

direct, physical experience –the pleasure that comes from a sunny day in the country, feeling its warmth, hearing the bird sounds, the music of a village band, even, at day's end, the threat of thunder in the distance. This is normal and natural for anyone. But, in the spiritual upheaval of these six years, Beethoven ceased to be "anyone," and became an "only one." One, that is, who realized he could still recollect those sensations inwardly, hear them with his mind's ear, and re create their effect musically. Then, in a way he could never have anticipated six years before, he was granted that "pure day of joy" in the music of his own creation.

Thus, the phraseology of the verbal preface to the "Pastoral" a recollection of country life. More an expression of feeling than a painting" is almost a postscript to the wording of the Heiligenstadt Testament. To the devil with a literal rendering! Let those who could only hear reproduce. It was the more exalted privilege of one who could no longer hear to speak of how a day in the country feels, to fix forever the senses it stimulates, the sights it conveys in short, not to reproduce but re create.

Beethoven "Pastoral" Symphony

Reiner / Chicago Symphony



Pundits have pondered for years over the inscription with which Beethoven prefaced his Sixth Symphony: "Pastoral Symphony, or a recollection of country life. More an expression of feeling than a painting." Most times, emphasis has been applied to the phrase about "feeling" rather than "painting," as if to exonerate Beethoven from the blame for writing "program music." However, the reference to "recollection" is worth the degree of attention it rarely receives. Why, of all words, "recollection"? And what is its significance relative to the Vienna suburb of Heiligenstadt, where it was written in the summer of 1808? Now just one more built up area on the perimeter of Vienna almost within the streetcar range Heiligenstadt in Beethoven's day, was a blessed haven of retreat for summer thought and relaxation. One year it might be another neighboring area, such as Gneixendorf, in another Doubling or Hetzendorf. But Heiligenstadt, to the Beethoven indoctrinated, has a special significance.

It was here, of course, that Beethoven first made mention in written form of his growing deafness, the so called "Heiligenstadt Testament" of 1802. Though it did not become known

to the world until after the composer's death, it speaks in still poignant words of his despair, indeed his "humiliation when someone stood by me and heard a flute in the distance and I heard nothing or someone heard the shepherd boy singing, and I again heard nothing." And, in a final heart rending outcry: "O Providence, let for once a pure day of joy be mine, so long is true joy's inward resonance a stranger to me. O when, O when O God, can I feel it once again in this Temple of Nature and of Humanity. Never? No-O that was too cruel."

Six years were to pass before in another summer's visit to Heiligenstadt, Beethoven found the answer to his prayer and was granted the "pure day of joy," for which he implored Providence. Not, of course, by remittance of the ailment that plagued him or through medical intervention. If anything, his hearing was worse, and shortly he would have to give up public performance altogether.

What had happened to Beethoven in those six years was (in my view) simply this: As of 1802, he conceived joy and the fulfillment of it in the "Temple of Nature" as an outward,

Beethoven "Pastoral" Symphony

Fritz Reiner / The Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Symphony No.6 in F, Op.68 "Pastoral" (40:46)

1 Allegro ma non troppo

(Cheerful impressions received on arriving in the country) 10:16

2 Andante molto mosso (Scene by the Brook) 14:09

3 Scherzo : Allegro (Peasants' merry-making) 3:20

4 Allegro (Tempest and Storm) 3:53

5 Allegretto (Shepherds' Song : Thanksgiving after the Storm) 8:59

Engineer – Lewis Layton Producer – Richard Mohr

Recorded by RCA April 8 & 10, 1961, at Orchestra Hall, Chicago



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