T B S

Tessa Uys Ben Schoeman

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17 November 2024

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Programme

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

Symphony No 5 in C minor, Op. 67

Transcribed for four hands by Franz Xaver Scharwenka (1850-1924)

Allegro con brio; Andante con moto; Scherzo. Allegro; Allegro

The *Fifth Symphony* was first performed at a marathon personal benefit concert given at the Theater an der Wien on 22 December 1808. Never before, or since, could there have been such a display of new music by one composer. As well as the *Fifth*, the programme also included premières of the *Sixth Symphony (Pastoral)* – although the numbering of the two was reversed, the *Fourth Piano Concerto*, movements from the *Mass in C*, and a hastily written *Fantasia* for piano, chorus and orchestra, with its foretaste of what was to come in the *Ninth Symphony*. As if this wasn't enough, a much earlier work, the aria *Ah, Perfido!*, was revived. The hall was cold and the performers under-rehearsed, so it is not surprising that the playing was rough and that in the *Fantasia* the orchestra broke down. It is almost unbelievable that so much great music could have been heard for the first time under such adverse conditions.

It has to be admitted that the first movement of the *Fifth Symphony* lends itself to fate associations, whether intended by Beethoven or not. The opening four notes, surprisingly given to strings and clarinets alone, pervade the whole of the movement, becoming more insistent as tempi and dynamics increase. Even in the melodic second theme the motif is heard in the background. The horn call which announces this subject is the starting point for the development. It is remarkable that the immense strength of this opening movement is achieved with no more than the forces of the normal classical orchestra, illustrated nowhere better than by the overwhelming force of the coda.

The *Andante* is in free variation form, involving two themes treated in a wide ranging and improvisatory manner. Little remains of the dance origins of the third movement *scherzo* which opens with a rather mysterious theme on 'cellos and basses, in unison. The *trio* section opens with a bustling *fugato*, again for the lower strings. It is not surprising that cuts were made in the difficult first performance, but this has left a continuing ambiguity as to whether these were still to be made in subsequent performances, not least in the *scherzo*. The usual procedure today is to follow the *trio* with one ghostly and abbreviated repeat of the first section, eventually leading to an extended *crescendo* which moves directly into the finale.

Three trombones, making their first important appearance in a symphony, together with added piccolo and contrabassoon, help to underline the brilliance of this last movement. Its triumphant, martial rhythms take it inexorably forward, interrupted only by a quiet recall of the main theme of the preceding *scherzo*, before the long, extended coda, with its quickening tempo and increasing dynamics brings the symphony to a majestic close. *Notes John Dalton*

Short Interval

TBS continues to operate with a retiring collection rather than fixed-price tickets.

Please give generously to support these concerts. For those who can afford it, we suggest a minimum of £10 per adult in the afternoon and £15 per adult in the evening (under 25 free).

Payments in cash are preferred, but card payments may be made via our website. We do not operate a machine for card payments at the concerts.

If you are a tax payer please use the envelopes provided and fill in your name and, if you have not already done so, the Gift Aid Declaration so that we can maximise the tax that we reclaim.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

Symphony No 6 in F major, Op. 68 ('Pastoral')

Transcribed for four hands by Franz Xaver Scharwenka (1850-1924)

Allegro ma non troppo; Andante molto mosso; Allegro; Allegro; Allegretto

The Pastoral Symphony is also unique in having five movements, although the last three are played without a break. The first movement Allegro is headed "Awakening of happy feelings on arrival in the country". It is based on an effervescent theme announced first by the violins over a rustic drone bass in lower strings and, in the absence of a second subject, or formal development, this tune is repeated throughout the movement in a number of varied forms.

The Andante represents a "Scene by the brook", with rippling, murmuring phrases and an unbroken flow. Bird-calls, identified in the score as those of nightingale, quail and cuckoo, appear in the coda. But, even here Beethoven is not being merely descriptive, for these calls can be traced back to earlier motifs and have a relevant thematic context.

As the final three movements merge into one, we hear first the "Peasants' merry-making", with its parody of a country festival, including its rather incompetent wind band and robust dancing. All comes to a premature end as a quiet tremolo on 'cellos and basses announces the distant approach of a thunder storm, shortly followed by a staccato figure in the strings suggesting the first drops of rain. This is the transition to the fourth movement "Storm", at which point Beethoven adds a piccolo and two trombones to the orchestra. The storm reaches its full fury with lightning flashes from the woodwind and thunder from the timpani. As the storm dies away we pass into the final movement: "Shepherd's song: happy and thankful feelings after the storm". The oboe adapts the agitated notes of the raindrops and smooths them into a musical rainbow, while the shepherd is heard piping on his flute until the final hymn presents Beethoven's thanksgiving for the wonders of the natural world. There is a final lapse into those quiet bars which epitomize the poetic depth of the whole symphony.

Franz Xaver Scharwenka (1850 -1924)

Scharwenka was born near Posen in East Prussia and died in Berlin. He began learning the piano by ear when he was three, but did not start formal music studies until he was 15, when his family moved to Berlin where he enrolled at The Akademie of Tonkunst. He travelled widely as a piano virtuoso and scored a considerable success in England in both this capacity and that of composer. Scharwenka was an inspiring teacher, and a composer of symphonies, piano concerti and an opera, as well as a quantity of instrumental music, including the transcriptions for piano duet for four hands of all the 9 Symphonies by Beethoven.

Historical Background

Tessa Uys has a very personal connection with the music, as her concert pianist mother, Helga Bassel, was from Berlin, where Scharwenka lived. In the 1930's she fled the city seeking refuge in Cape Town. She took not only her beloved Blüthner piano with her but also her collection of piano music including the Scharwenka transcriptions. In 2004 the piano was returned to the Blüthner factory in Leipzig for restoration and finally gifted to the Jewish Museum in Berlin.

The complete cycle of Beethoven's symphonies has never been presented in this format and leading publications have unanimously praised these "ground-breaking" recordings.

Compact Discs for sale at the entrance. Also consult the SOMM Recordings website:
https://somm-recordings.com/artist/tessa-uys-and-ben-schoeman-piano-duo/

Tessa Uys and Ben Schoeman Piano Duo

In 2010, Tessa Uys and Ben Schoeman established a duo partnership after being invited to give a two-piano recital at the Royal Over-Seas League in London. Ever since, they have performed regularly at music societies, festivals and at the BBC, and in 2015 they embarked on their journey with the nine Scharwenka/Beethoven Symphonies transcriptions.

Born in Cape Town, **Tessa Uys** was first taught by her mother, Helga Bassel, herself a noted concert pianist. At 16, she won a Royal Schools Associated Board Scholarship and continued her studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London where she studied with Gordon Green.

In her final year she was awarded the MacFarren Medal. Further studies followed in London with Maria Curcio, and in Siena with Guido Agosti. Shortly after this Tessa Uys won the Royal Over-Seas League Competition and was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music. During the past decades, Tessa Uys has established for herself an impressive reputation, both as concert performer and as a broadcasting artiste, performing at many concert venues throughout the world and with such distinguished conductors as Sir Neville Marriner, Walter Susskind, Louis Frémaux and Nicholas Kraemer.

Also born in South Africa, **Ben Schoeman** studied piano with Joseph Stanford at the University of Pretoria and then received post-graduate tuition from Boris Petrushansky, Louis Lortie, Michel Dalberto, Ronan O'Hora and Eliso Virsaladze in Florence, Imola and London.

He obtained a doctorate from the City University in London and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He won 1st Prize in the 11th UNISA International Piano Competition, the Gold Medal in the Royal Over-Seas League Competition, the contemporary music prize at the Cleveland International Piano Competition, and the Huberte Rupert Prize from the South African Academy for Science and Art. He has performed at Wigmore Hall, the Barbican Centre and Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, and Carnegie Hall in New York. Ben Schoeman is a Steinway Artist and a senior lecturer in piano and musicology at the University of Pretoria.

This piano duo is currently touring countrywide performing all the Symphonies by Beethoven and promoting their new album and the complete six-CD box set.

Future Farnham Concerts

Spire Church, South Street, Farnham, GU9 7QU

7-30 pm Saturday 23 November: Akiko Ono – violin & Svitlana Kosenko – piano

7-30pm Tuesday 17 December: Christmas Concert

3-00 pm Sunday 5 January: Daniel Hill: piano recital, Mozart, Schubert, Ravel, Chopin

3-00 pm Sunday 12 January: Renata Konycska, piano recital, Beethoven, Schubert

7-30pm Saturday 25 January: Charlotte Spruit, violin recital, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann

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Future Conservatoire Concerts

Godalming Baptist Church, GU7 1BA

30 November & 7 December Chamber Music Festival

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