



Beethoven's Funky Fifth

by Ludwig van Beethoven

Introduction

This well-known classical piece by Beethoven transcends time, continent, and age. More than likely, your students will recognize it within seconds of playing the famous opening motif. Though written for symphony orchestra hundreds of years ago, it remains a favorite today of people young and old.

This arrangement for marimbas melds the old with the new in terms of musical style. It begins in the original style of Beethoven then takes a 200-year leap forward to the modern style of pop and funk. From what we know about Beethoven's personality, I would guess he would not approve of such a rendition; however, with all due respect to him, I think your students and audiences will.

Teaching Suggestions*

A Section:

- To cue the opening two motifs and fermatas, count the three preparation beats by saying "One, two, play." On the cut-off of the fermata, start the next count off, "One, two, play."
- Next, teach the opening of the A Section (m. 3–6).
 - Demonstrate the tenor part. Say to the students, "Tenors, play E and A for 8 beats then D and B for 8 beats." Mention to them that the D and B are located right next to the E and A. These notes can be located quickly by simply moving the mallets apart to the adjacent bars.
 - The bass players can be taught in similar fashion. Demonstrate the correct speed of the half notes by singing or playing. Then, provide an explanation: "Play these four notes slowly—A, C, E, C—then play B, D, E, D in the same way."
 - Teach the two phrases of the soprano part, beginning with the pickups into the A section, one at a time. If students aren't able to retain this much at once, break it down even further into four-note segments. For example, there are three segments to the first phrase: EEE C, FFEE, and CCCA. The next phrase has these three segments: EEEB, FFEE, and DDD B. Practice each segment separately then combine them to play in sequence.
- Measures 7 and 8 can be taught next. After showing the students their notes, explain that these measures are a call and response between the high instruments and the low instruments. Demonstrate this through singing and directing.
- Finally, teach measures 9–11. The parts are in unison, so teach the whole group at the same time. Have them roll softly on the fermata.

B Section:

- After the A Section is learned, teach the rest of the piece. An audible pulse is needed for this step. I like to use a muted triangle or cowbell for this. To mute the triangle, hold the triangle itself between your thumb and index finger. This muffles the triangle somewhat and provides a metronome-like sound for keeping time that's easy to hear and follow.
- The soprano notes for this section are the same as what they played in the A Section with just a little variation. The biggest change is found in the last phrase.

* The suggestions for this arrangement are quite detailed in terms of pedagogy. This is the only lesson I render like this, and I've done so with the hope that it will provide some insight into the methods that seem to work for me when teaching these arrangements. The teaching suggestions that accompany the rest of the arrangements focus on larger ideas and concepts, allowing you to extrapolate them into the nuts and bolts of effective instruction.

- For the altos, study the pattern that is played in the opening measures of this section. You will find that it is repeated throughout, just on different pitches.
- Place your players who have a natural sense of syncopation on your tenor and bass parts. Notice that their parts are nearly the same rhythmically with a few variations. The ending pattern for the basses is especially cool sounding, but a little tricky to play. Work through it slowly with your students.

Adapting the Song

- If the double stops in the alto part at measure 12 prove to be troublesome, play *divisi* instead. Divide the notes and assign them to individual players.
- Simplify further by cutting parts or sections from the arrangement until an acceptable version for your situation is found. Here are some ideas to explore:
 - Cut one or more parts from the B Section to simplify this part. Substitute a guitar or keyboard playing an improvised accompaniment to help fill in the omitted harmonies.
 - The A Section is easiest to comprehend. Cut out the more difficult, funky B section and just use the A Section. Because this makes the song very short, repeat back to measure 3 and play it again. Finish with the *Coda*.

Performance Suggestions

- Play the A Section as written paying attention to the dynamic markings.
- At the fermata in measure 11, have the players continue rolling softly on their note as you cue entrances to the next section. Layer these entrances: start with the tenors, then the altos, then the sopranos, and finally, the basses. To clarify, while the tenors move on to the B Section, the other parts are still holding the fermata. The altos are then cued to move on to the B Section (the other parts, soprano and basses, continue to hold the fermata). Next, the sopranos are cued to move on to the B Section, and finally, the basses, who have been rolling on their fermata note this entire time. Cue the basses one measure early for a special entrance, which means they will enter at measure 19.
- Next, feature different parts as solos, combine parts for duets, and layer parts back in again in a different order. Here is a suggested performance order:

A Section, as written.

B Section:

- Layered entrances in this order: Tenors, altos, sopranos, basses. Cue each group with each repeat of the B Section until all parts are in. Remember, until groups are cued to enter they should be rolling softly on the note they play in measure 11.
- After the bass entrance, everyone plays the B Section once more.
- Alto solo—once through the B Section.
- All play—once through B Section.
- Layered entrances again in this new order: Soprano, altos, tenors, and finally basses.
- All play one more time, then cue the *D.S. al Coda*. (To get back to the D.S. smoothly, the alto, tenor, and bass players need to leave out their last note at measure 19 and play the pickup notes found at the beginning.)
- At the *Coda*, play the fermata note *forte-piano* then gradually *crescendo*. Cue the ending four-note pattern when a sufficient volume has been reached.
- Consider including percussion with this piece to bring attention to the Latin flavor presented in the B Section. Use a variety of Latin percussion instruments—congas, bongos, maracas, guiros, cuica, cowbell, triangle, etc. A few patterns are suggested on page 6. Feel free to create your own.



Beethoven's Funky Fifth Percussion Patterns

Maraca

Cowbell

Agogo

Shaker

Muted Triangle

Conga

Djembe

Beethoven's Funky Fifth

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Arr. by Doug Edwards

$\text{♩} = 172$

A

Soprano *ff* *mf*

Alto *ff*

Tenor *ff*

Bass *ff* *p*

Bass Bars *ff* *p*

Am E7

4

Play "D" if the "B" is outside the range of the instrument.

Soprano *ff*

Alto *ff*

Tenor *ff*

Bass *ff*

B B *ff*

Am E

8

Am E Am To Coda Θ E

Soprano *fz*

Alto *fz*

Tenor *fz*

Bass *fz*

B B *fz*