

Concert Programme Autumn 2021



Beethoven with Sunwook

Lighthouse, Poole Wednesday 20 October

Supported by Michael & Judy Buckland Beethoven

Piano Concerto No.5 'Emperor' 38'

Interval

Beethoven Symphony No.7 36'

Sunwook Kim Conductor/Piano

Amyn Merchant Leader

Sarah Walker Livestream Presenter







Piano Concerto No. 5 'Emperor'

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: 17 December 1770 Bonn Died: 26 March 1827 Vienna

1. Allegro

2. Adagio un poco mosso

3. Rondo: Allegro

While the nickname 'Emperor' is thoroughly appropriate to this grand concerto, it was not Beethoven's own, since it was conceived by the publisher, composer and piano-maker Johann Cramer. The music was composed mainly between January to April 1809 and its first performance took place in Leipzig with the Gewandhaus Orchestra, conducted by Johann Philip Schulz on 28 November 1811. when the pianist was Friedrich Schneider and not Beethoven himself. as had been the case in each of the four previous piano concertos. The reason was the composer's deafness, which by this time was so acute that he could no longer perform in public. Thereafter he wrote no more concertos. although he continued to compose in all the other important genres save opera.

The first movement is constructed on the grand scale, and in fact is longer than the other movements combined. The opening gesture is immensely impressive: the pianist plays three short and explosive cadenzas against powerful orchestral chords, and only then does the orchestral exposition begin.

This generates a tremendous momentum, with several distinctive themes which are so constructed that they provide rhythmicmelodic units which are eminently suited to development. The second subject group is well contrasted, and uses both the major and the minor keys in radiating its subtle personality.

The return of the soloist soon generates a fortissimo statement of the first subject, but it is the various adaptations of the second which are more interesting, developing into a range of possibilities which the initial presentation had scarcely suggested. Then these ideas are fully developed, until the orchestral tutti is recapitulated. Although there is no formal cadenza in the later stages of the movement, there is an extended coda which further treats the main ideas and ends in a magnificently heroic manner.

The mood changes completely with the advent of the slow movement. This is constructed from two themes: a simple tune first heard on muted strings, and a series of slow descending piano phrases linked with fragments of the melody. The atmosphere is peaceful and provides a foil to the surrounding movements, as the piano elaborates and decorates the musical line, even taking a supporting role in accompanying several woodwind solos.

When the piano begins the gradual upward tread of a new theme, the music soon 'bursts' its skin' to become the energetic theme of the rondo finale. This is in fact a sonatarondo design, since there is development of the material in the contrasting episodes. Thus the three most important statements of the theme herald the exposition. development and recapitulation. There is fine subsidiary material too, the contrasts imposing the effect of heroic gesture in the manner of the finale of the famous Symphony No.5. Of this phenomenon there is no finer example than the conclusion. From quiet introspection the piano plays a series of rising scales, triumphantly releasing the full orchestra.

Terry Barfoot

Interval



Symphony No.7

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: 17 December 1770 Bonn Died: 26 March 1827 Vienna

- 1. Poco sostenuto Vivace
- 2. Allegretto
- 3. Presto assai meno presto Presto
- 4. Allegro con brio

The autograph score of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony is dated May 1812, but the composer's sketchbooks reveal that some of the music was conceived as far back as 1807. The work seems to have been written for the most part during 1811, but in truth less is known about the creative history of this symphony than of its fellows. Beethoven dedicated it to Count von Fries, and the first performance took place in the Great Hall of Vienna University on 8 December 1813 at a charity concert, when the music seems to have made a favourable impression on the audience.

Just as the history of the Seventh Symphony's creation is shrouded in obscurity, so too has its 'meaning' posed problems for commentators. Many have tried to ascribe a programme to it, but only that of Richard Wagner has made a lasting impression. He described the work as "the apotheosis of the dance, the happiest realisation of the movements of the body in ideal form". Each of the four movements is founded upon the reiteration of basic rhythms, and therefore the symphony is a new treatment of the obsessive rhythmic style which pervades so much of Beethoven's music during this period.

The main part of the first movement is played at tempo Vivace, but its abundant energy is preceded by an introduction on the grand scale. This is built from two contrasting themes, the first featuring soaring scales across two octaves, the second a plaintive theme presented by the oboe. The bridge to the Vivace is ingenious: persistent repetitions of the note E gradually increase in pace and assume the rhythmic shape of the theme which will dominate the remainder of the movement. The persistence of this rhythm is a test of stamina for the performers, and it is intensified by a grinding bass ostinato in coda which led Weber to declare Beethoven 'ripe for the madhouse'.

The Allegretto second movement made so favourable an impression at the premiere that it had to be encored. A long-held A minor chord in the wind instruments creates a tension which releases the measured tread of the lower strings, the rhythmic pattern which provides the haunting and march-like principal subject. Into this context a glowing counter-melody adds a new dimension, but the mood is abruptly changed when clarinet and bassoon introduce a sustained melody against a gentle accompaniment in triplets. Brightness now prevails, for the initial rhythm is relegated to the background as the radiance unfolds. A huge scale, descending through nearly four octaves, plunges the music back into A minor, and a ghostly fugue ensues. The mysterious atmosphere which is thus created prevails through the closing stages of the movement. Never before had a symphony contained music of the vigour and vitality of this scherzo. The progression of the movement abounds in surprises, but the basic structure has a clear outline of five sections. The brisk opening has its foil in the hymn-like quality of the second (trio) theme. The music of the scherzo is heard three times, the trio twice.

After two peremptory chords, the finale is launched on its headlong course, its energy recalling that of the first movement. The swirling activity requires the fastest tempo at which articulation of its contours can be maintained, while the strong accents emphasise the rhythm and add to its intensity. Later the wind instruments introduce a martial flavour, but the final stages of the symphony are the most remarkable of all. Berlioz captured the spirit of the matter when he described the coda as having "extraordinary brightness" and as "well worthy of terminating such a masterpiece - alike of technical ability, taste, fantasy, knowledge and inspiration".

Terry Barfoot



Sunwook Kim

Conductor/Piano

Sunwook Kim came to international recognition when he won the prestigious Leeds International Piano Competition in 2006, aged just eighteen, becoming the competition's youngest winner for forty years. Since then, he has established a reputation as one of the finest pianists of his generation, appearing as a concerto soloist in the subscription series of some of the world's leading orchestras.

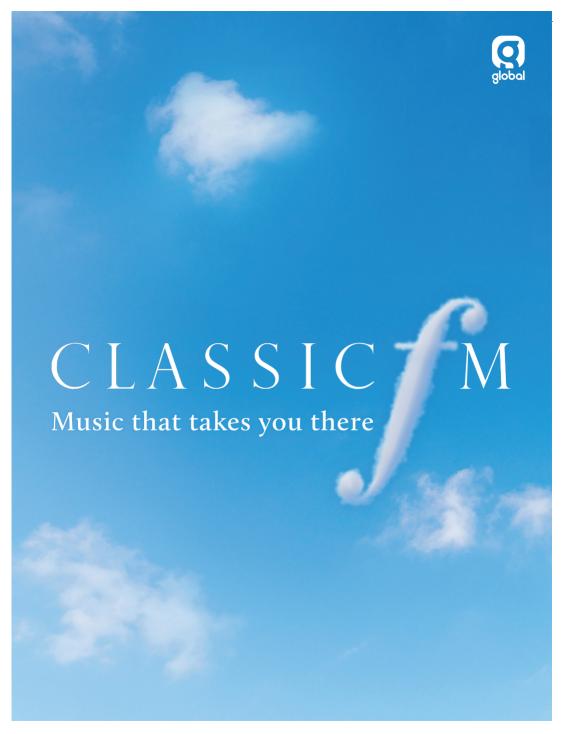
Recital highlights to date include regular appearances at the Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall (London International Piano Series), in the 'Piano 4 Etoiles' series at the Philharmonie de Paris and Théâtre des Champs- Élysées, Piano aux Jacobin Festival, AIX Festival, La Roque d'Anthéron International Piano Festival (France). Sunwook is also a keen chamber musician and has collaborated with singers such as Robert Holl and Kwang-Chul Youn.

Tonight Sunwook makes his European conducting debut with the BSO. He will perform with the Los Angeles Philharmonic (Stutzman) and Minnesota orchestras (New), with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (Ollikainen), BBC Philharmonic Orchestra (Sinaisky), BBC Symphony Orchestra (Korea Tour), Lahti Symphony (Cox) as well as his debut with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (Brinquier).

Sunwook Kim's debut recital disc was released on the Accentus label in October 2015, featuring Beethoven's Waldstein and Hammerklavier sonatas, this was followed by a recording of Franck's Prelude. choral et fuque paired with Brahms Sonata No.3. He has released further recordings of Beethoven's piano sonatas, No.8; Pathetique, No.14; Moonlight and No.23; Appassionata and his most recent DVD & Blu-Ray featuring sonatas nos.30-32 recorded at the Kunstkraftwerk Leipzig.

His discography also includes multiple concerto recordings; on Accentus Music with the Staatskapelle Dresden conducted by Myung-Whun Chung featuring Brahms' Piano Concerto No.1 and Six Piano Pieces, in addition to recordings on Deutsche Grammophon with the Seoul Philharmonic conducted by Myung-Whun Chung, a CD featuring Unsuk Chin's Piano Concerto and a CD featuring Beethoven Concerto No.5.

Born in Seoul in 1988. Sunwook completed an MA in conducting at the Royal Academy of Music and was subsequently made a fellow (FRAM) of the Royal Academy of Music in 2019. Besides Leeds, international awards include the first prize at the 2004 Ettlingen Competition (Germany) and the 2005 Clara Haskil Competition (Switzerland). In 2013, Sunwook was selected by the Beethoven-Haus Bonn to become the first beneficiary of its new Mentoring.









Sarah Walker

Presenter

Sarah Walker is well known as the presenter of BBC Radio 3's Sunday Morning. She also hosts many of Radio 3's Lunchtime Concerts from around the world and is a regular contributor to Record Review, In Tune and the BBC Proms.

Sarah's early career as a piano and keyboard teacher led her to create many volumes of original music for young players, published by Faber Music and ABRSM. She completed a PhD on the subject of English Experimental music, and as a performer has premiered many new British works: her latest album Haunted Carbonek: the piano music of Martin Pyne was released during lockdown.

Sarah has been presenting the Orchestra's concerts since the start of its inaugural livestream series in 2020, welcoming audiences from around the globe.

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The BSO, under its Chief Conductor Kirill Karabits, is known for pushing artistic boundaries, and its ongoing series of music from former Soviet states, Voices from the East, continues to gain praise. Boasting an enviable list of principal conductors, since its founder, Sir Dan Godfrey, including Constantin Silvestri, Sir Charles Groves and Marin Alsop, the BSO has given memorable performances worldwide and is broadcast regularly on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM.

The Orchestra's inaugural livestreamed series, which featured Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Benjamin Grosvenor and Alina Ibragimova, was widely praised by audiences and critics alike, with the BSO making history as one of the first British orchestras to return to the stage in 2020. Horn player Felix Klieser makes his UK concerto debut as the BSO's Artist-in-Residence, as the Orchestra resumes symphonic touring in 2021.

Committed to new music, the BSO celebrates a triptych of contemporary works written by women in 2021/22, with premiere performances of works by Carmen Ho, Franghiz Ali-Zadeh and Elizabeth Ogonek. During the pandemic, the BSO also gave premieres by composers Shirley J. Thompson and Magnus Lindberg.

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