



BEETHOVEN Symphonies

6 AND 8

Gianandrea
Noseda



National Symphony Orchestra
The Kennedy Center



National Symphony Orchestra

Gianandrea Noseda conductor

Ludwig van Beethoven

Symphony No. 6 in F major, Op. 68, “Pastoral”

- | | |
|---|--------|
| 1. Awakening of cheerful feelings on arriving in the country: Allegro ma non troppo | 11'16” |
| 2. Scene by the brook: Andante molto mosso | 11'38” |
| 3. Merry assembly of country folk: Allegro | 4'38” |
| 4. Thunder. Storm: Allegro | 3'30” |
| 5. Shepherd’s Song - Happy, grateful feelings after the storm: Allegretto | 9'44” |

Symphony No. 8 in F major, Op. 93

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| 6. Allegro vivace e con brio | 9'11” |
| 7. Allegretto scherzando | 4'08” |
| 8. Tempo di menuetto | 4'49” |
| 9. Allegro vivace | 7'33” |

Symphony No. 6 was recorded live on May 19 and 20, 2023 and Symphony No. 8 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. 6 in F major, Op. 68, “Pastoral” (1808)

Many musicians and writers on music in the 18th century were preoccupied with music’s expressive and representative powers. Time and again, composers attempted to demonstrate that music was able, even without the help of words, to depict specific feelings and emotions, and even to narrate a sequence of events. One Justin Heinrich Knecht advertised his 1784 symphony, *Musical Portrait of Nature*, in a music journal on the very same page on which the notice for the 14-year-old Beethoven’s first published works (three piano sonatas) appeared. Knecht’s program, with its shepherds, streams, birds, thunderstorm, and clearing of the sky, is so similar to what Beethoven would have in his “Pastoral” that it is almost certain Beethoven knew Knecht’s work.

Beethoven not only loved nature but, as many of his friends attested, worshipped it. Haydn and Mozart were not known for roaming the Austrian countryside; Beethoven, for his part, spent long and happy hours in the woods. He often retreated from Vienna to outlying areas where he admired Nature with a capital N as a true spiritual child of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the German *Sturm und Drang* (“storm and stress”) movement.

Beethoven became fascinated with the musical sounds of nature years before the composition of the “Pastoral”

Symphony: as early as 1803, he notated in one of his sketchbooks a musical rendition of the sound of water in a stream. Even earlier, he made a musical reference to nature in the “Heiligenstadt Testament,” the tragic document in which Beethoven first wrote about his encroaching deafness in 1802 (the Testament was addressed to Beethoven’s two brothers but never sent). “What a humiliation for me when someone standing next to me heard a flute in the distance and I heard nothing, or someone heard a shepherd singing and again I heard nothing.” It is difficult not to think of this mention of the shepherd when listening to the “Shepherd’s Song” in the finale of the Sixth Symphony. The love for the sounds of nature became inseparable from the pain of not being able to hear them.

The Sixth Symphony, composed almost simultaneously with the Fifth, then, has more in common with that work than one might think. One similarity between the two works is the linkage of the last movements. Just as the Fifth Symphony’s gloomy C minor Allegro is connected to the finale without a pause, the last three movements of the “Pastoral,” the country dance, the storm, and the thanksgiving song, form an uninterrupted sequence, and in both cases, an earlier conflict seamlessly segues into a positive resolution.

The bird songs and thunderclaps are not the only examples where Beethoven employed sounds from the world around him. His secretary, the often unreliable Anton Schindler, reported the following anecdote, relating to the third movement, which he could hardly have invented himself:

Beethoven asked me if I had not observed how village musicians often played in their sleep, occasionally letting their instruments fall and remaining entirely quiet, then awakening with a start, throwing in a few vigorous blows or strokes at a venture, but generally in the right key, and then falling asleep again; he had tried to copy these poor people in his “Pastoral” symphony.

Schindler then proceeded to point out those measures in which “the sleep-drunken second bassoon [repeats] a few tones, while contra-bass, violoncello, and viola keep quiet; on page 108 we see the viola wake up and apparently awaken the violoncello—and the second horn also sounds three notes, but at once sinks into silence again.”

More often than not, however, the symphony, as Beethoven himself pointed out, is more an expression of feeling than painting. Beethoven may have been responsive to extra-musical inspirations, yet he was first and foremost a musician. And he was never a more “absolute” musician than he was in his programmatic Sixth Symphony.

- Notes by Peter Laki



Symphony No. 6 by Mo Willems

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Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Symphony No. 8 in F major, Op. 93 (1812)

At first sight, one might think that Beethoven took a step back after completing his fiery and, at the time, super-modern Seventh Symphony, and wrote a companion piece in the style of his elders, Haydn and Mozart. That is, at least, the impression one gets from reading many earlier commentaries. Yet, it is clear that there is not a single measure in this piece that could have been written 20 years earlier, even by Beethoven. One should not be misled by the relative brevity of the Eighth, or by the fact that it contains a minuet, an older type of middle movement than the scherzo Beethoven had been more recently cultivating. In almost every respect—the variety of the harmonies, the richness of the orchestration, the individuality of the formal design—the symphony is anything but backward-looking. Beethoven did seem to revisit the world of his late teacher Joseph Haydn, but he did so without giving up the stylistic accomplishments of his mature years. The result was a real tour de force that Beethoven was justifiably proud of: he told his student Carl Czerny that he considered the Eighth Symphony a “better” work than the Seventh.

We 21st-century listeners hardly need to put one of these masterworks above the other, recognizing as we do the individuality of every one of Beethoven’s nine symphonies. The individuality of the Eighth lies, to no small degree, in the combination of humor and seriousness (or, if you prefer,

looking back and looking forward) that is peculiar to this work.

Take the first movement, *Allegro vivace e con brio*. It starts with a jocular theme whose beginning is played *forte* by the full orchestra, the middle *piano* by the winds, and the end *forte* by everyone again. The melody itself could perhaps be characterized as light, but the vehemence it receives from the orchestration (note especially the brass and timpani!) makes it sound a lot more serious. The movement is filled with rhythmic energy; sudden pauses, tonal shifts, and mood changes abound. In the development section, the music becomes highly dramatic, even violent, for a few seconds before the recapitulation begins in a triple *forte*, with the theme in the bass. These moments are anything but light and humorous; the same is true of most of the lengthy coda, before bursting out in a new double *forte* explosion. Beethoven first wrote this coda much shorter than it is in the final version. He later brought back the humor to the ending of the movement by adding a new fanfare version of the theme that suddenly fades into *pianissimo* as the first notes of the melody appear again as a soft-spoken farewell.

According to the well-known story, the second-movement *Allegretto scherzando* was inspired by the ticking of the metronome, newly invented by Beethoven’s friend Johann

Nepomuk Mälzel. Beethoven used the same melody in a canon written in 1812 on the words “Ta ta ta ta...lieber, lieber Mälzel.” The charming and witty little piece is not the first instance Beethoven replaced the slow movement with a quasi-scherzo; earlier examples include the C minor string quartet (Op. 18, No. 4) and the piano sonata in E-flat major (Op. 31, No. 3). Scherzos normally take the place of minuets of earlier times; yet in these cases, as in the Eighth Symphony, both the Scherzo and the Minuet were retained. The Eighth is the only Beethoven symphony to have this characteristic.

The third movement, *Tempo di menuetto*, looks back on the minuets of old from a certain distance and with noticeable nostalgia. Yet, the graceful minuet-like melody is allowed to appear only after two measures of heavily accented *ostinato* (a melodic pattern repeated without changes). The brass and timpani continue to punctuate the gentle minuet with seemingly incongruous *sforzatos* (stressed single notes) that would more properly belong in a Beethoven scherzo. The recapitulation of the first theme on the solo bassoon and the triumphant *fortissimo* closing figure on the horns and trumpets are also unexpected events that make this minuet more than an innocent evocation of the 18th century. The trio, or middle section, is a dialog between the pair of horns and the first clarinet over the lively accompaniment of the cellos. It is interesting that the violins and violas are silent throughout the trio except for one short phrase.

The finale, *Allegro vivace*, is the most grandiose of the symphony’s movements. It starts in a whisper on high-



Symphony No. 8 by Mo Willems

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pitched instruments only, but the whole orchestra soon enters in a thundering *fortissimo* on C-sharp, a note foreign to the key of F major. The bustling orchestral activity continues until it is suddenly interrupted by a lyrical second theme that also starts with a “wrong” note in the key of A-flat major (instead of the expected C major, which the music only reaches after this elaborate detour). The development section takes us to many new keys and introduces the main melody in many new guises.

Following the recapitulation, the symphony ends with one of Beethoven’s longest codas; it is more extended than even that of the first movement and, indeed, takes up almost half of the entire finale. It includes a new subject, a return of the main theme, and repeated emphasis on that off-key C-sharp we heard at the beginning of the movement. In the last minute, when listeners might assume that the journey has reached its end (and the only thing remaining being to confirm the home key), this C-sharp becomes the springboard for a whole passage in the very distant key of F-sharp minor, out of which Beethoven extricates himself with a real masterstroke. After a return of the lyrical second theme, and yet another variant of the first one, there is a seemingly unending succession of F major chords, high and low, soft and loud, and the ultimate joke of the symphony is that we can never be sure when it will be over.

- 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 *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, Noseda served as music director of the Teatro Regio Torino, where



his leadership marked the opera house's golden era.

Noseda 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).

Noseda 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, Noseda 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 Nillson and Luciano Pavarotti.

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

Funding for NSO recordings is provided by generous Noseda 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
Tsunaka 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*

Kevin 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*

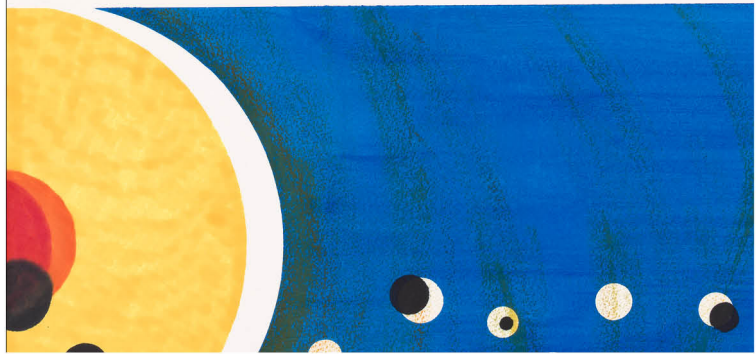
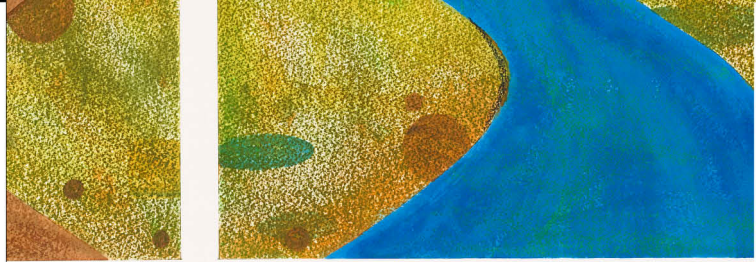
Karen Lee *Assistant*

* Regularly engaged extra

** Temporary position








BEETHOVEN
Symphonies

1 AND 3

Gianandrea Noseda



National Symphony Orchestra
The Kennedy Center



BEETHOVEN
Symphonies

2 AND 7

Gianandrea Noseda



National Symphony Orchestra
The Kennedy Center



BEETHOVEN
Symphonies

4 AND 5

Gianandrea Noseda



National Symphony Orchestra
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BEETHOVEN
Symphony No.

9

Gianandrea Noseda



National Symphony Orchestra
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National Symphony Orchestra
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