

of expression, and this concerto was no different. Instead of the usual orchestral exposition, the first movement opens with a single sustained chord by the ensemble. This is immediately followed by several cadenza-like passages from the soloist, which are in turn emphatically resolved by the orchestra's sustained chords before taking off into the glorious first theme. The second movement is

hymn-like in the key of B major, resolving with a simple half-step by the bassoon to B flat to return us to the dominant of the original key of E flat major and the final rondo in all its grandeur.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings, solo piano

## Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

### Symphony No. 6 in F major, op. 68, "Pastorale" 9/21 9/23 9/25

- I. 'Awakening of cheerful feelings on arrival in the countryside.' — Allegro ma non troppo (ca. 9 min)
- II. 'Scene by the brook.' — Andante molto mosso (ca. 12 min)
- III. 'Merry gathering of country folk.' — Allegro (ca. 5 min)
- IV. 'Thunderstorm.' — Allegro (ca. 4 min)
- V. 'Shepherd's song. Happy and thankful feelings after the storm.' — Allegretto (ca. 9 min)

'*Sinfonia caratteristica* — or memories of country life.... *Sinfonia pastorella*.... Anyone who has experienced country life can determine the intentions of the composer even without titles.... The listener should be allowed to discover the situation.... All painting in music is a failure if it is pushed too far.... Instead the music is more an expression of feelings rather than a painting in sounds....'

These various comments were written by Beethoven in his sketches for the Sixth Symphony and reveal that although he did in fact give titles, not only to each movement of the work, but also to the

work as a whole, that his focus was more on expressing the emotional reactions to nature rather than presenting a programmatic piece.

Beethoven's love for nature, in fact his need to be in constant connection with nature, is well known. But the fact that, of all of his works, he felt it important to entitle each movement of his *Pastorale Symphony*, emphasizes even more his strong feelings associated with his relationship with nature. The first movement, '**Awakening of cheerful feelings upon arrival in the country**', may be an expression of his own personal feelings whenever he would leave the city to take time out in the countryside, such as he often did. In fact when he composed this and his Fifth Symphony, among other works, during the summers of 1807 and 1808, he was on retreat in the rural town, Heiligenstadt.

The second movement, '**Scene by the brook**', perhaps comes close to painting a picture of nature with the timbres of the orchestra aptly imitating the sound of the babbling brook as well as mimicking particular bird songs. Beethoven even

indicated in the score the bird song each instrument was playing in the closing woodwind cadenza, with the flute playing the part of the nightingale, the oboe as a quail, and the clarinet a cuckoo. But again it seems it was Beethoven's intent to create a serene atmosphere with these sounds rather than a sound painting.

The remaining three movements are performed without pause, almost creating the effect of a three-movement work, rather than the five indicated in the score. In fact, many have commented that the fourth movement '**Thunderstorm**', in all of its brevity, acts more as an introduction for the final movement, '**Shepherd's song. Happy and thankful feelings after the storm.**' The third movement, '**Merry gathering of country folk**' is a fairly traditional scherzo/trio form with abrupt interruptions in even rhythms, almost as a foreshadowing of the storm to come. And again, though the fourth movement clearly depicts a scene during a sudden rainstorm, Beethoven's hope was that the audience would experience the emotions at hand, beyond the inevitable sound painting.

Symphony No. 6 was premiered in December of 1808 at the massive concert at the Theatre an der Wien where

Beethoven introduced his Fifth Symphony along with his Fourth Piano Concerto, two sections of the Mass in C major, the concert aria *Ah! Perfido*, the Fantasia in G major for piano, as well as the Fantasia in C minor for piano, chorus and orchestra. Needless to say it was somewhat overwhelming for the audience to sit through such a full program. And given that both the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies were composed about the same time, their numbers were mistakenly reversed on the program for this premiere.

As the final movement expresses pure thanksgiving in an exultant hymn, one can't help but hear Beethoven's own words describe his joy at being surrounded by nature as he wrote in a letter to a friend: "How glad I am to be able to roam in wood and thicket, among the trees and flowers and rocks. No one can love the country as I do.... In the country, every tree seems to speak to me.... In the woods, there is enchantment, which expresses all things.... For surely woods, trees, and rocks produce the echo that man desires to hear."

**Instrumentation:** piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani, strings

## Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

### Symphony No. 7 in A major, op. 92 9/25

- I. Poco sostenuto – Vivace (ca. 12 min)
- II. Allegretto (ca. 9 min)
- III. Presto – Assai meno presto, trio (ca. 8 min)
- IV. Allegro con brio (ca. 7 min)

With his continually declining health in the summer of 1811, Beethoven was referred by the prominent Viennese physician, Dr. Giovanni Malfatti to retreat to the Bohemian town of Teplitz, which

was well-known for its spas that ‘cure’. Apparently the respite did some good, if only for the heart, mind and soul, as Beethoven returned to Vienna with sketches for two symphonies, the Seventh being the first he set to writing in the winter of 1811-1812.

**The first movement** opens with a slow introduction, punctuated by emphatic chords before leading into the seminal rhythmic motive that pervades the entire work in various forms. The traditional sonata form is adhered to, however it is thought that the repetitive rhythms and chromatic bass line found in the coda may have led to Carl Maria von Weber’s claim that this was evidence that the composer was “ripe for the madhouse.”

The *Allegretto* title of **the second movement** may seem misleading at first for the so-called slow movement, however it seemed Beethoven wanted to be sure this section was not played as slow as previous ‘*adagio*’ movements. This movement came to be extremely popular with its extended version of the ‘long-short-short’ rhythmic motive over an intriguing A-minor melody, gradually building in intensity, to the extent that the entire movement was often repeated as an encore.

**The third movement’s** scherzo and trio extends the usual ABA form, so that one hears the trio an additional time. The trio utilizes yet another version of the long-short-short rhythmic pattern in its main theme, the melody of which is apparently taken from an Austrian Pilgrim’s hymn heard when the composer was in Teplitz.

**The final movement** is also in the traditional sonata form and brilliantly develops the seminal rhythmic motive even further, leading to two immense ‘tutti’ climaxes at the previously unheard of extreme dynamic of *fff*. The composer himself conducted the highly successful premiere in 1813 in Vienna, at a benefit concert for Austrian and Bavarian soldiers who had been wounded in the Napoleonic Wars.

With as much, if not more emphasis on the rhythmic versus the melodic motives, the dance-like feeling found throughout the work perhaps led to Wagner’s famous quote: “This symphony is the very apotheosis of the dance.” He went on to say: “If anyone plays the Seventh, tables and benches, cans and cups, the grandmother, the blind and the lame, aye, the children in the cradle fall to dancing.”

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**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings

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