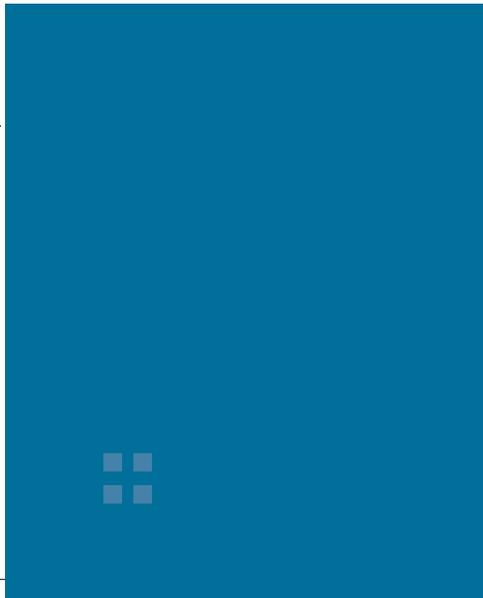


**CHANDOS :: intro**

CHAN 2020

*an introduction to* **Ludwig van Beethoven**





*Classical music* is inaccessible and difficult. It's surprising how many people still believe the above statement to be true, so this new series from Chandos is not only welcome, it's also very necessary.

I was lucky enough to stumble upon the wonderful world of the classics when I was a child, and I've often contemplated how much poorer my life would have been had I not done so. As you have taken the first step by buying this CD, I guarantee that you will share the delights of this epic journey of discovery. Each CD in the series features the orchestral music of a specific composer, with a selection of his 'greatest hits' played by top quality performers. It will give you a good flavour of the composer's style, but you won't find any nasty surprises – all the music is instantly accessible and appealing. The discs are beautifully presented, and very good value for money, too.

I sincerely hope this CD marks the start of your own lifelong passion for classical music.

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Classic FM presenter



## Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

- |   |                                                            |              |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Overture to 'The Creatures of Prometheus',<br>Op. 43       | 5:22         |
|   | Adagio – Allegro molto con brio                            |              |
|   | Piano Concerto No. 5 in E flat major,<br>Op. 73 'Emperor'* | 39:12        |
| 2 | I Allegro                                                  | 20:16        |
| 3 | II Adagio un poco mosso                                    | 8:29         |
| 4 | III Rondo, Allegro                                         | 10:27        |
|   | Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67                          | 33:21        |
| 5 | I Allegro con brio                                         | 8:25         |
| 6 | II Andante con moto                                        | 10:19        |
| 7 | III Allegro –                                              | 5:26         |
| 8 | IV Allegro                                                 | 9:08         |
|   | <b>Total time</b>                                          | <b>77:55</b> |

John Lill piano\*  
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra  
Felix Kok leader  
Lyn Fletcher co-leader\*  
Walter Weller



*overture to 'the creatures of prometheus'*

Beethoven's ballet *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus*, literally the creatures or 'creations' of Prometheus, dates from 1801, shortly after the completion of the First Symphony and the String Quartets, Op. 18. The choice of subject may have been influenced by the recent success of Haydn's *Die Schöpfung* (The Creation), giving rise to one of Beethoven's typical plays upon words. Although patronising about the ballet master Salvatore Vigano, Beethoven must certainly have been attracted by the legendary figure of Prometheus, the bringer of fire, who was also represented as hero and benefactor, and with whom Beethoven may have identified himself as a musician. In fact, as Marion Scott remarked, the hero on this occasion seemed to have acquired the combined gifts of Orpheus and Pygmalion, bringing statues to life through the power of harmony. With the disappearance of the original ballet most of the music fell into neglect, though the finale acquired fame by bequeathing its theme to the Op. 35 piano variations and the last movement of the *Eroica* Symphony. The Overture, however, quickly became a favourite concert piece. Its dramatic opening chords epitomised the unusual harmonic moves at the start of the First Symphony, and the lively string writing in the *Allegro molto con brio* looked forward to the finale of the Fourth. But the importance of the wind instruments, already a feature of the First Symphony, is another characteristic, and their antiphony with the strings adds to the excitement.

© Denis Matthews

*piano concerto no. 5 in e flat major 'emperor'*

Deafness brought Beethoven's career as a composer-cum-concerto soloist to a close, but not before he had written the

'Concerto-Symphony' (Hans Keller's phrase) known in Britain as the *Emperor*: the Piano Concerto No. 5. It is an heroic work conceived in Beethoven's loftiest vein by a man well-versed in the heroic ideals of the ancient world. But it draws, too, on contemporary experience. In the spring of 1809 the French bombarded Vienna. Beethoven spent much time in the cellar of his brother's house, a pillow over his ears to check the effect of the vibrations. In July he wrote to his publisher Breitkopf:

We have passed through a great deal of misery. I tell you: since 4 May I have brought little into the world that is connected – only here and there a fragment. The whole course of events has affected me: body and soul. Nor can I have the enjoyment of country life that is indispensable to me... What a disturbing, wild life there is around me. Nothing but drums, cannons, men, and misery of all sorts.

The Fifth Concerto rises magnificently above the fray, but it does not rewrite history or put a gloss on human affairs. On the last page we have one of Beethoven's most astonishing improvisations, a passage of muffled war music for piano and drum. It is moments like this that astound, even today. But, then, it is his capacity to surprise, disturb, shock, and delight that make the music of Beethoven in general and his concertos in particular so endlessly rewarding.

As the poet Ezra Pound said, great art is 'news that stays news'.

© Richard Osborne

*symphony no. 5 in c minor*

'Thus Fate knocks at the door!' Beethoven's supposed remark to Schindler has been inseparably linked with the opening of the Fifth Symphony – or were those momentous first bars, as Czerny maintained, actually inspired by the notes of the yellow-hammer? The listener may prefer to take Hans Keller's more objective view of them



as 'this is what it is all about'. Yet the overtones persist, helped by the storm-and-stress associations of C minor and the resplendent triumph of the major-key finale. 'I will seize Fate by the throat' Beethoven had written about his deafness, and after the crisis of the Heiligenstadt Testament his musical triumphs of the *Eroica* Symphony and the *Waldstein* Sonata were followed by sketches for the Fifth. The work was interrupted and not completed for four years, the first performance being given at a marathon concert in December 1808 that also included the *Pastoral Symphony*, the Fourth Piano Concerto, parts of the Mass in C major and the *Choral Fantasy*. Perhaps the inordinate length of the programme was responsible for the deletion of the full *da capo* in the scherzo, about which scholars still argue. But the third movement, apart from its *fugato* trio, is unlike the scherzos of the other symphonies in being through-composed without the usual repeats. Its drama lies in the alternation of mysterious questionings (cellos and basses) and bold resolution (horns). Over the finale of his very last quartet he was to write the formula, 'Must it be? It must be!', but this philosophy seemed to underline very many of his musical gestures. In E.M. Forster's *Howard's End* the romantically inclined Helen found panic and emptiness in the third movement of the Fifth and splendour and heroism with the entry of the trombones in the finale, while young Tibby, profoundly versed in counterpoint, implored the company to look out for 'the transitional passage on the drum'. As Forster so aptly put it, the Fifth Symphony satisfies 'all sorts and conditions'.

After the vast timescale of the *Eroica* the first movement of the Fifth thrives on its concision and economy, its longest paragraphs deriving from the opening motive and the related horn call that announces the second subject. Yet its stupendous effect was achieved with the standard classical orchestra, extra instruments being reserved for the finale. 'Are they giants whom we hear scraping

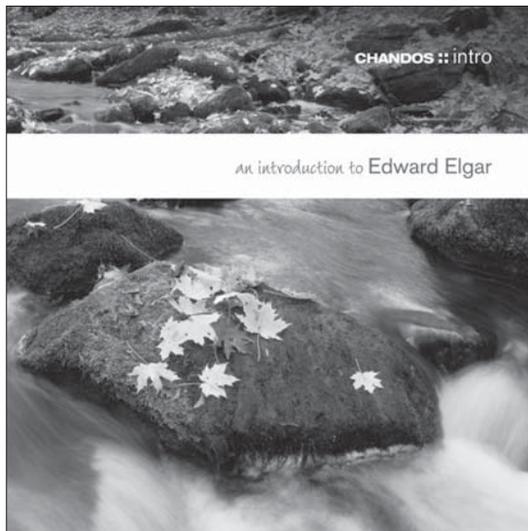
and blowing?' asked the conductor Weingartner, as Beethoven restored the minor key in a coda of unprecedented power. In the midst of such an elemental drama the brief oboe cadenza following the reprise had sounded a note of touching pathos, the outcome of a new melodic thread woven into the previous bars.

For the *Andante con moto* Beethoven evolved a plan of variations and afterthoughts that was to have a sublime sequel in the *Adagio* of the Ninth. In the sketches the theme first appeared as a *Tempo di menuetto* with mundane sequences, but it was eloquently reshaped with a martial counterpart involving a move from A flat to C major, the symphony's eventual key of salvation. But such awareness between movements was a feature of the mature classical style. After one complete variation, a second breaks off for a freer treatment of the theme, highlighting the wind players but leaving the emotional climax for the strings with an inspired variant in the coda. On the subject of scoring, the arrival of the trombones in the finale was a landmark, their use normally confined to opera and church music. Beethoven also added a piccolo and double-bassoon, creating a grandeur of sonority all the more telling after the ghostly reprise of the previous movement, one reason for his need to refer back before the finale's own recapitulation. In view of the prolonged affirmation of C major at the end it is hard to imagine the Fifth Symphony with a minor-key finale, though Beethoven had noted and rejected such an idea, a tribute to his admiration for Mozart's Piano Concerto in C minor. His work on *Fidelio* intervened, and over sketches for the third *Rasumovsky* Quartet he wrote the significant words, 'Let your deafness no longer be a secret'. Both have jubilant C major finales and key associations were strong.

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## Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

The German composer Ludwig van Beethoven is widely regarded as one of classical music's supreme masters, who radically transformed every musical form in which he worked. In a musical language which appeals directly to the listener, Beethoven combined elements of the traditional with the innovative but always in his own style; his music remains as striking today as it was when it was written.

- |       |                                                           |       |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------|
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Total time 77:55

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