

Heroes and Tyrants: From Beethoven to Shostakovich

Thursday, May 28, 2026 · 20:00 · Philharmonie Berlin
Semyon Bychkov, conductor · Víkingur Ólafsson, piano

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	BEETHOVEN 1770–1827 <i>Coriolan Overture in C minor, op. 62</i>	8'
2	BEETHOVEN 1770–1827 <i>Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 5 in E flat major, op. 73</i> ("Emperor")	38'
3	SHOSTAKOVICH 1906–1975 <i>Symphony No. 5 in D minor, op. 47</i>	45'
TOTAL MUSIC		91'

Ludwig van Beethoven

1770–1827

8 minutes

Coriolan Overture in C minor, op. 62

ABOUT THE WORK

The overture was composed not for Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, as is sometimes assumed, but for a now largely forgotten verse tragedy on the same subject by the Viennese playwright Heinrich Joseph von Collin, published in 1804. The story, drawn from Plutarch, concerns Gaius Marcius Coriolanus, the proud Roman general who is banished from Rome, allies himself with the enemy and marches on his own city. His mother's pleas persuade him to spare it, and in Collin's version, unable to turn back or go home, he kills himself.

Ludwig van Beethoven

38 minutes

1770–1827

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 5 in E flat major, op. 73 ("Emperor")

ABOUT THE WORK

Beethoven composed his Fifth Piano Concerto in 1809, in Vienna, as Napoleon's army was bombarding the city. During the worst of it he took refuge in his brother's cellar with pillows pressed against his ears, to protect what hearing he had left from the cannon fire. It would be the last piano concerto Beethoven completed. By the time of its premiere his hearing had deteriorated so far that he could no longer perform as soloist, ending one of the most brilliant pianistic careers of the era.

Dmitri Shostakovich

45 minutes

1906–1975

Symphony No. 5 in D minor, op. 47

ABOUT THE WORK

The Fifth Symphony was Shostakovich's response. Composed in 1937, the year of the Great Purge, when Stalin's terror reached its peak, it was premiered in Leningrad on 21 November of that year by the Leningrad Philharmonic under Yevgeny Mravinsky. It was Shostakovich's calculated act of public repentance, and the press greeted it, with the composer's own public endorsement, as "a Soviet artist's creative response to just criticism." It was an immediate and overwhelming success: the premiere audience gave the work an ovation said to have lasted well over half an hour. Shostakovich's career was saved.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

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