

# BEETHOVEN

Symphonies Nos. 4 & 7



Royal Flemish Philharmonic  
**Philippe Herreweghe**



## Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

### Symphony No.4 in B flat, Op.60

1 Adagio - Allegro vivace	11. 26
2 Adagio	9. 22
3 Allegro vivace	5. 44
4 Allegro ma non troppo	6. 45

### Symphony No.7 in A, Op.92

5 Poco sostenuto - Vivace	14. 11
6 Allegretto	8. 48
7 Presto - Assai meno presto	9. 38
8 Allegro con brio	9. 32

### Royal Flemish Philharmonic conducted by: Philippe Herreweghe

Total playing time: 75. 40

Recording Producer: Andreas Neubronner

Balance Engineer: Markus Heiland

Recording: Tritonius Musikproduktion Recording Service, Brussels

Recording location: De Roma, Antwerp

Recording date: 11/2004

SACD mastering: Bastiaan Kuijt, BK Audio, Amsterdam

## The path to the unpronounceable

A select company was present to witness the première of Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 3, *Eroica*, in the summer of 1804. In honour of the occasion, Prince Franz Joseph von Lobkowitz – to whom the symphony was dedicated – had opened his palace gates. This was not an unusual occurrence, as the music-loving prince considered it his privileged duty to generously support promising composers (Beethoven, but equally Anton Eberl or Ludwig Spohr), be it by means of allowances, commissions, or organizing private concerts.

By the time Beethoven's Symphony No. 4 was first performed three years later, quite a bit had already changed in the Viennese musical scene. In October 1805, Napoleon had declared war on Austria, and just a month later, French troops had managed to catch the city off guard. Although public opera and theatre performances were allowed to continue, the French siege had put an end to the private concerts that were usually organized in aristocratic circles. For a while, the future of the orchestral music scene appeared to be endangered. Due to the disappearance of its aristocratic patronage and the municipal concert authorities, the rich (but by no means democratic) Viennese orchestral tradition was under serious threat.

The brief 'crisis' caused an upheaval in the Viennese music scene. In 1807, a number of aristocrats (including Prince Lobkowitz) endorsed the foundation of the *Liebhaber Concerte*: a series of symphonic concerts to which a large part of the affluent upper class could subscribe. How great a demand there was for such concerts, which were more or less accessible to 'the public at large', was apparent from the successful turn-out (approximately 1300 people) for the first concert. Although 'public' concerts were in no way a novelty – Mozart himself had organised performances ('Akademien') in the past, for instance – there was clearly a great need for such initiatives. Nevertheless, there was no structural organization supporting these concerts until 1814, when the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde (= association of friends of music) was founded. And the city had to wait until the foundation of the Wiener Philharmoniker (= Vienna Philharmonic) in 1842 until to have a permanent orchestra at its disposal.

As a matter of fact, Beethoven wrote his symphonic oeuvre parallel to and in flat contradiction of this unpredictable state of affairs. He developed a body of symphonies during an unruly period, in which an elitist system of concerts (in fact, private events for the aristocracy) was transformed into a wide-ranging concert scene, where symphonic music was allotted a position of prominence. With hindsight, it might well seem as if (the utter genius of) Beethoven's orchestral music was responsible for this metamorphosis. However, one can only partially explain the

evolution towards a public and democratic concert scene as a consequence of the music itself. Other factors also contributed to communal recognition of orchestral music. For instance, this period also witnessed a radical intellectual shift in mentality. In short, Beethoven lived through the transformation of not only the social-cultural production, but also the aesthetic reception of orchestral music. Whereas in the past (instrumental) orchestral compositions had been evaluated according to their ability (referential or even representational) to generate expressions or 'Affekten', in his day it gradually became more common to consider these works the bearer of a contemplative and philosophical content.

Notably, E.T.A. Hoffmann is often referred to as the 'spokesman' for this attitude of mind. In his well-known review of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, dating from 1810, Hoffmann demanded an active attitude from the listener. The latter was no longer expected to languidly subject himself to the rhetoric of a composer: no, he was supposed to search for the meaning (Gustav Mahler later used the phrase: 'the inner truth') of a wordless composition. "But how can one accomplish this, if one's weak understanding is not capable of fathoming the intricate cohesion of Beethoven's composition?" Hoffmann wrote. His question places a 'splint' between the human spectator and the artist, who sees through and understands the suffering of his times, the raging of the world.

It would be going too far to allot an aesthetic gravity to Hoffmann's words: rather than an elaborate philosophy, his article is an impassioned essay in which tendentious concepts further specified in the works of other philosophers (Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Schlegel) have been applied to the field of music. It is mainly the historic durability of his thoughts that is of significance here. "Music opens the door to the unknown – a realm that has nothing in common with the external, sensory world by which we are surrounded, a realm in which we leave behind all feelings that can be defined by concepts, in order to surrender to the unpronounceable." Never before had the idea of (instrumental) music as an autonomous, non-cerebral form of art been described with such bravura.

According to Hoffmann, the symphony – and specifically the symphony as composed by Beethoven – was the living proof that instrumental music was capable of thrusting forward to 'the unpronounceable'. However, his depiction of the evolutionary transition from referential to abstract music wilfully ignores Beethoven's most descriptive works (the *Eroica*, *Pastoral*, or *Wellington's Victory*). Only in the 'contentless' symphony – later called the 'absolute' – does Beethoven attain the true essence. What is remarkable, is that the modern listener, now some 200 years later, can still go along with Hoffmann's claims. No matter how 'contentless' this music is, it still wishes to be 'understood'. For instance, the musical arsenal of the Symphony No. 4 – which is shorter

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and more poetic than its predecessor – is still impressive: the harmonically adventurous, darkly tinted introduction (*Adagio*), the exceptional tension created by Beethoven in expectation of the recapitulation in the rhythmically rigorous *Allegro vivace*, the numerous dialogues in the woodwind-dominated *Adagio*, the peasant-like exuberance of the instable scherzo and the *perpetuum mobile* of the concluding *Allegro ma non troppo*. Nowhere is this ever-mobile and multi-hued symphony a bland repetition of classical charm. In fact, Theodor W. Adorno considered the steadily meandering rhythms to be a resounding symbol of Time itself.

Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 has at least as much a claim to a symbolic value as the above-mentioned work. Commentators have continuously likened this symphony to the symbol of a dancing party, a drinking spree or even fragments from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. In the first movement, Berlioz heard a 'ronde des paysans'; and Wagner called the entire work an 'apotheosis of the dance'. Although such interpretations may be considered suggestive, they form the best proof that this music is challenging its audience to listen 'with greater concentration,' 'more in-depth' or 'beyond the notes'. For once again, Beethoven avoids any purely agreeable rhetoric: it contains the sweeping introductions (one of the longest ever composed by Beethoven), the gradually swelling exuberance (ranging from a flute solo to an orchestral *tutti*) of the *Vivace*, the march of the *Allegretto*, which abounds with psychological tension, and the luminous optimism of the *Presto*. Perhaps the most remarkable is the singeing finale, in which a jubilant recklessness flares up every so often – resulting in a short-lived, yet disconcerting moment of confusion. However, this symphony possesses a grand conclusion, with an enormous coda that disposes of any reminder of tragedy in whirlwind fashion.

Carl Maria von Weber considered Beethoven to have been ripe 'for a madhouse'. Leaving aside the dubious criticism of this phrase, his judgement points to Hoffmann's predictions. This music has left behind the external, sensory world in order to cross over to another world, "the realm of the horrifying and immeasurable". Never before had symphonic music been so intrinsically compared to the romantic concepts – never before had a composer tried to attain the 'unpronounceable' with purely instrumental means. Such was the expansion of the position occupied by Beethoven's symphonies, becoming the middle-point of the music scene, that in 1824 already – the year in which Beethoven's final Symphony No. 9 received its première – Adolf Bernard Marx was able to write that the symphony was "a true cornerstone for composer and audience alike".

Tom Janssens

English translation: Fiona J. Stroker-Gale

## Philippe Herreweghe

Philippe Herreweghe was born in Ghent. There he studied medicine and psychiatry at the university and piano at the Music Academy. He founded the Collegium Vocale Gent, La Chapelle Royale and, later, the Ensemble Vocal Européen, thus establishing himself as a specialist in renaissance and baroque music. Since 1991, he and the Orchestre des Champs-Élysées have applied themselves to playing romantic music on period instruments. From 1982 to 2001, he served as Artistic Director of the Festival of Les Académies Musicales de Saintes. At the start of the 2008-2009 season, he became the principal guest conductor of the Netherlands Radio Chamber Philharmonic. In his capacity as principal conductor of the Royal Flemish Philharmonic, Philippe Herreweghe has been focusing for the last ten years on interpreting the pre-romantic and romantic repertoire adequately and refreshingly.

He has also appeared as guest conductor with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Concerto Köln, the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and other illustrious orchestras and ensembles. Some of his most significant recordings include the vocal masterpieces of Bach (such as the St. Matthew and St John Passions, the Mass in B Minor and the Christmas Oratorio), an anthology of the French 'Grand Motet', the requiem masses by Mozart, Fauré and Brahms, oratorios by Mendelssohn, and Schönberg's Pierrot lunaire. With the Royal Flemish Philharmonic he recorded the complete symphonies of Beethoven, next to recordings of Mendelssohn and Stravinsky, in collaboration with the international label PentaTone.

The European musical press acknowledged Philippe Herreweghe's artistic vision by proclaiming him Musical Personality of the Year in 1990. In 1993, Philippe Herreweghe and the Collegium Vocale Gent were appointed Cultural Ambassadors in Flanders. A year later he was awarded the Order of the Officier des Arts et Lettres and in 1997, Philippe Herreweghe received an honorary doctorate from Louvain University. In 2003, he was made a Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur in France.

## Royal Flemish Philharmonic

A modern and stylistically flexible symphony orchestra, the Royal Flemish Philharmonic demonstrates an artistic flair which allows for a variety of styles - from classical to contemporary - in a historically authentic manner. Chief Conductor Edo de Waart is responsible for the orchestra's main repertoire. Drawing on his vast orchestral experience, as former chief conductor of the San Francisco and Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, he contributes to the unique character of the Royal Flemish Philharmonic. He works in close co-operation with Principal Conductor Philippe Herreweghe, who makes use of his specific background in his readings of (pre)Romantic music. Martyn Brabbins is Principal Guest Conductor, former Chief Conductor Jaap van Zweden retains his affiliation with the orchestra

Thanks to its own series of concerts in large venues, the Royal Flemish Philharmonic occupies a unique position in Flanders. The orchestra has earned itself a recurring spot on the annual programmes of the Queen Elisabeth Hall and deSingel in Antwerp, the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels, de Bijloke Music Centre in Ghent and the Bruges Concertgebouw. Alongside its regular concerts, the Philharmonic attaches great value to developing educational and social projects, offering children, youngsters, and people with different social backgrounds the opportunity to get acquainted with the symphony orchestra from close quarters.

The Royal Flemish Philharmonic has also been a guest of some major foreign concert halls: the Musikverein and Konzerthaus in Vienna, the Festspielhaus in Salzburg, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Suntory Hall and the Bunka Kaikan Hall in Tokyo, the Philharmonie of Cologne and Munich, the Alte Oper in Frankfurt, the Palace of Art in Budapest and the National Grand Theatre of Peking. International concert tours through various European countries and Japan are a constant item on the yearly calendar.

In collaboration with the publisher, Lannoo, the Philharmonic is currently developing a series of audio books for children. The Royal Flemish Philharmonic is frequently broadcast on its media partner, Radio Klara, and on the digital television broadcaster, EURO1080. Several of the orchestra's CDs received acclaim by the professional press, including the recent recordings of Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Stravinsky conducted by Philippe Herreweghe (PentaTone). The orchestra's recent releases include Shostakovich' Fifth Symphony with Jaap van Zweden (Naïve) and recordings of Mortelmans and Vieuxtemps with Martyn Brabbins (Hyperion).

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