UNLV presents

MUNICH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
PHILIPPE ENTERMONT,
CONDUCTOR AND PIANIST

Sunday, February 22, 2009 • 7 p.m.
Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall

Presented by special arrangement with
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**Tonight’s Program**

*Piano Concerto No. 5, op. 73,*
E-flat major (“Emperor’”) ........................................ LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)
Allegro
Adagio un poco mosso
Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

- Intermission -

*Symphony No. 4, op. 60, B-flat major ..................... LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)*
Adagio - Allegro vivace
Adagop
Allegro - vivace
Allegro ma non troppo

**To Our Audience**

The Performing Arts Center is delighted to hear your generous appreciation for our concert artists. We ask that you **please** hold your applause until all of the movements in a particular piece are finished. Generally, a conductor will indicate when it is time for your applause; you can also count the number of movements in each piece – movements are listed underneath the piece’s title. Thank you for your continued enjoyment and support of the Charles Vanda Master Series.

**Program Notes**

*Piano Concerto No. 5, op. 73, E-flat major (“Emperor”)*

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December 16, 1770, in Bonn
Died March 26, 1827, in Vienna

The last and most significant of Beethoven’s piano concertos, known as the “Emperor Concerto,” was written in 1809, the year of the death of the composer’s old teacher, Franz Joseph Haydn; more important, however, is the fact that it was written in Vienna during the occupation of that city by Napoleon’s army. The title, “Emperor,” most certainly was not Beethoven’s. Although Beethoven originally dedicated his *Third Symphony* to General Bonaparte, when the despot declared himself Emperor, Beethoven tore the dedication from the manuscript in disgust. By the time he wrote his *Fifth Piano Concerto*, Beethoven’s antagonism toward Napoleon was extremely high. It can only be surmised that the unidentified publisher who dubbed it “Emperor” either was himself an admirer of Napoleon or was simply inspired by the overall majesty of the concerto itself. Another possibility, of course, is that the publisher may have taken his inspiration for the appellation from Beethoven’s dedication in the score to “His Imperial Highness, Rudolph, Arch-Duke of Austria.”

Beethoven usually performed his own concertos, but by this time his deafness had become so acute that he had ceased to perform in public. The *Fifth Piano Concerto* was first performed in Leipzig in 1810 with Friedrich Schneider as the soloist, and received its Vienna premiere in 1812 with Karl Czerny (Beethoven’s student and later Liszt’s teacher) at the keyboard. At the time, the critic for the Allegemeine Musik Zeitung in Vienna praised Czerny for his remarkable playing but complained of the excessive length of the work. The Leipzig critic, however,
recognized it as “without a doubt one of the most original, imaginative, effective, but most difficult of all existing concerti.” It is indeed Beethoven’s most “symphonic” of his concertos, as well as by far the most imposing and commanding, with a fusion of virtuosity and creative inspiration that are nothing but remarkable.

The first movement (Allegro) of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major is the longest of the three and is built upon a very extended sonata form. Most unusually, after a vigorous sounding tonic chord in E-flat by the full orchestra, the Concerto begins with a rhapsodic cadenza for solo piano, punctuated only by three chords in the full orchestra. This improvisatory-like introduction sets the tone of the work and leads directly into the main theme of the first movement, stated by the first violins and later taken up by the clarinets. The strings usher in a pianissimo second theme and pass it on to the horns several measures later. There is development, largely centering on the first theme, and a huge crescendo leads to the pause and cadenza. However, Beethoven breaks with the custom of the time and expressly forbids any impromptu virtuosity on the part of the soloist (At this point in the score, the composer wrote “Non si fa una cadenza, ma s’attaca subito il sequente.” [“Do not make a cadenza here, but attack what follows immediately.”]). The orchestra joins the latter section of the cadenza to bring the movement to its conclusion.

The main part of the second movement (Adagio un poco mosso) is a sequence of “quasi-variations” on the hymn-like melody announced by the strings with muted violins. A pensive second subject is brought in softly by the piano. At the close of the movement there is an anticipation of the theme of the final movement which follows without pause.

The finale, marked Allegro, is a broad seven-part Rondo, perhaps the most spacious and triumphant concerto rondo in the repertoire. Both themes are stated and fully expounded by the solo instrument. Toward the end of the movement occurs the famous passage in which the piano and timpani join in an extended duet: the pianissimo kettle drums intone the rhythm of the first movement as they accompany the piano’s diminuendo chords in long descent. The piano then makes one last dash and lets the orchestra bring the work to its forceful conclusion.

Symphony No. 4, op. 60, B-flat major
LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
Born December 16, 1770 in Bonn
Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna

Count Franz von Oppersdorf, an amateur musician with the reputation of maintaining an excellent orchestra, once had the great opportunity of performing Beethoven’s Second Symphony while the composer was in attendance. In 1806, when Beethoven had occasion to visit Count von Oppersdorf’s castle, the Count commissioned him to write a symphony and paid him in advance. Instead of a symphony, however, the Count received in 1808 a letter of apology from Beethoven stating that he had been forced, on account of circumstances, to sell his most recent symphony – known today as the Fifth Symphony – but he promised the Count that the symphony intended for him would be forthcoming shortly. The symphony finally presented to the Count, which bears the dedication to him, was the Fourth Symphony, composed in the summer months of 1806. Count von Oppersdorf was particularly irked by this turn of events as this symphony had not only been performed already – it received its first performance in March of 1807 at the house of Prince Lobkowitz in Vienna – but it had also been met with a less than highly acclaimed reception. As one critic noted, the symphony contained a “wealth of ideas, bold originality and fullness of strength,” but yet he went on to complain of the “neglect of
noble simplicity” and the “excessive amassing of thoughts.” As a result of this episode, the relationship between Beethoven and the Count terminated on unhappy terms.

The vast introduction to the first movement (Adagio) sets a mysterious atmosphere, somewhat dark in character. The lowering unison B-flat, pianissimo in the winds and pizzicato in the strings quietly unrolls, revealing the unusual tonality of B-flat minor, the minor mode of the symphony’s official key. As the music develops, modulations to remoter keys occur until the tone A, with dynamics intensifying, is reached, thus serving the leading-tone function to the key of B-flat major. The rapid pulse of the Allegro vivace is established by a rushing string figure that, following a wide-ranging first subject and a witty, somewhat imitative second subject with the woodwinds predominant, returns as the main subject of the development section. The development, containing modulations to both related and unrelated tonalities suddenly shifts back to the tonic key of B-flat. A drum roll wittily signals the transition to a regular recapitulation. The movement concludes with a brief coda that made use, once again, of the string figure that served as the main theme of the development section.

The second movement, Adagio, is marked by a pervasive, steady and unchanging pulse. The cantabile melody of the violins is of particular beauty, consummately lyrical. Beethoven combines the gently inflected turns of this theme with a harmonic texture of extraordinary intricacy and subtlety, while still providing forceful and dramatic climaxes. The second subject, played by the clarinet, is exceptionally tender and scored with a degree of finesse remarkable for a composer even of Beethoven’s stature. The pulsing rhythmic figure, akin to a musical heartbeat, is heard from the solo bassoon and echoed by the cellos and basses; then, re-echoed by the tympani. From this pulsing arises the flute that leads us back to the ornamental return of the main melody.

The scherzo, Allegro-vivace, presents the listener with jaunty rhythmic displacements and modulatory sequences, Beethoven leaving the tonic key almost immediately after its start as if to avoid a possible monotony of key. The entire scherzo is repeated before moving on to the trio (Un poco allegro). This section gracefully contrasts the woodwinds with the strings and continues a somewhat ambiguous treatment of tonality. The trio, as well, repeats in its entirety.

The finale, Allegro ma non troppo, is impeccably adroit in its construction and is spirited and playful in character. The first theme contains running sixteenth note figures providing a feeling of perpetual motion. In contrast, the second theme acquires a dance-like quality, especially given its triplet accompaniment figures, before returning to the running sixteenth note figure that persists until nearly the end of the movement. The entire finale captures the flavor of the finales of Haydn’s last symphonies in its robustness and high spirits. It is, however, unmistakably pure Beethoven.

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