Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Beethoven: The Nine Symphonies

Symphony no. 1 in C major, op. 21

1. Adagio molto – Allegro con brio
2. Andante cantabile con moto
3. Menuetto. Allegro molto e vivace
4. Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace

Symphony no. 2 in D major, op. 36

1. Adagio – Allegro con brio
2. Larghetto
3. Scherzo. Allegro
4. Allegro molto

In the opening bars of Beethoven's First Symphony, expectation sits high – the lack of a sure harmonic base tantalizing the ear, the tricky wind and pizzicato string chords teasing and testing out orchestral ensemble. There is, as we launch into the famous Nine, an almost mesmeric sense of things about to be. The Allegro itself settles sonorously down in C major, the tension of the slow introduction giving way to a settled, assured mood. (Beethoven's ability to assure his listeners is to be one of his more popular assets.) The gait is unmistakably his, taut and alert; and when the music threatens to settle into conventionality, it soon begins marvellously to spread and expand. The second subject, too, avoids lapsing into conventional utterance by conjuring a late-flowering theme on the oboe, haunting in G minor, just when interest is beginning to slacken. Scherzo and finale – the latter with its mock-serious start and irresistible motion – are also *echt* Beethovenian, full of joy, urgericy, and good humour. Although Beethoven was not to write an obviously recognizable minuet movement in the symphonies until the sublimely expansive Menuetto of the Eighth Symphony, there is certainly nothing conventional about this present one; and the Trio, with its skirling strings and pulsing winds, has an hypnotic power which has fascinated many musicians (the young Edward Elgar actually copied it out for further study and contemplation). The second movement does, perhaps, fall a little below expectation. The theme was probably originally conceived as a fugue subject, unsuited to the kind of melodic ramifications Beethoven had in mind; and though Beethoven makes the quiet intrusions by trumpets and drums inimitably his own, one has only to go back to, say, the Andante of Mozart's *Linz* Symphony to recognize that in matters of lyric pathos, Mozart was, by a fair margin, the finer composer.

The première of the First Symphony was a typically gargantuan musical feast which included music by Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven and also brought before the public Beethoven's Septet. The year was 1800. No century could have begun more propitiously, from the musical point of view. Oddly, according to one critic, the symphony flourished, despite a very lax reading of the concluding movements ("For all the conductor's efforts, no fire could be gotten from the orchestra"). Happily, this is not the case on the present recording, which brings playing of much fire and polish.to the two final movements and prefaces them with a beautifully shaped account of the difficult-to-articulate first movement.

Contemporary taste was not entirely happy with the Second Symphony. The fashionable *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* argued that "the First Symphony is better than the Second because it is

developed with a lightness and is less forced, whereas in the Second the striving after the new and the surprising is already more apparent". It is certainly true that the Second Symphony is altogether the more formidable proposition. In writing "a grand symphony in D major", Beethoven cannot have been unaware of Mozart's luminously expansive *Prague* Symphony or the last symphony of Haydn, lyrical, exuberant and full of rustic wit. In the slow introduction of his own D major Symphony (which had its première on 5 April 1803, putting it shortly after the great Heiligenstadt Testament and during the gestation period of the *Eroica*), one senses Beethoven leaning massively out, sculpting the musical lines with a serene and ample touch. There are grimmer intrusions – that formidable D minor scale near the end of the slow introduction which looks out over the years to the first movement of the Ninth Symphony – but for the most part the Second Symphony is joyous and expansive, the earth firm beneath its feet. That it was conceived in the wake of Beethoven's recognition of impending deafness and the near suicidal despair of the Heiligenstadt Testament is only further proof of the resources of the human spirit and the capacity of Beethoven to listen for the resilient and joyful mood within.

The third movement again shows Beethoven experimenting with rhythm and blocks of sonority. It is full of intriguing patterns and sudden dynamic contrasts – witty contrasts of instrumental volume conceived long before Stravinsky wrote *Pulcinella*. Its lovely bucolic Trio has in its midst an extraordinarily rude pother of string tone launched on an abrupt unison F sharp. As it happens, the finale begins on an F sharp – with a skittish skip and a lurching trill which the composers of *Falstaff* (the opera of the symphonic poem) probably admired – and subsequently makes much ado about a note (the unison F sharp punctuates the coda) whose first rude entrance was clearly not for nothing. The polyphonic riches of the finale and, again, the generous reach of its themes – not to mention the richness of its workings-out – are wholly characteristic of this wonderfully serene and expansive piece, whose slow movement (an obvious inspiration to Schubert) is one of Beethoven's most elaborate and heartwarming inventions. As for Karajan's performance, it is appropriately radiant and expansive, full of lovely wind playing and a masterly way with the symphony's perpetually fascinating string writing, the tonal and harmonic possibilities of a symphony in D major richly exploited.

Symphony no. 3 in E flat major, op. 55 "Eroica"

1. Allegro con brio
2. Marcia funebre. Adagio assai
3. Scherzo. Allegro vivace
4. Finale. Allegro molto

Sinfonia grande, intitolata Bonaparte: a grand symphony dedicated to Bonaparte. So ran the *Eroica* Symphony's original dedication before news reached Vienna, in May 1804, that the great upholder of Republican ideals had declared himself Emperor. Beethoven flew into a rage, tore out the original inscription and substituted the words "composed to celebrate the memory of a great man". It was a bitter memory. Years later, when news of Napoleon's death reached Beethoven, his response was more temperate but no less terse: "I have already composed music for that catastrophe." But we must beware of making too much of this celebrated tale of two inscriptions. Though political idealism and the concept of heroism (Nelson's exploits had stirred Beethoven as much as Napoleon's) are important to the *Eroica*, many other strands went into the making of a symphony which bestrode the gateway to 19th-century orchestral music like the Colossus.

At the time of the conception of the *Eroica* Symphony, Beethoven – irrepressible, immensely successful, and quite determined to change the world – was brought face to face with the fact of his growing and debilitating deafness. In 1802 he wrote the great Heiligenstadt Testament, in which he openly contemplates suicide and, in terms which remain to this day majestical and awe-inspiring,

rejects them. “Plutarch taught me resignation”, he later said. ”If it is possible, I shall challenge my destiny.” The fierce discords which cry out from the height of the first movement’s development section, not to mention the defiant opening chords of the symphony, speak of this pain and this resolution: “I was Hercules at the crossroads”, he said later. In other words, this symphony may have been dedicated to Napoleon, but it is, in another sense, a portrait of Beethoven – a portrait full of defiance and joy (“grant me at least one day *of pure joy*”, he wrote as a postscript to the Testament).

Looked at in this light, unproductive arguments about Beethoven’s “killing of the hero” at the end of the first movement are suitably side-stepped. Heroism involves death, hence the great *Marcia funebre* (Funeral March) with its muffled tread, its sombre colours and its strange disintegrating coda (offset by the sunlit oboe theme, in C major, and the stirring fugato, with its gloriously articulated horn line). It is a scene – solemn cortège against louring temples and crumbling Classical pediments – which David or Delacroix might have painted. But it is not all Beethoven has to say. Significantly, for the Finale Beethoven returned to a theme he had already used in his *Prometheus* ballet-music; Prometheus – another example of self-portraiture on the grandest scale? – the demi-god who made men out of clay, stole fire from Olympus and taught men to harness the creative force of the liberal arts. An heroic self-portrait in E flat, a kind of Beethovenian *Heldenleben*? Not quite. Richard Strauss’s great symphonic poem may have been directly inspired by the *Eroica*, but it fails to meet its great predecessor on one essential point: *Ein Heldenleben* is not a symphony. And putting aside Napoleon, Beethoven, and anyone or anything else commentators are eager to drag in, the *Eroica* is first and last a radically fine example of the symphony, loftiest and most powerful of musical forms.

The scope, the symphonic reach, of the *Eroica* is immense. The first movement is itself an epic journey, something which is partly a matter of length, principally a matter of tonal farsightedness. Here, range is matched with an uncanny structural poise. How superb, for instance, are the opening chords, not only as a gesture, but also in the way they redeploy the rhythmic stresses, allowing the E flat major theme itself an ease and impulsion which it cannot possibly have if you try to start the symphony at bar 3. Note also the unexpected C sharp in bar 5, an unusual cadence. Yet at the point of recapitulation, it swings the music loftily and serenely into the broad acres of F major, the violins adding a trill to their theme, the solo horn singing lyrically out.

Beethoven is said to have loved the *Eroica* more than any of his symphonies apart from the Ninth, which it interestingly resembles, in its move from defiant tragedy to transfigured joy, in its use of theme, variations, fugue, lyrical transformation and presto coda as the Finale’s substructure and, above all, in its revolutionary ability (in the first movement particularly) to generate a fierce rhythmic charge by the use of tersely formulated and tersely juxtaposed thematic material. There is also immense skill in the working-out. True, Beethoven later distilled the form of the Funeral March, making it even more succinct and expressive in the Allegretto of the Seventh Symphony; but the Seventh has a less magical transition to its Scherzo. In the *Eroica*, the horn-thronged Trio unequivocally reasserts E flat major, the home key; but the way the Scherzo dances stealthily in, *sempre pianissimo e staccato*, hushed and furtive in B flat under the shadow of the Funeral March, is a masterly stroke; and like the very end of the symphony, the Scherzo has a thrilling coda, horns and timpani gloriously voiced. As for the Promethean variations, they are full of wit (the spare, skeletal opening, all bass and no theme), eloquence (the theme itself), and power (the fugato that later drives the theme thrillingly forward). As for the great oboe-led Poco Andante (”the opening of the gates of Paradise” was Sir Donald Tovey’s description of this moment, which Karajan and his oboist realize with a rare, and rarely encountered, accuracy and reach on this present recording), here the theme, shorn of its bass, is transfigured, just as the world was by the shortly-to-be-scotched Prometheus.

All these points are here to ponder in this gloriously played and gloriously projected performance under Karajan. Recorded, along with the Ninth Symphony, at the very end of the famous 1962 Berlin sessions, this *Eroica* is one of the pinnacles of a justly celebrated cycle.

Symphony no. 4 in B flat major, op. 60

1. Adagio – Allegro vivace
2. Adagio
3. Allegro vivace
4. Allegro ma non troppo

The poet William Blake was fond of commending to his friends the "fiery line" of the paintings of Michelangelo. And it is the fiery line – the living, singing pulse of the music – which we most readily attend to in the symphonies of Beethoven and, above all, in the sublime Fourth Symphony. As poet and dreamer Beethoven was (in his early and middle periods at least) only partially successful.

In the symphouies it is arguable that Beethoven's reflective genius is best seen in moments of temporary stasis, in brief pools of quiet at the storm's eye – which partly helps explain why the first movement of the Fourth is so characteristic a ruiraele: the play of darkness and light, energy and reflection, held in the sweetest, finest kind of dramatic and aesthetic balance. It was the German musicologist Walter Riezler who observed that the consummate harmony of the Fourth is founded in darkness. At the symphony's start, the waters move strangely over the face of the earth. It is brooding, disorientating music, close kin to the start of the third *Rasumovsky* quartet. (Carl Maria von Weber was driven to distraction by it – "Every quarter of an hour", he wrote in a famous polemic, "we hear three or four notes. It's exciting!") Yet, like all great artistic craftsmen, Beethoven had an unerring instinct as to how to begin a work. The slow, descending minims in bars 2 and 3, and the strange chromatic shift from B flat to G flat in the symphony's very first phrase, are germ cells, seeds which, once planted, bear remarkable fruit. What follows is richly various, a movement which is both expansive and abrupt, playful yet controlled, skittish yet inveterately responsible, exuberant yet given to moments of hypnotic quiet. Shakespeare's Peter Quince's guileless phrase "very tragical mirth" would suit the music well.

It is a movement which is full of surprises. I know of no more eloquent melody in all Beethoven than the one which briefly emerges at the start of the development: violins and cellos, flutes, clarinets and bassoons in D major over a pizzicato bass, soaring angelically upwards and outwards, Here dreams and reality mysteriously twine (in this present performance with a special magic, for Karajan, like Furtwängler before him, gives us beautifully expansive long appoggiaturas in bars 223 and 227). Yet, apart from the merest ghost of an echo later on, the theme never returns. Then there are the silken chromatic descents and quiet hypnotic drum rolls with which Beethoven paves the way for the recapitulation. (How skilfully Beethoven uses the drum, as Bruckner was later to do: rock and lighthouse in the midst of strange harmonic seas.) And after such expansiveness, the briefest of codas – a mere sixteen bars which even Haydn, most economical of symphonists, must have wondered at.

Of the Adagio Berlioz wrote: "This movement seems to have been sighed by the Archangel Michael one day when, seized with a fit of melancholy, he stood upon the threshold of the Empyrean and contemplated the world." It is Beethoven in Apollonian mood, with sublimely beautiful scoring which even the composer of the ballet score *Apollo* must have admired (Stravinsky was more generous to Beethoven than Shaw ever was to Shakespeare). And yet even this movement, the loveliest of the Beethoven symphonic adagios, is essentially an essay in the interplay of stillness and motion – the serene opening melody, that still unravished bride of musical quietness, made the more calm by the very persistence of the rocking accompaniment beneath it.

The third movement, boldly and wittily extended to contain a further return of the Trio, also involves a fascinating play of metres, two against three; and the finale, which allots a special role to the bassoon, who is tested and teased almost beyond measure, is a movement which also makes much play of the fact that its sweet-singing melodies seem to be constantly challenged (or harmoniously fused?) with the most animated figurations.

How untroubled is the Fourth Symphony? Not, I think, entirely. To hear. a Fourth Symphony which is, in the best sense of the word, naively happy, we must go to Mahler's G major "Symphony of Heavenly Life". Beethoven's B flat major Syrnphony may eventually arrive at a state of gamesome, gambolling joyfulness, but it is, as I have already observed, a symphony founded in darkness. Significantly, the Fourth Symphony was written whilst the Fifth was put aside. It was only after the completion in 1806 of the Fourth, in which joy is unambiguously won out of the most ambiguous promptings, that Beethoven was able to go back to the Fifth and complete it – the transition from ghostly scherzo to victorious finale, martial and full of splendour, wrought now with an incomparable mastery that its smiling predecessor had so generously bestowed.

Of Herbert von Karajan's recordings of this symphony, the present one is perhaps the fieriest and the most obviously lyrical, Grecian and golden-toned, the spirits of Dionysus and Apollo held in a rapturous balance.

Symphony no. 5 in C minor, op, 67

1. Allegro con brio
2. Andante con moto
3. Allegro
4. Allegro

The transition from scherzo to finale in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is one of the tautest and truest of all musical transformations. Yet, as with so much in Beethoven, it was a hard-won victory. The transformation is, in every sense, a critical moment, whether one sees it as an enactment of the revolutionary age's transcendent spirit; or as Beethoven's own personal ascent from within, the moment in which the composer – increasingly deaf and increasingly isolated – moves from the gloom of the mind's inner landscapes to greet with joy the public world; or, simply, as a wonderful appropriation of the force of minor and major tonality. All these things are here. Sonata form, with its theme, counter-theme, crisis and synthesis, is the perfect mirror of the Hegelian dialectic, a significant enactment, in music, of the political and philosophical spirit of the age.

The beginning of the scherzo of the Fifth Symphony fascinates, as Berlioz once put it, like the gaze of a mesmeriser; and the pizzicato link to the passage on the drum takes us into a spectral, twilit world from which there seems to be no escape. Against this background the drum sounds its repeated low C, a note so laden with the feel of C minor at this point in the score that at each new hearing, all thoughts of a resolution are, to normal sense, more or less unthinkable folly (and there are some harmonically ambiguous asides on the basses and cellos to reckon with, too). At each new hearing the psychological weight of all these factors is such that we feel afresh the impossibility of the task of transformation. Yet a swift, short crescendo, and the launching of a wonderfully proud march, by turns confident and expansive, is utterly compelling. The C of C minor, we realize with hindsight, was also the C of C major. In the midst of sorrow there is joy, and out of despair victory springs. In a fallen world in which pain so strangely and necessarily coexists with happiness, Beethoven's music rings true in terms which a great mass of people intuitively understand. "Gusts of splendour, gods and demi-gods contending with vast swords, colour and fragrance broadeast in the field of battle, magnificent

victory, magnificent death" – E. M. Forster's description catches the majesty of the march, the *éclat terrible* of its war-born mood.

Not that the march is itself enough; for at the moment of recapitulation Beethoven has still more to say. The music boils to white heat and we find ourselves intoxicated, exhilarated beyond measure – until a doubt begins to nag. For surely the dominant preparation for the return of the march is too protracted? And so it proves, for the spectral dance of the third movement makes its ghostly return. It is an inspired touch, adding perspective to what might otherwise be too liberal a romp. It is precisely because the goblins are there amid the gusts of splendour, threatening presences in a cosmos which is far from stable, that we, like the ever-aware Mr. Forster, are able to feel that, as far as this world goes, Beethoven is an artist who will always tell us the truth. Beethoven's sketchbooks show how manfully he laboured over the celebrated first movement, how persistently he worked on the fermatas – the held notes of the opening – until they became like tidal barriers holding back the potent onrush of sound. (No wonder Wagner thought them imbued with force enough "to arrest the waves and lay bare the very ground of the ocean"!) How boldly Beethoven eventually lopped off an array of concluding chords, leaving the coda after the final statement of the motto wonderfully terse, the oboe crying out plaintively. As a movement it is both grand and economical. Even the lyrical second subject retains a tautness; and when the music slows mid-way and a sublime oboe cadenza sings its way through the texture, the mood is heightened, not diminished: passion and pathos become one until, with a lovely outflow of feeling, the music moves off once more on a short, singing crescendo. And yet in the midst of so much drama – "Fate knocking at the door", as Beethoven is said to have remarked to his friend and biographer, Anton Schindler – one notices with surprise how harmonically stable much of the exposition is; and .how it is a movement, for all its dynamism, which is wholly bereft of syncopation – a movement which conjures rhythmic tension (in the mystically beautiful passage for alternating chords on winds and strings) with a simplicity of means on which the composer of *The Rite of Spring* gazed with awe.

Herbert von Karajan made his London début with the Philharmonia Orchestra in 1948 in a concert which included the C minor Symphony. It is a work he has always conducted with a thrilling directness and unforced splendour, the music's formidable interpretative difficulties squarely faced and brilliantly resolved with no recourse to spurious "traditions". This celebrated Berlin recording soon proved to be one of the outstanding records of its time. Played with consummate skill by the Berlin Philharmonie, it moves from the outset like a sped arrow from the bowstring, soaring, majestic, ineffably certain of aim.

Symphony no. 6 in F major, op. 68 "Pastoral"

1. Erwachen heiterer Empfindungen bei der Ankunft auf dem Lande
Allegro ma non troppo
2. Szene am Bach
Andante molto mosso
3. Lustiges Zusammensein der Landleute
Allegro
4. Gewitter – Sturm
Allegro
5. Hirtengesang. Frohe und dankbare Gefühle nach dem Sturm
Allegretto

"Nature I loved, and next to Nature, Art." This famous epigram by the English essayist, Walter Savage Landor, would have been approved of by Beethoven. Stories of Beethoven's devotion to the countryside are legion. "He loved to be alone with nature, to make her his only confidante", wrote the

Countess Therese von Brunsvik. In Vienna he once refused to take lodgings in a house when he discovered there were no trees around it. “I love a tree more than a man”, he is said to have retorted tersely. Like Dr. Johnson, who had so sturdily trodden the highways and byways of Scotland, Beethoven liked to experience nature in all its moods, to feel the wind, rain, and sun on his face. At Baden it is said that he once angrily refused the offer of an umbrella, though only his eminence can have induced hostesses to smile at his unendearing habit of shaking the water off the brim of his hat all over the fumiture after one of his umbrellaless walks.

On his many walks round Heiligenstadt and Nussdorf, beyond Vienna, it was the broad meadows, rocky clefts, elm-girt woodland paths and murmuring, rushing brooks which were Beethoven’s constant delight, The beauty of the natural scene often moved him to religious fervour. “O God, what majesty is in woods like these”, he wrote in his diary in 1815. ”In the height, there is peace – peace to serve Him.” It is a remark which explains the benedictory mood of the coda of the *Pastoral* Symphony’s finale before the horn’s final, muted, autumnal call.

Of earlier efforts at natural scene painting by composers as various as Vivaldi and Haydn, Freystädtler and Knecht, Beethoven was largely contemptuous, rather as the poet or landscape painter is contemptuous of the photographer. It is true that he had made his own detailed observations: ”The deeper the water, the deeper the note”, he scrawled on a sketch for the symphony’s “Scene by the Brook”, with a care that Leonardo da Vinci would have admired. But it was not Beethoven’s intention to use the symphony for purely realistic ends. Even the storm, which Beethoven evokes with a sublimity and force that makes the efforts of Rossini and Verdi seem puerile, and the opening of *Die Walküre* casual, is, in essence, no more than an extended introduction to 'the finale, a formally cogent opportunity for another of his great imaginative moments of transition (a moment realized with a special beauty and intensity in this present performance). And the unlikely congregation of bird sounds at the end of the “Scene by the Brook” is as much a Classical cadenza as it is a piece of pictorial realism.

Beethoven summed all this up when he wrote, in a famous sentence, “more a matter of feeling than of painting in sounds”, In other words, it was the spontaneous activity of mind and imagination in which Beethoven was interested; and in this he was at one with his exact and eminent contemporary, William Wordsworth. When Wordsworth revised his long, autobiographical poem, *The Prelude*, he clearly saw in retrospect what Beethoven, writing his *Pastoral* Symphony, was immediately aware of: that his art was charting, not landscape as an end in itself, but the interrelationship between landscape and the conscious mind. Thus Wordsworth’s revised poem is stripped of narrative filling – more feeling than painting.

Wordsworth had to evolve a form; Beethoven’s was to hand – for the *Pastoral*, a perfectly wrought Classical symphony, uses Classical forms and Classical harmony with great resourcefulness. Here, Classical form and Romantic feeling – a variation on the age-old polarity between metropolitan sophistication and provincial spontaneity – are perfectly fused in a way which Wordswoith, who was not above patronizing his subjects, never quite achieved. In the finale of the *Pastoral* Symphony Beethoven, the skilled musician, *becomes* the songful shepherd, inhabits the landscape. It is a miraculous act of union – something which only music can achieve – as well as being a great song of thanksgiving.

Some early critics, baffled by music at once revolutionary and simple, complained of the length of the work and of its repetltiveness. Yet Beethoven’s use of repeated figures, especially in the first movement, is one of the secrets of its greatness. The brief, organically changing themelets, the bare tonic-and-dominant shapes, the bold deployment of diatonie harmonies, matched to a slow rate of harmonic change and a most ingenious overlapping of phrase lengths – all make for a sense of natural

continuity and, in this urgent Berlin reading of 1962, a live, near-apprehensive joy in the wonder of the scene as it bursts on our all too bemused gaze.

Everywhere, in fact, Beethoven's craft is breathtaking. In the "Scene by the Brook", the detached violin phrases seem to set the observer apart, while the lower strings, which include two solo cellos, conjure the sound and continuity of the brook itself. Voices enter in sequence (a characteristic effect in this symphony) as the movement unfolds, diversifying melodic and harmonic interest. Expressive turns, arpeggios and a series of beautifully judged key changes all add to the effect: B flat major (well established already in the first movement and thus effecting a sense of natural continuity), G major, and the subdominant, E flat major, associated elsewhere in Beethoven with heroism but here, as Tovey brilliantly observed, "the key of shade".

The scherzo's genius is self-explanatory; and yet how Beethoven laboured, as Dvorák was later to do, over what seem to be the most winningly spontaneous of his effects – such as the exquisite contouring of the oboe's principal theme. This joyous, drowsy scene (the bassoon asleep, the players prodding themselves into action as Beethoven watched rural musicians doing in Heiligenstadt on high days and holidays), ascene which Bruegel could have painted, is, like the rest of the *Pastoral* Symphony, superbly crafted. Debussy, who once grumpily observed that it was more profitable to see the sun rise than to listen to Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony, should have known better.

Symphony no. 7 in A major, op. 92

1. Poco sostenuto – Vivace
2. Allegretto
3. Presto
4. Allegro con brio

There is a celebrated letter of the year 1810 in which Bettina Brentano enthuses to the poet Goethe about a recent meeting with Beethoven. "When I open my eyes", Beethoven had announced to her, "I must sigh ... I must despise the world which does not know that music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy." "Music", he continues, in words which will interest all those who feel in the finale of the Seventh Symphony a certain Bacchanalian element, "is the wine which inspires us to new generative processes, and I am the Bacchus who presses out this glorious wine to make mankind spiritually drunken."

According to Beethoven's effusive amanuensis, Anton Schindler, the Seventh Symphony's première was "one of the most important moments in the life of the master, the moment at which all the hitherto divergent voices united in proclaiming him worthy of the laurel". Though the whole symphony was received with acclaim, it was the second movement, the elegiac Allegretto, which struck the most responsive chord in the minds and irnaginations of the audience. It was encored and demanded *da capo* wherever and whenever it was played. In Paris, it was used to sustain the (then ailing) Second Symphony; and it was even inserted into the Eighth, ousting the popular Allegretto scherzando. The influential *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* hailed the movement·as "the crown of modern instrumental music", and Schubert, ever alive to Romantic pathos, used its metre and its mood in several of his most highly-charged orchestral, instrumental and chamber works. This enormous popularity is interesting. In form, the Allegretto is not unlike the Funeral March of the *Eroica*. There is the same march pulse, a similar overall plan, a central fugato and a disintegrating end. But the quicker pulse (scrupulously observed by Karajan in this present performance), the, austere beauty of the scoring – something which is a feature of the entire symphony – and, above all, the sense of this being a rare distillation of the mood of heroic pathos, all seem to have made for a swifter than usual osmosis between the composer's and the public's own inner imaginings.

In spite of being programmed at its première with the much less demanding *Wellington's Victory* symphony, pictorial and patriotic (a work whose literalism might have made even the composer of the *Sinfonia Domestica* stare), and in spite of Beethoven's antics on the rostrum, faithfully chronicled for us by Spohr ("as a *sforzando* occurred, he tore his arms with great vehemence asunder ... at the entrance of a *forte* he jumped in the air", and so on), the première was a great success. The orchestra, led by Schuppanzigh, and including such men as Spohr, Hummel, Meyerbeer, Salieri, Romberg and the great doublebass virtuoso Dragonetti, played (according to Beethoven himself) with great fire and expressive power. And yet, the charismatic Allegretto apart, is not this a fierce, revolutionary work which one might have expected to daunt contemporary audiences, just as Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* did almost exactly one hundred years later? When Weber heard the chromatic bass line in the coda of the first movement, he declared the composer ripe for the madhouse; and there are, in the finale, undertones of war, a terrible eruptive power which may well remind us that 1812 was as traumatic a year in European history as, say, 1916. Yet for all its fire, the Seventh is not at all an iconoclastic work. "Myself I must remake", wrote W. B. Yeats, greatest of all the 20th-century poets; and Beethoven, writing at a white heat of inspiration, seems to echo that try in the Seventh Symphony. For there is about the finished work – so organic, so inevitable – a self-evident and self-delighting wholeness. The finale may well be Bacchic, but there is here nothing of the purely destructive frenzy of the Maenads in Sophocles' great drama on the subject. In this, respect, it is interesting to note how often C major crops lip during the symphony (it first appears just 22 bars into the searingly beautiful slow introduction, sung rapturously out on the oboe), with a force, a subtlety and an inevitability to which the Fifth Sympliony, for instance, can hardly lay equal claim.

Like Toscanini before him, Herbert von Karajan has always had a special affection for the Seventh Symphony and a special genius in interpreting it. "Karajan's Seventh is magnificent", wrote the influential *Record Guide* of Karajan's early Philharmonia recording of the symphony. "The playing throughout the evening was truly superb, every instrumentalist bowing and blowing as though for dear life ... We could hear things in the score which usually we are obliged to seek out by eyes reading it", wrote Neville Cardus in *The Guardian* when, shortly before making this present recording, the Berliners played the symphony in London in 1961. As a young conductor, Karajan was convinced that traditional interpretations of the symphony had taken from it much of its elemental fire. Remembering Mahler's dictum that the clear articulation of every note marks the upper limit of a quick tempo; Karajan has striven to bring a fiery tempo and a vital articulation of every note into harmony with one another. In achieving this, he has produced a fierce, yet intensely lyrical, reading of the symphony, a true apotheosis of the dance, a telling example of the reconciliation of orchestral virtuosity with the deep, dark, dionysiac forces which sustain this most elemental of Classical symphonies.

Symphony no. 8 in F major, op. 93

1. Allegro vivace e con brio
2. Allegretto scherzando
3. Tempo di Menuetto
4. Allegro vivace

Few symphonies are launched in a more exhilarating fashion than Beethoven's Eighth. Like the poet Donne, Beethoven tosses his material down before us with an irresistible plainness. The sketches show· Beethoven paring everything into shape, removing a launching ostinato figure, tiglitening tripiet excursions, giving the music its lean athletic shape, its snapping vitality, its coruscating wit. Foreshortening of material was not Beethoven's only concern, though. The Eighth Symphony, for all its apparent brevity, is at times generously expansive. The wonderful Menuetto is started by a

powerfully ruminative preamble on strings and bassoons; the Trio, with its bucolic horn writing, is as leisurely as anything you will find in the length and breadth of the *Pastoral* Symphony. Beethoven referred to himself as being in an unbuttoned mood – *aufgeknöpft* – in the Eighth Symphony; and so he is, though in a host of different ways. At times he is as expansive as a well-fed alder-man. At other times the humour is rough, abrupt, taunting, teasing the listener almost beyond endurance. What are we to make of the C sharp which interrupts the finale after just 17 bars? As the movement goes its high-spirited way, its progress seems to be a model of decorum, albeit touched with the drollest effects. (The transition on timpani and bassoons is an effect which Haydn would have delighted in.) The C sharp remains, though, a spectre at the feast. And it returns, along with a clusterof remarkable alarums and excursions, precisely at the point at which we imagine the movement to be drawing to its close. At its behest, the music switches alarmingly into F sharp minor, silencing drums and natural brass, who are unable to utter in so foreign a key. Of course, all ends happily, though the recklessness of the coda and its sheer length (the tail more or less wagging the dog) are themselves comical in a symphony which everywhere purports to be a model of decorum, economy, and (in the close of the first movement and the Allegretto scherzando) wit.

No wonder that Goethe, when he encountered Beethoven for the first time, thought him "an entirely uncontrolled person"! Artistically, though, Beethoven is thrillingly in control. How irresistibly he builds towards the first movement's central *fortissimo* (*fff*), a fearsome point of arrival (Sir George Grove calls it "a wild tornado") with cellos and basses singing out the movement's principal theme in the cellarage. Yet Beethoven's triple *forte* is achieved with the standard Classical orchestra (no trombones), and how deftly the woodwinds assuage the storm with theme and counter-theme. All this puts the music more or less unequivocally in the line of its great predecessor, the Seventh Symphony – a point which has not been lost on Herbert von Karajan, whose reading of the Eighth has always been intensely thrilling, a performance which abates no jot of .the outer movements' inexorable energy, yet which is wonderfully easy and assured within.

Symphony no. 9 in D minor, op. 125

1. Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso
2. Molto vivace
3. Adagio molto e cantabile
4. Presto – "Freunde, nicht diese Töne!" – Allegro assai
Final chorus from Schiller's "Ode to Joy"

At what point Beethoven finally settled on Friedrich Schiller's *Ode an die Freude* (Ode to Joy) as a proper subject for the end of his grand new German Symphony is not wholly clear; but it was nearly thirty years after the first recorded reference to the Ode in connection with him. On 26 January 1793, the poet's sister, Charlotte Schiller, had been told in a letter that "a young man whose talents are universally praised and whom the Elector has sent to Haydn in Vienna proposes to compose Schiller's *Freude*". The correspondent added: "I expect something perfect, for as far as I know the young man is wholly devoted to the great and to the sublime." How apt the phrase is! All it neglects to note is that there is a tide in the affairs of men; that genius is often slow to mature; and that Europe would have to wait long and suffer much before Beethoven gave it the setting of Schiller's Ode which remains to this day the emblem of its freedom and a mainstay of its will to survive.

Yet we must beware of regarding the finale of the Ninth Symphony as an Ode to Freedom inspired by liberation hymns of the period – a genre piece from an aspiring and war-torn age. The tenor's breezy Alla marcia speaks of a hero going to conquest; but the passage is not about war. It concerns, rather, the motion of the stars across the heavens. Ralph Vaughan Williams thought the passage impossibly vulgar: "Beethoven obviously considered that the stars were jolly good fellows,

fond of a rousing chorus, a glass of beer and a kiss from the barmaid." It was his little joke. Of course, Beethoven is concerned with common humanity. When he rejects the themes from the first three movements and fashions for the basses a passage of inimitable recitative, he is preparing the way for the baritone's great cry of "Freude!", a cry addressed to the whole of mankind. And the great melody which Beethoven so gloriously fashioned for the joy theme itself speaks to men and women of all complexions. Yet the finale of the Ninth Symphony in no way depicts, as do certain passages in the works of Berlioz and Mahler, blue-denimed workers marching and countermarching along the boulevards. Sublimity is the keynote, with Beethoven instinctively recognizing the depth of inspiration of Schiller's Ode (a poem written out of profound joy in a deep and abiding friendship – "All who can call at least one soul theirs/Join in our song of praise").

The result is a great spiritual drama arising out of a musical and theological dialectic already familiar from the *Missa Solemnis*. Here, an overwhelming sense of the majesty of God is pitted against suffering humanity, prostrate and self-abasing (one thinks of the timelessly beautiful Adagio in the Ninth Symphony's finale, "Ihr stürzt nieder", with its divided violas – lovingly attended to by Karajan – basses, clarinets, flutes and bassoons). Out of such conflict a new order is born: in Beethoven's terms, a rousing fugue with perilously high lines for the sopranos, blazing with light and an intoxicated sense of joy.

Thanks to film and television, many people from many nations and creeds have not only heard this incomparable Karajan performance of the Ninth Symphony, but have seen it, too: an evidentiy joyous interpretation, the more potent for being born in Berlin, a beleaguered city whose great musical traditions radiate brightly out into a troubled world. Karajan's reading of the first movement has great tragic intensity – a reading, like Toscanini's, which catches in full measure the music's essential force: "the broadest and most spacious processes", as Sir Donald Tovey brilliantiy asserts, "set side by side with the tersest and most sharply contrasted statements".

The scherzo, too, has great demonic energy – how early audiences in Beethoven's time were roused to fear and frenzy by the powerful timpani strokes; and the Adagio, with its marvellous sense of reaching out, its richly worked set of double variations and its quiet, circling motion only temporarily crossed by the sternest summons, is also finely served.

Had Beethoven followed his own precedent in the Piano Sonatas op. 109 and op. 111, he might have rested his case here, in a well of quiet. The Ninth Symphony, though, goes further, reaching out for that quality of joy which will unite all creation in ecstatic song. Here heaven and earth are joined as, towards the end of the finale, the soprano rises to a single, sublime high B, crowning the solo quartet's *a cappella* meditation on joy's mystic, hovering mood, before the music – in shapes happily reminiscent of the cavortings of Papageno and Papagena in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* – races and hosannas to its close, a joy and spiritual salve to all who hear it.

Richard Osborne

Concertos

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra no. 1 in C major, op. 15

1. Allegro con brio (Cadenza: Ludwig van Beethoven)
2. Largo
3. Rondo. Allegro scherzando

The Concerto in C major was completed in 1798, the same year in which Beethoven revised the Concerto in B flat, composed previously although published as no. 2. Beethoven probably started

work on the C major concerto in 1795–96. He may have played it in Prague in 1798 (as well as the Concerto in B flat); but in Vienna he presented it on 2 April 1800 in an "academy" whose programme also included the op. 20 Septet and the First Symphony (both receiving their first performance), a Mozart symphony and arias from Haydn's *Creation*. On this occasion too, and not by chance, the names of Haydn and Mozart are found flanking that of Beethoven, as was the case with the B flat concerto. The academy was a great success, and the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* spoke of it as an outstanding event, clouded only by insufficient orchestral rehearsal. The C major concerto was then published in Vienna by Mollo at the beginning of 1801 as op. 15. with a dedication to the princess Babette Odescalchi (*née* von Keglevics), who had been a pupil of Beethoven's. The op. 15 concerto shares with op. 19 the modest opinion expressed by Beethoven in letters to Hoffmeister and Breitkopf & Härtel: in fact this judgment stems from his conception of concerto form after having left behind the Mozartian model – which is here still substantially respected. But it is adopted with a freshness of invention and a security still greater than in the preceding concerto, at least as regards the first and third movements. It has, moreover, a different character, at once evident from the fuller scoring (with trumpets and timpani) and more markedly brilliant and extrovert character: especially in the first movement, the work can be placed in the then fashionable category of the "military" concerto (and it contains foreshadowings of the "Emperor" Concerto, no. 5).

In the *Allegro con brio* the listener is at once struck by a vehemence and vigour which very obviously succeed in gaining the upper hand, even if the thematic material considered in the abstract, apart from what Beethoven makes of it, may not appear particularly personal. In the orchestral exposition, after the resolute first subject, there is a surprising modulation (as was also the case in the Concerto in B flat): the announcement of the second theme (only partial, since it will later be up to the soloist to expound it in full), cantabile in character, in sharp contrast to the preceding subject, is made in E flat major. From E flat it passes, with iridescent modulations, into F minor, F major, G minor and G major to arrive back in C major: elements of the two main themes appear, ingeniously combined, and before the end of the exposition a new theme of martial mien is introduced. The entry of the soloist follows a Mozartian model, as was the case in the previous concerto: the piano seems to digress freely with a new idea (though it establishes a connection with what has been heard). In general terms, also, the careful balance between soloist and orchestra is still Mozartian; but the clarity of the contrasts, the expansion of form which seems to spring directly from the urgency of the inventive impulse, and the energy with which the virtuoso solo writing is charged plainly belong to another world. It is not by chance that passages are met with that anticipate the Fifth Concerto: for example, towards the end of the exposition (from bar 199) the episode which combines staccato chords in the right hand with incisive triplets in the left; and also some pages of the development which give way to accents of a muffled, uncertain sweetness which then lend a remarkable effectiveness to the luminous reappearance of the first subject in the recapitulation. Also noteworthy is the originality of the quasi-improvisatory character of the development's initial section, in E flat major. For this first movement we know of four cadenzas by Beethoven, of which the first, which is fragmentary, appears to date from 1798, while the others were probably written in 1808–9: one of these is exceptionally spacious and elaborate.

After the brilliant and vigorous extroversion of the first movement, the *Largo* marks a moment of lyrical intimacy in a climate of quiet, of quasi-chamber character, dominated by the noble sweetness of the melodic line, which is ornamented by the soloist. The special colour of this music merits attention: the wind are reduced to pairs of clarinets, bassoons and horns, and the first clarinet emerges into the foreground several times. The formal scheme is the normal one, with a first part and a varied repetition connected to the preceding section by a central episode of a few bars and followed by an extensive

coda; this coda provides the most original moment of the Largo, an enchanted opening-out towards the regions of Romanticism.

In the unconstrained vitality of the *Rondo* (Allegro scherzando) Beethoven's humour manifests itself with an excited vigour, a fantasy and an impetus of scintillating and irresistible accents, and with an almost brazen vehemence. As in the finale of the Concerto in B flat, the principal theme is marked by pungent rhythmic characterization, and is packed with potential for development which Beethoven exploits to the full, also dwelling a good deal on the contrasts between the rhythmic profile of the refrain and that of the ideas it successively encounters. In a perfectly calculated and compact structure (built according to the usual sonata-rondo pattern) inexhaustible inventions follow one another with verve: for example, the impetus of the second interlude, with its quasi-gypsy flavour, or the effect of some unexpected modulations.

Paolo Petazzi

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra no. 2 in B flat major, op. 19

1. Allegro con brio (Cadenza: Ludwig van Beethoven)
2. Adagio
3. Rondo. Molto allegro

The Concerto in B flat major, op. 19, occupies a special place in the story of Beethoven's relationship with Vienna, for with this work (in a version different from the definitive one that we know) Beethoven presented himself for the first time in the Habsburg capital in a public concert in the dual role of pianist and composer. From a brief notice in the *Wiener Zeitung* we learn that on 29 March 1795 at the Burgtheater, between the first and second parts of the oratorio *Gioas, re di Giuda* by Casimir Antonio Cortellieri, "the famous Herr Ludwig van Beethoven obtained the unanimous approbation of the public with a new concerto by himself". On that occasion Salieri conducted the orchestra: the article quoted does not specify the key of the concerto, but from a letter of Beethoven's we can deduce that the first to be composed in Vienna was that in B flat major (about ten years after the Concerto in E flat major, WoO 4, written in Bonn in 1784).

In December 1795 Haydn, on his return from his second London visit, presented to the Viennese public three of his latest symphonies, and on the same evening Beethoven again performed his own concerto. In 1798 he played it in Prague, and probably on that occasion made a revision of the score. He decided to publish the definitive version, however, only in December 1801, after Mollo had brought out the Concerto in C major, op. 15, at the beginning of the same year. The op. 19 concerto was printed in Leipzig by Hoffmeister and dedicated to Carl Nicklas von Nickelsberg, a noble of the Imperial court of whom we know almost nothing. Beethoven offered the work to Hoffmeister in January 1801 together with other compositions, asking the publisher for 10 ducats (as against the20 ducats requested for each of the other works, namely the Septet, the First Symphony and the op. 22 Sonata), explaining why: "I price the concerto at only 10 ducats because … 1 do not consider it one of my best." Beethoven seems to have confirmed this opinion when he wrote to Breitkopf & Härtel on 22 April 1801, regarding it as essential information in view of a possible review in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*. At the time at which he expressed this hasty valuation, however, Beethoven had already conceived, probably in its essential outlines, the C minor Concerto, and had completed some of the major piano sonatas: he was no longer the same composer who, a few years previously, had begun the conquest of Vienna by presenting himself, so to speak, under the banner of the course of action contained in Count Waldstein's famous wish, "to receive the spirit of Mozart from the hands of Haydn". This remark can be seen as indicating a fundamental orientation that did not exclude attention to other voices, for example to the stimuli which could come from Clementi and the new generation of

piano virtuosi, but which, at least in the field of the piano concerto, dispenses with being up-to-date in order to return to the unrepeatable perfection of the idealized Mozart concerto. What Beethoven's orientation was should immediately have become clear to the Viennese when (a year after the successful publication of the op. 1 trios, printed in 1794) they listened to his public concert debut in the Concerto in B flat major, and two days later, on 31 March 1795, they heard him play Mozart's Concerto in D minor, K. 466, for which we still possess Beethoven's cadenzas. The names of Haydn and Mozart are significantly linked to the first performances of the op. 15 and op. 19 concertos, as if to indicate points of reference.

Some aspects of the Concerto in B flat seem to make plain Beethoven's basic decision to follow the supreme example of Mozart's piano concertos. It is perhaps not important that the key and the forces (without clarinets, trumpets and timpani) are the same as in the K. 595 concerto; but the manner, the overall proportions, the relationship between soloist and orchestra, and various details of form recall Mozart's most mature concertos. The references to the Mozartian heritage are obvious, but this serves as a point of departure, as the payment of homage, while fully aware of affirming an independent language and personality, especially in the second movement. Something of the same sort can be said as regards the debts, recognizable in the first and third movements, to Haydn's more advanced idiom.

The sparkling *Allegro con brio* is characterized by a profusion of ideas, by a freshness of invention, whose urgency Beethoven knows how to control within a clear and compact structure – one capable of utilizing the full potential of the elements forming the principal thematic groups. The first of these immediately puts forward four, of diverse expressive character, and dominates the whole orchestral exposition. A personal touch can also be recognized in certain modulations; for example, at bar 40, where the first distinct joint in the form occurs, there is an unexpected modulation into D flat major with an idea that is not new but is drawn from the second motif of the first theme: it plays between the light and shade of D flat major and B flat minor. As in some of the later Mozart concertos, the soloist makes his entry with an apparently new idea almost in the nature of a free digression, which is, however, related to the first subject. A clear suggestion of Mozart is then heard in the rhythmic profile of the second subject and in the carefully calculated symphonic integration of soloist and orchestra. We possess a cadenza that Beethoven himself wrote about 1809: in this highly compressed piece the first movement's thematic material is considered in the light of Beethoven's maturity, and thus appears in a perspective vigorously aimed towards the future.

No reference to Mozartian or Haydnesque models can be made for the *Adagio*, which in the intense nobility of its lyrical phrases belongs among the young Beethoven's great pages. The presentation of this calm meditation, profound in its expressive concentration, is divided into two parts, the second of which is a varied repeat enriched by more florid pianistic embellishment. Special attention is due, towards the end, to the short recitative which the soloist expounds *con gran espressione* in dialogue with the strings before the orchestra's final bars.

It is possible that, for the *Rondo*, Beethoven had at one time thought of a different solution from that which we know, if the hypothesis (which cannot be documented with certainty) is correct that originally the rondo intended for this concerto was that in B flat major, WoO 6 (posthumously published by Diabelli in 1829 with some alterations to the piano part by Czerny, and then in 1960 by Willy Hess in the original form). The substitution, if such it was, eliminated a movement which is pleasing and well constructed but undoubtedly less personal in impression than the Rondo of op. 19. In this latter the brilliant manner and robust humour, though revealing an indebtedness to Haydn, in fact have a flavour that is already clearly Beethovenian, and in which can be recognized, in essence, the definition of the type of finale that Beethoven also chose for his other concertos. Some of the

fragments we possess of the first version of the op. 19 concerto (those in the Kafka Collection in the British Library) reveal that the initial theme of the rondo did not originally have that odd rhythmic characterization which immediately gives it a piquant humorous flavour: the accents fall in more orthodox fashion on the second and fourth notes (as occurs at one single moment of the definitive version, at the start of the coda at bars 261–63). The second subject, whose regular 6/8 rhythmic profile gives it a vaguely pastoral flavour, almost seems an anticipation of Schubertian sweetnesses, and contrasts with the mordant rhythmic character of the refrain. The vigorous syncopated figures of this refrain return in the central section, which constitutes the capricious development of the movement (its structure follows the scheme of a sonata-rondo with extended coda). The coda supplies a sparkling conclusion, suitable to the brilliant and humorous character of this finale.

Paolo Petazzi

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra no. 3 in C minor, op. 37

1. Allegro con brio
Cadenza: Ludwig van Beethoven
2. Largo
3. Rondo. Allegro

By common consent Beethoven's *Op. 37* is accorded a central position in his concerto output: it is the composition in which, for the first time with such clarity and originality, a new conception of the concerto for pianoforte and orchestra is stated – still not with the completeness of the two ucceeding masterpieces, but in unquestionably more precise and explicit terms as compared with the "Mozartian" quality still recognizable in the Op. 15 and Op. 19 of 1794–98. A famous letter of Beethoven's to Breitkopf & Härtel, dated 22 April 1801 , seems to confirm a similar estimate, since he refers to the first two concertos, underlining the words "they are not my best compositions of this kind" (even if they do not in fact deserve so severe and hasty a judgement on the part of their composer) and then adding "Musical strategy demands that for a certain time the composer should keep his best concertos in reserve", a phrase in which should probably be read an allusion to Op. 37. The manuscript of the *Third Concerto* in fact bears the date 1800, and it was in the summer of that year that the major part of this work, for which sketches exist dating back perhaps to 1797, was probably composed. The soloist's part however was not written in detail even by the date of the first performance, which took place in Vienna on 5 April 1803 (in the course of a concert at which the oratorio "Christus am Ölberge" and the Second Symphony received their world première, and the First Symphony was also performed). According to the testimony of Seyfried and of Ries, Beethoven on that occasion played from jottings.

From the very first bars, the Op. 37 Concerto can be recognized as a more complex and problematic work than the previous concertos, from which it is separated, *inter alia*, by the experience of composing the Sonata in C minor ("Pathétique") and the Symphony no. 1. The conflicts and tensions which characterizethe titanic and heroic Beethoven of the "second period" are set out here with a directness unknown to his first orchestral works. Henceforth there is a clear declaration of a new symphonic spirit and, in parallel, of the vigorous personality of the pianoforte: soloist and orchestra are presented with an energy that confers a new dimension on their relationship, increasing, wirhin the bounds of the specific form of the concerto, the intensity of the conflict defined by the Beethovenian concept of sonata form. The new dimension of the relationship between soloist and orchestra is one of the aspects which most immediately reveal the distance between the Op. 37 Concerto and some of the most mature of Mozart's masterpieces, including the Concerto K. 491 (and K. 466) which was particularly dear to Beethoven and has the key of C minor in common with Op. 37. It is observable that as regards the overall structural proportions Beethoven's Third Concerto is not all that far removed from its most mature Mozartian predecessors, in comparison with which, for

example, the first movement emerges a little more expansive, and with a relatively short development. But the nature of the musical content is profoundly different.

The *Allegro con brio* begins at once with the first subject stated "piano" by the orchestra, as if charged with a very strong sense of expectation and with an austere, concentrated energy: each of the essential components of this theme (the arpeggio, the descending scale, and above all the concluding rhythmic figure) will have a precise function in the unfolding of the movement. The rich thematic flowering which immediately follows the first idea also has great significance. The contrast with the second subject is downright programmatic in its obviousness, given the fluid cantabile ease which characterizes it, In the whole of the Allegro con brio there is a clear demand for strong contrasts of light and shade, pursued even through a careful disposition of the episodes in major and minor keys. After a return of the first subject and the appearance of a new idea, which concludes the orchestra's exposition, the soloist enters, appearing with an immediate authoritarian vigour, with those ascending C minor scales that instantly make evident, with the incisive clarity of an elemental fact, the presence of a new protagonist. His personality is asserted with such energy, in the close-knit dialogue with the orchestra, that Beethoven has no need to assign to the pianoforte a theme of its own (as was frequently the case in the last decade of the 18th century), preferring to concentrate on the abundant material of the orchestral exposition. Attention is drawn to the cadenza (the one performed here is that due to Beethoven himself): we do not know if it should be attributed to the year 1809, like so many other cadenzas of Beethoven, or to a period closer to the composition of Op. 37. In any case it reveals an essential conciseness, a compact logic, which adheres rigorously to the basic thematic material and is inserted in the structure of the first movement with a new function and need. Note also a masterly link to the concluding episode, where the marvellous intuition of colour of those few *pianissimo* bars is underlined, the pianoforte in dialogue with the kettle-drum against a background of held string chords.

The *Largo* has been rightly recognized as one of the most fascinating slow movements of Beethoven's "second period". It is a noble lyrical vision, a moment of enchanted contemplation. The distance between the sombre dramatic tension of the first movement and the dimension of lyrical transfiguration of the second is emphasized by the very strangeness of their tonal relationship, for a Largo in E major is unusual after the C minor of the first movement, these being two "remote" tonalities. This fact also helps to place the Largo, right from the mysterious suggestion of the first phrase by the soloist, in an uncertain region far from that of the preceding movement. The formal scheme of the Largo is very simple – ternary (A-B-A'), with a brief central section in which the pianoforte's arpeggios "accompany" a dialogue between bassoon and flute.

The *Rondo* brings us back to C minor, with a burst of arrogant vitality by the soloist: this brilliant page does not offer the dramatic involvement of the first movement all over again, but it is not without areas of light and shade, moments of violent tension which bring in their train consoling relaxations, lingering cantabiles, until the luminous, joyous affirmation of the final coda, a 6/8 *Presto*. The principal idea is presented in a form much more effective and incisive than that revealed in some sketches: note how this enlivens, about halfway through the Rondo, a short and severe fugato development, placed immediately after the fluid tunefulness of a delightful secondary episode (C). Calling A the principal theme and B the second episode, we have: A-B-A / C – development of A / A-B-A-coda. The overall formal scheme of the Rondo thus accords with the ternary layout of sonata form.

Paolo Petazzi

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra no. 4 in G major, op. 58

1. Allegro moderato (Cadenza: Ludwig van Beethoven)
2. Andante con moto
3. Rondo. Vivace (Cadenza: Ludwig van Beethoven)

Piano concertos belong to the sphere of Beethoven's creative work in which the highest degree of personal involvement is to be expected. The piano was not only the instrument of his improvisations and flights of fancy; it was also the instrument of Beethoven the remarkable virtuoso, whose ideas were as original as the highly individual style of his playing. Piano concertos offered the pianist a welcome opportunity to demonstrate his ability, and at the same time they gave the composer new, highly original, and significant paths to tread.

The Concertos in G major, op. 58, and in E flat major, op. 73, are undoubtedly pinnacles among his works in this genre; the "Emperor" Concerto, op. 73, was the last of them, composed as it was in 1809, the year during which it can be seen, in retrospect, that the idea of a "concerto crisis" probably had a bearing on Beethoven's thinking.

The first performance of the Concerto in G major took place at the palace of Prince Lobkowitz in Vienna, before "an extremely select gathering, who had contributed very substantial sums for the benefit of the author [Beethoven]". This was one of the two concerts consisting purely of his own works which Beethoven was enabled to give during March, 1807; the Fourth Symphony and the "Coriolan" Overture were also performed for the first time. Beethoven himself was the soloist. The Piano Concerto in G major was considered to be so difficult, and Beethoven himself so incomparable in his keyboard technique, that no other pianist would venture to play the solo part when the work received its second performance at the famous "academy" given on 22 December 1808. As the eighth work in that immensely long concert, a contemporary report referred to "a new piano concerto of extreme difficulty, which Beethoven played with astonishing. bravura, at the fastest possible tempi". No less striking an experience was the Adagio, "a masterly movement of beautiful, sustained lyricism, which he really sang on his instrument with deep, melancholy feeling, which also flowed through me". So wrote the composer and critic J.F. Reichardt in his *Vertraute Briefe*.

To Beethoven, this was really only the almost unbroken continuation of his series of virtuoso works such as the "Waldstein" and "Appassionata" Sonatas, which have kept their high standing and the respect due to them from pianists right down to the present day. The fact that no further performance of the Fourth Piano Concerto took place in Vienna during Beethoven's lifetime was certainly not due to lack of interest in the work, although at least some parts of it were not generally understood. Thus, a critic in the Leipzig *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* wrote in May 1809 that "this Beethovenian work is the most wonderful, individual, artistic and difficult which Beethoven has written, but less rewarding for the soloist than, for example, the Concerto in C [minor, op. 37]. The first movement in particular will be heard many times before one can completely grasp it, make it one's own and fully enjoy it. However, this is less true of the second movement, uncommonly expressive in its beautiful simplicity, and of the third movement, with its·powerful and enthusiastic jubilation – if well played, these will at once meet with abundant applause everywhere."

In his *Biographical Notices* (Koblenz, 1838), the pianist and composer Ferdinand Ries wrote that on one occasion – in 1809 – Beethoven called on him with the score of the G major Concerto under his arm, and asked him to play the Concerto that Saturday at the Kärntnertor Theatre. As this allowed for only five days in which to prepare and rehearse the work, Ries refused, suggesting that the C minor Concerto should be given instead, whereupon Beethoven angrily went to the young pianist Stein. He agreed to perform the work, but gave up immediately before the performance, and finally, with Beethoven's agreement, played the C minor Concerto.

The sketches for the G major Concerto are of great interest, showing as they do that it had its origins in the same creative phase which produced on the one hand, the Fifth Symphony, and on the other, the opera *Leonore* – later known as *Fidelio*. It can be seen clearly from some pages of sketches now preserved in the Berlin Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz that the first themes of this Concerto and of the Fifth Symphony originated in close proximity and from the same basic elements. Many similarities – such as the striking repetition of notes at the outset – remained. In addition, the uncommonly gripping motor energy of the Symphony is often encountered in the Concerto, although here Beethoven made more frequent use of changes of rhythm and contrasts of other kinds, evidently considering them more appropriate to the nature of a concerto. A relationship between the two works is also suggested by the dotted rhythm of their second movements, both of which are marked *Andante con moto*.

Above all, however, it is clear from these pages of sketches that the finale of the G major Concerto was originally to have had the semiquaver (sixteenth-note) figuration which precedes the Prisoners' Chorus "O welche Lust" in the first act finale of the opera *Leonore*. The indications are, therefore, that the first movement of the G major Concerto originated with ideas for the first movement of the Fifth Symphony, while the introduction to the Prisoners' Chorus grew out of preparatory work on the G major Concerto. This interesting idea may suggest to the listener other comparisons between the completed works, and in any event it demonstrates the mastery with which Beethoven was able, by the tiniest alterations in his musical ideas, to conjure up entirely new concepts.

The G major Concerto, which was completed in 1806, was not published until August 1808 – its appearance was advertised in the *Wiener Zeitung* of 10 August 1808, together with that of the piano version of the Violin Concerto, op. 61. This Piano Concerto was dedicated to the Archduke Rudolph of Austria, who had studied the piano and composition with Beethoven since 1804. This was the first of a number of dedications to him, extending to the Piano Sonatas op. 106 and op. 111, and finally to the *Missa Solemnis*, intended for the Archduke's installation as Archbishop of Olmütz.

Hans Schmidt

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra no. 5 "Emperor" in E flat major, op. 73

1. Allegro
2. Adagio un poco mosso – attacca:
3. Rondo. Allegro

With the composition of his Fifth Piano Concerto Beethoven concluded his experimentation in the field of the concerto. Two other works composed at the same period, both of the highest significance but totally different in character, suggest a particular preference for the key of E flat major, the String Quartet, op. 74, and the Piano Sonata, op. 81a, in which the last movement contains keyboard writing of a virtuoso style not wholly unlike that to be found in the Rondo of the Fifth Concerto. The E flat major tonality might even recall the Third Symphony, the imposing grandeur of whose symphonic style returns in the concerto as it were with organic perfection, resulting in a powerful construction absolutely definitive in its clear formulation of a conception of the concerto quite different from that of Mozart and totally independent of the fashionable taste in this field.

There is no hint in the work of Beethoven's enthusiasm for Fichte's claims for a German patriotism, and the nickname of the "Emperor" attached – for some unknown reason – to this concerto is inept. In any event it is clear that, even if there is some connection between the concerto and the vogue for military music, the substance of the work belongs to the same world as that of the *Eroica*, *Fidelio* and the Fifth Symphony, with their foundations in politico-ethical ideals and their

revolutionary note. Another aspect of the Fifth Concerto revealing a point of contact with the works of such contemporaries as Moscheles, Hummel, Kalkbrenner and Dussek is to be found in Beethoven's underlining of keyboard virtuosity. But the new developments in the field of technical brilliance are not used by Beethoven to confer on the soloist that absolute pre-eminence that we find in the concertos of his contemporaries. On the other hand they serve to strengthen and enrich a conception already clearly affirmed in the Third Piano Concerto, i.e. the definition of the concept of a dialogue between soloist and orchestra. From the very opening bars of the work the solo part has a clearly, even brusquely defined individuality, and there is no contradiction between virtuosity and the integration of solo and orchestral parts in the formation of a symphonic structure which is exceptionally large and closely integrated. Such a structure makes impossible any ide a of either partner playing a subordinate role; so that we find the soloist on occasion playing an accompanying part, and even the cadenza – the point at which the soloist had hitherto been expected to develop to the full his own individuality – is, unprecedentedly, an episode closely integrated into the first movement and entirely controlled by the composer himself.

The dialectical conception of the relationship between soloist and orchestra is therefore not belied but reinforced by the virtuoso character of the keyboard writing, which includes a number of features hitherto rare in Beethoven's work and designed to obtain a bigger volume of tone. These play an organic part in determining the broad inspiration, the truly "titanic" nature of the work. Representing a reaction against the conception of the preceding concerto, the epic-heroic character of the present concerto makes no concessions to a triumphalist rhetoric but is primarily solemn and luminous, almost as though the dramatic conflicts familiar from so many other works of Beethoven were already overcome and merely recalled in certain passages.

As in the Third Concerto, the soloist in the first movement has no theme exclusively his own; and in view of the overwhelming affirmation of his own individuality from the very opening bars, in the improvisatory, cadenza-like episode that introduces the powerful architecture of the *Allegro*, he does not need it. We cannot really speak of an introduction, because the episode is given an organic place in the ensemble of the passage reappearing at the beginning of the recapitulation. There are no violent dramatic contrasts in the rich thematic material of the exposition. After the first subject, in fact eighteenth century in cut, a familiar formula but given new intensity and strength, the cantabile nature of the second subject does not represent a striking contrast. The most striking feature is rather Beethoven's richly varied presentation of this second subject, from its first appearance (in E flat minor) in the strings, to the noble phrase (in the major) given to the horns supported by bassoons, timpani and strings and the superb, magic transformation in the solo part (in B minor and C flat major) followed immediately by the martial tutti. In the course of the huge development section the soloist appears as accompanist to the wood-wind before the central episode in C flat major, where the pianoforte is in vigorous contrast with the orchestra. The climax of the development section is in the same key as that of the second movement (B major being enharmonically identical with C flat) an unusual choice of key. After the recapitulation, at the moment when we should expect the cadenza Beethoven writes explicitly: "Non si fa una Cadenza, ma s'attacca subito il seguente" (No cadenza, but continue immediately with the following). The episode is improvisatory in character, fully written out, with the orchestra supporting the soloist, and is closely and organically connected with the powerful coda, almost large enough to be considered a second recapitulation. In this way the traditional cadenza, with its improvisatory style, is wholly integrated in a symphonic conception to which any indeterminate passage dependent on the solo player would be wholly alien. This passage in fact marks the conclusion of a process which can be followed through the various cadenzas that Beethoven himself wrote for his earlier concertos, always moving towards the fusion of the virtuoso-improvisatory element with the thematic, structural. This calling in question of the very nature of the

cadenza culminates here in its virtual abolition and, in the event, Beethoven's abandoning of the concerto-form as such. Although there are improvisatory elements in the masterpieces of the composer's "last period", they are no longer traditional in either their placing or their nature.

The short *Adagio un poco mosso* is a moment of pure lyrical meditation in the simple ternary form of the Lied. It opens with a magical string melody, and it is in the middle section that the soloist comes to the fore. Here the keyboard writing, especially the ornamentation, offers some surprising anticipations of Chopin. The soloist then reintroduces the opening theme and finally accompanies in the most delicate colours its final appearance in the woodwind – a passage quoted by Berlioz as a model of the integration of the piano with the orchestra.

The transition from the second movement to the final *Rondo* is particularly striking. The two movements are continuous, and the strings' simple descent from B to B flat creates a sense of expectation, or mysterious suspense. The tension is not immediately broken by the soloist's enunciation of the rondo theme at a slow tempo, but only by the explosion which completely changes the atmosphere and impresses on the listener the original rhythmic nature of the rondo theme. There is a second subject in this sonata-rondo movement and a central episode, which acts as a development section based on the first subject. In the final coda there is a marvellous passage for timpani and piano, gradually losing both dynamic power and speed before the final attack by the soloist and the conclusion.

Beethoven offered the concerto to Breitkopf & Härtel in a letter dated 4 February 1810, and it was published in 1811 with a dedication to the Archduke Rudolph. The first performance was in the Leipzig Gewandhaus on 28 November 1811, when Friedrich Schneider was the soloist and Johann Philipp Christian Schulz the conductor. The concerto was given by Carl Czerny in Vienna a year later.

Paolo Petazzi

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D major, op. 61

1. Allegro ma non troppo
2. Larghetto
3. Rondo. Allegro
Cadenzas: Fritz Kreisler

Beethoven's greatly gifted contemporary, the poet Coleridge, was once moved to compare wisdom to the evening star, "serenely brilliant". It is an intuition which, redeployed as a critical touchstone, declares Beethoven's Violin Concerto to be the wisest of works; for serenity and brilliance are certainly among its leading characteristics. The old adage that tall oaks from little acorns grow can also be applied to this majestic work. The drum's five-note introit reveals once more Beethoven's genius for raising mere pulse to the status of finely etched rhythmic motif. And it does more besides. The Violin Concerto is, in its central aspect, a superb musical discourse in which brain and heart, the pulse of the mind and the pulse of being, are felt to be ineluctably one. Romantic art of the period, with its yearning for transcendence (what Goethe, revitalizing the old myth, called "the Fall Upwards", "der Fall nach oben") was fond, too, of an imaginative trajectory which takes us from settled and intimate surroundings, across ever broadening landscapes, until our gaze is on the heavens themselves. We find such a motion in Coleridge's "Eolian Harp" quoted above, in the great op. 110 Piano Sonata, and in much else besides. Such is its special privilege, the solo violin walks on the heights more or less from the first, like Yeats's personification of love which "paced upon the mountains overheard / And hid his face amid a crowd of stars". Yet beneath the soloist's first charged utterance there is the recurrent drum beat, the pulse of the earth below.

Like Mozart in a number of his most brilliant and beautiful piano concertos, Beethoven renders the wide diversity of his thematic material viable by casting it into a series of long, beautifully sustained, beautifully weighted soliloquies. The ensuing discourse makes great demands on a player's technical and intuitive gifts. Here is tension and release, the systolic pulse of heart and mind, spun into the finest musical weave: sometimes rendered as full-throated song, sometimes no more than a shake, a high-lying trill, the mind, as it were, "trembling into thought" (Coleridge's phrase again), as basses and cellos brood and shift below.

In the years during which the Violin Concerto was conceived and written (we know little about its actual composition) Beethoven, increasingly deaf, turned in on himself (the opening of the Fourth Symphony the perfect emblem of such brooding), preoccupied with the relationships between different qualities of experience, and thus with the whole question of musical transition, and with the mystery of the interplay of stillness and motion. The problem of the transition from Scherzo to Finale in the Fifth Symphony is solved by the writing of the Fourth Symphony, bright sister of the Violin Concerto whose interplay of stillness and motion and lyricism forges an unbreakable bond with the earlier work.

Philosophy, Eastern and Western, increasingly preoccupied Beethoven. Significantly, the slow movement of the Violin Concerto is one of "sublime inaction", a movement, as Tovey avers, whose very point is that it cannot end, a timeless flow of consciousness. (In this it resembles the Andante cantabile of the "Archduke" Trio which also sports a quizzical dance finale which alternately delights and teases the ear.) In the slow movement the discourse, which is of the rarest kind, derives from figures already glimpsed in the long first movement: lattice-like arpeggio figures now rendered chaste and still.

The Concerto, rather neglected in Beethoven's lifetime, was decisively revived in 1844 by the prodigiously gifted Joseph Joachim, then just 13 years old. In the 1920s, chastened by a brilliant teacher who made him master Mozart first, the young Menuhin gave the world a comparably famous interpretation. Against such a background, the new recording by Anne-Sophie Mutter is musically welcome, historically apt.

Richard Osborne

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in D major

arranged by the composer from Violin Concerto, op. 61

1. Allegro ma non troppo
2. Larghetto – attacca:
3. Rondo. Allegro
Cadenzas: L. van Beethoven

To judge by contemporary accounts, Beethoven's Violin Concerto, which is now so greatly loved, was received with enthusiasm even at its first performance, given in Vienna on 23 December 1806. Beethoven had composed it for the 26-year-old violinist Franz Clement, giving him ample opportunities to demonstrate his particular abilities; Clement was renowned for his full, impeccable tone in the upper register, and for his richly expressive cantabile playing. The great arches of high-lying melody suggest the extent to which Beethoven wrote this concerto with the violinist's personal characteristics in mind.

A few weeks after the first performance, the composer and pianist Muzio Clementi visited Vienna. Clementi owned a music publishing business in London, and while travelling he was always on the lookout for new works which he could publish. In April 1807 he signed a contract with Beethoven by which he acquired the publishing rights for England to various works including the

String Quartets op. 59, the Piano Concerto in G, and the Fourth Symphony. At the same time Beethoven followed up Clementi's suggestion that he should arrange the Violin Concerto as a piano concerto. Beethoven seems to have produced the new version during that same year, because both the original and the arranged version were printed in Vienna during 1808. The Violin Concerto is dedicated to Stephan von Breunig, the Piano Concerto to his wife Julie. Clementi did not announce the publication of the piano version in London until 1810.

Beethoven was in financial difficulties at the beginning of 1807, and this may have been the reason why he complied with Clementi's request for a piano arrangement. The arrangement can scarcely be justified on artistic grounds, as the solo part was conceived with the melodic characteristics of the violin in mind, and its use of the instrument's upper register was even tailormade to demonstrate the special attributes of element; so much so that a transcription for an instrument of so entirely different a tonal character as the piano can carry conviction to only a limited extent. The fact that the solo part was not originally conceived for piano is evident at many points in the arrangement. While making this, Beethoven left the orchestral parts unaltered; he used the violin part, with slight modifications, as the right-hand piano part, and composed the left-hand part afresh. Here he worked within very restricted bounds, for the most part writing traditional accompanying figures or doubling the violin part in octaves. In only a few places in the arrangement did Beethoven exploit the virtuoso possibilities of the piano – for example in the first movement cadenza, which he composed especially for the piano version. Here the contrast between original and non-original key board composition is strikingly evident. This cadenza is also interesting because Beethoven here used the timpani in a solo role, playing an imaginative game with the main theme and introducing its first bar. Possibly the piano solo with timpani accompaniment at the end of the finale to the Fifth Piano Concerto is a reminiscence of this cadenza in the piano version of the Violin Concerto.

Hans-Günter Klein

Romances for Violin and Orchestra

No. 1 in G major op. 40

No. 2 in F major op. 50

Beethoven's Romances for Violin and Orchestra, which may be regarded as preliminary studies for his Violin Concerto, were ready by 1803 and were then offered to various publishers. It is not known when they were composed and first performed. In ternary form, they reveal Beethoven's mastery in the unfolding and transformation of thematic material.

Hans-Jürgen Winterhoff

Overtures

There is an understandable tendency to think of Beethoven as being a dramatic composer only insofar as his symphonic music is concerned: as not having an interest in the stage itself, in spite of having produced one operatic masterpiece. But if *Fidelio* was his only completed opera, the list of his dramatic works, of one kind or another, is extensive, and there were many projected stage pieces that never materialised. Of the 11 overtures recorded here only two ("Coriolan" and "Namensfeier") were not originally designed for performance in a theatre.

Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus, Op. 43

The earliest of them prefaces Beethoven's one fullength ballet, *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus* (The Creatures of Prometheus), which comprises an introduction and 16 numbers besides the overture. The

scenario, by the Italian dancer and choreographer Salvatore Viganò, has not survived, but it can be deduced, from various sources, that the subject was the legend of Prometheus, who brought two statues to life by stealing fire from heaven, and, with the help of Bacchus, Pan, Apollo and the Muses, initiated them into the mysteries of the emotions, the arts and the sciences; and it was probably intended as a skit on Haydn's oratorio *Die Schöpfung* (The Creation). The music dates from 1800–01 and the first performance took place in the Hofburgtheater in Vienna on 28 March 1801. The mai n body of the overture, an exuberant *Allegro* in C, is prefaced by a short but stately slow introduction.

Leonore No. 1, Op. 138

Leonore No. 2, Op. 72a

Leonore No. 3, Op. 72b

Fidelio, Op. 72c

Fidelio (or, as Beethoven preferred to call it, *Leonore*) resulted from a commission from the Theater an der Wien, at that time (1803) under the management of Emanuel Schikaneder , the librettist of and original Papageno in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. The libretto he was offered was a translation by Schubert's friend Joseph Sonnleithner of a text by Jean-Nicolas Bouilly entitled *Leonore, ou L'Amour conjugal*, based on a personal experience in Bouilly's life, but transferred – for understandable reasons of political expediency – to seventeenth-century Spain, which had as its subject the brave rescue of a political prisoner by his wife, disguised as a boy. The piece had already been set to music by Pierre Gaveaux (1798), Ferdinando Paër (1804) and Simon Mayr (1805) before Beethoven's first version was produced, on 20 November 1805. A revised version, with the text adapted by Stephan von Breuning, and reduced from three acts to two, was staged on 29 March 1806, but because of disagreements with the theatre staff Beethoven withdrew it after two performances (one less than the first production had enjoyed). Eight years later, he was invited to produce the work a third time, and engaged Georg Friedrich Treitschke to undertake a radical revision of the libretto (still confining the opera to two acts). In this final form *Fidelio* was staged at the Kärntnertor-Theater on 23 May 1814, and won immediate and lasting success. Beethoven wrote four overtures for it. "Leonore No. 1" was reputedly discarded before the first performance, though it *may* have been composed after the second production, for a projected staging of the opera in Prague in 1807 which never materialised. In any case it was "Leonore No. 2" that was played at the first performance in 1805. "Leonore No. 3" (like the first two, in C) was used for the 1806 revival. It is by far the longest, and Wagner perceptively described it as "less an overture to a music drama than a music drama itself". Like both its predecessors, it includes (beginning in the ninth bar of the slow introduction) a reference to the great aria "In des Lebens Frühlingstagen" that the imprisoned Florestan sings at the beginning of Act II, before his wife Leonore, disguised as the youth Fidelio, has found him; and, like No. 2, makes highly dramatic use of the offstage trumpet calls that give the signal for his delivery from the clutches of the merciless prison governor, Don Pizarro. The "Fidelio" Overture (in E) was written for the 1814 revival (though not actually ready until the second performance, on 26 May). The whole design is more concise: the slow introduction is integrated with the main *Allegro*, and no themes from the opera are used.

Coriolan, Op, 62

Heinrich von Collin's tragedy on the subject of the dishonoured and exiled Roman general Coriolanus (apparently written in ignorance of Shakespeare's) was produced at the Hofburgtheater in 1802, with incidental music adapted from Mozart's *Idomeneo* by the Abbé Stadler. Beethoven was bot h a friend

of von Colin and interested in the chances of being appointed composer to the Hofburgtheater; whether it was with this end in view or not, he wrote his "Coriolan" Overture early in 1807, and it was performed at one of two subscription concerts given in the Palais Lobkowitz in March that year, and, we can be sure, at a revival of the play on 27 April. The whole cast of the overture (in C minor) is expressive of the struggle that rages in the breast of the courageous Roman, while the final bars vividly portray his suicide, even his dying breath.

Egmont, Op. 84

A subject that appealed to Beethoven as powerfully as Coriolanus was Lamoral, Count of Egmont and Prince of Gavre (1522–68), hero of St Quentin and Gravelines, who became Governor of Flanders and Artois and, by his death on the scaffold, inspired the Flemish people to win freedom from their Spanish oppressors. In 1809 he was commissioned to provide incidental music for a revival of Goethe's prose tragedy, *Egmont*. The overture and nine numbers (including two songs for the heroine, Clärchen) were composed between October 1809 and June 1810, and were not ready in time for the first performance of the play in the Hofburgtheater on 24 May 1810, so it was not until 15 June that Goethe's play and Beethoven's music were heard together: "that glorious *Egmont* on which I have again reflected through you, and which I have felt and reproduced in music as intensely as I felt when I read it", as the composer wrote to the poet. The overture is cast in F minor. a rare key for Beethoven, and to some extent it acts as a *précis* of the drama itself. The sombre slow introduction is balanced by a coda (in F major) almost identical to the "Victory" Symphony that concludes the incidental music and depicts Egmont's triumph, in death, over the enemies of his people.

König Stephan, Op. 117

Die Ruinen von Athen, Op, 113

The opening of the new theatre in Pest (which, on its amalgamation with Óbuda and Buda on the right bank of the Danube in 1873, became part of the Hungarian capital Budapest), planned for 1 October 1811 but postponed until 9 February 1812, was celebrated by the performance of two festival plays by August von Kotzebue: a prologue entitled *König Stephan, oder Ungarns erster Wohltäter*, the subject being Hungary's national hero, who was crowned in 1000 and converted his people to Christianity – for which he was canonised in 1803; and an epilogue entitled *Die Ruinen von Athen*. Both were given with incidental music by Beethoven, who received the texts late in July 1811 and wrote the music (an overture in E flat and nine numbers, mostly vocal, for *König Stephan* and an overture in G minor-major and eight numbers, also mostly vocal, for *Die Ruinen von Athen*) between 20 August and the middle of September, while he was taking the waters at Teplitz. The overture to *König Stephan* contains various recognisably Hungarian touches, such as the brief suggestion of a cimbalom shortly after the opening, the fiery nature of the *Presto* which succeeds the slow introduction, and the otherwise unusual alternation of slow and quick tempi. *Die Ruinen von Athen* is a fulsome tribute to Emperor Franz I, comparing Pest, thanks to his enlightened and beneficent patronage, to ancient Athens. Beethoven's short overture begins with a slow introduction using the music of a duet for two Greek slaves (Athens being now occupied by the Turks); a brief march for the winds leads to the main *Allegro*.

Overture in C, Op. 115 "Zur Namensfeier"

The overture we know as "Namensfeier" was sketched in 1809, considered for use with a choral setting of Schiller's ode *An die Freude* in 1811–12, reworked in September 1814, with a view to performance on the Emperor's nameday (4 October), but not completed until March 1815. lt was first performed on Christmas Day that year at a hospital benefit concert in the Redoutensaal in Vienna. The

main body of the overture (preceded by a solemn slow introduction) is in a swinging 6/8 metre, which accourus for the fact that the piece was later nicknamed, much to Beethoven's annoyance, "La Chasse".

Die Weihe des Hauses, Op. 124

Beethoven's last and grandest overture (in C, like "Namensfeier") was composed at extremely short notice in the late summer of 1822. He had been asked to provide incidental music for a festival play entitled *Die Weihe des Hauses* (The Consecration of the House) by Carl Meisl, which was to be performed at the reopening of the Josephstädter-Theater in Vienna on 3 October. Because time was so short, he turned to the music he had composed for *Die Ruinen von Athen*, substituted a new overture in place of the old one, and added a new chorus. In design the new overture bears a resemblance to the French *ouverture* so often used by Handel and his contemporaries, with its impressive slow introduction and fugal main section, although its scale far exceeds that of any Handelian prototype. An extended slow introduction in four distinct and strongly contrasted sections prefaces a magnificent double figure, providing a splendid climax to Beethoven's last work for the stage and recalling his own advice to a colleague: "Handel is the unequalled master of all masters! Go and learn to produce such great effects by such modest means!"

Robin Golding

Dances

Twelve Minuets, WoO 7

Twelve German Dances, WoO 8

Twelve Contredanses, WoO 14

In his biography of Beethoven, first published in 1840, 13 years after the composer's death, his garrulous friend and disciple Anton Schindler wrote: "There are circumstances that indicate the particular interest that Austrian dance music aroused in Beethoven. Until his arrival in 1792, he claimed to know nothing of folk music except the songs of Berg [the duchy of Berg and Cleves in the Lower Rhine] with their strange rhythms. How much attention he subsequently gave to dance music can be seen in the catalogue of his works. He even tried his hand at writing Austrian dance music, but the musicians were unwilling to confer Austrian citizenship on these attempts." The inaccuracy of this last statement is proved both by the actual number of dances – waltzes, Ländler, minuets, écossaises, *Deutsche*, and contredanses – that poured from Beethoven's pen, and by their evident popularity in his own day. Indeed, Beethoven showed much more flair for this kind of music than did the Austrian-born Joseph Haydn.

The 12 Minuets WoO 7 and the 12 German Dances (*Deutsche*) WoO 8 were composed in November 1795 for the annual charity masked ball for pensioners of the Society of Painters and Sculptors in Vienna, which was held in the Redoutensaal on 22 November (the event had been initiated in 1792, and composers who had been invited to produce dances for the occasion before Beethoven included Haydn, Koželuch, Dittersdorf and Eybler). In their full orchestral guise the dances require strings, with double woodwinds (and piccolo), two horns, two trumpets and timpani, in various combinations, but there are also versions for two violins and bass, and for piano; the last of the *Deutsche* ends with an elaborate coda. The 12 Contredanses, WoO 14 probably date from between 1791 and 1801, but it is not known for what occasion(s) they were composed or when they were first played. They are all short (only Nos. 3, 5, 6, 10 and 12 have trios) and lightly scored, for strings, with

a flute and pairs of oboes, clarinets, bassoons and horns (with a tambourine in No. 8), and again there are versions for two violins and bass, and for piano. Beethoven incorporated Nos. 7 and 11 into the finale of his ballet music for *Prometheus*, and No. 7 was destined to become the basis of the Variations and Fugue, Op. 35, for piano (1802) and of the finale of the "Eroica" Symphony (1803–04).

Robin Golding