

# Beethoven, Symphony No. 6 in F major, “Pastoral” (1808)

## Beethoven’s Love of Nature

1. Beethoven found great pleasure in taking **long walks outside Vienna**, and his personal letters were filled with references to how much he loved nature. A trip to the country provided Beethoven with an **escape from work**, as well as a release from his **persistent loneliness and deafness**.
2. Beethoven’s favorite book — one he read many times — was ***Reflections on the Works of God and His Providence Throughout All Nature*** by **Christoph Christian Sturm**. The book provided 365 lessons on science, one for each day of the year. It also included homilies about the perfection of God’s creation, proclaiming the natural world to be harmonious and good.

*Wherever we direct our attention, whether to examine the beautiful and grand objects diffused over the face of nature, or whether to penetrate within the interior of the earth, we perceive that everything is arranged with wisdom, and we everywhere discover the legible character and broad stamp of an Infinite, Almighty, and Supreme Being.... Everything in the universe is connected together, and concurs to the preservation and perfection of the whole.*

– Christoph Christian Sturm, *Reflections on the Works of God and His Providence Throughout All Nature* (1785)

## Miscellanea

1. Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony contains five movements providing **five vignettes** about nature.

*How happy I am to be able to walk among the shrubs, the trees, the woods, the grass and the rocks! For the woods, the trees and the rocks give man the resonance he needs.*

– Beethoven, 1808

2. Beethoven’s Sixth helped elevate **program music** as a significant art form during the nineteenth century. Although program music had been popular for several decades before the Sixth, it had generally been considered **a genre for second-rate composers**.
3. The Sixth Symphony was not Beethoven’s first attempt at writing program music. (His Third Symphony, for example, was about heroism.) Unlike previous works, however, Beethoven’s Sixth included **descriptive labels** for each movement.
4. Beethoven composed his **Fifth and Sixth Symphonies simultaneously**, completing both in 1808. In almost every way, the two symphonies are the opposite of each other and hardly seem to have come from the same composer.

5. Beethoven's Sixth was first performed in **Vienna** on **December 22, 1808**, during a four-hour concert in a frigidly cold concert hall. The musicians had spent almost no time rehearsing, and their performance was reportedly substandard for a professional orchestra. The concert included eight pieces, all composed by Beethoven and performed in the following order.

- 1) *Symphony No. 6 in F major* (premiere)
- 2) *Ah! perfido* (an aria for soprano and orchestra)
- 3) *Gloria* from the *Mass in C major* (for vocal soloists, chorus, and orchestra)
- 4) *Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major* (premiere, featuring Beethoven as solo pianist)

Intermission

- 5) *Symphony No. 5 in C minor* (premiere)
- 6) *Sanctus* from the *Mass in C major* (for vocal soloists, chorus, and orchestra)
- 7) *Fantasia for Piano* (featuring Beethoven as a solo pianist playing extemporaneously)
- 8) *Choral Fantasy* (premiere for piano, vocal soloists, choir and orchestra)

*There we sat, in the most bitter cold, from half past six until half past ten, and confirmed for ourselves the maxim that one may easily have too much of a good thing, still more of a powerful one.*

– Prince Lobkowitz, Beethoven's patron, describing the concert of December 22, 1808

## Recordings Used in Class

1. **Audio:** Karl Böhm conducting the Vienna Philharmonic
  - Find the recording on Spotify at <https://spoti.fi/3eCIVlt>.
  - The **time stamps on pages 3-5** refer to the Spotify version of this recording.
2. **Video:** Bernard Haitink conducting the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra

**More versions of Beethoven's Sixth are embedded on Jim Smith's website at [www.ClassicalTyro.com/presentations/beethoven6](http://www.ClassicalTyro.com/presentations/beethoven6)**

# Beethoven, Symphony No. 6 in F major,

## FIRST MOVEMENT (Sonata Form) – 12:31

“Awakening of Cheerful Feelings upon Arrival in the Country”

### INTRODUCTION

1. 0:00 / 2:41 • **Introductory theme**
2. 0:22 / 3:00 • **Five-note “nature” motif**

### (A) EXPOSITION

3. 0:37 / 3:13 • **Theme 1**
4. 1:04 / 3:38 • **bridge**
5. 1:20 / 3:54 • **Theme 2 (Part 1)**
6. 1:52 / 4:22 • **Theme 2 (Part 2)**
7. 2:13 / 4:47 • **closing**

*The exposition is repeated, including the Introductory Theme.*

### (B) DEVELOPMENT

8. 5:14 • **Part 1** (based on Theme 1)
9. 5:26 • **Part 2 (five-note nature motif repeated 36 times)**
10. 6:10 • **Part 3** (based on Theme 1)
11. 6:16 • **Part 4 (five-note nature motif repeated 36 times)**
12. 7:00 • **Part 5** (based on Theme 1)
13. 7:11 • **Part 6** (based on the introductory theme)
14. 7:42 • **Part 7** (based on the nature motif and Theme 1)
15. 7:57 • **Part 8** (based on the introductory theme and nature motif)

### (A) RECAPITULATION

16. 8:22 • **Theme 1**
17. 8:40 • **bridge**
18. 9:00 • **Theme 2 (Part 1)**
19. 9:28 • **Theme 2 (Part 2)**
20. 10:02 • **closing**

### CODA

21. 10:15 • **Part 1** (based on Theme 1)
22. 10:30 • **Part 2** (variation of the nature motif)
23. 12:06 • **Part 3** (foreshadowing of the third movement)
24. 11:26 • **Part 4** (based on Theme 1)
25. 11:44 • **Part 5** (The End)

*More an expression of feeling  
than painting.*

– Beethoven, describing his  
Sixth Symphony

*Anyone who has the faintest  
idea of rural life will have no  
need of descriptive titles to  
enable him to imagine for  
himself what the composer  
intends. Even without a  
description, one will be able  
to recognize it all.*

– Beethoven, 1807

## SECOND MOVEMENT (Sonata Form) – 14:10

### “Scene by the Brook”

#### (A) EXPOSITION (no repeat of the exposition)

1. 0:00 • **Theme 1**
2. 1:52 • **bridge**
3. 2:41 • **Theme 2 (Part 1)**
4. 3:18 • **Theme 2 (Part 2)**
5. 4:43 • **closing**

#### (B) DEVELOPMENT

6. 5:23 • **beginning of the development**
7. 5:44 • **giraffe-throated yellow hammer (flute)**

*Turn off your mind, relax, and  
float downstream.*

– The Beatles,  
“Tomorrow Never Knows”

#### (A) RECAPITULATION

8. 9:03 • **Theme 1**
9. 9:39 • **bridge**
10. 9:51 • **Theme 2 (Part 1)**
11. 10:26 • **Theme 2 (Part 2)**
12. 11:35 • **closing**

#### CODA

13. 12:05 • **beginning of the coda**
14. 12:50 • **nightingale (flute) • quail (oboe) • cuckoo (clarinet)**
15. 13:13 • **nightingale (flute) • quail (oboe) • cuckoo (clarinet)**
16. 13:36 • **early evening**

*My unhappy ears do not torment me [in the country]. It seems as if every tree  
in the countryside spoke to me saying, “Holy! Holy!” in the forest, enchantment!  
Who can express it all? If everything else fails the country remains.*

– Beethoven, 1810

## THIRD MOVEMENT (Scherzo) – 5:49

### “Merry Gathering of Country Folk”

1. 0:00 • **Dance No. 1** (triple meter)
2. 1:02 • **Dance No. 2** (triple meter)
3. 1:51 • **Dance No. 3** (duple meter)
  
4. 2:36 • **Dance No. 1** (triple meter)
5. 3:36 • **Dance No. 2** (triple meter)
6. 4:26 • **Dance No. 3** (duple meter)
  
7. 5:11 • **Dance No. 1** – The dance is cut short after the peasants rush indoors upon the arrival of a storm.

## **FOURTH MOVEMENT (Through-Composed) – 3:41**

### **“Storm”**

This movement begins with the distant rumble of thunder and the sound of raindrops preceding a ferocious storm of thunder and lightening accompanied by high winds and a deluge of rain. The storm is followed by a rainbow and the dawn of a new day.

## **FIFTH MOVEMENT (Rondo-ABACABA) – 9:46**

### **“Shepherd’s Hymn. Cheerful and Happy Feelings after the Storm”**

#### **PART 1**

1. 0:00 • **Shepherd’s Call** (played by the clarinet and French horn)
2. 0:17 • **Theme A – Shepherd’s Hymn**
3. 1:06 • **Theme B**
4. 1:43 • **Theme B** (closing)

#### **PART 2**

5. 2:10 • **Shepherd’s Call** (played by the French horn)
6. 2:14 • **Theme A – Shepherd’s Hymn**
7. 2:49 • **Theme C**
8. 3:22 • **Theme C** (closing)

#### **PART 3**

9. 4:07 • **Shepherd’s Call** (played by French horn)
10. 4:10 • **Theme A – Shepherd’s Hymn** (variation)
11. 5:00 • **Theme B**
12. 5:38 • **Theme B** (closing)

#### **CODA**

13. 6:03 • **Shepherd’s Call** (played by the strings)
14. 6:21 • **Theme A – Shepherd’s Hymn** (variation)
15. 6:49 • **Embracing the Multitudes**
16. 7:02 • **Shepherd’s Call** (played by the strings)
17. 7:24 • **Theme A – Shepherd’s Hymn** (variation)
18. 7:49 • **Embracing the Multitudes**
19. 8:28 • **Hymn of Thanksgiving**
20. 8:31 • **Shepherd’s Call** (played by a distant trumpet)

*How fortunate you are to be able to go into the country so soon ... I look forward to it with childish excitement. How delighted I shall be to ramble for a while through bushes, woods, under trees, over grass and rocks. No one can love the country as much as I do. For surely woods, trees, and rocks give back the echo which man desires to hear.*

– Beethoven, letter to Teresa Malfatti, 1810

## Resources

1. Dover Publications, *Beethoven's Nine Symphonies in Full Score (3 Volumes)*
2. Geck, Martin. *Beethoven's Symphonies: Nine Approaches to Art and Ideas* (2017)
3. Hopkins, Antony, *The Nine Symphonies of Beethoven* (1996)
4. Grove, George, *Beethoven and His Nine Symphonies* (1898)
5. Lockwood, Lewis, *Beethoven: The Music and the Life* (2005)
6. Suchet, John. *Beethoven: The Man Revealed* (2012)
7. Sullivan, J.W.N., *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development* (1927)
8. Swafford, Jan. *Beethoven: Anguish and Triumph* (2015)
9. Young, John Bell, *Beethoven's Symphonies: A Guided Tour* (2008)

### Additional Pieces of Music Portraying the Natural World

1. Antonio Vivaldi, *The Four Season* (1717)
2. Hector Berlioz, *Symphonie Fantastique, Third Movement* (1830)
3. Robert Schumann, *Papillons* (1831)
4. Felix Mendelssohn, *Hebrides Overture* (1833)
5. Frédéric Chopin, *Prelude in D-flat, Op. 28, No. 15, "Raindrop"* (1838)
6. Richard Wagner, *The Flying Dutchman, Overture* (1843)
7. Giuseppe Verdi, *Otello, Introduction to Act One* (1887)
8. Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, *Scheherazade, "The Sea and the Ship of Sinbad"* (1888)
9. Gustav Mahler, *Symphony No. 3* (1896)
10. Claude Debussy, *Three Nocturnes* (1899)
11. Maurice Ravel, *Mirrors* (1905)
12. Claude Debussy, *La mer* (1905)
13. Jean Sibelius, *The Oceanides* (1914)
14. Benjamin Britten, *Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes* (1945)
15. Olivier Messiaen, *Exotic Birds* (1956)
16. Herbie Hancock, *Maiden Voyage* (1965)
17. Max Richter, *Recomposed by Max Richter: Vivaldi, The Four Seasons* (2012)
18. John Adams, *Become Ocean* (2014)

### Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 6 in F major

Presented by Jim Smith  
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jameslsmith@icloud.com  
www.ClassicalTyro.com

Western Institute for Lifelong Learning  
Western New Mexico University

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