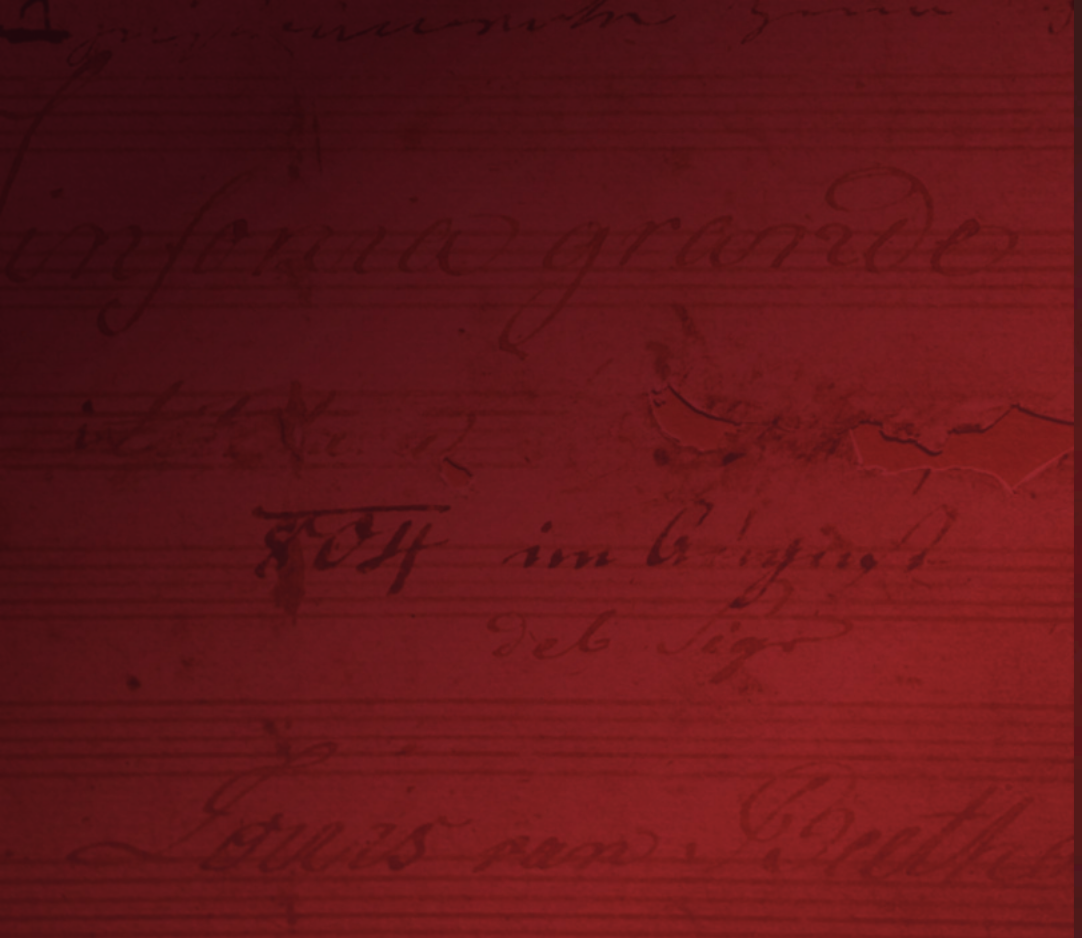

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BEETHOVEN
THE NINE SYMPHONIES

RIMMA SUSHANSKAYA
NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

"It is I Myself that I remake" – *Beethoven's Vision in the Era of Modernity*

Some reflections by Michael Jameson

It was the Irish writer W.B Yeats who once pointedly observed that no creative endeavour comes without personal cost. That's because the power of communication, be it through the spoken or written word, the visual arts, or indeed music, is constantly evolving, and change always comes at a price. In that context, Yeats' plea that we "*should know what issue is at stake"* is uniquely applicable, too, in the case of Ludwig van Beethoven, whose constant cry attending his every creative exertion, was surely the same as his own; "*it is I myself that I remake!*"

In every field of his creativity, Beethoven's implacable determination to relentlessly move forward, to advance the craft of the composer into seemingly dangerous areas which were *terra incognita* to his predecessors, is possibly the most universally compelling aspect of his legacy for our own times. Much as we think of the passage of human history in terms of centuries before and after the era of Jesus Christ, it is impossible to imagine the chronology of Western music without seeing Beethoven at its very epicentre.

That centrality seems so much more pertinent when we consider Beethoven's message to humanity alongside everything – disillusionment, war, revolution, deafness - he said it in the face of.

Everybody knows about his resolute commitment to the ideals of democracy, liberty, and universal brotherhood. Nobody who witnessed it will ever forget the overwhelming effect of hearing the Ninth Symphony, with the word '*Freiheit*' ('Freedom') replacing '*Freude*' ('Joy') in the great choral finale, at the suggestion of Leonard Bernstein, when he conducted it in Berlin shortly after the wall came down in 1989.

As the American Beethoven scholar Joseph Kerman suggests, such music as this constantly bespeaks the composer's *"determination to touch common mankind as nakedly as possible"*.

Venezuelan conductor Gustavo Dudamel, Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, also described the humanising and unifying effect of Beethoven; *"This music is very important for young people. For all of humanity, of course, but for young people especially… The Fifth Symphony is not just about the notes… It is fate, it's destiny and that is important for everybody… The symphony opens with anger. But you come to the last movement, which ends with hope. You listen, you can feel this in the music. We all share this hope. And it becomes something amazing."*

The late Bernard Haitink, who lived alongside Beethoven's music for close on eight decades, expressed more powerfully (and more poignantly) than anybody else, perhaps, just how and why the effect of Beethoven's music upon our collective psyche is still relevant, and still vital today; *"He is the great inspirer and the great comforter, above all in his slow movements. He shares a rich humanity with many others, of course – Mahler, Mozart to name just two. But his ultimate message is less shadowed. It appeals directly to the human spirit."*

In discussing his own recorded cycle of the Beethoven symphonies, David Zinman explained why the music always sounds new and original, even in 2024, and it seems worth quoting his observations here; *"Beethoven in his day was about noise, violence, shock, but also about exploring the deepest human emotions. His symphonies still have this freshness and excitement, still have the capacity to stun and inspire us. With his foibles, his courage in the face of adversity, his ceaseless struggle for perfection in his art, Beethoven is a man for all time… He'll always be new."*

But now, as Rimma Sushanskya and the National Symphony Orchestra complete their own Beethoven pilgrimage in 2024, with this first ever recorded cycle of the nine symphonies under a female conductor, it seems fitting to conclude these introductory remarks with something more personally challenging to us all, performers and listeners alike.

Back in the 1970s, when cynicism and doubt about the trajectory our world seemed to be taking was attended by the ever-present fear that actually, it could all end at the touch of a button in nuclear apocalypse, the Beethoven scholar Maynard Solomon warned us that we neglect the universal message of hope enshrined in Beethoven's music at our collective peril.

His admonition is surely no less relevant now:

"If we lose our awareness of the transcendent realms of play, beauty, and brotherhood which are portrayed in the great affirmative works of our culture, if we lose the dream of the Ninth Symphony, there remains no counterpoise against the engulfing terrors of civilisation, nothing to set against Auschwitz and Vietnam as a paradigm of humanity's potentialities."

Symphony No.1 in C major, Op.21

i Adagio molto – Allegro con brio
ii Andante cantabile con moto
iii Menuetto. Allegro molto e vivace
iv Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace

At the time of Beethoven's departure from his native Bonn for Vienna, where he was to study with Joseph Haydn, his "*friendship book*" (a compendium of autographed personal felicitations) included the following prophetic inscription, dated 29th October 1792, from his friend and patron, Count Ferdinand von Waldstein (1762 – 1823):

"*Dear Beethoven! You are going to Vienna in fulfilment of your long-frustrated wishes… With the help of assiduous labour, you shall inherit Mozart's spirit from Haydn's hands.*"

Count Waldstein, to whom Beethoven dedicated the Piano Sonata No.21, Op.53 (which bears his name) in 1805, clearly recognised the genius of his protégé, but he also had the foresight to appreciate that under his influence, the direction of travel which European music had for so long seemed destined to pursue would be radically altered.

Nevertheless, Beethoven's entrée into the fashionable salons of Vienna did not immediately break any dramatic new compositional ground, but rather capitalised upon the 22-year-old's formidable reputation as a keyboard virtuoso, gifted with astonishing improvisatory powers which enthralled his audiences.

Eschewing large-scale public statements of musical intent, Beethoven's earliest Viennese compositions included the Piano Trios of Opus 1, the Piano Sonatas Opp.2 and 7, the String Trios, Opus 9, and (in 1800) the Septet in E flat, Opus 20. Meanwhile,

his first two Piano Concertos afforded opportunities to experiment with scoring for full orchestra before tackling the challenge of writing a symphony.

By now, the symphony was already firmly established as the most influential of all public musical genres, and Beethoven's apparent reluctance to explore a form perfected by Haydn and Mozart for a further eight years is understandable.

It seems ironic, though, to remember that, almost three quarters of a century later, when questioned as to why it had taken him 21 years to complete his own first symphony, Johannes Brahms quipped "*you don't know how hard it is to write anything when you always hear the footsteps of that giant behind you!*" Beethoven, though, had tentatively sketched a symphony in C in 1795–96, later abandoning the attempt, and subsequently redeploying some of its material in his first published symphony, Opus 21, which received its premiere at his keenly-awaited *Akademie* concert at Vienna's Burgtheater on April 2nd 1800.

The programme, which also included parts of Haydn's *Creation*, a symphony by Mozart, and some piano improvisations, concluded with "*a new Grand Symphony, with complete orchestra, composed by Herr Ludwig van Beethoven.*" He had originally planned to dedicate it to his former employer, Maximilian Franz, Elector and Archbishop of Cologne, whose untimely demise necessitated a new dedicatee, the Baron Freiherr Gottfried von Swieten, an acquaintance of both Mozart and Haydn, and singularly well placed to introduce the young Beethoven to wider Viennese society.

The new symphony was enthusiastically received, with the influential *Leipzig Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* reporting that "*At last Herr Beethoven was able to have the theatre, and this was truly the most interesting concert we have heard for a long time… it finished with a symphony of his own composition, which contained much art, many new things and a wealth of ideas…*"

In his celebrated *Essays on Musical Analysis*, Donald Francis Tovey famously dubbed the work "*a comedy of manners*", but that hardly does justice to its originality. One "*new thing*" which would have startled early listeners is the very opening of Beethoven's First Symphony. Audiences would reasonably expect a symphony in the key of C major to begin with a tonic chord, but here we have a C major chord with an added B♭, deliberately creating a dissonance that must resolve to F major, the wrong key, effectively disorienting the listener in order to gradually lead back to C major by the close of the *Adagio* introduction.

From the very first bar of Beethoven's symphonic canon, fertile ground was being broken, and the shock of the new would persist right to its conclusion almost a quarter of a century later! The main *allegro* section of this opening movement pays homage to Mozart, notably his final symphony, No.41 in C, the *Jupiter*, with which it shares its key, and closely follows Mozartian developmental techniques, notably with Beethoven's use of the circle of fifths within a sonata-form structure.

Similarly, the *Andante* in F major is no less respectful of Classical semantics in its triple-meter presentation of a dance-like motif stated at the outset by the second violins. This is treated imitatively (recalling Haydn's contrapuntal writing in his own symphonic slow movements), with a secondary motif stated in the dominant. Of particular note is Beethoven's innovative use of the timpani (anticipating its importance in the Violin Concerto, Op.61, and the *Emperor* piano concerto), often absent in Classical symphonic slow movements, yet here used to great effect in the dotted rhythms underpinning the closing section of this delightful movement.

The third movement is a novel departure from the traditional minuets of Haydn and Mozart symphonies, being the first ever symphonic *scherzo* in all but name. Its contrasting trio section juxtaposes swirling violin figurations with stately wind chords, though as Tovey also remarked, it is in the exuberant finale that Beethoven finally *"lets the cat out of the bag"*. Following a dramatic unison G for the whole orchestra, we hear the violins cautiously feeling their way up the scale in a recitative-like passage which finally stalls on an F. What follows is a jubilant exploration in sonata form of more or less everything which can be wrung out of a C-major scale, heard in many guises as this dazzling finale emphatically signals Beethoven's arrival on the symphonic stage as a new voice for a new century.

Symphony No.2 in D major, Op.36

i Adagio molto – Allegro con brio
ii Larghetto
iii Scherzo: Allegro
iv Allegro molto

Writing in 1862 of the outwardly optimistic disposition of Beethoven's Symphony No.2 in D major, Hector Berlioz declared that "*everything in this symphony smiles*." Indeed, the period of its composition (1801–02) was attended by the material fruits of growing success (aged 30 at the turn of the century, Beethoven's income from commissions was now supplemented by a pension of 600 florins from Prince Lichnowsky, an enthusiastic patron and dedicatee of several Beethoven works, including this symphony), while his new ballet score for the choreographer Salvatore Vigano, *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus*, Op.43, took Vienna by storm, receiving 28 performances at the city's Burgtheater.

But Beethoven's correspondence of the period attests to an altogether darker reality. For some years, he had grappled with a progressive deterioration in his hearing, writing to his friend Franz Gerhard Wegeler on 16th November 1801 that "*My poor hearing haunted me everywhere like a ghost; and I avoided all human society*", later adding that *"For some time now my physical strength has been increasing more and more, and therefore my mental powers also… I will seize Fate by the throat; it shall certainly not crush me completely*."

During October 1802, just as he completed this symphony, Beethoven set down his famous *Heiligenstadt Testament*, a valedictory letter to his brothers Carl and Johann, which was never sent, and found amongst his papers following his death in 1827. It contains these tragically eloquent lines:

"O how harshly was I repulsed by the doubly sad experience of my bad hearing, and yet it was impossible for me to say to men speak louder, shout, for I am deaf. Ah! how could I possibly admit such an infirmity in the one sense which should have been more perfect in me than in others, a sense which I once possessed in highest perfection… what a humiliation when one stood beside me and heard a flute in the distance and I heard nothing, or someone heard the shepherd singing and again I heard nothing, such incidents brought me to the verge of despair, a little more and I would have put an end to my life – only Art it was that withheld me, ah! it seemed impossible to leave the world until I had produced all that I felt called upon to produce, and so I endured this wretched existence…"

The Second Symphony was introduced at Vienna's Theater an der Wien, where Beethoven was living at the time, on 5th April 1803. The programme included the first two symphonies, the C minor Piano Concerto, and Beethoven's Oratorio, "*Christus am*

Olberge" ("*Christ on the Mount of Olives"*) which, on account of its duration, overshadowed the other works performed, leading one critic to comment that "*the whole thing is too long, and greatly artificial in places*", a response probably occasioned more by listener fatigue than musical considerations!

The imposing and stately slow introduction (already three times the length of that of its predecessor) readily invites comparison with opening of Mozart's final symphony in D, No.38, the "*Prague"*, K.504, in its grandeur, but it is not without moments of tragic pathos too, as witnessed by several bold harmonic modulations and episodes where the sky very obviously darkens, perhaps suggestive of Beethoven's personal preoccupations at the time. However, the motivic first subject, striving insistently upwards in cellos and basses only to be dramatically stated by the full orchestra, quickly casts all doubt aside, inviting comparison with the principal theme of the overture to Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*.

The expanded scope and duration of this first movement confirms that the symphony is already a product of Beethoven's so-called "*Middle Period*", and of particular note here is the massive coda, emphatically and brilliantly scored, and illustrative of the end-weighted (rather than centre-weighted) approach which Beethoven adopts from this point onwards in the opening and closing movements of his symphonies.

The *Larghetto* in A major, at once consolatory and intimately scored, with luxuriant themes for the strings from the outset, and sonorous wind scoring (often reminiscent of a Mozartian *Serenade*) is one of the most extended to be found in any of Beethoven's nine symphonies. Beethoven omits the celebratory trumpets and drums which crown the peroration of the opening movement entirely, but gives the horns special prominence at several key moments. Despite the text-book key structure of this movement, the development includes several novel and unexpected key progressions, with the mediant key relationship built around augmented sixths affording memorable poignancy.

What follows is the first of Beethoven's fully-formed symphonic *scherzos*, customarily defined by bold rhythmic and dynamic contrasts, and witty inventiveness. By contrast, the trio section is reminiscent of Classical *Harmoniemusik* for winds, with its plaintive main motif suddenly and dramatically interrupted by a unison arpeggio figure (Haydn would have relished it!) in the key of F sharp minor in the strings, itself quickly brushed aside as the winds' theme returns again before a reprise of the main *scherzo* material.

The explosive *finale* begins abruptly, taking up where the *scherzo* leaves off, with a theme built upon a simple two-note figure which returns throughout this *sonata-rondo* movement. Though overwhelmingly exuberant in utterance, there are moments of minor-key digression and high drama too, though the principal area of musicological interest is to be found in the coda. Encompassing some 150 bars of the score, this monolithic episode brings this joyous symphony to an unforgettably exhilarating close, in another example of Beethoven's adoption of end-weighting technique. It was the coda, incidentally, which probably perplexed early listeners the most, leading one commentator to liken this finale to *"an uncivilised monster, a wounded dragon, refusing to die while bleeding to death, raging, striking in vain around itself with its agitated tail!"*

Symphony No.3 in E flat major, Op.55, *Eroica*

i Allegro con brio
ii Marcia funebre. Adagio assai
iii Scherzo: Allegro vivace
iv Finale. Allegro molto

In his personal recollections of the composer, Carl Czerny describes a conversation from 1802, in which Beethoven told his friend Wenzel Krumpholz *"I am far from satisfied with my past works: from today on I shall take a new way."* Whilst at once affirming the immense moral courage of the *Heiligenstadt Testament*, that *"new way"* was soon to be publicly proclaimed in Beethoven's monumental *Eroica Symphony*, a revolutionary creation which heralded the new epoch of Romanticism, shifting for ever the prescribed course of western symphonic music.

Beethoven's libertarian and republican ideals were often debated amongst his contemporaries, and indeed, still seem to be woven into the very fabric of his music several centuries later. Such utopian notions rapidly gained traction amongst post-Enlightenment intelligentsia, and throughout Europe, the new politics of revolution, allied to novel sentiments about the primacy of the individual and his right to self-determination were becoming increasingly fashionable.

Beethoven's deep admiration for Napoleon Bonaparte, whom he considered to be the true embodiment of a liberating hero, and (according to Ferdinand Ries) likened to "*one of the great Consuls of ancient Rome*" was widely reported.

But all that changed abruptly, when Ries informed him that, on 18th May 1804, Bonaparte had crowned himself Emperor of France. Enraged, Beethoven seized a quill pen and scratched out the third symphony's dedication to Napoleon with such venom that he tore through the title page, exclaiming "*So he too is no more than an ordinary mortal! Now he will trample underfoot the rights of men, and indulge only his ambition; now he will think himself superior to all people and become a tyrant!*"

Turning to the *Eroica Symphony* itself, perhaps the most astounding feature to be noted from the outset is its vastly expanded architecture, scope, and scale (its patrician first movement alone is longer than many Classical symphonies in their entirety), all of which seems yet more staggering when one compares this work to its immediate predecessor, completed little more than a year earlier.

The symphony was first heard in private at the Lobkowitz Palace (Prince Franz Maximillian Lobkowitz had become its dedicatee following the Bonaparte debacle) on 9th June 1805, and received its public premiere at one of Beethoven's *Akademie* concerts at the Theater an der Wien on 7th April 1805.

Public reaction to the new work predictably ran the whole gamut, from confusion to derision. One concert-goer seated up in the Gods reportedly shouted out *"I'll willingly pay another Kreutzer if only the damned thing will stop!"*, while the reviewer of the Leipzig *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* concluded that *"This lengthy and extremely difficult composition is in truth a very expansive, wild, and bold fantasy. There is no lack of striking and appealing passages, in which one cannot help but recognise the energetic and talented mind of its creator, but the music very often seems to get lost in its own haphazard disorder…"*

Beethoven's *Eroica* announces its unprecedented visionary credentials right from the start of its opening movement, in which the traditional slow introduction of the Classical symphony is replaced by just two peremptory E flat major chords, before the

first subject (built on nothing more complex than a tonic triad) is played by cellos and basses. But such apparent economy of means generates an energy and impulse all of its own, returning time and again with increasing passion and emphasis, and becoming the heroic talisman which comes to dominate this epic movement.

The music abounds with incident and moments of total surprise. Early audiences would have been baffled by a notorious passage in the development section which climaxes with one of the most arresting dissonant chords in all music, an A minor chord with an F at the top! Moreover, Beethoven's pupil Ferdinand Ries occasioned his master's reprimand when he was misled by a deliberate "false" entry for the second horn just before the recapitulation, and even accused the player of miscounting his bars' rest and coming in at the wrong place!

The first published edition of the score described the symphony as having been written to "*celebrate the remembrance of a great man*", and whilst it may seem tempting to identify the presumed hero of the piece with the Beethoven himself, we should perhaps be wary of doing so. Whereas, almost a century later, Richard Strauss would have little difficulty in self-identification in his massive tone poem *Ein Heldenleben*, Op.40 (which in many ways took the *Eroica* as its inspiration), Beethoven's notion of heroism was two-dimensional, as the scholar Lewis Lockwood argues, since his life experiences and his music do not compliment each other in any autobiographical sense, and of course, the hero of the *Eroica*, who ever he may be deemed to be, is killed off in the second movement (or *is* he?).

The key to this apparent contradiction may lie in one of Beethoven's own observations regarding his *Pastoral* symphony, No.6, which despite the programmatic associations of the titles given to each of its five movements, was intended to express feelings and emotions alone, rather than specific locations, events, or as in this case, an individual. Nonetheless, the obsequies of this *Marcia funebre* employ a wide variety of developmental techniques and effects, from the dignity of the opening cortège, through moments of triumphalist ceremonial, to a consolatory central section in C major, before the atmosphere darkens once again, leading a plaintive coda. Interestingly, the third movement of the Piano Sonata Op.26, of 1801, is similarly styled *"Marcia Funebre, sulla morte d'un Eroe"* but as Lewis Lockwood notes, it was here, in his third symphony, that Beethoven "*introduces death and commemoration into the genre of the symphony for the first time.*"

The *scherzo*, which follows, brings an abrupt change from darkness to light, or perhaps even, the return of sentient life after death, a consideration of special significance if one tries to ascribe any autobiographical subtext to this symphony. And let us not overlook here Beethoven's own preoccupation with the *Prometheus* legend, as the fire of being and enlightenment was stolen from the Gods, bringing new life to mankind, hitherto just mere effigies of lifeless clay! Note, too, the brilliant writing in the central trio section for three horns, often in perilous high register, and practically impossible to play on the crude natural horns of Beethoven's day, before this arresting *scherzo* concludes with a reprise of its main material.

It seems reasonable to imagine that Beethoven intended the end of the *Scherzo* to *segue* directly into the *Finale*, without a prolonged pause, and many conductors follow this reasoning to heightened dramatic effect. There follows a series of intricate variations on a *contredanse* theme taken from Beethoven's *Prometheus* ballet music, which he had already used previously as the basis for his so-called *Eroica Variations and Fugue* for piano, Op.35.

Incidentally, the *contredanse* form actually originated in England, and here it is transformed from its simple folkish beginnings to nothing less than a triumphant hymn to the ideals of democracy itself – Beethoven's intentions could scarcely be more publicly stated than in the celebratory restatement of this theme, now nobly transformed and played by the horns, (always the touchstone of heroism in music) towards the close of the movement. There follows a more plaintive and reflective passage, in which the wind take centre stage, and which Strauss probably had in mind when, in the final stages of *Ein Heldenleben*, the hero enumerates his "*works of peace"* before retiring from the world. But Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony concludes in the only way it could – with an indomitable affirmation of the tenacity of the human spirit expressed through music.

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

i Adagio – Allegro vivace
ii Adagio
iii Scherzo: Allegro vivace
iv Finale: Allegro ma non troppo

Robert Schumann considered this genial work "*a slender Greek maiden between two Norse giants"*, a description not without relevance when one considers its position within the canon of Beethoven's symphonies. It was composed in 1806 and first performed at a private gathering in Vienna at the Lobkowitz Palace in March of the following year. The public premiere took place during one of Beethoven's concerts at the Vienna Burgtheater in April 1808, where it received enthusiastic reviews from the critics, for its "*richness of ideas and bold originality combined with fulness of power*".

The composer's first biographer Anton Schindler also related that the new symphony had proved an immediate success, but there were divergent voices too, most famously including Carl Maria von Weber (never, it must be said, an admirer of Beethoven!) who, upon hearing it in 1809, found the work *"full of short, disjointed and unconnected ideas… above all things, it throws rules to the winds, for they only hamper a genius."*

But that even today Beethoven's Fourth Symphony is not always accorded the status it truly deserves is largely due to its chronological misfortune! Beethoven scholars, meanwhile, are often unanimous in citing numerous features of this work which are often missed by audiences more familiar with the lofty idealism of its closest siblings, symphonies four and five.

Berlioz and Mendelssohn admired it, and in 1896, Sir George Grove (famous for his *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*) noted that the work had *"met with scant notice in some of the most prominent works on Beethoven."* A more contemporary view, from the American musicologist Robert Greenberg, sets the record straight; "*if any of Beethoven's contemporaries had written this symphony, it would be considered that composer's masterwork… as it is, for Beethoven, it is a work in search of an audience. It is the least known and least appreciated of the nine."*

The Fourth Symphony opens in the key of B flat minor, with a unanimous hushed *pizzicato* for the strings, followed by a sombre unison wind chord, after which the music explores with measured, cautious tread its searching 38-bar slow introduction, which as Leonard Bernstein notes, *"hovers around minor modes, tip-toeing its tenuous weight through ambiguous unrelated keys, and is so reluctant to settle down to its final B flat major."* Finally, fortissimo repeated chords in F replace darkness with

brilliant daylight as the main first subject idea of this sonata-form movement strides forwards. The contrasting second theme is, in the words of Donald Francis Tovey, "*a conversation between the bassoon, the oboe, and the flute*", followed by a harmonically adventurous development section, which takes the music into a very remote B major before returning to the tonic for a conventional recapitulation and life-assertive and brilliant coda.

The E-flat major *Adagio* opens with a steady rhythmic figure which will persist throughout the movement, and from which the principal melodic idea soon emerges. Berlioz could scarcely conceal his admiration for it, calling this slow movement *"The work of the Archangel, and not that of a human being."* The principal idea is subjected to a series of ingenious variations, before it eventually reappears in its original form, played by the flute at the start of the recapitulation. The scoring of the coda is noteworthy for Beethoven's ingenious use of the timpani, which echoes the pervasive rhythmic motto which runs through the entire movement during its closing bars.

That Beethoven never intended the succeeding movement to be played at a conventional minuet tempo (as suggested in early printed editions) is clear from the metronome marking, dotted minim = 100, a fact which did not escape Grove, who noted that he *"forsook the spirit of the minuet of his predecessors, increased its speed, broke through its formal and antiquated mould, and out of a mere dance, produced a* Scherzo."

Another important structural advance is seen in the way Beethoven also repeats the central trio section after the second hearing of the main *scherzo* material, and then brings its theme back a third time, now slightly abridged before the coda, where (to again quote Tovey) the horns finally *"blow the whole movement away"*. Beethoven was to use the same structural technique in the *scherzo* of his seventh symphony, and this expansion of what was traditionally a dance movement into a fully-fledged symphonic statement paved the way for the vastly extended *scherzos* of Gustav Mahler and Anton Bruckner.

The closing *Allegro* is in 2/4 time, and its bold dynamic contrasts and headlong forward motion signals all that we have come to understand and recognise as Beethoven in what he liked to call his "*aufgeknöpft*" ("*unbuttoned*") mood. Grove described this devil-may-care romp as a true *perpetuum-mobile*, but Beethoven sagely chose to end this joyous, sun-filled symphony by using the well-tried Haydnesque device of slowing down the main theme to half-speed during the coda, interspersing it with several halting pauses, and then concluding emphatically with a final, affirmative flourish.

Symphony No.5 in C minor, Op.67

i Allegro con brio
ii Andante con moto
iii Scherzo: Allegro
iv Finale: Allegro

Despite many attempts to define what the famous opening of this most familiar of all symphonies could actually signify, the German Romantic author and critic E.T.A. Hoffman could hardly be accused of hyperbole in declaring that Beethoven's Fifth *"sets in motion the machinery of awe, of fear, of terror, of pain, and awakens that infinite yearning which is the essence of romanticism".*

Hoffmann's early advocacy of this symphony in numerous published articles and essays robustly commended it to the new Romantic world of the early 19th Century, since when the work has never lost its universal appeal.

Years after Beethoven's death, his factotum Anton Schindler (who was not above indulging in a certain amount of Romantic hyperbole himself!) suggested that the notion of "*Fate knocking at the door*", with which the opening of the first movement is so often associated, was actually proposed by the composer himself; *"he pointed to the beginning and expressed in these words the fundamental idea of his work: "Thus Fate knocks at the door!"*

Carl Czerny, on the other hand, left an altogether more prosaic explanation, namely that *"this little pattern of notes had come to Beethoven from a Yellow-hammer's song, heard as he walked in the Prater in Vienna."* To this, the writer and musicologist Anthony Hopkins adds; *"given the choice between a Yellow-hammer and Fate-at-the-door, the public has preferred the more dramatic myth, though Czerny's account is too unlikely to have been invented."*

Modern scholarship suggests that the famous opening motif carried a subliminal republican message which, suggests Sir John Eliot Gardiner, *"had it come out into the open in a city as incredibly reactionary as Vienna, would have had Beethoven incarcerated, there's no doubt about it."* It has also been argued that the motto theme could have been derived from a work entitled *Hymne du Panthéon* (it contained Chenier's lines *"We swear, sword in hand, to die for the Republic and for the rights of man"*) of 1794, by the Italian composer Luigi Cherubini, whose music and libertarian ideals Beethoven greatly admired.

Interestingly, the symphony's defining motto permeates each of its four movements, though whether by accident or design is unclear. Most immediately obvious is the defiant horn theme of the *scherzo* (where the short-short-short-long note pattern recurs), the piccolo writing in the finale, and the repeated pattern played by the violins during its coda, which is answered directly by the bass instruments quoting directly from the ending of the first movement. But as Tovey cautioned, we should take the suggestion of a planned rhythmic unity in the symphony with a pinch of salt; "*This profound discovery was supposed to reveal an unsuspected unity in the work, but the simple truth is that Beethoven could not do without just such purely rhythmic figures at this stage of his art."* Comparable examples abound throughout his output, as for example, in the Piano Concerto No.4 in G, and the Op.74 String Quartet.

The second movement, an *Andante* in A flat major (the subdominant key of C minor's relative key of E flat major), is predominately lyrical in character, and includes variations on two separate themes. The first of these is for celli and violas, with double basses providing the accompaniment, which will recur three times, with each subsequent variation employing progressively shorter note-lengths. The second idea, stately if restrained in character but with moments of noble grandiloquence in C major (with trumpets and timpani prominent) quickly follows. Later variations survey only the opening melody more exhaustively, and any expectation that the movement might end in victorious C major is unfulfilled.

The 19th century Beethoven scholar Gustav Nottebohm pointed out that the *Scherzo* of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony uses exactly the same notated intervals as the opening of the finale of Mozart's Symphony No.40 in G minor, K.550. It would be easy to overlook this as mere coincidence, but Nottebohm found that in the

sketchbook containing his ideas for the movement, Beethoven had also copied out some 29 bars of the finale of K.550. The *scherzo* theme itself is first heard in the lower strings, and answered by a contrasting figure for winds. Both are repeated, with slight variations in orchestration before the horns announce what turns out to be the main motif, which as previously mentioned, uses the same rhythmic idea as the first movement's 3+1 short-short-short-long motto. The C major trio section includes complex fugal writing before the *scherzo* idea returns, but now played very quietly by *pizzicato* strings, before the 3+1 motif is heard again in subdued form.

There now follows one of the most extraordinary transitions in all western music, as the third movement is linked directly to the *finale* by means of a bridge passage over a pedal A-flat. Tom Service, writing in his *Guardian* column in 2013, described it as *"one of the dramatic masterstrokes of orchestral music. From an entropic mist of desolate memories of the* scherzo*'s opening theme, underscored by the timpani's ominous heartbeat, the violins'* arpeggios *climb until they reach a* tremolo*, a* crescendo *and a blaze of unadulterated C major glory."*

In the *finale*, Beethoven now introduces the piccolo and contra-bassoon to the orchestra for the first time in a symphony, and as well as expanding the tonal richness of this triumphal scene, these instruments, when added to the existing clamour of trumpets and trombones (also appearing for the first time in a Beethoven symphony), suggests the militaristic music of the Ottoman Janissary marching bands, whose unique sound is also recalled in the *finale* of the *Choral Symphony, No.9*. But there remains a further direct republican association deeply embedded in the movement, as it has now been found that the aspiring second subject motif derives from Rouget de Lisle's politically contentious *Hymne Dithyrambique*.

Gradually, the entire orchestra becomes caught up in this great paean to the libertarian ideals Beethoven held so dear, before a monumental dominant cadence re-introduces the hushed tread of the *Scherzo*'s 3+1 idea, which is itself abruptly denied by the increasingly eruptive force of the principal motif of the *finale*. The Fifth ends with an exceptionally long coda; 29 bars of tonic chords, and for good reason, as Charles Rosen explains in his seminal study *The Classical Style*; *"Beethoven's unbelievably long pure C major cadence is needed to ground the extreme tension of this immense work."*

Beethoven's Symphony No.5 received its first performance on 22nd December 1808, under the composer's direction, at Vienna's Theater an der Wien, and its introduction could hardly have been less propitious. The orchestra was an under-prepared "scratch-band", struggling to meet the epic demands of the work, added to which Beethoven, now 38, wished to showcase several new compositions in a programme of extraordinary length, including premieres of the Fourth Piano Concerto, the *Pastoral Symphony*, and the *Choral Fantasia*. Anton Schindler reported at the time that "the reception of the audience was not as desired, and probably the author himself did not expect anything better. His public was not endowed with the necessary degree of comprehension for so much extraordinary music…"

Symphony No.6 in F, Op.68, *Pastoral*

i Allegro ma non troppo
ii Andante molto mosso
iii Scherzo: Allegro
iv Allegro
v Finale: Allegretto

Alexander Wheelock Thayer, the American librarian, journalist, and author of the earliest truly scholarly Beethoven biography (it remains authoritative today) relates that *"When, in sorrow and affliction, his art, his Plutarch, his Odyssey proved to be resources too feeble for his comfort, he went to nature, and rarely failed to find it."* Indeed, Beethoven's inner circle knew well the extent of his attachment to the natural world (in a letter to Teresa Malfatti, dated May 1810, he writes *"How delighted I shall be to ramble for a while through bushes, woods, under trees, over grass and rocks. No one can love the country as much as I do."*

His forays amid the meadows, woods, and streams which surrounded Vienna, Heiligenstadt, and Baden afforded endless restorative recreation.

The *Pastoral Symphony*, early sketches for which can be traced back as far as 1802, was completed six years later, and premiered during the same mammoth concert as Symphony No.5, at the Theater an der Wien in December 1808.

Beethoven's Sixth is his only symphony to have descriptive subtitles appended to each of its five movements. The composer remained ambivalent about any broader programmatic intentions for the work, later saying it was *"more about the expression of feeling than painting. Every kind of painting loses by being carried too far in instrumental music… anyone who has the least idea about rural life will have no need of descriptive titles."* Nevertheless, the *Pastoral* strongly affiliates Beethoven with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and the early German Romantic movement in endorsing the French Enlightenment's plea for "*retour a la nature*".

Musically there were precedents of course. One need only think of certain Vivaldi concertos, or of Haydn's Oratorios, *The Seasons* and *The Creation.* Moreover, there remains a little known work composed in 1784 by an obscure German composer and theorist, Justin Heinrich Knecht (1752–1817), entitled "*Le Portrait musical de la Nature ou Grande Symphonie",* which he described as a "*Tongemälde der Natur oder Große Symphonie" ("a tone painting in the form of a large symphony*"). It has five movements and several other features comparable to those of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony. These include the sounds of birdsong, the shepherd's pipe, a babbling stream, and (in true *sturm und drang* style) the mandatory thunderstorm. There is no compelling evidence to suggest that Beethoven used it as a model for the *Pastoral*, although several sources confirm that he knew and respected Knecht's theoretical writings.

The first of the symphony's five movements is a bucolic depiction of the composer's unperturbed and eager spirits, having left the clamour of urban life far behind upon arriving in the countryside. In sonata form, it opens with a rustic-sounding open fifth played by cellos and basses, over which the violins offer a short theme of joyful simplicity, leading to a fermata before the music takes off on its happy way, with new melodic and rhythmic ideas heard in quick succession, which will come to represent the core motifs of the entire movement. The tonality is bright and unaffected, using major keys of F, the dominant of C, and some interesting passages built upon the subdominant B flat. The development section is harmonically more advanced, no doubt deliberately so, with shifts to keys a third away (B flat to D, G to E major), as if to underscore the fact the city and its preoccupations are now a world away.

In 1803, Beethoven had noted down an idea he called *"murmurs of the brooks"* in one of his many sketchbooks, adding the words *"the greater the stream, the deeper shall be the tone".* Such imagery finds its ultimate fulfilment and expression in the second movement, which is structurally complex, being cast in four-part sonata form, with the

gently flowing stream subtly evoked at the start by repeated triplet figures for the strings, later subdivided into semiquaver divisi patterns for the cellos, underpinning the continuous rippling motion of the water. Birdsong is all around us, emulated by the violins and flute, in trills and longer, more distinct motifs (the influence of birdsong fragments upon Gustav Mahler, in his First Symphony, cannot be ignored) though the celebrated passage towards the end of the movement includes the most obvious examples, in which Beethoven specifically names the birds as Nightingale (solo flute), Quail (solo oboe) and Cuckoo (two clarinets), which feature prominently during the *coda*.

The remainder of the work now ensues without a break (as had been the case with the two final movements of Symphony No.5), portraying the unfolding drama of village festivities being loudly interrupted by the storm, after which the shepherds' hymn celebrates safe deliverance.

The rustic merry-making of peasant folk is vividly recreated in the third movement, which follows the same five-section plan that Beethoven had employed to such striking effect in the *Scherzo* of his Fourth Symphony. Tipsy Breugelesque villagers strike up a romping tune, soon made all the more bucolic by an amusingly primitive bassoon part, with the hurdy-gurdy bass lines and round-dance of the trio section becoming more and more intoxicating as the main elements of the movement come round again and again, before threatening clouds and the first drops of rain send everybody scampering for cover.

The succeeding *Allegro* (subtitled "*Gewitter, Sturm*") is a startling and occasionally violent orchestral depiction of the unrestrained power of nature in all its fury.

Beginning with an ominous *tremolo* for lower strings, the increasing tension building up in the music soon cannot be withheld, and a paroxysm of coruscating notes representing torrential rainfall is inevitable. Snarling trombones and shrieking piccolo invoke the lash and blast of the wind, while the timpani's thunderclaps bring the storm right overhead before its gradual dissipation as the sky eventually brightens and rural tranquillity returns again. Berlioz was spellbound by its effect, as witnessed in the *"Scene aux champs"* from his *Symphonie Fantastique,* and "*Royal Hunt and Storm"* from *"Les Troyens"*. And as Dennis Matthews writes, *"The art of transition that preceded the triumphant finale of the Fifth Symphony is now practiced in reverse as the storm subsides for a more serene restoration of the major key…"*

The *finale*, "*Shepherds' Hymn of Thanksgiving after the Storm*", begins with a noteworthy bi-tonal introduction in C and F major of some eight bars, with horn and clarinet playing the opening of the main first subject idea over a tonic/dominant chord of a fifth in the lower strings. Thus arrives the Arcadian *Hymn of Thanksgiving* itself, rapturously presented by the violins, and restated three times, each with fuller orchestration. Eventually, the quiet repose and suppliant entreaties of the *Pastoral Symphony*'s *coda* restore the work's original character, somehow bespeaking a universal gratitude impossible of expression in words alone. As the critic Samuel Langford exclaimed after listening to the *Heiliger Dankgesang* ("*Song of Thanksgiving"*) of the String Quartet in A minor, Opus 132, "*It is indeed something to belong to the same race of beings as Beethoven."* No doubt he would have said the same of this remarkable symphony too!

Symphony No.7 in A major, Op.92

i Poco sosenuto: Vivace
ii Allegretto
iii Scherzo: Presto
iv Finale: Allegro con brio

Following the completion of Beethoven's Fifth and Sixth symphonies, more than three years would elapse before he returned once again to the genre, in 1811–12. He had not been idle during an interim which produced such masterpieces as the *Emperor Piano Concerto* and *Archduke Trio*. That his next symphonic utterance would break further new ground seemed certain.

On the evening of 8th December 1813, Beethoven directed his bizarre, unashamedly populist symphony-cum-tone poem "*Wellington's Victory*" or "*The Battle of Vittoria*" before a capacity audience foregathered in the Great Hall of the old Vienna University, for a charity concert for soldiers wounded at the Battle of Hanau. The programme also included the premiere of the new Seventh Symphony, which was wildly acclaimed from the outset, the house demanding that the second movement be encored immediately. Anton Schindler, despite his penchant for embellishment, can certainly be taken at his word, when he reported that this 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.*"

For once, Beethoven had at his disposal a very large and unusually fine orchestra, led by the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh, with the likes of Louis Spohr, Hummel, Meyerbeer, and Salieri filling its ranks. Spohr related that Beethoven's conducting style was volatile; "*when so often as a* sfzorando *occurred, he tore his arms asunder with great vehemence, and at a forte entrance, he jumped into the air,*" adding that "*the friends of Beethoven made arrangements for a repetition of the concert immediately, by which he was extricated from his pecuniary difficulties.*" Subsequent performances (three in ten weeks) took place at the Redoutensaal, of the Hofburg Palace, then Vienna's largest concert hall, attracting (suggests Thayer) audiences of 3000 plus on each occasion.

Carl Maria von Weber, never an admirer, was allegedly one of very few divergent voices, supposedly grousing that Beethoven was "*ripe for the madhouse*" upon hearing a famous chromatic passage in the opening movement. Various sources maintain that this notable put-down was another of Schindler's hyperbolic inventions, not that it matters greatly since the Seventh marked a watershed in the history of music.

"*It carries us away with bacchanalian power*", asserted Richard Wagner; "*the Symphony is the Apotheosis of the Dance itself.*" Such an epithet would doubtless have appealed to Beethoven, the subject (in 1810) of a letter written by Bettina Brentano to Goethe (who upon making his acquaintance felt him to be "*an entirely uncontrollable person*"), in which she relates that during her meeting with the composer, Beethoven reportedly exclaimed "*I must despise the world which does not know that music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy… it is the wine*

which inspires us to new creative endeavours and I am the Bacchus who presses out this glorious wine to make mankind spiritually drunken."

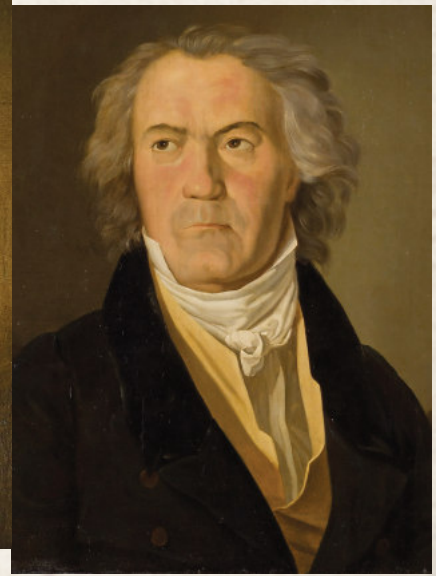
The work begins with four majestic unison chords suspending a gentle oboe solo prefacing the longest introduction in any Beethoven symphony, characterised by extensive use of ascending scalic passages in the strings, and a sequence of modulations, to C major, and then to F. During this passage, there are 61 repetitions of the note E as the music progresses toward the main *Vivace* section (in sonata form) of the first movement, and we hear the first of the irrepressible dactylic rhythmic figures which will come to dominate much of the work. The C major development similarly places greater emphasis on rhythmic rather than melodic devices, inducing unrelenting forward motion, while the *coda* includes another famous passage in which the same two-bar figure is reiterated ten times, and features especially brilliant writing for the horns in high register.

Dactylic (long-short-short) rhythms again overshadow the second movement, which is marked to be played *Allegretto* (somewhat lively), and which, although occupying the place of a traditional symphonic slow movement, is actually slow only in comparison to its fellows. With quiet processional tread, a sombre melody emerges from the original rhythmic cell, but this turns out to be an accompaniment to the contemplative second subject theme introduced by the cellos. The 37-bar long development section in A major offers a consolatory clarinet melody, ending with a sudden decent on an A minor scale in the strings and a final fugato before the movement concludes with the sense that no lasting resolution has been attained.

The third movement, a rousing *Scherzo* in F major, finds Beethoven again expanding the structure of the movement (from A-B-A ternary form into the more extended A-B-A-B-A), with the trio played fully twice, as he had done previously in the Fourth and Sixth symphonies. The trio section itself features a melody thought to be derived from an Austrian pilgrims' hymn, which is also momentarily referenced at the close of the coda, before the *Scherzo* ends with five mighty unison chords for full orchestra. Upon hearing this Olympian movement today, one can scarcely credit Sir Thomas Beecham's inexplicable (and, in the view of this writer, unforgiveable!) repost; *"What can you do with it? It's like a lot of yaks jumping about!"*

Beethoven almost certainly wanted the two mighty downbeats which open the finale to follow on from the final chords of the *Scherzo* without a break, a convention adopted by some conductors today. Alongside its galvanic energy and irrepressible pulse, Tovey speaks of its "*Bacchic fury*", while Sir George Grove, writing in his book *Beethoven and his Nine symphonies* writes that *"the force which reigns throughout this movement is literally prodigious"*, having *"fire enough in the belly to burn up the entire world!"*

But above all else, perhaps, it is that tangible, yet often unpredictable sense of spontaneity forged in the white heat of creativity which marks out Beethoven's Seventh Symphony as something truly unique, often emulated, seldom equalled, and never surpassed. As Anthony Hopkins has written, "*the notes seem to fly off the page as we are borne along on a floodtide of inspired invention. Beethoven himself spoke of it fondly as 'one of my best works'. Who are we to dispute his judgement?"*



Symphony No.8 in F major, Op.93

i Allegro vivace e con brio
ii Allegretto scherzando
iii Tempo di Menuetto
iv Finale: Allegro vivace

Witty without being lightweight (the composer affectionately referred to it as "*my little symphony in F",* thus differentiating it from the *Pastoral*, also in F), Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No.8 followed hard on the heels of its A major predecessor in the year 1812. Some 30 years later, Robert Schumann extoled the Eighth for its "*Profound humour*", and "*tranquillity and happiness",* realised with an unspectacular economy of means and manifest lack of rebellious adventurism which combine to make this sometimes under-valued work instantly appealing.

Beethoven was 41 years of age when began writing the symphony, during the summer of 1812. But given the complications of his personal and family circumstances at the time, and the onerous demands the latter in particular placed upon him, it seems all the more remarkable that he completed the Eighth (the only Beethoven Symphony to lack a formal dedication) in just four months.

That summer, he had desperately sought a cure for his now quite profound deafness at the hands of various money-grabbing quacks in the spa town of Teplitz (now Teplice in the Czech Republic), from whence he also penned the famous letter to the "*Unsterbliche Geliebte*" or "*Immortal Beloved*", on or around 7th July 1812. Speculation persists as to the identity of its intended recipient, but its tortured sentiments reflect Beethoven's inner battles with his solitude, whilst at same time, he felt compelled to make the journey to Linz, and intervene in his brother Johann's disastrous affair with his housekeeper Therese Obermeyer.

The new symphony received its first performance at the Vienna Redoutensaal, where Beethoven had scored a major triumph two months earlier with the premiere of his Symphony No.7 in A major which, alongside the crowd-pleasing "*Wellington's Victory*", was also repeated during Beethoven's *Akademie* on 27th February 1814.

This time, critical reaction to the new work was more circumspect, the correspondent of the Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung reporting that "*the applause which it received was not accompanied by that enthusiasm which distinguishes a work which gives universal delight…"* Beethoven, however, remained unconcerned and undeterred, and when asked by Carl Czerny why the symphony had produced at best a lukewarm response, he replied "*because it is so much better!"* George Bernard Shaw certainly agreed with him, writing that "*In all subtler respects, the Eighth is better than the Seventh",* though few would likely concur with his judgement today, since both works stand as they are; altogether different in terms of structure, content, and intention.

The opening movement, which has no slow introduction, opens with an affirmative yet cheerful first subject idea, which predominates throughout this sonata form structure. One curious feature is that the rhetorical climax of the movement comes not, as expected, during the development, but at the very moment of recapitulation, where the bold opening idea returns in tonic triumph. As if to underscore the significance of the moment, Beethoven adds the dynamic marking *Fortississimo* – to be played extremely loudly – a performance direction seldom used in his works! The same

indication is also found in the coda, though the movement ends with a final backward glance at the opening theme, in a moment of unexpected calm.

Another unusual feature of the Eighth Symphony is found in the absence of a conventional slow movement. Instead, the regular metrical tread of the B flat major second movement (*Allegretto scherzando*) was often thought to be a parody on the regular beat of Johann Maelzel's musical time-keeping device, the metronome.

Beethoven (according to the ever-imaginative Anton Schindler) was said to have attended a dinner party held in Maelzel's honour in 1812, at which he apparently improvised a canon called "*Ta ta ta… Lieber Maelzel*", and later returned to this ditty in the second movement of this symphony. There is, however, absolutely no corroborative evidence to support Schindler's tale, and Maelzel had no intellectual property rights to the metronome anyway, having only made some technical improvements to an already established design. It seems far more likely that Beethoven followed closely the example of his master, Joseph Haydn, who used a similar technique in the equivalent movement of his *Clock Symphony, No.104 in D*.

Further evidence of overall economy of scale in the Eighth Symphony is found in the succeeding movement, which Beethoven styles as a Minuet, following Haydn and Mozart's example to the letter, and returning to a more concise A-B-A format, in which the central trio is not repeated. This section (much admired by Stravinsky, who found the entire symphony "*fresh and delightful*") is notable for its prominent melody for a pair of horns with clarinet, over a buoyant triplet accompaniment for two solo cellos.

The finale, the most expansive and dramatic movement of the four, opens innocently enough, with an insistent repeated-note motif ("*like a knock at the door*", says Dennis Matthews), played pianissimo, in the home key of F which, after 17 bars precipitously lands on a totally unexpected *fortissimo* C sharp, a moment, writes Anthony Hopkins, of "*outrageous impropriety!*"

So sudden and extreme is this interloper that Tovey, noting that "*all that precedes it is so delicate in texture, so nimble and light-footed*" points out that we are left unprepared for Beethoven's *"long-distance harmonic effects."* This errant C sharp will have an important role to play in helping to provide overall structural unity to the movement. The opening idea is repeated three times, at the start of the development and recapitulation sections, and part way through the huge coda, one of the most expansive and ingenious Beethoven had thus far created. Only now does the importance of the apparently "wrong" C sharp become clear, when the main theme erupts again in F sharp minor, only to be forced down by a semitone a few bars later in a dramatic return to the home key of F, one of the many masterstrokes that prompted Tchaikovsky to dub this "*one of the greatest symphonic masterpieces of Beethoven*".

Symphony No.9 in D minor, Op.125, *Choral*

i Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso
ii Scherzo: Molto vivace
iii Adagio molto e cantabile
iv Presto – Allegro assai

This recording of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was made shortly after the acclaimed two-hundredth anniversary concert performance of the work by Rimma Sushanskaya

and the National Symphony Orchestra, at London's Cadogan Hall, on Tuesday 7th May 2024.

Perhaps never before in the unfolding story of humankind has its clarion-call to brotherhood, liberty, and equality had greater figurative significance. And there is something indefinably ritualistic about hearing the Ninth Symphony, whether for the first time or for the hundredth. Some experience a spiritual awakening, others a transcendental catharsis, but whether as performers or as listeners, we are *all* profoundly affected by the universality of its message, becoming stake-holders in Beethoven's enduring vision of a better world.

Discussing the Ninth Symphony at length in a rare book entitled "*Talks about Beethoven's Symphonies*", the conductor Frederick Stock wrote of "*A symphony dedicated to the whole of mankind, it embraces all phases of human emotion, monumental in scope and outline, colossal in its intellectual grasp and emotional eloquence… the Ninth stands today as the greatest of all symphonies*."

Moreover, as Michael Steinberg contends, whether we approach the work from a personal, philosophical, or purely musical standpoint, *"it demands that we come to terms with it. Adrian Leverkühn, the composer-hero of Thomas Mann's 'Doctor Faustus', must 'revoke' it, and Michael Tippett began his Third Symphony, an eloquent report in music on the human condition in the year 1972, from the urge to respond to its affirmation with some questions of his own. Quite simply, it is 'the Ninth Symphony' – or even just 'The Ninth' – and when Leverkühn gives voice to his need to 'revoke the Ninth Symphony' we do not stop to wonder whether he means Haydn's or Dvorák's or Mahler's."*

Sketches for what would eventually become the Ninth Symphony can be traced back to 1815, but earlier still, in May 1812, Beethoven had made mention of a new symphony in the key of D minor in correspondence to the Leipzig publishing house of Breitkopf & Härtel. But it was the eventual acceptance of a commission (£50 for a new symphony) from the Philharmonic Society in London, together with an invitation to visit the city (which never took place) that finally catalysed Beethoven's work to complete the project.

His life had been in a state of more or less perpetual calamity since 1812, and the decade which followed produced no grand public utterances, though we owe smaller-scale creations such as the Opus 102 Cello Sonatas, the song cycle "*An die ferne Geliebte" ("To the distant Beloved")* and the Piano Sonata Opus 106, the "*Hammerklavier"* (1819) to this period.

By 1822, however, Beethoven's creative energies had been revitalised, and he finished his great *Missa Solemnis* (only two years behind schedule!) and the magnificent overture *Die Weihe des Hauses (The Consecration of the House).* Nascent ideas for the Ninth were crystallising too, with the immense opening movement largely finished by 1823, but Beethoven (like practically every other composer) experienced '*Finale-Trouble*', and having already determined to construct a vocal finale, he grappled with the problem of how to validate the inclusion of the human voice in a symphony, a gesture entirely without precedent.

Beethoven's amanuensis Anton Schindler has left us a vivid account of how the problem was eventually resolved; it has become apocryphal, but for once, perhaps we may take him at his word!

"One day Beethoven burst into the room shouting 'I have it, I have it!', and he showed me the sketchbook with the words, 'Let us sing the song of the immortal Schiller – Freude!,' whereupon a solo voice immediately begins the Ode to Joy."

"By adding the text by Schiller," writes the conductor Marin Alsop, *"a philosopher whom he greatly admired, and incorporating the sound and inflection of the human voice, Beethoven conveyed a broad existential philosophy that embraced his belief in unity, tolerance, peace and joy."*

Beethoven had become concerned by Vienna's growing appetite for opera, (particularly those of Rossini) and felt that his new symphony might receive a more appreciative reception in Berlin, but his many patrons and admirers petitioned him otherwise, and plans were made for the Ninth Symphony to be first performed in the city which had been his home since 1792.

The premiere took place on 7th May 1824 in the Kärtnerthor Theatre, before a capacity audience eager to witness Beethoven's first appearance in the city for 12 years. Original plans to include the entire *Missa Solemnis* were wisely curtailed, with three sections only included. The programme commenced with the Overture *The Consecration of the House*, and involved the largest orchestral and choral forces Beethoven ever had at his disposal, including the theatre's own resident ensemble, and members of the illustrious *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* (today the Wiener Philharmoniker) alongside prominent soloists and select amateur musicians, led by Konzertmeister Ignaz Schuppanzigh.

But who really conducted? The theatre's Kapellmeister, Michael Umlauf, had seen the deaf composer wreck a dress rehearsal of the revival of *Fidelio* in 1822, and now instructed his players to disregard Beethoven entirely during the premiere, and follow his own baton at all costs. One orchestra member, the violinist Joseph Böhm wrote that *"Beethoven himself conducted, that is, he stood in front of a conductor's stand and threw himself back and forth like a madman. At one moment he stretched to his full height, at the next he crouched down to the floor, he flailed about with his hands and feet as though he wanted to play all the instruments and sing all the chorus parts. The actual direction was in Umlauf's hands… we musicians followed him only."*

As for the vocal soloists, third-choice bass Joseph Seipelt ran out of breath at the finale's notorious high F sharp, though Beethoven was certainly more fortunate with the others. The 18-year old soprano Henrietta Sontag had already claimed for herself the title role in Weber's *Euryanthe*, tenor Anton Haitzinger seemed destined for a successful career, and Vienna-born contralto Caroline Unger soon claimed the interests of Bellini and Donizetti.

It was she who, at the triumphant conclusion of the premiere, walked over to Beethoven (still gesticulating and unaware that the performance had ended) and gently turned him around so that he could see the acclamation of the audience. The journal *Theater-Zeitung* reported that *"the public received their musical hero with the utmost respect and sympathy, listened to his wonderful, gigantic creations with the most absorbed attention and broke out in jubilant applause The audience acclaimed him through five standing ovations with handkerchiefs in the air, hats, and raised hands, so that Beethoven, who they knew could not hear the applause, could at least see the ovations."*

As for the work itself, we must first ask when does Beethoven's Ninth Symphony truly begin? That might seem like an absurd question, but it really does seem to arise out of primordial silence at the outset (much as do several of Bruckner's symphonies), emerging from a two-note chord of a fifth, E and A, played by the horns over tremolo

strings, before the arrival of the implacable, plummeting first subject idea itself, in the tonic key of D minor, dramatically stated at bar 17.

This vast sonata-form movement has no exposition repeat, however, and this is the only Beethoven symphony in which it is absent. Instead, although a return to the sparse fifths with which the movement commenced might lead the innocent ear to anticipate a repeat, Beethoven side-steps into a two-part development of similarly gigantic proportions. The *coda*, too, is monolithic, and of unprecedented length. The lower strings insistent ostinato figure clearly gave rise to Mahler's chromatic bass line in the first movement coda of his *Resurrection Symphony*, No.2, and the influence of Beethoven's Ninth on the symphonies of Anton Bruckner has already been noted.

The *Scherzo*, a neurotic, endlessly circling dance whose thematic conservatism seems curiously at odds with its length and restless impetus, seems bound to prolong the tempestuous mood which precedes it; the first few bars have an uncanny resemblance to what we hear at the outset of the Ninth Symphony, a device also used in Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Piano Sonata, Opus 106, written a few years earlier in 1819.

The movement is characterised by unsettling and increasingly vehement fugal passagework for the strings, often interrupted by violent timpani interjections. Although it is in triple metre, we are led to think it is in quadruple time, which begs the question, how could Beethoven possibly have conducted it? Structurally, we could describe this movement as being in compound ternary form (ie. *Scherzo-Trio-Scherzo*), but that, too, oversimplifies matters, because it is a complete sonata-form movement, the opening fugal motif forming a first subject before modulation into an unexpected C major for the second subject, a return to the opening idea (recapitulation), and a brief development, with its prominent timpani solos. The contrasting trio section in D major affords some repose, and we hear the trombones for the first time in this work.

The B flat major *Adagio molto e cantabile* begins with a two-bar preface from clarinets and bassoons, leading to the heart-easing principal melody offered up by the violins. The movement is in double variation form, with each successive variant becoming more elaborate, both rhythmically and melodically, and running through the keys of D, G, E flat, and B major. During the final variation, which also includes a notoriously exposed solo for (unusually) the fourth horn player, the texture is suddenly interrupted by heraldic fanfares (glimpsing the final triumphant outcome of the symphony from afar?) and answered in octaves by the first violins before the movement concludes in heavenly stasis.

The great choral *finale* opens with something suggestive of the '*Representation of Chaos'* from Haydn's *Creation*, punctuated by alarming trumpet calls (Wagner called it the *"Schreckensfanfare" or "Fanfare of Terror")* before the main motifs from each of the previous movements are briefly reviewed, and then summarily dismissed by recitative-like interjections for cellos and double basses, who then introduce, somewhat tentatively and experimentally at first, the *Ode to Joy* theme itself. This time, it is not to be vetoed, and gradually expands into a magnificent, stridently confident paean for the entire orchestra.

A comparable motif appears in the closing movement of Johannes Brahms' First Symphony (sometimes called '*Beethoven's Tenth*'), and when the similarity was pointed out to him, Brahms apparently retorted "*Any fool can see that!*" Beethoven had used versions of what later became his most universally recognised melody on several

occasions previously, as early as 1795 in a song entitled "*Geigenliebe*", and more famously in 1808, when he introduced it into the *Choral Fantasia*, for piano, choir and solo voices, Opus 80.

Suddenly the opening "*Terror*" fanfares return, and only now does the human voice make its entry into the symphonic realm for the very first time, as the baritone soloist intones Beethoven's own words (written to preface Schiller's *Ode)*, as he sings "*O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!' Sondern laßt uns angenehmere anstimmen, und freudenvollere." ("Oh friends, not these sounds! Let us instead sing more pleasing and more joyful ones!").*

And thus the scene is set for the final, astounding peroration of this extraordinary symphony. What follows, in effect a free-standing cantata within a symphonic movement, characterised, not inappropriately, by Charles Rosen as a "*Symphony within a symphony*" is played without a break.

It can be briefly analysed as a set of variations, with a double exposition, as follows:

1. Theme and Variations with slow introduction. The main idea is first heard in cellos and basses, and later repeated by the voices.
2. *Scherzo* in military style – note the humorous use of the contra-bassoon, and of bass drum and cymbals in the Turkish Janissary march episode which follows (bars 331-594).
3. A slower section, in effect a new slow movement (bars 595-654) with a new theme setting the words *"Seid umschlungen, Millionen!"* ("Be embraced, ye Millions!"), introduced by men's voices, trombones, and low strings in unison.
4. The final fugato section, which includes motifs from the above, with two canons and coda.

The final moments of Beethoven's *Choral Symphony* transport us into the realms of the ultimate, and in many senses anticipates the *Veni Creator Spiritus* opening of Gustav Mahler's Symphony No.8, the "*Symphony of a Thousand*" in all its visionary majesty. Let us leave the summing up to Michael Steinberg, who reminds us that *"Schiller himself did not think much of his* Ode to Joy *– and who, reading it away from Beethoven's setting, would disagree with him? He had been dead eighteen years when Beethoven set it to music, and it is impossible, though intriguing, to guess how he might have reacted to Beethoven's symphony... But Beethoven read into it what he needed."*

And let's add one final thought. Upon completing his *Missa Solemnis*, Beethoven inscribed the score with the words "*From the heart – may it go to the heart*", sentiments which seem equally relevant here as we scale the heights of his greatest symphonic achievement once again.

Music Notes by Michael Jameson, © 2025

A Beethoven Cycle for the 21st Century:
Rimma Sushanskaya in conversation with Michael Jameson

For performers and listeners alike, exploring great music is a life-long voyage of discovery, even though our individual pathways to appreciating and absorbing the landmarks of the repertoire can be fascinatingly diverse.

Hearing Beethoven's Fourth Symphony played live at around seven years old was just one of many '*lightbulb moments*' which would dictate the course of my own musical life, and so my first question to Rimma Sushanskaya (who now undertakes the first ever complete recorded cycle of the Nine Symphonies by a female conductor) was an entirely predictable one – "*how did you first get to know Beethoven's symphonies?*"

"*I was just 13 when I had my first exposure to any of Beethoven's Symphonies, it was while I was at music school in Leningrad… our school orchestra played the Eroica… it was something which I have never forgotten*", she recalls.

"*Now, many years later, I can look forward to our Beethoven Symphonies cycle with the National Symphony Orchestra with great excitement and expectation… they are a truly remarkable group of musicians, and I love working with them… they are my musical family!*"

I wondered what special qualities Rimma particularly values about the NSO; "*I find this fantastic level of dedication and personal commitment amongst the players. I feel very privileged because these musicians know these symphonies so deeply – they've played them all many times before, and with many orchestras and conductors, all with their own ideas.*"

"*But for all of us, it is rare to have the chance to play all the symphonies together, first in concerts, and then to record them as well. Our concerts together always have a special energy and chemistry and I think that passion and dedication is going to translate into something really special for our NSO Beethoven series!*"

Speaking about her individual approach to the project, Rimma Sushanskaya insists "*I don't want to be different just to be different… This is Beethoven, and you can't re-invent Beethoven for yourself!*"

"*I think a lot about my childhood experiences growing up in the Soviet Union, and the education I had about how we should try to live. I was taught by my mother from a very early age about how important it is to be modest and to be respectful, and I think this is vital for any musician, particularly for any conductor of Beethoven!*"

"*My personal fascination with the lyrical elements of Beethoven's music comes from my experiences as a violinist, and I know that our string players will feel this in the same way and I hope that will bring a special quality to the sound we produce, but the NSO has world-class wind and brass players too, and so our sound will be distinctive and with a special character also.*"

"*But you know, I'm also fascinated by Beethoven's very bold and innovative use of the timpani in his symphonies. He uses them in lots of situations to provide the rhythmic framework for the music, but he does it in entirely new ways, which can sometimes startle us and take us by surprise!*"

"*In the NSO we're very fortunate to have one of the most respected percussion players in the world today, Tristan Fry, as our wonderful timpanist, and I'm sure that he's going to bring his own special magic to our Beethoven series!*"

I was also curious to know if Rimma Sushanskaya was committed to following any specific performing traditions in Beethoven. *"No, not really, I don't think so. I'd like to come back to what I said earlier on, and that's the importance I place on modesty in what you do, in everyday life as much as in our musical life, and most importantly of all, having respect, respect for each other, respect for the music itself, and being fully aware that we as musicians must always try to be humble in trying to recreate Beethoven's own ideas, so this becomes our greatest responsibility as we begin this great project together."*

"Another great influence in my musical life, which also strengthened these ideas of duty, and artistic responsibility came from Rosalyn Tureck, the famous harpsichordist. I met her while I was teaching violin in New York at the Manhattan School of Music. A friend had told me about her, and encouraged me to meet her. She influenced me powerfully, especially through her Bach playing, about faithfulness to the style and form, and about how technique is always in the service of the music, and not just the means of displaying brilliance for its own sake."

As contemporary Beethoven scholarship continues to evolve, particularly under the influence of historically-informed performance practice, I wondered if Rimma Sushanskaya had any firm views about critical textual editions of the Beethoven Symphonies, or on the equally controversial issue of so-called "*authenticism*" in the choice of the actual instruments used.

She explains, *"Yes, I agree, there are lots of questions still about authentic performance in Beethoven, but I don't think of this as being very relevant to what we are doing now, and my reason for saying that is very simple. You see, if Beethoven had any idea of what orchestras would sound like, and would have been capable of today, or even by the end of the nineteenth century, he would have written many things very, very differently, and that would have altered our perception of his music completely, the symphonies in particular."*

As we talked, I was reminded of what Beethoven himself reputedly said to the puzzled second violinist of Ignaz Schuppanzigh's quartet, as they struggled manfully through one of his Late Quartets; *"Do you think I care a jot about your lousy fiddle when the muse speaks to me…I am writing music for the future!"*

Rimma Sushanskaya plainly agrees; *"yes indeed, I think he was writing music for his own times, and he realised that many of his works wouldn't be understood until a future time. We don't know when the moment will be, and that's why, like in everything else you do in life, sometimes you have to take the big chance, and that's why we're doing this huge project – or perhaps 'pilgrimage' is a better word – right now in 2024."*

An die Freude

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elysium,
Wir betreten feuertrunken,
Himmlische, dein Heiligtum!
Deine Zauber binden wieder
Was die Mode streng geteilt;*
Alle Menschen werden Brüder*
Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.

Wem der große Wurf gelungen
Eines Freundes Freund zu sein;
Wer ein holdes Weib errungen
Mische seinen Jubel ein!
Ja, wer auch nur eine Seele
Sein nennt auf dem Erdenrund!
Und wer's nie gekonnt, der stehle
Weinend sich aus diesem Bund!

Freude trinken alle Wesen
An den Brüsten der Natur;
Alle Guten, alle Bösen
Folgen ihrer Rosenspur.
Küsse gab sie uns und Reben,
Einen Freund, geprüft im Tod;
Wollust ward dem Wurm gegeben
und der Cherub steht vor Gott.

Ode to Joy

Joy, thou shining spark of God,
Daughter of Elysium,
With fiery rapture, goddess,
We approach thy shrine!
Your magic reunites those
Whom stern custom has parted;*
All men will become brothers*
Under your protective wing.

Let the man who has had the fortune
To be a helper to his friend,
And the man who has won a noble woman,
Join in our chorus of jubilation!
Yes, even if he holds but one soul
As his own in all the world!
But let the man who knows nothing of this
Steal away alone and in sorrow.

All the world's creatures draw
Draughts of joy from nature;
Both the just and the unjust
Follow in her gentle footsteps.
She gave us kisses and wine
And a friend loyal unto death;
She gave the joy of life to the lowliest,
And to the angels who dwell with God.

Froh, wie seine Sonnen fliegen
Durch des Himmels prächt'gen Plan
Laufet, Brüder, eure Bahn,
Freudig, wie ein Held zum Siegen.

Seid umschlungen, Millionen!
Diesen Kuß der ganzen Welt!
Brüder, über'm Sternenzelt
Muß ein lieber Vater wohnen.
Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen?
Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt?
Such' ihn über'm Sternenzelt!
Über Sternen muß er wohnen!

Joyous, as His suns speed
Through the glorious order of Heaven,
Hasten, brothers, on your way
Exultant as a knight victorious.

Be embraced, all ye millions!
With a kiss for all the world!
Brothers, beyond the stars
Surely dwells a loving Father.
Do you kneel before Him, oh millions?
Do you feel the Creator's presence?
Seek Him beyond the stars!
He must dwell beyond the stars.

Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759 – 1805)

RIMMA SUSHANSKAYA Principal Associate Conductor, NSO

In 2024, The National Symphony Orchestra celebrated a special year, performing and recording the complete cycle of Beethoven symphonies, due for release on the Quartz label in the Autumn of 2025. The close relationship between conductor and orchestra is palpable, one of great respect and synergy. Their critically acclaimed performances and recordings in recent years reflect a shared passion for music making. Sushanskaya has found an energy and vision which gives inspiration and a huge sense of eager anticipation for the future.

The internationally-acclaimed violinist Rimma Sushanskaya was the last pupil of the great David Oistrakh, with whom she studied at the Moscow Conservatoire, and under whose tutelage she won many prestigious awards. Upon leaving the Soviet Union, she rapidly established a glowing reputation in USA and Europe. *The Washington Post* described her as *"one of the greatest violinists alive today,"* and commented on her *"extraordinary intensity and brilliant virtuosity."*

Rimma Sushanskaya subsequently embarked upon a most successful career in conducting.

In recent years, she has performed as a conductor in concert halls of an ever growing list of countries, including Germany, Russia, Israel, Romania, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Switzerland, China and the United Kingdom. She has been enjoying successful performances and re-engagements in prestigious venues including the Gewandhaus, Leipzig, the Berlin Philharmonie and Konzerthaus, Philharmonic Hall, Kharkov, and the Tonhalle in Zurich, Switzerland.

Rimma Sushanskaya has conducted a growing list of ensembles, including the Berlin Sinfonietta, Neues Sinfonia Orchestra Berlin, Leipzig Chamber Orchestra, Kharkov Philharmonic, St. Petersburg State Orchestra, State Philharmonic of Satu-Mare, Romania, and in England, the Orchestra of the Swan, in Stratford-upon-Avon, where she has a home.

She made her highly acclaimed London Debut with the National Symphony Orchestra at Cadogan Hall in 2017, conducting a programme which included Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Ravel's *La Valse*. Her repertoire includes many diverse orchestral works, from the Classical and Romantic periods, Beethoven's Symphony No.9, "*Choral*", Rachmaninov's Symphony No.2, Mozart's Requiem, Mahler's Symphony No.4, and Orff's *Carmina Burana*.

Following in the traditions of her own legendary teacher, Dr Sushanskaya has been equally anxious to pass on her knowledge and experience to younger musicians. She was a sought-after Professor at the Birmingham Conservatoire, and for many years presented her own Virtuoso Violin Festival every summer in Stratford-upon-Avon, her base in England.

National Symphony Orchestra

Guest leader: **Paul Willey**
Managing Director and Artistic Director: **Justin Pearson**
Principal Associate Conductor: **Rimma Sushanskaya**

The National Symphony Orchestra is one of the longest-established and most resourceful professional freelance orchestras active in Britain today. Formed during the turbulent years of the Second World War, the NSO's musicians were young, creative, indomitable, and enthusiastic. They needed to be – throughout this period, the orchestra regularly traversed the country, visiting many blitzed towns and cities to give morale-boosting concerts, despite the many obstacles this entailed.

That dynamic performing tradition has stood the test of time, and today, the NSO boasts a hugely impressive recorded legacy, and continues its busy schedule of live concert performances. The orchestra is widely admired for its versatility and its ability to communicate, connecting with its audiences, both new and old, with consistent commitment and passion. The National Symphony Orchestra has recently found renewed energy and direction under the leadership of its Managing Director, Justin Pearson, who is also its principal cellist.

In 2024, under its Principal Associate Conductor, Rimma Sushanskaya, the NSO performed and recorded a complete cycle of the Beethoven symphonies, the first ever to be undertaken by a female conductor. A unique highlight of this series was an acclaimed performance of Beethoven's Choral Symphony, given at London's Cadogan Hall on 7th May, marking two hundred years (to the very day!) since the work was premiered in Vienna under the composer's direction.

The NSO has recently enjoyed hugely successful tours to China and New York, performed film and video concerts at the Barbican Centre, and recorded the scores for several BBCTV dramas, including *Wolf Hall, Father Brown* and *Shakespeare and Hathaway*. A special annual event sees NSO musicians playing at the popular '*Flying Prom'* held at the Shuttleworth Collection of vintage aircraft, whilst concerts for Viking Cruises at Cadogan Hall have been particularly well received.

In July 2023, the NSO toured to the Riyadh Film Music Festival for a series of concerts, immediately after completing recording projects of new concertos by the Argentine composer Polo Piatti, and a new English string music disc for Quartz Records with Rimma Sushanskaya. A live vinyl recording of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* was made in May and released on Chasing the Dragon records. The orchestra also continues its series of classical concerts at Sinfonia Smith Square, as

well as at Cheltenham Town Hall, where it performed Mahler's Symphony 4. The NSO also coordinated a video project for the Womens' Global Orchestra with Alicia Keys, which received five million YouTube hits in its first week alone.

In 2022, the NSO was chosen to perform for Queen Elizabeth II in one of her final appearances at the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations at Windsor Castle, watched by an audience of millions. With Principal Associate Conductor Rimma Sushanskaya, the orchestra recorded discs of Mozart concertos and symphonies, Beethoven's Symphony No.5 and Romances for Violin (with soloist Mathilde Milwidsky), released on the Guild label, and a disc of Brahms symphonic works released on the Quartz label in May 2022.

During the challenges of the pandemic the NSO was the first UK orchestra to return to Air Lyndhurst studios, recording Debbie Wiseman's score for the film *To Olivia*, also reaching number 1 in the classical charts with the composer's album for Classic FM *Kings and Queens*, with narrators Dame Helen Mirren and Damian Lewis. NSO musicians also featured in many episodes of *The Crown* and again in *Bridgerton* and other Netflix productions.

The orchestra has toured to Spain with Katherine Jenkins and Alfie Boe and was proud to play at the ceremony marking the handover to the nation of the new DNRC Rehabilitation Centre in Loughborough in the presence of King Charles III and the Prime Minister. In March 2019, the NSO performed at the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Later, in the autumn of that year, the orchestra undertook a nationwide UK tour with Tasmin Little and Philip Dukes as soloists, conducted by Rimma Sushanskaya. Performances of Beethoven symphonies and the *Emperor Piano Concerto* were also released on Chasing the Dragon records in 2019.

In 2018, the NSO topped the classical charts for weeks, collaborating with presenter Alan Titchmarsh and composer Debbie Wiseman in a project named *The Glorious Garden*. Previously, in 2017, the orchestra again occupied top spot with a recording of new music in Debbie Wiseman's *Musical Zodiac*. The recent release of the film *Edie* starring Sheila Hancock featured the NSO on its soundtrack. The orchestra also returned to Abbey Road Studios in November 2018 with Debbie Wiseman and Stephen Fry, recording a soundtrack to Fry's book *Mythos*, another number 1 disc in the classical charts.

Shortly after its formation in the 1940s, the National Symphony Orchestra immediately became a significant recording orchestra. From the 1980s, the reputation and standing of the orchestra surged forwards, successfully performing and recording for audiences in a wide range of genres: Classical, Film and TV scores, West End and Broadway Musicals, and accompanying celebrated international singers, all of which it continues to do to this day.

Though based in London, the orchestra performs throughout the United Kingdom, drawing its fine players from all round the country. The NSO prides itself on the huge audiences that regularly support its concerts. The orchestra has performed Opera Galas with artists such as Dame Kiri Te Kanawa and Lesley Garrett.

Viennese Nights, Tchaikovsky Galas and programmes of popular classics have been performed to capacity houses at prestigious venues including The Royal Festival Hall, Barbican Centre, Royal Albert Hall and Symphony Hall, Birmingham, to name but a few.

In addition, the NSO played seasons with the New York City Ballet when they visited the London Coliseum, performing under conductors Charles Barker and Jack Everly; the orchestra also toured extensively for The Moscow City Ballet for many years during their visits to the UK.

To date, the NSO has recorded more than 40 complete major classic musicals. This significant legacy means that the NSO is one of the most frequently recorded orchestras at EMI Abbey Road Studios. These musicals, marketed mainly in the USA, often sold more than 1.5 million discs, including recordings of *Phantom of the Opera* and *West Side Story* – The Leonard Bernstein Estate remarked: "*There is no finer recording of* West Side Story *than that which was laid down by the NSO*". The orchestra has also performed in a number of spectacular televised and recorded concerts under the direction of distinguished composer/conductors from the worlds of TV and Film, such as Barrington Pheloung, the Oscar-winning composer Anne Dudley, Ron Goodwin and Debbie Wiseman – currently Classic FM's composer-in-Residence.

BEETHOVEN
THE NINE SYMPHONIES

CD1

Symphony No.1 in C major, Op.21

1	Adagio molto – Allegro con brio	*9'23*
2	Andante cantabile con moto	*7'35*
3	Menuetto, Allegro molto e vivace	*3'21*
4	Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace	*6'21*

Symphony No.2 in D major, Op.36

5	Adagio – Allegro con brio	*12'55*
6	Larghetto	*12'26*
7	Scherzo, Allegro	*3'50*
8	Allegro molto	*6'43*

CD2

Symphony No.3 in E flat major, Op.55, *Eroica*

1	Allegro con brio	*17'49*
2	Marcia funebrie, Adagio assai	*15'30*
3	Scherzo, Allegro vivace	*5'42*
4	Finale, Allegro molto – Poco Andante – Presto	*12'43*

CD3

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

1	Adagio – Allegro vivace	*11'48*
2	Adagio	*10'06*
3	Allegro molto e vivace – Un poco meno allegro	*5'43*
4	Allegro ma non troppo	*7'23*

Symphony No.5 in C minor, Op.67

5	Allegro con brio	*7'39*
6	Andante con moto	*10'21*
7	Allegro	*5'04*
8	Allegro	*11'15*

CD4

Symphony No.6 in F major, Op.68, *Pastoral*

1	Allegro ma non troppo	*12'38*
2	Andante molto mosso	*13'42*
3	Allegro	*5'12*
4	Allegro	*4'11*
5	Allegretto	*10'51*

CD**5** **Symphony No.7 in A major, Op.92**

1	Poco sostenuto – Vivace	*14'48*
2	Allegretto	*9'09*
3	Presto – Assai meno presto	*10'07*
4	Allegro con brio	*9'11*

Symphony No.8 in F major, Op.93

5	Allegro Vivace e con brio	*9'42*
6	Allegretto scherzando	*4'01*
7	Tempo di Menuetto	*4'55*
8	Allegro vivace	*8'20*

CD**6** **Symphony No.9 in D minor, Op.125, *Choral***

1	Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso	*16'12*
2	Molto vivace – Presto	*14'07*
3	Adagio molto e cantabile – Andante moderato	*16'04*
4	Presto – Allegro assai	*26'39*

The National Symphony Orchestra gratefully acknowledges the support and assistance of David Corfield in these recordings.

Symphony No.9 soloists

Jennifer Davis *soprano*
Bethany Horak-Hallet *alto*
Sam Furness *tenor*
Stephen Loges *bass*

National Symphony Orchestra
Artistic director: **Justin Pearson**
Leader: **Paul Willey**
Orchestra manager: **Toby Hart**
Conductor: **Rimma Sushanskaya**

Brighton Festival Chorus
Musical director: **James Morgan**

Producer: **Michael Ponder**
Executive producer: **Justin Pearson**
Engineer / Editor: **Phil Hardman**
Programme notes: **Michael Jameson**

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