

VICS-1170 STEREO



# Beethoven

## SYMPHONY No. 2

Overtures: Fidelio *and* King Stephan

MONTEUX

London Symphony Orchestra



Filippino Lippi: Study for Rape of Europa



Beethoven: Symphony No. 2  
Overtures: Fidelio and King Stephan  
Pierre Monteux  
London Symphony Orchestra

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## BEETHOVEN RECORDINGS BY MONTEUX --- PREVIOUSLY UNRELEASED

The notion that the outward circumstances of a composer's life are reflected in his works—that he will write cheerful music when he is happy and melancholy music when he is sad—can be refuted by any number of masterpieces, notably the Beethoven Second Symphony.

It is bold, buoyant music without a shadow. It radiates confidence and optimism. The word that seems apt to describe it is "joyous." Yet when Beethoven wrote it, in the summer of 1802, he was bowed down with afflictions that eventually wrung from him one of the most eloquent expressions of grief ever put down on paper, the letter to his brothers Karl and Johann known as the "Heiligenstadt Testament."

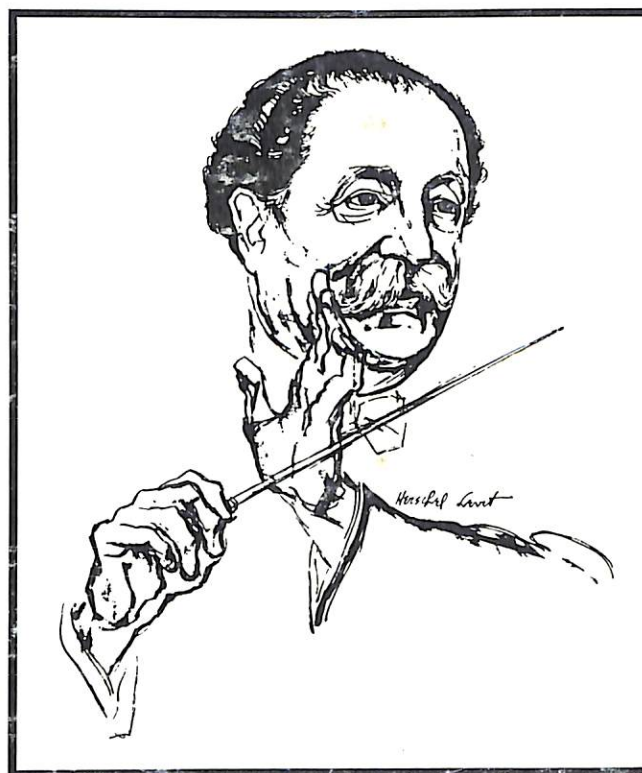
Around 1800, Beethoven had begun to be troubled by a "roaring in the ears," the first symptom of his approaching deafness. Here was a frightening development that threatened to put an end to his career, both as composer and as Vienna's foremost piano virtuoso.

He frantically tried all sorts of "cures" for deafness. Nothing helped. Then came the crushing news that the Countess Giulietta Guicciardi, with whom he was in love and to whom he had proposed, had married someone else.

In 1802 Beethoven went to Heiligenstadt, now a suburb of Vienna but then a country village. There he spent a solitary summer and somehow weathered the profound spiritual crisis that produced the Heiligenstadt Testament. In the autumn, he returned to Vienna—with the manuscript of the Second Symphony.

The Symphony opens with a slow introduction. The tempo quickens as the principal theme is announced by cellos and double basses and taken up by other instruments. A contrasting theme in A major appears in the woodwinds. Development and recapitulation of the two themes take place along traditional lines.

The Larghetto movement is filled with song; one memorable melody treads upon the heels of another. The third movement is a bold new Beethovenian idea, a Scherzo, and frankly labeled as such; its trio is an interest-



ing anticipation of the trio of the Ninth Symphony. A brilliant Finale brings the Symphony to a powerful, affirmative close.

### *Fidelio* Overture

*Fidelio*, Beethoven's only opera, was based on an actual happening of the French Revolution. It is the story of a faithful wife who disguises herself as a boy in order to save her husband, a political prisoner who has been jailed without a fair hearing.

For various performances of the opera, Beethoven wrote four overtures—three named after the heroine, Leonore, the fourth bearing the title of the opera. The *Leonore* No. 3 is now usually played between the two scenes of Act II. It also stands, like the *Leonore* No. 2, as a concert piece. For performances of the opera today, the shorter *Fidelio* Overture is used.

Unlike the *Leonore* Overtures, the *Fidelio* contains no

themes from the opera. It is a self-contained, spirited work which serves to put the audience in a receptive mood for the drama that follows.

### *King Stephan* Overture

King Stephan I of Hungary lived between approximately 977 and 1038 A.D. For his saintly good works he was canonized, his memory being revered on September 2nd.

In February 1812 a new theater was opened in Budapest. To celebrate the occasion, the German dramatist August von Kotzebue supplied a drama entitled "King Stephan, Hungary's First Benefactor." Beethoven was commissioned to write incidental music. Of the ten pieces he wrote, only the Overture has survived.

It begins with an introduction in slow tempo. The flute introduces a theme having somewhat the character of gypsy music. The tempo quickens, and another gypsylike theme is stated by the woodwinds. Flutes and clarinets enter with yet another theme that is an interesting anticipation of the "Ode to Joy" theme of the Ninth Symphony. Elaboration and development of these themes completes the Overture.

—JOHN BRIGGS

Author of *The Collector's Beethoven*

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