

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE
MONTREAL
MONDAY, DECEMBER 11th. 1916

Mr. GAUVIN PRESENTS

THE
NEW YORK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

WALTER DAMROSCH, CONDUCTOR

PROGRAM

1.—SYMPHONY No. 6 IN F. (*Pastoral*) BEETHOVEN

- 1.—*Cheerful impressions on Arriving in the Country*
- 2.—*By the Brook*
- 3.—*Peasant's Merry-Making*
- 4.—*The Thunder-Storm, and*
- 5.—*Shepherd's Song; Glad and Thankful Feelings after the Storm*

The Pastoral Symphony, is the first elaborate expression of Beethoven's love for nature.

The first movement opens with a lovely melody, its main subject—"as sweet and soft", says Sir George Grove in his "Beethoven and His Nine Symphonies", "as the air of May itself, with buds and blossoms and new-mown grass. A peculiarity of the composer's treatment of this theme, as, indeed, of the whole of this movement, is the frequent insistent repetition of single phrases or bits of phrases, an upward scale passage of five notes being repeated for instance, ten times, a kind of repetition found nowhere else in the symphonies. Grove's explanation is doubtless the true one. "I believe", he says, "that the delicious, natural, May-day, *out-of-doors* feeling of this movement arises in a great measure from this kind of repetition. It causes a monotony—which, however, is never monotonous—and which, though no *imitation*, is akin to the constant sounds of Nature—the monotony of rustling leaves and swaying trees, and running brooks and blowing wind, the call of birds and the hum of insects." In the second theme also, a sustained descending phrase in C major passed from first violins to second violins, then to cellos and to basses, the same repetition will be observed. The same is true of the final group of themes (conclusion theme) one of which suggests by its reiterated drone-bass the rusticity of peasant music. The development of the themes is long, but simple, consisting for the most part of repetitions of similar figures in different keys.

As early as 1803, when his hearing was only beginning to be impaired, Beethoven had recorded in his sketch-book the sound of a

brook, with the remark: "the more water the deeper the tone." The lapping figure thus suggested to him appears in the lower strings, at the start of the second movement, "Scene by the Brook", and persists through a large part of it. Above it the first violins outline a heavenly melody, beginning timidly and gradually acquiring momentum—one of those melodies of which only Beethoven in his slow movements seems to have had the secret. After it has been thus stated it is repeated by clarinet and bassoon over an even more undulating accompaniment, while the violins add high, thin trills curiously suggestive of the trembling heat of a summer day. The music takes its placid course, a bassoon presently outlining the deliberate second theme over a pizzicato bass. There is much development and variation of the themes (for the music seems to have all the leisure of the longest days of the year) before we come to the final passage of the birds which has become so famous. We hear the notes of the nightingale (flute), the quail (oboe), and the cuckoo (clarinet), all so artfully harmonized that they make the common chord. We have Beethoven's own authority that the passage occurred to him as a joke; but he has done it so perfectly, returning after the momentary realism of the bird notes to one of the loveliest phrases of his melody and developing it to a sustained cadence, that it appeals to the sense of beauty as much as to that of humor.

In the third movement we have not only nature, but human nature—the peasant makes his appearance. Beethoven was fascinated by a band of seven peasant musicians who played in a tavern. He often sought out and listened to them; and he even found time to write them some waltzes. He once asked a friend if he had noticed how they would go on playing until they dropped asleep, and how an instrument would falter and stop, and begin again when its player awakened. "In the Pastoral Symphony", he said, "I have tried to copy this." In the middle part or Trio of this third movement, where the oboe has a solo over an obstinate figure in the violins, the hearer will notice this rustic effect, especially in the funny casual bass notes that the bassoon from time to time adds.

This movement comes to no complete close, but is interrupted by the storm, heralded by the remote rumble of thunder and the large scattering raindrops almost unavoidably suggested by the staccato notes of the second violins, and presently bursting forth in a truly intimidating clamor of the full orchestra. The impressiveness of this storm, the mere accumulation of sonority that Beethoven gets out of his small orchestra (with only two horns, two trumpets, and two trombones, for instance, in the brass), but far more the sense of hurry, confusion, and wild caprice that he manages to impart, largely by his treatment of rhythm, are so extraordinary as to make most musical storms, even that of Strauss in his most recent work, the Alpine Symphony, where he employs an apparatus that would have made Beethoven rub his eyes, seem like twicetold tales. Not the least impressive page of it is the dying away, the gradual cessation of the rolling thunder, the hymn-like harmonies that suggest the feeling of almost religious happiness in returning fair weather, and the flute solo that, according to Grove, shows us "a rift of blue sky."

With the Yodel or *ranz des vaches* of the clarinet, echoed by the horn, commences the finale, a movement without any special programmatic features, but brimful of the happiness and vigor of restored high spirits.

2.-PRELUDE TO "L'APRES-MIDI D'UN FAUNE". DEBUSSY

"* * * * A faun—a simple, sensuous, passionate being—wakens in the forest at daybreak and tries to recall his experience of the previous afternoon. Was he the fortunate recipient of an actual visit from nymphs, white and golden goddesses divinely tender and indulgent? Or is the memory he seems to retain nothing but the shasow of a vision, no more substantial than the 'arid rain' of notes from his own flute? He

cannot tell. Yet surely there was, surely there is, an animal whiteness among the brown reeds of the lake that shines out yonder. Were they, are they, swans? No! But Naiads plunging? Perhaps! Vaguer and vaguer grows the impression of this delicious experience. * * * The sun is warm, the grasses yielding; and he curls himself up again, after worshipping the efficacious star of wine, that he may pursue the dubious ecstasy into the more hopeful boskages of sleep. * * * "

- 3.—(a) *Scotch Idyl* }
 (b) *Gigue* } From "HENRY VIII"... SAINT-SAENS

4.—ANDANTE CANTABILE for Strings. . . . TSCHAIKOWSKY

The "Andante Cantabile", from the 5th Symphony, a love song, is conceived with exquisite feeling, and seems to portray the whole scale of human emotion. It opens with a melody for horn, which is afterwards taken up by the strings and worked up to a blazing climax. The waltz movement, which takes the place of the usual scherzo, is of great delicacy and refinement, and in the finale we have a boisterous Cossack dance, exuberant and almost frenzied in character, which ends in an "Andante Maestoso" of triumphant rhythms, the principal theme in the minor in the introduction of the first movement appears here in major.

5.—SOUNDS OF THE FOREST from "Siegfried" Act II. WAGNER

In Act II, Mime has brought Siegfried to where he may see the dragon, hoping Siegfried will learn to feel fear. Siegfried, left alone, lies down under a big tree and listens to the rustlings of the forest and the twittering of the birds. He cuts a reed and tries to imitate the birds. The effect is so comical the he flings down his reed and blows a long call on his horn. This wakens the dragon and fight follows.

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