the start of their international careers such as Stefan Jackiw, Gabriela Montero, Jonah Ellsworth, and George Li, to world-famous artists like Yo-Yo Ma, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Russell Sherman, Kim Kashkashian, and Alisa Weilerstein, and legendary masters such as Ivry Gitlis, Denes Zsigmondy, Georgy Sandor, Leonard Shure, and Oscar Shumsky.

The BPO has released five critically acclaimed recordings, including works by Stravinsky, Beethoven, Mahler, Shostakovich, and Ravel. Among many other reviews of extravagant praise, Classic CD magazine gave the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra's recording of Stravinsky's Rite of Spring the highest rank of all available recordings. Of Mahler's Symphony No. 6, American Record Guide wrote: "This joins the Rattle and the two Bernstein recordings as the finest on record... All the glory to Zander and his semi-professional orchestra, for the sixth is probably Mahler's most difficult and complex symphony...All things considered, when I reach for a recording of the sixth to play for my own pleasure, it will most likely be this one."

Boston Philharmonic Orchestra concerts have long been a two-part experience; each performance is preceded by one of Benjamin Zander's illuminating and entertaining pre-concert lectures, which prepare listeners to understand the ideas and the structure of the music they are about to hear. The Philharmonic's commitment to reaching and educating a wide audience is maintained by its Music Without Boundaries program, which raises money to provide tickets for school-age students, and its Crescendo! Community Engagement programs that provide thousands of students throughout Boston with musical activities ranging from concerts to individualized instruction to workshops and more.

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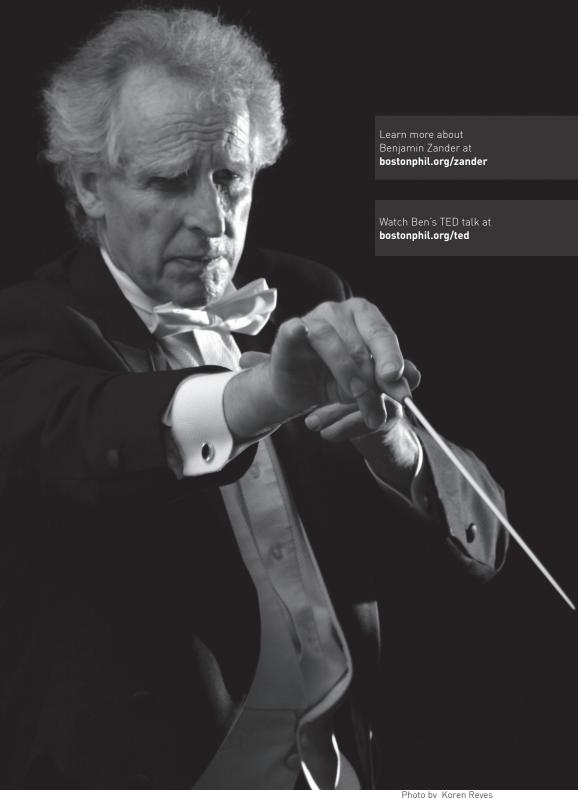


Photo by Koren Reyes

BENJAMIN ZANDER CONDUCTOR

For the past 50 years, Benjamin Zander has occupied a unique place as a master teacher, deeply insightful and probing interpreter, and as a profound source of inspiration for audiences, students, professional musicians, corporate leaders, politicians, and more. He has persistently engaged well-informed musical and public intellectuals in a quest for insight and understanding into the western musical canon and the underlying spiritual, social, and political issues that inspired its creation.

Zander founded the Boston Philharmonic in 1979 and has appeared as guest conductor with orchestras around the world. His performances have inspired thousands of musicians, renewed their sense of idealism, and shed fresh, insightful, and sometimes provocative light on the interpretation of the central symphonic repertoire of the 19th and 20th centuries. Critics and the public have been united in their praise of Zander's interpretations of the central repertory.

For 25 years, Zander has enjoyed a unique relationship with the Philharmonia Orchestra, recording a series of Beethoven and Mahler symphonies. High Fidelity named the recording of Mahler's 6th as 'the best classical recording' of 2002; the 3rd was awarded 'Critic's Choice' by the German Record Critics' Award Association; the Mahler 9th, Mahler 2nd, and Bruckner 5th recordings were nominated for Grammy awards.

In 2012, Zander founded the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra (BPYO), which draws young musicians from the entire northeastern US to its weekly rehearsals and high-profile performances in Boston. This tuition-free orchestra tours regularly, and has performed in Carnegie Hall, the Concertgebouw, and the Berlin Philharmonie, among others. Over the past two summers, the BPYO toured South America and Europe. From 1965-2012, Zander was on the faculty of the New England Conservatory of Music (NEC), where he taught Musical Interpretation, and conducted the Youth Philharmonic and Conservatory orchestras. He was the founding Artistic Director of the NEC's joint program with The Walnut Hill School for the Performing Arts. Zander led the NEC Youth Philharmonic on fifteen international tours and made several documentaries for the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). His interpretation class, "Interpretations of Music: Lessons for Life," is being presented this season in partnership with the Boston Public Library once a month at the Central Library in Copley Square. They are free and open to the public, as well as made available online where they are viewed by tens of thousands of people around the world.

Zander enjoys an international career as a leadership speaker, with several keynote speeches at the World Economic Forum in Davos and at TED. The best-selling book, The Art of Possibility, co-authored with leading psychotherapist Rosamund Zander, has been translated into eighteen languages.

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CONCERT PROGRAM

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2019 AT 7:00 PM

SANDERS THEATRE, HARVARD UNIVERSITY Discovery Series

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2019 AT 8:00 PM

JORDAN HALL, NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY Guide to the music with Benjamin Zander, 6:45 pm

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2019 AT 3:00 PM

SANDERS THEATRE, HARVARD UNIVERSITY Guide to the music with Benjamin Zander, 1:45 pm

Benjamin Zander, conductor

BEETHOVEN Coriolan Overture 8 mins

BEETHOVEN Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat Major,

Op. 73, "Emperor"

Allegro

Adagio un poco mosso

Rondo: Allegro

Robert Levin, piano

INTERMISSION 15 mins

38 mins

31 mins

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67

Allegro con brio Andante con moto Scherzo: Allegro

Allegro

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Unauthorized use of cameras, video and tape recorders is not permitted. Listening devices are available from the venue, please ask for assistance.



This organization is funded, in part, by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

CORIOLAN OVERTURE, OPUS 67

BORN:

December 17, 1770 in Bonn, Germany

DIED:

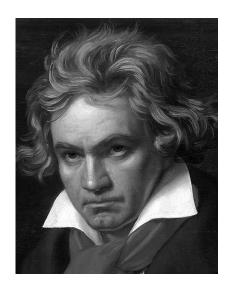
March 26, 1827 in Vienna, Austria

WORK COMPOSED:

1807

WORK PREMIERED:

March 1807 at Prince Franz Joseph von Lobkowicz's residence in Vienna, Austria



Beethoven composed Coriolan because he wished to impress the directors of the Imperial Theater in Vienna and because he needed a new concert overture. Its subject is not Shakespeare's last tragedy, but one by the Viennese poet and playwright, Heinrich Joseph von Collin (1771-1811). Von Collin, who was an official at the Imperial Treasury and Privy Councilor, was a friend to Beethoven and one for whose literary skills the composer held in high regard. He was called in to advise on the revision of *Leonore/Fidelio*, and Beethoven cherished a never-to-be-realized hope of an operatic collaboration. To flatter and encourage the author may be another reason for Beethoven to have undertaken this Overture.

Von Collin's *Coriolan*, one of several plays he wrote on Roman subjects, was first given at the Burgtheater in Vienna on November 24, 1802 with incidental music adapted by Abbot Stadler from Mozart's *Idomeneo* and with Joseph Lange, Mozart's brother-in-law and painter of the famous unfinished portrait of Mozart, in the title role. The play was revived for what appears to have been a single performance on April 24, 1807, and Beethoven's biographer, Alexander Wheelock Thayer speculates that this event, two years after the play had been dropped from the repertory, was arranged particularly "to bring together the composition and the work for which it was written."

Thayer also remarks that "the admirable adaptation of the overture to the play is duly appreciated by those only who have read Collin's almost forgotten work." That puts most of us in our place, but it is in fact important for the listener to know that von Collin's hero vacillates and delays, speaks reams of elegant verse but never acts, and dies at last by suicide.

The *Coriolan Overture* is portraiture of extraordinary concision; few composers have ever put a character on stage so vividly as Beethoven does with the slashing gestures of the first fourteen bars. Later there is music for Volumnia and Virgilia, pleading mother and wife—unsentimental, soft, and urgent. It is a restless, anguished work, terse, and singularly austere in sound. The tempo and character marking is *allegro con brio*, quick and fiery, though at the moment a performance tradition is current that slows this down to a ponderous and sentimental moderato. Especially striking are Beethoven's silences and the contrast between the quick successions of agitated phrases in the principal theme and the sweeping lyric paragraphs of the music associated with the two women. For the tragic close, Beethoven carries a step further the rhythmic, melodic, and textural disintegration that he had invented for the parallel scenario of the funeral march in the *Eroica*, *Beethoven's Third Symphony*.

Corolian and the funeral music in the *Eroica* are in C minor. This is a key that, especially in quick movements, carries special associations for Beethoven—

Coriolan, particularly at the composer's tempo, being a powerful exemplar of Beethoven's clenched-fist C minor temper (also on display in the most famous of all the C minor pieces, the Fifth Symphony).

© Michael Steinberg Edited for clarity and brevity.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

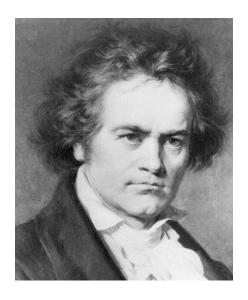
PIANO CONCERTO NO. 5 IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 73, EMPEROR

WORK COMPOSED:

1809-1811; dedicated to Archduke Rudolph, Crown Prince of Austria

WORK PREMIERED:

November 28, 1811 at Gewandhaus in Leipzig, Germany; conducted by Johann Philipp Christian Schulz; soloist Friedrich Schneider



The origins of the name Emperor are obscure, although there is a story, unauthenticated and unlikely, that at the first Vienna performance a French officer explained at some point, "C'est l'Empereur!" The Concerto was written in 1809, and the first performance was given in Leipzig on November 28, 1811 by Friedrich Schneider, Johan Phillip Christian Schulz conducting the Gewandhaus Orchestra. Vienna got to hear it on February 12, 1812 when the soloist was Beethoven's student Carl Czerny. Like Concerto No. 4, this is one of many compositions that Beethoven dedicated to his patron, student, and friend, Archduke Rudolph, Crown Prince of Austria

"Nothing but drums, cannons, human misery of every sort!" Said Beethoven on July 26, 1809 to Gottfried Christoph Härtel, his publisher in Leipzig. The Fifth Concerto is a magnificent affirmation asserted in terrible time. Alfred Brendel has described it as imbued with "a grand and radiant vision, a noble vision of freedom." This quality does not endear it to all – not, for example, to those who, following the philosopher Herbert Marcuse, deplore the idea of "affirmative" music that fails to rebel against the ills of oppression.

In 1809 Austria was at war with France for the fourth time in eighteen years. In 1792 the Girondists had come to power, the Parisian mob stormed the Tuileries, the royal family was arrested and the Republic proclaimed, Louis XVI was brought to trial, and an efficient new decapitation machine – popularly known as

Luisette or Louison and only later named for its chief propagandist, Dr. Joseph-Ignace Guillotin – began its bloody work. The conservative forces of Austria, Prussia, Spain, Portugal, and Sardinia formed a coalition to fight the spirit of the French Revolution. In 1795, the Prussians, the strongest of the Allies, had deserted the cause in order to attend to business of their own in Poland. The following spring, the ill-fed, ill-equipped, ill-shod French army, led by the twenty-six-year-old Napoleon Bonaparte, inflicted on the Austrians the first in a series of defeats that led them to sue for an armistice a year later. It was the beginning of the destruction of the Hapsburg Empire as a major power, a process whose completion was accomplished and acknowledged in 1806, when Francis II abdicated the ancient title of Holy Roman Emperor. Having returned to the fray after the 1797 armistice, Austria was defeated for a second time in 1800 and again in 1805, when French troops occupied Vienna (The unrest caused by the arrival ruined the chances for Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*). Each peace brought Austria new humiliations, new territorial losses, and new economic chaos.

In the midst of this crescendo of civic turmoil, Beethoven had been working with phenomenal intensity. Between 1802 and 1808 he wrote the five symphonies from the Second through the Pastoral; the three <code>Rasumovsky</code> string quartets and two trios, Opus 70; four sonatas for violin, including the <code>Kreutzer</code>, and the Cello Sonata, Opus 69; six piano sonatas, among them the <code>Waldstein</code> and the <code>Appassionata</code>; the Third and Fourth piano concertos, the Violin Concerto, and the Triple Concerto; <code>Fidelio</code> in its original form and its first revision; the oratorio <code>Christ on the Mount of Olives</code>, the C-major Mass, and the Choral Fantasy – to mention only the large scale works. Even so, one can understand why he was seriously tempted late in 1808 to accept the offer of a post as court composer to Jerome Bonaparte, puppet king of Westphalia. That gave the Viennese another cause for alarm, and three wealthy patrons banded together to guarantee Beethoven an income for life provided that he stay in Vienna or some other city within the Austrian Empire.

Beethoven entered into this unprecedented agreement on March 1, 1809 and must have regretted it many a day and night during the subsequent months. On April 9, Austria once again declared war on France, this time with Britain and Spain as allies. One month later, Napoleon's army was in the suburbs of Vienna. The Empress left the capital with most of her family and household. The French artillery began its terrifying assault. On the worst night of all, that of May 11, Beethoven made his way through the broken glass, the collapsed masonry, the fires, the din, to find refuge in the cellar of the house of his brother Caspar. There he covered his head with pillows, hoping thus to protect the remaining shreds of his hearing.

Toward the end of the summer, Beethoven regained his ability to concentrate, and by year's end he had completed, besides this Concerto, the String Quartet, Opus 74, and the *Farewell* Sonata, both in E-flat; and two smaller piano sonatas, the wonderfully lyrical F-sharp major, Opus 78, and two smaller piano sonatas, and its snappy companion in G major, Opus 79. Excellence is, to say the least, undiminished, but in productivity, 1809 is a slender year compared to the previous seven. Whatever the reasons, Beethoven never again composed as prolifically as he had between 1802 and 1808, the period his biographer Maynard Solomon calls his "heroic decade." The *Sinfonia Eroica* (1803-1804) most forcefully defined the new manner; the Fifth Piano Concerto marks both its summit and its termination.

Beethoven had begun his Fourth Piano Concerto in an unprecedented way, with an unaccompanied lyric phrase for the soloist, and only after that bringing in the "normal" exposition of material by the orchestra. Starting to sketch the Fifth Concerto, he again turned his mind to the question of how one might begin a concerto in an original and striking manner. Here, too, he introduces the piano sooner than an audience 185 years ago expected to hear it – not, however, with a lyric or indeed any sort of thematic statement, but in a series of cadenza-like flourishes.

A cadenza is a cadence – an extended, elaborated, and usually brilliant one, but a cadence nonetheless. The *Harvard Dictionary of Music* has a suitable definition: "A melodic or harmonic formula that occurs at the end of a composition, a section, or a phrase, conveying the impression of permanent or momentary conclusion." A cadence is an odd thing, therefore, to find at the beginning of a composition; nonetheless, it is what we find here.

In three sonorous chords, the orchestra outlines the components of the most basic and familiar cadential formula in tonal music. The opening E-flat chord, besides being magnificently imposing, is also instantly recognizable as belonging to this work and no other. Beethoven had an extraordinary gift for incorporating such basic materials as common chords with individual character, and this particular chord sounds so "specific" because it consists only of E-flats and G's; not until the piano comes in do we hear the B-flats that complete the triad.

The piano responds to each of the three chords with fountains and cascades of arpeggios, trills, and scales. Splashy as this is, it is also totally organic. In no other concerto by Beethoven, in no other classical concerto at all, are figurations so much of the compositional essence as here: thus perhaps the opening cadenza is "thematic" after all. Each of the three fountains brings in new pianistic

possibilities, and the entire first movement – the longest Beethoven ever wrote – is continually and prodigiously inventive in this regard. The climax of the third fountain briefly introduces the tension of a triplet cutting across the basic two-by-two. That also foreshadows what is to come: the simultaneous presentation of different rhythmic versions of the same idea is a specialty of this Concerto, as is, in a more general way, the play of two against three. Indeed, the crescendo of excitement that Beethoven builds during this movement depends crucially on the increase in dissonance, both the cross-rhythms themselves and the actual harmonic dissonances produced by these collisions of two against three, three against four, four against five, and so on. Worth noting as well is the blending of brilliance with quiet, another characteristic foreshadowed in the dramatic exordium. Throughout, Beethoven tempers the virtuosic writing with the instruction *dolce* (literally, "sweet"), which invites a more inward manner than is implied by *espressivo*.

The first thing to be said about the slow movement is that it should not be too slow. As early as 1842, Czerny warned that "it must not drag." Beethoven himself makes this quite clear, qualifying *Adagio* with *un poco mosso* (moving a bit) and, even more significantly, writing a Common time signature, meaning that players and listeners should feel two principal pulses in each measure of four quarternotes. In the complete edition of Beethoven that came out in the middle of the nineteenth century, the same Mr. Reinecke who changed the time signature of the first movement of the Concerto No. 3 from Cut time to Common time again committed a foul, but this time changing Beethoven's two beats per bar to a plodding four.

B major, the key of this *Adagio un poco mosso*, comes across as both interestingly fresh and reassuringly tied to where we have been. Its five sharps look foreign after the three flats of the first movement, but if Beethoven had notated this movement in its "real" key of C-flat major, we would be looking at a key signature of seven flats and not be a bit grateful for it. Beethoven affirms the connection of the *Adagio* to the preceding *Allegro* by beginning its melody on D-sharp, which is for practical purposes the same as E-flat, the key of the first movement and concerto as a whole. The chief music here is a hymn introduced by muted strings, to which the piano's first response is a quietly rapturous aria, *pianissimo*, *espressivo*, and mostly triplets. Beethoven gives us two variations on the choral, the first played by the pianist, the second by the orchestra with the piano accompanying (but the accompaniment contains the melody, rhythmically "off" by a fraction and thus another instance of rhythmic dissonance).

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The music subsides into stillness. Then Beethoven makes one of his characteristically drastic shifts, simply dropping the pitch by a semitone from B-natural to B-flat (bassoons, horns, pizzicato strings, all *pianissimo*). This puts us right on the doorstep of E-flat major, the Concerto's home key. With that move accomplished but still in the tempo of the slow movement and still *pianissimo*, Beethoven projects the outlines of a new theme, made, like all the others in this Concerto, of simple motifs. Suddenly this new idea bursts forth in its proper tempo, that of a robust German dance, and fortissimo: the finale has begun. The dance theme is elaborately and excitingly syncopated. Beethoven works out the movement with his very own - and ample - sense of space. Nor is his sense of humor absent. Just before the end, the timpani attain unexpected prominence in a passage of equally unexpected quiet. But this descent into adagio and pianissimo is undone in a coda as lively as it is brief.

> © Michael Steinberg Edited for clarity and brevity.





A NOTE FROM THE CONDUCTOR

"I look upon the invention of the metronome as a welcome means of assuring the performance of my compositions everywhere in the tempi conceived by me, which to my regret have so often been misunderstood."

-Ludwig van Beethoven

It will surely come as a surprise to most listeners that a work as familiar as Beethoven's Fifth Symphony has rarely received a performance that realizes Beethoven's stated wishes as to how the music should be played, and that this tradition of ignoring the composer's intentions began in Beethoven's own time! It seems that from the very beginning conductors chose to disregard or simply didn't look at the metronome marks Beethoven left for his symphonies. In doing so they radically altered the "meaning" of the music and established a tradition of performance that is far removed from what Beethoven seems to have intended. At these concerts the Boston Philharmonic will perform the symphony according to Beethoven's marked tempi. It will come as a shock to many who assumed they knew the world's most popular piece of symphonic music.

How did this situation arise? Is there a right and a wrong way of performing this music? Or is its interpretation purely a subjective matter?

Let's take the opening of the Fifth Symphony – certainly the most famous four notes of music ever penned. If we hear it performed as slowly as it was by such great conductors as Furtwängler, Stokowski, and Klemperer, the music speaks with majesty, force, power, "Fate knocking on the door." If, on the other hand we hear it at the tempo indicated both by Beethoven's Italian direction Allegro con brio and by his metronome marking 108, it seems driving, violent, impetuous, headlong, as though a gauntlet were being thrown down in defiance. But which is the "true" version?

Clearly, when Beethoven was composing that opening he must have had some particular "meaning" or sound in mind. He cannot possibly have heard it both at the slower tempo and at the faster one, and it is unlikely that he was indifferent about the matter-just as unlikely as that he would have been indifferent as to which notes were played. For Beethoven cared so deeply about the tempi at which his works were performed that, according to his friend Anton Schindler whenever he heard about a performance of one of them, "his first question invariably was:

'How were the tempi?'" Every other consideration seemed to be of secondary importance to him.

In fact, Beethoven cared so much about such issues of tempo that he left more detailed instructions on the subject than did virtually any other composer. He headed each movement of his symphonies, and each section of each movement, with both an Italian descriptive phrase (such as Allegro molto vivace or Adagio) and a metronome marking. In taking such care in this matter (which was unprecedented) he assumed that he was leaving for future performers not only precise indications of the speeds (and hence the characters) of the various and sections, but also the key to the successful realization of the works' as wholes. In a letter to his publishers, Schott and Sons, Beethoven wrote: "I have received letters from Berlin informing me that the first performance of the Ninth Symphony was received with enthusiastic applause, which I attribute largely to the metronome markings."

So why should his tempo indications for the symphonies have been so rarely observed in performance? Most conductors have rejected the indicated tempi because they consider them too fast. Ironically, though, both the final movements of the Fifth and Seventh are traditionally played faster than Beethoven's indicated tempo, demolishing the common argument that since all his tempi are too fast, it is reasonable to assume that his metronome was broken. Moreover Beethoven's letters make it clear that he took great pains to have his metronome in good working order.

Some have suggested that Beethoven's deafness could have hearing it properly, though since the metronome had a visible pendulum, he did not need actually to hear it ticking to be able to use it. Yet another speculation has been that the ethereal instruments of the inner ear may move more fleetly than do those of the real acoustical world. And many musicians have continued to resist the notion that Beethoven's supreme genius could (or should) be fettered by the ticking of a mere machine. Beethoven himself had no such qualms, however, as is clear from the comment quoted below, published in the Wiener Vaterländische Blätter of October 13, 1813: "I look upon the invention of the metronome as a welcome means of assuring the performance of my compositions everywhere in the tempi conceived by me, which to my regret have so often been misunderstood."

But to return to our question: Why should Beethoven's tempo indications so rarely have been observed in performance?

More than any other compositions, Beethoven's symphonies-especially the uneven-numbered Third, Fifth, Seventh, and Ninth-fired the imaginations of the Romantic composers and interpreters who followed him. But when works of one

age are interpreted according to and even play a significant role in defining the aesthetics of a later age, something of the works' original spirit is lost. Romantic interpreters, influenced by Wagner and Liszt, favored extremes of tempo and frequent, even violent, fluctuations between those extremes. They tended to equate slow tempi with profundity and significance - thus the slowing up of "the hammer blows of Fate" at the beginning of Beethoven's Fifth, while at the other extreme, Wilhelm Furtwängler, one of the most revered post-Romantic interpreters of Beethoven, propelled the conclusion of the Ninth Symphony into a frenzy of religious ecstasy by taking a tempo seventy points faster on the metronome than the one indicated by Beethoven!

These interpretative decisions have come down to later generations, often in somewhat modified form, as powerful performance traditions that the present day performer defies at some risk. The danger is that adherence to the metronome indications will lead to performances that are mechanical and devoid of passion. But it is important to remember that tempo is not an end in itself but a medium that allows different expressive forms, just as water allows for coral reefs, fish and anemones and air makes possible pine forests, deer, and human beings. Those that inhabit these elements do not notice water or air: the tempo is never the subject of a successful performance. Perhaps, if we can hear this music free of the bar lines, fidelity to the metronome indications need not necessarily result in a sense of mechanical regularity or a lack of breathing space or passion. It all depends, after all, on what is done with and within the chosen tempo.

In working with Beethoven's tempi over the course of many years I have found that they have come to seem absolutely right, and in fact liberating rather than constricting, for they open up a wealth of interpretative possibilities that would not work at slower tempi and that seem true to the essence of Beethoven's musical spirit.

– Benjamin Zander



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LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

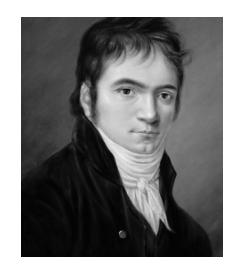
SYMPHONY NO. 5 IN C MINOR, OP 67

WORK COMPOSED:

1804-1808; dedicated to Prince Franz Joseph von Lobkowitz and Count Andres Razumovsky

WORK PREMIERED:

December 22, 1808 at Theater an der Wien in Vienna, Austria



Beethoven began to sketch the Symphony No. 5 early in 1804, immediately after completing the *Eroica*, continued to work on it sporadically until 1806, but interrupted the project to complete the Razumovsky quartets, Opus 59, and to write the Piano Concerto No. 4, the Symphony No. 4, and the Violin Concerto. The main work on the Fifth Symphony was done in 1807, and the score was completed early in 1808. Some revisions followed the first performance at a concert at the Theater an der Wien, Vienna, on December 22, 1808. On this occasion, desperately under-rehearsed, the *Pastoral* Symphony and the Choral Fantasy also had their premieres, the Fourth Piano Concerto had its first public performance, and several movements of the Mass in C and the concert aria *Ah! Perfido* had their first hearings in Vienna. Beethoven also offered one of his famous solo improvisations at the piano. What those who attended might have remembered most vividly is that the heating apparatus had broken down. The dedications are to Count Andres von Razumovsky and Prince Franz Joseph von Lobkowicz.

About the ta-ta-ta-TA: Beethoven begins with eighth notes. They rhyme, four plus four, and each group of four consists of three quick notes plus one that is lower and much longer, in fact unmeasured. The space between the two rhyming groups is minimal (about one-seventh of a second if we go by Beethoven's metronome mark); moreover, Beethoven clarifies the shape by lengthening the second of the long notes. This lengthening, which was an afterthought, is tantamount to writing a stronger punctuation mark. As the music progresses, we can hear in the melody of the second theme, for example, or, later, in the pairs of antiphonal chords of woodwind and strings, that the connection between the two four-note units is crucial to the movement and constantly invoked.

It has often been said that the first movement of the Fifth Symphony is all "built up" from its first four notes. But, as Donald Tovey pointed out long ago, if that were so we would have, instead of a Beethoven *allegro*, one by Schumann, a composer who really does put movements together by that kind of additive process. The source of Beethoven's unparalleled energy here is in his writing long sentences and broad paragraphs whose surfaces are articulated with exciting activity. Indeed, we discover soon enough that the double ta-ta-ta-TA is an openended beginning, not a closed and self-sufficient unit.

What makes this opening so dramatic is the violence of the contrast between the urgency in the eighth-notes and the ominous freezing of motion in the unmeasured long notes. The music starts with a wild outburst of energy, but immediately crashes into a wall. Seconds later, Beethoven jolts us with another such sudden halt. The music draws up to half-cadence on a G-major chord, short and crisp in the whole orchestra except for the first violins, who hang on to their high G for an unmeasured length of time. Forward motion resumes with a relentless pounding of eighth-notes. The music modulates to a new key, E-flat, the relative major, and only now do we get a change of atmosphere.





The horns introduce this new chapter with a fanfare that is a variant of the Symphony's opening. The initial rhythm, the ta-ta-ta-TA, is the same. Beyond that, what Beethoven has done is to stretch the intervals: the thirds (G/E-flat, F/D) has been opened up into fifths (B-flat-E-flat, F/B-flat). The middle two notes, F/E-flat, are the same as before, even though other essentials such as manner of presentation, key, orchestration, and context are different. Another difference is

that this time there is no space between the two pairs of notes: the music goes from E-Flat to F without a break. This suggests that at the opening it is important that the conductor not lengthen the silence on the first beat of measure 3: the fermata applies to the E-flat, not to the rest right after.

Another interesting detail about the horn call in Ex. 2 is that the fourth note, B-flat, is held for thirteen measures so that it serves as a bass to the *dolce* violin melody that follows. This corresponds to the extra length of the D at the beginning of the symphony (measures 4-5), and no doubt when Beethoven had the afterthought of lengthening that D it was to clarify this relationship. As for the violin melody, the first two measures outline B-flat/E-flat (though in reverse order), and the third and fourth outline F and B-flat. In other words, it uses the same pitch vocabulary as the opening and the horn call, and again the link in the middle is E-flat/F. So with horns and uppers strings retaining the pitches of the opening motif, the cellos and basses meanwhile make sure that the ta-ta-ta-TA rhythm stays in our consciousness. All this is an amazing tour de force of concentration and saturation

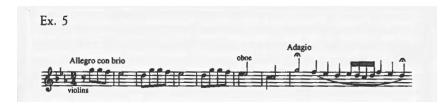
For a long time the development is totally occupied with ta-ta-ta-TA. This rhythm becomes so much a norm for us that when it is lengthened to the effect is of something crazed.



Next, Beethoven re-examines the horn call, and this begins his transition toward the recapitulation. Winds and strings play antiphonal chords, first by pairs, then as single chords. As in the corresponding passage in the first movement of the *Eroica*, the greater the harmonic tension, the softer the dynamic level. These are patches of illusory calm before violent storms. Once, a five-measure outburst of furious *fortissimo* interrupts the *pianissimo*. Three things come together at that point: the shape of the opening, with the thirds and the five-measure length, the rhythm of the horn call, and a harmonization that is derived from the antiphonal chords in the development.

A great thunder of eighth-notes sends us flying into the recapitulation. When first we heard the famous opening notes of this Symphony they were played by strings and clarinets; this time Beethoven hurls them at us with his full orchestra.

What follows is also rescored in that to the agitated eighth-notes in the strings Beethoven adds more sustained lines for oboe and bassoons as well as supporting chords from flutes and clarinets. And now, when he arrives at the cadence where in the exposition the first violins stopped time by clinging to their high G, it is the oboe that detaches itself from the rest of the orchestra, not just to play that high G but to use it as the start of a pathos-filled cadenza. The cadenza both disrupts and integrates. It totally halts forward motion, but at the same time its melody is a perfectly organic continuation of what the oboe itself and the first violins have been playing in the preceding fourteen measures. This paradoxical multiplicity of function is completely characteristic of Beethoven.



That cadenza looks forward as well as back, for it sets up the pathos that the wind instruments, the oboe in particular, inject into the movement just before its close.

The coda is forceful and big. The proportions of this movement yield interesting numbers: exposition 124 measures (meant of course to be repeated), development 122 measures, recapitulation 126 measures, and coda 127 measures. Beethoven puts a big silence, articulative as well as dramatic, between the end of the exposition and the beginning of the development, but when he gets to the corresponding joint between the recapitulation and the coda, he tears from one into the other without a break and in wild abandon. The rhythmic disruptions and distentions are even more violent than those in the development.

It is softness that is pursued in the second movement. In one sketch it is marked "Andante quasi Menuetto," and Beethoven worked hard and long before he found the right shape for the melody and the right expressive tone. Upon that melody he writes a series of variations. The first two break the theme down into faster notes. The third variation is in minor, and Tovey aptly characterizes it as "smiling through tears." These variations are, however, separated by interludes that begin softly in A-flat major, like the theme itself, but move on to C major, with drums and blazing trumpets and horns. (In the sketch referred to earlier, this contrasting idea was to serve as trio to the quasi-minuet.) Furthermore, some of

these transitions are so leisurely that they suspend forward motion as surely and – at least to Haydn – and Mozart-trained ears in 1808 – as startingly as the fermatas in the first movement.

The ecstatic transformation at its last appearance of the little cadential tag at the end of the main theme is a wonderful, proto-Romantic touch. Three times we have heard it, piano, descending gently from E-flat through C to the keynote, A-flat; this last time, the C swells in crescendo and the melody soars up to the high G.

After the storms of the first movement, the second is an oasis of pure and lovely music-making. With the grotesque, creeping and threatening scherzo, the drama is resumed. E. T. A. Hoffman, that vital and original writer, musician, and artist, in his review of the Fifth, for him a quintessentially Romantic symphony, points out how unexpected extensions of phrases – again, interferences with "normal" rhythm – are responsible for the "mounting effect" of the scherzo, "its restless yearning... heightened to a fear which tightly constricts the breast, permitting only fragmentary, disconnected sounds to escape."

The scherzo is a ghostly affair that is back in minor, much of it in *pianissimo*, but with forceful reminders of the first movement's ta-ta-ta-TA rhythm. The trio is in C major, fierce and jocular at the same time, and also a real virtuoso turn for the cellos and basses. It has no formal close, but leads directly into the reappearance of the scherzo. When the scherzo returns, it is much altered. The opening phrase is stretched into a more sinister variant, while the whole design is compressed from 160 measures (to be repeated) to 88. It is, all of it, in relentless *pianissimo*, even the reminders of the ta-ta-ta-TA motif.

Beethoven's original plan was to make the scherzo-trio-scherzo circuit twice, as in the Fourth Symphony (and later in the Sixth and Seventh). The first repetition of the scherzo was to be identical with the original statement, the second was to introduce the spooky, attenuated variant that leads to the finale, thus:

scherzo/trio/scherzo/trio/spooky variant of scherzo/transition



Beethoven soon had second thoughts about the rightness of such an expansive design for this forward-thrusting Symphony. A set of orchestra parts issued by the Leipzig publisher Breitkopf & Härtel in April 1809, just four months after the first

performance, already omits the extra repeat (marked x, above), and in subsequent correspondence with Breitkopf about those parts, Beethoven does not touch on this question. Presumably he made his revision for the sake of tighter dramatic progress. Most conductors choose Beethoven's final version; surely, though, it is a good idea from time to time to examine, in public performance, the original design. The latter really demands taking the repeat of the exposition in the finale as well – a good idea in any case – and these decisions then yield a symphony that is more grand than taut.

The victory symphony was a new kind of symphony, and Beethoven's invention here of a path from strife to triumph became a model for symphonic writing to the present day. This seems to us so central to the whole idea of the Fifth Symphony that it is surprising to learn that it was not part of Beethoven's original plan at all. An early sketch for the finale shows a theme in C minor and in 6/8 time, a nervously impassioned variant of another C-minor piece Beethoven admired vastly – the finale of Mozart's Piano Concerto, K-491. But once it was clear to him how the symphony wanted to end, other changes followed. For one, the martial C-major interludes in the *Andante* lost their formal closes; thus they ceased to be quasi-independent episodes but became adumbrations of both a mood and a key to be explored more fully later.

Likewise, certain ideas Beethoven had about the scherzo came into focus. Two sounds had already occurred to him: the diversion of the harmony from C minor to A-flat major by the way of a deceptive cadence, and the persistent beating of a drum on C. At some point he saw that these were not separate ideas but belonged together, and with that, one of the most amazing passages in all music came into being.

The scherzo is never completed, for Beethoven steers what we expect to be its final cadence into a murky tunnel of thudding drums and grasping bits of melody. This is an extraordinary joining of Fifth Symphony tension to Pastoral Symphony stasis. At last we emerge into the sureness and daylight of C major, marked by the new sounds of trombones (heard here for the first time in any symphony), piccolo, and contrabassoon.

Beethoven asserts his C-major triumph with all the force he can muster. Not only trombones but shrilling piccolo and thunderous contrabassoon add their voices to the orchestra. We are accustomed to those sounds, but in 1808 the shock and the expressive effect must have been tremendous.

"Look out for the part where you think you have done with the goblins and they come back," says Helen Schlegel in E. M. Forster's Howards End. Beethoven does bring them back before his affirmation is final: more technically put, their return constitutes the transition to the recapitulation. "But the goblins were there," Forster adds. "They could return. He had said so bravely, and that is why one can trust Beethoven when he says other things."

The goblins do indeed return, and Beethoven has to make his C major return a second time. (Mahler powerfully annexed the psychology and the design of this plan in the finale of his Symphony No. 1.) Many people have made fun of Beethoven's concluding forty-one measures of tonic and dominant (twenty-nine of them just tonic C-major chords) — Dudley Moore even did it wittily in Beyond the Fringe — but after such a hurricane, nothing less would do to properly ground this music.

As a boy, Felix Mendelssohn had tried hard and not entirely successfully to convert the elderly Goethe to a belief in the Fifth Symphony, or at least to an understanding of it. As a young man, Berlioz tried no less hard to persuade an older man who was almost as determined to resist that impact as Goethe had been. Now let Hector Berlioz have the last word. He was addressing his former teacher, Jean-François Lesueur,

"...an honest man without envy in his nature, and devoted to art. François-Antoine Habeneck's carefully prepared performances of Beethoven's symphonies were causing an immense stir in the music world of Paris, but Lesueur took no notice. Confronted with the immense enthusiasm of musicians in general and me in particular, he shut his ears and carefully avoided the Conservatoire concerts. To have gone would have meant committing himself to a personal opinion of Beethoven; it would have meant being physically involved in the tremendous excitement which Beethoven aroused. This was just what Lesueur... did not wish to happen. However, I kept on at him, solemnly pointing out that when something as important as this occurred in our art – a completely new style on an unprecedented scale – it was his duty to find out about it and to judge for himself; and in the end he yielded and let himself be dragged to the Conservatoire one day when the C-minor Symphony was being performed...

When it was over... I found him in the corridor, striding along with a flushed face.

"Well, master?"

"Ouf! Let me get out. I must have some air. It's amazing! Wonderful! I was so moved and so disturbed that when I emerged from the box and attempted to put on my hat, I couldn't find my head. Now please leave me be. We'll meet tomorrow."

...The next day I hurried round to see him... Lesueur let me talk on for some time, assenting in a rather constrained manner to my exclamations of enthusiasm. But it was easy to see that my companion was no longer the man who had spoken to me the day before, and that he found the subject painful. I persisted, however, and dragged from him a further acknowledgment of how deeply Beethoven's symphony had moved him; at which he suddenly shook his head and smiled in a curious way and said, "All the same, music like that ought not to be written." Don't worry, master," I replied, "there is not much danger."

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ARTIST PROFILE

ROBERT LEVIN, PIANO

Robert Levin is both a pianist and musicologist, serving in the latter role as a teacher of composition, Mozart scholar, and writer of numerous articles on music. As a performer, he is most closely associated with the compositions of Mozart, which he plays on fortepiano in recordings, but usually on piano in concert. He has also completed several important compositions by Mozart, as well, most notably the Requiem. Beethoven has occupied a significant chunk of his repertory, too, Levin having recorded all the piano concertos. He has also been an advocate for modern composers, including Harbison and Denisov.



Despite his immense keyboard gifts as a child, he initially decided to primarily focus on composition, studying in New York with composer Stefan Wolpe from 1957-1961. He then took piano instruction from Louis Martin over the next three years, also in New York City. Concurrent with this activity, Levin studied composition under Nadia Boulanger and piano with Alice Gaultier-Léon at the Fontainebleau Conservatoire Américain in France (1960-1964). It is remarkable that all this advanced training took place while Levin was still in high school. Levin went on to Harvard and following graduation, was appointed head of music theory at the Curtis Institute in 1968, upon the recommendation of Rudolf Serkin. Two years later, he took on a professorship at S.U.N.Y., Purchase, which he concurrently held until he departed his Curtis post in 1973. He would remain at Purchase until 1986, but again take a second position during his tenure there, this at the Fontainebleau Conservatoire, from 1979-1983, on the invitation of former teacher Boulanger. While Levin had been making impressive strides in his pedagogical profession, his keyboard career had advanced only modestly during the nearly two decades following his graduation from Harvard. He had given public concerts with reasonable frequency from childhood, but his first major appearance would not come until his Alice Tully Hall recital in 1987, after which he enjoyed a nearly meteoric rise. Yet Levin was hardly turning away from his teaching career at this point:



he had accepted a post at the Freiburg Staatliche Hochschule für Musik the year before, holding the post until 1993. By that time, he had launched his recording career. The first issue in his highly praised Mozart fortepiano concerto series, with Christopher Hogwood and the Academy of Ancient Music, was issued in 1994 on L'oiseau-Lyre. He had appeared in chamber music recordings as early as 1986 (with Kim Kashkashian on viola) and in the Mozart Concerto for Three Pianos with his friends Malcolm Bilson and Melvyn Tan. Levin's eighth release in his own Mozart concerto series came in early 2001. He has been widely praised for the performances, particularly for his imaginative, improvised cadenzas, a once-popular performance practice that some have credited him with restoring to tradition. Levin has also made a mark with his set of the five Beethoven piano concertos (also played on fortepiano), which he recorded between 1996 and 2000. His version of Mozart's Requiem was premiered in 1991 in Stuttgart at the European Music Festival, conducted by Helmuth Rilling. Perhaps Levin's most famous Mozart essay was his 1998 "Who Wrote the Mozart Four-Wind Concertante?". In 1993, Levin left his post in Freiburg and accepted a professorship at Harvard, where he served as a Dwight P. Robinson Jr. Professor of the Humanities.

Robert Levin lives in Cambridge and is appearing for the third time as soloist with the BPO.

Artist Biography by Robert Cummings





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