



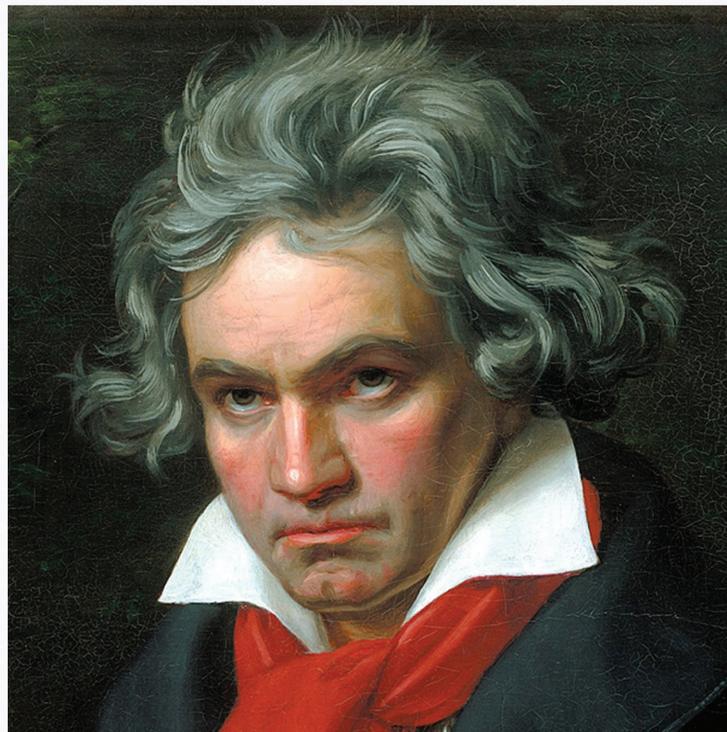
# Classics Concert Insights Lecture

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## BEETHOVEN SYMPHONY #7 (1813)

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*“Perhaps no other work by Beethoven is so intensely animated and driven by the power of rhythm.”* (Kindermann)

## MUSICAL HISTORY:

- Middle ages and Renaissance.
- Baroque (1600 – 1750): Bach, Handel, Vivaldi
- Classical (1750-1803): Haydn, Mozart, Early Beethoven
- Romantic (1803-1900): Late Beethoven, Brahms, Berlioz, Schumann, Tchaikovsky
- Twentieth Century: Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Bartok, Copland

## STAGES OF BEETHOVEN’S CAREER:

- Viennese Period (1792-1802): Classical Style. Symphonies #1-2; Piano Concerti #1-3.
- Heroic Period (1803-1815): Romantic Style. Symphonies #3-8; Piano Concerti #4-5; Violin Concerto
- Late Period (1820-1826): Monumental Works. Symphony #9; Great Fugue.

## BEETHOVEN BIOGRAPHY (1770-1827):

- Born and raised in Bonn; father was musician.
- 1792: Moved to Vienna; briefly studied with Haydn and Salieri.
- Early career as a piano virtuoso.
- 1796: Beginning of hearing loss.
- 1802: Heiligenstadt Testament (a suicide note).
- 1802-1815: Napoleonic Wars. Vienna occupied twice by the French, 1805 & 1809.
- 1808: Fifth & Sixth Symphonies.
- **1813: Seventh Symphony premiere.**
- 1811: Stopped performing or conducting due to hearing loss.
- 1815-20: Drop in compositional output; custody battle for nephew.
- 1824: Ninth Symphony.
- 1827 Died.

## 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.”* (Donald Tovey)
- Thematic unity; large compositions built from small ideas.

## HISTORY OF BEETHOVEN SYMPHONY #7:

- Began composing, summer of 1811, in the spa town of Tiplitz (currently Teplice in the Czech Republic), while recuperating from various ailments.
- The spa where he stayed currently bears Beethoven's name. It was also popular with Wagner, Goethe, Chopin and Liszt.
- Beethoven worked simultaneously on his 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> (as he had done with his 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>).
- Beethoven knew that he had created an exceptional symphony. *"One of my most excellent works."* (Beethoven writing to his publisher Johann Peter Solomon)
- 1811-1812 were a troublesome years in Beethoven's life:
  - Austria, exhausted from the Napoleonic Wars, was in financial crisis.
  - So was Beethoven. He lost two major patrons (Lobkowitz & Kinsky).
  - He was lonely, frustrated with fruitless attempts at relationships with women.
  - 1812 was the year of his Immortal Beloved episode.
  - He remained disconsolate about his worsening hearing loss.
- *"By the time it was finished in June (1812) the final crescendo of the Napoleonic Wars had been launched: the catastrophic invasion of Russia...By the time (of its) first performance, Napoleon's empire was in its last stages of disintegration."* (Downs)
- Dedicated to Empress Elizabeth Aleksiev of Russia, and Count Moritz von Fries, a generous patron.
- Premiere: December 8, 1813, Vienna. Charity concert for soldiers wounded at Hanau
- Beethoven was, *"a clever promoter of his own music and preferred the idea of a public concert to an evening in an aristocratic ballroom."* (Michael Tilson Thomas)
- The program, all Beethoven:
  - Symphony #7.
  - 2 marches played by Mälzel's mechanical trumpeter.
  - *Wellington's Victory*.
- *Wellington's Victory* was the big hit. Nowadays it is considered bombastic and artistically void. The *Allegretto* of the 7<sup>th</sup> was also liked and had to be encored.
- Orchestra conducted by Ignaz Schuppanzigh. It included some of the most famous musicians of the time: Spohr, Hummel, Meyerbeer, Salieri (violin), Romberg (bassoon), Dragonetti (double bass), Giuliani (cello).
- During rehearsals the violin section revolted, declaring some parts unplayable. Beethoven asked them to take the score home and practice overnight, *"a concession unheard of at that time."* (Ledbetter) The next day the rehearsals went well.
- ***"It is an accident of history that the first performances of this radiant symphony...exactly coincided with the celebration of the victory over Napoleon."*** (Kindermann)
- The premiere was a success. The concert had a successful repeat on Dec 12.

## OVERVIEW OF SYMPHONY #7:

- This is not a program symphony. It does not carry any extra-musical meaning.
- Unlike most other Beethoven works, it lacks thematic unity.
- What binds the symphony together is rhythm.
- Lockwood: “*(It is) essentially rhythmic in character. Each movement is permeated by its own well defined, persistent rhythmic cell that shapes the musical substance.*”
- Richard Wagner famously described it as “*the apotheosis of dance.*” This is widely quoted. Do NOT pay much attention to it.
- Beethoven pupil Carl Czerny speculated that the rhythms of the symphony may have been derived from those of ancient Greek poetry.

## MOVEMENT PLAN:

- 1: *Poco Sostenuto*, Introduction; *Vivace*. Sonata Form, A-major.
- 2: *Allegretto*; Slow movement; Sectional A-B-A'-B'; A-minor.
- 3: Scherzo: A-B-A-B-A; *Presto*, F-major; *Trio*, D-major.
- 4: *Allegro vivace*: Sonata Form; A-major.

## MOVEMENT 1:

*Poco Sostenuto* INTRODUCTION: Harmonically ambiguous, 4/4 time

The movement begins with a lengthy Introduction that masquerades as a fake exposition. “*A semi-slow introduction, the largest heard in any symphony until then.*” (Michael Steinberg)

- PART I:
  - A series of four loud orchestral chords with a soft Motive *a* between each.
  - Motive *a*: a simple four note idea in the bass, presented in variations.
  - The variations are progressively more elaborate & thicker in texture.
  - *a*: oboe only.
  - *a'*: clarinet (melody); oboe (ornament).
  - *a''*: horn & flute (melody); oboe & clarinet (ornament).
  - *a'''*: flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn & strings; melody harmonized differently in winds & horn, strings accompany, accenting.
  - “*A gathering of instrumental forces.*” (Robert Greenberg)
  - NOTE: This music sounds like a Theme I complex.
- PART II:
  - Quiet staccato rising scales alternate with Motive *a*.
  - Music gets dramatically louder. Motive *a* in full orchestra, *ff*, alternating with the staccato string scales.
  - Music falls in a *diminuendo* passage.

- NOTE: This music sounds like a modulating bridge.
  - KEY AREAS: Parts I & II are mostly modulatory but do feature the key of A major in the very first orchestral chord and in the loud passage of Part II.
- PART III:
- A fuller melody, *b* (C major), in oboe, is more “theme-like.”
  - Marked *dolce* in the score, *b* is a gentle, lyrical, Mozartian melody.
  - Melody *b* then in strings; another quiet passage.
  - NOTE: This music sounds like a Theme II. .
- PART IV:
- Loud, agitated *ff* passage in which the orchestral chords of Part I alternate with the rising scales of Part II.
- PART V:
- The *dolce*, Theme II-like melody of Part III returns in winds (F major).
  - Strings quietly take up the melody and mount a *crescendo*; winds accompany.
- PART VI:
- Transitional.
  - Begins with a final assertive *ff* orchestral chord.
  - Music then drops to *piano* and the tempo becomes hesitant.
  - Amid a series of fast E notes in oboe and flute, a motive based on *b* is heard twice in clarinet.
  - Now, all that remains is a series of hesitant E notes.
  - The music is clearly anticipatory as the tempo slows.
  - The E notes are repeated 61 times.

#### COMMENTS ON THE INTRODUCTION:

- Beethoven had introductions on his 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> symphonies. That of the 7<sup>th</sup> is, “*the most spacious slow introduction that Beethoven ever wrote.*” (Ledbetter)
- Unlike other Beethoven Introductions, this one does not state any motivic building blocks of the work.
- “*The introduction is in itself a movement of considerable development, containing two fully formed themes.*” (Tovey)
- Tovey is not alone. Many scholars consider the Introduction to be a separate movement.
- “*That introduction, far more than being simply a neutral foyer serving as entry to the house, summarizes the architecture of the entire building. A, C and F are the harmonic poles around which the symphony is built.*” (Ledbetter)
- Comparing this to the slow introductions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> symphonies that began in a “*quiet, almost motionless state,*” Kindermann comments that it, “*by contrast, harbors virtually inexhaustible reserves of rhythmic energy that spill over into...the...four movements.*”

*Vivace*

EXPOSITION: A major; 6/8 time

Rhythmic cells:

- There are two rhythms that pervade the movement.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> is *tat-ta-ra/ tat-ta-ra*.
- It first appears in the transition from the *Poco Sostenuto* to the *Vivace* with E notes from the end of the Introduction that coalesce into this rhythm.
- NOTE that Beethoven achieves the transition via purely rhythmic means.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> is *ta-rat-taa*. This pervades Theme I and will be heard elsewhere.

THEME I: (A major)

- First presented by winds, rustic and dance-like, then gloriously by full orchestra.
- Theme I is made of two phrases: *a* & *b*.
- Phrase *a*: An antecedent-consequent with a *ta-rat-taa - ta-rat-taa* rhythm.
- Phrase *b* is a rising idea in winds, echoed by strings, repeated twice & extended.
- Both the 1<sup>st</sup> version in winds, and 2<sup>nd</sup> in orchestra feature these two phrases, *a* & *b*.
- A brief Modulating Bridge features a persistent syncopated version of *tat-ta-ra* (emphasis on 2<sup>nd</sup> beat) in a *crescendo*. It climaxes and ushers in Theme II.

THEME II: (E major)

- This is not a lyrical theme. It is a complex of diverse sounds and dynamics.
- Its phrases feature variations of *ta-rat-taa* with added beats.
- Phrase *a*: A loud antecedent in 1<sup>st</sup> violins with a *taa-ta-rat-taa* rhythm.
- Phrase *b*: A quiet, spry, dance-like consequent in strings with a *ta-tar-taa-tat-aa* rhythm.
- Phrase *c*: Derived from *b*, this interrupts *b* with brief, *forte* eruptions.
- The theme ends with a series of hammering orchestral chords.
- Transitional music consisting of repeated *ta-rat-taas* quiets to anticipatory fragments.

CLOSING SECTION:

- A slow crescendo hurls a *taa-ta-ra* rhythmic cell toward *ff* Closing Theme.
- NOTE: This *taa-ta-ra* is the reverse of *ta-rat-taa*.
- The slow crescendo is accented with *ta-rat-taas* in winds.
- The Closing Theme (E major) is derived from Theme I & carries a *tat-ta-rat-taa* rhythm.
- Theme I recalled (E major), loud and boisterous. Ends in repeated chords in orchestra with an open cadence.
- An awkward pause breaks the momentum of the music.
- As the listener wonders what's next, the open cadence repeats loudly; then another pause.

## EXPOSITION REPEAT:

- In keeping with Classical Era custom, the score calls for a verbatim repetition of the Exposition. Some conductors obey this, others don't. Depending upon the recording you're listening to, the Exposition repeat may or may not happen.
- Peter Jaffe will definitely NOT take this repeat.

## DEVELOPMENT:

Relatively brief. Mainly concerned with Theme I & the prevalent *tat-ta-ra* rhythm. In five parts.

- PART I:
  - The double open cadences and pauses at the end of Exposition mark the beginning of Development.
  - These hesitant gestures break up the momentum of the music and mark a clear delineation between the sections.
  - Next, quiet *tat-ta-ras* appear in imitative lines, blended with the rising scales of the Introduction (Part II & IV).
  - Music rises in a slow *crescendo* toward the next section.
- PART II:
  - A loud section that pits Theme I Motives *a* & *b* against each other.
  - The passage maintains a strong rhythmic drive with *tat-ta-ras* & *ta-rat-taas*.
  - It ends with open cadence *tat-ta-ras*.
- PART III:
  - Music abruptly quiets down to a delicate woodwind based polyphonic passage, strings maintaining the *tat-ta-ra* rhythm.
  - The passage features, “*a sort of whimsy and lightness not generally associated with Beethoven’s music.*” (Greenberg)
- PART IV:
  - *Crescendo poco a poco* (slow crescendo); music becomes homophonic and mounts a slow *crescendo* on *tat-ta-ras*.
  - The passage begins with clarinet and horn stating persistent *tat-ta-ras*. The full orchestra follows with loud repetitions of this rhythmic cell.
- PART V:
  - A typical heroic Beethovenian passage.
  - Loud, hammering orchestral chords pit repeated *tat-ta-ras* against *ta-rat-tas*.
  - The passage ends with a loud anticipatory *ta-rat-tas*.
  - The pattern switches to loud, emphatic *tat-ta-ras* as Recap dawns.

## RECAPITULATION:

In the Recap, Exposition materials return, but they are reworked.

- Theme I: (A major)
  - A glorious *ff* orchestral return, accented with loud chords.
  - Phrase *b* ends in an open cadence. There is no extension.
  - Music suddenly drops to *piano*, & a quiet, melancholic variation of the theme is stated in oboe, accompanied by other woodwinds.
  - It is in stark contrast to the heroic presentation that preceded it.
- Bridge:
  - Shorter than the Exposition version; accelerating string *crescendo* that climaxes into Theme II.
- Theme II: (A major)
  - Truncated; less than half as long as the Exposition version.
  - Phrase *a* is the same as in Expo. Phrase *b* is brief and lacks Phrase *c* eruptions in its midst.
  - Ends with the same hammering chords and transitional music as in Exposition.
- Closing Section: (A major)
  - Proceeds nearly identical to Exposition except that the final repetition of the open cadence is understated.
  - Quiet, mysterious passage rises and speeds up.
  - Closing Theme is repeated twice, loud, in orchestra.
  - Theme I recalled. Ends in repeated cadential chords and an open cadence.
  - Pause.
  - Open cadence is quietly echoed by orchestra in a single grace note and chord.

## CODA:

- PART I: (A-flat major)
  - Begins quietly with mix of *tat-ta-ras* & *ta-rat-taas* in low strings.
  - The 3-note idea of the Closing Section, in woodwinds, accents the passage.
- PART II:
  - A slow *crescendo* in violins based on a Theme I motive, rises to a climax.
  - This passage is famous, not for the surface melody, but rather for the bassline that accompanies it.
  - The 2-measure bassline in low strings repeats 11 times. It is dissonant to the main melody.

- Michael Tilson Thomas: *“There is a droning, chromatic bass-line...a charming arabesque. It starts gently, becomes more capricious and then, as the listeners drop their guard, it turns quite obsessional.”*
  - This persistent bassline is the subject of a well-known statement, falsely attributed to composer Carl Maria von Weber, who supposedly said that Beethoven was *“ripe for the madhouse.”* It is a quote found in almost all scholarly articles and symphony programs.
  - *“But it provides a splendid build-up of tension before the final climax.”* (Mathews)
- PART III: (A-major)
    - Massive *ff* climax with *tat-ta-ras* & *ta-rat-taas* hammering away in *tutti*.
  - PART IV:
    - Triumphant finale with Motive *a* of Theme I, horns blaring, toward loud concluding chords.

#### COMMENTS ON MOVEMENT 1:

- Beethoven’s use of 6/8 meter for a first movement of a symphony is unusual. Beethoven used this meter mostly in his Rondo Form movements (e.g. 3<sup>rd</sup> movements of concertos).
- Lockwood points out that the movement may have been inspired by Scottish & Irish folk songs that had attracted Beethoven’s interest in those years.
- Michael Tilson Thomas notes that the themes of the Exposition are *“elided over each other,”* without clear distinguishing landmarks between them. *“In other Beethoven symphonies the structure is usually quite clear; the first theme ends here and the second begins here.”* In this Exposition *“the themes are overlapped.”*

#### MOVEMENT 2:

*Allegretto* A-minor, 2/4 time, A – B – A’ – B’ – CODA

A:

- THE “CHORD”:

  - The movement begins with a bleak, unresolved 6/4 chord in winds and horns.
  - *“A problem unresolved, a cry unanswered.”* (Greenberg)
  - The A section then proceeds as a variations procedure.

- Theme A: (A-minor)
  - A quiet, dark hued melody in low strings, presented mostly staccato.
  - The melody has a unique march rhythm.

- “The movement ...features a prominent rhythmic ostinato, which endows it with a processional aura, imposing a strong unifying character that is felt throughout.” (Kindermann)
  - The theme unfolds in phrases:  $a - b - b'$
  - $a$  &  $b$  are *piano*,  $b'$  falls to *pianissimo*, barely audible, accentuating the somber quality of the theme.
- Theme A, Variation 1:
- The melody is identical; but now smoothed to legato.
  - It is in higher register, in second violins.
  - The march rhythm is maintained as an ostinato in first violins.
  - This variation features a hauntingly beautiful counter-melody in violas & cellos. “An elegiac utterance.” (Lockwood)
  - The dynamics are once again piano for Phrases  $a$  &  $b$ , *pianissimo* for  $b'$ .
- Theme A, Variation 2:
- *Crescendo poco a poco*, the tune gradually rises from *piano* to *forte*.
  - The texture thickens, the entire string section playing. Oboe & bassoon added at  $b'$ .
  - The melody is in higher register, played by 1<sup>st</sup> violins. The counter-melody is in 2<sup>nd</sup> violins.
- Theme A, Variation 3:
- *Fortissimo* & *tutti* (in whole orchestra) the theme is presented in a regal, yet tragic climax.
  - “It’s got to be the most goose bump inducing piece ...ever written.” (Joshua Bell)
  - Phrases  $a$  &  $b$  are *ff* in winds & horns; the countermelody in 1<sup>st</sup> violins.
  - Phrase  $b'$  is a *diminuendo* passage, bringing the A section to a quiet end.
  - A brief codetta simultaneously quotes the theme & countermelody.

B:

Suddenly the clouds part and a strikingly brighter mood is struck with the key of A major.  
 “Beautiful and consoling...dream like.” (Lockwood)

The section unfolds in 5 paragraphs made of three melodies:  $a - b - c - c' - b'$ . The march rhythm beats on quietly in the background, maintained by *pizz* basses.

- Melody  $a$ : (A-major)
- Sunny tune, marked *dolce* (play it sweetly), in clarinet & bassoon.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> violins accompany with gentle, rolling triplets.
- Melody  $b$ : (E-major)
- A brief, lyrical clarinet/horn duet.

- The melody features a one octave fall which then rises back.
- NOTE: when this melody returns as *b'*, the fall will be much more dramatic.
- Melody *c*: (A-major)
  - Gentle, lyrical melody in oboe & clarinet. Bassoon & horns accompany.
- Melody *c'*: (A-major)
  - The melody repeats in oboe & clarinet and transitions to *b'*.
- Melody *b'*: (C-major)
  - Lengthier and more elaborate than the earlier *b*.
  - Initially quiet in flute & oboe with soft accents from brass & tympani.
  - Triplets in 1<sup>st</sup> violins and the ever present march beat in *pizz* basses continue.
  - The melody restarts as though it will repeat. Instead it derails into a loud, 5-octave staccato fall in winds, followed by a dramatic continuing downward spiral in strings.
  - The staccato gives the fall a dramatic emphasis.
  - It ends in an open cadence that leads to a return of the A march.

A': (A-minor)

The sunshine disappears with the preceding dramatic fall. The music returns to the abyss of A-minor and the tragic march. The section is entirely reworked and unfolds in three subsections.

- Theme A, Variation 4:
  - The countermelody is the main melody of this variation In winds.
  - This is the most explicit presentation of the countermelody, tender and poignant.
  - The march rhythm beats in *pizz* basses as it did in Section B.
  - Music transitions with a variation of the countermelody.
- Fugato:
  - “*A quiet, ghostly fugue.*” (Greenberg)
  - This is a 4 part fugue based on a Theme A motive that begins in imitative polyphony from high to low strings.
  - A staccato countersubject accompanies.
  - Toward the end, the music becomes homophonic, winds join in, and it mounts a dramatic *crescendo* toward the next subsection.
- Theme A, Variation 5:
  - *A fortissimo*, emphatic statement of Theme A by the orchestra, heavily accented by the march rhythm.
  - The music has changed from poignant to a stormy outcry.
  - The countersubject of the fugue accompanies in winds.

- Music suddenly falls to *piano* with a brief codetta that echoes the last phrase of the theme.

B': (A-major)

Music returns to the sunny side, but only for a brief spell.

- Melody *a*:
  - Melody *a* is recalled in woodwinds. Triplets in 1<sup>st</sup> violins and the steady *pizz* march beat in basses accompany.
  - A transitional passage echoes the end of Melody *a*; music seems to be stalling.
- Sudden March eruptions:
  - Two *ff* eruptions of a march motive (C-major) bring back the tragic mood.
  - Each eruption receives a quiet, dejected reply from strings (A-minor).
  - These eruptions are like a knife that cuts the throat of the music. From hereon, the music disintegrates in a brief, gloomy Coda.

CODA: (A-minor)

Theme A returns, *pianissimo* and fragmented, each fragment assigned to different instrument groups. The movement ends with the same ambiguous chord that started it.

- Phrase *a*:
  - Starts in flute & oboe, continues in oboe & clarinet, then bassoon and horn.
  - Strings provide a broken *pizz* accompaniment.
  - The steady march beat has also broken down.
  - The passage ends in a bare, broken, *pizz* march.
- Phrase *b*:
  - Stated with the same sequence of instrument groups as Phrase *a*.
  - It again ends with the bleak *pizz* string march laid bare.
- Echoes of Phrase *b*:
  - Phrase *b* is echoed in a brief *pp* passage, by winds & horns, then *pizz* strings.
  - Music rises toward the final chord.
- The final chord:
  - The same unresolved 6/4 chord that began the movement returns to end it.
  - The chord is again in winds and horns.
  - Its reappearance after a dejected Coda is a final affirmation of the desolation.
  - Robert Greenberg calls it, "*The chord of bleak isolation.*"
  - "*A final chord Beethoven never used to end any other piece...and with it, this movement leaves by the same portal through which it had entered, as if in a dream.*" (Lockwood)

## COMMENTS ON MOVEMENT 2:

- The movement was received with enthusiasm by its premiere audience and had to be encored, “*a compliment rarely accorded to slow movements.*” (Downs)
- It remained popular afterwards and was frequently performed as a free standing piece of music, separate from the symphony. In 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris it was used as a substitute to the slow movement of Beethoven’s 2<sup>nd</sup> symphony.
- There is some controversy about the tempo of the *Allegretto*. Many conductors slow the tempo, making the movement sound like a dirge. Others object to this practice and recommend adherence to Beethoven’s tempo marking in the score, faster and in keeping with the overall rhythmic energy of the symphony.
- In Section A, the initial presentation of the march, Beethoven employs a simple but very effective variations procedure: the melody remains the same, the texture and dynamics gradually increase, eventually reaching a rousing climax. **This is a narrative that Beethoven will repeat his 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony, 4<sup>th</sup> movement, when he presents the Ode to Joy in exactly the same fashion.**
- “*The second movement...which since its first performance in Vienna has been a favorite of all connoisseurs and amateurs, ...speaks inwardly even to those who have no training in music; by means of its naiveté and a certain secret magic it irresistibly overcomes them – and it is still demanded to be repeated at every performance.*” (A reviewer, 3 years after the premiere)
- “*Its dreamy melancholy seems to refer to some universal and far off sorrow.*” (Sullivan)
- “*I think this movement appeals because it is simple and expressive, like a perfect scene in an opera.*” (Michael Tilson Thomas)
- The movement was perceived as a military march by its original Viennese audiences who had been living with two decades of war, including two French invasions.
- Not everyone liked this movement. Nicholas Slonimsky, a Beethoven contemporary and a fervent critic of the 7<sup>th</sup>, comments on the ambiguous chord that begins and ends the movement: “*Look for instance at the deplorable ending of the Andante. Look and weep!*” (He got the name of the *Allegretto* wrong, perhaps intentionally.)

## MOVEMENT 3

*Presto, Assai meno presto*; F-major/ D-major; 3/4 meter, A – B – A – B – A - CODA

SCHERZO: (F-major)

*Presto*

The first Scherzo is the longest. It features the following phrase structure: *a-a-b-a'-a''-b-a'-a''*.

Phrase *a*:

- This main phrase of the Scherzo is fast and energetic, in full orchestra.
- It is an antecedent-consequent that sounds like clucking chickens.
- The antecedent begins explosively, loud & syncopated, with a *Ta-taa-Ta-taa* rhythm.
- The antecedent then continues soft & staccato with a *Ta-ra-ra-Ta-ra-ra* rhythm. .
- The consequent, highly syncopated, features a mixture of both rhythms. It rises in a *crescendo*.
- NOTE: The dramatically contrasting dynamics within this short phrase. It is exemplary of the entire movement.

Phrase *a* repeat:

- Identical to its precedent.

Phrase *b*:

- Momentum from Phrase *a* continues with a *forte* tympani roll with the *ta-taa-ta-taa* rhythm. It is then echoed by the strings.
- Dynamics fall to *piano*. A motive of Phrase *a* is tossed around in winds, then strings, the music moving to *pianissimo* and slowing as if it will end.
- A sudden *tutti* burst of *ta-taa* attempts to inject energy into the phrase to no avail.
- The *p* to *pp* wind/string passage repeats.
- Another *tutti* burst of *ta-taa* and we move on to Phrase *a'*.

Phrase *a'*:

- This a brief variation based only on the clucking antecedent, stated by the winds.
- It ends with a *crescendo* toward Phrase *a''*.

Phrase *a''*:

- This is the longest and most dramatic variation.
- It begins with a loud (*ff*), triumphant orchestral climax on the antecedent.
- Dynamics suddenly fall to *piano* and winds echo a motive of the melody.

- The consequent begins quietly in strings & winds and continues in a lengthy, somewhat developmental passage to a climax with a new, *taa-ta-ta-ta* rhythm.
- The climax abruptly cuts off with *ta-taa-ta-taas* in tympani and strings, loudly sequenced up to an open cadence.

Phrases *b-a'-a''* repeated:

- This is a literal repetition of these passages.

TRIO: (D-major)

*Assai meno presto* (a little less fast)

Slower, more ceremonial music, full of dotted rhythms. While it begins lowly instrumented as Trios typically do, it prominently features *fortissimo* regal *tutti* passages, unusual for a Trio.

The phrase structure is: *c-c'-d-c''-d-c''-d'*.

Phrase *c*:

- Marked *dolce*, brief antecedent-consequent, derived from Phrase *a* of the Scherzo.
- It is presented quietly by horns and winds.
- The dotted rhythms of the melody and a steady pedal accompaniment in strings gives the music a regal, hunt-like quality.

Phrase *c'*:

- The melody remains the same.
- The music has a thicker texture with more wind instruments participating.

Phrase *d*:

- Again marked *dolce*, this is a quiet, leisurely, pastoral melody in winds.
- Horns maintain a persistent ostinato with the main Phrase *c* motive.
- Strings maintain a pedal accompaniment, giving the music a static quality.
- NOTE: This melody could easily belong to Beethoven's 6<sup>th</sup> (Pastoral) symphony.
- The passage ends with a transitional *crescendo* toward *c''*.

Phrase *c''*:

- The previously quiet, pastoral tune suddenly erupts into a *fortissimo*, *tutti* passage, its dotted rhythms, along with tympani rolls, giving it a regal aura.
- The pedal accompaniment is loud in trombones.
- NOTE: This sort of loud, thick textured music was unusual in its time for a Trio.

Phrases *d* & *c*'' repeat:

- These are literal repetitions.
- They result in not one, but two *ff* eruptions of regal music amid otherwise peaceful, pastoral music.
- The dynamic juxtapositions are dramatic.

Phrase *d*', Transition:

- Coming on the heels of the second regal eruption, this is the softest version of Phrase *d*, going from *p* to *pp*.
- It is thin in texture, the melody in strings, Phrase *a* ostinato in horns. No winds.
- The music is clearly transitional and anticipatory.

SCHERZO II: (F-major)

*Presto*

To the inexperienced listener this may sound identical to the first Scherzo. It isn't. The overall length is less than half the original. The number of phrases is reduced and some are in variation.

Phrase structure: *a-a'-b-a'-a''*.

Phrase *a*:

- This is identical to the original Phrase *a*, allowing a recognizable return of the Scherzo.

Phrase *a'*:

- The melody is the same.
- The dynamics however are different. There are no soft-loud juxtapositions. The entire phrase is *piano*.
- In the last part of the phrase where the melody previously rises to *forte*, the score has a *sempre piano* (always soft) instruction.

Phrase *b*:

- The melody is the same. The dynamics are dramatically different than the earlier version.
- The phrase is not as assertive. It largely proceeds *pianissimo*.
- The tympani roll that started the phrase is stated quietly.
- The two *tutti* bursts that interrupted the earlier version are not there.

Phrase *a''*:

- Starts quietly as before.
- It then rises in a *crescendo* toward Phrase *a''*.

Phrase *a''*:

- As with the first Scherzo, this is the longest, most elaborate, triumphant version, identical to the original..
- Coming on the heels of dynamically understated precedents, the overall effect of this assertive phrase is to create a soft-loud juxtaposition that arches over the second Scherzo.

TRIO II: (D-major)

*Assai meno presto*

- Truncated. Overall Phrase structure: *c-c'-d-c''-d'*. The 2<sup>nd</sup> *d-c''* pair is missing.
- Thus *c''*, the startlingly loud, regal version of Phrase *c* is only heard once.

SCHERZO III: (F-major)

*Presto*

- Yet more truncated. Phrase structure: *a-b-a'-a''*.
- Each phrase is identical to that of the first Scherzo.

CODA:

- Trio Phrase *c* briefly recalled and “*is abruptly dismissed – by five sharp chords of the entire orchestra – as if with a sudden gesture of humorous impatience.*” (Downs)
- Concluding chords.

COMMENTS ON MOVEMENT 3:

- Traditionally the Scherzo is a ternary structure A-B-A.
- Beethoven extended it to match the overall proportions of the symphony.
- Beethoven had previously employed such a 5-part structure in his Symphony #4.
- About the soft middle of Scherzo II, Lockwood comments, “*It is a moment every listener learns to savor, the more so when the full Scherzo comes back for the third time...and the fortissimo crash returns as well.*”
- Regarding the Trio, some liken it to an Austrian Pilgrim’s Hymn.
- “*The trio ...represents the still center of the symphony...Majestic, yet almost static...conveyed by impressive pedal points...that resound through extended passages.*” (Kindermann)
- The tempo with which the Trio should be played is controversial (as that of the *Allegretto*). Some conductors adhere to a “*tradition of lethargic performance quite at variance with Beethoven’s more modest retarding of the tempo from ‘presto’ to ‘assai meno presto.’*” (Mathews)
- “*The Trio will always remain as marvelous as ever, though we may not be able to remember a time when we did not know it by heart.*” (Tovey)

## MOVEMENT 4

*Allegro con brio*

### EXPOSITION:

- Statement of rhythmic signature:
  - The movement begins with a two measure, *ff* orchestral fanfare that repeats an E note with a specific rhythmic signature, *tat-ta-ra-ra*.
  - This rhythm will prevail throughout the movement as a glue that binds it.
  - NOTE: A pair of loud *tat-ta-ra-ra* fanfares will mark the beginning of each section in the movement, Exposition, Development, Recapitulation & Coda.
- THEME I: (A-major)
  - This is a fast, energetic theme, stated loud by full orchestra, and with great forward momentum.
  - Phrases: *a-a-b-b-c-c'*.
  - Phrase *a* is an antecedent-consequent that ends with the *tat-ta-ra-ra*.
  - Phrase *b* is closely related to *a*, and also ends with *tat-ta-ra-ra*.
  - Phrases *c* & *c'* pick up the *tat-ta-ra-ra* and extend it.
  - NOTE: While I dissected the phrases here, I do not advise you to do it while listening to the music. The theme moves with great momentum and should be enjoyed as a whole.
- Modulating Bridge:
  - The Bridge Theme: Derived from Theme I, it has two motives.
  - Motive *a*: A fast 16<sup>th</sup> note rising-falling antecedent.
  - Motive *b*: A slow, full note falling consequent.
  - NOTE: This theme will be developed in a dramatic passage in the Coda.
  - Part I: Bridge Theme repeated 4 times in strings, the last 2 sequenced up.
  - Part II: A series of loud, hammering chords with offbeat accents.
- Theme II: (C# minor/D major)
  - This is a complex tune. At its heart is a soft, heavily syncopated, dance-like melody (C# minor) heard first in strings and later in winds. Interspersed are loud orchestral chords (D major) that accent the tune.
  - Music flows without interruption into the loud Closing Section.
  - NOTE: *Forte* orchestral chords interspersed within delicate music also occurred in Movement 1 Introduction & Scherzo Phrase *b*.
- Closing Section: (D major)
  - Begins with a slow *crescendo* that features Theme I fragments accompanied by a pedal in winds and increasingly loud tympani rolls.
  - NOTE: The Closing Section of Movement 1 also began the same way.

- The *crescendo* climaxes in a fast, *fortissimo* Closing Theme.
- The Closing Theme, in full orchestra, is loud, fast and energetic, and with syncopations & off-beat accents, giving it a dance-like feel.
- The momentum flows straight into the *tat-ta-ra-ra* that began the movement. This puts a jolting break into the momentum. Development has begun.

#### DEVELOPMENT:

Begins with two *tat-ta-ra-ras*. It is in four parts.

- PART I: Theme I derailed.
  - Theme I, Phrase *a*, begins in violins but is cut short. It receives an abrupt, menacing response from low strings.
  - The same pair of phrases repeat, the low string response extended.
  - NOTE: Development begins with an illusion that the Exposition will repeat. The low string responses dispel this notion. It is as if they are derailing an intended repeat of Theme I.
- PART II: Theme I stated, but in the “wrong” key.
  - Another attempt by the orchestra to repeat Theme I is successful.
  - Theme I Phrases *a-a-b-b* re-stated by full orchestra, but in C-major.
  - The listener, fooled that Recap has already begun, expects the theme to continue on with Phrase *c*. Instead the music continues in Development.
- PART III:
  - An extraordinary passage in which a two-note fragment of Theme I is incessantly repeated.
  - The two-note idea is initially loud and fast in winds. Strings provide a syncopated ostinato of repeated *tat-ta-ra-ras*.
  - The two-note idea is then taken through various key areas with dramatic momentum that builds up great tension.
  - The *tat-ta-ra-ra* ostinato persists in the bass.
  - The music finally exhausts itself. The passage ends in a *diminuendo*.
- PART IV:
  - A soft, *pp* passage strongly contrasts with the bombast that preceded it.
  - Quiet *tat-ta-ra-ras* in strings & winds are pitted against Phrase *a* motive in winds.
  - The passage ends in a *crescendo* that slams into two loud orchestral *tat-ta-ra-ras*. Recapitulation has begun.

## RECAPITULATION:

- The Exposition material returns more or less the same, and mostly in A major.
- Two loud *tutti tat-ta-ra-ra* fanfares announce the start of Recap.
- Theme I returns loud and energetic in orchestra, but without Phrase *b*.
- Theme I phrases: *a-a-c-c*.
- Bridge music is the same as in Exposition.
- Theme II: Same as Exposition but with some key area changes. The *forte* eruptions are in A major, while the tune remains in C# minor.
- Closing Section: Same as in Exposition.
- Momentum continues to the double *tat-ta-ra-ras* that announce the Coda.

## CODA:

- PART I:
  - After the two introductory *tat-ta-ra-ra* fanfares, the orchestra loudly repeats the *tat-ta-ra-ras* four times.
- PART II:
  - Loud, lengthy passage develops the Modulating Bridge theme in orchestra.
  - Initially the passage develops the full theme.
  - Later the two motives of the theme are separated. Motive *a* repeats over and over, while Motive *b* descends in the bass.
  - The passage builds up considerable tension that is released with a *crescendo* toward Part III.
- PART III:
  - Phrase *c* erupts *ff* in full orchestra, delivered gloriously, with brass blaring.
  - It is stated twice, the second version extended in strings.
- PART IV:
  - Fast, triumphant, *ff* orchestral statements of a motive from Phrase *c*.
  - Music volume suddenly drops to *piano*, interrupting the momentum.
  - A fast and exciting *crescendo* leads to *fff* re-statements of the motive.
  - NOTE: These two gestures, a dramatic interruption of momentum with swift recovery of energy in a *crescendo*, are known as a Mannheim Cadence and Mannheim Rocket respectively. These and many other dramatic musical gestures were pioneered by a famously virtuosic 18<sup>th</sup> century orchestra in the German town of Mannheim.
  - NOTE: The dynamic marking of *fff* (*fortissisimo*; extremely loud), makes its first appearance in Beethoven with this symphony.
- PART V:
  - Two loud re-statements of the Modulating Bridge Motive *a*.
  - Music rushes headlong, loud and energetic toward two concluding chords.

#### COMMENTS ABOUT MOVEMENT 4:

- *“A triumph of Bacchic fury.”* (Tovey)
- No other symphonic movement of Beethoven, *“so completely overwhelms the listener with incessant forward momentum.”* (Lockwood)
- *“The finale has the highest energy of all...In his improvising days, which were pretty much over by this time, Beethoven would sometimes stupefy people, playing for an hour or more with incredible energy. I think here, he is using the orchestra to create the same effect.”* (Michael Tilson Thomas)
- The constant drive and frequent repetition of the *tat-ta-ra-ras* led composer John Adams to call it – tongue in cheek – *“the first minimalist symphony”*.

#### FINAL COMMENTS:

##### NOT EVERYONE WAS A FAN OF THE 7<sup>TH</sup>:

Slonimsky, 1823: *“It is a composition in which the author has indulged a great deal of disagreeable eccentricity. Often as we now have heard it performed, we cannot yet discover any design in it, neither can we trace any connection to its parts. Altogether it seems to have been intended as an enigma – we had almost said a hoax.”*

Frederick Wieck (Clara Schumann’s father & Robert Schumann’s teacher) after the Leipzig premiere: *“The Symphony – especially the first and last movements – could have been composed only in an unfortunate drunken condition.”*

##### A BRIGHT PLACE IN BEETHOVEN’S LIFE:

*“In this symphony Beethoven seems to have emerged into a region where the spiritual struggle that had obsessed him for years is finally done with... Conflict and anguish, to say nothing of despair, are completely absent from this symphony.”* (Sullivan)

##### THE IRONY OF HISTORY:

Compared to its precedents in Beethoven’s oeuvre, the 7<sup>th</sup> is the least heroic work of his Heroic Period. Yet, because of the coincidence of its premiere with the 1812 defeat of Napoleon, it was interpreted in a heroic context.

*“The symphony was to outlast all the empires involved in that spectacular cataclysm.”* (Downs)

### COMPARISON OF THE 7<sup>TH</sup> VERSUS 5<sup>TH</sup> (Lockwood):

The 5<sup>th</sup> is another symphony with a famously rhythmic figure: *ta-ta-ta-taa*. The 7<sup>th</sup> resembles the 5<sup>th</sup> in that rhythmic action is of essence to both. Yet, it “*does not traverse a quasi-narrative journey from minor to major.*” Nor does it have a cyclic return of material from one movement to another.

“*The unity of the 7<sup>th</sup> does not stem from the reappearance of a single essential rhythmic figure through the span of the symphony, as in the 5<sup>th</sup>.*” Instead, it stems from “*the rhythmic consistency that governs each movement and the vitality, the élan that drives the whole work.*”

### A MEANINGLESS SYMPHONY:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century countless critics and scholars attempted to assign a meaning to the 7<sup>th</sup>.

In the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Donald Tovey defined our contemporary understanding of the work: “*The symphony is so overwhelmingly convincing and so obviously untranslatable, that it has for many years been treated quite reasonably as a piece of music, instead of an excuse for discussing the French Revolution.*”