

prepared and rehearsed the work in secret, Wagner gathered his small orchestra on the stairway on Christmas morning, 1870, and awakened Cosima with its first performance (Cosima's birthday was December 24; the Wagner family celebrated that day and the Christmas holiday together). Afterward, Wagner and Cosima's five children presented her with the score.

As is reflected in the uncharacteristically (for Wagner) modest scoring, the Siegfried Idyll is a particularly intimate work, meant to acknowledge and celebrate the year that Wagner and Cosima could finally legitimize their union. Several stressful years had passed since Cosima had left her first husband, the conductor Hans von Bülow, in 1866. The divorce was finalized at last in 1870, and in August of that year Cosima and Wagner wed.

Wagner wrote Siegfried Idyll while he was occupied with the completing and initial staging of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. The music for Siegfried (1856-71), the third part of the cycle, had caused the composer great difficulty; he had set it aside in frustration in 1857, returning to it only in 1869. Wagner borrowed Siegfried Idyll's principal themes from Siegfried and *Die Walküre* (1854-56), where they have specific meanings within the cycle's system of leitmotives. Within the context in Siegfried Idyll, however, these themes are taken on a more general nature as expressions of triumphant love and affection. Wagner had never intended to publish the work, but financial problems forced him to make it public in 1877.

BEETHOVEN: SYMPHONY NO. 4
Monteux London Symphony

WAGNER: SIEGFRIED IDYLL
Monteux San Francisco Symphony



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Robert Schumann described this symphony as "a slender Greek maiden between two Norse giants," and started the long-standing tradition which holds that somehow Beethoven's even-numbered symphonies are less profound than the odd-numbered ones. This may seem true at first glance, but there is much that Schumann's analysis leaves unsaid. While the lambent beauty of the Adagio might suggest the kind of Classicism that the Eroica transcended, one should remember that, in many senses, the Fourth, emerging from an intensely foreboding, and even tragic, introduction, is no less heroic than either the Eroica or the Fifth. Dark-hued and intensely chromatic strivings pull the music from B flat minor toward the unison F which heralds the beginning of the sunny Allegro vivace exposition. While Weber criticized the deliberately sparse-sounding introduction, Tovey sensed its immense stature, writing of the "sky-dome vastness" of its harmonic progression. The Adagio, a sonata structure minus development, begins with an insistent rhythm which recurs several times. At the start, the violins sing out the sublimely reflective principal motif, a tenderly lyrical utterance which stands in direct contrast to the opening figure. These two contrasting elements are always at the hub of the movement, the expressive violin theme later becoming the subject of variations. The reprise of the second group then leads to the highly atmospheric coda. What follows is the Scherzo; a bucolic main theme suggests the rustic folk-dance idioms that Beethoven knew well; nevertheless, the movement surpasses the Eroica's Scherzo in power and dynamism. It should be noted that this is the first of Beethoven's

symphonic scherzos to feature a repeat of the trio section, which is significant, given the massive nature of the surrounding material. The scherzo is heard one last time, now abridged, before the shattering final coda with its three-bar horn solo. Expanded scherzos also figure in several of Beethoven's later symphonies (the exception is the Eighth), and sketches suggest the technique was originally envisaged for the Fifth. Opening with a series of mercurial sixteenth note fragments from which the first subject group is derived, the final movement is "perpetuum mobile." As the movement unfolds, the oboe's second theme provides contrast with the initial statement, the relentless development section posing serious technical challenges to the lower instruments: bassoon, cellos, and basses. In the coda, surely one of Beethoven's most humorous inventions, the theme is passed around at half speed after a "false" ending has been reached, and finally brushed aside dramatically as cellos and basses plummet down the scale before the striking final bars for full orchestra.

The full title on the original manuscript of Wagner's Siegfried Idyll reads, "Tribschen-Idyll, with Fidi-Birdsong and Orange Sunrise, presented as a symphonic birthday greeting to his Cosima by her Richard, 1870." The "Siegfried" in the title does not refer to the composer's opera of the same name, as is often supposed, but to his infant son, whose pet name was "Fidi." The "orange sunrise" refers to the color of Cosima's bedroom wallpaper, which brightly reflected the morning light. Though the work is sometimes heard in an arrangement for full orchestra, Wagner originally wrote it for an ensemble of 15 players. Having

BEETHOVEN: SYMPHONY NO. 4

Pierre Monteux - London Symphony Orchestra

WAGNER: SIEGFRIED IDYLL

Pierre Monteux - San Francisco Symphony

Beethoven Symphony No. 4 In B-Flat Op. 60

1 Adagio; Allegro Vivace 12:38

2 Adagio 9:15

3 Menuetto: Allegro Vivace;

Trio: Un Poco Meno Allegro 5:44

4 Allegro Ma Non Troppo 6:32

5 Wagner Siegfried Idyll 16:43

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