

In 1914, when war broke out, he was called to military service. He received a discharge in 1916 and travelled to the United States, where he obtained a conducting post at the Metropolitan Opera that lasted until 1919. At that point he was engaged to conduct the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Taking up the post in 1920, he walked into a labor dispute, with his musicians on strike; by the time the strike was settled, the concertmaster and 30 other musicians had left. Monteux had to rebuild the orchestra -- a difficult task, but an opportunity for Monteux to mold the orchestra according to his own taste; ever since then, the Boston Symphony Orchestra has been known for its French sound and its expertise in French and Russian repertoire. He remained in Boston through 1924, gaining a reputation as a supporter of modern music. He brought to America not only Stravinsky and the French composers, but such others as Respighi, Vaughan Williams, and Honegger.

In 1924 he began a ten year association with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw. He was a good fit with the orchestra's other conductor, Willem Mengelberg, who had a Romantic-era style, and who specialized in traditional repertoire and Dutch composers. In addition, Monteux founded the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris in 1929, and the Ecole Monteux, a coaching school for young conductors in 1932.

In 1936 he returned to the United States as conductor of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, staying in that position through the 1952 season. During World War II he obtained American citizenship and transferred his Ecole Monteux to his new hometown of Hancock, Maine, where Erich Kunzel, Neville Marriner, and André Previn were among his students. He guest conducted and recorded extensively, and in 1961, at the age of eighty-six, accepted the musical directorship of the London Symphony Orchestra.

RCA Victor recorded him extensively in stereo, not only in Debussy, Ravel, Milhaud, Stravinsky, and the like, but also in Beethoven and Brahms; Monteux was especially noted for his performances of these composers' music, to which he brought an unusual charm and lyrical quality.

He strove for transparency of sound, precision, light and springy rhythms, and that elegance that seems particularly associated with French music.

# Beethoven

## "Pastoral"

### The Sixth Symphony

**Pierre Monteux / Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra**



Symphony No. 6 in F Major, byname Pastoral Symphony, symphony by Ludwig van Beethoven. Premiering in Vienna December 22, 1808, on the same concert that offered the premiere of his Symphony No. 5, this work is distinct from that one in part due to its generally optimistic character, but also by the presence of a sequence of scenes that the music attempts to capture. Many modern listeners came to know Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony through its appearance in the Walt Disney's *Fantasia* film of 1940, in which the scenes of mythological creatures are remote from Beethoven's own vision, helpfully specified by the composer's own heading to the individual movements.

It was not for his essay on Beethoven that French writer Romain Rolland (1866–1944) won his Nobel Prize for Literature. However, in that essay one finds some words of Beethoven's that seem especially apropos for the Symphony no. 6: "I love a tree more than a man." It's a thought that might have come from Henry Thoreau (1817–62), but instead represents the ideas of a European man of the arts. Beethoven's closest friends attest that he was always most at ease when vacationing in the countryside, where he could take long solitary walks through the fields and woods. That is exactly the man who is captured in his Symphony No. 6.

Early sketches for this symphony date from 1802, though its actual composition waited until the summers of 1807 and 1808, which Beethoven spent in the village of Heiligenstadt. In that rural retreat, a green escape from city heat, his mind was at rest, and he was able to compose not only this symphony, but also the Symphony no. 5, the Cello Sonata in A major, op. 69, and the two op. 70 Piano Trios. During this period, Beethoven produced so many works that he was uncertain which symphony was finished first. He initially cataloged the Pastoral Symphony as number five and the c-minor Symphony as number six. The numbering was only altered at publication.

The first, *Awakening of Cheerful Feelings on Arriving in the Country*, sets an idyllic mood. A sort of skipping rhythm is heard throughout this movement, as if the composer were envisioning village children at play. The second movement is *Scene By the Brook*, in this case, a gentle brook frequented by quails, cuckoos, and nightingales, whose voices are evoked by the woodwinds: oboe, clarinet, and flute, respectively. The individual parts indicate specifically which instrument represents which bird.

The third movement has human inspiration, with a *Merry Gathering of the Country Folk*.

The music progresses in an ebullient, though somewhat undirected fashion, as if portraying a band of barely talented, or barely sober, village musicians. Phrases are often interrupted and sudden declarations break into the melodic flow.

Like all merry-making, this party too comes to an end, in this case, with a change in the weather, as the fourth movement, *Thunderstorm*, arrives. The storm rages away throughout the orchestra, though especially with the full brass and percussion. The storm subsides with the beginning of the fifth movement, *Shepherd's Song —Happy, Thankful Feelings after the Storm*. Here, Beethoven gives first to the clarinet, and then the horn, his *Shepherd's Song*. This theme gradually grows to become a serene and rapturous melody, the one that he wishes to leave in his listeners' ears as the symphony ends.

The last three movements are played without pause, the entire symphony ending on a tranquil note. One might suppose it is dusk in Heiligenstadt, and Beethoven, enjoying a rare bit of peace of mind, is resting from his labors.

Pierre Monteux had one of the longest musical careers in memory, exceeded perhaps only by Pablo Casals and Leopold Stokowski. He retained a youthful appearance (and a full head of black hair!) well into old age, and he was well loved by colleagues and audiences alike.

He started violin studies at the age of six and then entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of 9. He made his conducting debut in Paris at the age of 12. He was a co-winner of the first prize for violin in 1896, with the great violinist Jacques Thibaud. He served as principal violist in the Opera-Comique, and was also assistant conductor and concertmaster of the Concerts Colonne.

In 1894 he joined the Quatuor Geloso as a violist and was privileged to participate in the performance of a Brahms quartet in the composer's presence. In 1908 he became conductor of the Orchestre du Casino in Dieppe and in 1911 founded a series called the Concerts Berlioz. In the same year, he began a historic association when he was hired by Diaghilev to conduct his Ballets Russes. He led the premieres of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloe*, Debussy's *Jeux*, and Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and *Rite of Spring*, the last of which caused a notorious audience riot.

# Beethoven

## "Pastoral" The Sixth Symphony

**Pierre Monteux / Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra**

**1 Allegro Ma Non Troppo 12:17**

**2 Andante Molto Mosso 11:35**

**3 Allegro 5:14**

**4 Allegro 3:32**

**5 Allegretto 8:49**

Producer John Culshaw Engineer James Brown

Recorded by Decca for RCA October 1958 in the Sofiensaal, Vienna



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