



Classics Concert Insights Lecture

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BEETHOVEN PIANO CONCERTO #5 (1809)



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MUSICAL HISTORY:

- Middle ages and Renaissance.
- Baroque (1600 – 1750): Bach, Handel, Vivaldi
- Classical (1750-1803): Haydn, Mozart, Early Beethoven
- Romantic (1827-1900): Late Beethoven, Brahms, Berlioz, Schumann, Tchaikovsky
- Twentieth Century: Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Bartok, Copland

CONCERTO AS A GENRE:

- Definition: Three movement work for solo instrument and orchestra.
- Opera analogy: Orchestra is the chorus, soloist is the diva.
- The balance between orchestra and soloist is paramount to any analysis of concerto.
- Composers tend to create concertos mostly for their instruments of choice.
- Groundbreaking concertos feature novel displays of the range and capabilities of the instrument.

EVOLUTION OF THE PIANO:

- The predecessor of the piano is the harpsicord, a keyboard instrument in which pitches are created via plucked strings.
- The harpsicord is incapable of dynamic range; the loudness of pitch cannot be altered.
- The piano was invented in the first decade of the 1700s by Bartolomeo Cristofori, a Florentine inventor employed by the Medici.
- Cristofori invented an instrument where strings on a soundboard were struck by hammers, the severity of the strike allowing for dynamic range.
- An early description of the instrument from Cristofori's catalog:
 - *Un Arpicembalo di Bartolomeo Cristofori di nuova inventione, **che fa' il piano, e il forte**, a due registri principali unisoni, con fondo di cipresso senza rosa...*
 - *A harp-harpsicord by Bartolomeo Cristofori, of new invention, that produces soft and loud, with two sets of strings at unison pitch, with soundboard of cypress without rose...*
- Cristofori's invention was capable of four octaves.
- By 1711 Cristofori had built three pianos.
- The instrument was described by Federigo Meccoli, court musician, as: *Arpicimbalo del piano e forte*.
- It eventually came to be known as *pianoforte* or *fortepiano*, and later, simply as *piano*, referring only to the soft.

- The piano gradually supplanted the harpsicord during the 1700s.
- The pianos utilized by Classical Era composers – most notably Mozart – were delicate instruments of five octave tonal range. They produced gentle sounds. The term *pianoforte* has come to be associated with these.
- During 1790-1860 the piano underwent a major transformation into a much more powerful instrument, of seven or more octaves, capable of higher dynamic range and sustained sound.
- The piano eventually came to rival an entire orchestra in power and range of sound.
- An early beneficiary of this new, more powerful piano was Beethoven.

BEETHOVEN, THE PIANIST:

- Beethoven began his career in 1792, at age 21 as a concert pianist in Vienna. By 1793 he was already receiving acclaim.
- *“Beethoven belonged to the first generation of keyboardists who grew up playing the piano. Mozart and others had started on the harpsichord and tended to play the piano as they would the harpsichord.”* (Robert Greenberg)
- By all accounts Beethoven displayed a dramatic, powerful playing style, unusual for the delicate pianos of the time.
- *“Mozart sees the piano as a quiet solo voice. Beethoven sees the piano as equivalent to the orchestra – a second band.”* (Robert Greenberg)
- Some considered his piano style “rough.” He developed a reputation for smashing the delicate pianos of his early years.
- Others saw profound artistic expression in his style, making *“such an impression on every listener that frequently there was not a single dry eye.”* Carl Czerny.
- Beethoven’s hearing loss began in 1798 and progressed in the first decade of the 1800s.
- He eventually had to curtail his concertizing. He gave his last piano concert in 1809.
- In these waning years of his career as a performer, Beethoven’s focus gradually shifted away from performing his own works and toward publishing them.

STAGES OF BEETHOVEN’S CAREER:

- Viennese Period (1792-1802): Classical Style. Symphonies #1-2; Piano Concerti #1-3.
- Heroic Period (1803-1815): Romantic Style. Symphonies #3-8; Piano Concerti #4-5; Violin Concerto
- Late Period (1820-1826): Monumental Works. Symphony #9; Great Fugue.

HISTORY OF PIANO CONCERTO #5:

- Written during the height of the Napoleonic Wars.
- Completed in 1809, when Austria lost the battle of Wagram and the French occupied Vienna.
- In one occasion in May 1809, the French erected a battery that fired directly toward Beethoven's apartment. Beethoven took refuge in his brother Carl's cellar and spent a fearful night protecting his already vulnerable ears from the noise by placing a pillow on them.
- *"We have passed through a great deal of misery...I have brought into the world little that is connected, only here and there a fragment. The whole course of events has affected me body and soul...What a disturbing, wild life around me, nothing but drums, cannons, men, misery of all sorts."* Beethoven, in a letter to his publisher Breitkopf & Härtel.
- Despite this proclamation, Beethoven was quite prolific during 1809.
- Beethoven's "Invasion Year" compositions include:
 - Piano Concerto #5, op 73
 - Harp Quartet, op 74
 - Three Piano Sonatas, op 78,79,81
 - Several Lieder (songs)
- #5 is the only piano concerto of Beethoven that he himself did not introduce as a soloist. His hearing loss was too advanced by that time for him to perform.
- First performance was delayed until 1811, because of war. Premiered in Leipzig with Johann Friedrich Schneider as soloist.
- The premiere was received with rave reviews and an enthusiastic audience reaction.
- However, the first Viennese performance in 1812, with Beethoven pupil Carl Czerny as soloist, did not fare as well. *"He can be understood and appreciated only by connoisseurs."* (A reviewer)
- Scholars think that the fault was not with the composition or performance, but rather with the Viennese audience that expected a concerto more in line with Classical predecessors.

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE & THE IRONIC NICKNAME:

“More than any other composer, Beethoven’s most popular works suffer the indignity of nicknames that he never approved.” (Peter Guttman)

- In keeping with the experience of “The Invasion Year,” Beethoven’s 5th Piano Concerto expresses noble and heroic sentiments and features martial elements.
- He chose the key of E-flat major for this concerto, one he favored for heroic sentiments.
- Three of his 1809 works (5th Piano Concerto, Harp Quartet, & Piano Sonata Op 81) are in E-flat, as is his Symphony #3 *Eroica* (1803).
- It is therefore understandable that some would find the title *Emperor* appropriate.
- The title clearly refers to Napoleon Bonaparte.
- Beethoven, an anti-monarchist republican, despised Napoleon whom he had initially regarded as a hero of the French Revolution. When Napoleon declared himself Emperor of France, Beethoven was severely disappointed.
- Beethoven famously crossed out Napoleon’s name from the dedication of his Symphony #3, *Eroica* (1803).
- The origin of the ironic nickname is unknown.
- According to one story a French army officer in the audience during the Viennese premiere cried out, “*C’est l’empereur!*” This is dubious.
- Others think that the nickname was coined by Johann Baptist Cramer, a London based musician and publisher, who did so for marketing purposes.
- The “Emperor” nickname caught on in the English speaking world and not in German speaking countries.
- Thus Beethoven never heard it. Had he done so, he would certainly have been incensed.
- *“From the history of the ‘Eroica’ we know how Beethoven would have appreciated the vulgar title by which this concerto is known in the British Isles.”* (Donald Tovey)

THE CLASSICAL DOUBLE-EXPOSITION SONATA FORM:

- ORCHESTRAL EXPOSITION: Orchestra presents main themes.
- SOLO EXPOSITION: Soloist embellishes orchestral themes, or presents its own.
- DEVELOPMENT: Orchestra and soloist jointly subject the themes to musical variation.
- RECAPITULATION: Themes return. Orchestra and soloist share the section.
- CADENZA: Soloist plays alone. Improvised.
- CODA: Concluding music, usually brief.

OVERVIEW:

- MOVEMENT 1: *Allegro*; Double Exposition Sonata Form; E-flat major; 4/4 time.
- MOVEMENT 2: *Adagio un poco moso*; Theme & Variations; B major; 4/4 time.
- MOVEMENT 3: *Rondo allegro*; Sonata/Rondo hybrid; E-flat major; 6/8 time.

MOVEMENT 1:

INTRODUCTION:

- Brief & very dramatic.
- Three *fortissimo* orchestral chords in E-flat, A-flat and B-flat alternate with piano cadenzas, solo piano playing scales, trills and arpeggios.
- NOTE: These three massive chords outline the E-flat major triad, a typical Beethoven move, firmly establishing the home key from the get-go.
- The first two piano cadenzas are similar, fast, loud and assertive, slowing down and becoming lyrical just before the end in passages marked *espressivo* by Beethoven.
- The third cadenza is the longest. It begins assertively, but then slows and becomes more lyrical, providing transition to the Orchestral Exposition.
- NOTE: This introduction will reappear once, right before Recapitulation.
- NOTE: Each cadenza features a rising chromatic scale that will be a signature trademark for the solo piano.

COMMENTS:

- This introduction, only around one minute, is revolutionary.
- It foreshadows the remainder of the concerto in overall outline of key structure, as well as the expressive range of the piano.
- It also represents the beginning of the end of the Classical Double Exposition Form.
- This was not the first time a soloist initiated a concerto. Mozart Piano Concerto #9 in E-flat K271 (1777) & Beethoven's 4th Piano Concerto (1808) both begin with the piano stating the first theme.
- Here in the Fifth, Beethoven has a forceful piano that matches the orchestra at the very onset, altering the traditional Classical Era balance between the two.
- With this Introduction Beethoven also alters the Classical tradition for the Cadenza. He provides a set of cadenzas at the very beginning and repeats them before Recapitulation. When the movement arrives at the expected Cadenza, Beethoven will issue a cursory statement.
- The Classical Era Cadenza was an improvised section left up to the soloist. From hereon this tradition is dead, not just for piano concertos, but for all concertos.

QUOTES FROM CRITICS AND SCHOLARS:

- Peter Guttman, on the piano passages: “*dazzlingly extroverted flight(s) by the solo piano.*”
- Michael Steinberg: “*fountains and cascades of arpeggios, trills, and scales. Splashy as this it, it is also organic.*”
- Sir Donald Tovey: “*A majestic introduction in which the key of E-flat is asserted by the orchestra and pianoforte in a rhapsodic outburst.*”

ORCHESTRAL EXPOSITION:

THEME 1: (E-flat major)

- This is a martial melody stated twice.
- In the first version the melody is stated assertively in strings.
- The second version in winds, is more lyrical, marked *dolce* by Beethoven.
- The theme is made of three motives:
 - Motive A: A long held E-flat note followed by a quick turn of phrase.
 - Motive B: A falling arpeggio, the E-flat triad in reverse.
 - Motive C: A three note fanfare, with a dotted rhythm.
- NOTE: These motives will spawn various themes throughout the concerto.

MODULATING BRIDGE:

- Music moves on in a martial mood.
- Part I: Loud & boisterous. Motive B arpeggios alternate between strings and brass.
- Part II: Still loud and fast, featuring cross-rhythms derived from Motive C.
- Part III, THEME M1: A quieter tune derived from the turn of phrase in Motive A. .
- Music slows and diminishes in preparation for a calmer Theme II.
- NOTE: M1 will serve as an introduction to Theme II throughout the movement.

THEME II: (E-flat minor – E-flat major)

- This is a lyrical theme, also stated twice.
- The first version is quiet & mysterious, in staccato strings, and in the unexpected key of E-flat minor.
- The second version, marked *dolce* by Beethoven, is in E-flat major, legato and lyrical in horns. Tympani beats and strings play a counter melody that accompanies.
- NOTE: The expected key of the second theme is B-flat major, the dominant of E-flat.
- The awkward minor key, staccato version of the theme makes the subsequent major version all the more sweet.
- NOTE: At this point in his career Beethoven was experimenting with unexpected major-minor juxtapositions. They are also found in his Violin Concerto (1806).
- The music transitions with a passage derived from Motive A turn of phrase, initially quiet. It then mounts a *crescendo* toward the Closing Section.

CLOSING SECTION: (E-flat major)

- A fast and busy section, mostly martial, the Closing Section features two themes that stand out as distinct tunes.
- Section begins with loud, fast music in full orchestra re-stating and developing Theme I. Toward the end, the turn of phrase from Motive A is developed.

- THEME C1: Quiet, *dolce* wind tune entirely derived from Motive B. A set of falling eighth notes is sequenced up four times. The melody then falls back as a set of four full notes. The theme is then repeated.
- NOTE: Beethoven is making a complex melody here out of a simple idea of the four falling notes. The theme is, in essence, a repetition of this idea multiple times. Yet it is not a boring melody. It's the rhythmic profile that makes the tune unique and memorable.
- NOTE: C1 acts as a brief lyrical palate cleanser amid fast, assertive, martial music.
- Another *crescendo*, and the Motive Bs are now in full orchestra, loud and heroic, sequenced down.
- Toward the end of this passage the music quiets and the Motive Bs are accentuated by Motive C fanfares in brass.
- Theme C2: The second closing theme is a brief, wistful melody in violins, derived from Motive A. Another calm passage amid martial bluster.
- Two, assertive Motive Cs erupt from orchestra.
- Brief and quiet transitional Motive Cs lead to the entrance of the piano.

PIANO EXPOSITION;

ENTRY:

- The piano takes over with a rising chromatic scale followed by a trill.
- “*The piano, less like a foot soldier than a ballet dancer, (glides) to the center of the stage for a new beginning.*” Leon Plantinga
- NOTE: This rising chromatic scale is a signature melody for the piano. It was already stated in the cadenzas of the Introduction. It will also start Development and appear in the Coda.

THEME I: (E-flat major)

- The piano initiates a quiet, ornamented, *dolce* variation of Motive A and develops it. The passage is delicate and meditative, the piano Mozartian.
- This passage is cadenza-like, the piano either solo or with minimal orchestral accents.
- MOTIVE B ERUPTION: The orchestra erupts with loud, martial music, brass blaring out Motive B.
- NOTE: The dramatic contrast between the piano and orchestra is startling. This will continue throughout the Piano Exposition.
- The piano responds by echoing Motive Bs in a quiet, lyrical, Mozartian variation.

COMMENTS:

- In Classical Era concertos, the solo exposition often featured ornamented versions of the themes stated by the orchestra. Beethoven's dramatic treatment of Theme I is unusual. It would have been unfamiliar to contemporary Viennese audiences who might have considered its soft-loud juxtapositions rather vulgar.
- NOTE that the martial Motive C is absent in the Piano Exposition. Beethoven will save an assertive piano statement of Motive C to the very end of the movement, in the Coda.

MODULATING BRIDGE:

- This is dramatically different than the blustery bridge music of the Orchestral Exposition.
- It is a quiet wind passage. Piano accompanies with scales.
- PIANO ERUPTION M1: The M1 theme of the Orchestral Expo quieted down the blustery music. It now appears in a reverse role. The piano suddenly erupts with a *fortissimo* M1 in an assertive, solo, cadenza-like passage.
- The M1 eruption ends in a *diminuendo* passage as the piano prepares to enter Theme II.

THEME II: (B-minor, C-flat major, B-flat major)

Beethoven presents the second theme as a variations procedure, with three versions.

- MUSIC BOX VERSION, PIANO: (B minor) Quiet and mysterious in piano, a series of triplets marked *leggiermente* (lightly, delicately) by Beethoven.
- LYRICAL VERSION, PIANO: (C-flat major) Sweet, gentle, legato variation in piano.
- MARCH VERSION, ORCHESTRA: (B-flat major) Orchestra erupts with a loud, assertive, military march version, brass and percussion included.
- NOTE: After maintaining the minor-major dichotomy of this theme, Beethoven finally delivers the “correct” key of B-flat, but in orchestra.

PASSAGE WORK BY PIANO:

Beethoven gives the piano considerable “stage time” in this virtuosic section.

- Part I: Ascending piano arpeggios are followed by a loud, dramatic descent.
- Part II: Loud, dramatic sequence develops the Motive A turn of phrase.
- Part III: Quiet passage; Motive B in winds; piano figurations in accompaniment.
- Part IV: Theme C1 stated by winds; piano accompanies with ascending scales.
- Part V: Winds re-state and extend Theme C1 with piano in accompaniment.
- Transition: Quiet piano scales with wind accents mount a *crescendo* toward a dramatic re-statement of the Closing Section by orchestra.

CLOSING SECTION RE-STATED BY ORCHESTRA:

- The blustery, martial music of the Closing Section from the Orchestral Expo returns.
- NOTE: This is not an exact repetition of the earlier one. It is in B-flat major, not E-flat major; it has an abbreviated section within (see below).
- Full orchestra loudly states and develops Theme I. Toward the end, the turn of phrase from Motive A is developed.
- Theme C1 stated in winds, *dolce*, as in the earlier exposition.
- Orchestra re-states C1 loudly. The extension that follows is brief and more subdued as compared to its counterpart in the earlier exposition. It is half as long and lacks the martial Motive C accents.
- Theme C2 stated by violins.
- Two emphatic orchestral Motive Cs and brief transitional music lead to the Development.

DEVELOPMENT:

The Development is mostly concerned with Theme I. It continues to feature dramatic soft-loud juxtapositions. During the Development the piano truly begins its transition into a powerful instrument in par with the orchestra.

- PART I: QUIET SOLO PIANO
 - This is a calm section, similar to the beginning of the Piano Exposition.
 - Solo piano enters with a rising chromatic scale followed by a trill.
 - It then gently states a variation of Theme I Motive A.
 - NOTE: The rising scale & trill is the same gesture that began the Piano Exposition. But this time the rising scale is doubled, in both hands.
- PART II: WIND INTERLUDE ON MOTIVES A & B
 - A minor version of Motive A, followed by Motive B, are developed by different winds. The piano accompanies.
- PART III: MOTIVE C DEVELOPED, LOUD & DRAMATIC
 - Music transitions with Part II material in winds and piano, rising in dynamics.
 - Orchestra enters, accenting the music with Motive Cs.
 - Orchestra develops Motive Cs in a *crescendo*. They supersede Part II material.
 - A huge climax: orchestra & piano alternate with emphatic Motive Cs.
- PART IV: DRAMATIC PIANO SCALES
 - The piano begins a *fortissimo* passage, “*furious passage of octaves, descending in dialogue with the strings, while a solitary bassoon keeps the rhythm.*” (Donald Tovey)
 - “*What Beethoven wants here is the fury of a hail storm.*” (Tovey)
 - The passage ends in a slow *diminuendo*, the scales gradually dying out.

- PART V: THEME C2 DEVELOPED; MOOD CALMS
 - Piano states Closing Theme, *pp* & *espressivo*.
 - Low strings echo the tune, also quietly.
 - “*The curtain of hail is lifted...The calm closing theme reappears.*” (Tovey)
 - Theme C2 is developed with winds & piano in conversation.
- PART VI: TRANSITION
 - Brief, quiet and static. The passage is derived from Motive A. It ends in a crescendo toward the replay of the Introduction.

RECAPITULATION

The recapitulation will parallel the Piano Exposition.

INTRODUCTION REPLAY:

- Recapitulation begins with a return of the dramatic Introduction.
- Three massive, loud orchestral chords alternate with equally loud piano cadenzas.
- NOTE: The piano cadenzas are NOT identical to those at the beginning. They are shorter variations. The third cadenza features a transition to Theme I similar to its earlier version.

THEME I: (E-flat major)

- Theme I begins with Motive A, loud & martial in Orchestra, but then is abruptly cut off.
- Motive A is stated *dolce* by winds.
- Piano echoes this lyrical variation of Motive A beginning with a trill. It extends and develops the motive in a quiet, lyrical, *cantabile* passage.

MODULATING BRIDGE:

- The music is akin to the bridge of the Piano Exposition.
- The wind chorale of the Piano Exposition is now a conversation between horns and woodwinds.
- Theme M1 erupts *ff* in piano, heralding Theme II.

THEME II:

Here Beethoven again presents three variations on the theme, but in different keys.

- MUSIC BOX VERSION, PIANO: (C-sharp minor) *pp* , *leggiermente*.
- LYRICAL VERSION, PIANO: (D-flat major) Same as earlier melody but *pizzicato*.
- MARCH VERSION, ORCHESTRA: (E-flat major) Loud, emphatic, martial.

PASSAGE WORK BY PIANO:

- Part I: Ascending piano arpeggios followed by dramatic descent.
- Part II: Loud, dramatic sequence develops Motive A turn of phrase.
- Part III: Quieter section with Motive B development between winds and piano.
- Transition: Quiet piano scales with string accents followed by a brief wind passage. Dramatic *crescendo* with ascending piano scales leads toward the Closing Section.

CLOSING SECTION: (E-flat major)

- Begins, as expected, with a martial Theme I. This is truncated.
- It cuts off into a series of orchestral Motive C fanfares alternating with loud piano scales.
- The final fanfare is more ceremonial and ends with a loud, sustained 6/4 chord, the traditional introduction to a Cadenza.
- At this point Beethoven places the following instruction in the score: “*Non si fa una Cadenza, ma s’attacca subito il seguente.*” Do not play a cadenza but immediately proceed to the following.

CADENZA/CODA:

- CADENZA:
 - The Cadenza is extremely brief.
 - NOTE: Having delivered elaborate cadenzas in the two introductions and numerous other cadenza-like piano passages, Beethoven does not need a “regular” full Cadenza.
 - Solo piano enters with a brief, assertive passage developing a Motive A fragment, followed by a rising chromatic scale and quiet trills.
- THEME II:
 - Piano plays the delicate, music box version, *pianissimo*, in E-flat minor.
 - Horns and winds re-state Theme II, *forte*, in E-flat major.
 - NOTE: This final juxtaposition of minor & major is a sublime moment in the movement.
- TRANSITION:
 - Strings play Motive A while piano engages in dramatic downward scales; ends in a *crescendo* toward the Closing Section.

➤ CLOSING SECTION:

- The loud, heroic passage on Motive A is shared by piano and orchestra: Orchestra states Motive A; solo piano loudly echoes it. This pair is repeated, sequenced down.
- Winds and solo piano develop Motive A without a break in momentum.
- Same material in full orchestra, piano included. It gradually calms down.
- Theme C2, the Closing Theme, now appears quietly in winds.
- NOTE: Beethoven held back this Closing Theme in the Recap, deftly saving it for the true close of the movement, the Coda.
- Forceful piano passage begins with Theme C2 fragment. It continues with two assertive Motive Cs.
- NOTE: These forceful Motive Cs were previously expressed by orchestra. With this gesture the ascension of the piano from Mozartian delicacy to a full match of orchestra is complete.
- Winds repeat Motive Cs in a quiet, transitional passage.
- Rising chromatic scale in piano followed by a trill (the same one that began the Piano Exposition and the Development) hints at yet another new section.
- Virtuoso piano passage with Motive B presented as sequenced trills.
- A *crescendo* on piano arpeggios ushers heroic Motive Cs in orchestra, brass and tympani included. Music rises to *ff* on the Motive Cs.
- Movement ends with massive orchestral chords alternating with brief piano cadenzas, the piano playing virtuosic scales. It is a rousing finale.
- NOTE: This ending is, in essence, a brief recall of the Introduction.

COMMENTS FROM SIR DONALD TOVEY ON THE CADENZA/CODA:

Sir Donald Tovey views these two sections as one. Noting that Beethoven has forbidden an improvised Cadenza, he continues, “*(Beethoven) has written out in full a coda that begins like a cadenza, but soon settles down to what turns out to be the final glorified recapitulation of the ritornello.*” In essence he views the Coda/Cadenza as a second recap of the Piano Exposition but without Theme I.

About the rising chromatic scale on the piano: “*This quiet scale and the following trills have now born the Atlas burden of the whole mighty structure for the third time...leading unswervingly to the glorious close.*”

COMMENTS ABOUT THE FIRST MOVEMENT:

- CONCERTO ON A SYMPHONIC SCALE:
 - Beethoven elevated the concerto to a symphonic scale in this and his Violin Concerto (1806).
 - This is evident in the complex and lengthy first movement. At around 20 minutes, it is longer than many full Classical Era concertos.
- EVOLUTION OF THE PIANO:
 - The movement seems to recapitulate the evolution of the piano. After a dramatic introduction, Beethoven presents a delicate, Mozartian piano. As the movement progresses, the piano becomes increasingly assertive, by the end matching the orchestra in sonority and expressive power.
- REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES:
 - With this movement Beethoven abolishes two time honored Classical Era traditions: The Double Exposition Sonata Form and the improvised Cadenza.
- DRAMA:
 - In Classical Sonata Form movements, drama is usually created by harmonic contrast between the first and second themes, a subtle gesture which, for the average listener, is hard to appreciate.
 - In the Emperor, Beethoven utilizes a more overt dramatic device: contrast between the piano and the orchestra.
 - The early piano music is delicate, while the orchestra counters with loud, blustery, martial music. Nowhere is this more evident than in the second theme with the orchestral march that follows piano variations.
 - As the movement progresses, beginning in the middle of development, the piano becomes more assertive. By the finale, the piano matches the orchestra in dramatic expression.
 - This gradual ascension of the piano from meek & delicate to powerful and assertive can be a source of various metaphors for the overall narrative.

MOVEMENT 2:

OVERVIEW:

- This is a lyrical respite from the rigors of the first movement.
- It employs a simple Theme & Variations form.
- It is static, all in the same key of B major.

THEME: (B major)

- A hymn like melody in muted violins, presented in three phrases.
- Phrase 1 in muted violins is a slow, antecedent. Lower strings accompany *pizzicato*.
- Phrase 2 continues the antecedent in a somewhat more impassioned, rising melody, presented as a small *crescendo*. Winds and lower strings accompany.
- Phrase 3 is the consequent, a hesitant melody, with multiple pauses, in which the violins and lower strings participate.
- The theme ends in a codetta that features two cadences: A false one, akin to a semi-colon in written prose, then a closed cadence, akin to a period.

PIANO VARIATIONS:

The central core of the movement consists of a set of three piano variations on the theme.

- FIRST VARIATION:
 - A delicate, ornamented variation of Phrase 1, *espressivo*, full of triplets.
 - It is a long, leisurely passage. Winds accompany.
 - Brief transition in winds derived from Phrase 2.
- SECOND VARIATION:
 - Another *espressivo* passage, similar to the earlier one.
 - Piano passage then converses with horns& winds playing a Phrase 3 motive.
 - The music departs from earlier serenity & rises dramatically, with rising/falling scales in piano.
 - A *diminuendo* is followed by a series of rising piano trills. Strings accompany with changing harmonies. Ends with a falling scale in solo piano.
- THIRD VARIATION:
 - Akin to the original Theme. It is a *cantabile* (song-like) passage.
 - Left hand plays the theme, right hand accompanies with a triplet ostinato.
- CODETTA:
 - A delicate codetta begins in piano with *pizz* string accompaniment. It is extended by unaccompanied piano as a cadenza-like passage.

FINAL ORCHESTRAL VARIATION:

The theme is now a full, gorgeous melody, all three phrases presented straight through.

- This variation has the thickest texture of the movement.
 - Winds play all three phrases.
 - Piano accompanies with “*quiet, ringing broken chords*” (Robert Greenberg).
 - Strings underpin with eighth note accents.

- NOTE: The piano & string accompaniments are “*rhythmically off by a fraction,*” an instance of “*rhythmic dissonance.*” (Michael Steinberg)
- Sir Donald Tovey points out that the *wavy* piano accompaniment of this passage was admired by Hector Berlioz who made it familiar to all students of orchestration.
- Codetta is the longest in the movement. It begins loud in winds, piano accompanies..
- The codetta continues on into a *morendo* (dying) passage. “*The music seems to be rocking itself to sleep.*” (Robert Greenberg).

SEGWAY INTO MOVEMENT 3:

- There will be no pause between Movements 2 & 3. Instead Beethoven provides a segway, music that bridges the two movements.
- “*All motion comes to a halt as the piano, winds and strings quietly settle on the pitch B.*” (Robert Greenberg)
- Bassoons take over this pitch and, in a quiet, almost imperceptible passage, shift to B-flat.
- This is a set-up for the next movement in E-flat, B-flat being the dominant of that key.
- In the next two measures, the horns quietly take up the B-flat and maintain it.
- The hushed mood of the segway continues while the piano hesitantly hints at the main theme of the third movement.
- This is a deliciously teasing moment.
- “*The piano tries out, softly to itself, a new theme in the arpeggio of E-flat...while the strings listen in puzzlement, pluck a helpful chord or two.*” (David Cairns)
- Then, suddenly and cheerfully, the Rondo breaks out, the piano initiating the new theme.

COMMENTS ON THE SECOND MOVEMENT:

- “*As is true of many nineteenth-century concertos, the slow movement is comparatively brief, since the tempo is not well-suited for virtuoso showmanship.*” (Michael Roeder)
- “*The serene slow movement...acts as an immense parenthesis, its mood...dream like.*” (William Kindermann)
- Note that the serenity of the movement is not only due to its slow tempo and stable harmony. It is also because there are no strong orchestral contrasts as in the first.
- “*(The movement is comprised of) a sustained orchestral hymn around which the piano weaves fragile figures in sixteenth and triplet eighth notes, often simultaneously – no mean feat to play accurately.*” (Peter Guttman)
- About the hymn-like, meditative theme of the movement, Beethoven student Karl Czerny said: “*When Beethoven wrote this Adagio, the religious songs of devout pilgrims were present in his mind.*”
- Referring to the brevity and “*largely flat topography*” of the movement, same theme, same key, no major diversions or development, Leon Plantinga opines, “*it gives the impression...of a great, unhurried introduction to the finale.*”

NOTE ON SEGWAYS:

- During his Heroic Period, Beethoven experimented with segways between movements.
- They can also be found in his Triple Concerto (1804), Piano Concerto #4 (1805), Appassionata Sonata (1806), Violin Concerto (1806), Symphonies # 5 & 6 (1808), String Quartet (1809) and Harp Quartet (1810).
- Regarding the segway of the Emperor: “*But no previous composer had created such a magical transition.*” (Gerald Abraham)

MOVEMENT 3

Hybrid Rondo-Sonata Form. I will interpret in Sonata context.

EXPOSITION:

RONDO THEME IN PIANO: (E-flat major)

- This is a “*robust German dance...the dance theme elaborately and excitedly syncopated.*” (Michael Steinberg)
- It is first presented *fortissimo* by solo piano.
- It consists of an antecedent-consequent pair. Overall phrase structure: $a - a' - b - b'$.
- The antecedent (a):
 - It is a rising/falling idea derived from First Movement, Theme I, Motive A.
 - It rises *fortissimo* and falls *pianissimo*.
 - It ends in a brief trill.
 - The antecedent then repeats in slight variation (a').
- The consequent (b):
 - This is a chromatic descent, accompanied by horns playing broken chords.
 - Marked *Mit Nachdruck* (emphatically) in the score, a rare German instruction.
 - It repeats in a truncated statement (b'), with an extension that transitions to the next presentation.
 - NOTE: b' is never be fully stated. It always serves as a bridge to an extension.

COMMENTS BY LEON PLANTINGA ON THE RONDO THEME:

- About Phrase a : “*The beginning of Beethoven’s theme seems distorted from an excess of energy – behaving more like a large puppy than a reliable steed.*”
- About phrase b , the “downward reply”: “*this is a hunt-like theme...with galloping motions.*”
- “*The music of the hunt comes... across as a distant relative of the military sounds of the first movement.*”

RONDO THEME IN FULL ORCHESTRA: (E-flat major)

- The entire orchestra joins in to state the theme in a buoyant, energetic, *forte* passage.
- Phrasing remains the same: $a - a' - b - b'$.
- b' leads to an orchestral extension, in the same lively mood.

CODETTA:

- A brief brass fanfare leads to an orchestral codetta.
- The codetta is still dance-like and alternates with brass fanfares.
- Transition by solo piano in a cadenza-like passage of “*upwards swirling triplet figurations*” (Robert Greenberg), ushers in the Second Theme.

SECOND THEME: (E-flat major)

- Piano states a lyrical Second Theme, *dolce*.
- NOTE: This is not a true Sonata Form 2nd theme; it is in the same key as the first.
- The theme features two phrases:
 - Phrase a is an elegant, delicate dance, the melody derived from First Movement, Theme I, Motive A.
 - Phrase b is a rising three note idea, derived from Second Movement Theme, Phrase 3.
 - Phrase b is sequenced up three times, the 1st two receiving a string response.
 - Phrase b then engages in a conversation with winds and subsequently with a loud and emphatic orchestra.

CLOSING SECTION:

- This section belongs to the piano.
- Piano engages in another delicate, dance-like, *dolce* melody.
- Piano melody, still *dolce*, becomes more hurried.
- Orchestra briefly interjects, leading to an emphatic *fortissimo* piano passage that fades in preparation for the Rondo Theme reprise

DEVELOPMENT:

OVERALL ORGANIZATION:

- The Development, dominated by the piano, is in five parts.
- The first four parts feature the Rondo Theme, developed in variations.
- Each begin with a recognizable Rondo Theme motive and end with the Codetta.
- The final fifth part enacts a virtuosic transition toward Recapitulation.

PART I: RONDO REPRISE AND EXTENSION

- Solo piano reprises the Rondo Theme with phrases $a - a' - b$, as in the beginning.
- Music then moves on to a developmental extension: b' , is developed by solo piano in a virtuosic passage.
- Orchestra loudly states b' motive. Winds follow with a quieter statement.
- Finally, piano gives a loud version of the motive.
- Piano transition with the cadenza-like passage that heralded the second theme.
- NOTE: Many scholars consider Part I separate from Development, as a stand-alone Rondo reprise.

PART II: RONDO THEME DEVELOPED IN C MAJOR

- Solo piano states Phrase a of the Rondo Theme and develops it in a virtuosic passage that ends in rising and falling scales.
- A truncated Codetta. loud in strings, with horn fanfares, ends the passage.
- Transition with *pianissimo* horn fanfares.

PART III: RONDO THEME DEVELOPED IN A-FLAT MAJOR

- Solo piano develops Phrase a in a soft, virtuosic music-box version, ending in rising/falling scales.
- Codetta loud, in full orchestra, provides dramatic contrast to the piano passage.
- Transition with *pianissimo* fanfare in oboe & bassoon.

PART IV: RONDO THEME DEVELOPED IN E MAJOR

- Solo piano engages in another delicate, virtuosic variation on the Theme, full of “lacey arpeggios.” (Greenberg)
- Piano finishes with a louder, more assertive passage of rising/falling scales.
- Codetta begins loudly in orchestra, but is abruptly cut off for the next passage.

PART V: DARK PIANO EPISODE IN E MINOR

- The mood darkens with a loud, turgid piano passage in E minor, the piano playing fast arpeggios.
- Strings accompany with horn-fanfare motives.
- The piano passage dies down in a *diminuendo*.
- NOTE: This is another major-minor juxtaposition as in the first movement, Theme II.

COMMENTS:

- This development section takes up a large part of the movement, almost 40%.
- Repeated appearances of the Theme, despite the developmental treatment, give the listener the impression of Rondo Form.
- Leon Plantinga characterizes the section as, “*a series of rousing excursions that, in accordance with the larger idea of the rondo, keep circling back to their starting point.*”

SEGWAY RE-ENACTED:

- A quiet static passage with a long trill in piano.
- Strings hesitantly state Rondo Theme motives uttered by the piano in the original segway.
- The passage modulates to B-flat, as it did in the segway.
- The piano breaks out with dramatic *forte* scales, first down, then up.
- Piano moves on to Rondo Theme, as in the beginning of the movement.
- NOTE: This is not an exact replica of the Segway but rather a brief recall of it.

RECAPITULATION

Overall, this section remains faithful to the Exposition with slight variations in some details.

- Rondo theme (E-flat major) recapped by piano.
- The extension that transitions to orchestral version is slightly varied.
- Loud, celebratory Rondo Theme (E-flat major) in orchestra.
- Codetta (E-flat major) follows as in Exposition.
- Dramatic piano introduction that leads to Theme 2 repeated.
- Theme 2 (E-flat major) begins with Phrase *a* as in the Exposition.
- Theme 2 Phrase *b*, however is different. The rising three note idea is sequenced up 4 times (as opposed to 3) with responses in strings or winds.
- The net effect of the variation is to make the second part of Theme 2 more emphatic.
- Codetta proceeds as in Exposition.
- Closing Section with virtuosic piano passages is as in the Exposition.

CODA:

- Piano initiates the now familiar Rondo Theme; but now the theme is a shared dialogue between piano and orchestra.
- Orchestra presents the theme in a loud, triumphant passage.
- Orchestral phrasing: $a - a' - b$. Phrase b' is briefly uttered by bassoon & horns.
- Piano takes up b' and extends it in a long trill over which strings play the same motive.
- b' extension continues, shared between piano and orchestra, ending in another extended piano trill.
- Codetta begins quietly in horns and continues loud in orchestra.
- Tympani rolls usher a virtuosic piano passage of ascending scales.
- Beethoven's joke ending:
 - The piano passage dies down.
 - Music fragments to near nothing, piano playing individual broken chords while tympani softly beats the Rondo Theme rhythm.
 - *"Allied with the tympani, the piano mockingly repeats the last phrase while draining the theme of interest by flattening its melody to a single repeated note and slowing its distinctive rhythm to a crawl."* (Peter Gutmann)
 - The overall impression is that the concerto will fade into a subdued finale.
 - Suddenly the piano erupts into loud scales, followed by loud orchestral statement of Rondo Theme motive, and a triumphant finale is achieved with loud concluding chords in orchestra.

COMMENTS ON THE THIRD MOVEMENT:

ABOUT FORM:

- The overall narrative is akin to Sonata Form.
- The Rondo aspect of the movement is the recurrence of the two themes.
- The presence of an elaborate Development creates a loftier, more complex narrative than expected from a standard Rondo.
- *"What gives this rondo its chief impressiveness is the immense breadth of its middle episode."* Donald Tovey, referring to the Development.
- Harmonically this is not a typical Sonata Form; the second theme is always in the home key of E-flat.

BALANCE BETWEEN PIANO & ORCHESTRA:

- *"The rondo... displays a subtle balance between piano and orchestra."* Peter Gutmann
- The movement does not display clashing contrasts between the two, as in the first.

THE ROLE OF THE FRENCH HORN:

- Having noted that Phrase *b* of the Rondo theme is “*hunt-like*,” Leon Plantinga points out the prominent role of “*that instrument of the chase, the French horn*.”
- “*At many points in the movement the horn marks time, announces new beginnings, and ushers in new tonalities by tapping out its equestrian rhythms*.” Plantinga

ABOUT THE JOKE ENDING:

- Beethoven’s propensity for humor in his music is well known. Most see the final dying gesture of the piano with the aid of the tympani, and its subsequent lively climax as just that, a joke.
- “*The drum passage at the end reveals the sublime depth from which...outbursts of hilarity spring*.” Donald Tovey
- However, there are some who have taken this more seriously. British musicologist John Warrack sees the gesture as a metaphor of the conflict between individual and society, the final piano flourish representing the violent overthrow of oppression.
- Leon Plantinga: “*the tympani...transform that amiable galloping rhythm into something quite different: it has become tense, portentous, martial. It recalls the military music of the first movement*.”
- Leon Plantinga: “*(Beethoven’s) last concerto ends with a closing reference to that archetypal emblem of the genre, a vision of leader and followers engaged in common struggle and cooperation. The imagery is military, the meaning ultimately human and humane*.”

FINAL COMMENT ABOUT THE CONCERTO FROM A BEETHOVEN CONTEMPORARY:

“*It is doubtless one of the most original, most inventive, most effective, but also most difficult of all existing concertos*.” Friedrich Schneider (1786-1853), pianist, composer & conductor.

APPENDIX: ISSUES RELATED TO THE CADENZA

EVOLUTION OF BEETHOVEN'S APPROACH TO THE CADENZA

"The concerto has arisen from the needs and for the needs of virtuosity." Ludwig Misch

This is why, during the Classical Era when the genre was codified, the Cadenza was not composed but rather, left to the performer to improvise.

As his career evolved, *"Beethoven could not help being Beethoven,"* (Misch) and he increasingly resisted relinquishing the Cadenza to empty displays of virtuosity that clashed with his otherwise carefully constructed compositions.

Hence, *"Non si fa una cadenza,"* his instruction in the score of the Fifth Piano Concerto.

Misch argues that Beethoven's work is already virtuosic enough in its entirety. Therefore, soloists who master it do not need additional displays of virtuosity.

Note that earlier in his career Beethoven, still in a Classical Era mold, had a traditional approach to the Cadenza.

In an incident recounted by Beethoven pupil Ferdinand Ries, on the eve of a public performance Ries was to give of Beethoven's Piano Concerto #3 (1803), Ries asked Beethoven to write a cadenza for him. Beethoven refused and told him to write his own. Beethoven did review and approve Ries' cadenza. During the concert, conducted by Beethoven himself, Beethoven shouted "Bravo!" at the end of the cadenza, leading to a standing ovation for Ries.

"Although Beethoven is presumed to have improvised brilliant cadenzas when performing his own concertos, he wrote out suggested ones for publication. (He) barely tolerated others' efforts, specifying in his Fourth, 'La Cadenza sia corta' (The cadenza is to be short.)" Peter Guttman

"Beethoven's written cadenzas represent a step forward along the road leading imperceptibly to the abolishment of the (improvised) cadenza." Misch

"Thus Beethoven wrested control over his Emperor from structural mischief of future egotistical soloists and ensured that his intentions would be followed without disruption." Peter Guttman

COMMENT ABOUT A CADENZA IN THE BEGINNING, from MICHAEL STEINBERG

"A cadenza is a cadence – an extended, elaborated, and usually brilliant one, but a cadence nonetheless."

REFERRING THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FIRST MOVEMENT: *"A cadence is an odd thing, therefore, to find at the beginning of a composition; nonetheless, it is what we do find here."*