

Emilie Mayer's Faust and Beethoven's Fifth

Thursday, October 22, 2026 · 20:15 · Concertgebouw
Riccardo Minasi, conductor · Mao Fujita, piano

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	MAYER 1812–1883 <i>Faust Overture</i>	11'
2	MOZART 1756–1791 <i>Piano Concerto No. 25 in C major, K. 503</i>	32'
3	BEETHOVEN 1770–1827 <i>Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67</i>	33'
TOTAL MUSIC		76'

Emilie Mayer

1812–1883

Faust Overture

11 minutes

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

As a Faust overture in the Romantic tradition, expect music of dramatic contrasts: the brooding, striving spirit of Goethe's hero set against more lyrical, tender material. Listen for a weighty, often shadowed opening that establishes the work's serious tone (the restless searching that defines Faust himself), and for the way Mayer builds momentum through her orchestra with sudden harmonic shifts and rich colourings.

This is your chance to hear, quite possibly for the first time, the orchestral voice of a composer her contemporaries took entirely seriously. Notice how confidently she handles the full Romantic orchestra, how she shapes a dramatic arc across a short span, and how the music drives toward its climax. Come without preconceptions: rather than measuring the piece against the masterpieces that frame it, listen for what is individual in Mayer's voice, and for the simple, striking fact that music this assured lay silent and unheard for well over a hundred years.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

32 minutes

1756–1791

Piano Concerto No. 25 in C major, K. 503

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The first movement (Allegro maestoso) opens with grand, march-like C-major chords. But listen, just moments in, for the music's sudden clouding into the minor, a shadow that will keep recrossing the movement and give it its peculiar depth. This is one of Mozart's longest and most symphonic concerto movements; notice the wealth of themes and the way the piano, when it enters, both joins and gently transforms the orchestra's grand argument. One of its melodies has often been likened to the 'Marseillaise.'

The slow movement (Andante) moves to the warm key of F major and unfolds as a serene, songful meditation, the piano in intimate dialogue with the woodwinds, Mozart the opera composer audible in its vocal grace. The finale is a spacious rondo built on an elegant, dancing theme, but it too has surprising reach and contrapuntal interest, far more than a simple romp. Keep your ear on the conversation between piano and orchestra throughout: in this concerto, more than almost any other, they are true equals in a single grand design.

Ludwig van Beethoven

33 minutes

1770–1827

Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Everything grows from those first four notes. Listen for how the opening motto is not just a theme but a building block: Beethoven hurls it through the first movement obsessively, in every register and instrument, generating tremendous momentum from the barest material; even a lone oboe's brief, plaintive cadenza cannot halt its drive.

The second movement (Andante con moto) offers respite: a flowing, dignified set of variations on two themes, with noble brass outbursts. The third movement returns to C minor and a sense of foreboding: listen for the menacing opening on cellos and basses and the gruff, scrambling fugato of its central trio. Then comes the symphony's great masterstroke: instead of end-

ing, the scherzo dissolves into a long, suspenseful passage of hushed, throbbing strings over a quiet drumbeat, the tension stretched almost unbearably, until it bursts directly, without a break, into the blazing C-major finale. At that moment Beethoven brings in trombones, piccolo and contrabassoon for the first time in the symphony, flooding the hall with new brilliance. Listen, too, for how the shadow of the third movement briefly returns mid-finale, only to be swept aside as the music drives to one of the most emphatic, hard-won victories in all of music.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/rco-2026-10-22-minasi>

Version 3, 30 September 2026