

MONAURAL—ML 5906



Tommaso Walter
CONDUCTS

SCHUBERT: UNFINISHED SYMPHONY

BEETHOVEN: FIFTH SYMPHONY

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC / COLUMBIA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



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GUARANTEED
HIGH FIDELITY



SCHUBERT: Symphony No. 8 in B Minor ("Unfinished")
BRUNO WALTER conducting the New York Philharmonic

BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67
BRUNO WALTER conducting the Columbia Symphony Orchestra

The *Unfinished* Symphony exists in two manuscript versions, a piano sketch and an orchestral score worked up from that sketch. The sketch, according to Maurice J. E. Brown, consists of the two familiar opening movements and a nearly-completed scherzo. It is dated October 1822. On the 30th of that same month, Schubert began to score the incomplete sketch, laying out the first two movements with a new and uncanny feeling for dark and yet phosphorescent instrumentation. The scherzo, not quite complete in the sketch, is a mere page-long fragment in the orchestral version. In neither manuscript is there a hint of a finale. Sometime in November 1822 Schubert ceased working on the symphony and apparently never went back to it in the half dozen years of life remaining to him.

Several inferences—merely inferences—may be drawn from this evidence: 1) that the symphony is indeed incomplete and was not intended as a precedent-breaking two-movement work; 2) that Schubert, having tried and failed to finish the scherzo not once but twice, felt some deep-seated and probably instinctive revulsion toward it; 3) that it would be dangerous to postulate that Schubert ever intended to finish the work. The romantic—and attractive—idea that Schubert saw the first two movements as complete and not to be extended does not hit the mark. Rather, he saw these movements as terribly and irrevocably incomplete: two sombre fragments needing the scherzo-and-finale of ideal experience and meeting—silence. The scherzo theme itself, as quoted by Tovey, is an excellent one; Schubert need not have been ashamed of it. But it would not adhere. To perform this scherzo with the symphony, or to add a trumped-up finale out of the *Rosamunde* music—which was done, *mirabile dictu* at a Crystal Palace Concert in 1881—is to treat this great work with insufferable affront.

The story of the discovery of the *Unfinished* has often been told. Schubert sent the orchestral manuscript, including the fragment of scherzo, to Anselm Hüttenbrenner, as a gesture of gratitude for being elected, on Hüttenbrenner's recommendation, to a provincial music society. Hüttenbrenner, a composer himself and bitter at Schubert's posthumous fame and his own neglect, would not let the manuscript out of his hands for many years. It was not until the Viennese conductor Johann Herbeck bribed him with the promise of a performance of one of his own overtures that Hüttenbrenner gave up his treasure. The two movements were heard first in Vienna on December 17, 1865, long after all the earlier Romantics—Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Chopin—were in their graves.

Both movements are similar in tempo, as they are in feeling. Both are in a wandering, questing motion, expressed in the first as *Allegro moderato* and in the second as *Andante con moto*. The most important of the first movement's themes, the famous descending bass motif heard at the outset, is not technically the first subject, but rather a kind of motto. The first subject proper flutters amidst *tremolando* strings and woodwinds like leaves in a mythic forest.

The great cello song of the second subject is reached quickly, by the simplest of transitional devices. Without waiting for the development section, Schubert immediately begins to disclose the various faces, some of them disturbing, of this melody. When the development comes it is given over almost entirely to an examination of the tragic issue raised by the opening motto theme: key succeeds to key, struggle to struggle, a chill hoar frost stiffens the air. And then the magic woods again, *tremolando* strings buoying up the song of oboe and clarinet. The terse coda, ending with four grim chords, is at once beautiful and terrible.

In the warm comfort of E major, plucked string basses, horns and bassoons herald the arrival of the first theme of the *Andante*, given out by the upper strings. But every theme in this work has its several aspects "of comfort and despair," and the innocent pizzicato descending scale soon becomes an angry giant sending his defiance through the entire string section and the lowest trombone. A changing of musical chemistry—and the second theme (is it lamentation or pastoral serenity, with its echoings from oboe to flute to oboe?) is heard, first sounding in the clarinet. This, too, undergoes many changes, its innocent shape suffering *forte* distortions that completely alter its character. But despite these upheavals the movement wins through to a serene coda.

DAVID JOHNSON

In his autobiography, *Theme and Variations*, Bruno Walter gives an account of the books and authors that exercised the greatest effect on his mind as a boy. "Among the biographies of musicians included in my reading matter," he remembers, "I was most deeply moved by the life of Beethoven, his Titanic character, his growing deafness, his disdain of the aristocracy and society, the destruction of his dedication of his *Eroica*, the Heiligenstadt Testament, and other facts. . . . But the biographies always recorded in addition to the artistic triumphs the contrast between inward blessedness and outward distress."

Beethoven responded to this "outward distress" with two major devices, two means of making the world a place in which he could live. On the one hand he set out to see the beauty of the world—most particularly in nature, for which he had the early Romantic artist's close feeling of identification. On the other, there was the response of rage, of defiance, of fighting through and winning out over the petty, restrictive elements of life, political, social and material. Both these means of salvation found expression in Beethoven's works; just as the Sixth Symphony embodies the first in its clearest form, so the Fifth embodies the response of rage and defiance—and victory.

This great C Minor/C Major Symphony was completed, after some eight years of off-again, on-again work, in 1808 at Heiligenstadt, Beethoven's favorite country sanctuary near Vienna. Its meaning has been the subject of much writing. Without attempting to pin it down to one or two words, we can perhaps best see it in a description of the course of its career from conception to com-

pletion, as imagined by Louis Biancolli: "Some experiences or group of experiences had shaken Beethoven profoundly. . . . His deafness was steadily growing worse. In the Heiligenstadt Will he reviewed his 'blighted hopes' and in his wretchedness shrieked to high heaven for one more day of 'pure joy.' Thoughts of suicide and early death probably assailed him. Then themes began to filter through his mind, colored by these thoughts and seizures of grief, until the plan of a great moral drama took shape. He would fight destiny to victory, he resolved, and achieve reconciliation with the world. Around this decision musical and emotional patterns slowly formed. With the musician and the man so closely coordinated in thought and feeling, the process of shifting from emotional to artistic plans was complete and true. After stern and uncompromising scrutiny of each detail, the struggle finally took finished form as the C Minor Symphony. . . . Beethoven's great symphony was thus a monument to an ordeal. . . ."

Three Gs and an E-flat, perhaps the most famous four-note phrase in symphonic music, open the work. Klaus George Roy remarks about this "potent one-celled organism, which could grow and multiply with enormous force and logic. Tovey wittily warns against the common assumption 'that the whole first movement is built up of the initial figure of four notes'. Of course, that kind of structure would have been fatally dull. These notes, rather, grow hands and feet while they continue to course through the bloodstream of the developing musical organism." At any rate, what we have here is an example of symphonic logic *par excellence*.

The second movement, an *Andante con moto*, is usually identified as variation form. John Burk qualifies this: "It is not so much a theme with variations as free thoughts upon segments of a theme with certain earmarks and recurrences of the variation form hovering in the background." The effect, after the mighty first movement, is consoling and placating.

The *Scherzo* third movement contains a certain threat. Biancolli calls it "the musical embodiment of the terror that walketh by night." As this ghostly procession passes and the nightmarish feeling begins to wane, through the extraordinary transition passage at the end of the movement, we enter the glory of the finale. Certainly one of the most affirmative, all-conquering, triumphant moments in all our music, in point of sheer technical mastery it is also a triumph for its maker. Artistic victory is his and he displays the dead body of his mortal enemy by bringing back the corpse of the bridge passage. Musically this innovation in form is a stroke of undeniable creative genius, solid rebuttal in the faces of those who were ready to denounce the movement "as vulgar and blatant," Burke reports, "merely because they had settled back for a rondo and found something else instead." Beethoven, in surviving and surmounting his personal ills, had conquered in his music. Burke concludes: "The Symphony, which in all parts overrode disputation, did so nowhere more tumultuously, more unanswerably, than in the final coda."

CHARLES BURR

THE MOVEMENTS OF THE SYMPHONIES PUBLIC DOMAIN ARE FOLLOWED BY THEIR TIMINGS

SIDE I SCHUBERT: SYMPHONY NO. 8 IN B MINOR ("Unfinished")

I—Allegro moderato	10:35
II—Andante con moto	13:58
	24:38

SIDE II BEETHOVEN: SYMPHONY NO. 5 IN C MINOR, Op. 67

I—Allegro con brio	6:23
II—Andante con moto	10:48
III—Scherzo: Allegro	15:20
IV—Finale: Allegro	32:48

XYLP-51515-3D

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SCHUBERT: SYMPHONY NO. 8
IN B MINOR ("Unfinished")
BRUNO WALTER conducting the
NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

ML 5906

Side 1
XLP 51515



- 1. I - Allegro moderato
- 2. II - Andante con moto

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BEETHOVEN:
SYMPHONY NO. 5 IN
C MINOR, Op. 67

BRUNO WALTER conducting the
COLUMBIA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ML 5906

Side 2
XLP 45177

1. I - Allegro con brio
2. II - Andante con moto
3. III - Scherzo: Allegro
- IV - Finale: Allegro

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