

**TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Gustavo Gimeno, Music Director

# Lang Lang's Emperor— A Gala Celebration

**Gustavo Gimeno**, conductor

**Lang Lang**, piano

---

**Paul Dukas**

*L'apprenti sorcier (The Sorcerer's Apprentice)*

---

**Ludwig van Beethoven**

Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 73  
"Emperor"

I. Allegro

II. Adagio un poco moto

III. Rondo: Allegro

*Concert Program*

---

Wednesday,  
September 24, 2025  
7:00pm

---

Please note that there will  
be no intermission.

*Lang Lang's appearance is  
generously made possible  
by Bob Corcoran.*



Concert Sponsor

Paul Dukas (1865–1935)

## *L'apprenti sorcier* (*The Sorcerer's Apprentice*)

Composed 1897

10 min

**PAUL DUKAS WAS ONE OF THE MOST FASTIDIOUS OF THE FRENCH COMPOSERS.** He destroyed much of his life's work before anyone ever saw it, and so his reputation rests upon very few works. These, however, are all well known, not only for their artistic inspiration, but also for their extremely fine craftsmanship. *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* was Dukas's first resounding success and his longest lasting, inspired by a ballad by Goethe of the same name. He set to work on the piece in January 1897 and completed it in a matter of months.

In Goethe's poem, a sorcerer's apprentice is left alone by his master. His task is to fill the household jugs with water—the sort of drudgery apprentices in all the trades were bound to perform. This apprentice, however, is lazy; he has learned a little magic, enough to bring a broom to life and command it to carry water. All goes well until the job is done and the apprentice realizes that he does not know how to command the broom to stop. He tries chopping the broom in half, but the two halves of the broom both continue to fetch water until they flood the house. The sorcerer returns and with righteous wrath commands the brooms with the correct spell. The apprentice is chastened and humiliated.

Few of us today can hear *Apprentice* without remembering the sequence in Walt Disney's 1940 animated feature film *Fantasia* in which Mickey Mouse, as the title character, battles the horrific consequences of his sloth. The movie draws quite literally from Dukas's music, a work that is explicitly narrative.

Dukas found a way to use the taut structure of the traditional sonata form to

portray dramatic events as exactly as any live actor on stage ever could. The slow introduction presents the four principal themes of the work: The strings open softly with the descending water theme. The clarinet enters immediately with a gentle statement of the broom theme, which is carried into the higher registers by other winds. Abruptly, the jaunty apprentice theme disrupts the mysterious calm, but is immediately subdued once again by the surrounding mysteries. The sorcerer's theme (or the spell theme) intrudes suddenly in loud, muted brasses as the master admonishes his apprentice—then, he is gone.

In the ensuing, lively section, the broom fetches water and the apprentice battles it as the themes present themselves and interact with one another through the development section. The apprentice attempts an ineffectual spell, sounded by repeating calls from the trumpets. At the point of recapitulation, where the two halves of the broom come alive, Dukas sets the broom theme in canon with itself so that we hear two brooms following each other in their mindless execution of orders.

The disaster runs out of control until the sorcerer returns in a sudden outburst of sustained brass chords. This calls an immediate halt to the magical water-carrying. The apprentice faces his master in sodden silence. He pleads for forgiveness (sounded by a solo cello), but the master, after silent consideration, dismisses him with a final gruff outburst from the full orchestra.

—Program note by William Westcott

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

## Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 73 “Emperor”

Composed 1809

38 min

**BEETHOVEN'S LAST PIANO CONCERTO** is among the most representative works in his so-called “heroic style.” It was composed early in 1809, in part while the French army under Napoleon was laying siege to Vienna. (From this campaign comes the sad story of the composer fleeing to the basement of his brother’s house and using pillows to shield what remained of his hearing.) One might hear allusions to contemporary events in the often militaristic bearing of this concerto, particularly in the first movement, though the nickname familiar to English-speaking audiences did not originate with Beethoven. The “Emperor” was first performed in Leipzig in November of 1811, but Beethoven, by then nearly deaf, never played it in public himself.

The “Emperor” begins, in defiance of Classical convention, with a brilliant cadenza for the piano punctuated by powerful orchestral chords. The cadenza prepares the listener to hear music that is unusually grand in scale and elevated in rhetoric, and that demands a level of virtuosity that anticipates the early-Romantic piano concerto: witness the massive chords, stampeding octaves, stormy arpeggios, cascading scales, textures of uncommon delicacy and colour, and glittering figuration in the highest register of the keyboard.

Beethoven does not abandon Classical form here, however: once the cadenza passes, a long orchestral passage duly introduces the subject matter of the first movement. There are two main themes, both marches—the first blustery, the second gentle and appearing in both major and minor keys. As the movement unfolds, these

themes are varied and extended, recast in ever-new, often Romantic-sounding forms, and new motifs emerge in the process. The recapitulation is heralded by another cadenza—though later, at just the point where one actually expects a cadenza, Beethoven writes in the score, “Do not play a cadenza, but instead proceed immediately to the following.” The “following” is briefly cadenza-like in character, but really amounts to further development of the main themes.

The second movement, a lyrical, deeply Romantic meditation devoid of drama or development, is really an extended introduction to the finale. The touching main theme is hymn-like; Beethoven’s pupil and friend Carl Czerny recalled that “the religious songs of devout pilgrims” were in Beethoven’s mind when he wrote it. The piano plays the theme only once. Otherwise, it offers dreamy decoration of sometimes heartbreaking beauty. As in all of Beethoven’s later concertos, the second and third movements are linked, here with the pianist musing over a motif that foreshadows the main theme of the finale.

The joyous finale alludes to the hunt: the metre is 6/8, and the main theme imitates a sort of horn call. Though the finale is nominally in rondo form, little time is given to contrasting themes. In the long quasi-development in the middle, only the main theme appears, in four versions, each more rarified and more ornately decorated than the last—another delectable Romantic touch. At the end, we are left with the piano accompanied only by timpani quietly tapping out the “hunting” rhythm, until whirling piano scales and the orchestra’s last reference to the main theme bring the concerto rousingly to a close.

—Program note by Kevin Bazzana

For a biography of Gustavo Gimeno, please turn to page 6.



## Lang Lang, piano

Lang Lang made his TSO début in February 2003.

Lang Lang is a leading figure in classical music today—as a pianist, educator, and philanthropist, he has become one of the world's most influential and committed ambassadors for the arts in the 21st century. Equally happy playing for billions of viewers at the 2008 Summer Olympics opening ceremony in Beijing or just for a few hundred children in public schools, he is a master of communicating through music.

Heralded by *The New York Times* as “the hottest artist on the classical music planet,” Lang Lang plays sold-out concerts all over the world. He has formed ongoing collaborations with conductors including Sir Simon Rattle, Gustavo Dudamel, Daniel Barenboim, and Christoph Eschenbach and performs with all the world's top orchestras. Lang Lang is known for thinking outside the box and frequently steps into different musical worlds. His performances at the GRAMMY® Awards, with Metallica, Pharrell Williams, and jazz legend Herbie Hancock, were watched by millions of viewers.

For about a decade Lang Lang has contributed to musical education worldwide. In 2008 he founded the Lang Lang International Music Foundation aimed at cultivating tomorrow's top pianists, championing music education at the forefront of technology, and building a young audience through live music experiences. In 2013 Lang Lang was designated a Messenger of Peace, focusing on global education, by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Lang Lang started playing the piano at age 3, and gave his first public recital before he was 5. He entered Beijing's Central Conservatory of Music at age 9, and won First Prize at the International Tchaikovsky Competition for Young Musicians at 13. He subsequently went to Philadelphia to study with legendary pianist Gary Graffman at the Curtis Institute of Music. He was 17 when his big break came, substituting for André Watts at the *Gala of the Century*, playing Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Christoph Eschenbach. He became an overnight sensation, and the invitations started to pour in.

Lang Lang's boundless drive to attract new audiences to classical music has brought him tremendous recognition: he was presented with the 2010 Crystal Award in Davos and picked as one of 250 Young Global Leaders by the World Economic Forum. He is also the recipient of honorary doctorates from the Royal College of Music, the Manhattan School of Music, and New York University. In December 2011 he was honoured with the highest prize awarded by the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China, and received the highest civilian honours in Germany (Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany) and France (Medal of the Order of Arts and Letters). In 2016 Lang Lang was invited to the Vatican to perform for Pope Francis. He has also performed for numerous other international dignitaries, including four US presidents and monarchs from many nations.

Lang Lang is an Exclusive Recording Artist of Universal Music Group and Deutsche Grammophon.

Artist website:  
[langlangofficial.com](http://langlangofficial.com)



Lang Lang International  
Music Foundation website:  
[langlangfoundation.org](http://langlangfoundation.org)