

constructed, (perhaps to a fault in the case of the first movement), but Beethoven's middle period, of which the Fifth forms a kind of centerpiece, was one of the most prolific displays of compositional ingenuity in the history of art. The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Symphonies; the Appassionata Sonata; the three Razumovsky String Quartets; the Cello Sonata in A; the Violin Concerto; the Fourth Piano Concerto; and, not to mention the first two versions of Fidelio were all composed between 1805 and 1808. It is astonishing that any one person could produce so much in such a short amount of time. The sheer creative will is embodied in this symphony and that is something that will always be refreshing, will always bring something new to the world.

For Beethoven, this period of composition frenzy culminated in an epic concert on December 22 of 1808. It was at this *Musical Akademie* that the Fifth was premiered. Also on the bill that evening was the Sixth Symphony, the Fourth Piano Concerto, the Choral Fantasy, a number of arias, as excerpts from the Mass in C, and three Piano Sonatas (including the 'Appassionata'). All works were conducted by the composer who also played upon the piano-forte. It may be that the maniacal genius of Beethoven was overly extended that evening. One patron of this concert remarked afterwards:

There we continued, in the bitterest cold, too, from half past six to half past ten, and experienced the truth that one can easily have too much of a good thing—and still more of a loud.

The performance was not a huge success. Rehearsals were rushed, the musicians were a hodge-podge (comprised of what we would call 'giggers' today), and Beethoven, in his passions, clashed furiously with the starring soprano who had to be replaced at the last minute. It was not a glorious beginning for one of the greatest emblems of classical music. Indeed, like much of Beethoven's output, it took some years for the Fifth to gain its monumental reputation. That epic opening, so iconic, so *important*, so like fate knocking at the door, was characterized by a concert reviewer in 1809 in rather glib terms:

The first movement is a very serious, somewhat gloomy, allegro...

Tonight we present only the Fifth, whose reputation proceeds it mightily. Please enjoy.

David Medine

UCSD Chamber Orchestra—March 13, 2012

David Medine Conductor



Ludwig van BEETHOVEN *Symphony no. 5* Op 67

- I. ALLEGRO CON BRIO
- II. ANDANTE CON MOTO
- III. ALLEGRO
- IV. ALLEGRO, PRESTO



VIOLIN I

Daniel Zitter (concertmaster)
Kimberly Davies
Roy Gonda
Anthony Jongco
Dorian Koehring
Kira Turnbull
Stephanie Zapata

VIOLIN II

Carine Bossard
Kimberley Caesar
Foster Chamberlin
Sarah Choi
Batyá MacAdam-Somer
Kevin Vo

VIOLA

Noel Lee
Matthew Sasaki
Cara Steiner-Kiggins
Andrew Yousef

VIOLINCELLO

Damien Blake
Cindy Choi
Jordan Tani
Jakob Videm-Ellingsen
Stefani Von Huben
Danielle Wang
John Yuen

CONTRABASS

Brandon Bonilla
Julia Dinwiddie
James McCloskey
Karemy Valdez

FLUTE

Kelley Gallagher
Amy Klova
Mio Unno

OBOE

Jung Yeon Kim
Justin Kiggins

CLARINET

Micah Bregman
Ana Kasirer-Friede

BASSOON

Adam Fouse
Claire Perelman

CONTRABASSOON

William Propp

HORN

Nicolee Kuester
David Ryan

TRUMPET

Rachel Allen

TROMBONE

Max Yang

TIMPANI

Steven Solook

Fate Knocks at the Door

What is there to say about Beethoven's Fifth Symphony that hasn't been said before? As Donald Francis Tovey pointed out nearly eighty years ago: 'This work [has] the distinction of being not only among the most popular but also among the least misunderstood of musical classics'. Indeed, who can hear the opening two bars without mentally completing the thought: 'bum bum bum baaaaahhh...'?

However, the recognizability of the piece rests almost entirely upon this opening theme. The inner movements and finale are hardly as iconic. Yet it is the entirety of the piece that makes it so original. The Fifth was the first piece to do many things, and most of these distinctions are exemplified in those less recognizable interior and posterior movements. For example, it was the first symphony to feature trombones (in the finale only). It was also the first piece to continually develop a motif throughout each movement, which, of course, one hasn't the pleasure of noting without hearing the piece in its entirety.

The famed 'bum bum bum baaaaahhh...' motive, which *is* fate knocking at the door, is re-contextualized in each movement. In the second it appears diminutively in an accompanimental figure in the cellos and basses. In the third, the rhythm is respelled and given a nightmarish dimension. In the finale it is manhandled even further; transformed into a figure which is more than vaguely reminiscent of the first theme in Beethoven's First Symphony. In this final appearance, the motive has become a theme of joy and of triumph. To summarize the symphony: fate knocks rather ominously (movement I); the hero has a moment of repose, perhaps falling in love (movement II); the hero is cast down into some kind of hell (movement III); the hero triumphs, overcoming the forces of evil and transcending into passionate holiness (movement IV). Obviously words are insufficient to characterize the nature of musical expression, but, roughly speaking, this is the narrative arc and its epic proportion is typical of works from Beethoven's middle period.

All this is commonplace at this point. Now, more than two hundred years since the piece premiered, one can read any number of analyses of this piece that are far more competent and detailed than the one given above. As we have noted, the work is acclaimed, famed, and highly recognizable. So why bother with it at all anymore? After all, this symphony was the first complete symphony to be recorded; and, it is probably one of if not the most frequently recorded since. So what more can one say? The simple answer is that it is great music, and it is a joy to learn, perform, and listen to great music. But more than that, this piece, perhaps more than any other, represents the work of a fevered creativity, a mind that was utterly inspired. It is not a youthful work. It is carefully