

MAY 2019

Prelude

75 years



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MASTERWORKS #8:

BEETHOVEN'S 5TH MAY 3 - 5, 2019

The hidden meaning behind the music: two stories about using music to transmit messages for military purposes.

The first four notes of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony might be among the most recognized melodies in the world. Some have called it the "fate motif," as if those notes represent the huge fists of fate smacking down.ⁱ But there's an alternate theory proposed by Beethoven's student, Carl Czerny, who said that the opening theme was inspired by the call of a bird known as the yellow hammer.ⁱⁱ Whatever the inspiration, arguably the Fifth Symphony might well be considered the most famous symphony in the world.



Beethoven

It wasn't always that way. At the time of its premiere, Beethoven's fans were enthralled by his Third Symphony (Eroica).ⁱⁱⁱ Beethoven, in his thirties, was already suffering from greatly diminished hearing. The 1808 premiere of the Fifth Symphony took place in Vienna, in a marathon concert that lasted four hours.^{iv} The venue was bitter cold, and the musicians, with inadequate practice, faltered through the performance.^v Both the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies were featured on the concert program, and to make matters even worse, the printed program reversed the numbers of the two symphonies.^{vi} What we know today as the Fifth Symphony was presented to the public as the Sixth.^{vii}

After the confusion was resolved, and over the course of the 19th century, the Fifth Symphony came to epitomize Beethoven's life and musical style. It often appeared at the inaugural concerts of new orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, in November of 1900.^{viii} But the importance of the Fifth Symphony evolved still further when, during World War II, it became associated with Allied victory.^{ix}

The signature four note opening of the Fifth Symphony became a symbol for the Allied forces. The "short-short-short-long" rhythmic pattern corresponds with the Morse code letter "V," and when Winston Churchill famously formed a "V" with the second and third fingers of his raised right hand, it became "V for victory."^x Beethoven's Fifth Symphony became the rallying cry for the Allied Forces, and the BBC began its wartime radio transmissions to the continent with the signature four-note motif.^{xi} Even before the United States entered the war in 1942, the American press was already publicizing the "V for Victory" campaign.^{xii}



Churchill - "V" for Victory

The French also adopted Beethoven's Fifth Symphony as the icon of solidarity and resistance. During the worst of the German blitz on London in the spring of 1941, composer Maurice van Moppes wrote lyrics to the opening bars of the Fifth Symphony, calling it "La Chanson des V". The song was broadcast on Radio-Londres on June 1, 1941, when Allied forces sent the first messages to France to prepare for an attack.^{xiii} Here's a brief clip of the song. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebOgZtbUV8w>

The Fifth Symphony was not the only piece of music used to communicate messages. In 2010, the Colombian army was preparing a mission to rescue 16 soldiers who had been captured by the FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia.^{xiv} The FARC was a communist military group operating from the rural areas of Columbia. In more than 50 years of civil war, the FARC engaged in a variety of guerilla

continued on next page...



tactics that included the kidnapping of thousands of people for ransom and leverage in negotiations.^{xv} The victims were held in the deep jungle, in chain and barbed wire enclosures, some for more than a decade. Even if they could have escaped the guards and restraints, there was no chance of survival in the jungle. In 2010, as they planned the rescue of 16 soldiers, the Colombian army knew that at the first sign of a raid, the FARC would slaughter the hostages.^{xvi} For the mission to succeed, there had to be a way to warn the prisoners that a raid was imminent, and that they should be alert, prepared to fight back and flee into the jungle where they would be rescued.^{xvii} But how could they communicate that message to the hostages without tipping off the FARC?



Listening to radio broadcasts was one of the few luxuries afforded FARC prisoners.

Colonel Jose Espejo decided he needed to create an audio "trojan horse" or a broadcast

that could masquerade as ordinary, while delivering a covert message. The answer was music.^{xviii} And that was the beginning of an unlikely collaboration between Colonel Espejo and Juan Carlos Ortiz, a 42-year-old advertising executive who had a reputation for creating clever commercials.^{xix} Ortiz, who was then living in Coconut Grove, Miami, got the call from Colonel Espejo while playing with his children in the pool.^{xx}

Working with a small recording studio, Espejo and Ortiz helped create a pop song that buried a secret Morse code message within the song's rhythms.^{xxi} Many of the soldiers had learned Morse code as part of their basic training, and, as the Colombian government owned most of the radio stations, Espejo's team was able to make sure that the song was broadcast throughout FARC territory.^{xxii} How this was achieved is illustrated in a short video that highlights the code within the music: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xTYQcugD1c>

The song, entitled "Better Days," was played on over 130 small stations and heard by over 3 million people. The song encoded the message: "19 people rescued. You are next. Don't lose hope." By December of

2010, "Better Days" was echoing across the jungle. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CqOYM7cCX8>. The lyrics to the song, "Better Days" (in English) appear at the end of this Prelude.



Image used with song "Better Days"

The plan worked. One former hostage, Private Joshua Alvarez, was able to confirm the song's effectiveness, according to Col. Espejo.^{xxiii} In his military



Morse Code Machine

psychological evaluation, the liberated soldier spoke of hearing "the code hidden in the song," and revealed how the message was passed from soldier to soldier.^{xxiv} The song was even enjoyed by the FARC, who were oblivious to its secret message.^{xxv}

Ortiz maintained his contact with Col. Espejo, who worked as a journalist after he retired from the military. Col. Espejo wrote the book *El Gran Cartel*, an investigation into the FARC's finances.^{xxvi} Ortiz continued to travel between Colombia, New York, and Miami, where he created commercials for Rice Krispies and Volkswagen.^{xxvii}

The Colombian army declassified "The Code" operation in 2011, allowing the incredible story to be told. The lyrics to the song "Better Days" (in English) appear at the end of this Prelude.

Join us!

Please join the Hartford Symphony Orchestra for **Beethoven's 5TH, May 3 - 5, 2019** and be prepared to be "wowed" by our very special guest artists, Time for Three.



WONDERING HOW THE MUSIC WILL SOUND?

Try HSO'S Listening Guide, with links to the pieces you'll hear on our concert stage – and more!

Benjamin Britten's *Four Sea Interludes*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ht9mQE6X0C0>

Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 performed by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olMPEiqiic>

For extra fun with Beethoven's Fifth, watch this "Line Rider" video timed to coordinate with the music:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcBn04lyELc>

Jennifer Higdon's Concerto 4-3 (the so-called "Blue Grass Concerto") has yet to be commercially recorded. Hearing this composition performed by Hartford Symphony Orchestra is an extraordinary opportunity. The concerto was specifically composed for the group Time for Three, who met while students at Philadelphia's prestigious Curtis Institute. We are thrilled to have these talented musicians on the stage with the HSO!

Curious to learn more?

The diverse abilities of Time For Three have brought great acclaim. An interview with them was featured in an episode of *A Musical Life*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=20utPbYxFck>

Here's an interview of Jennifer Higdon with Time for Three, discussing Concerto 4-3, composed for the group:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UK19Zi8gJI>

Time for Three discussed Jennifer Higdon's Concerto 4-3 in a video prepared for an earlier performance:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrhQHnMHuuw>

HINT: Time for Three performing *Orange Blossom Special* as you've never heard before:

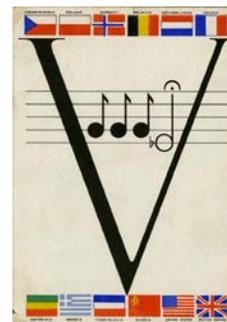
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDxsqgXWYJU>



Beethoven - in a WWII comic book



Beethoven statue standing amid the ruins of the city of Bonn during WWII



V for Victory



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Want the best recordings of the pieces you'll experience on the concert program? Coleman Casey, HSO's dear friend, Director Emeritus and beloved in-house audiophile, offers his recording recommendations of selections featured in our upcoming Masterworks Concert.

Benjamin Britten's atmospheric and terrifying *Four Sea Interludes*, from his opera *Peter Grimes*, should, naturally, be listened to with the composer conducting the London Symphony (DECCA), deep and detailed classic sound.

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is a pillar of the symphonic repertoire and, therefore, has been interpreted by the great orchestras and many not-so-famous ensembles. A favorite recording is Herbert von Karajan's 1962 Berlin Philharmonic version (DG), although most recording reviewers will direct you to Carlos Kleiber and the Vienna Philharmonic (also DG), notable particularly for its robust tempo choices.

LYRICS TO "BETTER DAYS":

[VERSE 1]

*In the middle of the night
Thinking about what I love the most
I feel the need to sing
What my heart has to give
I talk about those I love
About how much I miss them
I talk about pride and strength
Which beat inside my heart*

[CHORUS]

*A new dawn, singing this message from my heart,
Although I'm tied up and alone, I feel as if I'm by your side
Listen to this message brother*

[MORSE MESSAGE]

19 people rescued. You're next. Don't lose hope

[VERSE 2]

*I want to keep on fighting
For my friends, my family, my children
We will soon see each other again
I'm sure better days are coming*

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