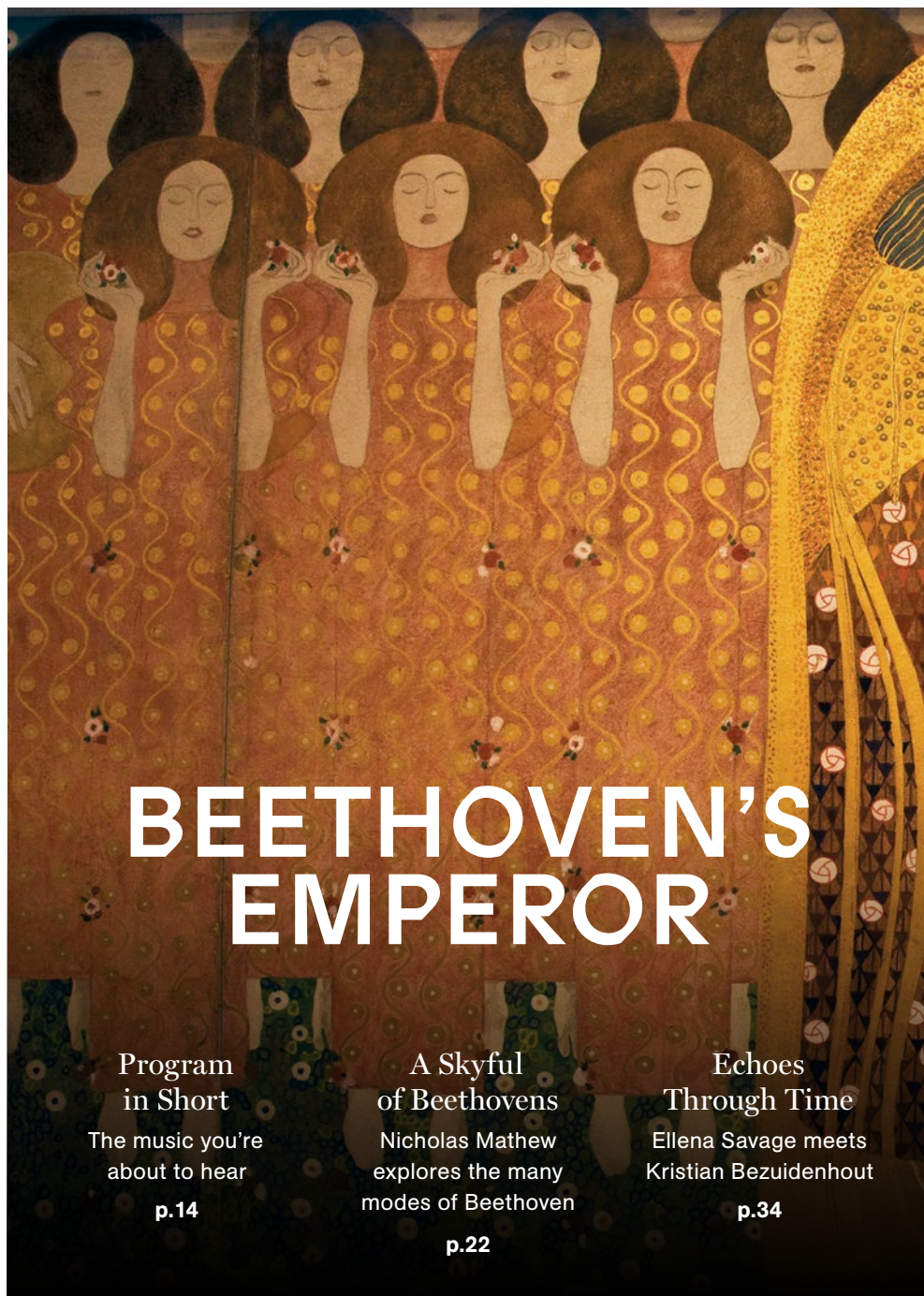


Australian Chamber Orchestra

RICHARD TOGNETTI – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



BEETHOVEN'S EMPEROR

Program in Short

The music you're
about to hear

p.14

A Skyful of Beethovens

Nicholas Mathew
explores the many
modes of Beethoven

p.22

Echoes Through Time

Ellena Savage meets
Kristian Bezuidenhout

p.34



NATIONAL TOUR PARTNER





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Inside you'll find features and interviews that shine a spotlight on our players and the music you are about to hear. Enjoy the read.

INSIDE



Welcome

From the ACO's Managing Director Richard Evans

p.2



News

What's coming up with the ACO

p.3



Musicians on Stage

Players on stage for this performance

p.8



A Skyful of Beethovens

Nicholas Mathew explores the many modes of Beethoven

p.22



Echoes Through Time

Ellena Savage meets Kristian Bezuidenhout

p.34



Acknowledgements

The ACO thanks our generous supporters

p.44

WELCOME

Welcome to *Beethoven's Emperor*.

The ACO has had a brilliant start to the 2024 Season, with our opening tour of the year, *River*, selling out in concert halls across the country. It was a privilege to share Richard Tognetti and Jennifer Peedom's awe-inspiring homage to the Earth's waterways with so many of you.

We are now delighted to reunite with a dear friend of the ACO's, Australian pianist Kristian Bezuidenhou, in this celebration of Beethoven's beloved *Emperor Concerto*. While Kristian has performed with the ACO over the years, this is his first time directing the Orchestra, in a program that traces the profound influence that Beethoven has had over the centuries, from his contemporaries Ferdinand Ries and Franz Schubert to the Australian premiere of a new work by Swedish composer Britta Byström.

I thank our National Tour Partner for these performances, Wesfarmers, for its invaluable support of this tour, as well as more broadly as Principal Partner of ACO Collective. Wesfarmers has provided enormous support for the ACO's Learning & Engagement programs for over 20 years and it is fitting that many of the musicians on stage for this concert are alumni of our Emerging Artist Program, including three of our own permanent ACO musicians, Principal Viola Stefanie Farrands, violinist Liisa Pallandi and violist Elizabeth Woolnough.

I celebrate the life of a dear friend, Robert Albert AO. Robert was a much-loved supporter of the ACO over several decades who, together with his wife Libby, was a member of the ACO's Medici Program, supporting Brian Nixon – our Principal Timpanist on stage today – as well as our Emerging Artist Program.

Robert was a committed, engaged and generous supporter across a range of artforms. From music to dance to theatre, and practical projects, from the development of the Stuart Piano to the restoration of the tall ship *James Craig*, Robert never failed to surprise us with his insatiable curiosity and keenly sought (and delivered) feedback.

His impact on the wider arts community was nothing short of extraordinary and he will be long remembered. The *Emperor Concerto* was a particular favourite of Robert's and I will sit with him, very much in spirit, as we dedicate these concerts to his memory.

I do hope that you enjoy our second subscription season offering for 2024 – *Beethoven's Emperor*.



Richard Evans AM
Managing Director

Join the conversation

#ACO24Season |     

@AustralianChamberOrchestra

News



Café Carlyle Residency

16–20 APRIL

New York

An ACO string quartet featuring Artistic Director Richard Tognetti, Principal Violin Satu Vänskä, violist Elizabeth Woolnough and cellist Eliza Sdraulig have been invited to perform a five-concert residency at New York's iconic Café Carlyle in April.

ACO Pier 2/3



ACO Family Day

17 MARCH

ACO Pier 2/3, Sydney

Bring the whole family along to Pier 2/3 for a day on the harbour. Enjoy a special concert experience, followed by creative play activities including the chance to try a string instrument.



ACO Up Close: Beethoven Arranged

20 APRIL

ACO Pier 2/3, Sydney

Five ACO musicians and pianist Aura Go shine a spotlight on Beethoven in miniature, including his Symphony No.2 arranged by the composer himself for piano trio.

This concert will also be performed at the Melbourne Recital Centre on 22 April.



ACO Families: How To Catch A Star

6–11 JULY

ACO Pier 2/3, Sydney

"Once there was a boy and the boy loved stars very much..."

Don't miss the return season of our enchanting ACO Families production of Oliver Jeffers' bestselling children's book, brought to life onstage by musicians of the ACO.

National Tours



For the Love of Music with *Chat 10 Looks 3*

8–12 APRIL

Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne

Annabel Crabb and Leigh Sales join Richard Tognetti and the ACO for an unmissable evening of music, laughter and revelations.



ACO Collective: The Lark Ascending

7–18 MAY

ACO Pier 2/3 & regional centres in New South Wales and Victoria

Principal Violin Helena Rathbone directs ACO Collective, an ensemble of Australia's best and brightest young musicians, in an evocative program featuring Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending*.



Mahler's Song of the Earth

12–26 MAY

National Tour

Stuart Skelton and Catherine Carby star in this extraordinary encounter with Mahler's monumental song cycle, directed by Richard Tognetti.

WELCOME

For over two decades, Wesfarmers has had the privilege of championing the ACO and supporting its ever-growing impact on audiences nationwide. The 2024 Season stands as yet another inspiring display of artistic brilliance, collaboration and unmatched virtuosity, firmly establishing the Orchestra at the very forefront of music-making and performance.

In 2002, Wesfarmers initiated its partnership with the ACO, ushering in annual performances at the Perth Concert Hall that have since become an eagerly anticipated and popular concert series amongst Perth audiences. We are thrilled to see five ACO concerts performed in Perth this year, many featuring esteemed international guests of the highest calibre, including tonight's special appearance of the highly acclaimed pianist Kristian Bezuidenhout.

This exhilarating performance will see Bezuidenhout share the stage with the talented musicians of the ACO, along with wind and brass players from the world's leading period-instrument orchestras. A longtime friend of the ACO, Bezuidenhout will direct the Orchestra from the fortepiano in a joyous celebration of one of Beethoven's most beloved and iconic works, the *Emperor Concerto*.

Wesfarmers are proud to be Presenting Partner of this national tour, in addition to Principal Partner of ACO Collective, which provides professional opportunities for the next generation of Australian classical musicians. We look forward to May when this critically acclaimed string ensemble, led by ACO Principal Violin Helena Rathbone, will embark on a thrilling tour to regional towns across New South Wales and Victoria.

We hope you enjoy this concert – a jubilant celebration of the ongoing influence of one of the greatest composers that has ever lived.



Rob Scott

Managing Director Wesfarmers Limited



Wesfarmers Arts

PRINCIPAL PARTNER: ACO COLLECTIVE

AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER
ORCHESTRA &
WESFARMERS ARTS:
BRINGING PEOPLE &
MUSIC TOGETHER



The thrilling spectacle
of Mahler's song cycle
featuring critically acclaimed
singers Stuart Skelton and
Catherine Carby.



Australian
Chamber
Orchestra

MAHLER'S SONG OF THE EARTH

DIRECTED BY RICHARD TOGNETTI

12-26 MAY

Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra.

Single tickets from \$59* | \$35* for U35s

aco.com.au

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*Transaction fee of \$8.50 applies

PROGRAM

The Australian Chamber Orchestra acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country, on whose unceded land we perform today. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Kristian Bezuidenhout Director and Fortepiano

Helena Rathbone Lead Violin

Australian Chamber Orchestra

FERDINAND RIES	Symphony No.2 in C minor, Op.80: I. Allegro ma non troppo	8
FRANZ SCHUBERT	Rosamunde, D.797: Entr'acte after Act III, interspersed with variations from Impromptu No.3 in B-flat major, D.935	12
<i>The following three works will be performed without a break:</i>		
BRITTA BYSTRÖM	A Walk to Beethoven's First Symphony (Australian Premiere)	4
LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (arr. Franz Liszt)	Symphony No.1 in C major, Op.21: II. Andante cantabile con moto (excerpt)	3
WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (cadenza by Beethoven)	Piano Concerto No.20 in D minor, K.466: III. Allegro assai	8
INTERVAL		20
BEETHOVEN	Piano Concerto No.5 in E-flat major, Op.73 "Emperor" I. Allegro II. Adagio un poco moto III. Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo	36

The concert will last approximately one hour and 45 minutes, including a 20-minute interval.

The Australian Chamber Orchestra reserves the right to alter scheduled artists and programs as necessary.



ACO concerts are regularly broadcast on ABC Classic.
Beethoven's Emperor will be broadcast on Thursday 4 April, 1pm
and available on demand for 30 days after.

MUSICIANS

The musicians on stage
for this performance.

Discover more

Learn more about our musicians, go behind the scenes and listen to playlists at:
aco.com.au



Kristian Bezuidenhout

Director & Fortepiano

Kristian plays a fortepiano after Conrad Graf by Paul McNulty, made in Divišov, Czech Republic in 2009, courtesy of Australian National University School of Music. Prepared by Carey Beebe.

In Perth Kristian plays a fortepiano after Conrad Graf by Paul McNulty, made in Divišov, Czech Republic in 2019, courtesy of WAAPA. Prepared by Paul Tunzi.



Helena Rathbone

Principal Violin

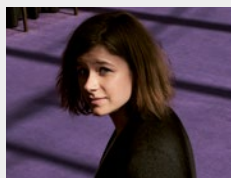
Helena plays the 1732 'ex-Dollfus' Stradivarius violin kindly on loan from anonymous Australian private benefactors. Her Chair is sponsored by Margaret Gibbs & Rodney Cameron.



Ilya Isakovich

Violin

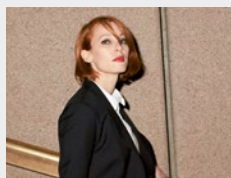
Ilya plays a 1590 Brothers Amati violin on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. His Chair is sponsored by Meg Meldrum.



Liisa Pallandi

Violin

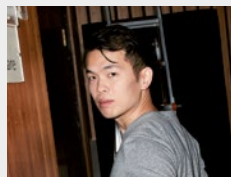
Liisa plays a 1759 Giovanni Battista Guadagnini violin on loan from the ACO. Her Chair is sponsored by the Melbourne Medical Syndicate.



Maja Savnik

Violin

Maja plays the 1714 'ex-Isolde Menges' Giuseppe Guarneri filius Andreae violin on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. Her Chair is sponsored by Alenka Tindale.



Ike See

Violin

Ike plays his own 2021 Zygmuntowicz violin. His Chair is sponsored by Ian Lansdown & Tricia Bell.



Tim Yu

Violin



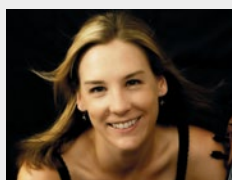
Thibaud Pavlovic-Hobba

Violin



Zoë Black #
Violin

Zoë appears courtesy of Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM).



Katherine Lukey #
Violin

Katherine appears courtesy of Opera Australia Orchestra.



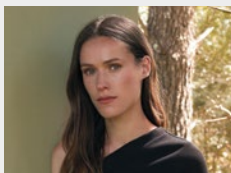
Anna McMichael #
Violin

Anna appears courtesy of Monash University.



Stefanie Farrands
Principal Viola

Stefanie plays her own 2016 viola made by Ragnar Hayn in Berlin. Her Chair is sponsored by peckvonhartel architects.



Elizabeth Woolnough
Viola

Elizabeth plays her own 1968 Parisian viola by Pierre M. Audinot. Her Chair is sponsored by Terry Campbell AO & Christine Campbell.



Karina Schmitz #
Viola



Timo-Veikko Valve
Principal Cello

Tipi plays a 1616 Brothers Amati cello on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. His Chair is sponsored by Prof Doug Jones AO & Prof Janet Walker CM.



Melissa Barnard
Cello

Melissa plays a cello by Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume made in 1846. Her Chair is sponsored by Jason & Alexandra Wenderoth.



James Munro #
Bass

James appears courtesy of Freiburger Barockorchester.

Guest Musicians



Julian Thompson
Cello

Julian plays a 1729 Giuseppe Guarneri filius Andreæ cello with elements of the instrument crafted by his son, Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù, kindly donated to the ACO by the late Peter Weiss AO. His Chair is sponsored by the Grist & Stewart Families.



Tatjana Zimre #
Oboe



Jane Gower #
Bassoon



Leanne Sullivan #
Trumpet



Melissa Farrow #
Flute

Melissa appears
courtesy of Australian
Brandenburg Orchestra.



Adam Masters #
Oboe

Adam appears
courtesy of Australian
Brandenburg Orchestra.



Sim Walters #
Bassoon



**Richard
Fomison #**
Trumpet



Mikaela Oberg #
Flute



Ernst Schlader #
Clarinet

Ernst appears courtesy of
University of Music and
Performing Arts, Vienna.



**Emmanuel
Frankenberg #**
Horn



Brian Nixon #
Principal Timpani

Brian's Chair is
sponsored by the
late Robert Albert AO
and Libby Albert.



**Ashley
Sutherland #**
Clarinet



Dorée Dixon #
Horn

“My highlight is *Mahler’s Song of the Earth*. It’s special for us to play this monumental, epic piece. We performed it years ago at Edinburgh Festival and dreamed of bringing it to Australia. I love getting lost in the spell of the fantasy; 60 minutes of magic.”

SATU VÄNSKÄ, ACO PRINCIPAL VIOLIN



“There are many highlights... playing with charismatic and intense cellist Nicolas Altstaedt as he directs Haydn and Tchaikovsky; the pure heaven that’s Beethoven’s *Emperor Concerto*; working with genre-bending guitarist Sean Shibe...”

MELISSA BARNARD, ACO CELLO



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*Transaction fee of \$8.50 applies



Gustav Klimt (1862–1918) was an Austrian symbolist painter who was the leader of the Vienna Secession movement, a group closely related to the Art Nouveau that provided opportunities for unconventional Austrian artists. He is well-known for his paintings, murals, sketches and other artworks, particularly for his 'Golden Phase' that included a characteristic usage of gold leaf.

In 1902 Klimt completed his *Beethoven Frieze*, created to celebrate the extraordinary successes of Ludwig van Beethoven and mark the 75-year anniversary of his death.

Beethoven Frieze 1902 (detail), by Gustav Klimt (1862–1918). Secession Building, Vienna.



PROGRAM IN SHORT

Your five-minute read
before lights down.

Pre-concert talks take
place 45 minutes before
the start of every concert.
See the ACO information
desk for location details.

Wollongong Town Hall

Francis Merson

Sat 9 Mar, 6.45pm

Adelaide Town Hall

Russell Torrance

Tue 12 Mar, 6.45pm

Perth Concert Hall

Francis Merson

Wed 13 Mar, 6.45pm

Melbourne Recital Centre

Francis Merson

Sat 16 Mar, 6.45pm

Mon 18 Mar, 6.45pm

Arts Centre Melbourne

Francis Merson

Sun 17 Mar 1.45pm

City Recital Hall, Sydney

Francis Merson

Tue 19 Mar, 7.15pm

Wed 20 Mar, 6.15pm

Fri 22 Mar, 6.15pm

Sat 23 Mar, 6.15pm

Sydney Opera House

Francis Merson

Sun 24 Mar, 1.15pm

Pre-concert speakers are
subject to change.

This concert brings together composers past and present who either influenced Beethoven or were shaped by his legacy. Together, they paint a vivid picture of how profoundly Beethoven inspired the way we hear, think about and create music.



Ferdinand Ries

(1784–1838)

Symphony No.2 in C minor, Op.80: I. Allegro ma non troppo

Ferdinand Ries was one of Beethoven's pupils, and later worked as his secretary and copyist. A talented pianist and conductor, Ries performed Beethoven's piano concertos, assisted with the premieres of the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, and conducted the German premiere of the Ninth Symphony. It is no surprise then, that Ries's own compositions were written in a similar vein.

With Napoleon advancing across Europe, Ries moved to London in 1813. His Second Symphony was written in early 1814, and was premiered to considerable success. The work became Ries's most successful symphony, with reviewers calling it "a work full of spirit and life". They noted "memories" of Beethoven's *Eroica* in the first movement, evident from the frenzied and dramatic string writing, the remarkably similar wind motifs, and even the distinctive horn calls. (It was Ries who famously believed the horn player had come in too early during the *Eroica*'s first rehearsal.) Ries would go on to dedicate the symphony to Beethoven.



Franz Schubert

(1797–1828)

Rosamunde, D.797: Entr'acte after Act III

*Interspersed with variations from
Impromptu No.3 in B-flat major, D.935*

Helmina von Chézy's play *Rosamunde, Fürstin von Zypern* (Rosamunde, Princess of Cyprus) follows the story of Rosamunde, a princess raised incognito as a shepherdess, in her attempts to reclaim her throne, as well as the counter attempts to thwart her ascent. Today, the play is best remembered for Franz Schubert's incidental music. The music and play premiered in 1823 at Vienna's Theater an der Wien. The venue was fitting for Schubert – it was where many works by Beethoven had premiered. Schubert admired Beethoven deeply, and strove to emulate his musical achievements. When Beethoven died in 1827, Schubert was pallbearer at his funeral, devoted to the very end.

The score of *Rosamunde* contains some of Schubert's most exquisite orchestral music, with perhaps the most famous number being the Entr'acte after Act III, a theme with variations in major and minor keys. Schubert re-used the opening theme in at least two other works, including the solo piano Impromptu in B-flat major, also a theme with variations that follows Beethoven's model. In these performances we present Schubert's Entr'acte interspersed with variations from the Impromptu, so as to delight in the many possibilities Schubert had envisaged for his enduring melody.



Britta Byström

(1977–)

A Walk to Beethoven's First Symphony

Australian Premiere

Swedish composer Britta Byström has composed around 20 pieces on some variation of “walk” since 2015. Taking inspiration from Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*, these walks are not from picture to picture, but musical conversations with some of the greatest classical composers, including Brahms, Mozart and Britten, functioning as “a journey to the next piece in the program.”

A Walk to Beethoven's First Symphony was composed during the 2020 lockdowns, a period of musical silence that must have felt as uncertain and threatening to composers as the concept of deafness would have to Beethoven himself. Byström starts her walk with the same uncertain pizzicatos that open Beethoven’s First Symphony, continuing her journey with material inspired by the symphony’s own “walking” movement, the Andante. The music eventually dies away as if “passing by you like a marching orchestra.”



Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770–1827)

Symphony No.1 in C major, Op.21:

II. Andante cantabile con moto (excerpt)

Arranged for solo piano by Franz Liszt

Britta Byström’s *Walk* leads us to Beethoven’s own First Symphony, presented here in Franz Liszt’s transcription for solo piano. Liszt made transcriptions of Beethoven’s complete symphonies, which in turn helped to popularise them across Europe. For Liszt, the symphonies were akin to the genius of Michelangelo or Shakespeare: “Today his symphonies are universally regarded as masterpieces. For anyone with a serious desire for knowledge or the wish to create, there is no meditation upon them nor study of them too profound.”



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(1756–1791)

Piano Concerto No.20 in D minor, K.466: III. Allegro assai (with cadenza by Ludwig van Beethoven)

Beethoven studied composition with Joseph Haydn, but if truth be told, it is the spirit of Mozart that had the most profound effect on him. The impact of Mozart's chamber and symphonic music is ever present in Beethoven's works, but the titanic Piano Concerto No.20 in D minor deserves a special mention as a precursor to Beethoven's own massive concertos. Mozart's 20th concerto is a work of unique fire and intensity, being one of only two concertos he wrote in a minor key. Mozart clearly disliked sorrowful endings, and in the concerto's rondo Finale, he upends the *Sturm und Drang* turbulence only at the very end, finishing in sunny D major. The concerto was a favourite of 19th-century audiences, and Beethoven admired the concerto so much that he composed cadenzas for his own performances.

Ludwig van Beethoven

Piano Concerto No.5 in E-flat major, Op.73 "Emperor"

It is well known that Beethoven's life and career intersected with major historical events initiated by Napoleon Bonaparte, who crowned himself emperor in 1804 and whose 1805 and 1809 marches on Vienna sent many of Beethoven's friends and colleagues fleeing. Beethoven's own response to these events would have a profound effect on his own destiny as a composer.

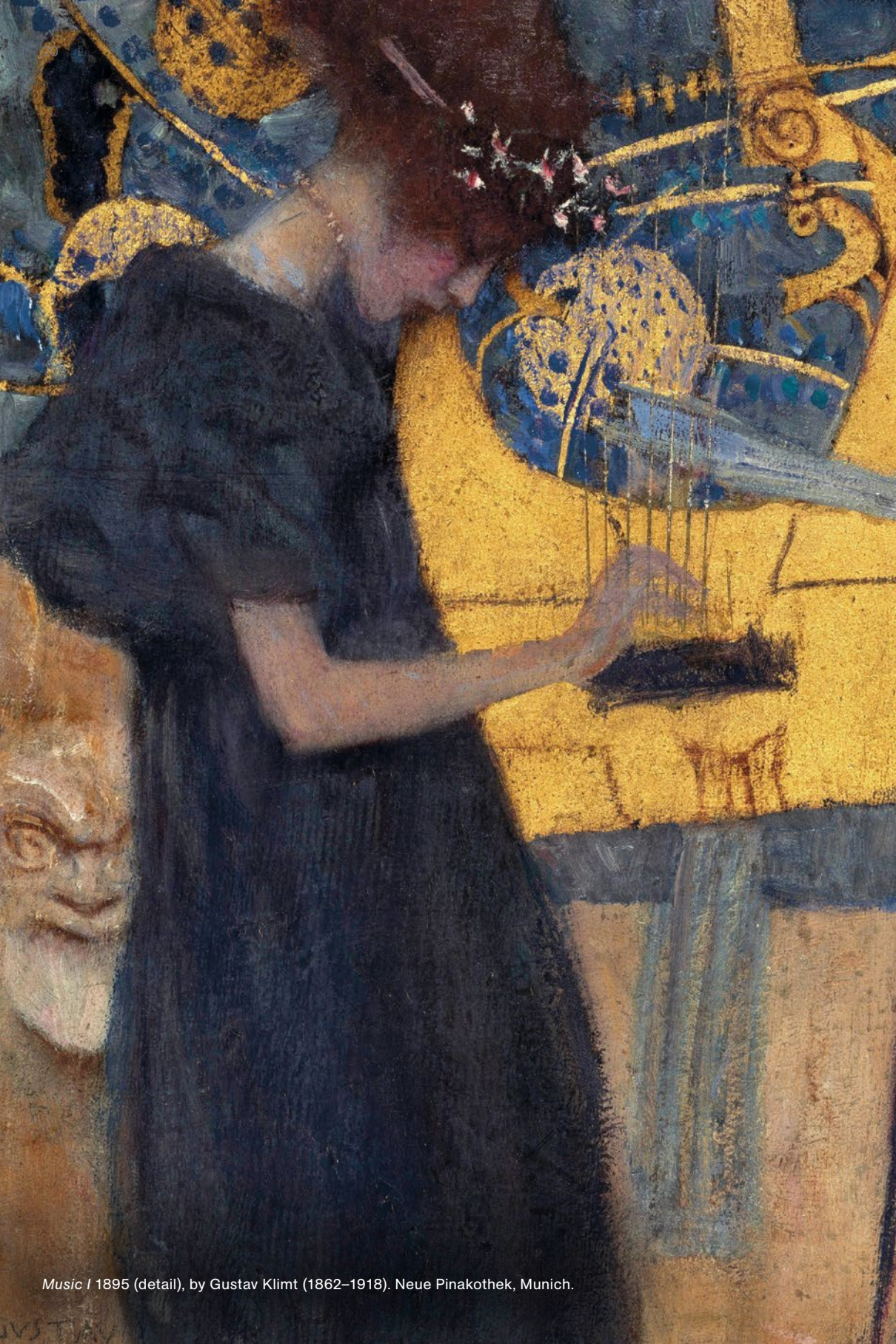
In 1808, Beethoven received an offer from Napoleon's brother, Jérôme Bonaparte, for a lucrative position as Kapellmeister at the court in Kassel. A counteroffer came from Beethoven's supporters Archduke Rudolph and Princes Lobkowitz and Kinsky, who collectively pledged a salary to Beethoven on the condition that he remain and work in Vienna "in the hereditary lands of his Austrian-Imperial Majesty" (Emperor Franz I of Austria). Beethoven accepted the counteroffer, and remained in Vienna for the rest of his life.

Beethoven composed his Fifth Piano Concerto under this newfound salary, and dedicated the work to Archduke Rudolph. While history has come to call it the "Emperor" Concerto, in truth it has no connection with any emperor, king or ruler. Napoleon was on Beethoven's mind during these years, but the wars brought "nothing but drums, cannons, men, misery of all sorts". He had already struck Napoleon's name off the title page of the *Eroica* five years earlier, and he had no interest in glorifying any emperors. Instead,

the militaristic tone of the concerto represents a “generalised human struggle”, employing the humanistic key of E-flat major (as in Mozart’s masonic pieces), and its heroic gestures symbolising “a nobility of character required to prevail”.

However one interprets the concerto’s title, what *is* clear is the imperial splendour abundant in every measure of Beethoven’s score, right from the concerto’s grand opening chords that each give way to torrents of piano flourishes. This was unusual for a piano concerto at the time, as they usually featured a lengthy orchestral introduction, but Beethoven’s innovative approach makes the piano the hero right from the get go. The orchestra then introduces the opening movement’s themes with militaristic, blunt force, before the piano re-enters in a surprisingly delicate manner. Juxtaposed with the majesty of the orchestral writing, the piano persists with a light and noble touch, finally duelling with the orchestra with tremendous power in the movement’s development. Beethoven departs from the norm once again by notating the entire cadenza himself, and the movement ends in triumph.

The Adagio that follows is both idyllic and simple, whilst still feeling as though it’s been touched by the hand of a giant. After a hymn-like orchestral introduction, the piano enters with gentle, cascading triplets that give way to one of Beethoven’s most beautiful piano melodies. It is so beautiful that Beethoven repeats this sequence in a new key, before returning to the opening hymn accompanied by calm arpeggiations from the piano. The Adagio transitions directly into the vigorous Rondo finale, with joyful dotted rhythms feeling like premonitions of the triumphant Seventh Symphony. Each virtuosic episode from the piano leads the listener to the conclusion that the true emperor here is not any one person, but the piano itself.



Music I 1895 (detail), by Gustav Klimt (1862–1918). Neue Pinakothek, Munich.



A SKYFUL OF BEETHOVENS

Beethoven is perhaps best known for his “heroic” style, which reflects the wars of his time, but his work has many modes from improvisatory explorations to Romantic introspection.

Written by Nicholas Mathew

The British-born writer and pianist Nicholas Mathew is Professor of Music and the Goldman Distinguished Professor in the Humanities at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *Political Beethoven*, *The Invention of Beethoven and Rossini* and *The Haydn Economy*.



Ludwig van Beethoven on a walk c.1901, by Julius Schmid (1854–1935).
Found in the collection of Vienna Museum.

It is one of the most recognisable sounds in classical music: Beethoven in his exhortative mood – the Beethoven of grand public utterances, of majestic themes festooned with brass and drums. You hear it in the Piano Concerto No.5, the ‘Emperor’ as soon as the orchestra enters: an exalted march tune, punctuated with urgent martial rhythms. The French music critic and Nobel laureate Romain Rolland christened this distinctive sound Beethoven’s “heroic style”. For Rolland, the style was heroic not only because of its tone but because of its catalogue of musical and historical conquests. Think how many hours of music have echoed and emulated it ever since the early 19th century – from Mendelssohn’s lofty orchestral homilies to the wild hallucinations of Berlioz, from Brahms’s earnest symphonic prose to the eccentric immensities of Mahler.

When composers respond to Beethoven – the premise of the new commission by Britta Byström on this program – they restage an old musical reckoning. The German music historian Carl Dahlhaus was only one of many to marvel at the almost oppressive ubiquity of Beethoven in the story of 19th-century symphonic music: each successive generation, he concluded, responded as much to Beethoven directly as to any more proximate predecessor or contemporary. This history didn’t move in a straight line, with Beethoven as its vaunted yet distant origin, but in concentric orbits – a musical solar system with Beethoven gleaming at its centre. No wonder we still recognise his voice.

But where did that voice come from? The answer lies in plain view – concealed, perhaps, only by its familiarity. This was the music of wartime. That’s the origin of those tattoos, fanfares, and marches – not to mention the drums and brass, the battery of winds that joins the forces of the Australian Chamber Orchestra on this program. It is barely an overstatement to say that Beethoven was as much a wartime composer as Wilfred Owen or Siegfried Sassoon were wartime poets.

The greater part of Beethoven’s career, and more or less his entire artistic reputation, were built under the conditions of total war, with its drastic social upheavals and emerging habits of popular mobilisation and public expression. You can hear it, too. Beethoven was given to calling himself a *Tondichter* or “tone poet” rather than a mere musician – a public figure with a more pressing charge than simply to entertain; somebody with vital things to say. Even in a medium not celebrated for the precision of its meaning, there is no doubt that many of Beethoven’s best-known heroic works consist of direct musical addresses to the clamorous publics of the Napoleonic era. His was a musical rhetoric forged in cannon fire.



In the Battle of Aspern-Essling, 1809, Napoleon attempted a forced crossing of the Danube near Vienna, but the French and their allies were driven back by the Austrians. Artist unknown.

To say so is not to indulge the more outlandish fantasies of Beethoven's later interpreters. Many works of music criticism in the excitable Wagnerian vein have sought to elaborate mystical affinities between Beethoven's music and some kind of ineffable Napoleonic spirit: Beethoven was "as great in his own province as was Napoleon in his, each being an exponent of a new order of things", intoned George Alexander Fischer. Beethoven was indeed, at one time, an admirer of Napoleon. And yet for him the Napoleonic Wars meant something at once more ordinary and more catastrophic than the distant historical symbol that Napoleon became.

In 1809, the year that Beethoven completed the *Emperor*, Napoleon's *Grande Armée* occupied Vienna for the second time. Beethoven had lately moved to an apartment overlooking the city's glacis – its historic defensive ring of open meadowland – and the cannonballs of advancing French troops were liable to break his windows. During the ferocious fighting of that spring, Beethoven hid in the cellar of his brother, pillows clutched protectively to his ears. By July, he lamented the "drums, cannons, men, misery of all sorts" that surrounded him. So much for the ethereal realm of the Napoleonic spirit: this cannon fire was as real as you can get.

Given the combustible political climate, it is hardly surprising that many musical performances took on the feverish intensity of political rallies.

The public musical events that Beethoven participated in during these years were the grandest of his career. Given the combustible political climate, it is hardly surprising that many musical performances took on the feverish intensity of political rallies. Beethoven's marathon concert of December 1808 paraded his contributions to all major genres: an operatic *scena* in Italian, the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, the Fourth Piano Concerto, movements from the Mass in C, a solo piano improvisation – and lastly the *Choral Fantasy*, which brought together all the evening's performers by way of a finale. This climactic choral piece – an ecstatic paean to the potent magic of music – whipped up a Viennese musical public that had, only months before, been transformed by compulsory military conscription: war was soon to touch the personal lives of nearly everyone in Vienna. This is how newly cohesive publics are made.

During this colossal concert, Beethoven, as was usual, presided at the piano – a kind of heroic bard, directing the emotions of a febrile wartime public from the keyboard. And more than one of the new compositions on the program self-consciously staged a process – one of the signature musical moves of the heroic style – in which the ostentatiously inchoate inner thoughts of the artist gradually congeal into rapturous collective expression. The Fourth Piano Concerto starts with the pianist almost tentatively experimenting with half-formed musical ideas, which are eventually shaped into coherence by the orchestra. And the *Choral Fantasy* begins with a still more extravagant extemporised piano solo – Beethoven wrote down a version of his live 1808 improvisation only several months later – which dramatically coalesces into the anthemic melody of the chorus. The *Emperor* – a work that followed hard on the heels of these two – begins with a maximally assertive version of this formal process: out of the opening tutti chord, the pianist erupts in a series of improvisatory effusions, which almost seem to call forth the orchestra's grand march. According

to a report in the period's leading German music newspaper, the audience at the earliest 1811 performance reached "such a state of enthusiasm that it could hardly content itself with the ordinary expressions of recognition and enjoyment".

By this time, however, things had changed dramatically in Beethoven's professional life. The improvising protagonist could no longer be the composer himself. Beethoven's hearing loss had worsened to the point where public performances were no longer viable. He was never again to appear before a large public as a piano soloist. In 1811, it was the young keyboardist Friedrich Schneider who premiered the *Emperor* in Leipzig. A year later, Beethoven's talented acolyte, Carl Czerny, gave the first Viennese performance.

The enforced end of Beethoven's career as a pianist-improviser decisively reordered his artistic future. He embarked on a concerted project of writing down the repertoire of free preludes, virtuosic piano licks and extended improvisations that, for years previously, he had carried around in his hands and brain. From now on, others would have to re-enact his improvisatory frenzies. In 1809, as he completed his last piano concerto, Beethoven also set down on paper several cadenzas for his earlier concertos, as well as those by Mozart that he had performed most frequently throughout his career – including the D minor one that features on this program.

The project of capturing – for his contemporaries and for posterity – the fleeting effusions of piano improvisation had a deeper artistic significance. The paradox of the written-down improvisation captures something crucial to Beethoven's mature aesthetic. He had long warned his public that his music was unique in being infused with the spontaneity and capriciousness

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of improvisation: this was the meaning of the epithet *quasi una fantasia* – “like a fantasy” or “almost an improvisation” – that, nearly a decade earlier, he had attached to his Piano Sonatas Op.27, the best known of which remains the mysterious and wild Moonlight Sonata. *Quasi una fantasia*: Beethoven thus intimated that, even in fully worked-out compositions, he aspired to the impulsiveness, formal freedom and expressive immediacy of his renowned piano improvisations.

His contemporary admirers were quick to take the hint. Soon, to listen to a work by Beethoven – even a plainly premeditated orchestral composition involving dozens of performers – was to hear the unbidden outpourings of a single musical intelligence. By 1815, the Leipzig philosopher Amadeus Wendt was moved to write that, in Beethoven’s hands, all music – no matter what the genre or how numerous the performers – becomes a free fantasy.

Considering the centrality of piano improvisation to Beethoven’s mature aesthetic, the many later adaptations of Beethoven’s orchestral music to the scale of a solo pianist deserve special attention – not least those by one-time Czerny student Franz Liszt, one of whose transcriptions appears on this program. Like Beethoven, Liszt was an acclaimed improviser – the towering celebrity recitalist of the mid 19th century. Rather than regard Liszt’s treatment of Beethoven’s orchestral music as a mere shrinking of scale, then – or, worse, as the daubing of frivolous mid-century

Engraving of *Beethoven chez Mozart* by Paul Allais from a painting by H. Merle; engraved by Alfred Chardon, Paris; published by Bulla frères, Paris, and L.T. Neumann, Vienna, 1858.

piano virtuosity all over Beethoven's otherwise serious symphonic architecture – we might well consider such later transcriptions as a sort of homecoming: a return of the Beethovenian aesthetic to the scene of the piano keyboard, whence it had come. As Wendt had realised, whether hearing Friedrich Schneider, Carl Czerny, the musicians of the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig or even Franz Liszt, we are supposed to be face to face with Beethoven the improviser.

The spellbinding Adagio of the *Emperor*, more even than the declarative opening Allegro, reminds us that Beethoven lived during the first great era of public self-disclosure – a portent of our own unrelentingly confessional age, perhaps. The late 18th and early 19th centuries witnessed an avalanche of published diaries and travel journals, intimate bourgeois domestic dramas, passionate Gothic heroines and voyeuristic novels of letters, and the faddish teenage angst of books such as Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, a literary hit much admired by Beethoven. As a young pianist, Beethoven was frequently asked to improvise by his patrons, and, according to more than one contemporary account, would haughtily refuse to roll out his noblest musical thoughts on demand, as if by the yard. But this was actually all part of an intricate social choreography. His admirers would affect to leave the room then conceal themselves behind a half-open door or curtain – whereupon Beethoven would improvise as if entirely alone, his patrons now privy to something rarer still: a private fever of musical inspiration.

Something of this eavesdropping aesthetic infuses the Adagio. The orchestra begins with a hushed chorale-like melody in a key exotically distant from that of the opening Allegro. The muted strings already create the uncanny timbral impression of music heard from a distance, but this is redoubled by the way in which the piano enters. Rather than provide the pianist with a clear or expectant introduction, the orchestra simply rounds out its melody – and the piano begins a long-breathed phrase, almost oblivious to what has preceded it, high up in the bell-like register of the keyboard. The phrase slowly winds downwards over a simple rippling accompaniment like an exploratory spun-out improvisation, repeatedly extending farther than one might expect. We are the fortunate eavesdroppers. Brief orchestral gestures interject, but do not obviously join in. It is even some time before the piano states the orchestra's opening chorale tune, though it is ostensibly the main theme. When the tune does arrive, the pianist does not approach it with any sense of occasion, but almost stumbles across it in the course of the unspooling improvisation.

The Adagio was in fact something of a departure for Beethoven – an early sign of yet another profound change in his artistic outlook.

The design of the early 19th-century Viennese piano – the sort of instrument that Kristian Bezuidenhout uses on this program – helps to emphasise these effects. The balance between the full orchestra and the wood-framed piano, with its rapid decay and Romantically diffuse resonance, means that the soloist tends to emerge from and withdraw behind the orchestra's shadowy sonic curtain. And just as the strings apply their mutes, so the piano has the option of a true *una corda* pedal, which causes the entire action to shift so that, as the Italian name suggests, the hammers strike only one of the two or three strings per note (Czerny reports that Beethoven almost always intended the use of this pedal in passages marked *pianissimo*). Unlike the softer, less percussive voice produced by the modern shift pedal, the *una corda* creates an insubstantial, veiled sound – a sound that surely contributes to the impression of music emanating through an aural keyhole.

In the *Emperor*, Beethoven reprises a formal device found in several earlier heroic works (mostly famously, the Fifth Symphony): the penultimate movement leads directly to the finale, without a pause. By way of a transition, and against a hovering harmonic background, the pianist must once again perform the theatre of real-time improvisatory choice, gingerly testing out fragments of the closing rondo before plunging headlong into the fully formed tune. It is one of those unmistakable heroic-style conclusions, its 6/8 metre allowing for a perpetual oscillation between the feel of a march (in 2) and a dance (in 3): even the main melody is constructed as a series of alternations between a declarative fanfare and an elegantly tripping reply.

Yet, even after all the brass and drums, all the Napoleonic musical celebrations, it's hard to shake off the memory of that unusually shadowed and lyrical Adagio. In its extreme public intimacy, the Adagio was in fact something of a departure for Beethoven – an early sign of yet another profound change in his artistic outlook dating from the year 1809.

From the moment of the second French occupation of Vienna, Beethoven – living under newly straitened circumstances and disillusioned with the promise of the post-revolutionary age – noticeably turned away from the bold outward expressions of his heroic style towards a more intimate and songlike register. A whole series of compositions, from the “Harp” quartet and the “Archduke” Trio to his seminal 1816 song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte*, reveal a side of Beethoven that the Napoleonic sound and fury of his heroic music had often drowned out: a Beethoven who sings more than he marches, who dwells in lyrical contemplation more than he proclaims and exhorts.

The heroic tone was to sustain an entire later tradition of orchestral music – the roiling symphonic register that would be cultivated in the second quarter of the 19th century by a new generation of admired composer-pianists: Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Robert Schumann, or Louise Farrenc. Yet it is worth recalling that for others, such as Franz Schubert, who was barely 15 years old when Czerny premiered the *Emperor* in his native city of Vienna, Beethoven’s newly lyrical turn represented the master’s latest word. The works by Schubert on this program, composed when Waterloo was already receding into history, are barely redolent of the heroic style at all – yet Schubert was a keen emulator of Beethoven, and he would have had every reason to consider his own lyrical compositions as distinctly Beethovenian in their own way.

Here is something else that Beethoven’s last piano concerto has to teach us, with its profound contrasts, its swerves between inner and outer worlds, its wild virtuosity, its delicate lyricism, and its tentative improvisations. Even though, as Dahlhaus believed, much 19th-century concert music has orbited around Beethoven, it turns out that there is a whole skyful of Beethovens to choose from. Yes, the heroic style is still the most recognisable Beethovenian voice – if only because, as in the opening bars of the *Emperor*, it is the one that grabs us by the lapels and demands our attention. But if we listen carefully at the door, we may overhear more voices than we were expecting.



Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I 1907 (detail), by Gustav Klimt (1862–1918). Neue Gallery, New York.



34



ECHOES THROUGH TIME

Kristian Bezuidenhout – who returns to the Australian Chamber Orchestra to guest direct the ensemble for the first time – says he can find an expressiveness and richness in early pianos that he can't find on contemporary instruments.

Written by Ellena Savage

Ellena Savage is the author of the VPLA shortlisted essay collection *Blueberries*. She lives in Athens.

When Kristian Bezuidenhout watched Miloš Forman's 1984 film *Amadeus* as a child, he says he became "completely obsessed with Mozart."

"It's just a magnificent film," Bezuidenhout tells me over the phone. He is just coming out of a rehearsal in Amsterdam and I'm at my flat in Athens. "It instilled in me a love for Mozart's music that never left me. Any time I hear any of those excerpts from that film, they bring back such strong feelings, memories and emotions."

I agree with Bezuidenhout: *Amadeus* is one of the greatest films to have been made about the stakes and dramas of the artistic life, though it strikes me a somewhat eccentric film for a small child to fixate on. It runs at three hours and depicts Mozart as a randy – if supremely talented – doofus, whose dour, less talented nemesis Salieri is driven to murderous extremes by his envy.

The film understands the supreme injustice of being stifled by the facts of our lives: by our personalities, our talents and our time periods. Forman's Mozart has the personality of a mall rat and the talent of a god, and Salieri can't stand it. I can see what an ambitious young music student might glean from the film, however: that making art well is an honour, and that artistic envy can – and ought to – be tamed by the gift of appreciating great works of art.

Though Bezuidenhout might be living in the wrong timeline – 18th-century Vienna might have been better suited to the fortepiano virtuoso – the present era is also not bad. When he moved as an eight-year-old from South Africa to the Gold Coast with his family, the music education Bezuidenhout received was world class. By the time he was a young man determined to be involved in the early music world, which meant moving to New York to learn from people such as John Eliot Gardiner at Eastham – "to see how they treat the material and the instruments, and to hear them live" – he found that he and other Australian students like him

Great art, this narrative tells us, arises from the conflicting urges of freedom and constraint, expression and perfection.

“There was, paradoxically, a level of musical freedom, richness and directness of expression I could get on fortepiano I could not achieve on the modern piano.”

“were very, very well prepared. Leaving high school and going to university as an Australian music student, one felt in good hands. My impression of classical music-making at school in Australia was one of it being taken deeply seriously.”

Bezuidenhout says he struggled with elements of his early training. “It was not easy for me,” he says. “I wasn’t a gifted sight-reader and I had a lot of technical hurdles.” While I suspect Bezuidenhout’s version of “not easy” is slightly different from my own – he’s an Amadeus, I a Salieri – I find myself excited by the narrative prospect of a young punk bucking against the dictates of his form and transforming himself nonetheless into a master. Great art, this narrative tells us, arises from the conflicting urges of freedom and constraint, expression and perfection.

I ask Bezuidenhout if his recognition of those early technical challenges might have something to do with the interest he took in early pianos later in his education – instruments with an expressive capacity exceeded only by the difficulty in mastering them. Bezuidenhout says his first encounters with early piano and period instruments were “unbelievably disheartening, because the level of technical retraining you have to do to harness the qualities of the instrument, they’re just enormous”. But he was determined to carry on. “I could see there was, paradoxically, a level of musical freedom, richness and directness of expression I could get on fortepiano I could not achieve on the modern piano.”

If Mozart was Bezuidenhout’s first love, Beethoven occupies a slightly more complicated place. “Mozart was a mystery to me,” says Bezuidenhout. “And that’s why I was drawn to his music. There are such deep layers of hidden emotion, and depth which are so touching and at times heartbreaking. Beethoven’s slightly more blockbuster career sometimes overshadows Mozart’s legacy.”

We discuss the imprint of what is remembered of Beethoven's large personality on his work. "Lots of the mercurial character that we see in Beethoven is present in his music," he says. "Many pieces are designed to shock and reverberate, and to dash all hopes and expectations." In part, this drama is what makes Beethoven so attractive to audiences. "It's fun to play, and it requires a huge amount of physical audacity to make it work," says Bezuidenhout. "It's so much of an event to play his music and to be involved in it."

Bezuidenhout is interested less in the grandiose Beethoven of lore and more in the wider context of Beethoven's work and influence. The *Beethoven's Emperor* program is inspired by the idea of tracing Beethoven's sound world, to shine a light on composers in the generation right around Beethoven's time. "What was the anxiety of influence like for them? What were they trying to achieve as symphonists? What lit a fire in their imagination?"

The program is built around Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto*, which is from the middle period of Beethoven's compositional career. "You see a slightly more Apollonian Beethoven emerging, one who is not quite so furiously interested in breaking the barriers down between what's possible and what's expected in the late 18th century and early 19th." Music by Ries and Schubert opens the program, illuminating some more of the possibilities and constraints of the period. In a palate-cleansing twist, this sound world is followed by the Australian premiere of Swedish composer Britta Byström's 2020 composition, *A Walk to Beethoven's*

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Kristian Bezuidenhout.
Photo by Marco
Borggreve

First Symphony. This piece, says Bezuidenhout, is “very refined and very delicate, the whole colour of the thing is very moody and sensuous and very perfumed. I think it’s so great, it ties in well with the Schubert, too.”

Bezuidenhout will direct the program from the fortepiano. “Part of what makes a project like this so exciting is working out exactly what one does during the other parts of the program,” he says. “It’s a very lexical situation that allows us to imagine what it might have been like to direct a concerto in the 18th century. It’s a real play-direct program in that sense.”

When I say that it sounds like a gift of a gig, he agrees. “When I work with ACO, the feeling is, how is the level so astonishingly high? You do something like this and you think this is the best thing you’ve ever done.”

KRISTIAN BEZUIDENHOUT



Director & Fortepiano

Kristian Bezuidenhout is one of today's most notable and exciting keyboard artists, equally at home on the fortepiano, harpsichord and modern piano.

Kristian is Artistic Director of the Freiburger Barockorchester and Principal Guest Director with the English Concert. He is a regular guest with leading ensembles including Les Arts Florissants, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest, Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Leipzig Gewandhausorchester; and has guest-directed (from the keyboard) the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, Tafelmusik, Collegium Vocale, Juilliard 415, Kammerakademie Potsdam and Dunedin Consort (*St Matthew Passion*).

He has performed with celebrated artists including John Eliot Gardiner, Philippe Herreweghe, Frans Brüggen, Trevor Pinnock, Giovanni Antonini, Jean-Guihen Queyras, Isabelle Faust, Alina Ibragimova, Carolyn Sampson, Anne Sofie von Otter, Mark Padmore and Matthias Goerne.

This season sees Kristian perform with a host of ensembles such as Orchestre National de Belgique, La Scintilla, Tafelmusik Baroque, Camerata Salzburg and Australian Chamber Orchestra. He performs a number of recitals with renowned artists including Isabelle Faust and Kristin von der Goltz, with whom

he tours Japan, and he visits many European countries with Jean-Guihen Queyras, Antoine Tamestit, Rachel Podger, Amandine Beyer, Marco Ceccato and Chiaroscuro Quartet.

Kristian's rich and award-winning discography on Harmonia Mundi includes the complete solo keyboard music of Mozart. Recent releases include *Winterreise* with Mark Padmore, Bach sonatas for violin and harpsichord with Isabelle Faust, Haydn piano sonatas and the complete Beethoven Concerti with Freiburger Barockorchester.

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