BEETHOVEN SYMPHONY #5 (1808)
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MUSICAL HISTORY:

➢ Middle Ages and Renaissance.
➢ Romantic (1803-1900): Late Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann, Tchaikovsky, Mahler.
➢ 20th Century: Stravinsky, Copland, Bartok.

BEETHOVEN BIOGRAPHY (1770-1827):

➢ Born and raised in Bonn; father was musician.
➢ Moved to Vienna 1792, studying briefly with Haydn and Salieri.
➢ Early career as a piano virtuoso; compositions receive praise.
➢ 1796 Beginning of hearing loss.
➢ 1802 Heiligenstadt Testament.
➢ Napoleonic Wars 1802-1815. Vienna occupied twice by the French, 1805 & 1809.
➢ 1808 Fifth & Sixth Symphonies.
➢ 1811 Stopped performing or conducting due to hearing loss.
➢ 1815-20 Drop in compositional output; custody battle for nephew.
➢ 1824 Ninth Symphony; Beethoven personally conducted it.
➢ 1827 Died of alcoholic liver disease.

BEETHOVEN’S CAREER (1770-1827):

➢ Viennese Period (1790-1802): Classical works; Symphonies #1-2, Piano Concerti #1-3.
➢ Heroic Period (1803-1815): Romantic works; Symphonies #3-8, Piano Concerti #4-5, Violin Concerto.
➢ Late Period (1815-1827): Symphony #9, Great Fugue.

BEETHOVEN’S COMPOSITIONAL STYLE:

➢ The composer’s need for expression supersedes other concerns, including musical form.
➢ Rhythm assumes thematic importance. “It is astonishing how many of Beethoven’s themes can be recognized by their bare rhythm without quoting any melody at all.” (Tovey)
➢ Thematic unity; large compositions built from small ideas.
HISTORY OF SYMPHONY #5:
- Composed 1804-1808, interrupted for other projects; main work in 1807.
- This was a period of personal turmoil for Beethoven with his worsening hearing loss, and political turmoil for his country with the Napoleonic Wars at the doorsteps of Vienna.
- Beethoven’s “patriotic and anti-Napoleonic sentiments had reached their height at this time.” (Jane Jaffe)
- First performed in Vienna December 22 1808, in a famous 4 hour-plus, all-Beethoven concert that also included Symphony #6 and Piano Concerto #4.

THE “FATE MOTIVE”:
- Beethoven described the famous four notes, with its unique short-short-short-long rhythmic profile, to his friend and biographer Anton Schindler as “Thus Fate knocks at the door.”
- Beethoven left no other programmatic statements regarding Symphony #5.
- In World War II this motive was adopted by the Allies as V in Morse code - symbol of Victory.

CATHARSIS SYMPHONY:
- A symphony that begins in a minor key and ends in major.
- Such symphonies have a dramatic focal point where catharsis is achieved.
- Symphony #5: C minor to C major, is the granddaddy of catharsis symphonies.

BEETHOVEN SYMPHONY #5:
- FIRST MOVEMENT: Allegro con brio. C minor. Sonata Form. 2/4 meter

FIRST MOVEMENT

EXPOSITION:
- Two fate motives in strings and clarinets (C minor), second sequenced down, last note held longer. Forms a mini introduction.
- Note: this is NOT a true theme in the Classical Era sense. It is merely a motive.
- Theme I (C minor), in first version, made entirely of fate motives, sequenced and transformed; ends in an extended open cadence.
- Theme I second version: a single Fate Motive announces it. Fate motives tumble over each other in a quiet, imitative passage. Music rises, and with driving energy, continuing into a brief modulating bridge.
A loud horn call announces Theme II.

NOTE: This horn call is an extension of the Fate Motive by two notes. It will give rise to other themes in the symphony.

Theme II (E-flat major). Finally a “real” melody, lyrical. Derived from the horn call that announced it, repeated thrice, quietly, in different instrument groups, followed by an extension that rises.

Closing music: fast, energetic, syncopated. Begins with music akin to the modulating bridge, ends with emphatic fate motives. Closed cadence and pause.

EXPOSITION REPEAT: ????

DEVELOPMENT:

- Begins with two loud fate motives (F minor), imitative and truncated, in horns and orchestra. Sounds foreboding.
- Theme I developed in different instrument groups in a quiet passage, in imitative polyphony.
- Music gets louder, texture thickens, horn call developed.
- Loud two note ideas.
- Music begins to quiet down, tempo slows, on the two note ideas.
- Music continues to break down, now to single notes, sounding like agonal breathing. “Chords of despair.” (Greenberg)
- Loud orchestral horn call melody fails to revive music.
- Music remains on two notes, quiet and slow.
- Sudden burst of fate motives revives music and leads to a loud, triumphant, double fate motive, like the one that started the movement, but now in full orchestra. Recapitulation has begun.

RECAPITULATION:

- Fortissimo recap of the two fate motives is followed by Theme I, first version. It is more subdued compared to its Exposition version, especially at its rising end.
- Theme I ends in an open cadence leading to a surprise cadenza.
- Oboe cadenza: a mournful oboe sings a pathos-filled song.
- NOTE: This oboe passage is most unusual in a symphony. Its meaning has been subject to varying interpretation. It appears as a lamentation to the breakdown that just occurred. “Death of innocence.” (Greenberg)
- Remainder of Theme I and modulating bridge continue with the same driving energy as in Exposition.
- Horn call now returns in bassoon announcing return of Theme II, both in the unexpected key of C major.
- Closing music, blustery, fast and triumphant proceeds, also in C major.
NOTE: The change of instruments on the horn call was necessitated by the primitive horns of Beethoven’s time. Lacking necessary valves, horns that played E-flat could not then switch to C. Thus, Beethoven had to assign the passage to another instrument.

In reference to this horn problem, the opinionated Sir Donald Tovey writes, “it is really a mistaken reverence for Beethoven which puts up with the comic bassoon instead of horns...there is no reason why his spirit should continue to put up with an unmitigated nuisance.”

NOTE: The unexpected appearance of C major in the Recap foreshadows the overall dramatic arc of the entire symphony.

The end of the Closing section is truncated compared to the Exposition and not conclusive. It leads into the coda uninterrupted.

CODA:

This is essentially a second development section.

Music returns to C minor.

Multiple ff fate motives rise to a question, and echoed by a solo horn. Pause.

Another burst of emphatic, ff, fate motives, followed by the quiet, solo horn motive in orchestra.

Loud passage based on the Exposition horn-call motive leads to a brand new melody, vigorous, march like, rhythmic.

This new melody, derived from the horn-call, is developed. Music still loud, vigorous.

Music leads to two very loud fate motives accompanied by tympani rolls. It leaves the impression of a second Recapitulation.

A brief quiet passage recalls Theme I, contrasting with all the blustery music that preceded it.

NOTE: this quiet interlude harkens back to the oboe cadenza.

Loud concluding chords based on the fate motive.

NOTE: The vigorous music of the coda, essentially a second development, sharply contrasts with the musical near-death of the development.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

The movement features many non-Classical gestures.

The theme itself as a mere motive rather than a full melody, is startlingly stark.

The events of Development are most unusual, Classical developments being brief, non-dramatic affairs, usually providing variations on the themes exposed.

The key areas of the Recapitulation, mostly C major, do not fit the Classical “prescription”.

Classical codas are brief pieces of concluding music. The lengthy second development of Beethoven’s coda is unexpected.
SECOND MOVEMENT

A – B – A’ – B’ – A” – B” – A’’ – B’’ – A’’’ – CODA

- A lyrical Theme I (A flat) stated in violas and cellos. Its dotted rhythms infuse a stately air to the music. Its last phrase echoed in orchestra and extended in winds and strings.
- Theme I has a rising three note motive at its core, with a long-short-short rhythmic signature.
- Theme II is a similar, quiet melody, built on the same motive. Suddenly a loud, triumphant march based on the theme (C major) emerges in full orchestra.
- Quiet, slow, transitional passage repeating three note motives, modulates back to A flat.
- Variation of Theme I (A flat), more embellished, with dotted rhythms smoothed out, the notes twice as fast, in low strings with wind accompaniment. Extensions follow.
- Variation of Theme II, very similar to its initial version, with another loud C major march that follows. Quiet transition.
- Variation of Theme I (A flat), dance like, notes yet faster. Phrasing differs from earlier versions, the extensions now absent. Instead, it is repeated in two more variations, the last as a rhythmic orchestral climax with regular accented beats.
- Slow, quiet, two-note, heartbeat-like transition.
- Variation of Theme II, a quiet, extended woodwind chorale. The C major march that follows the loudest, most dramatic and heroic. Transitional passage, shorter.
- Minor key variation of Theme I (A flat minor), quiet, in winds with pizz. string accompaniment. “The first theme smiling through tears in the minor mode.” (Tovey)
- Variation of Theme I (A flat), ff and dramatic, in full orchestra. Extensions return, quiet and verbatim, as in the original version.
- Variation of Theme I (A flat) begins quietly in bassoon, string accompaniment giving the music a skipping-hopping feeling. Three loud rising gestures introduce the extensions in winds and upper strings, now also in variation.
- Coda begins with quiet Theme I motives (A flat); music then rises, the finale surprisingly vigorous for a slow movement, with loud re-statements of the motives in full orchestra.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

- This is unusual music for a slow movement of the era.
- The three bursts of loud, triumphant C-major marches - the last one in particular - transport the listener to a different world than the one of the slow A-flat music.
- The C major gestures fit with the overall arching narrative of the symphony: as in the first movement recap, Beethoven is presenting a “taste” of C-major, as yet not fully attained.
- The loud A-flat finale gives a sense that C-major may have infused the world of the slow movement with some of its vigor.
THIRD MOVEMENT

SCHERZO:

➢ C-minor is back in “a ghostly affair.” (Steinberg)
➢ “That dream of terror which we technically call the scherzo.” (Tovey)
➢ A: In a quiet, ominous sounding passage low strings present a rising C-minor arpeggio, answered by woodwinds. The passage repeats, slightly longer.
➢ B: Suddenly horns blare out a loud new theme clearly based on the Fate Motive.
➢ A’: Ominous passage returns, stated once.
➢ B’: Horns repeat the Fate Motive based theme louder, slightly longer.
➢ A’’: Ominous low string/wind passage.

TRIO:

➢ Fugue-like music with rhythmic energy in C-major, repeated three times.
➢ Melody presented in three imitative entries, going from low strings to high. The music abruptly ends after these entries; therefore this is not a true fugue,
➢ Fugue-like passage repeated.
➢ A third, extended version of the same passage, rises to an open cadence and pause.
➢ Final, fourth version is quiet, truncated, and fizzles out.

SCHERZO DECAPO & SEGWAY:

➢ Ominous prelude in low strings and winds returns (C-minor), more quietly, stated once. The melody then becomes pizzicato.
➢ SURPRISE! The blaring horn melody (C-minor) is now truncated and very soft (pp), pizz in winds and strings.
➢ “A” & “C” return, also very soft, pizz. Codetta.
➢ Music becomes merely a pedal base (double pedal on G & C), ppp, atop which strings play a very slow, soft version of scherzo theme (C-minor).
➢ This is clearly transitional music and gives the impression that we are in a “murky tunnel of thudding drums and groping bits of melody,” (Steinberg).
➢ Sudden crescendo as we emerge from the tunnel. Loud, triumphant C-major Theme I of Movement Four bursts forth like a sunrise that parts the clouds.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

➢ This movement aroused fear in contemporary audiences.
➢ It is a most unusual third movement for its time.
➢ In particular the trio section, usually lowly instrumented, does not sound like a trio at all. Its main function is to provide yet another C-major contrast to the prevalent C-minor music.
➢ The Decapo, usually a truncated repetition of Scherzo, is also a surprise, soft and whimpering. It reflects “defeat” of C-minor in the overall narrative.
➢ Segways between movements were not the norm until Beethoven used them in this symphony as well as his Sixth Symphony (1808) and Fifth Piano Concerto (1809).
➢ This Segway is the critical “catharsis moment”, the dramatic focal point of the symphony.

FOURTH MOVEMENT

EXPOSITION:
➢ Theme I (C-major) is loud, triumphant, march-like, played in full orchestra that now features trombone, piccolo and contrabassoon for the first time.
➢ NOTE: This is the first appearance of the trombone in symphonic music.
➢ Theme I is a lengthy melody with two ideas, a rising three-note motive and a falling four-note motive. The music is full of varying syncopations and accents infusing it with a rhythmic drive characteristic of Beethoven’s heroic style.
➢ Music continues uninterrupted, fast and loud, with falling four-note ideas leading to another martial theme (C-major) on brass, derived from first movement horn call.
➢ Very brief modulating bridge.
➢ Theme II (G major) is a break from the breathless rhythmic drive. A loud, rising four-note antecedent (derived from the Fate Motive) with a soft falling four-note consequent, in strings. Repeated and extended; music rises and ends with an open cadence. Note a base figure throughout, also derived from the Fate Motive.
➢ Closing Theme (G-major), stated softly in strings, based on a six-note idea, a permutation of the horn call from the first movement. This is sequenced up thrice and answered with a falling phrase.
➢ Closing Theme (G-major) continues with a loud, triumphant, tutti version of the same melody, the music again infused with a rhythmic drive, moving uninterrupted into a modulatory passage and development.

DEVELOPMENT:
➢ Begins with a quiet development of Theme II material in strings and winds.
➢ NOTE: the still present four-note base figure, permutation of the Fate Motive, will gradually rise to the surface.
➢ The base figure erupts loudly in the brass and alternates with Theme II material in strings.
A two-note idea derived from the brass motive is sequenced higher and higher, alternating with lightning-like four-notes in brass and tympani. A very dramatic passage in music that maintains breathless forward momentum. Loud Theme II motives follow.

Music reaches a major climax.

The momentum is suddenly interrupted with quiet ticking in the violins. This is a transitional passage that leads to a surprise.

A quiet variation of the horn melody from the Scherzo (C-minor), in strings and winds.

Another transition, shorter than the segway between movements, re-enacts the dramatic emergence of C-major that began the fourth movement, the sun rising all over again.

Recapitulation has begun. C-minor will not be heard again.

**RECAPITULATION:**

- Theme I returns verbatim, loud and triumphant. "The celebration has begun.” (Greenberg)
- Music maintains rhythmic forward momentum as falling four-note motives in orchestra lead to the return of the martial theme (C-major).
- Theme II returns verbatim, in C-major.
- Closing Theme (C-major) begins quietly as in exposition. The tutti music that follows is louder, more triumphant and extended. It rises to a big climax with five loud, emphatic chords that give the impression that the movement is about to end.

**CODA:**

- Another second development, this time purely focused on C-major glory.
- Quiet passage in strings and winds recalls Theme II; extended and embellished.
- A motive derived from Theme I repeated three times in bassoons, horns and winds.
- Music rises with accompanying upward scales in piccolo.
- Orchestral chords in locomotive-like rhythm getting faster and louder.
- Fast Closing Theme motive repeated eight times. If the music was set to ballet this would be a series of rapid pirouettes.
- Music rushes to loud, excited, fanfare-like statements of main Theme I motive.
- Triumphant finale. Dominant and tonic harmonies repeated for 40 measures, some short, some long. Taken out of context, this could be comic.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS:**

- Having set up a glorious finale through unconventional compositional devices in earlier movements, Beethoven now delivers a fourth movement that more-or-less adheres to the Classical tradition.
- Exceptions: Scherzo material recalled in the Development, and extended Coda.
- Overwhelmingly triumphant movement convincingly affirms the catharsis achieved by the decisive arrival to C-major.
Ludwig Spohr (1784-1859), composer and conductor, a Beethoven contemporary highly regarded in his time, thought the theme of the first movement *scrappy and undignified*, and the whole finale *an orgy of vulgar noise*. But he admitted that the re-appearance of the scherzo in the last movement was *a stroke of genius for which the rest of the work might be forgiven*.

Referring to the scherzo re-appearance Tovey writes, “*this is the one true solution which confirms the truth of the former terror and the security of the present triumph; but no lesser artist could have found it.*”

“The source of Beethoven’s unparalleled energy here is in his writing long sentences and broad paragraphs whose surfaces are articulated with exciting activity.” (Steinberg)