



BEETHOVEN Symphonies

2 AND 7

Gianandrea
Noseda



National Symphony Orchestra
The Kennedy Center



National Symphony Orchestra

Gianandrea Noseda conductor

Ludwig van Beethoven

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 36

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| 1. Adagio molto - Allegro con brio | 11'45" |
| 2. Larghetto | 11'03" |
| 3. Scherzo: Allegro | 3'33" |
| 4. Allegro molto | 6'19" |

Symphony No. 7 in A major, Op. 92

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------|
| 5. Poco sostenuto - Vivace | 13'25" |
| 6. Allegretto | 7'47" |
| 7. Presto - Assai meno presto | 9'12" |
| 8. Allegro con brio | 8'02" |

Symphony No. 2 was recorded live on May 24 and 25, 2023 and Symphony No. 7 was recorded live on May 12 and 13, 2023 in the Concert Hall of The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C.

Recording producer Blanton Alspaugh, *Soundmirror*.

Recording engineer Mark Donahue, *Soundmirror*. **Mastering engineer** Mark Donahue, *Soundmirror*.

Executive Producers Nigel Boon and Genevieve Twomey, *National Symphony Orchestra*.

BEETHOVEN Symphonies Abstracted Art, © 2019 Mo Willems **Cover design** Scott Sosebee.

Orchestra photos Scott Suchman. **Gianandrea Noseda photo** Stefano Pasqualetti. **Mo Willems photo** Trix Willems.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 36 (1801–1802)

Beethoven's so-called "heroic" style, which we see in full bloom in the Third Symphony ("Eroica"), was not born overnight. Almost every one of Beethoven's early works has something in it that anticipates the explosion of the "Eroica" and the compositions that followed it.

In his First Symphony (1799–1800), Beethoven basically followed the outlines of a late Haydn symphony, though signs of a new musical world taking shape were numerous. In the Second Symphony, the occasional echoes of Haydn and Mozart are of secondary importance as an entirely new symphonic style is unfolding before our ears.

Soon after the first *fortissimo* D that begins the symphony's opening "Adagio molto," it becomes clear that we are listening to no ordinary symphonic introduction. The first great change is in the orchestration: the opening melody of the "Adagio" is given to the woodwinds while the strings are silent—it is the first indication that the winds will have much more to do in this symphony than merely doubling the strings and taking a solo or two. When the woodwind melody is repeated and expanded by the strings, we know that the equal balance between these orchestral sections was a primary concern of the composer's.

There are other novelties. The music starts out on a series of modulations to distant tonalities; the strings scurry up and down in passages and rapid thirty-second notes into which the horns interject some strong off-beat accents. One can recognize Mozart's "Prague" Symphony (in the same key of D major) as a model, but Beethoven packed a far greater number of events into little more than two minutes of music.

The same intensity continues in the ensuing "Allegro con brio." The first theme (its simplicity and the repeated D's again recall the "Prague") starts *piano*, but it is not long before a full orchestral *forte* is reached. The woodwinds and strings take turns as they play the second theme, a brilliant march suddenly interrupted by a *fortissimo* dissonance and, after it, a sudden silence. The same elements are elaborated upon in a varied and exciting development. The recapitulation is followed by one of Beethoven's first grand codas, expanded almost to a second development section.

Whereas the first movement emphasized rhythmic action, the exquisite second-movement "Larghetto" is all melody and lyricism. The themes, again arranged in sonata form, unfold with a grace and elegance that was new in Beethoven's music. This is a side of Beethoven's style that found continuation

in Schubert. Despite occasional turbulences, the movement preserves its serene and peaceful quality to the end.

The third movement is Beethoven's first orchestral "Scherzo" that is so labeled in the score. (The corresponding movement in the First Symphony, although scherzo-like in many respects, was still called a Minuet.) In the 1790s, Beethoven had written numerous scherzos, so designated, in his piano sonatas and chamber works; but in the Second Symphony he took the concept further than he had ever done before. The humorous nature of the movement is accentuated by the reduction of the thematic material to a single measure, its three rapid quarter notes constantly played at various pitches and different dynamic levels—and always differently from what one would expect. In contrast, the Trio has a continuous melody, although again a disarmingly simple one, consisting merely of parts of an ascending and descending D major scale. Beethoven was to come back to these D major scale patterns later, fashioning the Trios of both his Seventh and Ninth Symphonies from the same material.

The finale starts with another Beethovenian joke, a two-note motif played in a high register and answered by a "growl" an octave and a half lower. The entire movement is energized by the sparkling wit of this opening. Between the appearances of the two-note motif and its complement, there are some more expansive lyrical melodies. In the final measures of the symphony, Beethoven derives a brilliant coda from this returning motif, and a whole magnificent and powerful conclusion grows out of that humorous little phrase.



Symphony No. 2 by Mo Willems

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Symphony No. 7 in A major, Op. 92 (1811–1812)

I can distinctly remember the day I heard Beethoven's Seventh Symphony for the first time. I was five or six years old, and a recording with Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony was playing on the radio. I was completely mesmerized by the performance, and when the fourth movement began, I jumped to my feet and started to dance.

About a dozen years later, I learned about Richard Wagner's description of the symphony as the "apotheosis of the dance," and although I wasn't sure what an apotheosis was, I could certainly agree that dance was at the center of what this symphony was all about. Even later, I became acquainted with other attempts by 19th-century writers to capture the work's essence, invoking political revolutions, military parades, masquerade balls, Bacchic orgies, and more. Finally, about 25 years after my first encounter with the symphony, I read Maynard Solomon's excellent book on Beethoven, in which the author showed how all these fanciful interpretations were really variations on a single theme, that of the "carnival or festival, which, from time immemorial, has temporarily lifted the burden of perpetual subjugation to the prevailing social and natural order by periodically suspending all customary privileges, norms, and imperatives."

In other words, generations of listeners have felt that Beethoven's Seventh Symphony is a wild celebration of life and freedom. While the Ninth Symphony is a fierce struggle with fate that is won only when the "Ode to Joy" is intoned, from the start the Seventh radiates joy and happiness that not even the second movement (to some, a funeral march) can seriously compromise.

The dance feelings associated with the work find their explanation in the fact that each of the four movements is based on a single rhythmic figure that is present almost without interruption, (the third movement has two such figures, one for the Scherzo proper and one for the central Trio section). In the first movement, we may see how the predominant rhythm gradually comes to life during the transition from the lengthy slow introduction to the fast tempo.

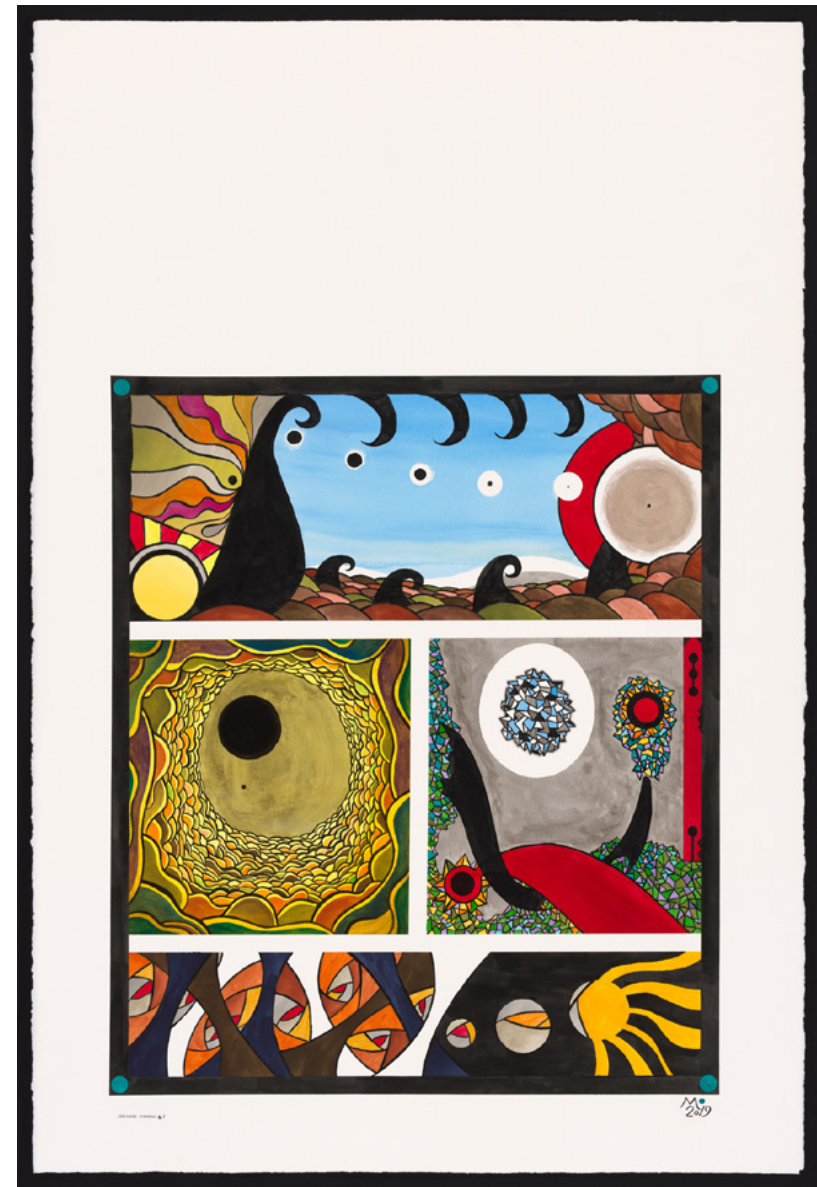
Every rock-and-roll lover knows how intoxicating the constant repetition of simple rhythmic patterns can be. That's part of what Beethoven did here, but he also did much more than that: against a backdrop of continually repeated dance rhythms, he created an endless diversity of melodic and harmonic events. There is a strong sense of cohesion as the melodies flow from one another with inimitable spontaneity. At the same time, harmony, melody, dynamics, and orchestration

are all full of the most delightful surprises. It is somewhat like riding in a car at a constant (and rather high) speed while watching an ever-changing, beautiful landscape pass by.

The first movement starts with the most extended slow introduction Beethoven ever wrote for a symphony. It presents and develops its own thematic material, linked to the main theme of the “Allegro” section in a passage consisting of multiple repeats of a single note—E—in the flute, oboe, and violins. Among the many unforgettable moments of this movement, I would single out two: the surprise oboe solo at the beginning of the recapitulation (which has no counterpart in the exposition) and the irresistible, gradual crescendo at the end that culminates in a *fortissimo* statement of the movement’s main rhythmic figure.

The second-movement “Allegretto” in A minor was the section in the symphony that became the most popular from the day of the premiere (it had to be repeated even at the first performance). The main rhythmic pattern of this movement was used in Austro-German church litanies of the 18th and 19th centuries. The same pattern is so frequent in the music of Franz Schubert that it is sometimes referred to as the “Schubert rhythm.” The “Allegretto” of Beethoven’s Seventh combines this rhythm with a melody of a rare expressive power. The rhythm persists in the bass even during the contrasting middle section in A major.

The third-movement “Scherzo” is the only one of the symphony’s movements where the basic rhythmic patterns



Symphony No. 7 by Mo Willems

© 2019 Mo Willems

are grouped in an unpredictable, asymmetrical way. The joke (which is what the word Scherzo means) lies in the fact that the listener may never know what will happen in the next moment. Only the Trio returns to regular-length periods. In another innovative move, Beethoven expands the traditional Scherzo-Trio-Scherzo structure by repeating the Trio a second time, followed by a third appearance of the Scherzo. At the end, Beethoven leads us to believe that he is going to start the Trio over yet another time. But we are about to be doubly surprised: first when the now-familiar Trio melody is suddenly transformed from major to minor; and second when, with five quick tutti strokes, the movement abruptly ends, as if cut off in the middle.

In the fourth-movement “Allegro con brio,” the exuberant feelings reach their peak as one glorious theme follows another over an unchanging rhythmic pulsation. The dance reaches an almost superhuman intensity (and that, incidentally, is the meaning of the Greek word “apotheosis,” literally, “becoming God-like”). This is a movement of which even Sir Donald Francis Tovey, the celebrated British musical essayist of the first half of the 20th century, had to admit: “I can attempt nothing here by way of description.” Fortunately, the music speaks for itself.

- Notes by Peter Laki

About the Cover Art

“Beethoven’s symphonies have moved millions of people. One evening, at a concert almost 250 years after his birth, Beethoven’s work moved me to paint them. The idea of creating art specifically to view while listening to Beethoven’s symphonies, compelled me to spend a year researching, listening, and painting. The result is nine abstractions, a visual art piece for each symphony, rendered in panels, whose sizes represent the lengths of each movement.

Through this project, I got to know Beethoven in a new way. When you listen to a symphony you are invited to a dialogue with its creator. I had the opportunity to see his technique change over his career and to feel the journey of his musical notes.

I hope these abstractions will spark something in you, as a listener and a viewer. Maybe you’ll even respond to Beethoven with your own art!”

- Mo Willems

Gianandrea Noseda

Conductor

Gianandrea Noseda is one of the world's most sought-after conductors, equally recognized for his artistry in both the concert hall and opera house. The 2023–2024 season marks his seventh as Music Director of the National Symphony Orchestra.

Noseda's leadership has inspired and reinvigorated the National Symphony Orchestra which makes its home at the Kennedy Center. The renewed artistic recognition and critical acclaim has led to invitations to Carnegie Hall, international concert halls, as well as digital streaming and a record label distributed by LSO Live for which Noseda also records as principal guest conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra. The label's most recent and upcoming releases are dedicated to the complete *Sinfonias* by Pulitzer Prize-winning Washington, D.C. native George Walker and a Beethoven Cycle.

The label launched in 2020 with Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 and Copland's Suite from *Billy the Kid*. Noseda has made over 70 recordings for various labels, including Deutsche Grammophon and Chandos on which he recorded many works including those by neglected Italian composers through his *Musica Italiana* series.

Noseda became General Music Director of the Zurich Opera House in September 2021. In 2022, his initial four-year contract was extended through the 2027–2028 season. An important milestone will be two complete *Ring* Cycles in May 2024 in a new production by Andreas Homoki. Since April 2022, his performances of the *Ring* operas have been praised by critics and in February 2023 he was recognized as “Best Conductor” by the jury of the German OPER! AWARDS, specifically for his Wagner interpretations.



From 2007–2018, Nosedà served as music director of the Teatro Regio Torino, where his leadership marked the opera house’s golden era.

Nosedà has conducted the most important international orchestras, opera houses and festivals and had significant roles at the BBC Philharmonic (Chief Conductor), Israel Philharmonic Orchestra (Principal Guest Conductor), Mariinsky Theatre (Principal Guest Conductor), Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI (Principal Guest Conductor), Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (Victor de Sabata Chair), Rotterdam Philharmonic (Principal Guest Conductor), and Stresa Festival (Artistic Director).

Nosedà has a strong commitment to working with the next generation of musicians and in 2019 was appointed the founding Music Director of the Tsinandali Festival and Pan-Caucasian Youth Orchestra in the village of Tsinandali, Georgia.

A native of Milan, Nosedà is Commendatore al Merito della Repubblica Italiana, marking his contribution to the artistic life of Italy. He has been honored as Musical America’s Conductor of the Year (2015) and International Opera Awards Conductor of the Year (2016). In 2023, he received the Puccini Award whose past recipients include legendary opera stars Maria Callas, Birgit Nilsson and Luciano Pavarotti.

The NSO Music Director Chair is generously endowed by
The Sant Family.

Funding for NSO recordings is provided by generous Nosedà Era Fund supporters.



National Symphony Orchestra

The 2023–2024 season is the National Symphony Orchestra's 93rd season. Gianandrea Noseda serves as the Orchestra's seventh Music Director, joining the NSO's legacy of distinguished leaders: Christoph Eschenbach, Leonard

Slatkin, Mstislav Rostropovich, Antal Doráti, Howard Mitchell, and Hans Kindler. Its artistic leadership also includes Principal Pops Conductor Steven Reineke and Artistic Advisor Ben Folds.



Since its founding in 1931, the NSO has been committed to performances that enrich the lives of its audience and community members. In 1986, the National Symphony became an artistic affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, where it has performed since the Center opened in 1971. The 96-member NSO participates in events of national and international importance, including the annual nationally televised concerts on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol, live-streamed performances from the Kennedy Center Concert Hall on medici.tv, and local radio broadcasts on Classical WETA 90.9 FM.

The NSO builds on its recording legacy with its eponymous label that launched in 2020. Since launching, the National Symphony Orchestra has garnered praise for its ambitious recording projects including the orchestra's first complete Beethoven Symphony cycle and the release of the first-ever cycle of George Walker's Sinfonias, both led by Music Director Gianandrea Noseda.

Additionally, the NSO's community engagement and education projects are nationally recognized, including NSO *In Your Neighborhood*, an annual week of performances in schools, churches, community centers, and other unexpected venues; *Notes of Honor*, which offers free performances for active, veteran, prior service, and retired members of the military and their families; and *Sound Health*, a collaboration with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and its affiliated organizations. Career development opportunities for young musicians include the NSO Youth Fellowship Program and its acclaimed, tuition-free Summer Music Institute.



For more information, visit nationalsymphony.org

Mo Willems

BEETHOVEN Symphonies Abstracted



Mo Willems is an author, illustrator, animator, playwright. He was the inaugural Kennedy Center Education Artist-in-Residence (2019–2022), and he continues to collaborate in creating new fun stuff involving classical music, opera, comedy concerts, dance, painting, and digital works with the National Symphony Orchestra, Washington National Opera, Ben Folds, Yo-Yo Ma, and others.

Willems is best known for his #1 *New York Times* bestselling picture books, which have been awarded three Caldecott Honors (*Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*, *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale*, *Knuffle Bunny Too: A Case of Mistaken Identity*), two Theodor Geisel Medals, and his celebrated *Elephant*

and *Piggie* early reader series, which have been awarded two Theodor Geisel Medals and five Geisel Honors.

Willems' art has been exhibited around the world, including major solo retrospectives at the High Museum (Atlanta) and the New-York Historical Society (NYC). Over the last decade, Willems has become the most produced playwright of theater for young audiences in America, having written or co-written four musicals based on his books.

He began his career as a writer and animator on PBS's *Sesame Street*, where he garnered six Emmy Awards (writing). Other television work includes two series on Cartoon Network: *Sheep in the Big City* (creator and head writer) and *Codename: Kids Next Door* (head writer). Willems' recent TV projects include the live-action comedy special *Don't Let the Pigeon Do Storytime!* an animated rock opera based on *Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed*, which originally premiered on HBO Max. In April 2023, Willems celebrated the 20th anniversary of *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* with the publication of *Be the Bus: The Lost and Profound Wisdom of The Pigeon* (Union Square Kids, April 4, 2023), a humor book for adults, and *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! 20th Anniversary Edition* (Hyperion Books for Children, April 4, 2023) including an exclusive game. His paper resides at Yale University's Beinecke Library.

National Symphony Orchestra

Violins

Nurit Bar-Josef

Concertmaster

Ying Fu

*Associate Concertmaster, The
Jeanne Weaver Ruesch Chair*

Ricardo Cyncynates

Assistant Concertmaster

Jane Bowyer Stewart

Teri Hopkins Lee

Pavel Pekarsky

Heather LeDoux Green

Joel Fuller

Lisa-Beth Lambert

Jing Qiao

Angelia Cho

Marissa Regni *Principal*

Dayna Hepler

Assistant Principal

Desimont Alston

Cynthia R. Finks

Deanna Lee Bien

Glenn Donnellan

Natasha Bogachek

Carole Tafoya Evans

Jae-Yeon Kim

Wanzhen Li

Hanna Lee

Benjamin Scott

Malorie Blake Shin

Marina Aikawa

Peiming Lin

Derek Powell

Meredith Riley **

Violas

Daniel Foster *Principal*

Abigail Evans Kreuzer

Assistant Principal

Lynne Edelson Levine

Denise Wilkinson

James Francis Deighan

Nancy Thomas

Jennifer Mondie

Tsuna Sakamoto

Ruth Wicker

Mahoko Eguchi

Rebecca Epperson

Cellos

David Hardy *Principal, The*

Hans Kindler Chair, the

Strong Family, and the Hattie

M. Strong Foundation Chair

Glenn Garlick

Assistant Principal

Steven Honigberg

David Teie

James Lee

Rachel Young

Mark Evans

Eugena Chang Riley

Loewi Lin

Britton Riley

Basses

Robert Oppelt *Principal*

Richard Barber

Assistant Principal

Jeffrey Weisner

Ira Gold

Paul DeNola

Charles Nilles

Alexander Jacobsen

Michael Marks



Harp

Adriana Horne

Flutes

Aaron Goldman *Principal*

Leah Arsenault Barrick

Assistant Principal

Alyce Johnson **

Carole Bean *Piccolo*

Oboes

Nicholas Stovall *Principal*

Jamie Roberts

Assistant Principal

Harrison Linsey

Kathryn Meany Wilson

English Horn

Clarinets

Lin Ma *Principal*

Eugene Mondie

Assistant Principal

Paul Cigan

Peter Cain *Bass Clarinet*

Bassoons

Sue Heineman *Principal*

David Young

Acting Assistant Principal

Steven Wilson

Samuel Blair ** *Contrabassoon*

Horns

Abel Pereira *Principal*

James Nickel

Acting Associate Principal

Markus Osterlund

Robert Rearden

Scott Fearing

Geoffrey Pilkington **

Trumpets

William Gerlach *Principal,*

The Howard Mitchell Chair,

the Strong Family, and the

Hattie M. Strong Foundation

Michael Harper

Assistant Principal

Thomas Cupples

Timothy McCarthy **

Trombones

Craig Mulcahy *Principal*

Evelyn Carlson

Assistant Principal

David Murray

Matthew Guilford

Bass Trombone

Tuba

Stephen Dumaine *Principal,*

The James V. Kimsey Chair

Timpani

Jauvon Gilliam *Principal,*

The Marion E. Glover Chair

Scott Christian

Assistant Principal

Percussion

Eric Shin *Principal*

Scott Christian

Greg Akagi

Joseph Connell *

Keyboards

Lambert Orkis *Principal*

Lisa Emenheiser *

Organ

William Neil *

Librarians

Elizabeth Cusato Schnobrick

Principal

Zen Stokdyk *Associate*

Karen Lee *Assistant*

* Regularly engaged extra

** Temporary position







BEETHOVEN
Symphonies

1 AND **3**

Gianandrea Nosedà



National Symphony Orchestra
The Kennedy Center



BEETHOVEN
Symphonies

4 AND **5**

Gianandrea Nosedà



National Symphony Orchestra
The Kennedy Center



BEETHOVEN
Symphonies

6 AND **8**

Gianandrea Nosedà



National Symphony Orchestra
The Kennedy Center



BEETHOVEN
Symphony No.

9

Gianandrea Nosedà



National Symphony Orchestra
The Kennedy Center



National Symphony Orchestra
The Kennedy Center