NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY
XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

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Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony

ONE-MINUTE NOTES

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Divertimento in D Major, K. 136

This Divertimento is one of three that Mozart wrote on the heels of his first Italian tour. It was inevitable that the sunny Italian temperament would manifest itself in Wolfgang's music, and in some respects these three Divertimenti are the embodiment of that spirit.

K. 136 is really misnamed as a divertimento. Though it is often performed by string orchestra, the score calls for first and second violins, viola, and bass (which meant cello in the 18th century). It finds its musical siblings among Mozart's early string quartets, rather than among the other divertimenti, which normally contain two minuets; this work has none. The first movement is a simple, joyous sonata form. The slow movement is song-like and graceful in its simplicity. A brief introduction ushers in the sonata-rondo finale, whose brief development is the only place where Mozart flirts with imitative writing in this otherwise homophonic work. There are striking similarities in the themes of the first and final movements, yet somehow Mozart makes them sound altogether different.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Clarinet Concerto in A Major, K. 622

Completed only weeks before Mozart's premature death, the Clarinet Concerto was his last concerto. Mozart first encountered the instrument (which was relatively new) in the late 1770s during visits to Mannheim. He was delighted with the clarinet's creamy, sweet timbre and suave presence. By the time he moved to Vienna in 1781, clarinets were becoming more common. Mozart almost certainly met clarinetist Anton Stadler (1753-1812) during his first months in the capital. Stadler was widely regarded as the finest player of his day. He played basset clarinet, an instrument with a range slightly lower than that of the modern clarinet.

The concerto focuses on the soloist's beauty of sound. Mozart tends to limit the orchestral accompaniment of the solo passages to strings, lending a chamber music intimacy to the work. The other woodwinds join for full orchestra passages, which constitute some of Mozart's most sophisticated symphonic writing. Transparent beauty pairs with masterful craftsmanship in this beloved concerto.

Ludwig van Beethoven: Symphony No. 6 in F Major, Op. 68, "Pastoral"

In the 19th century, none of Beethoven's symphonies captured the public imagination more than the "Pastoral." Beethoven was a great nature lover. In 1808 the outskirts of Vienna were indeed pastoral. He

delighted in long walks, even during the occasional thunderstorm that struck during the summer. Because the symphony's five movements bear descriptive titles we know to be the composer's own, it appealed to contemporary listeners.

The limpid and unruffled music of the first movement conforms to normal symphonic structure, with the exception that we do not experience the degree of contrast between first and second themes. F major was the traditional key for pastoral subjects. Beethoven's themes in both outer movements are uncharacteristically melodic. "Awakening of cheerful feelings on arriving in the countryside" leaves us to placid contemplation of nature's unruffled beauty.

"Scene by the brookside" extends the tranquil atmosphere with undulating triplets that suggest the gentle burbling of Beethoven's brook. The bird calls preceding the final three measures are naïve and simple: flute as nightingale, oboe repeating the quail's plaintive cry, and clarinet tooting the unmistakable falling third of the cuckoo.

The "Pastoral's" most original formal innovation is the linking of the final three segments without pause. The connecting thunderstorm provides natural cataclysm, musical drama, and a logical transition to the shepherd's song of thanks with which the symphony closes. Beethoven's orchestration includes some felicitous touches. He withholds trumpet until the scherzo ("Merry assembly of country folk"), because its brassy edge would compromise the uniform serenity of the opening two movements. Full brass underscores the fury of the "Thunderstorm." Punctuation by piccolo and trombones lends cosmic splendor to nature's wrath. Timpani, too, are reserved for the fourth movement, their only appearance in this otherwise tranquil work, so free of Beethovenian drama. England's Donald Francis Tovey famously observed that this symphony 'has the enormous strength of someone who knows how to relax.'

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Divertimento in D Major, K. 136

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Born: January 27, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria
Died: December 5, 1791 in Vienna, Austria
Composed: early 1772
World Premiere: undocumented, but probably in Salzburg in 1772
Duration: 13 minutes
Instrumentation: strings

Composed in 1772, this Divertimento is one of a set of three that Mozart wrote on the heels of his first Italian tour. 16-year-old Wolfgang had created a sensation in Italy, working with the finest Italian singers, performing in various Italian courts, and receiving the Order of the Golden Spur from the Pope. Still more important was his exposure to important Italian composers such as Padre Martini and Niccolo Jommelli. It was inevitable that

the sunny Italian temperament would manifest itself in Wolfgang's music, and in some respects these three Divertimenti are the embodiment of that spirit.

Leopold and his gifted son arrived home in Salzburg in mid-December, 1771 and remained there until October, 1772; this was the longest amount of time Wolfgang had spent at home since his extensive travels commenced almost a decade earlier. Their return coincided with the death of the Prince/Bishop Sigismund von Schrattenburg, whose love of music and influential patronage had been major factors in Wolfgang and his sister Nannerl's early triumphs. His successor, the unsympathetic Archbishop Colloredo, was elected the following March. During this time Wolfgang composed few symphonies and sonatas, spending more time on the lighter serenades, divertimenti, and other pleasing chamber works in the style galant.

K. 136 is really misnamed as a divertimento. Though it is often performed by string orchestra, the score calls for first and second violins, viola, and bass (which designated cello in the 18th century). It finds its musical siblings among Mozart's early string quartets, rather than among the other divertimenti, which normally contain two minuets; this work has none. Mozart scholar Hans Keller calls the three divertimenti K. 136-138 "quartet-symphonies," and the designation is apt, inviting the flexibility of either interpretation. The clarity of texture and the virtuosic character of the first violin part are perhaps better rendered by string quartet.

The music bears the imprint of Mozart's Italian teachers, and also that of Michael Haydn, who favored four-part divertimenti at that time. In all three movements the first violin has most of the main themes, with the second violin occasionally doubling in thirds or imitating. For the most part, the other three instruments function almost exclusively as harmonic accompanists. The first movement is a simple, joyous sonata form. The slow movement is song-like, and quite graceful in its simplicity. A brief introduction ushers in the sonata-rondo finale, whose main theme is distinctly derived from the opening melody of the first movement. The brief development in the Presto is the only place where Mozart flirts with imitative writing in this otherwise homophonic work.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Clarinet Concerto in A Major, K. 622

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Born: January 27, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria
Died: December 5, 1791 in Vienna, Austria
Composed: September–November 1791
World Premiere: undocumented, but probably in Vienna late in 1791
Duration: 25 minutes
Instrumentation: two flutes, two bassoons, two horns, solo clarinet, and strings

Completed only weeks before Mozart's premature death, the Clarinet Concerto was Mozart's last concerto for any instrument. Certainly it is his greatest for winds, on a level with the magnificent mature piano concertos. K. 622 was also the composer's last completed composition except for the Masonic Cantata, K.623, from November 1791. (The Requiem, K. 626, remained unfinished at his death.)

Mozart came of age writing for the court ensemble maintained by the Archbishop of Salzburg, which did not include clarinets. He first discovered the instrument in 1777 and 1778 during visits to Mannheim, a political and cultural center that, in the second half of the 18th century, boasted one of Europe's finest orchestras. Mozart was delighted with the clarinet's creamy, sweet timbre. He was equally impressed by its suave presence as both ensemble and solo instrument. From Mannheim, he wrote to his father Leopold in December 1778, "Ah, if only we [the Salzburg orchestra] had clarinets too! You cannot imagine the glorious effect of a symphony with flutes, oboes, and clarinets."

By the time Wolfgang moved permanently to Vienna in 1781, clarinets were becoming more common. Mozart almost certainly met Anton Stadler (1753-1812) during his first months in the capital. By then, both Anton Stadler and his brother Johann – also a fine clarinetist – were permanent members of the imperial court orchestra as well as the Emperor's Harmonie [wind band]. Anton Stadler was widely regarded as the finest player of his day. He and Mozart were bound not only by music, but also by their involvement in Masonry. Both were members of Vienna's Beneficence Lodge. Stadler played Mozart's Masonic works there regularly; they also played chamber music together in private gatherings. By 1787, Mozart's letters mention Stadler as if he were one of his inner circle.

We have Stadler to thank for Mozart's three chamber works with clarinet: the splendid Quintet for piano and winds, K. 452; the so-called *Kegelstatt* Trio for clarinet, viola and piano, K. 498, and the lovely Quintet for clarinet and strings, K. 581. Stadler was also the intended player for the glorious clarinet *obbligato* part in arias from *La clemenza di Tito*. Stadler's most enduring legacy, however, is surely the magnificent concerto on this program.

The instrument Mozart had in mind was actually the basset clarinet, a type of clarinet that evolved about 1770 with a range slightly lower than that of the modern clarinet. Stadler was a specialist in this lower range, known as *chalumeau*. (The term is still used to describe the lowest register of the clarinet.) When Mozart's concerto was published, the clarinet part was altered in order to facilitate performance on the modern instrument that Mr. Martinez plays.

As one might expect, the concerto focuses on the soloist's beauty of sound. While the full orchestral complement includes flutes, bassoons and horns, Mozart tends to limit the accompaniment of the solo passages to strings, lending a chamber music intimacy to the work. The other woodwinds join for full orchestra passages, which constitute some of Mozart's most sophisticated symphonic writing. There are no provisions for solo cadenzas, although there is ample opportunity for the soloist to display a brilliant technique, particularly in the lively finale. Finally, the selection of A major as the key for this work is significant, for all Mozart's compositions in A share a transparency of texture and sheer loveliness of melody that places them in a special category of their own.

Ludwig van Beethoven: Symphony No. 6 in F Major, Op. 68, "Pastoral"

Ludwig van Beethoven
Born: December 16, 1770 in Bonn, Germany
Died: March 26, 1827 in Vienna, Austria
Composed: 1808
World Premiere: December 22, 1808 in Vienna
Duration: 39 minutes
Instrumentation: woodwinds, horns and trumpets in pairs, and strings; piccolo and trombones are added for the "Storm" movement only

Beethoven's nine symphonies had enormous impact on the development of orchestral literature in the 19th century. Each one represented some aspect of experimentation and break with tradition. Beethoven's exploratory gestures were sometimes less adventuresome in the early works, but not always: the Second Symphony, for example, introduced for the first time the concept of a scherzo in lieu of a minuet. Similarly, the later symphonies tend to conform more with our perception of romantic rather than classic. Yet the Eighth, Beethoven's penultimate symphony, is in many ways his most conservative, and a conscious salute to 18th-century convention.

Signature Work for the Romantic Era
None of his symphonies captured the public imagination more than the "Pastoral" in Beethoven's day. In the decades that followed his death, when Beethoven worship took on near-reverential proportions throughout Europe, the "Pastoral" remained his most popular symphony. Because it has five movements and uniquely incorporates programmatic titles we know to be the composer's own, it appealed to the poetic 19th-century imagination, even spawning a sub-genre of romantic imagery depicting Beethoven composing by a brook. Yet it still retains strong bonds to the Viennese symphonic tradition of Mozart and Haydn. Like the Eighth Symphony, whose tonality of F-major the Sixth shares, it is in many ways a reflective rather than innovative work, with stronger roots in the eighteenth century than have been generally acknowledged. Nevertheless, the "Pastoral" has generally been regarded as the most romantic of Beethoven's orchestral works. It exerted considerable influence on the generation of composers immediately following Beethoven.

Fraternal twins
A major factor in understanding the "Pastoral" Symphony is acquaintance with its companion piece, the Fifth. Beethoven labored on both symphonies in 1807 and 1808. They were premiered on the same concert in December 1808, published together as Opp. 67 and 68 in 1809, and share the same joint dedicatees: Prince Lobkowitz and Count Rasumovsky. Yet two pieces further apart in spirit are difficult to imagine. The Sixth Symphony is almost devoid of the intense drama and battling with Fate that so dominate the Fifth. With the exception of the famous thunderstorm (the fourth movement), the "Pastoral" belies the strife-ridden Beethoven with which we are more familiar. Even a high-strung, emotionally charged personality such as his required its balancing moments, it appears.

Nature Lover and exercise fanatic

Beethoven was a great nature lover. In his day, the outskirts of Vienna were indeed pastoral. His contemporaries, among them his amanuensis Anton Schindler, reported that he delighted in long walks, even during the occasional inevitable thunderstorm that struck during the summer months. He would return from such an excursion invigorated, oblivious to the temporary discomfort and inconvenience of being thoroughly drenched. The mental image of Beethoven thus soaked is a far cry from the scenario that Walt Disney painted for us in *Fantasia* (1940) during the thrilling fourth movement.

Musicians' Corner

The otherwise limpid and unruffled music of the "Pastoral" conforms to normal symphonic structure with the exception that we do not experience the degree of contrast between first and second themes. Schindler confirmed that Beethoven considered F major the only possibly key for such a topic as a "nature" symphony. F major was the traditional key for pastoral subjects. Beethoven's themes in both outer movements are uncharacteristically melodic, showing a more Schubertian side of his personality. Thus, in "Awakening of serene impressions on arriving in the country" we are left to placid contemplation of nature's unruffled beauty, without the tension customarily present in Beethoven's developments.

"Scene by the brookside" succeeds in extending the tranquil atmosphere by means of the undulating triplets in the accompaniment, persuasively suggesting the gentle burbling of Beethoven's brook. The bird calls that precede the final three measures have generated much controversy over the years, but are best heard in their own naïve simplicity, as Beethoven undoubtedly intended them: flute as nightingale, oboe repeating the quail's plaintive cry, and clarinet tooting the unmistakable falling third of the cuckoo.

The most original formal innovation in the symphony is the linking of the final three segments without pause. The connecting thunderstorm provides natural cataclysm, musical drama, and a logical transition to the shepherd's song of thanks with which the symphony closes. Beethoven's orchestration includes some felicitous touches that are subtly rendered by omission rather than commission through much of the symphony. For example, he does not use trumpet until the scherzo ("Jolly gathering of country folk"), doubtless because its brassy edge would compromise the uniform serenity of the opening two movements. His introduction of full brass is all the more effective when they burst forth in the fury of the thunderstorm. Punctuation by piccolo at the high end and trombones at the low end lends a cosmic splendor to nature's wrath. Timpani, too, are reserved for the fourth movement, their only appearance in this otherwise tranquil work, so free of Beethovenian drama.

A MARATHON CONCERT - PREMIERE OF BEETHOVEN'S "PASTORALE"

On the evening of 22 December, 1808, Beethoven gave a much-anticipated benefit concert at Vienna's Theater an der Wien. The music-making lasted a staggering four hours and included choral and solo vocal music as well as orchestral compositions. Its first part opened with the premiere of Beethoven's newest symphony, his sixth, in F major. We know it as the 'Pastoral.'

Next on the program came an aria, '*Ah perfido!*' (later published as Op. 65); the Gloria from Beethoven's Mass in C major; and the Fourth Piano Concerto. Following an interval, the marathon music-making continued with

the Fifth Symphony – also a première – the Sanctus from the C major Mass, and a Piano Fantasia with the composer improvising, probably using material that he subsequently incorporated into the 'Choral Fantasia.' It must have been a very long night, but what a benchmark night for great music!

The combination of secular and sacred vocal music with solo improvisation and orchestral pieces was not unusual in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. An evening of live music customarily included a wide variety of performing forces. This 1808 program has historical significance not only because of Beethoven's titanic stature, but also because it included the premieres of two great symphonies.

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