



ROYAL
PHILHARMONIC
ORCHESTRA

ELENA
ULYANOVA

DMITRY YABLONSKY
ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

BEEETHHOVEN

PIANO CONCERTOS NO.3 AND NO.5, 'EMPEROR'

Since birth, I have been surrounded and captivated by Beethoven's music. During early childhood, my mother would introduce me to vinyl recordings of his sonatas and concertos featuring performances by Emil Gilels and Sviatoslav Richter. On commencing piano studies at the age of five, my own initial exposure to playing Beethoven's compositions began with his beautiful *Ecossaises* and *Bagatelles*. During my studies at the Moscow Conservatory, I gradually delved deeper into Beethoven's sonatas, and since then have recorded several of them on Blu-ray discs at Jacoby Symphony Hall, Jacksonville, Florida.



Beethoven's Concerto No.3 in C minor was one of my earliest concertos, performed at the age of twelve; the 'Emperor' Concerto was learned many years later. I hold Beethoven in the highest regard and admire the immense power of the piano concertos. The music of Beethoven has been an integral part of my life since I began playing - it has captivated me since my earliest days and continues to inspire me.

Elena Ulyanova

ELENA ULYANOVA – Piano

Elena Ulyanova is an award-winning concert pianist and distinguished graduate of the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory. Her elegant performance style runs the gamut of power and strength to a delicate, floating finesse. Since 2014, Elena has been a Steinway artist, having been awarded the elite status by Steinway & Sons, New York.

She has performed orchestral, chamber and solo concerts in nearly every European country as well as performing throughout Russia and in Korea and China. Highlights include recording with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Russian Philharmonic Orchestra – both with conductor Dmitry Yablonsky. Elena has also performed with the Vienna Mozart Orchestra, Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra, Moscow State Symphony Orchestra, American Philharmonic, Landon Symphonette, Maitland Symphony Orchestra, Villages Philharmonic Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Mexico City Philharmonic Orchestra, Wyoming Symphony Orchestra, Scottsdale Philharmonic, and National Symphony Orchestra.

In 2022, she recorded a selection of

Beethoven sonatas in Jacoby Symphony Hall, Jacksonville and she recently performed in the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, New York. Elena currently resides in Florida.

At the age of five, Elena Ulyanova began to study music with her mother, Larisa Ulyanova. After winning several first prizes in youth competitions she was awarded full scholarships in Moscow at the Gnessin State College of Music, Gnessin Russian Academy of Music, and Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory. Whilst studying at Gnessin Academy, she won the Mamontov Competition, resulting in tours of Russia, Bulgaria and Romania. She was also awarded a tour of Austria representing Gnessin Academy.

Shortly after joining the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, she became a Laureate in the Second Rachmaninov International Piano Competition. After receiving her Master of Music degree she pursued postgraduate studies with Victor Merzhanov while performing for the Moscow Philharmonic Concert Association. Elena has also taken masterclasses with Nikolay Petrov, Andrey Diev, John O'Connor, Howard Shelley, and Leslie Howard.



DMITRY YABLONSKY – Conductor

Grammy nominated cellist/conductor Dmitry Yablonsky was born in Moscow into a musical family. He showed musical talent from an early age and at six years old was accepted into Central Music School for gifted children. When he was nine, he played Haydn's Cello Concerto in C Major with Gennady Provotorov conducting.

During the next few years, Dmitry performed in many cities across the former Soviet Union. In 1975 his mother, the pianist

Oxana Yablonskaya, applied for a visa to leave the country but the authorities did not allow the family to leave. With the help of many people, including signatures of Katharine Hepburn and Leonard Bernstein, their visa was finally issued two years later.

Upon arriving in New York City in 1977, Dmitry joined Juilliard School of Music, before studying at Curtis Institute of Music and then at Yale University. His cello teachers included Isaak Buravsky, Aldo Parisot, Zara Nelsova, Lorne Munroe, David Soyer, plus lessons and masterclasses with Mstislav Rostropovich, André Navarra, Maurice Gendron and János Starker. Whilst at Yale, Dmitry took conducting classes with Otto-Werner Mueller, considered one of the most influential conducting teachers in the USA.

Dmitry has performed in grand halls such as La Scala, Carnegie Hall, Moscow Grand Hall, St. Petersburg Philharmonia, Taiwan National Hall, Cadogan Hall, Cité de la Musique and Madrid Auditorium. Dmitry started to conduct in 1989 and has been a very active conductor ever since, working with Vienna Chamber, Moscow Virtuosi, Moscow Soloists, Royal Philharmonic, Russian State, Moscow Philharmonic, St. Petersburg Symphony, Jerusalem Symphony,

Israeli Opera, Rishon LeZion, Tenerife, Lamoureux, National d'Île-de-France, Belgian National, OFUNAM in Mexico and Israel Philharmonic orchestras.

Dmitry Yablonsky is Artistic Director of Kyiv Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra. Together they have recorded albums for Naxos, including: Shostakovich chamber symphonies; Silvestrov, Pleyel and Hofmann cello concertos; Italian arias with Azer Zada; and Dvořák cello concertos.

Dmitry Yablonsky has collaborated with artists including Monserrat Caballé, Olga Borodina, Ildar Abdrazakov, Leif Ove Andsnes, Yuri Bashmet, Boris Berezovsky, Roberto Alagna, Krzysztof Penderecki, Dmitry Kitayenko and Vadim Repin. He has organised music festivals across the world including a large-scale festival in Gabala, Azerbaijan together with pianist Farhad Badalbeyli. He has made more than 90 CDs for Naxos, Chandos Records and Warner/Erato labels. His titles include: Honorary Academician of the Independent Academy of Liberal Arts, Moscow; Honoured Art Worker of Azerbaijan; Professor and Head of International Relations at Buchman-Mehta School of Music, Tel Aviv University. For cello performances, he plays a Matteo Goffriller 1700 and Grancino 1670.



ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

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LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

PIANO CONCERTO NO.3 IN C MINOR, OP.37

Ludwig van Beethoven was not only the greatest composer of his day, he was also Europe's most mesmerisingly individual pianist before the rise of Liszt and Chopin. Beethoven's headstrong belief in his own capabilities and natural gift for extemporisation were evident from the very beginning and even as a young boy had a remarkable ability to create music out of thin air.

He went on to become one of the greatest improvisers of his day. The spell he effortlessly cast on awestruck audiences during impromptu salon sessions of the 1790s can be judged from piano-pedagogue Carl Czerny's comments: 'In whatever company he might chance to be, he knew how to produce such an effect upon every hearer, so that frequently not an eye remained dry, whilst many would break out into loud sobs... After ending an improvisation of this kind he would burst into loud laughter and torment his hearers on the emotion he had caused in them - "You are fools!" he would say.'

The fascination regarding the young tyrant didn't end there, for his appearance and

general behaviour were equally volatile and unpredictable. One Frau von Bernhard painted a graphic picture of what it was like to entertain Beethoven at this time: 'He was short and insignificant-looking, with an ugly red face full of pockmarks. His hair was dark and hung almost shaggily about his face; his suit was very ordinary, and in strong contrast to the fastidious elegance customary in those days, especially in our circles. Besides, he spoke in a pronounced dialect and had a rather common way of expressing himself... his whole behaviour was unmannerly.' Both musically and personally Beethoven was heading for a crisis, one that would eventually find release in one of his most angst-ridden works: the C minor Piano Concerto.

Although largely written in 1800, it was not until 1803 that the Third Concerto was finally completed. Even then, Beethoven (according to his page turner at the première) was still extemporising certain passages on the spur of the moment: 'I saw almost nothing but empty leaves; at the most on one page or another a few Egyptian hieroglyphs wholly unintelligible to me scribbled down as clues

for him; he played nearly the whole solo part from memory, since, as was so often the case, he hadn't had time to put it all down on paper'.

The C minor Concerto is a far more ambitious work than its two predecessors, the minor key typically bringing out the turbulent side of Beethoven's personality. The outer movements are brim-full of high drama and tension, tellingly offset by the dreamy, tender reflectiveness of the central *Largo*.

To our contemporary ears, well accustomed to Beethoven's tempestuous outbursts, there may not seem to be anything so terribly radical about this music. Yet at the time this was something completely new, signalling a departure from the post-Mozartian athletics of the first two concertos towards new realms of heightened expression. There is a symphonic grandeur to this music that is utterly opposed to the virtuoso note-spinners of Beethoven's immediate contemporaries. To cap it all Beethoven even inserts a fugal passage for the string section into a concerto (!) finale. Neither the critics nor the general public were very impressed at the time of its première - but with the 'Eroica' Symphony just around the corner, this was only the beginning...





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

Beethoven finished work on this final and most imperiously all-embracing of his concertos in 1809, just as the walls of Vienna were collapsing under the might of Napoleon's invading armies. Beethoven was incensed, berating one officer rather uncharitably: 'If I, as a general, knew as much about strategy as I the composer know about counterpoint, I'd give you something to do!' The old regime was literally disintegrating around him.

Beethoven's hearing was now deteriorating so rapidly that he was forced to face the prospect of never performing in public again. He was reported to be tying pillows to his head in order to protect what was left of his aural senses against the noise of the battles outside. He had written a magnificent concerto that represented the perfect vehicle for his unique performing style but, sadly, he was simply no longer able to play it. It took Beethoven three years to come to terms with this and finally allow the 1812 première to go ahead with Carl Czerny as soloist.

The nickname of Beethoven's final and greatest concerto - 'Emperor' - seems to have been derived from a remark made by the English piano maker, J. B. Cramer, in which he described this blazing masterpiece as the 'emperor among concertos'. It is the work's all-conquering spirit and unquenchable reserves of spiritual as well as physical energy that led the notoriously conservative Viennese audiences of the time to complain that Beethoven had aimed beyond the comprehension of the common man. However, it is now generally recognised as one of his seminal masterpieces in any form.

The 'Emperor' begins with an imposing series of virtuoso flourishes, before the Concerto proper has even got underway. The second subject is an extraordinary creation, vacillating hauntingly between its initial presentation in the minor mode in detached strings (the piano plays it in the recapitulation), and the legato warmth of the horns in the major. Having already surprised us with those mini-cadenzas at the start, Beethoven reduces the traditional cadenza to the briefest of reflections before leading to a massive final coda, one of the longest in the concerto repertoire.

For the slow movement, Beethoven pulls

in the reins, creating a magical oasis of peace and tranquillity, introduced by muted orchestral strings. There follow two main variations on this opening theme, the second an enchanting version for woodwind with the soloist accompanying.

Beethoven leads us directly into the finale with a halting version from the soloist of the main rondo theme to come, before it charges away in all-conquering mood. Right to the end Beethoven is unconventional. There is no traditional cadenza, the orchestra gradually falling silent save for the timpani gently murmuring the rhythm of the main theme. Quite out of the blue the piano suddenly re-emerges with a stream of blistering octave scales up and down the length of the piano, leading to a final brief orchestral flourish. With nearly twenty years of life remaining to him, but with his concertising days at an end, Beethoven's love-affair with concerto form was over.

Notes by Julian Haylock

BEETHOVEN -

PIANO CONCERTO NO.3 IN C MINOR, OP.37

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|---------------------|-------|
| 1. Allegro con brio | 17:23 |
| 2. Largo | 09:57 |
| 3. Rondo. Allegro | 09:05 |

BEETHOVEN -

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

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| 4. Allegro | 21:02 |
| 5. Adagio un poco moto - | 08:01 |
| 6. Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo | 10:40 |
| Total | 76:12 |