



Clifford Curzon

BEETHOVEN

Piano Concerto No. 5 "EMPEROR"

Clifford Curzon, piano
Hans Knappertsbusch, conductor
The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra



Rudolph Johann Joseph Rainer
Archduke of Austria
8 January 1788 – 24 July 1831

Emperor Concerto, byname of Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 73, piano concerto by Ludwig van Beethoven known for its grandeur, bold melodies, and heroic spirit. The work was dedicated to Archduke Rudolf, who was a friend and student of the composer. It premiered in Leipzig, Germany, in 1811, and it remains the best known and most frequently performed of Beethoven's five piano concerti.

Beethoven began his work on this piece in 1808, about the time that he completed his fifth and sixth symphonies and fourth piano concerto. Despite difficult living conditions—in 1809 the city of Vienna was under bombardment by Napoleon's troops—the composer finished it promptly. Because his profound deafness prevented his own performance of the solo part, the honour fell to a 25-year-old church organist, Friedrich Schneider.

In February 1812, three months after its premiere, the concerto was given its first performance in Vienna.

The pianist on that occasion was Beethoven's student Carl Czerny, a performer still renowned today in keyboard circles for his own piano compositions. The success of the Emperor Concerto was due in part to technological developments in piano production that enabled a greater measure of expressive power. The piece quickly won for itself a place in the piano repertoire, and it became a great favourite of Franz Liszt.

The concerto's sobriquet "Emperor" dates from Beethoven's time, and it is sometimes attributed to German-born English pianist and music publisher Johann Baptist Cramer, whom Beethoven reportedly regarded as the greatest pianist of the day. Whatever the origins of the concerto's nickname, it is unlikely to have pleased Beethoven himself, who reconsidered the dedication of his third symphony—initially to have been dedicated to Napoleon—after Bonaparte assumed the title of emperor in 1804.

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1 Allegro 19:51

2 Adagio Un Poco Mosso 8:17

3 Rondo (Allegro) 10:32

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Engineer: James Brown Producer: Erik Smith



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