

BEETHOVEN

SYMPHONIES 6 AND 7

Symphony No. 6 "Pastoral": Beethoven was a lover of nature who spent a great deal of his time on walks in the country. He frequently left Vienna to work in rural locales. He was, however, not the first composer of his time to depict nature symphonically; for example, Joseph Haydn's oratorio *The Seasons*, premiered in 1802, likewise portrayed the loveliness of nature, peasant dance, a thunderstorm, bird song, and other 'pastoral' imagery. Beethoven did not write another oratorio, but a symphony, and thus escaped from the overly-literal character that a libretto would have imposed. As the composer said, the Sixth Symphony is "more the expression of feeling than painting", and the same point is made in the title he attached to the first movement (*Awakening of cheerful feelings upon arrival in the country*).

The first sketches of this symphony appeared in 1802. The symphony has programmatic titles; Beethoven remarked, "It is left to the listener to find out the situations ... Anyone that has formed any idea of rural life does not need titles to imagine the composer's intentions."

Symphony No. 7: Beethoven began to work on his Symphony No. 7 in A major, Op. 92, in 1811, while he was staying in the Bohemian spa town of Teplice in the hope of improving his health. It was completed in 1812, and was dedicated to Count Moritz von Fries.

The work was premiered in Vienna on December 8, 1813 at a charity concert for soldiers wounded in the Battle of Hanau, with Beethoven himself conducting and double featured with the patriotic Wellington's Victory symphony. The orchestra was led by Beethoven's friend, Ignaz Schuppanzigh, and included some of the finest musicians of the day: violinist Louis Spohr, Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Giacomo Meyerbeer, Antonio Salieri, Anton Romberg, and the Italian double bass virtuoso, Domenico Dragonetti, whom Beethoven himself described as playing "with great fire and expressive power". It is also said that the Italian guitar virtuoso Mauro Giuliani played cello at the premiere. The piece was very well received, and the second movement, the allegretto, had to be enored immediately. Spohr made particular mention of Beethoven's antics on the rostrum ("as a sforzando occurred, he tore his arms with a great vehemence asunder ... at the entrance of a forte he jumped in the air"), and the concert was repeated due to its immense success.

Notes from Wikipedia. Full scores are available for free download at The International Music Score Library Project: <http://imslp.org>

Recording and restoration notes

As with the other recordings in our series of Mengelberg's 1940 Beethoven cycle, these two live symphony performances were captured unusually well by the ARVO engineers on high quality glass acetate discs, and these recordings have responded especially well to Pristine Audio's XR remastering system. I have been able to tackle tonal deficiencies which in the originals manifested themselves in a rather hard, cramped acoustic characteristic of the microphones then in use. Fortunately almost all the frequencies required for true high fidelity had been recorded - the re-equalisation of the XR process merely rearranges them in volume a little to bring a far more natural tone to the orchestra.

From a restoration perspective, large swathes of the recordings were excellent, with just short sections where swish and low frequency bumps had to be eliminated, and the occasional side join tidied up. Both recordings are on a par with anything previously issued in this series with respect to sound quality, with the 7th Symphony perhaps showing the greater improvement over the original source.

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MENDELBERG

CONCERTGEBOUW ORCHESTRA



BEETHOVEN

SYMPHONY No. 6 IN F MAJOR, OP. 68, "PASTORAL"
SYMPHONY No. 7 IN A MAJOR, OP. 92

LIVE AT CONCERTGEBOUW, AMSTERDAM, MAY 1940

Mengelberg conducts Beethoven

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 6 in F major OP. 68, "PASTORAL"

- 1 1st mvt. - Allegro ma non troppo (9:14)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Andante molto mosso (12:31)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Allegro (5:38)
- 4 4th mvt. - Allegro (3:39)
- 5 5th mvt. - Allegretto (8:30)

Recorded live at Royal Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, 14th May 1940

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 7 in A major OP. 92

- 6 1st mvt. - Poco sostenuto - Vivace (12:38)
- 7 2nd mvt. - Allegretto (9:32)
- 8 3rd mvt. - Presto (10:20)
- 9 4th mvt. - Allegro con brio (6:55)

Recorded live at Royal Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, 25th May 1940

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra
conducted by **Willem Mengelberg**

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Transfers from Philips 6597 013
and 6597 014 from box set 6767 003

Cover artwork based on a photograph
of **Willem Mengelberg**

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