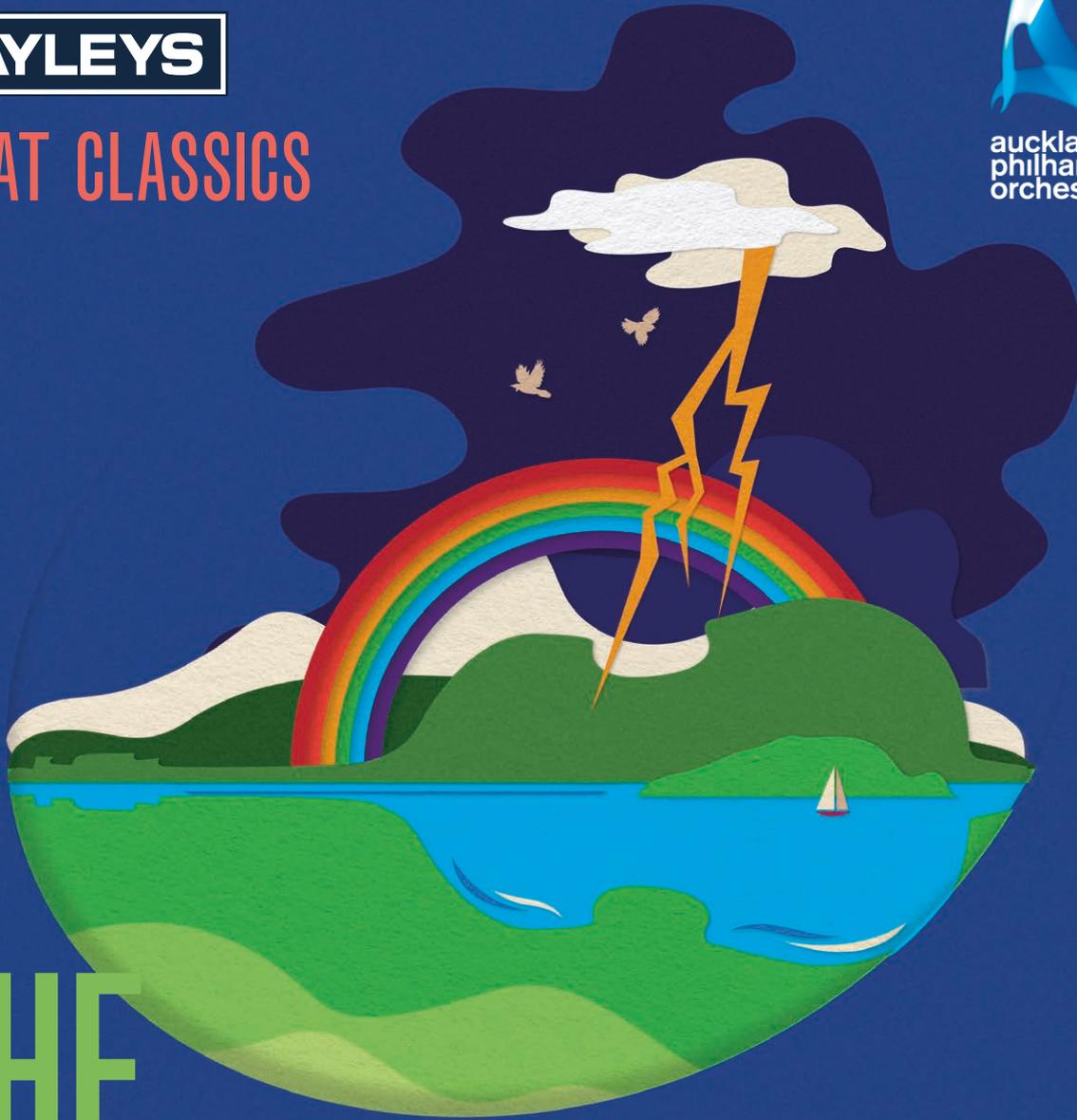




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LISTENING NOTES

FOR EXPERIENCED LISTENERS

CONDUCTOR Giordano Bellincampi

BEETHOVEN Symphony No.6 'Pastoral'

BEETHOVEN Symphony No.7

Presented in
association with



FUN FACT

No one is sure of the exact date Beethoven was born. Beethoven himself thought he was born in 1772. However, it is thought that his father had deliberately made Beethoven appear younger than he was, so he was thought of as a child prodigy.

SYMPHONY NO.7

The Seventh Symphony was premiered in Vienna in 1813, and was a part of a charity concert for soldiers. This concert was arguably the most successful in Beethoven's lifetime.

Beethoven himself conducted the concert, and we must remember that by then, he was profoundly deaf, and he couldn't hear the piano passages at all. German composer Louis Spohr describes Beethoven's conducting from his memories of playing violin in these concerts:

"Beethoven had accustomed himself [he says] to indicate expression to the orchestra by all manner of singular bodily movements. At piano he crouched down lower and lower as he desired the degree of softness. If a crescendo then entered he gradually rose again and at the entrance of the forte jumped into the air. Sometimes, too, he unconsciously shouted to strengthen the forte. It was obvious that the poor man could no longer hear the piano of his music."

It has four movements.

I. *Poco sostenuto* – *Vivace* A Major

The first movement starts with the longest introduction to any of Beethoven's symphonies. It is over three minutes long and previews the keys of the four coming movements, specifically: A major (first and last movement)—D major (the trio of the third movement)—C major (second movement, B theme)—F major (third movement)—E major (beginning of the fourth movement).

After this extended introduction, the movement jumps in tempo to *Vivace* with a rhythmical and driving motif. Again, Beethoven uses one of his defining characteristics, silence, to create dramatic effect and suspense. Another feature of this movement is Beethoven's use of chromaticism, creating ascending and descending chromatic scales starting in the bass. Finally, Beethoven bookends the first movement with its introduction and coda, both of exactly 62 bars each.

II. *Allegretto* A Minor

The second movement is a melancholy march in the parallel key of A minor. This movement has been very popular since its premiere in 1813, with audiences often wanting an encore of this movement before continuing to the remaining movements. The movement's form is unusual as a hybrid between a theme & variations and ternary form. The outer sections are the theme and its variations, and the middle section has a countering

theme in A major. Beethoven further develops the theme by turning it into a fugue. As with the first movement, the second movement features a rhythmic motif that is consistent throughout.

Beethoven uses ascending and descending chromatic lines, as he did in the first movement, in the melody of the theme and variation, it is played by the cellos and violas. The movement closes by returning to the main theme while gradually reducing the number of instruments playing and fragmenting the rhythmic motif. The movement ends with a fading A-minor chord in the winds.

III. *Presto* F Major

Beethoven uses the E in the last A minor chord of the previous movement to transition to an F major chord to begin the third-movement Scherzo. The main motif uses an ascending third, stated first by the strings and woodwinds and later passed around various sections. Beethoven injects some humour into this movement with the use of a repeated two-note descending gesture. This motif is stated throughout the orchestra, creating a dreamy effect shaken awake by a fortissimo outburst. The Trio section opens in D major with horns, clarinets, and bassoons playing a simple theme over a pedal note. This section builds as the orchestration and dynamics grow until the timpani brings us to the climax. The Trio section is repeated in full, and, once again, Beethoven uses humour to begin it a third time at the end of the movement, only to end it quickly with a loud cadence.

IV. *Allegro con brio* A Major

Like the preceding movement, this movement transitions from F major back to A major with whole bars of silence. This movement has a driving rhythm. The first theme is accented by sforzandi on the second beat of each bar. The movement continues in a sonata-rondo form. Dotted rhythms introduce the second theme, which is not in the dominant E but instead C-sharp minor. The development section moves further from the home key, passing through C major and F major and finally to B-flat major before the recapitulation returns us to the tonic key of A major. A very long dominant pedal note, with a gradual crescendo to *fff*, the first marking of its kind in Beethoven's symphonic works.

INTERESTING FACT

Beethoven was completely deaf by his mid-forties. A young musician named Ferdinand Hiller snipped off a lock of hair from the composer's head as a keepsake, which was a common custom at the time. It was passed down through generations, and eventually, a collector purchased the hair and was interested in finding out why Beethoven became deaf. The hair was DNA, chemical, forensic and toxicology tested. The results showed very high lead levels, potentially indicating chronic lead poisoning, which could have caused Beethoven's deafness.