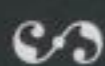


THURSDAY 18 JUNE
2015, 7.30PM



Programme:

Beethoven
FIDELIO OVERTURE

Beethoven
PIANO CONCERTO NO. 3

— Interval —

Beethoven
SYMPHONY NO. 5



Dresden Philharmonic

Freddy Kempf
PIANO

Michael Sanderling
CONDUCTOR

PROGRAMME NOTES

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
FIDELIO OVERTURE (1805)

Beethoven was to write four overtures to his opera *Leonore*, or as it is more well-known in its final revision, *Fidelio*, the theme of which is the rescue by a woman (disguised as man) of her husband who has been detained for political reasons and faces death. For the first, 1805 performance of the initial version of the opera, known as *Leonore* and cast in three acts as opposed to the eventual two for *Fidelio*, he wrote the overture called *Leonore No. 2*. After this came *Leonore No. 3*, also written for a revival of the first version of the opera and first heard in 1806. This is generally considered to be the finest of the eventual four, but in its scale, length and intensity, is unsuited to the earlier scenes of the opera, so throwing it out of balance dramatically.

For a planned performance of the opera in Prague in 1808, Beethoven composed the overture *Leonore No. 1*. He believed this version to be too slight for the drama to which it was a prelude. Finally for the two-act version, renamed as *Fidelio*, he resorted to fresh musical material and composed what is today called the *Fidelio Overture*, to be heard tonight. This proved to be best suited of all four for the opera, being a vigorous and brief curtain-raiser, and setting the scene well for what was to follow on stage.

The various versions have had notable musical champions. Towards the end of the 19th century Mahler began to play *Leonore No. 3* between the first and second scenes of the second act of the opera at the Vienna Court Opera, to great dramatic effect, and as a summation of the opera's eternal themes of liberty and fidelity. This practice is often still to be heard today. *Leonore No. 1* was admired and performed by Toscanini, who conducted it during the inter-war years.

Unlike the three *Leonore* overtures, the *Fidelio Overture* does not use any thematic material from the opera. It is written in the key of E major, the same key that Beethoven used for *Leonore's* first act aria expressing both hope and heroism. The three *Leonore* overtures are all set in C, the key of the final liberation at the climax of the opera. The change of key is significant, in that it indicates a shift in Beethoven's focus from the final victory to the struggle of the virtuous wife for the liberation of her beloved husband. First performed in Vienna in 1814 in its final form, *Fidelio* enjoyed immediate success, which has continued to this day.