

Classical Music Appreciation—Intermediate

Session 4 notes

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27-Feb-2007

Tonight's agenda

Historical Periods, Round 2

Beethoven, Symphony No 6 [music on the Classical/Romantic cusp]

Berlioz, Symphonie Fantastique [Romantic period]

Instrumentation, Round 2

Vaughan Williams, Toward the Unknown Region [chorus and orchestra]

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) (Germany) Symphony No. 6 (Pastoral) *Classical period (or Romantic?)*



Historical context

At the age of 22 Beethoven had left Bonn, his home town, for Vienna in order to study with Joseph Haydn. By 1800 his career as concert pianist and composer had blossomed, and he had completed the six string quartets of op. 18 as well as the first symphony. It was around this time that the onset of deafness—the result of a bout with diphtheria around 1797—became a problem. Becoming increasingly desperate in his search for a cure, he spent six months in the quiet village of Heiligenstadt. It seems that during this time he had come to terms with his lot in life, resolving anew to devote himself to his art while allowing fate to take its course.

And devote himself to his art he did—with a vengeance. The period 1802 to 1810 was the most productive of Beethoven's composing career. It was from this period that the sixth symphony, the Pastoral, emerged. The symphony is dedicated to two of Beethoven's wealthy patrons, Prince Lobkowitz and Count Andreas Rasoumowsky. It was given its first performance, in Vienna, on December 22, 1808, with Beethoven conducting.

The music

It appears that Beethoven may have borrowed the programmatic ideas for this symphony from one Justin Heinrich Knecht, a now-forgotten composer who wrote a five-movement

symphony he called *A Musical Portrait of Nature*. It is probably not a coincidence that an advertisement for this work appeared on the same page of a newspaper as an advertisement for some of Beethoven's own works. Not only does Beethoven's 6th have five movements (a most unusual—for the time—deviation from the usual four), but his movements' titles are eerily similar to those of Knecht. Be that as it may, the key to successful plagiarism is to be more famous than your source, and Beethoven was apparently never questioned. In any event, the music itself is pure Beethoven, even if he did pilfer the idea for the framework.

The Pastoral symphony evokes the countryside. Such explicit evocation of stories, scenes, and moods is commonly found in Romantic-period music. Such external motivation behind the music is regarded by some as an essential qualification for classification as "Romantic."

The titles Beethoven (or Knecht, as the case may be) gave to the five movements are:

1. *Awakening of joyous feelings upon arrival in the country*
2. *By the brook*
3. *Happy gathering of country folk*
4. *Thunderstorm*
5. *Shepherd's song; cheerful and thankful feelings after the storm.*

The argument over whether Beethoven belongs in the Classical period or the Romantic will probably go on forever. Most people, however, are content to regard him as a bridge between the two periods.

Here is a map of the symphony. Timings relate to the recording by Andre Previn with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, 7747-2-RC.

Theme chart

First Movement	
First subject	
Second subject	
Second Movement	
First subject A	
1 st idea A1	
2 nd idea A2	

Second subject B	
1 st idea B1	
2 nd idea B2	
Coda	
Bird calls (Nightingale Quail Cuckoo)	
Fourth Movement	
first theme	
second theme	
third theme	
Fifth Movement	
A	
B	
C	

First movement—Allegro non troppo
Awakening of joyous feelings upon arrival in the country
Sonata Form

<i>bar</i>	<i>time</i>	<i>structure</i>	<i>remarks</i>
1	0:00	exposition first theme (F maj)	
67	1:20	second theme (C major)	
138	2:44	exposition repeats	
139	5:20	development	
151	5:38		notice the triplets in the bass against the duplets in the treble
279	8:01	recapitulation first theme (F maj)	the three-against-two idea from the development continues into the recapitulation
346	9:17	second theme (F major)	
414	10:37	coda	

Second movement—Andante molto mosso
By the brook
Sonata Form

1	0:00	exposition A first subject 1 st idea A1 (B flat maj)	notice the gently moving accompaniment, suggesting the flow of the brook. After four bars, the accompaniment doubles in pace, and maintains that pace in an almost constant underpinning of the rest of the movement
13	1:12	2 nd idea A2 (B flat maj)	
21	2:03	A1	
30	2:51	B second subject 1 st idea B1 (F major)	
33	3:09	2 nd idea B2 (F major)	
47	4:32	codetta: A2 (F major)	
54	5:12	development	
91	8:46	recapitulation: A1 (B flat major)	
102	9:50	B1 (B flat major)	
105	10:08	B2 (B flat major)	
119	11:29	codetta: A2 (B flat major)	
124	12:00	coda	
129	12:31	bird calls	The flute imitates the nightingale, the oboe the quail, and the clarinet the cuckoo.

Third Movement—Allegro
Happy gathering of country folk
Scherzo and Trio

The third movement is a scherzo and trio. The pace and mood of the trio is similar to that of the scherzo, but is differentiated through rhythm, being in duple time against the scherzo's triple. Beethoven deviates from established convention by repeating the trio as well as the scherzo. To round things off, he presents a coda constructed from a very abbreviated version of the scherzo, further compressed by the furious presto that takes flight 30 bars into the coda..

bar	time	
1	0:00	scherzo. The key is ambiguous. The music starts in F major but skips around D major, D minor, and F
165	1:49	trio (very short). The trio begins in B flat, and is in duple time, in contrast to the triple time of the scherzo. It works its way to end on a C major chord in preparation for the scherzo repeat.
204	2:26	scherzo and trio repeat
205	4:54	coda—back to triple time
235	5:15	presto
264	5:32	without a break we go straight into...

Fourth Movement—Allegro
Thunderstorm

Some commentators have remarked that the fourth movement isn't really a movement at all, being more of an extended introduction to the final movement. It's a view that I can endorse, for I cannot construct a meaningful analysis beyond "it's a mood piece that freely develops three discernible themes." And I haven't been able to find an analysis by anyone else that (to me anyway) adds any additional useful insight.

The music begins in D flat major, but the key quickly becomes ambiguous as the music spends most of the movement in continuous modulation. I find it at least plausible that Beethoven was deliberately using this tonal instability to portray the meteorological instability of the thunderstorm.

bar	time	
1	0:00	After some ominous rumbling from the bass strings, the violins play a busy first theme suggesting anxiety.
21	0:26	The rumbling in cellos and basses becomes much more menacing, suggesting thunder.
35	0:49	The second theme makes its first appearance.
78	1:47	The third theme arrives.
107	2:28	The storm reaches its climax
118	2:46	The storm begins to subside

154	3:42	The flute announces the end of the storm and the transition to new tranquility.
155	3:45	Again we go straight into the next movement without a break...

Fifth Movement—Allegro
Shepherd's song; cheerful and thankful feelings after the storm

Sonata-rondo form

bar	time	
1	0:00	introduction , giving strong hints of the main theme to come
9	0:17	exposition A violins sing the beautiful sunny main theme (F major)
32	1:07	B cellos and violas introduce the second subject. It begins in F major but modulates to C major, with even a snatch of G major
54	1:58	codetta theme (A) returns, arriving from theme (B) in C major, quickly working its way back to F major and thus forming a bridge to...
64	2:22	development A theme, which returns in the home key to kick off the development
80	2:59	C episode begins in B flat major, modulating into...
85	3:34	...theme (A) in D flat major, quickly modulating to C major, where the development spends most of the rest of its life before modulating back to...
117	4:23	recapitulation AF major for the reappearance of theme (A) in the home key. Theme (A) appears here in variation as flowing 16 th notes instead of in its original straightforward lyrical melody.
140	5:12	B theme returns, in F major, and this time around it stays there.
162	6:01	codetta based on theme A, wraps up the recapitulation
177	6:36	coda here begins a very extended coda, built entirely from theme (A). Beginning in the home key of F major, it wanders briefly into C major and G major, but mainly stays close to home.
252	10:07	After a delicate 4 bars over which the horn sings the (A) theme one last time, the symphony ends with what sounds almost like a sigh of satisfaction.

Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) (France) *Symphonie Fantastique*

Romantic period



Historical context

At age 17, Berlioz, the son of a doctor, left his home town of La Côte-St-André for Paris to pursue a medical career. However, he found music and literature much more interesting than medicine, which he quickly abandoned. In pursuit of a career as a composer, he attended the Paris Conservatoire from 1826 to 1830. Supporting himself at first by giving guitar lessons and singing in a theatre chorus, he later graduated to journalism and conducting. Highly regarded as a music critic, Berlioz derived the bulk of his income from journalism, though ironically he declared a profound distaste for that line of work.

Berlioz became enamored of opera, especially the French tradition in the mould of Gluck and Spontini¹. He was also introduced to Shakespeare's plays. After Gluck, Berlioz discovered Weber and Beethoven. All of these interests and passions influenced the development of his music. His first substantial composition was a Mass (1824), which he later disowned. It was rediscovered in 1992 and found to foreshadow sections of his mature works². The Mass was followed by the opera *Les Francs Juges*, which although unsuccessful, largely lost, and almost forgotten as an actual opera, is survived by its very fine overture.

Berlioz composed the *Fantastic Symphony* in 1830. His admiration for Beethoven's 6th symphony, the *Pastoral*, was one of the influences behind this symphony, principally through its frank programmatic underpinnings, but also evident in its 5-movement design.

The *Fantastic Symphony* as a whole is transparently autobiographical, and was motivated by Berlioz' infatuation with the Irish Shakespearean actress Harriett (Henrietta)

¹ Neither of whom were themselves French. Go figure.

² In other words, Berlioz recycled and repurposed good musical ideas, in common with many other composers.

Smithson, whom Berlioz had seen perform in 1827. Smithson rebuffed Berlioz' advances, plunging him into despair³.

Leaving nothing to the imagination, Berlioz provided an explicit program for this symphony, which he instructed be distributed to the audience whenever it was performed. Here it is⁴:

A young musician of extraordinary sensibility and overflowing imagination in a paroxysm of despair caused by unhappy love has poisoned himself with opium. The drug is too feeble to kill him, but plunges him into a heavy sleep accompanied by the weirdest visions. His sensations, emotions and memories, as they pass through his diseased brain, are transformed into musical images and ideas. The beloved one herself becomes to him a melody, a recurrent theme (*idée fixe*) which haunts him everywhere.

(1.)—REVERIES, PASSIONS: First he remembers that weariness of the soul, that indefinable longing, that somber melancholia and those objectless joys which he experienced before meeting his beloved. Then, the volcanic love with which she at once inspired him, his delirious suffering, his return to tenderness, his religious consolations,

(2.)—A Ball: At a ball, in the midst of a noisy, brilliant fete, he finds the loved one again.

(3.)—IN THE COUNTRY: On a summer's evening in the country he hears two herders who call each other with their shepherds' melodies. The pastoral duet in such surroundings, the gentle rustle of the trees softly swayed by the wind, some reasons for hope that had lately come to his knowledge, all unite to fill his heart with a long-missed tranquility, and lend brighter colors to his fancies. But SHE appears anew, spasms contract his heart, dark premonitions appear to him. What, if she proved faithless. One of the shepherds resumes his rustic tune, the other does not follow. The sun sets—far away there is rumbling thunder—, solitude,—silence.

(4.)—March to the SCAFFOLD: He dreams he has killed his loved one, that he is condemned to death and led to the execution. A march, now gloomy and ferocious, now solemn and brilliant accompanies the procession. Noisy outbursts are followed without pause by the heavy sound of measured footsteps. Finally, the *idée fixe*, like a last thought of love appears for a moment, to be cut off by the fall of the axe.

³ There was a somewhat happy—yet at the same time very sad—ending to the Berlioz-Smithson relationship, which we won't go into here. Complementary coverage (nobody tells it all, and some of the accounts are contradictory) is at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hector_Berlioz, <http://members.aol.com/fausttiger/fantastique.html>, and <http://library.thinkquest.org/22673/berlioz.html>, and no doubt many other places.

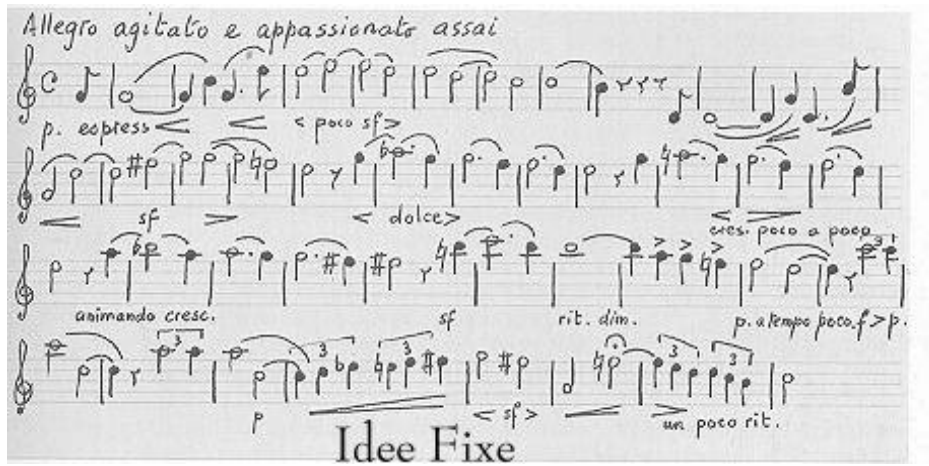
⁴ I can't resist pointing out that the idiosyncratic capitalization and punctuation are those of Berlioz' (or the translator) and not (intentionally, anyway) mine.

(5.)—Dream of a WITCHES SABBATH: He sees himself at a witches' sabbath, in the midst of a hideous gathering of spectres, sorcerers and monsters of every kind who have come together for his funeral. Strange sounds, groans, outbursts of laughter; distant shouts which seem to be answered by more shouts. The beloved melody appears once more, but has now lost its noble and shy character; it is now no more than a vulgar dance tune, trivial and grotesque: it is she who is coming to the sabbath.. Roar of delight at her arrival... She joins the diabolical orgy... The funeral knell tolls, burlesque parody of the Dies Irae,** the dance of the witches. The dance of the witches combined with the Dies Irae.

**A hymn sung in funeral ceremonies in the Catholic Church. [HB⁵]

The music

Idée fixe theme



Timings are with reference to the EMI recording D 154244, Ricardo Muti conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra.

⁵ HB is of course Hector Berlioz. So this footnote (the one you are reading now) is a footnote that explains a footnote. Are you sufficiently confused?

First Movement
Reveries, Passions

Sonata form (loosely speaking)

<i>ref no</i>	<i>time</i>	<i>structure</i>	<i>remarks</i>
[start]	0:00	introduction	a slow and lengthy introduction, beginning in C minor. Very slow for the most part, but briefly punctuated by a frenzied accelerating passage. Thematic material introduced in this prelude appears to play no further role in the symphony.
[5]+4	5:33	exposition first (and only!) theme (C maj)	this theme is the <i>idée fixe</i> that we'll hear over and over, in various different guises, throughout the symphony
[5]+4	7:00	exposition repeats	
[8]+18	8:26	development	this development section is very brief
[11]	9:22	recapitulation first theme (G maj)	the recapitulation abandons sonata-form convention and presents the theme (in its entirety) in the dominant key. In this recapitulation, Berlioz directs "poco stringendo" (a little gradual acceleration), which gives the theme a feeling of anxiety, in contrast to the serene mood of the exposition.
[15]	10:55	codetta	a slower section closes out the recapitulation section
[16]	11:44	coda	here appears to be the beginning of a very extended coda (more of Beethoven's influence?). An alternative view of this passage would be as an additional development section, but from here to the end the music sounds very much like it's trying to reach a conclusion. A true development section, by contrast, leads the listener to expect not closure but a restatement of themes.
[end]-23	14:22	the first eight bars of the <i>idée fixe</i> theme—in home key, no less	well, what do you know? We got a vestigial recapitulation after all, right at the tail end of the movement.

Second Movement**A Ball**

The second movement's structure is quite simple. We'll give it some shape by mapping it onto ABA form, which it fits fairly well.

<i>ref no</i>	<i>time</i>	<i>structure</i>	<i>remarks</i>
[start]	0:00	introduction	
[22]+3	0:36	A the dance theme (A maj)	what dance? Must be a Viennese Waltz, and a fast one at that. This recording faithfully follows Berlioz' metronome marking of 60 bars per minute.
[26]+5	2:01	B the idée fixe (F maj)	in an outrageously distant key, and appropriately modified to fit the tempo and mood of the dance. Accompanied by figures closely derived from the dance theme.
[27]	2:41	bridge	a link back to A major and the dance theme
[28]+2	2:58	A dance theme (A maj)	
[31]	3:56	coda	based mostly on the dance theme, but...
[35]	5:03	B (A min)	...interrupted one more time by the appearance of the loved one. The key is a little closer to home this time.

***Third Movement
In the Country***

This movement owes a lot to Beethoven's 6th. It has close similarities to that symphony's *By the brook* movement, and also depicts a storm in a way similar to the Pastoral's fourth movement. It is constructed on a very free design that frankly defies attempts to pigeonhole it into any of the "standard" patterns.

<i>ref no</i>	<i>time</i>	<i>structure</i>	<i>remarks</i>
[start]	0:00	introduction	the music frankly evokes the countryside as two shepherds (oboe and English horn) call to each other. Note the similarity of this figure with that of the bird calls at the end of Beethoven's 6 th 's second movement.
[37]	1:57	A the main theme of this movement (F maj)	Berlioz reworked this theme from his abandoned Mass of 1824
[38]+4	4:10	bridge	provides some contrast and moves to C major for a reprise of the theme
[39]+5	5:39	A a reprise in C major	this time in the bass instruments
[40]+2	6:20	bridge	to take us to...
[41]	6:56	B (B flat major)	...an ominous theme depicting the "dark premonitions" that Berlioz talks about in his notes
[41]+3	7:09	SHE appears, and stays around for quite a few bars	the idée fixe theme again, played by flutes and oboes
[42]+10	8:39	C A somewhat new idea that combines variations on the main theme (A)	the mood of rustic calm returns briefly...
[44]	9:59	accompaniment becomes busy and somewhat anxious	...although the calm mood quickly becomes agitated by the busy accompaniment, itself a variation on the main theme
[47]	11:36	coda	
[47]	11:36	SHE appears again, accompanied by theme A	
[47]+10	12:27	here SHE is again	
[49]	13:47	a shepherd calls again, reprising the introduction.	but this time no-one calls back
[49]+2	13:57	timpani imitate the roll of distant thunder	

Fourth Movement
March to the Scaffold

Berlioz constructed this movement, as he did the preceding one, from repurposed earlier work. This time the failed opera *Les Francs Juges* was the donor. This movement is constructed loosely along the ABA pattern, with much repetition of the thematic material in minimally altered form.

<i>ref no</i>	<i>time</i>	<i>structure</i>	<i>remarks</i>
[start]	0:00	introduction	ominous-sounding timpani dominate the introduction
[50]+2	0:25	A the first theme (G minor)	
[52]	1:17	bassoon countertheme above inverted A	all 4 bassoons weigh in with the countermelody. It stands out well against pizzicato strings
[53]	1:38	B the second theme (B flat major)	key has moved to the relative major. Woodwinds and brass deliver this theme in strident fashion while the strings take a rest
[53]+15	2:01	repeat from the beginning	this recording takes the repeat, though many conductors (and even some editions of the score) opt to leave it out (for shame!)
[53]+16	4:03	a brief (11 bar) interlude provides some contrast before...	
[54]	4:20	... B comes again, this time with almost everyone contributing with full force	
[55]	4:43	another interlude, starting as the first but with an extension, leading back again to...	
[56]+9	5:11	A which will be theme A 's final flourish. We hear only a four-bar snatch, followed by...	
[57]	5:22	... coda , which kicks off, appropriately enough, with a four-bar inversion of A	the coda is constructed chiefly from atomic ideas of the B theme
[59]+1	6:10	the <i>idée fixe</i> briefly appears for the first and last time in this movement, depicting our hero's last thoughts of his love	
[59]+6	6:19	a brutal G minor chord represents the fall of the guillotine; then the gory portrayal, by	

		two pizzicato notes from strings, of our hero's head falling to the floor	
[59]+7	6:23	now that our hero is dead, the key changes abruptly to the more-optimistic G major.	How sick is that? These last 8 bars of solid G-major chord seem to portray the jubilant celebration of the crowd at our hero's death. (Yeah, okay, he <i>did</i> kill his beloved, but still.....)

Fifth Movement

Dream of a Witches' Sabbath

Even more so than the third movement, the fifth movement is very free in form and conforms to no recognized design pattern.

<i>ref no</i>	<i>time</i>	<i>structure</i>	<i>remarks</i>
[start]	0:00	introduction	ominous and menacing, this rather lengthy introduction sets the mood for this macabre last movement
[62]+4	1:31	the <i>idée fixe</i> , grotesquely transformed (clarinet)	SHE arrives at this hideous gathering
[62]+12	1:40	a frantic full-orchestra outburst	the unsavory mob celebrates the beloved's arrival
[63]	1:51	an extended grotesque version of the <i>idée fixe</i> as SHE joins in with the ugly revelry (E flat clarinet, piccolo)	
[63]+7	1:58	the mob cackles with laughter (bassoons)	
[65]+1	2:39	strings drop the first hint of an important theme to come	
[65]+19	3:02	the funeral bell tolls	
[65]+25	3:08	violins continue hinting at the theme to come...	
[66]-6	3:17	..as does the oboe	
[66]+6	3:29	Dies Irae theme, forcefully stated by all 4 bassoons and both tubas	
[70]+2	5:20	Witches' Round Dance	the theme hinted at earlier now appears in its full form, and forms the basis of a fugue. Berlioz is said to have admitted privately that this fugue represents a giant orgy.
[77]	6:59	by now the dance (orgy, or whatever) has dissipated much	

		of its energy, but now it starts rebuilding in intensity until...	
[80]	7:44	...it reaches a thunderous climax, with the entire orchestra playing the same sustained syncopated rhythm for 4 solid bars, until some of the brass launch a concerted counteroffensive for another 4 solid bars.	
[81]	7:55	Witches' Round Dance returns	strings are all playing the same rhythm while the winds take a rest
[81]+7	8:01	Dies Irae reappears from the newly rested winds, while the strings continue the competition with the witches' dance	
[84]+12	8:58	coda	fast, loud, furious—in other words, totally in keeping with the mood of the movement. Perhaps unexpectedly for so ghoulish a concluding movement, the work ends conventionally on a plain vanilla C major chord, the key of the first movement's first theme.

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) (England) *Toward the Unknown Region*

Chorus and orchestra (Modern period)



Vaughan Williams was a great admirer of Walt Whitman, and this work is a setting of Whitman's poem *Darest Thou Now O Soul* from the collection *Leaves of Grass*. Vaughan Williams took his title from the poem's second line.

Here is the poem in full.

Darest thou now O soul,
Walk out with me toward the unknown region,
Where neither ground is for the feet nor any path to follow?

No map there, nor guide,
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in that land.

I know it not O soul,
Nor dost thou, all is a blank before us,
All waits undream'd of in that region, that inaccessible land.

Till when the ties loosen,
All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds bounding us.

Then we burst forth, we float,
In Time and Space O soul, prepared for them,
Equal, equipt at last, (O joy! O fruit of all!) them to fulfil O soul.