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**3 CD-SET**

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN**  
The Complete Piano Concertos

Hannes Minnaar  
Jan Willem de Vriend  
**THE NETHERLANDS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**



**SUPER AUDIO CD**

RECORDED - Mastered by SACD Plantenburg No. 1 SAC Audio - 00

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN**

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orkest van het oosten

## CD1

### LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

#### Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat Major, Op. 19

|                          |       |
|--------------------------|-------|
| [1] Allegro con brio     | 14:23 |
| [2] Adagio               | 7:29  |
| [3] Rondo: Allegro molto | 6:11  |

#### Piano Concerto No. 1 in C Major, Op. 15

|                      |       |
|----------------------|-------|
| [4] Allegro con brio | 17:49 |
| [5] Largo            | 10:13 |
| [6] Rondo: Allegro   | 8:50  |

total time 64:59

## CD2

### LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

#### Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Minor, Op. 37

|                      |       |
|----------------------|-------|
| [1] Allegro con brio | 17:10 |
| [2] Largo            | 7:47  |
| [3] Rondo: Allegro   | 9:40  |

total time 34:40

### CD3

#### LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

##### Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58

[1] Allegro moderato

17:23

[2] Andante con moto

4:52

[3] Rondo: Vivace

10:16

##### Piano Concerto No. 5 in E flat Major, Op. 73 ('Emperor')

[4] Allegro

20:04

[5] Adagio un poco moto

7:12

[6] Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

10:28

total time 70:19

(All cadenzas by Ludwig van Beethoven)

Beethoven wrote five concertos for piano and orchestra. It doesn't sound like much; his near-contemporary Mozart composed 27. But although it may be a bit smaller, Beethoven's contribution is a true monument in the history of music. He used the first two concertos to move away from his example, Mozart (whose last piano concerto was from 1791, while Beethoven completed his first in 1795); in *Concerto No. 3* Beethoven carved out new dimensions for the genre's dramatic possibilities. And *Concertos nos 4 and 5* have proved to be unmatched in their genre: the radiant *Concerto No. 4* is worshipped by experts and aficionados alike, while No. 5 is the all-time favourite of the public at large. Almost 25 years passed between Beethoven's first sketches for a piano concerto and the double line he drew under his last one. His piano concertos thus show a development covering more than half of the composer's life.

## CD 1

### Piano Concerto No. 2

Before we listen to the young Dutch pianist Hannes Minnaar play Beethoven's first two piano concertos, it is perhaps interesting to see how another young pianist may have played them once, long ago – a German who lived in Vienna, a headstrong and temperamental genius. His name? Ludwig van Beethoven. His pupil, the famous composer of etudes and sensitive observer Carl Czerny, once described his playing: "[...] characterised by passionate strength, alternated with all the charm of a smooth *cantabile*. The expressiveness is often intensified to extremes, particularly when the music tends towards humour [...] Passages become extremely daring by use of the pedal [...] His playing does not possess that clean and brilliant elegance of certain other pianists. On the other hand, it was spirited, grand and, especially in the *adagio*, filled with emotion and romanticism."

Strength. Smoothness. Humour. Focus on these aspects and you will come close to Beethoven. Minnaar, De Vriend and The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra play the concertos in reverse order: first 2, then 1. A bit odd. Or isn't it? Artistically, it is highly defensible: introduced as it were by the more balanced, more modest *Piano Concerto No. 2*, *No. 1* radiates all the more festiveness (trumpets, clarinets and timpani have come to join the orchestra). Perhaps the lovely, gentle, almost feminine B flat major of *Concerto No. 2* would not have been able to hold its own after the male and martial C major. But there is something else.

*Piano Concerto No. 2* actually came first. It was composed earlier, at least in its initial version. Beethoven never numbered his concertos; the confusion arose because he published the Concerto in C major before the one in B flat major, in March and December 1801. It was a deliberate choice: he found the concerto in C major better, more ambitious, more brilliant, more impressive, better suited to his debut as a composer of piano concertos.

Or it may be that he had somewhat less confidence in *Piano Concerto No. 2*. A great deal of trial and error had gone into its composition. Apart from a capably made but impersonal piano concerto in E flat major, composed when he was fourteen, it was his first real attempt in the genre of piano concertos. He started on it before 1790, perhaps even in 1788. He was just a boy of seventeen, living in the provincial town of Bonn, performing for the local citizenry. When, in 1792, he moved to Vienna – then the epicentre of music – for his career, he had the first version of the concerto in his trunk. He rewrote it twice between 1793 and 1795. Perhaps Beethoven even premiered it in 1795, although today it is thought that he played his *Piano Concerto No. 1* for this great Vienna debut. But if it was *No. 2*, then the audience will have heard something charming that still breathed the spirit of Haydn and Mozart, but still most definitely a piece by Ludwig van Beethoven. (Musicologists sometimes speak of its relationship to Mozart's *Piano Concerto K 595*, also in B flat major, although that was not composed until Beethoven had been working for some time.)

Whether it was premiered or not, Beethoven was still not satisfied. Three years later he once again altered it substantially. Particularly in the opera-like *Adagio*, while the original *Rondo* had even disappeared completely: in its place was one with mischievous syncopation and halfway through a charming *all'ungarese*, the *rondo* that we now know, music as it could only occur to Beethoven. Beethoven played this version in Prague in 1798. It was a chance performance; the audience was so enthusiastic after he had played his *concerto in C major* that he hastened to put together a new score of the one in B flat major. There was no time to write out the solo part, the conductor simply had to do without it and Beethoven did a lot of improvising; only the most important transitional passages were written out... By then it was three years later, thirteen years after its first conception when Beethoven, who was still frantically correcting the solo part just before the curtain went up, could finally regard his *Piano Concerto No. 2* as complete and sent it to his publisher. He accompanied it by the words "I do not consider this one of my best compositions"... What to say to that?

It is interesting, though. In *Concerto No. 2* you hear more or less the earliest Beethoven; a lot of its notes come straight from Bonn. And you hear a fairly late Beethoven. The *Cadenza* in the first movement is from 1809. The composer even seems to run ahead of himself; it is not hard to liken the piece to the *Hammerklavier Sonata* from 1819, as we can hear in the stirring *Fugato* at the beginning. Shortly before the end there is a very bold pause, you almost think that the music has run into a dead end... until a scale brings us back to reality and to the orchestra. The late Beethoven enjoyed taking such risks. 1788-1809:

the period leading up to *Piano Concerto No. 2* lasted more than 20 years. Which is in fact the entire period during which Beethoven wrote piano concertos.

### **Piano Concerto No. 1**

Beethoven had a much easier time producing this piece. The sources report 1795 as the year in which it was composed, with corrections to 1800. It is not known for certain when it premiered. It may have been very soon after completion of the first version, on 29 March 1795 in the Hofburg in Vienna (if not, then No. 2 was performed at the time). Beethoven played, Haydn conducted. *Toute Vienne* was there – Haydn was a celebrity, a crowd pleaser, and people wanted to see his self-willed pupil, the guy from Bonn with his black, black eyes and hair – often unkempt – in person. It must have been a performance on the razor's edge. The score was not finished until the very last minute: four copyists had to be found to write out the parts from the not-yet-dry manuscript and give them straight to the musicians. But not to Beethoven, because as usual, he played from memory, or even improvised a bit.

The concert was a big success. "The famous Mr. Ludwig van Beethoven [won] the sincere approval of the audience", wrote the *Wiener Zeitung* three days later. Perhaps this was why Beethoven put this same concerto back on the music stands for an important occasion five years later, in the version we know today. It was April 2nd 1800, during his first concert for his own benefit, once again in the Hofburg in Vienna. "Tickets are available at the address of Mr. Van

Beethoven, Tiefer Graben 241, third floor, and from the theatre's ticket seller", the Viennese newspaper announced a few days before the event, at which the *Symphony No. 1* would also be performed. One may well hope that the real fans had heard the performance five years earlier, because this time it did not turn out so well. The orchestra played poorly under a conductor who was not in the mood. "They paid no attention whatsoever to the soloist. As a result, the accompaniment showed absolutely no fine tuning, and did not respond at all to [his] musical feelings."

*Piano Concerto No. 1* is Beethoven through and through. You hear it straightaway at the beginning. This is the characteristic master who makes everything out of nothing. Because what exactly does the first theme consist of? An octave leap, later filled in with a scale. And then, in reply, another octave leap and another scale, a few notes higher this time. It is nothing, simply nothing. But the way it *sounds*... At the end of the orchestral introduction this turns into fireworks produced by musical scales as never heard before. Beethoven builds an entire movement on 'nothing', uncommonly powerful and *con brio*. The *Largo* sings sweetly, the *Rondo* is humorous the way the human being Beethoven must often have been humorous, and not just as a young man. The theme confuses the listener: are we starting on a downbeat or an upbeat? Beethoven had tried it out earlier in the *Rondo* of his *Piano Concerto No. 2*. And so these two piano concertos form a lovely pair.



## CD 2

### Piano Concerto No. 3

The first concertos: replete with youth, sparkling, often even rambunctious; the last two both more mature and more heroic. And *Piano Concerto No. 3* then? In part still building on his youth (Beethoven was around 30 when he wrote it), this is the first one where we hear heroism. Might has become the central theme.

Beethoven himself regarded it with a mixture of modesty and pride. 'Cramer, Cramer, we'll never be able to produce anything like that!' he once said to a colleague, referring to Mozart's *Piano Concerto in C major, K. 491*. Beethoven performed the brilliant work himself; he felt a great reverence for it, and chose it as the example for his *Concerto No. 3*. But there is something else. In 1801 he wrote to his publisher: 'It [*Piano Concerto No. 3*] is one of my best compositions in this genre.' For a long time, he did not want to part with it: 'Musical policy prescribes that the composer retains his best concertos for himself for a while'; he preferred to keep it 'for when I go on tour again.' As usual, Beethoven knew exactly what he was worth, and if you had any idea at all about music, you took your hat off to Mozart.

The work did not come about overnight. Although the premiere was in 1803, Beethoven probably started on it in 1797 – even before the first two piano concertos had been written. Considering the letter cited above, it must have been rather well under way in 1801, although no matter how strange it may sound, the final version had still not been committed to paper when it

premiered. Before it was published in 1804, Beethoven continued to tinker with it, one reason for which was his enthusiastic encounter with the latest product of Parisian piano manufacturer Erard: he had again managed to expand the tonal range, to more than five octaves, and Beethoven hastened to benefit from this.

'But where's the piano?' When you first listen to the beginning of *Piano Concerto No. 3*, you grow a bit concerned. The composer, highly resourceful and with a flair for drama, unfolds a grandiose tableau for the orchestra, but leaves the soloist with 111 empty initial measures. The audience that had gathered in the Theater an der Wien on the evening of 3 April 1803 for the premiere, with Beethoven himself as the soloist, was probably uneasy. A solo concerto was meant to be a joyous occasion, a playful dialogue between the orchestra and the soloist, and which one would win? They were expecting a light-footed and preferably virtuoso display. But this massive introduction was like a rock, a tower of strength.

If you wanted to follow Beethoven's musical ways closely – and there were a number of them – then evidently, it would cost you some effort. Goodness gracious, what an evening! Not only *Piano Concerto No. 3* premiered, but also Beethoven's *Symphony No. 2* and the oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives*. Together with *Symphony No. 1*, it was a bit much for one concert, even for the greatest admirers. The audience was hesitant, unsure. Some members of the choir and the orchestra were even rebellious. The rehearsals for this marathon had started at eight o'clock in the morning (!) and didn't end until two-thirty in the afternoon. The musicians were exhausted; they grumbled.



But problems were prevented by a tactical intervention from higher up: Prince Karl Lichnowsky, a devotee of Beethoven's who had sat through the entire rehearsal, ordered huge baskets filled with bread, cold meats and wine and asked everyone to kindly help themselves. Material consolation for mental effort. After that, they all had one more go at a rehearsal of *Christ on the Mount of Olives*... It was not the first time that Beethoven was saved by a prince, and would not be the last time either.

A certain Ignaz Ritter von Seyfried did not have a very enjoyable evening. He had the privilege of turning the pages for Beethoven's piano concerto. A lowly task? 'Heaven help me,' he said later, 'it was easier said than done. I saw before me almost nothing but empty leaves; at the most, on one page or another, a few Egyptian hieroglyphs wholly unintelligible to me were scribbled down. Beethoven hadn't had time to commit everything to paper. He would give me a secret glance whenever he was at the end of one of these invisible passages, and my scarcely concealed anxiety not to miss the decisive moment amused him greatly, and during the pleasant supper afterwards, he laughed most heartily about it.'

How did people react to this remarkable spectacle? With reserve. Coolly. We can well assume that no justice was done to many aspects – whether Beethoven could laugh about them or not. With 1800 florins, the profits were good, but the *Zeitung für die Elegante Welt* judged the concert as follows: 'The performance by Mr v.B., who is after all known to be an excellent pianist, could not fully satisfy the expectations of the public.' And that was it. Not

until one year later, after an academy concert in the Augarten, the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* took a much more positive view: 'This concerto is undoubtedly one of Beethoven's loveliest works. It is a masterful piece.' It was perhaps a boon that the solo part as presented by Beethoven's pupil Ferdinand Ries was less chaotic.

As mentioned, Beethoven took Mozart's *K. 491* as an example for this piano concerto. The key of C minor is just a coincidence; this mainly attests to the fact that it is Beethoven's preferred key – think of *Symphony No. 5*, the unfinished *No. 10*, *Coriolan Overture*, *Choral Fantasy*, the *Piano Sonatas Op. 10 No. 1*, *Pathétique*, *Op. 111*, and so on – and so it naturally had to be represented in the domain of the solo concertos. The most important thing Beethoven borrowed from his older colleague was the interplay of light and dark. For instance, right at the beginning: the theme, first softly, *piano*, and then overwhelmingly *forte* – a theme with a broken triad, not unknown in the work of Mozart. Once the solo part has taken the floor, it stays there, as it does in Mozart, until the first movement reaches its bitter end. The casual and surprising start of the final rondo is also reminiscent of his great role model. The surprising 6/8 time of the coda also has a parallel in Mozart's other great concerto in a minor key: *K. 466* in D minor.

Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 3* is an uncommonly expansive and dramatic concerto, innovative and pioneering in many senses. The length of the introduction alone! Then the piano makes its entrance, not as per usual, with its own theme, but with a scale. If anyone else wrote it, it would be a

joyless stopgap of the best kind, but Beethoven turns it into a characteristically robust gesture. (In the Largo, it makes a brief and witty comeback shortly before the end.) The cadenza is not a virtuoso excursion but a fundamental and compositionally necessary part (most often, Beethoven's own cadenza from 1809 is played). The passage for the timpani, immediately afterwards, is striking; softly arpeggio-ing, the piano recovers from its cadenza, suggests a major key but in vain, while the timpani modestly but emphatically asks our attention with a punctuated rhythm (an echo of the third measure). It must be the first time in history that a soloist accompanied a timpani.

The transition to the second movement, the Largo, must have been a shock at the time. And it still is. From C minor to E major: unheard of. Are these two keys in any way related? Perhaps Beethoven had in mind an ultimate minor-major effect: the interval from C to E is a major third. Later, Brahms (*Symphony No. 1*) and Rachmaninoff (*Piano Concerto No. 2*) would imitate this. The piano seizes the opportunity, perhaps in revenge because the orchestra made it wait so long in the first movement, while the orchestra stays hushed. This elaborate solo opening is novel, presaging the famous beginning of *Piano Concerto No. 4*.

Once the orchestra is allowed to play, it must play *con sordino* (muted), and trumpets and timpani are not appropriate to this ethereal whole. About two-thirds of the way through the playful rondo, Beethoven reaches back briefly for the E major of the Largo (no, he never forgets anything!) and ends exuberantly in C major – youthfully happy, as he will never be again.

## CD 3

### Piano Concerto No. 4

Once he had accepted the fact that he was inevitably going completely deaf, Beethoven wrote in his moving "Heiligenstädter Testament" (1802): "As the leaves of autumn fall and are withered, so hope has been blighted. Even the high courage, which often inspired me in the beautiful days of summer, has disappeared. Oh Providence, grant me but at least one day of *pure joy!*" Did Providence grant him that one day? It is hard to say. When it came to happiness, Beethoven had no-one but himself to rely on, as the further tragic course of his life shows. The only thing he had that could counter the forces of fate was his music. And in the first years after he had accepted his fate, his music was a source of huge joy to him. It emanates an optimism that is as beneficent as it is powerful. Take *Piano Concerto No. 4*, written in 1806: here we become aware of a sort of latent energy, music articulated in rays of sunlight, the deeply effusive light of the month of September.

The start is revolutionary. Completely alone, the piano posits its theme – which is highly unusual – and then the orchestra immediately follows suit. It is as if Beethoven first shows us the piano sketch, and then goes on to let us discover how this theme can grow, recede and grow again, taking on more and more meaning. This also allows him to compose a lengthy orchestral introduction without making the impression that he has forgotten the soloist (his *Piano Concerto No. 3* opens with such an enormous orchestral exposition that the solo instrument has to wait a long time for its turn...). In the Andante Beethoven

quite summarily allows the soloist and the orchestra to converse. The rebellious strings are gently soothed and calmed by the pianist. And quite successfully: the orchestral sentences gradually become shorter, only to merge with the conciliatory pleas of the piano. (Franz Liszt likened this dialogue to Orpheus pleading with the Furies.) Just before the strings yield, the soloist puts forth some moving chromatics and a hair-raising trill. This is followed by the Rondo: expressing a zest for life with simple ingredients tossed in: repeated notes, broken triads, dashes of rhythm. But so very effective!

This absolute masterpiece premiered on 22 December 1808 in the *Theater an der Wien*. It was a concert never to be forgotten. And it was truly gigantic, because in addition to this piece, *Symphonies nos 5 and 6*, the *Choral Fantasy*, the aria *Ah! Perfido* and two parts of the *Mass in C Major* were also premiered. Simply too much beauty. The audience, in an unheated hall – it was an icy December evening – had to digest four hours' worth of new music. The playing was not up to par: second-rate musicians, too little rehearsal time and Beethoven himself, nearly deaf, was not in form, to put it mildly. Some of the audience, such as composer J.F. Reichardt, even wished "that they had dared to leave the hall earlier".

### **Piano Concerto No. 5**

Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 5* is called the "Emperor Concerto". It was not given this name by Beethoven, and it makes an incorrect impression. The piece was not dedicated to an emperor, it was not commissioned by an emperor, and it is not about an emperor. Based on the preferences of both the public and the

composer, you might call it the crown on his piano concertos and so – although still very much the first among equals – the emperor among the concertos, but then we risk clashing swords with the 'true' experts who would choose No. 4.

In 1809, the year that he wrote his *Piano Concerto No. 5*, Beethoven did not have much time for emperors. He lived in Vienna, which was occupied by the armies of the Emperor Napoleon. Heavy cannon fire had caused much destruction; entire families had been reduced to beggary. Beethoven's house was next to the city walls and when Napoleon issued the order to demolish the wall, his house was left quite unprotected. On the very day that the explosives were positioned, a French officer who admired Beethoven's music sought out the composer when out delivering a message. Unfortunately, the Frenchman was in uniform. "Do I have the honour of speaking with monsieur Beethoven?" he asked. "Yes, sir! But I must tell you that I know very little French", Beethoven replied drily. Not much later, once the shelling of the city had started, he was obliged to move in with his brother Johann. There, in the basement, he waited with pillows over his head until the guns had stopped booming. It was a very lonely time. His noble patrons left the city. Friends, weakened by the conditions of war, died. Joseph Haydn, his former teacher and a person whom he greatly admired, died shortly after the bombardment. Beethoven's mood was sombre. He made some idle sketches for a new piano concerto but had to tell his publisher that he had a hard time setting himself to work, and could only put some disconnected notes to paper. "Life all around me is destructive and chaotic. Nothing but drums, cannons and human suffering..."

But meanwhile. When you are Beethoven, you persevere. Some hear in *Piano Concerto No. 5* Beethoven's response to the suffering of war and the rising tide of Napoleonic victories. But Beethoven certainly does not sit back and watch; this work was not written from the point of view of a victim. When it premiered on 28 November 1811, not in Vienna but in the Gewandhaus in Leipzig, it was immediately very well received on account of its martial character and the huge strength it emanates. The concerto opens with a clear statement: a powerful chord produced by the orchestra – the masses – is immediately answered by vast arpeggios from the single piano. Twice the orchestra repeats its contention, and only then gives its permission to the piano to launch the main theme. Like two soldiers, the first and third movements carry the stretcher of the *Adagio*, which bears an injured combatant. This is how Beethoven wrote his *Piano Concerto No. 5*, this unyielding music that he dedicated to his patron and faithful friend, Archduke Rudolf (perhaps it should even be called the "Archduke Concerto"), a work that guns can never destroy.

This CD brings the last two concertos together. When you hear them, you cannot help but find it unfortunate that his *Piano Concerto No. 6* (in D major, 1815) never got beyond the sketch stage. The solo concerto is absent in Beethoven's final creative period. But if you are still hungry for more, more is to be found: there is a quite pleasant piano concerto composed when he was fourteen, and when his magnificent *Violin Concerto* was not appreciated by his contemporaries, he turned it into a piece for piano and orchestra.

Stephen Westra

*Translation: Carol Stennes/Muse Translations*



## Hannes Minnaar

Hannes Minnaar received international acclaim after winning prizes at the Queen Elisabeth Competition (2010, 3rd prize) and the Geneva International Music Competition (2008, 2nd prize) and being awarded a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship (2011). He studied with Jan Wijn at the Amsterdam Conservatory, graduating with the highest distinction and took master classes with Menahem Pressler, Willem Brons and Ferenc Rados. In addition, he studied organ with Jacques van Oortmerssen.

Minnaar was soloist with various orchestras, including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, during which time he worked with conductors such as Marin Alsop, Jiří Bělohlávek, Herbert Blomstedt, Frans Brüggen, Eliahu Inbal, Edo de Waart and Xian Zhang. He gives recitals in many European countries and around the world. He performed at the Royal Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), Konzerthaus (Berlin), Musashino Hall (Tokyo) and the Great Hall of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory (Moscow) and was invited to the festivals of La Roque d'Anthéron, Bordeaux (Jacobins) and Guangzhou.

Minnaar is also active as a chamber musician. As a member of the Van Baerle Trio he won prizes at competitions in Lyon (2011, CIMCL, 1st prize) and Munich (2013, ARD, 2nd prize). The trio gave 18 concerts in an international tour in the "Rising Stars" series in 2014, including the Barbican (London), Musikverein (Vienna) and Cité de la Musique (Paris). Minnaar also performed with musicians such as Janine Jansen, Isabelle van Keulen and Mischa Maisky.

His three solo albums are highly acclaimed. His debut album was awarded an Edison and Gramophone published a full-page article about this album. The same magazine wrote about his second album "Bach inspirations": *"After Minnaar's debut disc, this makes two hits in a row"*. BBC Music Magazine selected it as "Instrumental choice of the month" with 5 stars. His third album with piano music of Gabriel Fauré received rave reviews by both national and international press. Gramophone wrote: *"Minnaar's identification with this unique realm of music is complete and his deeply felt interpretations shine with clarity and infinite nuance."*

In the autumn of 2016, Hannes Minnaar received the Nederlandse Muziekprijs (Dutch Music Award), the highest honour that can be bestowed by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) to a musician working in the field of classical music.

Minnaar has recorded all of Beethoven's piano concertos for Challenge Classics. Recent and future highlights include Liszt's Totentanz and a new concerto by Robert Zuidam with the Radio Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Markus Stenz, Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto with the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Carlos Miguel Prieto and a solo recital in the Meesterpianisten series in the Main Hall of the Concertgebouw.

### **Jan Willem de Vriend**

Jan Willem de Vriend was appointed chief conductor and artistic director of The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra in 2006. Since then, The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra has become a notable phenomenon on the Netherlands' musical scene. It has presented semi-scenic performances of works by Mozart, Beethoven, Strauss and Mendelssohn. There were premieres of works by Offenbach, Say and Mahler. And by substituting period instruments in the brass section, it has developed its own distinctive sound in the 18th and 19th century repertoire. It has recorded Beethoven's complete symphonies conducted by de Vriend. Opera conducting has come to play a significant role in de Vriend's career. He has led the Combattimento Consort Amsterdam (being artistic director from 1982 – 2013) in unknown operas by Gassmann, Rameau, Heintzen and Haydn, among others, as well as familiar operas by such composers as Monteverdi, Handel, Rossini and Mozart. For the opera houses of Lucerne, Strasbourg, Barcelona, Moscow and Enschede, he has conducted operas by Handel, Mozart, Verdi, Strauss and others. He has conducted many distinguished Dutch orchestras, including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and The Hague Philharmonic Orchestra. De Vriend is also a welcome guest internationally and has conducted orchestras in China, Germany, Austria, Italy and France.

### **The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra**

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra is based in Enschede, in the province of Overijssel. Performing at an international level, as evidenced by its highly acclaimed CDs and invitations for international tours, the orchestra is firmly rooted in society.

Jan Willem de Vriend has been its artistic director and chief conductor since 2006. Under De Vriend's leadership, the orchestra has expanded its repertoire to cover music from four centuries. Its use of period instruments in the Classical repertoire gives the orchestra a distinctive and highly individual character.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra performs amongst others in Amsterdam, Utrecht, Enschede, Zwolle and Deventer. In addition, it often works with the Dutch National Touring Opera Company. In its home town Enschede, the orchestra builds on a symphonic tradition of more than 80 years, and it is known as one of the most modern and entrepreneurial orchestras in the Netherlands. Its international partners include the BBC Philharmonic and the Tonkunstler Orchestra.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra created a number of ensembles. The orchestra's commitment to expanding its social relevance is also reflected in the large number of projects in which education is a key element.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra has made successful tours of the United States, Spain, China and England, and it has performed in such famous venues

as Carnegie Hall in New York and Birmingham Symphony Hall. Its CDs of the complete Beethoven symphonies (for Challenge Classics) and music by Dutch composers such as Julius Röntgen and Jan van Gilse (for the CPO label) were very well received by the international music press.

The orchestra has worked with distinguished conductors, such as its former chief conductor Jaap van Zweden, Vasily Petrenko, Edo de Waart, Hans Vonk, Gerd Albrecht, Marc Soustrot, Eri Klas, Ed Spanjaard, Claus Peter Flor and Tan Dun. Ed Spanjaard will be the orchestra's principle conductor as from the 2017/2018 season.

It also has accompanied many celebrated soloists, including Gidon Kremer, Ronald Brautigam, Natalia Gutman, Charlotte Margiono, Antje Weithaas, Marie-Luise Neunecker, Hélène Grimaud, Robert Holl, Fazil Say, Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Thomas Zehetmair.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra is financially supported by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Province of Overijssel and the Municipality of Enschede, as well as annual contributions from sponsors.

[www.ovho.nl](http://www.ovho.nl)

Ypma Piano's-Steinway Center Nederland has made two important contributions to these CD recordings: the immaculate Steinway & Sons concert grand, selected by Hannes Minnaar, and the efforts of their tuner Gerben Bisschop, who has applied his expertise to prepare the historical tuning of the instrument.

All this would not have been possible without the financial support of:  
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Stichting Roelvink Fonds

Gemeente  Enschede



This High Definition Surround Recording was Produced, Engineered and Edited by Bert van der Wolf of NorthStar Recording Services, using the 'High Quality Musical Surround Mastering' principle. The basis of this recording principle is a realistic and holographic 3 dimensional representation of the musical instruments, voices and recording venue, according to traditional concert practice. For most older music this means a frontal representation of the musical performance, but such that width and depth of the ensemble and acoustic characteristics of the hall do resemble 'real life' as much as possible. Some older compositions, and many contemporary works do specifically ask for placement of musical instruments and voices over the full 360 degrees sound scape, and in these cases the recording is as realistic as possible, within the limits of the 5.1 Surround Sound standard. This requires a very innovative use of all 6 loudspeakers and the use of completely matched, full frequency range loudspeakers for all 5 discrete channels. A complementary sub-woofer, for the ultra low frequencies under 40Hz, is highly recommended to maximally benefit from the sound quality of this recording.

This recording was produced with the use of Sonodore microphones, Avalon Acoustic monitoring, Siltech Mono-Crystal cabling and dCS - & Merging Technologies converters.



[www.northstarconsult.nl](http://www.northstarconsult.nl)

Executive producers: Anne de Jong  
Recording: Northstar Recording Services BV  
Producer, balance engineer, editing & mastering: Bert van der Wolf  
Recording assistants: Brendon Heinst & Martijn van der Wolf  
A&R Challenge Records International: Anne de Jong  
Recorded at: Muziekcentrum, Enschede (the Netherlands)  
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Recording dates Piano Concerto No. 3: 23 & 27 September 2016  
Recording dates Piano Concertos Nos. 4 & 5: 26-28 May 2014  
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[www.challengerecords.com](http://www.challengerecords.com) / [www.ovho.nl](http://www.ovho.nl)



