

# Beethoven's Seventh Symphony Op. 92

for two oboes, two clarinets, two horns, two bassoons and double bassoon

Pierluigi Destro

Transcriptions of instrumental works for wind ensemble were very fashionable in Beethoven's time, and were conceived with a view to publicity and profit; therefore, such transcriptions were often more famous than the originals themselves, which fact is proven by the great number of extant original manuscripts and first editions in archives and libraries throughout Europe

Between February and May, 1814, Ludwig van Beethoven composed the third version of *Fidelio* op. 72b, with the help of librettist Georg Friedrich Treitschke for the poetic text; the first performance took place on May 23rd, 1815 at the Kanter-Theater in Vienna, and Viennese Artaria Editions were the first to publish a transcription for voice and piano in 1814, followed, in 1816, by the Parisian editor Farrenc, who published the score with a French version of the text

On January 27th, 1815, the newspaper *Wiener Zeitung* reported the publication of *Fidelio* transcribed for two oboes, two clarinets, two horns, two bassoons and a double bassoon; this version had been specifically commissioned to clarinetist-composer Wenzel Sedlak by Artaria

W Sedlak was born on August 4th, 1776 in Jesborzitz (Bohemia); from 1805 he served Principe Auesperger as clarinetist; in 1808 he was Prince Liechtensteins Harmonie Kapellmeister at Felsperger in Moravia; starting in 1821 he collaborated with the first Wind quintet in Vienna; he died, probably in Vienna, on November 20th, 1851. It is thought that Sedlak succeeded oboist-composer Joseph Triebensee (Wittingau, 1772 - Prague, 1846), who had served Liechtenstein until 1809 and had composed some notable works for wind ensemble (two oboes, two clarinets, two horns, two bassoons), among which the transcriptions of two operas by W. A. Mozart: *La clemenza di Tito* and *Don Giovanni*.

Sedlak is thought to have transcribed a great number of operas 4; most of the titles in the following list are certainly his work, while for others the attribution is uncertain:

F. Auber, *La Musette de Portici*, *Der Orlum*; L. van Beethoven, *Fidelio*; V. Bellini, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, *I Puritani di Scozia*, *Beatrice di Tenda*, *Norma*, *La Sonnambula*, *La Straniera*; F. A. Boilodieu, *Johann in Paris*; L. Cherubini, *Faniska*; G. Donizetti, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *LElisir damore*, *Torquato Tasso*, *Marino Faliero*; W. R. Gallenberg, *Alfred der Grosse*, *Ottavio Pinelli*; A. Gytowets, *Hoczeit der Thetis*, *Die Pagen von Herzoge von Vendome*, *Adalbert and Persuis*; L. Gytowets, *Zauberschlaf*; F. Herold, *Zampa*, *Zweikampf oder Schreiber Wiese bey Paris*; N. Isouard, *Jaconde*, *Joseph und der Kleinen Dieblin*; G. Liverati, *David oder Goliaths Tod*; G. Meyerbeer, *Gli Ugonotti*; G. S. Mercadante, *Anacreonte in Samo*; F. Paer, *Sargino*, *Achille*, *Lintrigo amoroso*; S. Pavesi, *Marc Antonio*, *Il Principe di Taranto*; L. Ricci: *Il nuovo Figaro*, *Il disertore per amore*; G. Rossini, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Elisabetta Regina d'Inghilterra*, *L'italiana in Algeri*, *Semiramide*, *L'Assedio di Corinto*, *Tancredi*, *Zelmira*; F. X. Sussmayer, *Der Retter in Gefahr*; I. Umlauff: *Paul et Rosette*; P. Wranitzky, *Waldmadchen*

Such is the cultural context of the publication, in 1816, of a transcription of Beethoven's Symphony n. 7 op. 92, for two oboes, two clarinets, two horns, two bassoons and a double bassoon. This work was commissioned to an unknown transcriber by the Viennese publisher S. A. Steiner. There are many similarities with transcription techniques used in *Fidelio*, but the attribution to Sedlak has not been proven, nor can it be inferred by using traditional paleographic methods.

Beethoven composed this Symphony between the autumn of 1811 and May 13th, 1812 a period of spiritual calm and material well-being, apart from his increasing deafness. The manuscript of this composition is kept at the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in Berlin; it is dedicated to Count Moritz von Fries, chamberlain to the Austrian Emperor, and was first performed on December 8th, 1813 at the Great Hall of the Viennese University, conducted by Beethoven himself, in the course of a concert organised by J. N. Mälzel in favour of war-victims of the Hanau battle. The programme for the evening included Symphony no. 7, the *Victory of Wellington* (or *Victory Symphony*) and two marches, one by Dussek and one by Ignaz Pleyel, written for Mälzels 'mechanic trumpeter' (or Panharmonikon). Many Viennese

musicians, stimulated by the evenings patriotic character, played together with other members of the orchestra: A. Salieri conducted a band which imitated gun-shots backstage, Schuppanzigh played first violin and L. Spohr, I. Moscheles, A. J. Romberg, and D. C. M. Dragonetti were also present. N. Hummel took his place at the percussion, and young G. Meyerbeer, playing the cymbals, was the object of Beethoven's rage because he didn't always come in perfectly on time. Franz Schubert, who was fifteen at the time, was also present among the public.

Following is Spohr's opinion on Beethoven's manner of conducting:

Though I had seen him several times, he surprised me immensely. He communicated expression signs to the orchestra by means of the most peculiar body movements; thus, for a *sforzando* he would violently open his arms, which he formerly kept crossed; for a *piano* he would huddle up, getting smaller and smaller as the sound become softer; for a *crescendo* he would gradually rise, until, upon reaching a *forte*, he would stand up straight and sometimes, unwittingly, shout: *forte*

Following is the review which appeared on the Leipzig Gazette:

L. van Beethoven, considered one of our best composers of instrumental music, has now triumphed with the performance of his most important works. A large orchestra, made up of the best and foremost Viennese performers, gathered with great patriotic zeal. Each one wanted to show his gratitude for the success the German nation is having in the present war. Every musician wanted to take part in the performance of a composition which made all hearts beat fast. Thus, thanks to such unanimity, the orchestra, conducted by Beethoven, provoked heartfelt enthusiasm for its precision in performance. The most successful piece was the new symphony (the 7th). This new creation of Beethoven's genius must be heard in order to understand its beauty and enjoy it. The *Andante* was repeated, and it was moving both for connoisseurs and mere concert-goers. As concerns the *Victory Symphony*, it must be said that it conveys the sounds of a battle very appropriately [ . ]

After the success obtained with the Symphony, Beethoven congratulated the members of the orchestra in the following terms:

*It was a reunion of rare talents, animated by ardent fervour for a just cause. Every member of the orchestra, no matter what his role was, tried to contribute with an excellent performance, inspired by the thought that he could be useful to his nation by means of his art. As Mr Schuppanzigh guided the violins with his fiery and expressive way of playing, Mr Salieri, first Kappellmeister, would follow, guiding timpani and bass drums. The extraordinarily talented Mr Spohr and Mr Mayseder did not refuse to play in the lower ranks, as did Mr Siboni and Mr Giuliani, two notable musicians. I was conducting, having composed the symphony, otherwise I would have gladly taken Mr Hummel's place at the bass drum, since my heart was filled with love for my nation and a desire to help it with all my might. But, above all, it is Mälzel who deserves a word of praise. He was the one who actively organised the evening in every detail; I must thank him especially, because he gave me the opportunity to offer my compositions for a public cause [ ]*

The fact that the transcription for wind ensemble was issued by the same publisher and on the same year as Beethoven's original allows us to suppose that the transcriber worked on a manuscript version of the score, or on un-corrected proofs. This would explain the numerous errors and omissions in the only extant print of the transcription. A hypothetical supervision, on the part of Beethoven, of the transcription of his works has never been fully documented; the letter to Steiner, following the publication of the score, is significant in this sense:

*I'm bored with the whole matter of this symphony, as unfortunately neither score nor parts are correct. In the copies which have already been printed, mistakes should be corrected with by Schlemmer! [the copyist] using Indian ink, otherwise you must print and distribute a list of all the errors. The score, as it is, could have been engraved by the clumsiest of copyists; it is lacking in accuracy and has defects which have never heretofore appeared in any of my works. This is a consequence of your scarce attention concerning corrections, and of your never having sent me the proofs for revision. You have treated the public negligently, and the innocent author's reputation will suffer.*

A comparison between Beethoven's original and the transcription for wind ensemble allows us to evaluate the culture of this period, by means of the transcriber's ability and sensitivity in treating such weighty musical material.

I believe that the transcription for wind ensemble can be as enjoyable for the public as the original itself. The unknown transcriber shows his skill in treating Beethoven's original with disciplined respect; the agility of the melodic line is well sustained by the considerable timbric intensity which can be obtained with this type of ensemble, and all instruments participate in the effort to preserve the harmonic richness of the original.

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[Note: A complete bar-by-bar listing of the revisions is available from the author p.destro@pd.nettuno.it]

This new version was presented worldwide for the first time at the fairs of Frankfurt and Paris in March-May 1998, where it was reviewed by Radio France as the best work of the year. It is published by Ut Orpheus (Bologna) score and parts are available separately from

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*Comparison of the original with the Wind Transcription  
for two oboes, two clarinets, two horns, two bassons and double bassoon*

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## First movement Poco sostenuto - Vivace

### Original version.

Key: A major; 450 measures Instruments used: two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings. This is Beethoven's only composition in A major, not only among the symphonies, but also among all of his orchestral works. An initial 62-measure Lento precedes the Vivace; this is the last case in which Beethoven uses a slow introductory movement in a symphony.

### Transcription.

Key: G major; 450 measures Instruments used: two oboes, two clarinets, two horns, two bassoons and a double bassoon. The rhythmic pattern of the initial chords is as in the original, with a forte played by all instruments, while the theme is played by the oboe followed by the clarinet, horns and wind ensemble (see measures 1-8). The transitional character of the section preceding the Vivace is preserved, developing into the repeated notes and rests which characterize the main theme of the Allegro.

## Second movement Allegretto

### Original version.

Key: C major; 278 measures. The main theme, as famous as that of the funeral march in the Eroica, is played by the string sections, beginning with the lower register and rising with growing intensity to the treble. At first, the theme is played by alto and cello (measure 27), followed by the 2nd violins (measure 51), who repeat it for the third time in measure 67. A transition to a major key throws a ray of light (measure 102); "the fugal section breaks the charm, and science takes the place of infinite poetry for a brief period". The movement ends on a six-four chord played by the wind section, as was in the beginning.

### Transcription

Key: B flat major; 277 measures. In the transcription, the theme is played by the bassoon (measure 27); the clarinet repeats it from measure 51 through 67. The transcriber purposely omits measure 253. This omission alters Beethoven's masterly balance, obtained by means of a phrasing divided by twos, typical of this section. The missing measure has been reconstructed, inserted in brackets, and numbered 252bis.

## Third movement Presto - Presto meno assai - Presto

### Original version.

Key: F major; 653 measures. In his notes, Beethoven expresses the intention to entitle this movement «Minuetto», then «Scherzo»; in the final version, the author only writes Presto. The fresh gaiety of the main theme, emphasized by the presence of an acciaccatura, goes from the bass to the treble, then develops into an imitative passage characterized by rhythmic and timbric vitality. The insertion of a Trio slower and pastoral in character between measures 149 and 409, causes the first theme to merge with that of the Trio in the final section (Coda). Following is the structure of the composition:

<u>A</u>	<u>B (Trio I°)</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B1 (Trio II°)</u>	<u>A1</u>	<u>CODA</u>
bar	149	236	409	496	641

### Transcription:

Key: F major; 417 measures. The transcriber omits the reprise B1 (Trio II) and A1 (Presto), thus reducing the composition to the following:

<u>A</u>	<u>B (Trio I°)</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>CODA</u>
bar	149	236	405

## Fourth movement Allegro con brio

### Original version

Key: A major; 465 measures. The introduction's two full chords separated by a measures rest is played by the entire orchestra. The main theme, emphasized by repeats and continuous sforzando, gives the impression of a hymn to life. In the development, only the first theme appears, albeit in C major. The ending is characterized by the same two chords heard at the beginning, which end the contrapuntal section. Following is the structure of the composition:

<u>Exposition</u>	<u>Development</u>	<u>Recapitulation</u>
bar	126	225

### Transcription

Key: G major; 361 measures. The transcriber omits the entire development section, thus reducing the structure of this movement to the following:

<u>Exposition</u>	<u>Recapitulation</u>
bar	126