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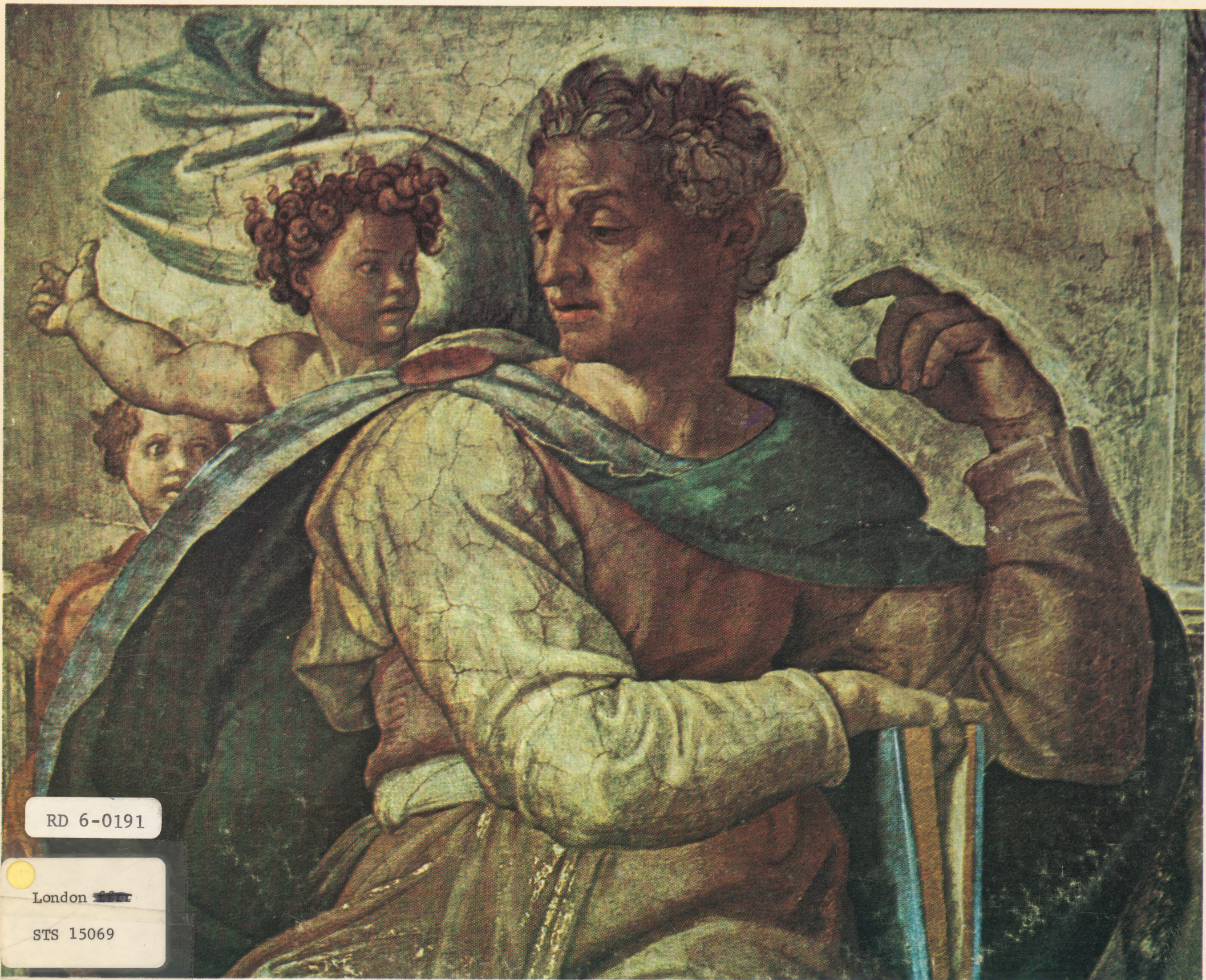
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

STEREO *Treasury* SERIES

MOZART HONNY NO. 3 IN E FLAT MAJOR (OP. 55) "EROICA"

L'ORCHESTRE DE LA SUISSE ROMANDE

ANSERMET



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BEETHOVEN

SYMPHONY No. 3 IN E FLAT MAJOR (Op. 55) ("Eroica")

L'ORCHESTRE DE LA SUISSE ROMANDE conductor: ERNEST ANSERMET

During 1804, while the anti-Royalist Ludwig van Beethoven was composing his *Sinfonia grande: Napoleon Bonaparte*, the First Consul was disassociating himself from the Republican heritage he still symbolized.

Royalist plots against Napoleon were uncovered that year. The "little corporal", reacting with a statement uncomfortably similar to Louis XIV's "L'état c'est moi" (I am the state), proclaimed, "They seek to destroy the Revolution by attacking my person: I will defend it for I am the Revolution." With this proclamation, he foisted upon the rubber-stamp Senate a new constitution on May 3rd, the "Constitution of the year XII." The Senators enthusiastically ratified it on the 18th.

This far-reaching document decreed, in part, that "The government of the French Republic is entrusted to an emperor, who takes the title of Emperor of the French. . . . Napoleon Bonaparte, present First Consul of the Republic, is Emperor of the French."

Coronation ceremonies, officiated at by the Pope, were held in December in the Cathedral of Notre Dame. During the rites, Napoleon commandeered the crown from His Holiness, waved the surprised pontiff gently aside and consummated the ceremonies by crowning both himself and Josephine. "We have done better than we intended," boasted one of the doomed leaders of the Royalist conspiracy. "We came to give France a king and we have given her an Emperor."

That month, Beethoven conducted a private performance of his Third Symphony for his friend and patron, Prince Lobkowitz. The title page of the "*Bonaparte*" *Symphony* had been torn from the score and a new one substituted: "*Sinfonia eroica. . . per festeggiar il souvenir d'un gran uomo*" (Heroic symphony. . . to celebrate the memory of a great man).

The hero of the symphony was, of course, never Napoleon. It was Beethoven's *idea* of Napoleon as the epitome of heroism. It was, in other words, Beethoven, himself, the man who, two years previous, had wrestled with his own deafness and won a life-long victory against Fate.

When the work received its official premier at the Theater an der Wien the following April 7th, it bore a dedication to Prince Lobkowitz. Napoleon had gained an Empire, but lost the *Eroica*, and everyone knows which has proved more durable.

FIRST MOVEMENT—*Allegro con brio*

The first movement of a classical symphony can usually be designated by the term "sonata form." Insofar as it fits most classical music, this procedure may be described as follows: The main musical material is exposed at the beginning of the movement, all of it in closely related keys. This material will return, more or less intact, in a recapitulation at the end of the movement. To separate these closely related sections, the composer sandwiches between them a de-

velopment section, based on what has already been heard, but in keys far removed from the main one. One purpose of this is to make a dramatic event of the "return home" of the original material in the original key. An introduction may precede this three-part movement and a *coda* may "wrap it up."

What Beethoven does in the *Eroica* is condense the introduction into two sharp attention-getting chords, expand the development into a complex and profound essay, and transform the usually short *coda* into a long scene equal in importance to any of the others in this first great act of the musical drama.

The two introductory chords propel the movement into a headlong plunge through the most agitated music. Cellos first expose what would normally be a calm, pleasant theme. A thirteen-year-old Mozart had used the same theme as a charming waltz-like melody in his little opera *Bastien et Bastienne*. But in the *Eroica* it is so surrounded by excited violins and violas that it has barely a chance to catch its breath before the second theme enters 45 measures later. This, too, is basically a relaxed melody which is made breathless by division into groups of three notes each, played in turn by the oboe, clarinet, flute and violins. When the tension seems just about to abate, the strings burst forth into a fresh display of energy with the most electric figurations of the movement.

For a moment the orchestra tries finally to catch that long-awaited breath with a repeated-note motif that seems almost to pant from exhaustion. But even this lasts only briefly and, with a final effort, stimulated by sharp chords again—more vigorous than those of the introduction because they are rhythmically compressed, and there are more of them—the exposition spills over into the development.

One remarkable feature of this development comes after a fugal passage of great vitality has worked its way to screaming dissonances. Now fresh blood is injected with yet a further theme, a beautiful, rustic tune first presented as a richly accompanied duet for oboes. It is only here, strangely located in the midst of the development, that the first truly untroubled music appears. Another stroke of genius occurs four measures before the recapitulation when a ghost-like French horn sounds the main theme half a phrase early in the original key.

The fairly straight recapitulation leads to the phenomenal *coda*. This *coda* is really a second development but now a sense of victory pervades the entire section. The untroubled theme, heard previously only in the development, here achieves its own recapitulation and the welcome repose it offers finally dominates the conclusion of the movement. After intense struggles, the hero can at last relax.

SECOND MOVEMENT—*Marcia funèbre*

The formal, stately nature of the C minor theme of this Funeral March is belied by agonizing accompanying shudders

in the double basses. Violins state the first phrase of the theme which is then repeated, as the second phrase, by the oboe. The calm third phrase, back in the violins and temporarily free from shudders, is specially noteworthy. It will later be turned upside down and used to build one of the most thrilling fugal passages ever penned.

After the theme has been stated in several ways by the different instruments, a related melody appears in C major. Excitement mounts, reaches a climax, then subsides to make room for what seems like the final appearance of the original theme, back in C minor. Instead, at one of the greatest moments in all music, an F natural intrudes like a projecting finger and forces out of the grief-stricken orchestra the agonized and thrilling fugal passage mentioned above.

Again the orchestra tries to sing the noble song and, again, it collapses in a long cry of sorrow. The Funeral March finally reaches its conclusion, exhausted, the still noble but no longer formal theme broken down into a series of sobs. Two final shudders are heard, then all is at rest.

THIRD MOVEMENT—*Scherzo: Allegro vivace*

A bubbling *scherzo* provides comic relief for the *Eroica*. Dynamic contrasts, rhythmic surprises, all at breakneck speed, combine to make this a typically humorous Beethoven *scherzo*. The trio, that traditional showcase for a work's unique instrumental features, has Beethoven shouting, "Look what I've got. . . three horns!" While the first French horn has to reach for high notes, the democratic Beethoven gives the most difficult part to the second horn, much as he was to feature the fourth horn in the *Ninth Symphony*. A brief *coda* displays the kettledrums before the movement ends.

FOURTH MOVEMENT—*Finale: Allegro molto*

In 1801 Beethoven's ballet *Prometheus* was produced. The following year he wrote *Fifteen Variations and Fugue on a Theme from "Prometheus"* for piano, now more popularly known as the "*Eroica*" *Variations*. For the *finale* of the *Third Symphony*, with its truly Promethean subject, Beethoven chose a set of orchestral variations based on the same theme.

This theme first appears as a simple bass, plucked in unison by all the strings. After two brief variations, a lilting melody enters to dance gracefully over this bass. Next comes the first of two fugal variations, the second of which will occur, after a martial transformation of the theme, with the theme turned upside down.

These joyful variations are interrupted by the oboe, slowly singing a plaintive version of the once lilting melody. Gradually the excitement mounts, the tension builds. Fateful steps are heard in the cellos and basses, while long, repeated notes cry out louder and louder from the violins, winds and, finally, the brass. The tension breaks in a furious *Presto* which provides the hero with a jubilant send-off.

LEONARD MARCUS

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BEETHOVEN: SYMPHONY NO. 3 IN E FLAT MAJOR,
Op. 55 ("EROICA")

1st Mov. Allegro con brio (14.30)
2nd Mov. Marcia Funebre—Adagio assai (15.15)

ERNEST ANSERMET
conducting
L'ORCHESTRE DE LA SUISSE ROMANDE

ZAL-4801-SL

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BEETHOVEN: SYMPHONY NO. 3 IN E FLAT MAJOR, Op. 55
("EROICA")
3rd Mov. Scherzo—Allegro vivace (5.55)
4th Mov. Finale—Allegro molto (12.15)
ERNEST ANSERMET
conducting
L'ORCHESTRE DE LA SUISSE ROMANDE

ZAL-4802-3L