

Beethoven: *Pastoral Symphony*



David Wyn Jones  
*University of Wales, Cardiff*

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP  
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA  
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1995

First published 1995

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data*

Jones, David Wyn.

Beethoven, Pastoral Symphony / David Wyn Jones

p. cm. – (Cambridge music handbooks)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 45074 8 (hardback). – ISBN 0 521 45684 3 (paperback)

1. Beethoven, Ludwig van, 1770–1827. Symphonies, no. 6, op. 68, F major. I. Series.

ML410.B4W96 1996

784.2'184–dc20 95–9937 CIP MN

ISBN 0 521 45074 8 hardback

ISBN 0 521 45684 3 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2002

## Contents

---

<i>List of illustrations</i>	page viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
1 <i>The concert of 22 December 1808</i>	1
2 <i>Background</i>	4
3 <i>Genesis and reception</i>	25
4 <i>Design and orchestration</i>	47
5 <i>Technique and image</i>	54
6 <i>Mehr Malerei als Empfindung</i> <i>Some critical views</i>	81
<i>Notes</i>	89
<i>Select bibliography</i>	96
<i>Index</i>	98

## *Illustrations*

---

- |   |   |                |
|---|---|----------------|
| 1 | Sketch for the beginning of the <i>Pastoral Symphony</i> from the Eroica Sketchbook (1803)                            | <i>page</i> 26 |
| 2 | A performance of Haydn's <i>Creation</i> in March 1808. Miniature by Balthasar Wigand                                 | 31             |
| 3 | Orchestral part used in the first performance of the <i>Pastoral Symphony</i> (Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Vienna) | 44             |

---

*The concert of 22 December 1808*

Perhaps the most remarkable concert in Beethoven's career was that given in the Theater an der Wien on 22 December 1808. On a bitterly cold night and with insufficient rehearsal an *ad hoc* ensemble of instrumentalists and vocalists provided a concert of Beethoven's music that lasted from 6.30 to 10.30.<sup>1</sup> Eight works were included in the programme, described on the handbill as follows.<sup>2</sup>

First part

- I Pastoral Symphony, (No. 5) more the expression of feeling than painting.  
 First movement. Pleasant feelings which are awakened in mankind on arrival in the country.  
 Second movement. Scene by the brook.  
 Third movement. Joyful fellowship of country folk; leading into  
 Fourth movement. Thunder and Storm; in turn leading into  
 Fifth movement. Beneficent feeling after the storm joined with thanks to the deity.
- II Aria, sung by Miss Killitzky.
- III Hymn with Latin text, written in the church style, with chorus and solos.
- IV Piano Concerto played by himself (Industrie-Comptoir).

Second part

- I Grand Symphony in C minor (No. 6).
- II Holy, with Latin text, written in the church style, with chorus and solos.
- III Fantasy on the piano alone.
- IV Fantasy on the piano, which gradually includes the orchestra, and ultimately ends with the entry of the chorus as a finale.

Erste Abteilung

- I Pastoral-Symphonie, (No. 5) mehr Ausdruck der Empfindung als Malerei.  
 1stes Stück. Angenehme Empfindungen, welche bei der Ankunft auf dem Lande im Menschen erwachen.  
 2tes Stück. Scene am Bach.

3tes Stück. Lustiges Beisammensein der Landleute; fällt ein  
4tes Stück. Donner und Sturm; in welches einfallt  
5tes Stück. Wohltätige, mit Dank an die Gottheit verbundene Gefühle  
nach dem Sturm.

- II Arie, gesungen von Dem. Killitzky.
- III Hymne mit latein. Texte, im Kirchenstile geschrieben, mit Chor und Solos.
- IV Klavier-Konzert von ihm selbst gespielt (Industrie-Comptoir).

Zweite Abteilung

- I Grosse Symphonie in C moll (No. 6)
- II Heilig, mit latein. Texte, im Kirchenstile geschrieben, mit Chor und Solos.
- III Fantasie auf dem Klavier allein.
- IV Fantasie auf dem Klavier, welche sich nach und nach mit Eintreten des Orchesters, und zuletzt mit Einfallen von Chören als Finale endet.

Each part opened with a new symphony, the *Pastoral Symphony* (at this stage called No. 5) and the C minor (labelled No. 6), two lengthy but very different works that would have tested the musicianship and perseverance of even the most devoted of Beethoven's players and listeners. While the presentation of these two symphonies was the principal aim of the concert Beethoven took the opportunity of pressing his credentials as a pianist-composer, now, because of increasing deafness, a secondary aspect of his career in comparison with ten years earlier; the first part ended with a performance of the Fourth Piano Concerto, recently published by the Viennese firm of Bureau des Arts et d'Industrie (hence the reference in the handbill). The penultimate item in the concert – 'Fantasy' – was an improvisation by Beethoven, the content of which can only be guessed at; almost certainly it was more extravagant than the Fantasy in G minor (Op. 77) composed the following year, which has the feeling of a salon piece rather than something designed to capture the imagination of a large audience. Interspersed between these works were three vocal numbers. The second number, the 'aria', was the oldest item in the programme, the concert aria, 'Ah! perfido' (Op. 65) dating from 1796, though it is possible that this was its first performance in Vienna; it had been published in 1805. For more recent vocal music Beethoven had a number of works from which to choose: the oratorio *Christus am Oelberge* (Op. 85), the opera *Leonore* (Op. 72) and the Mass in C (Op. 86). The opera and the oratorio were already known to the Viennese (both had been given their first performance in the city) and the subject matter of the latter was specifically suited to Easter rather than Christmas; the Mass in C, however, had been given its first performance in Eisenstadt (in September 1807) and was unknown in Vienna. Performances

of liturgical music in concerts were still very rare in the city and the Imperial and Royal censor was sensitive about advertising performances of such works outside the church. The oblique references on the handbill to a 'hymn' and movements 'written in the church style' were designed to get round this sensitivity; the two movements were the Gloria and Sanctus. The final item, the Choral Fantasia (Op. 80), brought together all the forces used in the concert in a new work composed at the last moment; it concluded with the massed forces – piano, chorus and orchestra – proclaiming the power of music, 'So, lovely spirits, accept the gifts of fair art gladly. When love and strength are wedded, divine grace is man's reward' ('Nehmt denn hin, ihr schönen Seelen, froh die Gaben schöner Kunst. Wenn sich Lieb' und Kraft vermählen, lohnt den Menschen Göttergunst').

The concert was a compelling statement of Beethoven's creative imagination at almost exactly half way through his life: two radical symphonies, a piano concerto that was quite unlike its predecessors, vocal and instrumental music that showed a willingness to respond to extra-musical stimulus and, above all, the steadfast appeal of traditional genres. The two very different symphonies, one abstract and intensely dramatic, the other avowedly programmatic and relaxed, point to some of the characteristics that were to dominate symphonic composition for over a hundred years. But, as often with Beethoven's music, their subsequent history and reputation have to a large extent obscured the impulses that first produced them.

The *Pastoral Symphony* has been part of the standard repertoire from 22 December 1808 to the present day, though admiration for the work is, at least in part, sustained by a general reverence for the composer rather than by the perceived quality of the work itself. Of all Beethoven's symphonies perhaps the *Pastoral* is the one that needs rescuing most from the cultural icon we call 'Beethoven'. What kind of work did the composer imagine the *Pastoral Symphony* to be? What were the various stimuli that influenced its composition? How might the audience have reacted in December 1808? Removing the veneer of time is a familiar metaphor in the period instrument movement; this book hopes to recapture some of the resonances that the period listener might have experienced. Some people will claim that this is unattainable (which, of course, it is), irrelevant to the 1990s and, therefore, misguided. Needless to say the author does not share this reactionary view. At the very least looking at the *Pastoral Symphony* from the late eighteenth century forwards rather than from the twentieth century backwards represents a change of perspective. It might enable us to marvel anew at the work itself.