



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Symphonies nos. 2 & 3

Complete symphonies vol. 4

THE NETHERLANDS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

CD1

Symphony no. 2 op. 36 in D major (1801)

[1] Adagio – Allegro con brio	12:17
[2] Larghetto	10:21
[3] Scherzo: Allegro	4:52
[4] Allegro molto	6:49

total time 34:25

CD2

Symphony no. 3 op. 55 in E-flat major "Eroica" (1803/4)

[1] Allegro con brio	16:48
[2] Marcia funebre: Adagio assai	12:49
[3] Scherzo: Allegro vivace	5:38
[4] Finale: Allegro molto	11:25

total time 46:45

"I heard your ballet yesterday and it pleased me very much!"¹ ("Nun! gestern habe ich Ihr Ballett gehört, es hat mir sehr gefallen!"), so said Haydn to Beethoven in 1801, to which Beethoven replied: "O dear Papa, you are very kind; but it is far from being a *Creation!*" ("O, lieber Papa! Sie sind sehr gütig, aber es ist doch noch lange keine *Schöpfung!*"). Haydn was surprised and almost insulted by this remark, and he retorted: "That is true; it is not a *Creation* and I can scarcely believe that it will ever become one." ("Das ist wahr, es ist noch keine *Schöpfung*, glaube auch schwerlich, daß es dieselbe je erreichen wird")

According to William Kinderman², this anecdote – about Beethoven's

ballet *The Creation of Prometheus* – is very plausible and also quite typical. It shows Beethoven's predilection for plays on words. Haydn's great oratorio *The Creation (Die Schöpfung)* had recently had its first performance, and it is telling that the two composers agreed that the ballet was "far from a *Creation*". According to Kinderman, the Prometheus ballet is a creation myth in its own right, but it is actually the music of the *Eroica* that personifies the Promethean stature and that can be seen as the "*creation*".

The myth of the Titan Prometheus as it was used by the Italian dancer and choreographer Salvatore Viganò and Beethoven in the ballet was not entirely in accordance with the

1. Anecdote recorded by Aloys Fuchs, a collector from Vienna.

From: *Thayer's Life of Beethoven, Volume 1*, pp. 272-3

2. William Kinderman in his book "*Beethoven*", pp. 86 ff.

Greek original. In the version of Viganò and Beethoven, Prometheus shaped human civilisation: he was a philosopher and teacher, not a victim who spent many years chained to a rock. Prometheus sculpts two creatures from clay and gives them the fire he has stolen from the gods, thus animating them. It is the only way to impart knowledge and culture to his creations (i.e. mankind). Unfortunately, Prometheus pays for this with his life. But ... of course this version has a happy ending, thanks to the intervention of the god Pan, who brings him to back life. Prometheus is then praised by his two archetypal creations for his heroic deed.

According to Lewis Lockwood³, the Prometheus ballet, composed in the winter of 1800-1801, paved the way

from the Second to the Third Symphony. It is widely known that the finale of the *Eroica* uses a theme from the ballet. Kinderman goes one step further, saying that Beethoven also used many other symbolic and dramatic elements from the ballet in this symphony, and not just in the finale.

But back to the Second Symphony. Beethoven composed it during a time of deep personal crisis. His health, and his hearing in particular, was fast declining; he felt isolated and depressed. The situation was so serious that there were times when he no longer wished to live. At least we can deduce this from the famous *Heiligenstadt Testament*, which he wrote to his brothers (and to humanity) in 1802. He wrote it, putting more or less all his thoughts

3. Lewis Lockwood in his book *"The Music and Life of Beethoven"*, p. 149

on paper, and then filed it away. It would not resurface until after his death. The music of the Second Symphony exudes Beethoven's desire to rise above his personal difficulties (although naturally traces of his misery as well can always be found in his music). Lockwood: "His ability to nurture his creative psyche and protect it from the physical and psychological anguish of his growing deafness is one of the more remarkable features of his life."⁴

Beethoven composed many works in the years from 1798 to 1802. He knew he was going through a period of tremendous artistic growth. He wanted a grip on his fate; as he clearly put it in a famous quote: "Ich will dem Schicksal in den Rachen greifen, ganz niederbeugen soll es mich gewiss

nicht." ("I will seize Fate by the throat; it will certainly not bend and crush me completely.") Even though he had no influence on his physical condition, he was definitely in complete control of his work! Although a "prisoner" in his own body, he cast off more and more of his compositional "chains". In the Second Symphony, we can still hear Mozart's influence (e.g. the Prague Symphony and "quotations" from operas) and that of Haydn. At the same time, we hear him beginning to sever the ties to those he looked up to. Abrupt key changes, more intense use of rhythms, strong contrasts (in the movements, between the movements) are but a few examples; after using them in the Second Symphony, he continued to develop them. From this point onward, he no longer needed Mozart or Haydn.

4. Lewis Lockwood in his book *"The Music and Life of Beethoven"*

Looking at the anecdote between Haydn and Beethoven in this light, we can conclude that Beethoven had gone through a period of rapid growth, from a feisty adolescent to a mature master composer: by the time his Third Symphony came into being, he had risen well above Haydn!

Conductor Jan Willem de Vriend calls the Second Symphony “a marvel, a cheerful symphony in D major, the radiant key of power and grandeur”. The contrast with how Beethoven must have felt was huge and this makes it a fascinating work.

A great deal has been written about the Third Symphony. Not in the last place, there has been much discussion and research of the heroic aspects of this “*Eroica*”. Who was the hero Beethoven had in mind? Was it Napoleon, or on second thoughts, was it someone else? After all, once Napoleon had

been crowned emperor, Beethoven was highly disappointed in him. Was it Prometheus? Was it Beethoven himself? There are many theories. Jan Willem de Vriend adds an interesting hero to this list: Beethoven’s grandfather! It was widely known that Ludwig idolised his grandfather Louis (from Mechelen, in Belgium); he had a portrait of him. His grandfather died when he was two or three years old. But all of Bonn always talked about him, because he was such a special person. It must have driven Ludwig’s father Johannes mad now and then, because he was not in the same league. Ludwig was always hearing how fantastic his grandfather had been: a free thinker, very progressive, cordial, friendly and kind. So Beethoven’s grandfather may also have been a hero who served as a model for the Third Symphony.

Still, nowadays many musicologists and biographers agree that the *Eroica*

tends to symbolise the hero in general, not one specific hero. What is more important is the “giant step forward in quality”⁵ that we hear in the *Eroica*, compared to music composed before it. What makes it special is that it is a temporisation of the musical form.⁶ It is about the “form as a process”, in contrast to the “form as architecture”. “Form as a process” means a focused, dynamic and continuous motion. It can be likened to an arrow heading straight for its target. Although the target is important, so is the route it takes to get there. But emphasis lies on the end, the finale. Before that, music was architectural in form; it was a symmetrical structure, a unity unto itself, built around a pivotal point, cyclic.

Repetition, so important in the sonata form, becomes problematic in a work with “form as a process”. Of course, solutions are provided for this in the *Eroica*: identical thematic configurations at the beginning of the exposition, in the recapitulation and the coda are developed differently each time. This leads to different conclusions in similar situations, which are related to each other in a way that leads to a strong intensification. This is enhanced by moments of simulated acceleration. They are achieved by “opening out” the orchestral apparatus. This leads to an experience of being “inundated by time”: an outpouring of ideas.⁷

5. Reinhold Brinkmann in “In the Time of the *Eroica*”,
from the book “Beethoven and His World”, p. 16

6. *idem*, pp. 16 ff.

7. *idem*, p. 17

According to Reinhold Brinkmann, the sound palette of the symphony orchestra can be viewed as a kind of revolutionary rhetoric. After a long road with many transitions, an important individual voice comes forward, that of the French horn (m. 631), which seems to advance a thesis. Gradually more and more voices and groups join in, as if they agree or want to add something, and they become part of the larger whole. The orchestra as an allegory for the Revolution, this is what we see at the end of the first movement. "It is as if the music were speaking with a thousand tongues and, by doing so, becomes one single voice."⁸

Valentine Laoût- van Leeuwenstein

Translation: Carol Stennes/Muse Translations

8. *idem*, p. 21

Jan Willem de Vriend

Jan Willem de Vriend is the chief conductor and artistic director of the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra since 2006 and the artistic director of Combattimento Consort Amsterdam.

Since De Vriend was named chief conductor, the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra has become a notable phenomenon on the Netherlands' musical scene. It has presented semi-scenic performances of works by Mozart, Beethoven, Strauss and Mendelssohn. There were premieres of works by Offenbach, Say and Mahler. And by substituting period instruments in the brass section, it has developed its own distinctive sound in the 18th and 19th century repertoire. Recently, the orchestra caused quite a stir by performing music by Schumann at festivals in Spain. It is currently recording Beethoven's complete symphonies conducted by De Vriend. Its long

Mahler tradition is being continued in recordings and tours.

In addition to being the chief conductor of the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra, De Vriend is the regular guest conductor of the Brabant Orchestra. He has conducted many distinguished Dutch orchestras, including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and The Hague Philharmonic Orchestra. De Vriend is also a welcome guest internationally and has conducted orchestras in China, Germany, Austria, Italy and France.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra (Orkest van het Oosten, based in Enschede) is the symphony orchestra of and for the province of Overijssel, bringing passion, commitment and

virtuosity to its audience. Performing at an international level, the orchestra is firmly rooted in society. Its balanced programming offers inspiring elements while the use of period instruments in the performance of its classical repertoire gives the orchestra its unique and highly individual character.

Performing concert series in towns across Overijssel, in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and other major cities, and concert tours abroad, the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra acts as a cultural representative for the Province of Overijssel. The orchestra works with the Nationale Reisopera (Dutch National Touring Opera Company) and regional choirs, and has undertaken successful tours to the United States, Canary Islands, Spain and the UK.

Directed by chief conductor Jan Willem de Vriend and permanent

guest conductor Mark Shanahan, the orchestra's unique reputation continues to grow, in both the Netherlands and abroad. CD recordings of music by Ludwig van Beethoven and Dutch composers including Jan van Gilse and Julius Röntgen are acclaimed and in great demand, and have established the orchestra's national and international reputation. The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra was recently awarded the Edison Audience Award 2010 for its recording of Paganini's violin concertos 1 and 2 with violinist Rudolf Koelman.

Concerts by The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra are enjoyed by a wide audience. The orchestra has played in many famous halls including Birmingham Symphony Hall and Carnegie Hall in New York, and has had the privilege of working with many renowned conductors including former chief conductor Jaap van

Zweden, Edo de Waart, Hans Vonk, Gerd Albrecht, Marc Soustrot, Vasily Petrenko, Eri Klas and Ed Spanjaard. It has accompanied numerous famous soloists, such as Ronald Brautigam, Kristian Bezuidenhout, Natalia Gutman, Charlotte Margiono, Antje Weithaas, Marie-Luise Neunecker, Sharon Bezaly, Robert Holl, Fazil Say, Rudolf Koelman and Thomas Zehetmair.

The orchestra's commitment to expanding its social relevance is reflected in its involvement in a number of extraordinary projects in which education forms a key element. In addition to its extensive symphonic programming, The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra has also inspired the creation of a number of ensembles, such as chamber orchestra Sinfonietta Aurora, the Baroque Academy of the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra and various chamber music ensembles. Many of the orchestra's musicians play

a key role in the region's music activities and society, either as teachers at schools and academies of music, or as musicians in ensembles and other projects.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra is financially supported by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Province of Overijssel and the Municipality of Enschede as well as annual contributions from sponsors.





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The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra - Jan Willem de Vriend conductor

This High Definition Surround Recording was Produced, Engineered and Edited by Bert van der Wolf of NorthStar Recording Services, using the 'High Quality Musical Surround Mastering' principle. The basis of this recording principle is a realistic and holographic 3 dimensional representation of the musical instruments, voices and recording venue, according to traditional concert practice. For most older music this means a frontal representation of the musical performance, but such that width and depth of the ensemble and acoustic characteristics of the hall do resemble 'real life' as much as possible. Some older compositions, and many contemporary works do specifically ask for placement of musical instruments and voices over the full 360 degrees sound scape, and in these cases the recording is as realistic as possible, within the limits of the 5.1 Surround Sound standard. This requires a very innovative use of all 6 loudspeakers and the use of completely matched, full frequency range loudspeakers for all 5 discrete channels. A complementary sub-woofer, for the ultra low frequencies under 40Hz, is highly recommended to maximally benefit from the sound quality of this recording.

This recording was produced with the use of Sonodore microphones, Avalon Acoustic monitoring, Siltech Mono-Crystal cabling and dCS Converters.



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