

BEETHOVEN
SYMPHONIES

6 & 8

“Pastoral”

VENEZUELA SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

EDUARDO CHIBÁS





BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 6 in F Major Op. 68

- 1 Allegro ma non troppo (10:22)
Awakening of cheerful feelings on arrival in the countryside.
- 2 Andante molto moto (13:24)
Scene by the brook.
- 3 Allegro (5:20)
Merry gathering of country folk.
- 4 Allegro (4:09)
Thunder. Storm.
- 5 Allegretto (9:49)
Shepherd's song. Happy and thankful feelings after the storm.

Symphony No. 8 in F Major Op. 93

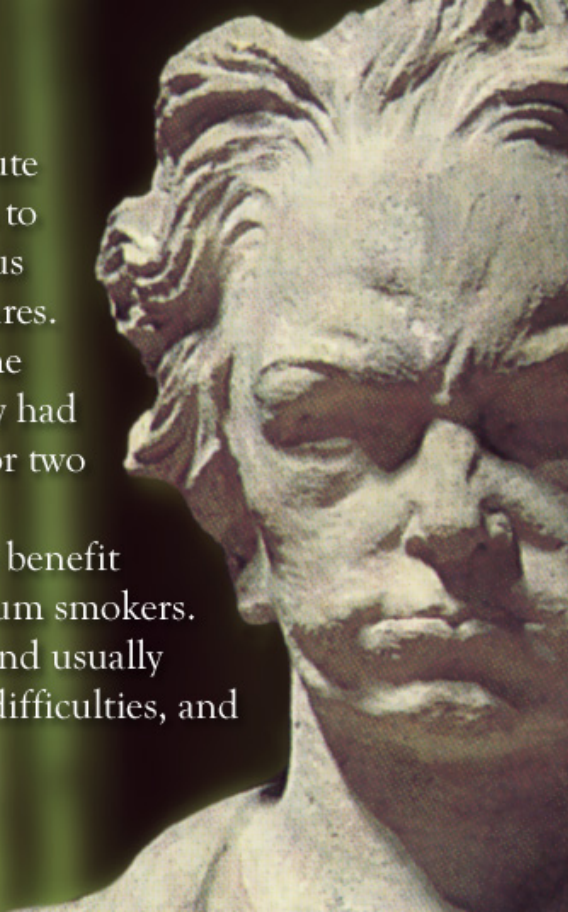
- 6 Allegro vivace e con brio (10:15)
- 7 Allegretto scherzando (3:27)
- 8 Tempo di Menuetto (5:14)
- 9 Allegro vivace (7:59)

Venezuela Symphony Orchestra Eduardo Chibás, *conductor*

Recorded live on March 22, 2017
José Félix Ribas Hall, Teatro Teresa Carreño
Caracas, Venezuela
Recording Engineer: Rafael Rondón
24 bit, 96k recording and mastering

“Pure and absolute tones just lull us to sleep and turns us into gentle epicures. It is as though the *Eroica* Symphony had been arranged for two flutes and was intended for the benefit of dreaming opium smokers. The original sound usually awakens deeds, difficulties, and terrors.”

Nietzsche



The term absolute music was first used by Richard Wagner in 1846. Wagner had initially intended this term to indicate the absolute autonomy and independence of music as an art form devoid of the obvious denotations of a language: an absolutely autonomous form that could “reach the infinite”. For Nietzsche the term “absolute music” was as ultimately misguided, useless and revolting as the concept of an absolute system of ethics. In his third **Untimely Meditation**, he writes: “pure and absolute tones just lulls us to sleep and turns us into gentle epicures. It is as though the Eroica symphony had been arranged for two flutes and was intended for the benefit of dreaming opium smokers.” For Nietzsche the “original tone” of Beethoven’s symphonic works, “usually awakened deeds, difficulties, and terrors” the way reading a great ancient historian did.

There is nothing absolute about music. As Hermann L.F. Helmholtz wrote in 1877 in his monumental **On the Sensation of Tone as a Physiological Basis For the Theory of Music**: “the system of scales, modes, and harmonic tissues does not rest solely on inalterable

natural laws, but is also the results of aesthetical principles which have already changed, and will still further change with the progressive development of humanity.” Beethoven did not write the Creatures of Prometheus using the principles of the homophonic system developed in the Greek classical age. On the other hand thanks to Italian Jesuit missionaries, Mahler did use some pentatonic elements in *Das Lied Von Der Erde*.

Going beyond the opinions of lonely philologists, and Prussian physicists of sound, modern anthropologists also agree that that there is nothing absolute about music. For Levy-Strauss and the structural anthropologists of our time music is a time-bound ideological construct for the creation of social communities based on the same perception of binary principles as language. Levy-Strauss has gone on to assert famously that the mystery of humankind resides in the ability of homo sapiens sapiens to recognize a melody in music or a sound structure in language.





In our time, “absolute music” is as much a non-empirical reality as the inevitability of the “progressive development of humanity”. Since “absolute music” is as impossible as an “absolute language”, then a conductor or a listener is perfectly validated in sensing a subjective narrative structure of conflict, struggle and liberation in a Beethoven symphony in the same way that Nietzsche thought he obtained a kind of meaning and knowledge about “deeds, difficulties, and terrors”.

The anthropological bottom line is this question: what are hundreds of people doing in a concert hall in the first place? For Berlioz, as J.Barzun notes, they are being seduced by means of music as ritual to live and to live more intensely. In his 1956 conversation with the concert pianist Margaret Tilly, Carl Jung stated that music “reaches deep archetypal material” of often great therapeutic value for the enhancement of our perception of the value of life. In an age without historical inevitability or metaphysical consolations, some of us may agree with the secularized

rituals of introspective narratives described by Edward Rothstein in his book, **Emblems of the Mind**: “The central works of the western repertory may be understood as tales which, in a highly metaphorical fashion, outline our society’s origins, detail its passions, and trace the adventures of its heroes...The very structure of the concert enacted one of the perennial themes of Romantic music: the individual passes through introspection, dream, and reflection and emerges transformed, embraced by a social order. The underlying belief was in the renewability of bourgeois society itself—and the concert hall is the temple in which this renewal is enacted. The music of the Nineteenth Century—the first music to be constructed in a narrative, novelistic style—has been repeated ritualistically in our secular temples, recounting our social origins in epic tales of extraordinary drama.”


The structural anthropologists and music critics such as Edward Rothstein all assert that the basic function of music is to create collective identities even as the concert ritual gives the individual room to dream within

that community and to participate in its heroic life and struggles. If this view of music is correct, then these ideas serve to explain the recent resurgence of the live recording as the ultimate expression of the ritual act of music with its risks, errors and sonic limitations.

Music is not an industrial commodity to be perfected and homogenized in absolute terms. Furthermore, the earlier love for sound on sound corrected studio recordings are proving far too expensive for a hyper-competitive market in which Classical music is just another niche. The ideal of a perfect studio recording like the idea of absolute music itself proves to be a conceptual chimera. One remembers the heroic tape splicing of Glen Gould who compulsively improved his Bach piano transcriptions until he achieved a personal stasis of perfected sound forever frozen in time in the analog streams of magnetic oxide of spinning cellulose. In reality, the tape machine and the microphone placements were just extensions of the piano like the pedals. While many obsessive compulsives will torment themselves with the ideal of music as perfected and absolute

object, the mass of performers and listeners will still experience music as an event with all the accidental hazards and problems this public procedure entails.





Beethoven's "Pastoral" symphony is full of wonderful descriptions of Nature. Any analysis of the work must take this into account. However, it is possible to go beyond this simple musical description of landscapes, forests, animals and natural phenomena. Nature includes everything around us and it also includes us, and one of our most basic existential problems is the relationship of the individual with the rest of the world. Our individuality is something we all experience, and we can say that it is a core experience. From the beginning, we seek our mother for nourishment we understand that we are in some way connected with what is out there. This duality is a problem to be solved throughout our lives, as well as a prototype of all other dualities that we will experience. For those who think that this is a problem of modernity, you can see a symbolic representation of duality in the "Font de Gaume" cave in the Dordogne, not far from Lascaux. There you will see, painted on a cave wall more than 13,000 years ago, two bison facing each other, one black and one red.


In many societies the problem of how the individual relates to everything else by imposing a rigid structure where the individual submits like a bee in a hive. Whether this is desirable or not

depends on whether one sees this as a solution or a suppression of the original problem. In any case, in the West, with its accent on the individual, this refuge is not enough. In addition, the heroic ethic, which assumes that the only basis for all action is inside the hero, exacerbates this problem. We can understand "Nature" as everything outside each one of us. Although we can rationally accept that we are part of it, when we think of Nature we feel it as outside our individuality, thus setting up an original duality. For that reason, it is possible to see Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, the Pastoral, as an attempt to address this fundamental problem of our existence.

The Pastoral is the only Beethoven symphony in five movements instead of four. This structure makes sense if one sees the first four movements as the presentation of two alternating points of view, with the fifth movement as the synthesis. These two points of view, or perspectives, are, on the one hand that of the individual in the first and third movements, and that of Nature, or the outside world, in the second and fourth. In the first movement, we approach Nature and try to establish a relationship with her. Our attitude is one of positive expectation. However, if we want to develop a profound vision of the work, it is important that it not be simply a "fun" attitude, as

is often expressed. This movement must express a search for what is essential in that experience. It is worth noting that the music develops with much repetition of short thematic phrases that remind one of Bruckner, and specifically what Deryck Cooke called the “Bruckner glare”. This repetitive process, often used by Beethoven as well as Bruckner, takes us the core of the issue step by step, accumulating strength and deepening our understanding with each repetition until we reach a climax. For this process to work well, the tempo should not be too fast. We must feel how each repetition gets us closer and closer to our own heart, as well as the heart of the work, with special emphasis on the bass. As is always the case in all of Beethoven’s first movements, we reach strong, climactic affirmation of our being and our individuality in the Coda. This also happens in a repetitive passage.

In the second movement, we change our perspective from our interior to that of Nature. The first experience all humans have of what is out there is the mother, and this is how Nature presents herself. It is interesting to note that in the first bar of this movement, the second violins play this sequence of notes: Bb-F, F-G-F, F-Eb-D, D-C-Bb, Bb. If we eliminate repeated notes, we get the following sequence: Bb-F-G-F-Eb-D-C-Bb,



equivalent to the nursery rhyme “Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman”. Our relationship with the mother is the most comfortable and secure that we will ever know. This movement caresses and cuddles us, and we feel happy and secure. It flows in long bars of 12 crotchets, a mythical space that reminds one of the long verses of epic poetry and giving the mother the possibility of expressing herself with all the love that fills her existence.

We celebrate this happiness with careless abandon in the third movement. Beethoven describes it as a “merry gathering of country folk”. The music certainly expresses fun, dancing and much satisfaction. But we know that life isn’t always like that. Our “mother” Nature quickly turns into a monster, a Gorgon, in the fourth movement. She presents us with a frightening face, with thunder and lightning, showing us a reality much more complex than the one we experienced in the second movement. We should thank Nature for this transformation. Without it, living all the time like in the third movement, we would be idiots.

And now, knowing the extremes, we can engage in the most productive relationship of all: the erotic. This represents the synthesis of the du-



alities we experienced in the first four movements. In the fifth movement, the insistent repetition of phrases returns, this time driving us towards ecstasy. Not only does it help us to find the essence of our own nature, it also moves us towards an expressive explosion. Beethoven always goes down to the depths in order to reach a climax. It is there that he finds the strength to reach the summit. The same way that he affirms his individuality at the end of his first movements, he uses this principle to reach a climax in his last movements. Here, repetition pushes us towards fullness.

In the fifth movement, Nature presents herself as a woman to a man. We want her and we approach her. We dance with her with increasing frenzy. Finally, in the Coda of this last movement, we unite with her and reach a surprisingly explicit musical climax. I don't know any other musical example where the physical aspect of the climax is so clearly expressed. In addition, the music makes us feel with eloquence what happens after the ecstasy. Most would agree that Beethoven is a heroic artist. Many probably think that this symphony is the least heroic of the composer. But a hero can also make love.

The Eighth

I believe that Beethoven's last period represents his decadence, in spite of the number of great works composed in this period. It should be noted that decadence has nothing to do with quality, but rather with attitude. With rare exceptions, such as the Ninth Symphony, Beethoven lost his capacity to reach an ecstatic climax in his last period, perhaps because he had lost confidence in his ideals.

What makes the Eighth Symphony such an interesting work is that the composer goes through the process of going into decadence as the work progresses. It is rare indeed to see an artistic expression of a profound change in the creator inside the work itself. The Eighth begins in the second period and ends in the third. The first movement, up to the last few bars, is second period Beethoven. The main theme is strong and heroic. The return to the recapitulation, always a Beethoven strong point, is one of his best. At the end of the movement there is a typically vertical, pounding, affirmation of the main theme. But then, in the last few bars, something odd happens, and the main theme is played at the very end pianissimo. I hear it as a mockery of this exuberant theme that was forcefully affirmed just 12 bars before. I feel that the whole movement

has been “thrown away”. Is Beethoven telling us that he doesn’t believe in those heroic values any more?

What follows supports this thesis. The second movement is also a mockery. It is reminiscent of Mahler in the use of dark humor, by far the most common type of humor we see today. This kind of humor is highly destructive of values and beliefs. Contrast it with the positive humor one hears in the Second Symphony described above, or even in the first movement of this symphony before the last bars. Next comes a Minuet marked as “Tempo di Minuetto”. And it is a real, old-fashioned Minuet! Beethoven had called the third movement of the Fourth a Menuetto, but it isn’t that at all, but rather a Scherzo. Why would Beethoven write a true Minuet at this point in his life? It has been said that he is “looking back”. But what is he looking back to? I don’t believe that Beethoven ever moved backward. I believe he is again mocking himself. Then, in the last movement, he creates a structural monstrosity. It is in Sonata Form, but where the Coda is almost half the movement. He had been the great expander of the Coda in Sonata Form. Where before it had been just a few bars to bring the movement to a close, Beethoven turned it into a summary of what had happened before. Is he again mocking himself by composing a Coda that

is absurdly long?

Self-mockery is destructive of ideals and values. Beethoven seems to be telling us that he no longer believes in the ideas that he has expressed until now. One consequence of this is his inability to reach a climax, where in his second period he composed some of the greatest climaxes in all of music. In the Eighth, he ends pounding away without a release. The same happens in the Hammerklavier Sonata. In the last three sonatas, he doesn’t even try. Only in the Ninth do we get a true climax.

Why would Beethoven undergo such a profound change at this point in his life? It is impossible to know what could have been on his mind, but we can speculate that something disappointed him and made him question his ideals. Could it had been his audience, who was the Viennese aristocracy at the highest level, and that presumed to understand the heroic values contained in his music? When it became necessary for them to actually act out those values in the defense of their country against Napoleon, they had simply run away. Not a particularly heroic reaction.





EDUARDO CHIBÁS

Since 1992, when he conducted the Venezuela Symphony Orchestra in Wagner's **Meistersinger Prelude**, Eduardo Chibás has carved out a solid trajectory as an orchestral conductor that is now recognized nationally and internationally.

An example of this is the first CD set of all Beethoven symphonies made in Venezuela, all recorded live with the Carabobo Symphony Orchestra. Sándor Végh, who was music director of the Camerata Salzburg and was twice in Caracas wrote: "Eduardo Chibás has a very tight relation to Beethoven and his special message."

Later he was invited to conduct The Camerata Salzburg on a visit to Caracas. In 1999, he also conducted Portugal's Orchestra of the North. In 2005 he recorded, also live, Beethoven's five Piano Concertos with the Brazilian pianist Luiz de Moura Castro and the Venezuela Symphony Orchestra.

In November of 2007, Eduardo Chibás travelled to Germany, where he was invited to conduct Beethoven's Fourth and Seventh Symphonies at Regensburg, Bavaria, with excellent reviews in the local press. The Donaupost wrote: "Eduardo Chibás sparked impressive energies in the orchestra".

While Eduardo Chibás is well known for his interpretations of Beethoven's symphonies and concertos, his name is now also linked with another great symphonic composer: Anton Bruckner. In May of 2004, Eduardo Chibás conducted Bruckner's Seventh Symphony with the Venezuela Symphony Orchestra. It was the first time the orchestra had performed the work. In 2005 he conducted the Eighth Symphony with the same orchestra, this event marking the premiere in Venezuela of this great work. Another Venezuelan premiere followed in 2007 with Bruckner's Ninth.

The live recordings of the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies have been praised by international publications such as **Fanfare Magazine**. In the January/February 2007 edition said: "Eduardo Chibás proves a thoroughly sympathetic and powerful interpreter of Anton Bruckner's music. His vision is distinctly his own, but it rivals in quality those of legendary conductors whose names come up most often when we think of great interpreters of Bruckner, for example Furtwängler, Jochum, Karajan, Klemperer, Knappertsbusch, Tintner, and Wand."

In the most important web page dedicated to Anton Bruckner's discography (www.abruckner.com), these recordings have been singled out as excellent interpretations. All of his recordings with the Venezuela Symphony Orchestra can be

ordered from this web page, and are also on sale in Japan. Radio stations from countries such as the United States, Sweden, Israel, Cyprus, Holland among others, play the recordings of Chibás.

In 2008, the Venezuelan newspaper El Universal put on sale a collection of 10 records of Eduardo Chibás and the Venezuela Symphony Orchestra with sales of almost 200,000 CD's.

In 2011, Eduardo Chibás launched a website devoted to selling downloads of his own remasterings of recordings by the great conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler. His own recordings can also be acquired at this site.

Eduardo Chibás was born in Havana, Cuba. He received a BS and MS in Applied Mathematics and Operations Research from Columbia University, New York. He lives in Venezuela since 1971. In 1976, he founded AW Nazca Saatchi & Saatchi, a renowned advertising agency of which he is currently its Chairman. He is President of the Wagner Society of Venezuela.

Web pages: www.eduardochibas.com
www.furtwangersound.com



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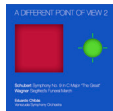
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Schubert Sinfonía No. 9
Wagner Marcha Fúnebre de
Sigfrido
Orquesta Sinfónica de Venezuela





BEETHOVEN

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