

FIFTY-FIRST PROGRAMME OF MUSIC.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827).¹

By CEDRIC H. GLOVER.

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Note.—(2) & (6) may be learnt by children studying the pianoforte. (4) may be learnt by older children learning the violin. (1) numbers 6 and 30 are suitable for class or solo singing by children.

The best small book on Beethoven is that by Dr. Ernest Walker in the "Music of the Masters" series (John Lane). In a short compass it gives a scholarly and lucid exposition of the composer's work with an excellent survey of his music as a whole.

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There is a chapter on Beethoven in Parry's "Studies of the Great Composers" (Routledge). Sir George Grove's "Beethoven and his nine Symphonies" (Novello) should also be consulted.

The music included in this term's syllabus has been selected with a view to giving the student a slight acquaintance with the work of each period in turn. The order given in the syllabus should therefore be strictly adhered to. It is of course impossible to give more than a glimpse of the genius of Beethoven. Many of his greatest works were written for orchestra or quartet, and arrangements of these for the pianoforte, as ever, afford very little satisfaction.

Again, many of the composer's finest works for the pianoforte are beyond the compass of the ordinary amateur executant. The music written during the third period is on the whole beyond the comprehension of children, but the specimens included here are quite simple, although wholly characteristic of the later Beethoven.

(1) (a) "*Faithfu' Johnie*": Beethoven arranged large numbers of English, Welsh and Scotch folk songs for voice with accompaniment of pianoforte, violin and violoncello, to the commission of a certain Thomson, an Edinburgh publisher. They were written for the most part between the years 1814 and 1815, and this song is one of the gems of the collection. There is not much trace of folk song in Beethoven's music as a whole. He introduces Russian folk tunes into two quartets as a compliment to Count Rasoumovsky, to whom they were dedicated. These tunes entirely lose their character in such a sophisticated setting, and the same applies in general to the collection from which this particular song is drawn. Beethoven has in fact attempted to create art songs out of the folk tunes supplied to him, and naturally many of his efforts were foredoomed to failure. His setting of "*Faithfu' Johnie*" however is certainly justified by the result. In spite of the elaborate instrumental ritornello, an atmosphere of simplicity is preserved together with many characteristic touches. The grace notes in bar 14 are doubtless introduced in order to impart local colour to the setting, but bar 6 from the end and the two concluding bars are typical of the composer.

(b) "*Death.*" Beethoven' [sic] genius did not lend itself to logical forms, and almost all his songs are deservedly forgotten. A casual examination of them will soon disclose the fact that, like Mozart, he was careless as to the literary quality of the words, which he set, and the music as often as not bears but little relation to the sentiments expressed in the text. The song under discussion is an exception in so far as the music amply reflects
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the gloom of the poem, which in itself is not a composition of any great value. The ideas are as pietistic as those which inspired many of the texts set by J. S. Bach, but Beethoven with unerring instinct has seized the dramatic possibilities, which the poem offers him: indeed this song will even stand comparison with Schubert's famous "*Death and the Maiden.*" It is interesting to note how Beethoven achieves this sense of horror; notice the bare dissonance in bars 5 and 6, the emptiness of the bare fifths, the third of the chord being omitted, in bar 19 (the last bar of the Mozart E minor violin sonata studied last term), the threefold repetition of the tune in treble, alto and bass parts in bars 19 seq., which produces a most menacing effect. Bars 32-41 are almost in the manner of Schubert himself, and the concluding bars with the pedal E running throughout, and the gloomy diminished sevenths considerably heighten the effect of foreboding.

(c) "*Nature's Praise of God*": This song is not as fine as "*Death*": it is too square cut and rhetorical, though there is more strength and individuality in it than in most of Beethoven's songs. It enjoyed a vogue in years gone by which was denied to other and better songs of the composer, and is still occasionally heard.

(2) *Bagatelles: op. 33, nos. 3 and 6*: It has already been noted that Beethoven's genius was more at home in epic than in lyric forms. He produced large quantities of small works for the pianoforte, sets of variations on popular tunes, dances and such like, but the vast bulk are of no particular interest, and it remained for the later Romantics, Schumann and Chopin, to translate the lyric into sound. There are however three sets of Bagatelles, which, together with

two or three of the sets of variations are of outstanding excellence. The title, Bagatelle, is curious and reflects the spirit of the little pieces rather than the form in which they are cast. The only other notable use of the word in music is for a charming suite by Dvorak for pianoforte, two violins and violoncello. The set of seven comprised in opus 33 were probably written many years prior to publication, and are characteristic of the composers' [sic] first period.

Number 3 is a pleasant little piece in pure first period style, modelled on the gigue of the old suite. The modulation from F into the remote key of D major (the major of the relative minor) is a characteristic touch, and its constant recurrence gives the Bagatelle its individual flavour. Equally noteworthy are the bars of pure Mozart following the second repeat bar, and the conventional XVIII century sequence in the third and fourth bars from the end. This piece is in binary form, the first subject

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extending to the second repeat bar, and the second subject occupying the next fourteen bars. Both subjects are recapitulated with slight embellishments, and without any development section.

Number 6 is also very much in the style of Mozart, though the coda with the tonic pedal shows an advance on the normal XVIII century idiom. The piece consists of a little ternary tune many times repeated, sometimes in its original form, sometimes with decorations, and the coda already mentioned. Both these Bagatelles are diffuse in style, and have none of the brevity of most of the specimens in the two later collections.

(3) *Pianoforte Sonata in C sharp minor*: This sonata is commonly styled "The Moonlight Sonata," but the title was not given with the composer's authority. The music in this sonata is strictly "absolute" music; it is contrary to the composer's intention for the listener to consider the sonata as an attempt to illustrate musically moonlight or the like. There are examples of so-called "programme" music among Beethoven's works—music which attempts to imitate storms or battles—but as a rule the composer only attempts to conjure up the emotions inspired by such concrete things: he would not imitate the storm but would attempt to rouse emotions in the listener, which are associated with storms. There is certainly a distinct emotional basis to this sonata, but it is idle to try and define it in any but the vaguest terms, and the title, which is commonly bestowed on it, is very misleading.

This sonata was published, together with that in E flat, as opus 27. Both were written in 1801 and are styled "sonata quasi una fantasia." They are, however, orthodox sonatas, but there is a greater interdependence in sentiment between the movements than had hitherto been customary; the composer intended each work to be played straight through without a pause between the movements.

1st movement: After four bars of the triplet figure which persists throughout the movement over a slowly moving bass, the subject enters. There is only the one subject and it is treated rather in the manner of the chorale in the choral prelude of the older composers; each line of the chorale was separated from the next by a few bars of the accompanying figure, and similarly here, though the gaps are not so marked. The general effect is that of a song. The song ends ten bars from the conclusion of the movement, but the rhythm of the first bars of the song persists in the bass of the coda for six bars.

2nd movement is a scherzo and trio and therefore in direct contrast to the seriousness of the first movement. Beethoven

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evolved the scherzo from the minuet of the XVIII century sonata. It is in his hands a light and rollicking dance, in which he often gives full rein to his curious and perverse sense of humour. The trio with its syncopations oddly foreshadows a mannerism of Schumann.

3rd movement. In this movement there is a return to the serious atmosphere of the first movement, tempered with a new element of restlessness and feverish energy. It is in ordinary sonata form, the second subject in the minor key of the dominant (G sharp minor) enters at bar 21 after an extensive treatment of the stormy first subject. After the double bar there follows an orthodox development section devoted to a discussion of both subjects in various keys, no new matter being introduced. Note particularly the dominant pedal point in bar 23 after the double bar, which leads into the recapitulation at bar 38 after the double bar. The first subject is repeated somewhat curtailed in its original key, and is followed by the second subject normally transposed into the same key as the first subject. At bar 96 after the double bar the long coda starts: it is composed of material taken from the first and second subjects interspersed with rapid arpeggios and pauses.

(4) *Sonata in F for violin and pianoforte*: Beethoven wrote ten sonatas for this combination, of which that dedicated to the violinist, Rudolf Kreutzer, is undeservedly the most famous and supplied Tolstoy with the title of his famous novel. The Sonata in F, sometimes for no apparent reason styled the "Spring" sonata, is a first period work, full of charm and thoroughly characteristic of the composer.

1st movement is in ordinary sonata form. The violin leads off with the first subject (A), which is later taken up by the pianoforte: the second subject (B) in the dominant appears at bar 38. The development section (M) after the double bar, is entirely taken up with the elaboration of bars from (B); the recapitulation starts at bar 39 (after the double bar), the pianoforte in this case giving out (A) and the violin repeating it at bar 49 (counting from the double bar). (B) is normally transposed in the key of (A) on its reappearance. There is a lengthy Coda founded chiefly on the first bar of (A), which occurs now on the violin and now in the bass of the pianoforte.

2nd movement is characteristic of many first period slow movements. They are usually the least interesting movements in the early sonatas and quartets, and, like this specimen, very influenced by Mozart. This movement has one subject given out by the pianoforte over a conventional bass. In the 10th bar it is repeated by the violin. At bar 18 there follows some padding

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leading up to a florid repetition of the subject at bar 30. The subject is resumed by the violin at bar 38 in B flat minor (the relative minor) and the key sequence from here onwards should be closely followed. The "enharmonic change" at bar 46 from G flat major to F sharp minor is particularly effective. The violin part however throughout is dull and ineffective, especially in bar 54 seq., though the corresponding figure on the pianoforte in bar 38 is quite suitable for that instrument.

Scherzo and trio. The scherzo is a splendid movement and full of humour, a comic effect being obtained by the violin continually imitating the pianoforte but lagging a beat behind, as in

bars 11, 12 and 13. The lumbering trio with a pedal point in the first half is a fine contrast to the delicate scherzo. If the slow movement owed much to Mozart, the scherzo has a completely original flavour about it.

Rondo. Beethoven extended the old XVIII century Rondo form by the addition of a repetition of the second subject and a coda. The difference can be best illustrated thus:—old style, A: B: A: O: A. Beethoven, A: B: A: O: A: B: Coda, where A, B and O are three different subjects. The Rondo opens with (A), a simple but very beautiful tune, eminently suited to the singing qualities of the violin. (B) enters at bar 39 in the contrasted key of C minor. (A) recurs at bar 57 but without its second half. (O) in D minor begins at bar 74, (A) in its complete form returning at bar 113, followed by (B) at bar 162 in the remote key of E flat minor. The Coda begins at bar 190 with variants of (A) and with new matter at bar 207 and a most lovely new little tune at bar 225.

(To be continued).

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(Continued from page 646).

THE stirring of XIX century romanticism was already noticeable in the mature work of Mozart, and with him the formality of the XVIII century passed out of music. Beethoven's contribution to the development of music is akin to that of J. S. Bach and Richard Wagner. Mozart brought to perfection the style which had already been formed and lay ready to his hand: he was a master craftsman. Beethoven was an innovator and a daring experimenter. The speed at which the march of progress now went forward is remarkable. It is not easy for the casual investigator to distinguish the early and the mature compositions of XVII and XVIII century composers: indeed some of Bach's greatest work was the product of his young days. It is however possible to mark an advance over a period of years: for example, between the work of Ph. E. Bach and his successors or between Corelli and Tartini. Beethoven on the other hand achieved an immense advance in his own life time. His early work is much in the style of Mozart, whereas his latest music had to wait some sixty years for any general acceptance, so far was it in advance of the musical capacity of the composer's generation. Throughout the XIX century there are similar examples of this quick development: it is only necessary to compare works such as Verdi's "Il Trovatore" with the same composer's "Falstaff" or Wagner's "Rienzi" with "Die Meistersinger," and this will be at once apparent. This process is still going on in a more intensified form among contemporary composers: Scriabin's early work was largely based on existing models, but before his untimely death he had evolved "Prometheus." Similarly Stravinsky, the most discussed composer of the day, began by writing music, which, in spite of its originality, owed much to the influence of his predecessors. Though still a young man he has already progressed far beyond the comprehension of the general public of to-day, and is experienc-

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ing the same want of sympathy and the same hasty condemnation as Beethoven endured a hundred years ago.

Beethoven was born in 1770 at Bonn. Unlike Bach and Mozart, he received no regular musical instruction in his early years, but gained experience from playing in the local theatre

orchestra, and had some composition lessons, when a young man, from the court organist. It is recorded that, whilst on a visit to Vienna at the age of seventeen, he met Mozart, who gave him some lessons and proved so strong an influence on all his early work. In 1792 Haydn passed through Bonn and young Beethoven received so much encouragement from him that he returned to Vienna, where he was to remain all the remainder of his life. He became Haydn's pupil, but the association was not a happy one owing to the difference in temperament and age, and Beethoven eventually transferred his allegiance to the great theorist Albrechtsberger.

Beethoven soon made a place for himself among the wealthy and aristocratic amateurs of Vienna, first as an executant and eventually as a composer. His life was however an unhappy one, as he was always harassed by poverty and worry. He possessed the artistic temperament in an extreme degree, with all its concomitant disadvantages—boorishness, gullibility, and want of method. In 1798 there were premonitions of deafness, which eventually became a complete barrier between him and the outer world. Beethoven died in 1827, one year before his great contemporary Schubert.

It is difficult to realise the small space of time which separates the dates on which Mozart and Beethoven were respectively born: the former so essentially belongs to the old world, the latter seems in some ways almost our contemporary. Mozart was the last of the race of court composers; Beethoven was inspired by the new democracy, which was just emerging and was a composer of the people. Mozart could write music without any effort; Beethoven on the other hand worked over his material for years and was constantly revising. It is not therefore difficult to understand why Beethoven attained to heights which Mozart never reached. Another factor, which goes far to explain the apparent modernity of Beethoven's music compared with Mozart's, is the sudden growth of the orchestra, which coincided with Beethoven's period of activity. There is a certain archaism in Beethoven's instrumentation, but far more feeling for orchestral colour and sureness of effect than was the case with his predecessors. Keyboard instruments too were being improved. The pianoforte had at last ousted the harpsichord and clavichord, and on Beethoven rested the task of laying the foundations of

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pianoforte technique: he carried it far beyond the capacity of most of the executants of his day. Mozart it is true wrote for the pianoforte, but a comparison between the sonata in last term's syllabus and the Beethoven sonata included in this term's will show how bounded Mozart was by the limitations of the harpsichord technique in which he was brought up.

Beethoven's life is commonly divided up into three periods. The first period includes all works written before 1802, the second ends about 1814, and the third with the composer's death in 1827. The first period is the least important, though it contains many of the best known of Beethoven's compositions, such as the Sonata Pathétique and the Septet, works which met with instant acceptance and are only now being displaced in popular favour by the maturer works of the second period. The first period is experimental in character, though the composer was working on traditional lines. There is generally speaking a certain diffuseness in all the work of this period and often an inability to sustain the interest of the listener for long at a stretch. There is much charm, but no great emotional depth, the slow movements in particular often seeming shallow and insipid. The second period contains the four great symphonies, numbers 3, 5, 6 and 7, and numerous other works of a like calibre, which

represent the composer at the height of his powers. There is more conciseness in the music of this period, and a greater mastery in the development of material. The dry formalism of the XVIII century, so evident in the decorative effects, which abound in the slow movements of the first period, has given way to an abundant richness of sentiment and to an emotional depth unknown in music since the death of J. S. Bach. The third period is even now a closed book to the larger public. At the end of his life Beethoven reverted to the experimental phase of his youth, but with all the experiences of the middle years to guide him. In the music produced at this time there is a thinness of texture and an economy of material curiously reminiscent of the most advanced composers of our own age. Some of the output of this period seems the product of a worn and disappointed old man: a lack of freshness is felt and a bias towards mere intellectuality, which often leads to dullness and aridity. Coupled with this however are moments of an almost unearthly beauty, never reached while the composer was still in direct contact with his fellow men. It is the music of introspection, though often of a curiously impersonal character. To this period belong the composer's two greatest works, the *Missa Solemnis* and the *Choral Symphony*, both failures in so far as they are on far too vast a scale for the medium employed. Performances of these

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two works are seldom wholly satisfactory, and the sense of effort and strain on the part of the singers in the choral sections always leaves a feeling of disappointment.

Notes on Music Syllabus (continued):—

(5) *Symphony in C minor*: It is almost impossible in a few words to deal adequately with this wonderful work, and the student is referred to Sir George Grove's excellent chapter in "Beethoven and his Nine Symphonies." There is no composition in the whole of music which has received more attention from writers and critics, from Wagner onwards. It still remains the most popular item in a popular programme, and is certainly the most frequently performed of any work on a corresponding scale. It is difficult to convey much idea of the greatness of this symphony through the medium of the gramophone or the pianoforte. No study of Beethoven would however be complete without some acquaintance with it, and every opportunity should be taken during the term of attending the many concerts at which it will be performed.

This symphony, the fifth of the nine, was composed between 1805 and 1808, and was published together with the *Pastoral symphony* in 1809. It breathes the very essence of romanticism and is the product of a man at the very height of his creative power. Many have tried to translate the emotional contents of this symphony into words, but its subtilty evades them all. It is however amazingly personal music, born of a real agony of soul and far removed from anything that had ever been heard in music before.

1st movement. The opening phrase is one of the classical tags of music. Said to have been suggested by the note of a yellow hammer, it is commonly likened to Fate knocking at the door. The movement is in ordinary sonata form and perfectly simple to analyse. Note how the rhythm of the opening bars persists in the bass during the second subject (bar 65 seq.) and forces its way into the open sixteen bars before the double bar. The development section proceeds on normal lines, and is followed by the recapitulation. The power of the opening bars is here accidentally enhanced by the fact that Beethoven's trumpets were still of a rudimentary character, and could not shift quickly from key to key. Hence the magnificent open thirds and

fourths in bar 124 seq. (counting from the double bar). The sad little passage for oboe in bar 144 after the double bar is noteworthy. After the second subject has been repeated there is an extended coda based on fragments of the two principal subjects, and leading to a final outburst of the first phrase of the movement.

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2nd movement is a very elaborate air and variations. The "air" in this case consists of three distinct sections and a short coda: it occupies the first forty-eight bars of the movement, and is followed by two variations, one beginning in semiquavers and the other in demisemiquavers. The second variation contains the famous E flat (bar 99), which some early conductors wished to correct to F, thus spoiling the whole effect of the melting of the E flat into E natural. After this the close correspondence of variation to air is deserted and the movement becomes more fee [sic] in form, though the attention of the composer is still confined to the material of the "Air." There are again several passages which scandalized Beethoven's contemporaries: such are the long passage for wind instruments in contrary motion (bar 135 seq.), the curious passage at bar 161 seq., where violins and violas play the chord of E flat major in various rhythms and are answered by the violoncellos: both are good examples of Beethoven's perverse sense of humour. The end is wonderfully noble, especially bar 226 seq., which seems the culmination of the whole movement.

3rd movement and finale. The composer quits the calm and serene atmosphere of the second movement, and returns to the storm and stress of the first. The third movement is really a scherzo, though not so designated. The first strain is curiously like the first subject of the last movement of Mozart's G minor symphony, studied last term. In interval the first eight notes are identical in each. Beethoven himself noticed this resemblance, and copied the Mozart theme opposite his own in one of his sketch books. The second strain at bar 20, is strongly reminiscent of the "Fate" theme of the first movement, with its threefold repetition of a single note. The trio is fugal and extremely humorous, as the fussy quaver figure is given to the violoncelli and double basses. The second part of the trio starts with a series of misfires but soon melts away into the mysterious scherzo, which gradually fades away until the soft and insistent drum taps on C (bar 89 after the change of key), ever increasing in strength, herald the approach of the finale. This passage is universally recognised as one of the most wonderful inspirations in music.

The entrance of the broad triumphal march tune of the finale on the full orchestra reinforced by trombones affords unspeakable relief after the gloom and stress of the scherzo and first movement: doubt and despair seem to give way to certainty and an infectious optimism. The march tune is quickly followed by two others (bars 26 and 44) in a similar vein and then by the second subject proper at bar 64, this movement being in sonata form. The development section can be easily followed and is succeeded by the dramatic interpolation of the scherzo, a most masterly stroke of

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genius. This leads into the recapitulation of the principal themes followed by a coda of 150 bars. The coda, in spite of a curiously unimpressive entry on the bassoon, is one of the most lovely things in this altogether lovely movement. It gathers speed and impetuosity as it goes along and ends in a perfect delirium of joy.

(6) *Bagatelles opus 119 and opus 126*: There are two sets of Bagatelles published during the third period, which suffer from a most undeserved neglect at the hands of pianists. These sets appeared as opus 119 (1821-1822) and opus 126 (1823). Of the eleven included in opus 119, numbers 2 and 5 had certainly been sketched many years before the years of publication. They are all however good examples of that concise writing and rather intangible beauty associated with the third period: very highly polished little gems, there is also a certain waywardness about them, which is not so evident in the composer's earlier work.

Six of the opus 119 set are included in the syllabus, numbers 1 to 4, 9 and 11. They do not call for detailed comment. Number 1 is like an old minuet and trio. Number 3 is curiously styled "A l'Allemande" but is a real Beethoven scherzo: the old Allemande was in common time and slower and heavier in character. Number 9 is a waltz, rather in the manner of Chopin. Number 2 is earlier in style and a study in decoration, the musical box effect at the end is humorous. Number 4 also betrays its early origin: it is rather Mendelssohnian with its preponderance of sixths and thirds. Number 11 is one of the gems of the collection, and one of the loveliest things written by the composer. It is a pure third period tune, exquisitely wrought. The difficulty experienced in writing a square cut piece like this without lapsing into the banality of a hymn tune is notorious, and one which Mendelssohn rarely surmounted. There is no touch of the commonplace here in spite of the wonderful economy in notes. Dissection is superfluous, but the second chord should be noted: it is an open chord (without the third). Most composers would have written D in the bass instead of F and sacrificed the beautiful rocking movement of the first bar. Number 11 is a good example of a binary tune, number 9 similarly of a ternary tune. The former consists of two sections and four bars of epilogue, the latter of three sections, of which the first and third are identical.

Opus 126, number 5 is ternary in form, and has that curious thinness so characteristic of the output of the last years. It is pastoral in character and the reiterated C in the bass of the middle section is like the drone of a bagpipe: the C sharp in bar 20 is a case of the waywardness alluded to above.

¹ Notes on the Life of Beethoven will appear in the October number.