



BEETHOVEN

SYMPHONY NO. 5



SYMPHONY NO. 7

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PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
MANFRED HONECK, MUSIC DIRECTOR

BEETHOVEN SYMPHONY NO. 5 AND NO. 7 LOOKING BEHIND THE NOTES

There are none of the classic symphonies that have been performed more often than those of Ludwig van Beethoven. The name Beethoven holds an unbelievable fascination—and this is undoubtedly true for conductors who encounter all nine of the symphonies in the course of their own careers. Equally remarkable is the number of different interpretations that exist within the two centuries since Beethoven penned his symphonies—and nowhere is this more evident than with the Fifth Symphony. In Dr. Lars E. Laubhold's detailed and informative book documenting the many recordings of Beethoven's Fifth, one can go back to the earliest recorded versions from 1910 (Friedrich Kark and the Odeon Symphony Orchestra) or 1913 (Arthur Nikisch and the Berlin Philharmonic), and already observe an immense variety of musical choices. Surveying the over one-hundred years since those first recordings, it is clear to see that the music performance tradition has changed dramatically. Running parallel to this, as well, was the development of an art of interpretation coinciding with the emergence of the first conducting schools—Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner and Weingartner, to name a few.

It is rather impossible to distinctly define a clear evolution of the performance tradition for Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, but if we dare to try, there are three general schools of thought that can be seen from 1910 through the present. The first is the traditional interpretation (before 1950) which comes out of the Romantic period. Dr. Laubhold refers to it as *espressivo* style. The second (after

1950) is a *new objectivity*, a cleaner look at only that which has been written in the score. Emerging near the end of the twentieth century is the *authentic performance practice* tradition—and there exists an unbelievable amount of sound documents that enable us to have insights into the “supermarket” of these various interpretations. We know much more today—and interpretations can even come face to face and confront each other. I personally had the luxury as a musician to play under the baton of very different conductors—Bernstein, von Karajan, Kleiber, Harnoncourt, Muti, Abbado, among many others. Additionally, I hesitated for a long time before conducting the Beethoven Symphonies. Of course, I studied them all, but I waited to program them as it was first necessary to organize my impressions and then have a certain distance from the variety of influences. There were also still the questions to address which every conductor must answer with each work: Firstly, what is Beethoven’s will and what are the peculiarities of the piece? Under what circumstances was it composed? At the time that Beethoven composed the work, what was new? What should happen in a particular way? Which traditions, if any, should be followed? Is it possible to find something revelatory?

Beethoven wrote his Fifth Symphony over the course of four years. During the same time, he also worked on his Sixth Symphony and other compositions including *Fidelio* and the Piano Concerto No. 4. The world premiere of the Fifth Symphony took place on the 22nd of December, 1808 in the Theater an der Wien. It was a marathon concert which also included the Sixth Symphony, the Fourth Piano Concerto, the Choral Fantasy, two movements of the C Major Mass and the concert aria “Ah! Perfido”. Reports indicate that the orchestra was not entirely prepared (priority, including the first tier musicians, was given

to the benefit concert under the baton of Antonio Salieri that was to take place the same evening) and the hall had no heat. It is no wonder that it was not a success. Beethoven was said to take the tempo of the Fifth Symphony quite quickly. Nine years later, in 1817, he would add specific metronome markings to every movement indicating that each was to be rather fast. He notated half note = 108 beats per minute for the first movement, and for the second movement, eighth note = 92. Even more important than the metronome numbers though are the descriptive attributes (In the first movement, Beethoven adds the words *con brio* to *Allegro*, meaning "with vigor". In the second movement, he adds *con moto* "with movement" to the *Andante*). In some of the earlier recordings, you find the opening bars of the first movement to be quite slow, mostly in the previously described *espressivo* style. In the second interpretive style, *new objectivity*, most take it quicker. Anton Schindler, who knew Beethoven personally and was more or less his private secretary and first biographer, claims that Beethoven told him the now famous expression "Fate is knocking at the door" (*Das Schicksal klopft an die Tür*) to describe the opening bars. In the first edition of his Beethoven biography, Schindler also writes that Beethoven requested that the first bars of the Fifth Symphony be much, much slower. We know that some of Schindler's comments were not always accurate, but in this particular case, I believe that Schindler's assertions prove true. Egon Voss supports this, as well, with convincing arguments in his Beethoven essay.

The use of the more deliberate tempo gives the opening bars a grandiose weight, power and vehemence. For me, it was essential to capture the greatest possible drama with this famous first statement so as to depict the heroic

character of the movement. Equally important was to highlight the main motive as it appears throughout the movement, balancing the individual parts to make the motive always transparent and discernable, each time according to the character of the passage. Even within the second lyrical melody, it is possible to hear the motive and later in the timpani part (bar 423 or 6:05"), Beethoven has written four equal notes, but makes reference to the motive through a special accent. A very beautiful example can be found in bar 473 (or 6:36") where Beethoven hides an augmentation of the main motive, this time only in the first horn. At times, it is necessary to support the rhythmic structure (I have asked for some accents and emphasis) and though Beethoven has not specifically indicated this in the score, one can read it in the musical language. One such example is bars 416-417 (or 6:00") which continue and connect to the main motive, (bars 421-422 or 6:04"). The oboe cadenza in the recapitulation provides a beautiful expressive interlude, and although the question of why Beethoven has included this can never fully be answered, his concurrent work on his opera, *Fidelio*, and the concert aria "Ah! Perfido" likely provides some insight that his symphonic writing was surely inspired by the operatic trends of the time.

As mentioned previously, Beethoven marks the second movement *Andante con moto*. This clear indication for a quicker tempo provides a wonderful motion and the impression that Beethoven had in mind a light movement with a dancelike character. Instead of thinking of three beats per bar, every dance step is initiated from the first beat. Throughout the movement, there is a certain buoyancy and elegance to the phrasing which can be heard especially in the beautiful woodwind cantilena (bars 132-144 or 4:44") and

also in the fluent character of the variations (bar 50 or 1:46" and bar 99 or 3:30"). The main motive of the first movement comes back in several places (for example, bar 76 or 2:42" and bar 88 or 3:10"). The whole movement is very lyrical with heroic elements, but there are also sad moments, perhaps reminiscent of *Fidelio*. I have asked the orchestra to incorporate some traditions that were common during the time of the classical period, for example a kind of Baroque style bow vibrato in the first violins, second violins and viola (bar 114 or 4:01" and following) which allows for a longer phrasing and warm lyricism over the sixteenth notes. The end of the movement is particularly beautiful as one can nearly hear the German word *Lebewohl*, (meaning farewell) as the music comes to a gentle close (8:23").

The main motive of the opening movement reappears in the third movement Scherzo, first in the fortissimo entrance of the horns and subsequently throughout (bar 101 or 1:16" in the violins and bar 111 or 1:22" and following in the flute, oboe and timpani). The robust trio is folkloristic and funny, and I have highlighted the humor by emphasizing the unexpected accents (for example, the hemiolas or shift between duple and triple meter of bars 192-193 or 2:35"), again not overtly notated in the score, but certainly implied in the music. The timpani outlines the first movement motive (now very dark and mysterious) in the transition to the fourth movement, and following this extended still and very quiet (*sempre pianissimo*) passage, Beethoven leads us through a tremendous crescendo to the glorious, bright and brilliant C Major finale. For me, this special moment is a wonderful depiction of *Per aspera ad astra* ("through hardships to the stars" – from darkness to light). One can be sure that this transition was certainly a great influence on the symphonies of Anton Bruckner.

The fourth movement, which Beethoven wrote in a letter “makes more noise than six timpanis, and namely a better one,” works best with strong rhythmic accents and sounds anew, like a new adventure. It is heroic, triumphal and victorious. The entire movement receives a certain military character and inflection. For example, the triple upbeat in bar 122 (or 4:37”) is reminiscent of a march and likely originates from the opening first movement motive. The instrumentation used is quite similar to French Revolution music with which Beethoven was surely familiar, particularly with the addition of the piccolo, contrabassoon and trombone. Beethoven must have known the “Hymne Dithyrambique sur la conjuration de Robespierre et la Revolution du 9 Thermidor” by Rouget des l’Isles and even seems to quote this revolution hymn (bar 92 or 3:57” in the violas and celli, bar 107 or 4:16” in the celli and bassi, and bar 113 or 4:24” in the bassoons and trombones, to name a few). A further detail to highlight is the victory scale in the piccolo (bar 329 or 8:32” and following) which is normally quite difficult to hear. If I remember correctly, Carlos Kleiber asked for four piccolo players to play this part together in an effort to make it heard. Here, the piccolo scales end with the motive of the first movement (it is nearly hidden, but there!)—and I try to balance this passage in such a way so as to allow it to emerge (this can only be realized when the whole orchestra steps back (bar 332 or 8:34” and bar 349 or 8:59”). Again, I have asked the orchestra to bring out specific rhythmic moments in the music (for example, the first movement motive appears in bars 286-288 (or 7:35”) and again in bar 308 (or 8:04”) and following). Although there is nothing overt in the score, I have requested that the musicians play these moments with more consciousness. The presto in bar 362 (or 9:10”) is a real

presto with an unbelievably fast metronome number, the whole bar = 112 beats per minute and with this brilliant writing, it is clear to see why this movement made such a sensational impression upon its debut. The end, in particular, with its repeating beats, is almost an overstatement just to show that it is unequivocally a victory. We should also not forget that by this point, Beethoven was nearly deaf and often spoke openly of his bold desire to defiantly meet fate face to face. This theme was in fact recurrent throughout his life (he had surely heard the story of his distant relative who had been burnt at the stake as a witch) and Beethoven, no doubt, was no stranger to struggles in his everyday life with a difficult family situation (his mother was ill and his father suffered from alcoholism). In the Fifth Symphony, this battle against fate can clearly be felt—and the valiant words that Beethoven famously expressed in his letters, “I want to seize fate by the throat; it will never bend me completely to its will.”

Nearly three years later, Beethoven began composition of his Seventh Symphony. The world premiere took place in 1813 at a charity concert for wounded Austrian and Bavarian soldiers. The patriotic work *Wellington's Victory* or the Battle at Vitoria, Op. 92, was also on the program, exalting the victory of the British over France, (a clear reference to Napoleon against whom Austria also fought). The general mood was positive with excitement, reflective of the common sense of the Viennese of the time who were happy to support anything that was against Napoleon. Many of the most important musicians in Vienna were on the stage, including the famous violinist Louis Spohr and composers Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Antonio Salieri and Giacomo Meyerbeer. Beethoven himself conducted the premiere and it was

one of his biggest triumphs. Critics did not comment on the poetic melodies, but rather on the rhythm as the main element of this symphony. Richard Wagner would later famously refer to the Seventh as “the apotheosis of the dance” and Carl Maria von Weber even remarked that with this work, Beethoven was certainly “now ripe for the madhouse.” Nobody before had composed such a revolutionary work based mostly on rhythm, and it would not be until nearly one hundred years later that Stravinsky would again do the same.

It is interesting to study the more than one hundred pages of sketches that Beethoven wrote for the Seventh Symphony. In spite of the many individual thoughts and motives, it is important to remember that Beethoven once alluded to the fact that when writing instrumental music, he always had the whole in front of his eyes. This thought is key to forming an interpretation, particularly in the Seventh Symphony, where there is a danger amongst the many small details to lose the bigger picture. It could be possible to have a certain stiffness or rigor to the music with too much of a concentration on the individual elements, but already within the first 62 bars of the first movement introduction, there are possibilities to go beyond the formality of mere execution. I see the poetic melody in bar 23 (or 1:19”) and bar 42 (or 2:26”) as very light and almost dancelike. Likewise, it is important throughout to look for the flexible moments that interrupt the prevailing rhythm, providing dimension and contrast. One such example is bars 220-221 (or 9:06”) where I have asked for a slight tempo change to reflect the harmony. Another such passage is bar 309 (or 10:56”) which should be played quite lyrically and rather out of tempo. Moments such as these are important points of relief which Beethoven surely understood, as it is not possible to construct a whole movement on

rhythm alone. Additionally, a new joy and delight can be found when the rhythm returns. Throughout the movement, it is important to notice the numerous fermatas or points where everything stands still. These moments should be observed not merely as isolated instances, but instead, placed within the context of the whole. Another characteristic aspect is the dynamic crescendo or gradual increase in volume. But it is no doubt the unbelievable rhythmic brilliance and all of its various intensifications and progressions, whether over a long time period or a short burst, that makes this movement very special. It is truly a symphonic firework that charts new territory never before seen.

The second movement, which starts and ends against the rules with a 6/4 chord, is likewise based on a rhythmic theme, although here a slower, pacing, grave stride. Is it a funeral march? In this case, one could play the notes quite short, as is usual and the effect would be interesting and acceptable. But, if you follow the beautiful thoughts of Wolfgang Osthoff who sees this theme of the formula of litany Sancta Maria, ora Pro Nobis ("Holy Mary, pray for us" in Latin), then it is possible to view this opening in a more lyrical, singing way. Osthoff compares the crescendo and decrescendo with the coming and leaving of a procession. The second theme is reminiscent of Florestan's aria in *Fidelio* with the words, "You will get your reward in a better world. Heaven has sent you to me." It is interesting to note, as well, that Beethoven denotes the second movement as *Allegretto* rather than *Andante* which would typically mean slower. An additional clue to the tempo character is Beethoven's metronome marking (quarter note = 76 beats per minute). Some might be surprised that I ask the violins at the end of the movement to go against the tradition and play pizzicato (plucked with the finger) and rather not arco (with the bow). At the time that I

played second violin in the Vienna Philharmonic, Carlos Kleiber explained to the orchestra during a rehearsal that his father, Erich Kleiber, had seen the autograph of the Seventh Symphony and could see very clearly that Beethoven had indicated pizzicato at the end. Unfortunately, the autograph has since been lost, but I nonetheless believe what Carlos Kleiber has shared.

The third movement is a traditional Scherzo, a dance movement that continues the regaling joyful mood of the symphony. Beethoven has called it a *Presto* and it is a movement that demands the highest technical challenges in ensemble playing. The famed Austrian clarinet player, Anton Stadler, for whom Mozart often wrote, described the trio as a Lower Austrian pilgrimage song and it sounds, for me, like a very silent night song, a sound of nature. I interpret bar 207 (or 3:16") and following as a rustic dance and even though Beethoven has indicated the fortissimo dynamic here, this very grand and explosive gesture must first and foremost reflect the dance character. Of the droll last bars, composer Robert Schumann remarked that you can almost see the composer throw away the pen!

The last movement has a heated temperament and is a wild and boisterous dance. Throughout the movement, which Beethoven calls *Allegro con brio*, it is essential to have the rhythm played with incredible drive and an enormous energy and brilliance. All accents must be executed with great passion and vigor, but it is likewise critical to find the balance between playing with a red hot reckless abandon and extreme precision. None of the accents should get lost, and even during the few fermatas and waiting points which interrupt the rhythmic drive, (for example bar 129 or 3:40" and bar 136 or 3:46"), everything should be played with the biggest possible impetus and pent-up power so as to achieve

an almost insatiable energy. This small episode is a dramatic dialogue between two figures, an upper voice in the violins and a lower voice in the violas, cello and bass. It is almost as if the two sides fire muskets at each other!—and I have asked the opposing forces to fight for their lives as they stretch for maximum resistance on the long notes, perhaps a musical depiction of Beethoven's own battle against fate. There are countless details that you might find in this rendition but, for me, the expression and the phrasing are the most important. Along with the phrasing is the character and overall way of playing, the journey through the notes, revealing that which can be found in the essence of the music, even if not specifically notated. One such example is the very long phrase beginning in bar 349 (or 6:54") which is marked to be played *forte* throughout its entire 56 bars. Rather than continuing with the same loud dynamic over the course of the whole phrase, I instead ask the orchestra to drop down in volume in the middle which then gives room to start again with a new impetus and *brío*. Subtle shadings in dynamic such as this allow for opportunities to begin the crescendo and line anew, providing a certain dimension and color that contribute greatly to the overall character. Near the end of this same phrase in bar 389 (or 7:25") and following, you will hear that I have asked the violins to use open E strings (four bars firstly in the first violins followed by four bars in the second violins). While this may be a somewhat unusual request (though it happened to be standard in Beethoven's time), the open E string sound introduces a fantastic brilliance and intensity to the color, allowing both voices to continue to build the line in a vibrant crescendo leading finally to the culmination and high point. This is a moment where it is possible with our modern instruments to support the wildness of the composed music and truly take the music to the very edge.

The Seventh Symphony received its world premiere on the 8th of December 1813 and was performed in the big hall, Redouten Saal of the University of Vienna with an astonishingly large orchestra. As Beethoven wrote in his diary, "On my last music (concert) in the Redouten Saal, there were 18 first violins, 18 second violins, 14 violas, 12 cellos, 7 concert basses and 2 contra bassoons." We have likewise played both the Fifth and the Seventh Symphonies in Pittsburgh with a similarly large cast. Although this is more or less unusual in our time, it can only be possible if an orchestra plays with great clarity. Additionally, we have used the Viennese classical setting of the orchestra, with the violins sitting on opposite sides of the stage, thus making it possible to bring to life the strong orchestral drama.

It is interesting to note that during recent years in the United States, there are surprisingly few recordings that have been released of Beethoven's Fifth and Seventh Symphonies. The last recording of the Beethoven Symphonies with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra occurred nearly fifty years ago (Symphony No. 5 in 1965 and Symphony No. 7 in 1962) under the baton of William Steinberg. A recording of Beethoven is always a great occasion and event. The marrying of the music's historic interpretation with the brilliance of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra's playing and the fantastic technique of Soundmirror have made this recording possible, comprised of three live concerts from December 2014. It has been a joy to look deeply into that which Beethoven has composed, while also discovering the sense and content of the music and thus the reason why it has been written. For me, this is always the most beautiful part of the creative process.

—MANFRED HONECK

AUSTRIAN CONDUCTOR MANFRED HONECK, in high demand by the world's leading orchestras, has served as Music Director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra since the 2008-2009 season. After two extensions, his contract now runs until the end of the 2019-2020 season. He and his orchestra present themselves regularly to European audiences to great acclaim. Since 2010, annual tour performances have led them to numerous European music capitals, including a week-long residency at the Vienna Musikverein, and major music festivals.

Manfred Honeck's successful work with the Pittsburgh Symphony is now captured on CD by Reference Recordings. The first three CDs, Strauss tone poems, works by Janáček and Dvořák, and Bruckner's Symphony No. 4, released during the 2013-2015 seasons, have received rave reviews, and several additional recordings are completed.

As a guest conductor Honeck has worked with the world's leading orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris and Accademia di Santa Cecilia Rome. In the United States, he has conducted the New York Philharmonic, The Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra and Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Born in Austria, Manfred Honeck received his musical training at the Academy of Music in Vienna. Many years of experience as a member of the Vienna Philharmonic and the Vienna State Opera Orchestra have given his



Felix Broede

conducting a distinctive stamp. Honeck began his career as conductor of Vienna's Jeunesse Orchestra, which he co-founded, and as assistant to Claudio Abbado at the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra in Vienna. Subsequently, he was engaged by the Zurich Opera House, where he was bestowed the prestigious European Conductor's Award in 1993. From 1996-1999, Honeck was one of three main conductors of the MDR Symphony Orchestra in Leipzig. He served as Music Director of the Norwegian National Opera in 1997 and was also engaged as Principal Guest Conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra for several years. From 2000 to 2006, Honeck was Music Director of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and from 2007 to 2011, Music Director of the Staatsoper Stuttgart where he conducted numerous premieres. Since 2008, he has served as Principal Guest Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra.

Manfred Honeck has received honorary doctorates from St. Vincent College and, most recently, from Carnegie Mellon University. Moreover, he has been Artistic Director of the "International Concerts Wolfegg" in Germany for more than twenty years.



THE PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, known for its artistic excellence since 1896, is credited with a rich history of working with the world's finest conductors and musicians, and a strong commitment to the Pittsburgh region and its citizens. Past music directors have included Fritz Reiner (1938-1948), William Steinberg (1952-1976), Andre Previn (1976-1984), Lorin Maazel (1984-1996) and Mariss Jansons (1995-2004). This tradition of outstanding international music directors was furthered in fall 2008, when Austrian conductor Manfred Honeck became music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony. The orchestra has been at the forefront of championing new American works, and gave the first performance of Leonard Bernstein's Symphony No. 1 "Jeremiah" in 1944 and John Adams' "Short Ride in a Fast Machine" in 1986.

The Pittsburgh Symphony has a long and illustrious history in the areas of recordings and radio concerts. As early as 1936, the Pittsburgh Symphony broadcast on the airwaves coast-to-coast and in the late 1970s it made the ground breaking PBS series *Previn and the Pittsburgh*. The orchestra has received increased national attention since 1982 through network radio broadcasts on Public Radio International, produced by Classical WQED-FM 89.3, made possible by the musicians of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

With a long and distinguished history of touring both domestically and overseas since 1900—including 36 international tours to Europe, the Far East and South America—the Pittsburgh Symphony continues to be critically acclaimed as one of the world's greatest orchestras.

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Technical Recording Notes

We at Soundmirror believe, that in a good and successful recording, the sound has to serve the music. While an important goal is to truthfully represent the acoustical event in the hall, another is to capture the composer's intention reflected in the score and its realization by the performer. To achieve these goals, extensive collaboration and communication between the artists and the recording team are of utmost importance.

Based on our long experience of recording the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in Heinz Hall, we chose five omnidirectional DPA 4006 microphones as our main microphone array. Supplementing those with "spot mics" to clarify the detail of the orchestration, we worked toward realizing the above goals. Extensive listening sessions with Maestro Honeck and orchestra musicians were crucial in refining the final balance.

This recording was made and post produced in 64fs DSD on a Pyramix workstation to give you, the listener, the highest sound quality possible.

We hope, you will enjoy listening to this recording as much as we enjoyed making it! —Mark Donahue, John Newton and Dirk Sobotka

For more than 40 years, Soundmirror has been the first choice recording and post-production company for orchestras, choral groups, opera companies, solo artists, and record labels. Soundmirror's recordings have received over 80 GRAMMY® nominations and awards as well as special commendations from prestigious publications.

For more information about Soundmirror: <http://www.soundmirror.com/>

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