

sible, like Chinese" and "a confusion of Babel". However, critical opinion of the work has risen steadily since the early 20th century and it is now considered among Beethoven's greatest achievements. Igor Stravinsky described it as "an absolutely contemporary piece of music that will be contemporary forever."

The composition originally served as the final movement of Beethoven's Quartet No. 13 in B major, Op. 130, written in 1825; but his publisher was concerned about the dismal commercial prospects of the piece and wanted Beethoven to replace the fugue with a new finale. Beethoven complied, and the Grosse Fuge was published as a separate work in 1827 as Op. 133. It was composed when Beethoven was almost totally deaf, and is considered to be part of his set of late quartets. It was first performed in 1826, as the finale of the B quartet, by the Schuppanzigh Quartet.

Music analysts and critics have described the Grosse Fuge as "inaccessible", "eccentric", "filled with paradoxes", and "Armageddon". "It stands out as the most problematic single work in Beethoven's output and ... doubtless in the entire literature of music," writes critic and musicologist Joseph Kerman of the fugue. Moreover, according to violinist and composer David Matthews, "it is fiendishly difficult to play."



Beethoven Symphony No. 5

Antal Dorati London Symphony Orchestra

Beethoven Grosse Fuge

Wyn Morris Symphonica of London



Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67, orchestral work by German composer Ludwig van Beethoven, widely recognized by the ominous four-note opening motif—often interpreted as the musical manifestation of “fate knocking at the door”—that recurs in various guises throughout the composition. The symphony premiered on December 22, 1808, in Vienna, and it soon became a standard against which many other symphonies were measured.

Beethoven habitually worked on several compositions simultaneously. Shortly after finishing Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major (*Eroica*) in 1803, he began to write the piece now known as Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, but initial progress was slow, and it was not until 1807–08 that he worked on the piece with intensity. Meanwhile, he started to write another symphony, which is now known as Symphony No. 6 in F Major (*Pastorale*). Beethoven completed both of the symphonies at nearly the same time in 1808, and they premiered together on the same all-Beethoven program. At that first performance, however, the *Pastorale* bore the number five. Somewhere between premiere and publication, Beethoven renumbered the two compositions: the C minor became the Fifth Symphony, and the F major became the Sixth Symphony.

The hallmark motif of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony has had tremendous appeal well beyond the realm of classical music. During World War II, for instance, Allied forces used it to signal a victorious moment, as its rhythm—short, short, short, long—matched that of the letter V in Morse Code. In the mid-1970s, American musician Walter Murphy released “A Fifth of Beethoven,” a popular disco recording based on the signature motif and other elements of the symphony’s first movement. The “fate” figure has also been featured in many films and has been used in television commercials to promote a range of products and services from liquor to convenience stores to an Internet browser. More than two centuries after its premiere, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5—especially its foundational four-note theme—has remained remarkably durable.

The *Grosse Fuge* (German spelling: *Große Fuge*, also known in English as the *Great Fugue* or *Grand Fugue*), Op. 133, is a single-movement composition for string quartet by Ludwig van Beethoven. An immense double fugue, it was universally condemned by contemporary music critics. A reviewer writing for the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1826 described the fugue as “incomprehen-

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1. Grosse Fuge 21:24
2. Allegro Con Brio 7:43
3. Andante Con Moto 8:04
4. Allegro 4:53
5. Allegro 8:33

Symphony No. 5 was recorded on July 24 and 25, 1962,
on 35 mm film at Watford Town Hall by Mercury Records

Grosse Fuge Recorded 1978 Engineer - Allen Stagg Producer - Isabella Wallich