

BEETHOVEN *transformed* VOLUME 2



BOXWOOD & BRASS

Beethoven Transformed, Volume 2

Virtuoso arrangements
for Viennese Harmonie of music by
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Boxwood & Brass

Rachel Chaplin *oboe*
Nicola Barbagli *oboe*
Emily Worthington *clarinet*
Fiona Mitchell *clarinet*
Robert Percival *bassoon*
Takako Kunugi *bassoon*
Anneke Scott *natural horn*
Kate Goldsmith *natural horn*
Jacqueline Dossor *double bass*

About Boxwood & Brass:

*'Boxwood & Brass prove dazzlingly persuasive
advocates of the form... vibrant musicality, a wonderful warmth
of sound and total technical precision... these thoughtful and assured
performances bring to life every subtlety and colour in these works.'*

BBC Music Magazine

*'Creamy clarinets combine attractively with punchy
horns and burbling bassoons to give this music a
special Viennese verve.'*

The Observer

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
arr. c.1812 by Friedrich Starke (1774–1835)

Egmont, Op. 84

1. Overture [6:04]

Egmont, Op. 84: Incidental Music

arr. 2018 by Robert Percival (b.1970)

2. Lied: die Trommel Gerühret (Clara's Song) [1:30]
3. Entr'acte III [3:19]
4. Clärchens Tod bezeichnend (The Death of Clara) [2:21]
5. Siegessymphonie (Egmont's Dream – Victory Symphony) [2:01]

Sonata Pathétique, Op. 13

arr. anon (Vienna 1810)

6. Grave – Allegro molto e con brio [8:37]
7. Adagio cantabile [4:32]
8. Rondo: Allegro [5:28]

Symphony No. 7, Op. 92

arr. anon (Vienna 1816)

9. Poco sostenuto – Vivace [14:15]
10. Allegretto [7:57]
11. Presto [4:44]
12. Allegro con brio [5:09]

Total playing time [66:06]



Lamoral d'Egmont

The Harmonie in Beethoven's Vienna

The sound of the Harmonie – an ensemble of pairs of oboes, clarinets, horns, bassoons, usually with a double bass or contrabassoon – was a defining feature of the soundscape of Vienna at the turn of the nineteenth century. This formation had its roots in the small wind ensembles of the mid-eighteenth century, but became a particular Viennese speciality from 1782 when Emperor Joseph II established his 'kaiserliche und königliche Harmonie'. Soon, Viennese-style 8- and 9-part Harmonien were found wherever Joseph II's influence was exercised, or his favour sought.

These late-eighteenth century Harmonien are now mostly associated with the performance of opera arrangements as *Tafelmusik*, and serenades in outdoor settings (as depicted by Mozart in *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan Tutte*), but it would be a mistake to understand them simply as purveyors of attractive 'background' music. From the 1780s until the 1810s Harmoniemusik was frequently heard in both indoor and outdoor concerts throughout Vienna as well as in private performances. The high artistic standard of these Harmonien inspired the composition of substantial original works, of which Mozart's Serenades and Franz

Krommer's Partitas are the best-known examples. Indeed, in Vienna, even opera transcriptions were arranged to conserve the order and dramatic structure of the original music. The oboist Josef Triebensee, one of the most important figures in Harmoniemusik during the period, asserted that the pleasure of the listener stemmed from the 'joy of the artist' (*die Freude de Künstler*) in performing well-written arrangements that reflect the spirit of the original composer – testament to the artistic standards of the best Harmonien.

Ludwig van Beethoven, Sigmund Anton Steiner and the Chemische Druckerei arrangements

After 1800, the twin forces of declining aristocratic patronage due to the Napoleonic wars and growing public demand for what was beginning to be defined as 'art music' began to re-shape Viennese musical culture. Vienna's flourishing publishing industry offered an outlet for Harmoniemusik arrangers, whose work was in less demand from private patrons. In particular, Beethoven's friend and publisher Sigmund Anton Steiner championed Harmoniemusik through his publishing house, the Chemische Druckerei or 'chemical print works' – a reference to the new technique of lithography, developed by the company's

founder Alois Senefelder. In 1810, an advert promised that the firm's Harmoniemusik arrangements were 'edited by renowned and famous masters from the original scores, with special care, and with an exact knowledge of the effects of wind instruments' – an indication of the pride that was invested in the arrangements by their creators, as well as the competitive nature of the market.

The three arrangements presented on this disc – the *Egmont* Overture, Sonata *Pathétique* and Seventh Symphony – are all from Steiner's *Chemische Druckerei*. Each was issued as a standalone publication outside of Steiner's main *Journal für Harmonie*, which concentrated on the more usual fare of opera and ballet arrangements. Harmoniemusik versions of significant instrumental works such as symphonies were not unheard of prior to this, but these settings of Beethoven's works represent a significantly more ambitious undertaking and arguably show nine-part Viennese Harmoniemusik in its most advanced stage of development.

***Egmont* Overture and Incidental Music**

Beethoven composed his overture and incidental music for Goethe's *Egmont* in 1810 against the backdrop of Napoleon's second occupation of Vienna, and it is easy

to see why this tale of tyranny, revolutionary struggle, sacrifice and eventual freedom caught his attention. Set in sixteenth century Brussels, the honourable Count Egmont is the leader of his people against the Spanish invader, but is conflicted by his loyalty to the rightful Dutch king, a loyalty that leads to his arrest and execution. His love, Clara, in despair at having failed to rouse the populace to rescue him, takes poison. In the night before his death Egmont dreams of freedom personified as a heavenly Clara, and goes willingly to the scaffold sure in the knowledge that his sacrifice will inspire the downtrodden citizens to victory against their oppressor.

The *Egmont* overture became popular as a concert piece, and this Harmonie version, made by Friedrich Starke, was issued in 1812. Before settling in Vienna in 1810, Starke was a travelling horn player and regimental Kapellmeister. He soon became a close acquaintance of Beethoven, who admired his playing and entrusted him with the musical education of his nephew, Karl. A prolific arranger, Starke's version of the *Egmont* overture is very effective, showing a strong understanding of the idiom and the capabilities of the instruments.

The *Egmont* incidental music was not published during Beethoven's lifetime, which

may explain why no wind arrangement was issued. In light of this, Boxwood & Brass's bassoonist Robert Percival has followed the practice of Viennese arrangers by creating a suite that presents the original dramatic structure of the play in a compact form. After the overture we hear Clara's song, lamenting the oppression of her people; then Beethoven's third entr'acte, depicting the heroic character of Egmont himself. This is interrupted by the march of the approaching Spanish army, followed by Beethoven's depiction of Clara's off-stage death, her failing heartbeat evoked by faltering horn chords. After a brief extract from Egmont's final vision of Clara, the suite concludes with the victory music as it appears in Starke's setting of the overture.

The Sonata *Pathétique* and Seventh Symphony

Like the *Egmont* Overture, the *Chemische Druckerei* arrangements of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and Sonata *Pathétique* were probably motivated by the popularity of the original works. The 'Harmonie ... arrangé de Sonata Pathétique' was first advertised by Steiner in 1810, with no arranger attributed, and over a decade after the first publication of the piano version. Arrangements usually appeared when a work was still fresh and new, so this unusually long interval is testament to the

sonata's enduring appeal.

Beethoven composed the symphony between 1811–12 and it received its first performance in December 1813 in a benefit concert for soldiers injured in the Battle of Hannau, a strategically important clash during Napoleon's retreat to France. The programme also featured Beethoven's 'Battle Symphony', Wellingtons Sieg: both pieces captured the public mood and remained extremely popular throughout Beethoven's lifetime. In 1816, Steiner announced the first publications of Beethoven's Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, giving equal prominence to the orchestral score and parts and to arrangements for 9-part Harmonie, piano and strings. However, only a single copy of the wind arrangement of the Seventh Symphony is extant, and none of the Eighth

Starke's *Egmont* arrangement is quite faithful to the original work, but the arrangements of the symphony and the sonata are very different from each other, as also is their relationship to their 'other', original versions. Both change the key-relationships between the movements: the symphony transposes the first, second and fourth movements down from A to G but the keeps the third in its original key of F; the sonata keeps the original key of the outer movements (C minor),



but moves the middle one up a tone from A-flat to B-flat. In both cases this puts the majority of the music into more comfortable keys for the woodwinds, and allows the use of more flexible and versatile horn crooks, but it also alters our perceptions of the pieces.

The arrangement of the symphony omits some musical material, possibly in order to avoid tonalities that were simply too difficult for wind instruments, and perhaps to make the long piece shorter and less physically demanding. The first and second movements are complete except for the omission of a single bar in the coda of the second movement, a change we have preserved. The third movement, however, is truncated into a traditional 3-part structure, omitting Beethoven's extended extra repeat of the entire scherzo and trio. The last movement is rather more heavily abridged, but the form of the orchestral version means that a lengthy middle section can be omitted whilst still retaining the feeling of a modified rondo.

Though the arranger of the symphony skilfully distributes almost all of the musical lines of the original work amongst the woodwind of the Harmonie, the resulting arrangement is exceptionally taxing in terms of physical stamina. It also pushes the

technical capabilities of the instruments to their limits, and indeed sometimes beyond: for instance the part for Grand Fagotto plays almost continuously and uses a low B-flat in ways that would not have been possible on contemporary instruments. For this reason, we use a double bass rather than a contrabassoon, as many historical Harmonien did.

The change in sonority from orchestra to Harmonie demands a reconsideration of the character of the music. Wagner's description of the seventh symphony as 'the apotheosis of the dance' has coloured views of the work since the mid-nineteenth century, but in the 1810s it is much more likely to have been associated with heightened emotions of military conflict, particularly given the context of its premiere. The notion of it as another kind of 'battle symphony' provided a pretext for us to re-interpret the music in a way that embraces the robust and varied colour palette of the Harmonie, rather than striving to imitate the orchestral original.

As in the symphony, the arranger of the Sonata *Pathétique* makes significant changes, but rather than omit difficult material, they completely re-compose entire sections, even in one instance adding new bars. They also expand the middle textures,

adding new countersubjects and bass notes and filling out the harmony. Most audacious are the changes to the slow movement, where the arranger adds an upbeat to highlight the horn solo and weaves a delicate filigree around Beethoven's famous theme. Though technically challenging, especially on instruments of the period, the highly idiomatic approach shows a great deal of knowledge about the workings of wind instruments. The result is extremely virtuosic ensemble writing, in particular exploiting the possibilities of the natural horn for colour and drama.

The extreme liberties taken with these two works prompt the question of who is responsible for them. Wenzel Sedlak (1776–1851) has been convincingly associated with the symphony by several writers: the oboe, clarinet and horn writing certainly matches the style of Sedlak's known arrangements. Georg Druschetzky (1745–1819) has been linked to the *Pathétique*, but the evidence is circumstantial and the style of arranging and instrumental writing differs from his normal practice. Sedlak is also unlikely here for similar reasons. Starke is a stronger possibility, and he certainly had the skill in writing for the horn that is shown here.

Two factors are crucial to understanding why Steiner, who made such strong claims for the fidelity of his arrangements, should publish such free interpretations. The first is that in the early nineteenth century, musicians considered their responsibility to be to the spirit of a musical work, not its text. Secondly, we know that Beethoven told Steiner arrangements of his works 'must all be checked by me and, wherever necessary, corrected'. It is certain that Beethoven was aware of these arrangements, highly likely that he sanctioned them, and possible that he looked over them before publication. There even remains the tantalising possibility that he had a hand in them himself, but in the absence of manuscript score or letters we can never know for sure.

¹ Intelligenz-Blatt zur Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung VI, January 1804, 25–27.

² Wiener Zeitung, 30 May 1810, 60.

³ Beethoven to Steiner, 1 February 1815. The Letters of Beethoven, vol. II:495, Emily Anderson, editor & translator. London: Macmillan, 1961.

Boxwood & Brass

Established in 2013, Boxwood & Brass is a group of exceptional period wind players specialising in the wind chamber music and Harmoniemusik of the Classical and early-Romantic periods. Boxwood & Brass's members perform with the world's leading period-instrument orchestras, including the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, Academy of Ancient Music, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Orchestre des Champs-Élysées, and Bach Collegium Japan. Boxwood & Brass's concert appearances include the Holywell Music Rooms, St John's Smith Square, and the York Early Music Festival, and they have broadcast numerous times on BBC Radio 3. The group is ensemble-in-association at the University of Huddersfield. Boxwood & Brass have previously released *Music for a Prussian Salon* (2016) and *Beethoven Transformed Vol. 1* (2019) on Resonus Classics to unanimous critical praise.

www.boxwoodandbrass.co.uk



Performing materials

All works edited and prepared by Robert Percival from original sources.

Instruments

- Rachel Chaplin *oboe* (Richard Earl after J. F. Floth, Dresden, 1807)
Nicola Barbagli *oboe* (Richard Earl after J. F. Floth, Dresden 1807)
Emily Worthington *clarinet* (Peter van der Poel after H. Grenser, Dresden c.1810)
Fiona Mitchell *clarinet* (Guy Cowley after H. Grenser, Dresden c.1810)
Robert Percival *bassoon* (Peter de Koningh after H. Grenser, Dresden c.1810)
Takako Kunugi *bassoon* (Peter de Koningh after H. Grenser, Dresden c.1810)
Anneke Scott *natural horn* (M.-A. Raoux, Paris c.1820)
Kate Goldsmith *natural horn* (Courtois neveu aîné, Paris c.1820, kindly loaned by the Bate Collection)
Jacqueline Dossor *double bass* (Anonymous, Northern Italy, likely Bologna, c.1740)

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Early Music Review

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