

tar, encouraging irrelevant and awkward choreography (by Isadore Duncan and Léonide Massine among others) and licensing the music appreciation racket to misinterpret Beethoven's intent as well as his content. Wholly abstract and utterly symphonic, the Seventh was his definitive break with stylistic conventions practiced by Mozart, Haydn, and a legion of lesser mortals who copied them. He stretched harmonic rules, and gave breadth to symphonic forms that Haydn and Mozart anticipated. If, in his orchestral music, Beethoven was the last Austro-German Classicist, he did point those who followed him to the path of Romanticism.

While the *poco sostenuto* introduction begins by observing time-honored rules of harmony, within 62 measures it modulates from A major to the alien keys of C and F major, then back again! The transition from solemn 4/4 meter to 6/8 for the balance of an evergreen *vivace* movement (in sonata form) further exemplifies Beethoven's conceptual stretch.

Coming from the 20-minute funeral march of his earlier *Eroica* Symphony, Beethoven created an *allegretto* "slow" movement. He established a funerary mood (without its being specifically *elegiac*) through the repetition of a 2/4 rhythmic motif in A minor, the most somber key of the tempered scale. A minor serves more than an expressive function, moreover; it readies us for the reappearance of F major in a tumultuous five-part Scherzo marked *Presto*. Two trios go slower (*assai meno presto*), in D major -- a long distance harmonically in 1812 from the work's A major tonic. The beginning of a third trio turns into a short coda capped by five *fortissimo* chords.

A major finally returns in the final movement. Here more than anywhere else in his orchestral music, Beethoven became a race-car driver. As in the "slow" movement, the rhythm is 2/4, but sonata-form replaces ABA. And there's a grand coda longer than the exposition, the development, or the reprise, which, furthermore, begins in B minor! But modulations bring it back to A major in time for a heart-pounding final lap with the accelerator pressed to the floor.

*Ludwig van Beethoven*

## Symphony No. 5 in c-minor Symphony No. 7 in a-major



The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra  
GEORG SOLTI



Beethoven worked on the Fifth Symphony for more than four years, completing it in 1808, and introducing it on December 22 of that year at what must have been one of the most extraordinary concerts in history. The marathon program included the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies; the Choral Fantasy, Op. 80; the Fourth Piano Concerto; and parts of the Mass in C. Vienna was in the grip of exceptionally cold weather, the hall was unheated, and the musicians woefully under-prepared. As Schindler noted, "the reception accorded to these works was not as desired, and probably no better than the author himself had expected. The public was not endowed with the necessary degree of comprehension for such extraordinary music, and the performance left a great deal to be desired."

Following early indifference, the public only gradually began to come to terms with the Fifth. One of its earliest proponents, the poet and composer E.T.A. Hoffmann wrote, "How this magnificent composition carries the listener on and on in a continually ascending climax into the ghostly world of infinity!...the human breast, squeezed by monstrous presentiments and destructive powers, seems to gasp for breath; soon a kindly figure approaches full of radiance, and illuminates the depths of terrifying night." In his *Howard's End*, E.M. Forster writes of the work, suggesting that it satisfies "all sort and conditions." The characters of Helen and Tibby know the work well, the latter even describing "the transitional passage on the drum" before the finale. That Forster dwelt at such length on the work shows the extent to which it had become absorbed into the Romantic consciousness.

Hermann Kretzschmar wrote of the "stirring dogged and desperate struggle" of the first movement, one of the most concentrated of all Beethoven's symphonic sonata movements. It is derived almost exclusively from the rhythmic cell of the opening, which is even felt in the accompaniment of the second subject group. There follows a variation movement in which cellos introduce the theme, increasingly elaborated and with shorter note values at every reappearance. A second, hymn-like motif is heard as its counterfoil.

The tripartite scherzo follows; the main idea is based on an ominous arpeggio

figure, but we hear also the omnipresent "Fate" rhythm, exactly as it is experienced in the first movement. The central section, which replaces the customary trio, is a pounding fugato beginning in the cellos and basses, and then running through the rest of the orchestra. Of particular structural interest is the inter-linking bridge passage which connects the last two movements. Over the drumbeat referred to by Forster's Tibby, the music climbs inexorably toward the tremendous assertion of C major triumph at the start of the finale. The epic grandeur of the music, now with martial trombones and piccolo added (the Fifth also calls for contrabassoon), has irresistible drive and sweep, though that eventual victory is still some way off is suggested by the return of the ominous scherzo figure during the extended development.

Ludwig van Beethoven completed seventh symphony in 1812, but withheld the first performance until December 8, 1813, in Vienna. It is scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, and trumpets, plus timpani and string choir.

1812 was an eventful year for the very famous, seriously deafened Beethoven. July was especially noteworthy. At Teplitz he finally met Goethe (1749-1832), but was disappointed to find (he felt) an aging courtier who was no longer a firebrand or kindred democrat; worse yet, a musical dilettante. A week before that only meeting of German giants, Beethoven had written the letter to his mysterious "immortal beloved" that was discovered posthumously in a secret drawer. Then, toward the end of the year, he meddled unbidden in the affairs of his youngest brother, Johann, who was cohabiting contentedly with a housekeeper. Somehow, he found time to compose the last of his ten sonatas for violin and piano and to complete a new pair of symphonies -- the Seventh and Eighth -- both begun in 1809. He introduced the Seventh at a charity concert for wounded soldiers, and repeated it four nights later by popular demand.

Richard Wagner called Symphony No. 7 "the apotheosis of the dance," meaning of course to praise its Dionysian spirit. But this oxymoron stuck like feathers to hot

# *Ludwig van Beethoven* **Symphony No. 5 & 7**

**The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra**  
**GEORG SOLTI**

**Symphony No. 5 in C Minor 32:23**

**5 Allegro con brio 7:28**

**6 Andante con moto 11:09**

**7 Allegro 5:07**

**8 Allegro 8:39**

**Symphony No. 7 in A Major 36:50**

**1 Poco Sostenuto - Vivace 12:50**

**2 Allegretto 9:35**

**3 Presto (Scherzo) - Assai Meno Presto 7:40**

**4 Allegro Con Brio 6:40**

Recorded by Decca Records 1959  
Engineer James Brown Producer - Erik Smith



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