

An Interview with Rex Woods

**Soloist in the March 16 & 17 Performances of Beethoven's "Emperor" Piano Concerto
with the Civic Orchestra of Tucson**



What makes Beethoven's "Emperor" concerto so special?

Rex Woods:

This concerto is the culminating work in his series of five piano concertos. Years of striving and experimentation yielded a bountiful harvest in this noble, profound, composition. One feels that Beethoven transcends the eternal struggles of the human condition in this music and finds a way to answer the most searching questions of existence. There is dignity, spirituality, and joy in this music and it would be a hard heart indeed that is not moved to some degree by its strains.

Which part do you find the most meaningful?

Rex Woods:

There are so many great moments in this piece: the eloquent entrance of the soloist in the first movement (repeated in the recapitulation), the heavenly beauty and peace of the second movement, and the unexpected and ingenious tympani solo near the end of the third movement. The exaltation and triumph one feels at the end of the first movement, however, is one of my favorite moments.

Do you remember the first time you heard, or played, the concerto?

Rex Woods:

My piano teacher gave me an LP recording of the concerto when I was around 11 years old. I still have the sounds of Arthur Rubinstein in my mind from that performance.

What advice would you give a piano student who is learning the concerto?

Rex Woods:

Give yourself plenty of study time (it's not a 30-day project!). Practice slowly and with total concentration.

What would you tell an audience member to listen to in the work?

Rex Woods:

Enjoy the beautiful themes laid out in the orchestral exposition of the first movement. All of the musical discussion that follows is built on that material. Allow your mind to be carried away by the dreamy mood of the second movement and give yourself over to the joyful dance of the final movement. Beethoven's themes are easy to follow and enjoy. The beauty of his gift to all music lovers is that one discovers new delights and depths of meaning with each hearing. This concerto is a gift for a lifetime.