





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 George Grove
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SYMPHONY No. 1, IN C MAJOR (Op. 21).

Dedicated to the Baron van Swieten.

Adagio molto (88 ): Allegro con brio (112 ). (C major.)

Andante cantabile con moto (120 ). (F major.)

Menuetto e Trio (108 ). (C major)

Finale, Adagio (63 ): Allegro molto e vivace (88 ). (C major.)

The metronome-marks to Symphonies I. to VIII. are taken from the table given with the *Allg. musikalische Zeitung* for Dec. 17, 1817, which purports to have been settled by the composer himself with Maelzel's metronome.

The Symphony is written for the following instruments, which, in this and all the other cases, are given in the same order as in the original score, beginning at the top of the page.

2 Drums (in C, G).	2 Clarinets.
2 Trumpets.	2 Bassoons.
2 Horns.	Violins, 1st and 2nd.
2 Flutes.	Violas.
2 Oboes.	Basso.

Being one flute and two clarinets more than are employed by Mozart in the 'Jupiter' Symphony. In the *Andante* one flute only is employed.

The score is an 8vo of 108 pages, published by Simrock in 1820. '1re Grande Simphonie en Ut majeur (C dur) de LOUIS VAN BEETHOVEN. Oeuvre XXI. Partition. Prix 9 Frs. Bonn et Cologne chez N. Simrock. 1953.' The parts were published by Hoffmeister & Kühnel, Bureau de Musique (now Peters), Leipzig, end of 1801.

In hearing this Symphony, we can never forget that it is the first of that mighty and immortal series which seem destined to remain the greatest monuments of music, as Raffaele's best pictures are still the monuments of the highest point reached by the art of painting, notwithstanding all that has been done since. Schumann has somewhere made the

just remark that the early works of great men are to be regarded in quite a different light from those of writers who never had a future. In Beethoven's case this is most true and interesting, and especially so with regard to the First Symphony. Had he died immediately after completing it, it would have occupied a very different position from what it now does. It would have been judged and loved on its merits; but we should never have guessed of what grander beauties and glories it was destined to be the harbinger, or have known the pregnant significance of its Minuet.

The autograph of the Symphony is lost, and no evidence is known to exist by which the date of its completion can be determined. Probably it is only mislaid, and some day will be revealed with that of Schubert's Gastein Symphony, Beethoven's own Eroica, and other such treasures. Meantime sketches for the *Finale* are found among the exercises which Beethoven wrote while studying counterpoint under Albrechtsberger in the spring of 1795. One of these is quoted by Nottebohm, in his *edition of Beethoven's studies, as occurring, with sketches for 'Adelaide,' amongst the fugues *alla decima* and *duodecima*; and they probably show how the impatient student relieved his mind when the counterpoint became too tiresome for him. It was five years later before the Symphony came to a hearing; since it was first performed in public in 1800, on the 2nd April, at a concert given by its author in Vienna. It is not only the first Symphony which he performed or published, but apparently the first which he completed. Its date brings home to us in an unmistakable manner the deliberate progress of Beethoven's creations. In

* *Beethovens Studien . . . von Gustav Nottebohm*. Erster Band. Leipzig, Rieter-Biedermann, 1873, page 202. See also Nottebohm's remarks in his *Zweite Beethoveniana*, 1887, page 228. He seems, however, in these latter remarks to have changed his mind, and to consider the sketches as belonging to an earlier work than Op. 21.

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INTRODUCTION.

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1800 he was thirty years old, and it is startling to recollect that at that age (in 1786) Mozart had written the whole of his Symphonies save the three masterpieces; and that though Schubert was but thirty-one when he died, he left a mass of compositions, including certainly nine, and probably ten Symphonies behind him. The work is scored for the usual orchestra of Haydn and Mozart, with clarinets in addition, which they very rarely employed in their Symphonies, but the use of which Beethoven probably learned from Mozart's operas. The ease with which he handles the orchestra in this his first large work is somewhat remarkable. His only orchestral practice before it would seem to have been his two Cantatas, written in 1790 on the death of Joseph II. and the accession of Leopold II.; the first movement of a Violin Concerto in C, and his two Pianoforte Concertos, in *B flat and in C. The Symphony is dedicated to the Baron van Swieten, a friend of Beethoven's, when a stranger in Vienna, as he had been of Mozart's (who spells his name Suten) and Haydn's before him. This, however, is on the Parts, which were published by Hoffmeister and Kühnel (now Peters), of Leipzig, at the end of 1801. In the earliest score, that of Simrock (8vo, No. 1953, published in 1820), the Baron's name is omitted. What honorarium his patron may have bestowed is not known; but in the list of compositions offered by Beethoven to Hoffmeister (1801) the Symphony figures at the modest price of 20 ducats, or £10.

I. The work commences with a very short introductory movement, *Adagio molto*. In his 2nd, 4th, and 7th Symphonies Beethoven has shown how extended and independent such Introductions can be made; but the present one, like many of Haydn's, is only twelve bars in length, of no special form, and merely serving as a prelude to the work. Though short it is by no means without points of historical

* The B flat, though numbered second, was composed before the other.

interest. The opening may not seem novel or original to us, but at that date it was audacious, and amply sufficient to justify the unfavourable reception which it met with from such established critics of the day as Preindl, the Abbé Stadler, and Dionys Weber, some of whom established a personal quarrel with the composer on this ground :—

No. 1. *Adagio molto.*

The image shows the beginning of the first movement of Beethoven's First Symphony. It consists of two staves: Wind (top) and Strings (bottom). The Wind staff is in G major (one sharp) and the Strings staff is in C major (no sharps or flats). The time signature is common time (C). The music begins with a sharp staccato chord in the Wind part, marked *fp* (fortissimo piano). The Strings part begins with a *pizz.* (pizzicato) chord marked *f* (forte). The first few bars show a discord in the key of F major, which then resolves to the key of G major by the third bar. The strings play a steady bass line, and the wind part has a melodic line with some grace notes.

That a composition professing to be in the key of C should begin with a discord in the key of F, and by the third bar be in that of G, was surely startling enough to ears accustomed to the regular processes of that time. Haydn has begun a Quartet (in B flat, Pohl, No. 42) with a discord of 6-4-2; and John Sebastian Bach, who seems to have anticipated everything that later composers can do, begins his Church Cantata* 'Widerstehe doch der Sünde' with the formidable discord of 7-5-4-2 on a pedal. Beethoven was thus not wanting in precedents, if he had known them, which he probably did not. The proceeding, at any rate, evidently pleased him, for he repeats it, with even an additional grain of offence, in the Overture to his Ballet of Prometheus in the following year. Another of his compositions beginning with a discord is the Pianoforte Sonata in E flat (Op. 31, No. 3). We shall see that the 'Eroica' Symphony was originally intended to open with a discord, a chord of the 6-5 on D; but this, it is hardly necessary to say, was abandoned. The opening of the present work was an experiment; the sharp staccato chords

* Bachgesellschaft, Vol. XII., Part ii., p. 61.

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THE ALLEGRO.

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in the strings, which never can be effective, even in the largest orchestra, when overpowered by loud holding notes in the wind, he abandoned in the Prometheus Overture; and when he again employs them (in the opening of the Fourth Symphony) the wind is carefully hushed, and marked *pp*. The interest of the discord resides in the fact that Beethoven was even then sufficiently prominent to put such Fathers of the Church as the critics named on the *qui vive* for his heresy.

In the *Allegro* which succeeds this Introduction there is not much to call for remark. The leading theme is as follows—three four-bar phrases in the strings, artfully protracted by two bars of wind—

No. 2.

Allegro con brio.

Wind (a)

Strings tr

sf *cres.* *ff*

And here again—in the transition from C to D (bar *a*)—there is a likeness to the first subject of the Prometheus Overture, with which indeed the whole of this movement has much in common. The same transition will be found in the opening subject of the String Quintet in C (Op. 29), a work of the year 1801, and in the fragment of a Violin Concerto in C major, dating from about the same time. The general form of the figure, and the repetition a note higher, have been followed by Schubert in his Symphony in B flat (No. 2), and by Weber in his Overture to ‘Peter Schmill.’

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FIRST SYMPHONY.

There is another fact about this first subject which should be noticed—its determination to mark the key, a great characteristic of Beethoven. In many of the Sonatas and Symphonies (No. 2, the 'Eroica,' No. 8, No. 9, &c.) the chief subject consists, as it does here, of little more than the notes of the common chord of the tonic repeated; 'so that,' in the words of an eminent *musician of the present day, 'the principal key shall be so strongly established that even the most stupid persons shall be able to realise it.'

The second subject, in the 'dominant'—key of G—according to rule, is very melodious and agreeable, and the *arpeggio* accompaniment in the strings, borrowed from bar 4 of the first theme (see No. 2), and the broken accents in bars 5 and 6, make it very continuous and lively—

No. 3.

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows the Oboe, Flute, and Bassoon parts. The Oboe part is marked *fp* and has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The Flute and Bassoon parts are also marked *fp* and have similar melodic lines. The second system shows the Strings part, which has an arpeggiated accompaniment with slurs and accents, marked *sf*.

It again is akin to the analogous subjects in the Overture to Prometheus and the C major Quintet; and all these are of the type which was given by Mozart in his Overture to the Clemenza di Tito. (See Jahn's *Mozart*, Transl. iii., 293.)

A very effective and original passage—almost to be called an episode—arises out of this theme; where the bass has a portion of the subject in the minor, with a separate melody above it, first in the oboe and then in the oboe and bassoon in octaves. It is preceded by an emphatic bar closing in G

* Dr. Hubert Parry, *Proceedings of Musical Association*, xv., p. 28.

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THE ALLEGRO.

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major, and the contrast of the sudden *pianissimo* and the change of mode is both effective and characteristic—

No. 4.

Strings *pp* Oboe *p cres.*

Fag. 8va.

The modulations—G minor, B flat, E minor, and G major—are worthy of notice.

The first part of the *Allegro* ends with a short *Coda* of nine bars, containing a new phrase—

No. 5.

p sf sf

and a passage for the wind alone. The first part is then repeated, according to the excellent rule laid down by Haydn. In the 'working-out,' which follows the repeat, there is not much to call for remark, except the prevalence of imitative progressions, which would have pleased his master, Albrechtsberger, but which Beethoven soon moderated when left to himself. Of these we may quote one or two, which will be recognised in the course of the working-out—

No. 6. Flute

Viol. 1. *p fp*

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FIRST SYMPHONY.

and this:—

No. 7. Strings



Another, referring to the principal subject (see No. 2), and admirably divided among the wind instruments—

No. 8.

The recapitulation is shortened and shows great differences in the instrumentation. The *Coda* which closes the first movement, after repeating in the tonic the phrase already quoted as No. 5, combines the wind instrument passage with the first subject (No. 2), and goes on for forty bars in all. It is an early and good example of a feature which, though not Beethoven's invention (see, for instance, the *Finale* to Mozart's 'Jupiter' Symphony), was but rarely used by previous writers of Symphonies, and first became a prominent characteristic in his works.

II. The second movement, *Andante cantabile con moto*, which begins as follows—

No. 9. *Andante cantabile con moto.*

is an old and well-known favourite. Here again we have occasionally to remark passages which recall the strict contrapuntal school of Albrechtsberger. On the other hand, there is an elegance and beauty about it far above any school, and worth any amount of elaborate ornamentation; as well as continual little sallies of fun and humour. The beginning of the second part of the movement is a perfect example of this.

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THE ANDANTE.—DRUMS.

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After the last quotation is completed the theme is continued in this elegant style—

No. 10.

Strings

An original passage will be noticed in which the drum has an independent solo part—

No. 11. Drum

&c.

The passage comes over three times, first on G, with the trumpets in octaves, as the pedal bass to the *Coda* of the first section; next on C, at the close of the working-out, immediately before the recapitulation; and again, on C, in the passage analogous to the first occurrence. In order to carry this out Beethoven, probably for the first time in the annals of the orchestra, has tuned his drums, not according to practice in the key of the movement, which being F would require F and C, but in the key of the dominant, C—namely, in C and G. This passage foreshadows his remarkable individual use of the drums and other instruments in his subsequent orchestral works. It is the direct parent of the drum solos in the *Andante* of the Fourth Symphony, the *Finale* of the Fifth Pianoforte Concerto, the opening of the Violin Concerto, &c. The recapitulation itself is prepared for by seven elegant bars of dotted semiquavers in the first violins (*solis*), and two *calls* in the clarinet and bassoon, of charming effect. The dialogue-passages, in short phrases, between the bassoon, oboe, and flute, in the second portion of this beautiful *Andante*, will not escape the listener. They might be the parents of Schubert's performances in this direction; and a lovely echo of them will be found in Brahms's First Symphony. How

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FIRST SYMPHONY.

such short phrases can be so beautiful will always be astonishing. Otto Jahn in his *Mozart* (Transl. i., 925) draws attention to a likeness between the close of this movement and a passage in the corresponding movement of a Pianoforte Concerto of Mozart's in E flat, dated 1777; but I have not been able to compare them.

III. The *Minuet* and *Trio* form the most original portion of the work. And they are original in every sense of the word. In the former, though he entitles it Minuet, Beethoven forsook the spirit of the minuet of his predecessors, increased its speed, broke through its formal and antiquated mould, and out of a mere dance-tune produced a *Scherzo*, which may need increased dimensions, but needs no increase of style or spirit, to become the equal of those great movements which form such remarkable features in his later Symphonies. The change is less obvious because Beethoven has adhered to the plan and measure of the old Minuet and Trio, instead of adopting others, as Mendelssohn did in his *Scherzos*, and he himself in at least one instance, the *Allegretto vivace* of the Sonata in E flat, Op. 31, not to speak of the Trio of the Ninth Symphony, both of which are in 4-4 time. But while listening to this movement we have only to bear in mind the best Minuets of Haydn or Mozart to recognise how great is the change, and to feel that when Beethoven wrote this part of his First Symphony, he 'took a leap into a new *world.' The movement begins as follows—

No. 12. *Allegro molto e vivace.*

The musical score consists of two staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. It contains the first six measures of the piece, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic for the strings, followed by a crescendo (*cres.*) leading to a forte (*f*) dynamic and the instruction *Tutti*. The second staff continues the melody for the next six measures, with dynamics marked as *Str. p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, and *&c.*

* These words are the late Mr. J. W. Davison's, a voluminous and sound commentator on Beethoven.