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March 2004

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On behalf of the PSO's musicians, board, and staff, we thank you from the bottoms of our hearts for your generous support.



Fadlou Shehadi
President, Board of Trustees

FINAL CONCERT OF THE SEASON!

LIVE AT RICHARDSON AUDITORIUM

PRINCETON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

MARK LAYCOCK
MUSIC DIRECTOR



APRIL 25, 2004 LOVE FROM A DISTANCE
Vladimir Ovchinnikov, piano

Saint-Saëns Overture to *La Princesse Jaune*
Rachmaninoff *Piano Concerto No. 2*
Dvorak *Symphony No. 9 "From the New World"*
Galindo *Sones de Mariachi*
Return Engagement!

Last season a sold-out house spontaneously leapt to its feet when Vladimir Ovchinnikov struck the final notes of Rachmaninoff's 3rd Piano Concerto, creating one of the most vividly memorable moments in PSO's history. Ovchinnikov returns, this time with Rachmaninoff's most requested concerto, surrounded by lovelorn diaries from foreign lands: Saint-Saëns' "Japanese Princess" and Dvorak's "New World Symphony," the latter presented on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the composer's death. A little-known jewel by Galindo becomes the celebratory coda to PSO's extraordinary 24th season. *Mr. Ovchinnikov's appearance underwritten by a grant from Bloomberg L.P.*

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2nd Season "Sunday Afternoon with Mozart"

Program

PRINCETON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

SUNDAY, MARCH 14, 2004 4:00 P.M. RICHARDSON AUDITORIUM PRINCETON

SUNDAY, MARCH 28, 2004 2:00 P.M. RICHARD P. MARASCO CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, MONROE TOWNSHIP

MARK LAYCOCK, *Conducting*

Reiko Uchida, *Piano*

HEINICHEN

Concerto in G Major, S.215

- I. Andante e staccato
- II. Vivace
- III. Largo
- IV. Allegro

MOZART

Piano Concerto No.17, K.453

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Allegretto

REIKO UCHIDA

INTERMISSION

BEETHOVEN

Symphony No.7 in A Major, Op.92

- I. Poco sostenuto - Vivace
- II. Allegretto
- III. Presto - Assai meno presto
- IV. Allegro con brio

No audio or video recording or photography permitted.
No one will be admitted during the performance of a piece.

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This program is funded in part by the
New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Dept. of State



About Us

Princeton Symphony Orchestra



MARK LAYCOCK, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Now in his eighteenth season as music director, Mark Laycock has deftly shaped the Princeton Symphony Orchestra into a nationally recognized, mature and acclaimed ensemble that received a Citation of Excellence from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts in 2003. He is well known for his innovative programming and his ability to provide the audience with an understanding and accessibility to the music that remains unique in the concert going experience.

Mr. Laycock was initially trained as a violist under the tutelage of the Curtis String Quartet. In 1979, he won the Leopold Stokowski Memorial Conducting Competition and the opportunity to conduct the Philadelphia Orchestra. He was then twenty-one and the second youngest ever to conduct that orchestra. He carries the distinction of being the only non-Russian invited to appear at the Moscow Autumn Festival, performing at Tchaikovsky Hall in 1988, and has conducted the Philharmonia Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall and the Barbican Centre in London. His guest conducting appearances include multiple reengagements with the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, and a recent debut to great acclaim at the famed Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City. Mark Laycock was also Music Director of Orchestra London Canada from 1995 to 1998 and Associate Conductor of the New Jersey Symphony from 2000 – 2003. He resides in Princeton with his wife and two children.

ABOUT THE PRINCETON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Whether performing the classical masterworks or introducing music by the most innovative contemporary composers, the Princeton Symphony Orchestra is widely regarded as one of the region's finest musical organizations, renowned for its excellence in presenting unusual and challenging programs. The Princeton Symphony Orchestra is greater Princeton's only resident professional orchestra and performs its subscription series in Princeton University's beautiful and historic Richardson Auditorium. Last season PSO performed the American premiere of *Daylight Divine* by Augusta Read Thomas, and in past seasons presented *American Salute* July 4th concerts, annual Holiday Pops concerts, a Waterloo Festival Concert and the Millennial Celebration of Sacred Music, including the Festival of Hymns and the All-Bach New Year's Day program. PSO also produces *BRAVO!*, an educational outreach series with performances in schools, at Richardson Auditorium, and the State Theater in New Brunswick.

Founded in 1980 by the late Portia Sonnenfeld, the Symphony was originally comprised of amateur music lovers in the Princeton area who presented two or three informal concerts each year. The Princeton Symphony Orchestra was restructured as a professional group in 1983 and, under the leadership of Mark Laycock since 1986, has developed into an incredibly versatile ensemble, with the ability to shift styles dramatically and perform a wide variety of orchestral works ranging from the sixteenth century to the present, from classical to jazz. The artists and soloists who have appeared in concert with the PSO include the Louisiana Repertory Jazz Ensemble, the American Boychoir, Leon Bates, John Chancellor, John Cheek, Linda Hohenfeld, Joan LaBarbara, Chantal Juillet, Emily Mann, Bernard Rands, Sharon Sweet, Tania Leon, Joel Quarrington, Anthony Hewitt, Arve Tellefsen, Cynthia Clarey, Vladimir Ovchinnikov, and Representative Rush Holt.

Guest Artists

Princeton Symphony Orchestra



REIKO UCHIDA, *piano*, is recognized as one of the music world's finest talents. A Los Angeles native and the First Prize winner of the Joanna Hodges Piano Competition, Ms. Uchida has appeared as soloist with numerous orchestras, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Symphony Orchestra of the Curtis Institute of Music, the Santa Fe Symphony, and the Greenwich Symphony, among others. She made her New York solo debut at Carnegie's Weill Hall under the auspices of the Abby Whiteside Foundation, and has performed solo and chamber music concerts

throughout the world, including the United States, Japan, France, Italy, Germany, Russia, Finland, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic, in venues including Avery Fisher Hall, Alice Tully Hall, 92nd Street Y, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Kennedy Center, Suntory Hall in Tokyo, and The White House. Her festival appearances include Spoleto, Tanglewood, Santa Fe, and Marlboro.

As a chamber musician, Ms. Uchida was one of the first pianists selected for Chamber Music Society Two, part of Lincoln Center's program for outstanding emerging artists. She has been the recital partner for many distinguished artists including Jennifer Koh, David Shifrin, Jaime Laredo, and Sharon Robinson, with whom she performed the complete works of Beethoven for cello and piano. Ms. Uchida is a member of the Laurel Trio with violinist Anna Lim (who is PSO's co-concertmaster) and cellist Amy Levine, and of the Moebius Ensemble, a group specializing in 20th century music in residence at Columbia University.

Reiko Uchida began studying the piano at the age of four with Dorothy Hwang at the R.D. Colburn School, and made her orchestral debut with the Los Angeles Repertoire Orchestra at the age of nine. As a youngster, she performed on Johnny Carson's Tonight Show and the Emmy Awards. Ms. Uchida holds a Bachelor's degree from Curtis Institute of Music, where she studied with Claude Frank and Leon Fleisher, and a Master's degree from the Mannes College of Music, where her principal teacher was Edward Aldwell. She has also studied with Carl Schachter and Sophia Rosoff. Ms. Uchida currently resides in New York City where she is an associate faculty member at Columbia University.



LAURENCE TAYLOR The stage is set for every PSO subscription series concert with the brilliant and colorful insights of the inimitable Professor Laurence Taylor. A composer and musicologist (as well as PSO violinist), Taylor taught at Columbia University and The College of New Jersey, studied under Nadia Boulanger, and performed under Otto Klemperer, Pierre Boulez and Colin Davis. The program notes he pens for each PSO subscription series concert have been singled out by critics for their clarity, wit, and educational value for all ages.

Johann David Heinichen (1683-1729)

CONCERTO IN G MAJOR, S. 215

A familiar approach to discussing European music in its cultural settings is to explore the great urban centers which were traditionally the focus of important artistic activity. If, for example, one were to talk about Vivaldi, Schubert, Berlioz or Stravinsky, it would be important to reflect upon Venice, Vienna, Paris or Saint Petersburg, the cities which provided the cultural background and stimulus to such creative figures. Unaccountably overlooked in most such accounts is Dresden, a city of extraordinary artistic richness in the early years of the 18th century, with cultural achievements of a brilliance rivaling even those of Venice. Dresden had long been an important musical center, boasting the Staatskapelle, founded in the 1500s, and surviving to this day as Europe's oldest orchestra. Later, in the 1620s, the Saxon court in that city fostered the career of Heinrich Schütz. The glory days of Dresden probably were the years 1700-1730, the highpoint of the Baroque era, when such rulers as Augustus II (the "Strong") and Friedrich Augustus II turned the city into a showcase for wonderful architecture, sculpture and decorative arts, as well as boasting some of the most lavish collections of paintings ever seen, with splendid public galleries and theatres. Proclaimed the "Florence on the Elbe," musically the city soon rivaled even Venice, with a roster of the finest performers and composers working in northern Europe. Although not resident in Dresden, no less a figure than Johann Sebastian Bach (whose life span 1685-1750 was nearly identical to Heinichen's, but twenty years later) had an important relationship with the city, his majestic *B Minor Mass* being dedicated to Friederich Augustus II.

Among the most distinguished members of the Dresden musical establishment during those years was Johann David Heinichen, who took up a position at the court in 1717, remaining there until his death. Heinichen's career reveals many fascinating intersections with that of Johann Sebastian Bach and his contemporaries. Educated at the school of the St. Thomas Church in Leipzig (where Bach was music director from 1723-50), Heinichen went on to study law at the university (as did Georg Philipp Telemann). But music won his attention, and following a period of activity in the concert life in Leipzig, Heinichen traveled to Italy in 1710. Eager to experience first-hand the musical scene in Venice, Heinichen soon won success there with two opera commissions, as well as developing close ties with many of the most important musicians of the day, including Lotti and Vivaldi. It is interesting to note that while in Italy he gave music lessons to the young Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, who a few years later employed Johann Sebastian Bach as his court composer. Heinichen's

activities in Italy brought him to the attention of the Prince-electoral of Saxony, who in 1716 engaged him as Kapellmeister (music director) in Dresden. After a single abortive operatic venture there, the composer devoted himself to a large output of orchestral, instrumental and choral works, developing a highly individual style which was characterized by a mixture of national styles (German, French, Italian), and richly varied instrumental textures which look ahead to the *galant* style that emerged in the 1740s and '50s. For some of his contemporaries Heinichen's most enduring accomplishment was probably his *General-Bass in Composition*, a landmark theoretical treatise published a year before his death, which led some music historians to hail him as the "Rameau of Germany."

Although Heinichen had direct experience with the Venetian *concerto grosso* style during his sojourn in Italy, the *Concerto in G Major* displays a highly original character throughout. Scored for pairs of oboes and flutes, strings and *basso continuo* (harpsichord), the concerto opens with a slow movement, *Andante e staccato*, in which the traditional role of the *concertino* (solo instruments) emerges in occasional solo lines for oboe and violin contrasted with the full sonority of the strings. The *staccato* element is heard in the stiff rhythmic tramp in the bass instruments, leading off with four heavily stressed repeated notes, moving upward through the orchestra. In the first "solo" passage a supple melody in the oboe is unfolded over the unremitting tread of the repeated-note bass-line, with the *basso continuo* supplying the harmonic support. A second "solo" section is given over to the violin, by which point the music has migrated from the home key of G to the related key of E minor, where the tonality remains, as a final extended *tutti* section rounds out the movement. The successive instrumental entries heard in the opening are now reversed, moving downward from oboes and violins into the lower strings. The second movement, *Vivace*, seems at first to be rather more conventional in character, with a springy, jig-like rhythmic opening *ritornello* in G major leading to the first *concertino* section, unexpectedly featuring a pair of flutes. A shorter *ritornello* shifts the tonality to D major, as the oboes reappear with some quirky rhythmic touches. Soon the oboes and flutes are interwoven, and the harmony glides into C major. With a return to the home key of G major the movement is rounded out by a restatement of the opening *ritornello*. The third movement is something of a rarity in an orchestral work: A lyrical, highly Italianate *Largo* movement in G major for a solo violin with the accompaniment of *basso continuo*, while the other performers are silent. The final *Vivace* movement is filled with boisterous sport, the strings and oboes playing with full force. As with the earlier, fast movement, the traditional alternation of full orchestra and solo instruments (oboes and flutes) is brimming with hectic high spirits, forging onward to become a cascade of whirling downward scales in the strings. Halting on an unexpected chromatic chord, Heinichen shifts the meter from three to two, attaching as a coda a sprightly concluding dance.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 17 IN G MAJOR, K. 453

Although the catalogue of Mozart's works covers virtually every musical genre existing in the late 18th century, probably his most unique and incomparable works are in three distinct categories: String quintets, operas, and most of all, piano concertos. When considering the development of the piano concerto over the span of 200 years, from Beethoven to Bartok, the *locus classicus* is indisputably the amazing series of twenty-seven works produced over

Mozart's entire life. To give the conventional total as twenty-seven *concerti* written between 1767 (when the composer was all of eleven years old!) and 1791 (the year of his death), is somewhat misleading. The first four *concerti* are actually arrangements for piano and orchestra of movements from existing solo piano sonatas by a number of reputable composers of the day. In these "apprentice" works the boy composer, doubtless under the watchful eye of his father, Leopold, fashioned quite attractive and viable piano *concerti*, taking as his model the *concerti* of Johann Christian Bach, whose work Mozart came to know while living in London for fifteen months in 1764-65.

Following a successful career in Italy, Johann Sebastian Bach's youngest son, Johann Christian, came to London in the 1760s, where he remained for the rest of his life, composing operas, symphonies and instrumental works. He was to become a key figure in popularizing the little-known *pianoforte*, even taking part in the earliest known public concert of music for the instrument.

During his visit to London the nine year-old Mozart spent much time in the company of the "English Bach," deeply impressed by the older man's expressive style, which would become a powerful influence in shaping his own musical style, as can be seen in a trio of *concertos*, K 107 written in 1772, based on keyboard sonatas by J.C. Bach. (Curiously, these compositions have never been included in the over-all numbering of the Mozart piano *concertos*.) It was with the so-called *Concerto No. 5* (K. 175) that Mozart began his remarkable succession of original *concertos* which, including two for multiple pianos, would total twenty-three works.

Apart from a few instances in which Mozart composed works for favored pupils, most of these *concerti* were written as vehicles for his own appearances as a virtuoso pianist before the Viennese public. During the years of his greatest popularity in Vienna, Mozart would organize subscription concerts ("Academies"), built around a series of new *concerti* which would display his powers both as a performer and creative artist. The production of most of these *concerti* during several years of feverish activity was quite prodigious: *Concerti* Nos. 6-9 appeared within a single year (1776-77), Nos. 11-13 were written in 1782, and no fewer than nine *concerti* (nos. 14-22) in less than 2 years, 1784-85. The *Concerto No. 17 in G Major* (K. 453) belongs to this period of tremendous industry, completed on April 12, 1784, and written for one of his favorite pupils, Barbara von Ployer.

An important factor in understanding Mozart's approach to the *concerto* form can be seen in the basic structural plan followed in the opening movements of all twenty-three of these *concerti*. After an extended orchestral introduction, or *ritornello*, in which most, but not all of the major thematic elements are set out in the tonic key, the soloist appears, proceeding to restate the major thematic elements according to traditional sonata-form practice, with first and second subjects now laid out in contrasting keys. While the basic musical structure is indeed an extended "sonata-form," the manner in which this is manipulated has for many years been seriously misunderstood by music analysts unfamiliar with the practices of Mozart's day.

To begin with, some elements of Baroque tradition lingered on into the late 18th century, affecting the manner in which the solo instrument was presented, as well as aspects of the musical structure itself. As regards "presentation," the soloist usually played along with the

orchestral "introduction" in the manner of old-fashioned *basso continuo*, not making an "entry" at the conclusion of the opening orchestral *tutti*. Nowadays, although some performers follow the 18th century tradition, most soloists politely wait during the opening orchestral section before playing, thus making an "entry." For many years analysts argued that it was only at that point that the sonata-form structure took shape, even claiming that the *concerto* movement actually opened with a "double exposition," one for the orchestra, followed by one for the soloist. Since the opening section never departs from the home key, this is palpably not the case. In Mozart's day the introductory *ritornello* (another link with the Baroque era) comprised most of the musical elements from which the movement was constructed, as well as material that was restated in orchestral *tutti* passages at pivotal points in the overall structure of the movement. As regards formal design in the other movements, the central slow movement could be written in sonata-form, or shaped in a variety of other ways, some more intricate than others. Similarly, the final movement could be treated with great freedom, written in sonata-form, as a *rondo*, even a *minuet*, or, as in today's example, a set of variations.

A half dozen of Mozart's *concertos* lead off with a perky rhythmic figure reminiscent of Austrian military music, sometimes giving the music a bright and a festive spirit. Here the *concerto* sets out in a mood of blithe cheerfulness, the primary musical material a simple, light-footed tune. There is easy-going byplay between the strings and winds, relaxed and without a trace of ceremonial bluster. (The concerto calls for a small orchestra consisting of a single flute, plus pairs of oboes, bassoons, horns and strings; there are no trumpets or drums.) This introductory *ritornello*, firmly rooted in the tonic key, is treated by the composer as the source of nearly all of his thematic elements, many of which will be set out in other tonal areas. But there are some unexpected twists to come, suggesting an approach to the interplay between soloist and orchestra which is perhaps influenced by Mozart's experience as a composer of opera. The soloist takes center stage, and the primary subject is heard very much as before, though with delicate embellishment in the piano part. Choosing to use the element of surprise, Mozart presents a second subject which was not prefigured in the orchestral *ritornello*. Further, after rocking back and forth as if refreshed by the contrasting tonality, the music slides into D minor, the atmosphere darkening somewhat. But then the woodwind "bubbling," heard earlier, returns to take the listener into what seems to be another second subject, which turns out to be the "gently lilting theme" heard in the *ritornello*, here given to the pianist, rounding out the Exposition with suave tranquility. As is his normal practice, Mozart does not "develop" so much as to move through an imaginative sequence of richly-colored modulations, with arcing woodwind patterns heard against quietly billowing *arpeggio* figures in the piano. But just when the composer seems about to be harmonically stranded some distance from the tonic key, a quite new chain of melodic figures comes into view, beginning in C minor (still remote from G major), but soon effortlessly slipping home. The Recapitulation is unusually straight-forward for Mozart, as if the lyrical ease of the basic elements required none of the unexpected twists that are often stock-in-trade in many of his other *concerto* movements. There is, of course, one more "whiff" of E-flat just before the *cadenza*, with a final *ritornello* to act as a *coda*, bringing the movement to a firm if smiling conclusion. (*Cadenzas* written out for Mozart's pupil, Barbara Ployer, survive, and are normally performed with the *concerto*.)

The *Andante* is one of Mozart's most reflective and hushed slow movements, the very embodiment of that quality which the Germans call *innigkeit*. Laid out as a small-scale sonata-form structure in C major, the orchestra leads off an extended introductory section with a meditative five-bar phrase which comes to a pause. The music moves ahead in a series of short phrases passed between the winds, taking on a tinge of unease especially noticeable in the chromatic harmonics which conclude this section. As before, the five-bar phrase is now heard in the piano. But now the pause is abruptly followed by an unexpected plunge into G minor, with wide melodic skips in the piano part which seem to hint at darker expressive meanings. The winds unfold a secondary theme in the dominant key, while the strings, which have been kept in the background, provide a gently rocking accompaniment. A more sustained melodic phrase appears in the winds, with subtle chromatic touches. The expository section is concluded by a third hearing of the opening five-bar phrase. The brief development, commencing in D minor, again inspires Mozart to seemingly drift through a dreamy succession of modulations, eventually arriving in the Antarctic remoteness of G-sharp major! In a mere four bars of harmonic legerdemain the composer succeeds in painlessly returning to the home key of C, where the five-bar phrase is again heard in the piano. Unusually for a slow movement, there is a *cadenza*. In what would appear to be yet another statement of the five-bar phrase (now high in the winds), the harmonies are even more chromatic and bittersweet, as is the final phrase, a recollection of the "tinge of unease" heard earlier. The listener may ponder whether music of such apparent serenity may actually conceal deeper, darker meanings beneath its unruffled surface.

The *concerto* concludes with an *Allegretto* movement, consisting of a set of variations on a chirpy little tune which is a reminder that animal-loving Mozart was especially fond of birds. It is said that he taught his pet starling to whistle this tune! The variation procedure is quite uncomplicated. The theme is in two sections, each repeated, and laid out with a clear-cut, simple harmonic structure. When we reach Variation Four, Mozart initially seems to interject a note of pathos, marked *pianissimo* and written in G minor, with gliding chromatic syncopations. But soon it is clear that this is a mock pathos, "feeling" of a mawkish sort. This is brought home by the arrival of Variation Five, with the orchestra storming away *fortissimo* with contrasting quieter interjections by the piano. Suddenly the orchestra is still, the piano curling downward in a chain of chromatic figurations to pause on a dominant chord. At this point, for the only time in any of his *concertos*, Mozart labels the final section of the movement *Finale*. And let there be no doubt that the composer had in mind the musical traditions of *opera buffa*. The tempo is suddenly hiked up to *presto*, the music is at first marked *pianissimo*, and in the phrases tossed back and forth by winds and strings one can virtually hear the vocal banter in the concluding scene of *Figaro*, Act II. At first all references to the chirpy bird music have vanished, the music racing along in breathless excitement, first in the orchestra alone, then the soloist, with chuckling noises in the bassoons and horns. There are many humorous instrumental comments, more touches of "mock pathos," and even a veritable Rossini-esque *crescendo* whipping up excitement. Finally, just when one wonders if Mozart has forgotten all about the actual theme on which the variations were based, it comes twittering back in the piano, and then passed on to the winds. The *Finale* ends with a closing chirp from the piano, answered by a good-natured declamation in the orchestra.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

SYMPHONY NO. 7 IN A MAJOR, OP. 92

Although one can only be filled with sadness to compare the tragic brevity of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's life (36 years) with the rather longer span allotted Ludwig van Beethoven (56 years), it is surprising to note that both composers created the bulk of their works within remarkably short periods of activity. Mozart wrote all of his mature works in the space of twenty years (1772-1791) while it is incredible to discover that even with a much longer working life, Beethoven's first hundred works with opus numbers were composed over a period of barely fifteen years (roughly 1800-1815), with the final dozen years of his life accounting for only some thirty additional opuses. This startling statistic certainly underscores the fact that Beethoven clearly worked with prodigious energy and dedication. (This is evidenced in the Beethoven sketchbook that is part of the Scheide Library at Princeton University: On two of the pages are drips of wax from red and black candles, prompting the comment of PSO Advisor William H. Scheide, "See? The rest of Vienna was sleeping — Beethoven was *working!*")

This very energy itself, as expressed in the sheer power of the music, probably accounts for the unique hold the composer's musical personality has had on music lovers over two centuries. And *the Seventh Symphony* is the epitome of that power and psychic energy. Indeed, one of the enduring mysteries of all great music, but perhaps especially the great music of Beethoven, is its staying power, its ability to withstand what would otherwise be over-exposure, in spite of repeated battering at the hands of ham-fisted performers, and endless assaults on the composer's true intentions at the hands of misguided enthusiasts of every description. Yet of course, when performed with the single-minded dedication which is always demanded by the music, the *Seventh Symphony* remains as fresh, compelling and memorable as ever.

The *A Major Symphony* was written in 1812, toward the end of Beethoven's fifteen year spate of composing activity. It was not until December 1813, when it had its first performance at a concert undertaken by Maelzel (the inventor of the metronome) for the benefit of the soldiers wounded at the battle of Hanau, where the Austrian and Bavarian troops attempted to cut off Napoleon's retreat from Leipzig. On that occasion the symphony shared the program with a pot-boiler which nowadays is likely to embarrass most true *Beethovenians*, that splashy orchestral pot-pourri, *Wellington's Victory*, which predictably brought the house down. But the Symphony was received with cheers as well, with the second movement, *Allegretto*, greeted with such wild enthusiasm it was immediately encored before moving on to the remainder of the symphony! It is ironic to consider that not long after a period of such success the composer began to produce important works in a more intermittent, even distracted manner, his life becoming increasingly unsettled by matters related to his nephew, Karl. These often became bruising, obsessive legal battles, as well as a battle within Beethoven himself. We can never be sure whether this can be regarded as a terrible drain upon Beethoven's creativity, or perhaps a grave mental trauma from which the composer emerged to write his greatest, most challenging and profound works of his last years.

After the *Fifth Symphony*, the Seventh is perhaps the most popular of the nine, owing most likely to its sheer rhythmic abandon and buoyant high spirits. Indeed, this big, brawling

symphony seems quite inexhaustible, overflowing with boundless rhythmic vitality, always revealing new secrets, delights and quirks.

The first quirk to be noted is the slow introduction to the first movement, marked *poco sostenuto*. Fully four and one-half minutes long, it is nearly as long as some entire first movements composed by Beethoven. An initial impression of the work might be one of gravity and portentousness. But near the final bars of the introduction, with repeated Es passed back and forth between winds and strings, the tempo suddenly springs into a lively *vivace*, and we discover that Beethoven may be playing a joke on us: All that solemn introductory material has been leading to a bright, twittering tune built upon an obsessive “dactylic” rhythm (TUM-da-dum, TUM-da-dum). Of course, this turns out to be another example of Beethoven’s extraordinary capacity for transforming even the most disparate musical raw material into a marvelous final product, a bit like Michelangelo’s celebrated feat in carving his *David* statue from a block of marble rejected by other sculptors as unworkable. If we believed that the composer’s obsessive ways were pushed to the limit in the *Fifth Symphony*, here, in the *Seventh*, he sets a new standard for sheer single-mindedness. Indeed, so pervasive is the hypnotic repetition of the dactylic rhythm that it is possible to lose sight of the solid sonata-form underpinning of the movement. A brief breath of relative quiet leads in a secondary theme which, after straying for a moment into the distant reaches of C major, moves to the proper dominant key, with the insistent dactylic rhythm concluding the exposition. The development swings back to C major, setting off a restless harmonic prowling through related keys, with melodic fragments darting through the winds and strings in imitative counterpoint, the omnipresent rhythm never releasing its grip on the proceedings. So relentless is the propulsive momentum of the music that the movement takes on the character of a monothematic structure, its jig-like rhythmic pattern spun out into ever-expanding waves of sound. The recapitulation proceeds much as before, only to crash into the quite unlikely tonality of A-flat. Beethoven manages to turn his huge musical battleship around, coming to dwell on the dominant pitch of E, with a hushed, grinding *ostinato* pattern in the lower strings carrying the music forward to a final exultant stomp on the tonic key of A major.

Many listeners (and performers) insist upon viewing the second movement as a slow movement, despite its tempo marking as *allegretto*, which is a moderately quick metronome indication, although the controversial subject of Beethoven’s metronome markings has never been satisfactorily resolved. But, strictly speaking, the *Seventh Symphony* (like its little brother, the *Eighth*) is actually a symphony without a traditional slow movement. Naturally, that has not prevented some conductors from presenting the movement as a sort of sluggish funereal procession. From the beginning, the movement was enormously popular with audiences. It was even to have a profound influence upon Franz Schubert, who had his own “obsession” with the long/short-short rhythmic pattern that runs throughout the *Allegretto*. Again we have an example of Beethoven working with curiously “unpromising” raw material, employing a nearly mono-tonal theme in A minor which, after an “attention-getting” opening chord in the winds, is heard in a series of repetitions which increase in volume, enriched by a supple counter-melody, building to an impressive fullness of orchestra tone. A tranquil contrasting episode in A major ensues, with a lyrical melody heard over flowing triplets, filled with expressive warmth. Suddenly the triplets tighten up, and the opening A

minor theme is heard deep in the bass instruments against a pattering background in the strings, the counter-melody gliding along in the winds. The string figuration then is turned into a delicate counter-subject to a fugal development of the “monotonal” theme, expanding in complexity, and soon swelling into a blaring *fortissimo* statement of the main theme. The A major episode returns in an abbreviated form, becoming a coda to the movement. The main theme slips downwards from upper winds to low *pizzicato* strings, the music concluding with the same chord which opened the movement.

In his middle period works Beethoven favored *scherzo* movements with the trio played twice (as in the *Fourth Symphony*), becoming a sort of *rondo* structure (A-B-A-B-A). That is also the case in the *Seventh Symphony*. Here the traditional contrasts between the main parts could not be plainer: A bustling, breathless F major *scherzo* followed by a trance-like trio in D major, the tempo somewhat slower, with long sustained pedal-points, low murmuring horn figures, and a faintly peasant, folk-like atmosphere. As with the *scherzo* of the *Ninth Symphony*, the movement’s coda starts to return to the music of the trio, only to be brusquely shoved out of the way in an impatient conclusion.

The *Finale* is unusually animated, even for Beethoven. Donald Francis Tovey refers to it as “a triumph of Bacchic fury.” As with the first three movements of the symphony, a positively prancing rhythmic energy runs through every bar of this overwhelming movement. A sonata-form structure, with many short, repeated sections, the major elements comprise a whirling first subject over a thudding, pile-driving bass, associated with an arresting fanfare-like passage in the brass, and a nimble, skittish second subject, flitting hither and thither with an endless fund of teasing musical twists. This is all sent storming on its way with Beethoven’s usual thorough development of musical ideas. After the recapitulation of the main elements, the coda is of particularly galvanizing energy. The whirling opening melodic motive is frisbeed about the upper strings while the cellos and basses gradually wind downward to the dominant low E, grinding on that pitch so doggedly that the final triumphant appearance of the main tune, with the horns in full-throated glory, cannot distract them from their assigned purpose. Eventually the entire orchestra joins in the romp and the movement rockets home with wild exultation.

Richard Wagner has been chided for runaway rhapsodic notions about this symphony, but any person of feeling cannot but sympathize with his comments:

“All impetuosity, all longing and raging of the heart here becomes the blissful exuberance of joy, which with Bacchantic omnipotence carries us with it through all the realms of nature, all the streams and seas of life, exulting wherever we are led by the audacious rhythms of this human dance of the spheres. This symphony is the very apotheosis of the dance, it is the dance in its highest being.”

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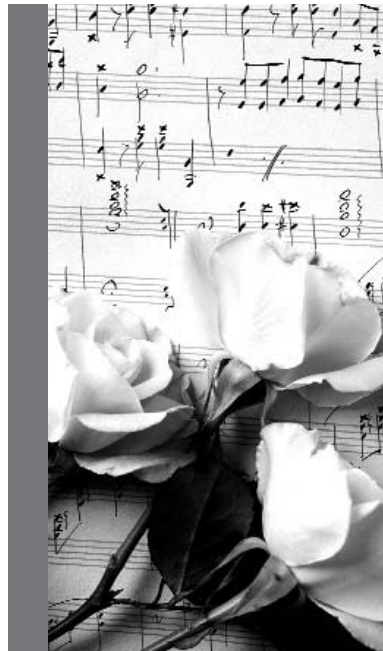
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