

ROYAL CONCERTGEBOUW ORCHESTRA

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

ABOUT THE WORK

The concert overture (a single-movement orchestral piece, often inspired by a literary or dramatic subject, written for the concert hall rather than the theatre) was one of the most popular orchestral genres of the Romantic era. Mendelssohn's overtures were the great models, and composers across Europe used the form to paint a scene, tell a story in miniature, or evoke a famous literary character. Emilie Mayer, a prolific and resourceful orchestral composer, wrote around fifteen such overtures, and among them is this Faust Overture, inspired by Goethe's monumental drama: the foundational text of German Romanticism, and a subject that drew composers from Berlioz and Schumann to Liszt and Wagner.

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

1756–1791

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

32 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Mozart completed his Piano Concerto No. 25 in C major on 4 December 1786, in the same busy stretch that produced the 'Prague' Symphony, and probably played it himself in Vienna soon afterwards. It is the last of the great series of concertos

he wrote for his own use during his peak Viennese years, and it is the grandest and most public of them all. Where some of the earlier concertos charm or beguile, K. 503 impresses: it is big-boned, ceremonial and symphonically ambitious, the work of a composer at the height of his powers writing on the largest scale the genre allowed.

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 con-

versation 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

1770–1827

Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67

33 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

No piece of orchestral music is more famous than Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and few have been more influential. Its four opening notes, three short and one long ('short-short-short-LONG'), are perhaps the most recognisable musical idea ever written, and the symphony built from them became, almost immediately, the very emblem of what a symphony could be: not merely a sequence of pleasing movements but a single dramatic journey, a struggle that ends in triumph.

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 ending, 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.

Tonight's artists

Mao Fujita *piano*

Mao Fujita's affinity for Mozart is well established: his recorded cycle of the complete Mozart sonatas marked him out as a Mozartian of rare poise and clarity. The 'grand' C-major Concerto, K. 503, asks for more than charm, though: its symphonic breadth and shadowed grandeur call for architectural command alongside the singing tone and transparency that are Fujita's hallmarks. Hearing this most public of Mozart's concertos in his hands is a chance to test a celebrated Mozart specialist against the composer's most ceremonious canvas.

Mao Fujita, born in Tokyo in 1998, is among the most admired pianists of the younger generation. He began playing at the age of three and rose rapidly through the competition circuit, winning first prize at the Clara Haskil Competition in Switzerland in 2017 and then the silver medal at the 2019 International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, which brought him to wide international attention. An exclusive Sony Classical artist, he announced himself on record with an acclaimed complete set of Mozart's piano sonatas, and his Mozart playing, poised, transparent, unaffected and singing, has become something of a calling card. Praised for the refinement and natural musicality of his playing rather than mere display, he now appears with leading orchestras and in major recital halls around the world.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

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

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