CRITICISM OF BEETHOVEN’S \textit{PASTORAL} SYMPHONY IN LONDON AND BOSTON, 1819-1874: A FORUM FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF MUSICAL TOPICS

Amy Nicole Cooper, B.M.

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APPROVED:

Margaret Notley, Major Professor
Mark McKnight, Committee Member
Deanna Bush, Committee Member
Eileen M. Hayes, Chair of the Division of Music History, Theory, and Ethnomusicology
Lynn Eustis, Director of Graduate Studies
James D. Meernik, Acting Dean of the Toulouse Graduate School

Critics who discuss Beethoven’s *Pastoral* Symphony often write about aspects that run counter to their conception of what a symphony should be, such as this symphony’s static nature and its programmatic elements. In nineteenth-century Boston and London, criticism of the *Pastoral* Symphony reflects the opinions of a wide range of listeners, as critics variably adopted the views of the intellectual elite and general audience members. As a group, these critics acted as intermediaries between various realms of opinion regarding this piece. Their writing serves as a lens through which we can observe audiences’ acceptance of ideas common in contemporaneous musical thought, including the integrity of the artwork, the glorification of genius, and ideas about meaning in music.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Sixth Symphony of Beethoven, op. 68 in F major, the Pastoral Symphony, raises aesthetic questions for critics who have approached it from various perspectives. Many critics, for example, have considered it to deviate from the symphonic style that people commonly typify as Beethovenian: that found in the Third, the Fifth, the Seventh, and the Ninth symphonies. In other words, the style of the Pastoral Symphony is less heroic than that of any of the other symphonies noted above. Moreover, the symphony has more overtly programmatic elements than do the others, with the exception of the Ninth. Critics who discuss the Pastoral Symphony often write about aspects such as these that run counter to their conception of what a symphony should be. Such concerns are not limited to modern scholarship, however; nineteenth-century music critics, including those working for Boston and London periodicals, wrote about this symphony in a similar manner.

Criticism of Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony from 1819 to 1874 in those cities reveals earlier or contemporary ideas in German musical thought that had gained acceptance on an international scale. Even as English-speaking critics applied these ideas in their writings on the symphony, however, they also demonstrated an awareness of their readership and thus tended to adopt perspectives with which audiences in general could easily identify. Stated differently, critics acknowledged aspects of the Pastoral Symphony that would help audiences to appreciate it in addition to making observations that fell in line with aesthetic positions historically taken by critics. Music criticism published in these cities therefore represented a point of intersection between the worlds of amateur listeners and those who brought more informed perspectives to this music.
In the past fifty years, several scholars have discussed the development of the concept of the public sphere as part of the changes in European society in the eighteenth through the early twentieth centuries. It does not, however, lie within the scope of this paper to discuss this concept, except to note that in this paper the idea of music criticism as public discussion primarily concerns critics’ representation of ideas common to various groups within audiences of cultivated music.

Although study of the reception history of the Pastoral Symphony is clearly helpful in exploring issues surrounding the genre of the symphony in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, few scholars have pursued such a study. When they have done so, their studies have tended to focus on German or Viennese reception. For instance, in his Beethoven: Pastoral Symphony, David Wyn Jones highlights such musical figures as Schumann, Liszt, and Wagner as part of his account of the symphony’s reception. Other scholars have brought up the Sixth within the context of studies of particular critics and their reactions to Beethoven’s entire oeuvre or a selection from it. Ora Frishberg Salomon, for example, wrote specifically about four prolific nineteenth-century American critics, including John Sullivan Dwight. Another study focuses on the reception of the Pastoral Symphony in the city of Ljubljana. To my knowledge, however, no one to date has done a systematic study of reception of Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony in nineteenth-century London and Boston.

1 The foundation for this work is Jürgen Habermas, Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft [The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society], trans. Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).
Nineteenth-century London and Boston are ideal for such a study because many musicians and critics in these cities were interested in German culture and currents of thought, which they explored in a variety of publications. Furthermore, English-language criticism tended to be audience-oriented: the critics were sensitive to how their readership was likely to react to aspects of classical music such as imitation of sounds of nature. Aware that audiences in Boston and London often favored lighter orchestral works such as waltzes and marches, some critics propounded views informed by Germanic music criticism in attempts to help audiences appreciate serious music. Works such as Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony that were considered unusual provided a springboard for discussing these views.

Recurring topics in English-language reviews of the Pastoral Symphony include questions of whether composers should depict extra-musical concepts in instrumental music and, if so, how much depiction is acceptable. Critics also discussed generic expectations of a symphony and how the Pastoral Symphony did not meet those expectations, even though some also took into account its high status as a work by Beethoven in comparison with works by other composers. Connected with recognition of this status were both recognition of Beethoven’s genius and a pronounced preference for hearing the work in its entirety rather than a selection of two or three movements. All of these ideas relate to currents of thought common in continental Europe, especially in German-speaking countries, at the time: the integrity of the work, the worship of genius, and also ideas of meaning in music. Engagement with these concepts on the part of English-speaking critics demonstrates the dissemination of the ideas outside German lands.
The principal method in this study entailed an examination of primary sources. I examined many articles published in Boston and London from 1819 to 1874, including reviews of performances, ensembles, musical works, and books, in addition to essays on subjects such as Beethoven and music in general. Most of these appeared in music journals such as the Harmonicon and the Musical World in London and Dwight’s Journal of Music in Boston. My study reveals trends in the opinions presented in these sources that relate to areas of concern in modern scholarship devoted to the period.

For example, ideas about the ability of music to convey the extra-musical are connected with broader critical theories. M. H. Abrams presents one well-known perspective in his The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Condition. In the introduction, which he subtitles “Orientation of Critical Theories,” Abrams outlines four recurring approaches: mimetic, pragmatic, expressive, and objective theories. According to Abrams, the premise of mimetic theory is that art must imitate nature. Pragmatic theory assumes, in contrast, that art should instruct or entertain the audience, whereas expressive theory brings with it the expectation that art should convey the feelings of the artist. Finally, objective theory considers the artwork as something separate from nature, the audience, and the artist. Although Abrams applies these ideas to literature, especially poetry, his observations pertain to music as well. Mimetic and expressive theories are especially pertinent to understanding the debate about depiction in music.

John Neubauer takes issue with some of Abrams’s theories. In The Emancipation of Music from Language he writes that expressive theories of music, which focus on the artist’s feelings, are inherently mimetic; that is, they describe or imitate those feelings. On this basis, he

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5 The earliest English-language review I could find that discussed the Pastoral Symphony was published in 1819. From that point, I completed as much research as I could within a reasonable amount of time, but I did not discern a natural stopping place.

objects to the distinction that Abrams makes between expressive and mimetic theories. After conflating these two categories, Neubauer emphasizes instead the shift towards objective theories of art. Critics with an appreciation for the latter theories valued art that did not refer to anything outside the piece, but rather was based on internal formal relationships in a musical work.

Mary Sue Morrow proposes the existence of a different aesthetic theory in *German Music Criticism in the Late Eighteenth Century: Aesthetic Issues in Instrumental Music*. In the decades before Beethoven wrote the *Pastoral Symphony*, German-speaking critics changed their stance toward imitation in music. Examining this change in detail, Morrow notes that German musicians were influenced by a translation of a treatise by the French aesthete Charles Batteaux that discussed mimetic theories of music. They combined ideas from this treatise with their own pragmatic theory based on the so-called doctrine of the affections. Morrow calls the result “mimetic expressivity,” a theory that advocates imitation of passions rather than imitation of physical objects or actions. This new concept was an important influence on the attitudes of audiences, especially music critics, toward the expressive theories of art that persisted throughout the nineteenth century.

Abrams, Neubauer, and Morrow adopt different points of view on whether the expression of emotions in art should be considered a type of mimesis. This conflict of opinion mirrors disparities in how nineteenth-century critics in both London and Boston treated the music of

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8 Ibid., 7-9 and 172-200.
10 In her book, Morrow traces a decrease in importance of mimesis within the discussion of the expressivity of instrumental music throughout the forty years leading up to 1800.
Beethoven’s *Pastoral Symphony*, which, according to Beethoven’s own indication *mehr Ausdruck der Empfindung als Malerei*, not only seeks to express emotional states, but also includes instances of so-called tone painting. In both Britain and the United States, writers could not agree as to whether music was capable of depicting any non-musical objects or ideas. Furthermore, among those who thought that it could, there was disagreement about whether it *should* depict those phenomena. Some thought that all depiction was good and essentially viewed expressive theories of art as mimetic; others, however, rejected imitation of objects in nature but allowed the expression of emotions, thus differentiating between the two theories.

Important to the discussion of imitation in Beethoven’s *Pastoral Symphony* is the sub-genre of the characteristic symphony. Frank E. Kirby describes the characteristic symphony as a work that “[makes] use of a musical style that has explicit associations with a definite expressive character.” According to him, the *Pastoral Symphony* is a characteristic symphony. Richard Will in large part agrees, writing that characteristic symphonies portray specific subject matter and, typically, portray the emotions associated with that subject matter. He uses the *Pastoral Symphony* as an example of such a work. Wyn Jones also recognizes the validity of placing the *Pastoral Symphony* in that sub-genre. In support of this classification, he notes that one of the titles Beethoven considered for the *Pastoral Symphony* used the term *Sinfonia caracteristica*. Still, the characteristic symphony’s history as a sub-genre seems to have been coming to a close.

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11 “More the expression of feeling than painting.” This famous statement appeared in the January 25 issue of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, in an article which purportedly reprinted the handbills passed out at the première of the symphony. Wyn Jones, 1.


14 Wyn Jones, 32-33. The entire title as found in Beethoven’s sketches was *Sinfonia caracteristica oder Erinnerungen an das Landleben.*
by the early nineteenth century; among the primary sources I have thus far read, there is no
mention of any type of character piece, even when writers discuss aspects of tone painting in the
symphony. Either the idea of the characteristic symphony was not taken up in England and the
United States, or the type was nearly extinct and had faded from memory.

That nineteenth-century British critics did not invoke the characteristic symphony
probably means that it was no longer current in continental Europe. In his “Xenophilia in British
Musical History,” Nicholas Temperley writes that aristocrats in nineteenth-century England
sponsored music from the Continent in order to separate themselves from the middle classes.
Middle-class citizens, meanwhile, expressed their desire to rise socially by imitating the upper
class: they listened to the same music.¹⁵ According to Temperley, the value placed on foreign
music resulted in a devaluing of native music among the upper and middle classes, a situation
that Colin Eatock likewise observes in his Mendelssohn and Victorian England.¹⁶ When treating
foreign music, British music critics also engaged with concepts that foreign music critics
attributed to such music; since they did not discuss the characteristic symphony, its importance
on the Continent may well have diminished greatly.¹⁷

Like English audiences, American audiences listened to foreign music and engaged with
its aesthetics. That Americans followed this practice is due in part to their adoption of English
attitudes and ideas. Vicki Lynn Eaklor observes that before the middle of the century, many

¹⁵ Nicholas Temperley, “Xenophilia in British Musical History,” in Nineteenth-Century British Music
¹⁷ Will, in his Characteristic Symphonies in the Age of Haydn and Beethoven, discusses the changing
intellectual atmosphere that caused the characteristic symphony to flourish and, eventually, to die away. He notes
that the characteristic symphony as a sub-genre has both a definite meaning and an indefinite quality, and that the
public’s conception of the two ideas as increasingly incompatible concepts led to the sub-genre’s demise in the early
Americans went to England as part of their education.\textsuperscript{18} Thus American critics undoubtedly absorbed many of their opinions about music from the English. Another significant factor in shaping American attitudes towards foreign music was immigration. Nicholas E. Tawa notes that among the influences driving Americans to elevate their musical life was a large influx of European immigrants who successfully marginalized American music while supporting the music of European masters.\textsuperscript{19} Joseph Horowitz likewise asserts that Americans who participated in high culture valued European music more than American music.\textsuperscript{20}

Also important to understanding nineteenth-century music criticism in the United States are the attitudes of music critics towards their audiences. According to Eaklor, these critics, particularly those who wrote before the Civil War, found American audiences to have deficient appreciation for classical music. She proposes that critics thought they could inspire audiences to develop a taste for serious music by educating them. When these reviewers reported on concerts, they spent little time writing about the actual performances. Instead, they commented on elements surrounding the music such as its history, the compositional theory undergirding it, and aesthetic matters.\textsuperscript{21} Such a practice may be related to Lowell Mason’s goal of using music as a tool for edifying the American population.\textsuperscript{22} Richard Crawford writes in \textit{America’s Musical Life: A History} that Mason, building upon the idea of the singing school for teenagers and adults, founded singing schools for children, both inside and outside public schools. Mason hoped to shape children’s tastes so that they favored what, to him, constituted good music.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{21} Eaklor, 113-18.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 146-47.
education would thus lead to edification,\textsuperscript{24} or “intellectual, moral, or spiritual improvement.”\textsuperscript{25}

Music criticism published in Boston seems indeed to include more didactic treatment of music than that written in London. Although this treatment is different, however, music critics in both cities discuss topics such as tone painting and the integrity of the work that suggest the dissemination of German thought.

Even though the \textit{Pastoral} Symphony was a favorite work of audiences in both those cities and was therefore performed regularly, reception of the symphony in London and Boston was not always consistent from one performance to the next. I have discovered two different trends in the opinions of critics who reported on performances of the symphony, beyond the well-known and much discussed debate about the symphony’s programmatic elements.

In and around the 1820s, critics and conductors in England saw the length of the \textit{Pastoral} Symphony as an issue. Not only was it a long symphony, longer than many others, but also it seemed static because it developed slowly. Some writers considered that the symphony’s length and static nature posed a problem for audiences used to shorter and more dynamic orchestral works. A second group, however, respected the integrity of the symphony, as a matter of principle and also because it was a work of Beethoven. When the first group of critics proposed solutions to the perceived problem, the latter reacted against them, writing that to enact such solutions was to show disrespect for Beethoven.

About twenty years later, English writers began to view the \textit{Pastoral} Symphony as a prime example of “higher” music and to treat it accordingly. In addition to considering the fact that Beethoven wrote the piece, critics discussed issues such as the compositional skill displayed

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 140.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 135.
in the symphony and the skill required of its performers. Furthermore, these critics began to use audiences’ reactions to the piece as a measure of good taste.

Throughout the period from 1819 to 1874, the most constant topic of discussion was the symphony’s programmatic elements, which remained central to reception of the Pastoral Symphony in Boston and London. All critics had their own opinions as to how much imitation of nature occurred in the work, and many of them made blanket statements about the ability of music to convey extra-musical ideas in addition to their remarks specifically concerning this symphony. Unfortunately, this controversial aspect of the symphony appears to have been the feature that audiences with little musical training could engage with most easily.

One problem inherent to such a study as this one is the anonymity of most of the critics. A majority of concert reviews published in these cities in the nineteenth century lacked by-lines, while many others merely gave pseudonyms. Positive identification of these critics is therefore difficult, requiring outside confirmation or a comparative study of writing styles of known critics. The Retrospective Index of Music Periodicals names as many reviewers for major music publications as is possible, but most of the critics’ identities are unknown.26 In this paper, therefore, I give critics’ names when identification is known or suspected, but refrain from speculation when it is not.

Although the Pastoral Symphony was of course performed many more times than it was written about, critics were nonetheless more likely to discuss it than other pieces on a program. Its very fame made it a useful example in articles other than concert reviews. For instance, it was mentioned in many reports by correspondents, a type of writing that I do not discuss here.

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26 Perhaps the unavailability of such information stems from a reason similar to that which Morrow names in German Music Criticism in the Late Eighteenth Century: editors hid the names of their critics “on the assumption that anonymity allowed a freer exchange of opinions.” Morrow, 36.
Rather, I concentrate on the many reviews from London and the relatively few reviews from Boston that connect the symphony to ideas about what music is and what it should be.

The first two trends I treat, concerns about the symphony’s length and discussions that relate it to good taste, are much more apparent in London sources. My chapters on these topics therefore cover only sources from that city. Concerns about the symphony’s programmatic elements appear in both London and Boston, however. Critics in both cities share a wide variety of opinions on the subject, with no trends changing over time. Rather than devoting one chapter to London and another to Boston, I cover both cities together, dividing my discussion instead between critics who differentiate between tone painting and emotional expression and critics who do not.

27 There is one source from Boston, written about half a century later than the trend in England, that claims that the symphony is too long; I have not seen any other American source that brings this up. The concept that the symphony is a piece of higher music does not define a trend in Boston, although some correspondents to Boston papers from cities like New York make mention of it.
CHAPTER 2

ISSUES OF LENGTH AND THE INTEGRITY OF THE WORK

The Pastoral Symphony was well performed, but in its best state is always too long, particularly the second movement, which, abounding in repetitions, might be shortened without the slightest danger of injuring that particular part, and with the certainty of improving the effect of the whole.\(^\text{28}\)

Audiences in London struggled with the *Pastoral* Symphony for a few decades, even while they also loved the music. For critics, the problem lay in the perception that the symphony had too few ideas repeated too many times. Complaints about the symphony’s length abounded, especially in the 1820s. Critics who proposed solutions to this issue saw themselves as representing the audiences’ interests, while their opponents promoted the idea of the integrity of the symphony as a work of art.

Many protests regarding the symphony’s length came from the critic for the *Harmonicon*, but there were others who held the same opinion. The critic for the *Literary Gazette*, for instance, writes thus in a critique of a performance of Beethoven’s Fourth Symphony:

> The performance commenced with Beethoven's symphony in B flat, which, if such a composition can be said to possess a fault, has that of being much too long, as it occupied more than half an hour. Beethoven was one of those who never knew when to leave off; witness the length of his pastoral symphony.\(^\text{29}\)

The critic here reveals something of the contemporary practices of those who programmed concerts: If a symphony that lasted over half an hour was felt to be too long, then the symphonies that orchestras usually performed must have been half an hour at the most.\(^\text{30}\) The critic’s

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\(^{30}\) Indeed, a study of performance timings of recent recordings of Haydn’s *London* Symphonies, H.I:93-104, and Mozart’s Symphonies Nos. 38-41 (K.504, 543, 550, and 551) reveals that performances of these symphonies rarely average more than 30 minutes in length. On the other hand, in a similar study of Beethoven’s symphonies, only Symphonies Nos. 1 and 8 are less than half an hour long. The length of the *Pastoral* Symphony averages about 43 minutes, with the Third and Ninth Symphonies beating it at about 50 minutes and about 69 minutes, respectively. These last two symphonies are nevertheless more dynamic than the *Pastoral* Symphony, a
statement that the Pastoral Symphony is long takes on added significance in that a critic would
not usually name the Sixth Symphony in a discussion of the Fourth. Although this critic does not
give a timing for the Pastoral Symphony, he presumably knows that it is longer than thirty
minutes and assumes that at least part of his readership, perhaps especially those who were
casual listeners, had similar feelings about it.

The apparent tediousness of the Pastoral Symphony affected those in particular who
were unattentive to the technical details of the music—presumably, most of the audience. In a
letter to the editor of the Quarterly Musical Magazine published in 1827, one writer, who
identifies himself as “Musicus,” also comments on the symphony’s length. He writes,

Now, Sir, what is the tendency of instrumental music? Is it not to excite in us a
disposition to reverie? ...But this charm of the imagination, which we have been
considering, cannot be long continued, though so delightful. Some one [sic] has said, “It
is a law of our nature, that impressions, often repeated, should lose their force.” This is
strikingly proved by our author: take, for example, his Pastoral Symphony. When that is
performed, you at first give into all the illusion which he would create, and your mind is
insensibly filled with rural images; but the stimulus is too long applied—you are roused
from your reverie, find a number of vacant faces about you, and heartily wish the
movement at an end. 31

This author, in writing about his own experience, is also presenting himself as a representative of
the audience. Not only is the Pastoral Symphony too long for him to engage with it throughout
an entire performance by picturing the countryside, but also it appears also to be too long for
others in the audience, who listen to the music with “vacant faces.” “Musicus” does not,
however, propose any sort of solution.

The reviewer for the Harmonicon does offer a solution to the perceived problem of the
Pastoral Symphony’s length. Each of the six articles in which he discusses the symphony

31 Musicus [pseud.], letter to the editor, Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review, 1827, 164-65. That the
“disposition to reverie” was excited in more people than just Musicus is evidenced by a number of writers who,
when they reported on a performance of the Pastoral Symphony, would give a poetic description of the music rather
than a technical description of it.
contains a comment about its length. He even times the second movement—”upwards of a quarter of an hour in duration” — and the symphony as a whole—”upwards of three-quarters of an hour.” Later, he mentions the time again and recommends that conductors should “Reduce…this work from forty minutes, its present duration, to thirty, a rational time.” In fact, he made the recommendation of abridging the symphony every time he discussed it; furthermore, he specifically suggests shortening the second movement in four articles.

Once or twice, when the critic for the Harmonicon suggested that the symphony be abridged, he justified this by pointing to the amount of repetition in it. The symphony tends to develop through slow, subtle changes. Critics often took this to be repetition without development, as opposed to the clear, dynamic development that occurred in other symphonies they heard on a regular basis, even including Beethoven’s longer symphonies, such as the Third. To the Harmonicon’s critic, the symphony’s slow development hindered enjoyment of the piece and in fact was the culprit that caused the perception of excessive length.

The pastoral symphony is too long for the quantity of ideas that it contains; and though if reduced one-third it would generally please, yet, spun out to upwards of three-quarters of an hour, he must be a great enthusiast who can listen to it without feeling some symptoms of impatience. In this excerpt, the critic bases his recommendation for abridgment on the grounds that, between the length of the symphony and the belaboring of musical ideas, any audience member would likely tire of the music. Though the impatience is his own, it is clear that he also has in mind the audience’s reaction to the symphony when he makes these comments. In a different review, he likewise recommends shortening the symphony to make it more palatable to a wider audience.

35 “Fourth Concert,” May 1826, 106.
Why, for the purpose of rendering it popular, it should not be shortened, we cannot divine: we curtail the fine operas of Mozart to suit them to local habits and manners; we even amputate a limb if it be found an incumbrance [sic]; for what reason, then, not surrender a few injudiciously repeated passages, if thus the remainder can be strengthened, and its beauties be better brought out?\footnote{36}

The image of amputating a limb vividly illustrates the concern of some critics. The practice of modifying the music in operas was common, but applying the same practice to the genre of the symphony would have caused concern among critics. In fact, the \textit{Harmonicon} reviewer correctly states later in the same paragraph that “those who now tolerate its lengthy repetitions for the sake of its beauties...have hitherto contemplated [abridging the music] as a profanation.”\footnote{37} A later critic refers to the idea of cutting out parts of the symphony as “the mutilation of a feature for the improvement of a face.”\footnote{38} Critics such as this last one expressed views typical of those knowledgeable about music, who considered Beethoven’s symphony to be a work of art best heard as it was written, without any cuts.

Critics were not alone in complaining about the \textit{Pastoral} Symphony’s length; some orchestral conductors also thought the symphony was too long. For the most part, English orchestras played the symphony in its entirety; a number of conductors, however, attempted to deal with the perceived problem. Since these conductors relied upon the audience’s support for their livelihood, they were probably trying to please their listeners. One conductor attempted to address the issue in 1841 by increasing the tempi in all movements to shorten the symphony’s duration. The critic who attended this performance did not approve of the conductor’s tactics at all:

Mr. Eliason has devised a new plan for shortening the suspense of listening to this “inordinately long” composition, namely, the playing [sic] all the movements very

\footnote{36} “\textit{Fifth Concert},” 137.  
\footnote{37} Ibid.  
considerably faster than we have been used to hear them, and than the feeling of the music seems to indicate; and we suppose the author’s intention to be as much deteriorated by this perversion, as it would be by the mutilation of his ideas.\textsuperscript{39}

The quickening of the tempi as a solution to the perceived problem of length was a singular idea that does not appear to have been repeated. While it provided a conductor a means to curb the audience’s impatience without omitting anything from the symphony, a significant increase in the tempo of any of the movements changes the nature of the work entirely: it takes away from the feeling of relaxation inherent to the concept of the pastoral.

In addition to stating a reaction against the conductor’s changes to the piece, the 1841 concert review cited above also asserts that music critics had learned to appreciate the symphony’s slow changes: “The age is now a little advanced in its critical acumen, and if our musical reviewers do not always understand the subject of which they treat, they are at least too sensible to suggest the mutilation of a feature for the improvement of a face.”\textsuperscript{40} These statements are not just observations; they also admonish against even suggesting the possibility that the symphony be shortened. Through this review, the critic may be attempting to influence a wider audience in addition to critics who would make such a suggestion, so that fewer people would air their complaints about the symphony’s length. This concert review provides the last reference to anyone calling for the piece to be shortened. Critics begin to take a different view of the symphony.

As has been illustrated in the reviews cited above, some critics deemed the act of playing the entire symphony essential to an audience’s experience of the work. The implied respect for the integrity of a work must be connected to the reverence for Beethoven as a great composer. For example, in 1850 the critic of the London \textit{Times} observed about a performance of a single

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
movement of the *Pastoral* Symphony: “We have a strong objection to the mutilation of great works.”

Likewise, in 1860, a reviewer of a performance that included only the third and fourth movements of the symphony comments that “we can only again express our regret, not unmingled with surprise, at the mutilation of such a masterpiece, and trust we shall not have future cause to complain of so grave an offence against the giants of art at the hands of one who so thoroughly understands and venerate[s] them.”

Playing one or two movements of the symphony in isolation, as the conductors did in the performances reviewed above, might have been seen as a better way of dealing with its length than abridging it. Certainly, several instances of playing selections from the *Pastoral* Symphony went unprotested. The critic quoted above who wrote in 1860, however, viewed this practice as a compromise between the possible impatience of the audience and the conductor’s desire to perform a great work. He wrote as follows:

The admirable execution of the “Scherzo and Storm” from Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* made us regret that Mr. [Alfred] Mellon should have given this movement only, and not the symphony in its entirety, as the effect is utterly destroyed by its isolation from the body of the work. With the experience of the Monday Popular Concerts, where week after week crowded audiences are found, who not only sit out, but thoroughly enjoy the quartets and other chamber music provided for them, Mr. Mellon need not fear that a symphony, whether of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, or Mozart, is too long for the British public, who, thanks to the late M. [Anton] Jullien, have shown themselves quite as ready to do justice to these grand works as the more aristocratic listeners of the Philharmonic or other high-priced Societies.

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42 “Floral Hall,” unsigned review of concert performance by Alfred Mellon’s orchestra, London, *Musical World*, August 18, 1860, 527-28. The reviewer makes no reference in this article to the fact that the storm is supposed to segue into the finale. He does note that “the effect [of the music in the scherzo and storm] is utterly destroyed by its isolation from the body of the work;” however, he seems to be making a broader statement about hearing movements in context rather than pointing out the incomplete feeling that would result from ending the music before the finale.

43 In these cases, the reviewers were more concerned with the way that performing even one or two movements of the symphony reflected upon the quality of the orchestras’ work.

44 “Floral Hall,” 527.
This reviewer appears to be representing the viewpoint of the music critic: He wants to hear the parts of the symphony in their proper context. Furthermore, based on observation, he considers any concern about whether the audience is unable to appreciate entire symphonies to be unfounded. Any compromise on the part of the conductor, when viewed in this light, would be unnecessary. The critic trusts that the audiences’ tastes have improved from what they used to be.

The above critic is not the only critic who marked an improvement in the audiences’ appetites for classical music. In fact, in the 1870s two critics also note such an improvement; they express displeasure at the thought of having to abridge the symphony’s second movement even for the sake of the audience. The reviewer for the *Musical Standard* writes this in 1872:

> Will it be believed that the Philharmonic Society, when they first produced the Pastoral Symphony, were obliged to make numerous cuts in the *andante* “to make it go down?” Blessed, in this case, are those who have “short memories,” for it is not pleasant to recollect such proofs of barbarism.\(^{45}\)

One year later, in an article entitled “Music in England,” the writer makes a side comment that it is “a sign of the increasing capacity of the audience, that the slow movement in the Pastoral Symphony of Beethoven is now given in its entirety, whereas in the good old days extensive cuts were made to bring it within their comprehension.”\(^{46}\) Evidence is lacking for the claim that the Andante was cut; however, the audiences’ tastes must have improved, since no one now asked conductors to make those cuts.

The view of the *Pastoral* Symphony as lasting too long for London audiences brought critics who espoused cuts or performances of selected movements into conflict with others who championed the idea of the symphony as an entity. While the critics who saw length as an issue


suggested that the symphony be abridged, their opponents wrote against such actions, thus engaging with related ideas of a work’s integrity and of composer as genius. Audiences’ eventual adjustment to the symphony’s length demonstrates that the latter ideas prevailed, bringing audiences’ opinions into agreement with views typical of music critics.
It is said that he [Jullien] is a “man of polkas,” and his programmes are condemned for the quantity of light and trivial music they contain. It is stated that such “trash” is calculated to “deprave and lower the taste of the people.” Can you deprave or lower that which has no existence? Where was the musical taste of the people before popular concerts acquainted them with music? ...Yet in 1846, when Jullien had been engaged for some time in “lowering” the popular taste, the “man of polkas” had the temerity to announce a whole week of Beethoven’s music, and the polka-loving public positively availed themselves of the opportunity, and crowded Covent Garden Theatre each night of the week so devoted. Jullien set apart a whole week to the performance of the not long before despised works of the great German, who “trod in no man’s steps, moved within no prescribed limits, and adopted no established combinations.”

In the 1840s, English critics began to praise the Pastoral in earnest as an example of “higher” music. What the critics meant by “higher” varied, of course, with each author, his intention, and the type of publication for which he wrote. For example, critics writing articles with a religious tone deemed the Pastoral Symphony to be capable of raising moral standards, possibly because of themes related to its program. Other writers, particularly the ones who reported on concerts for newspapers, mostly considered the symphony in comparison with other, so-called lighter works popular among middle-class listeners. For these critics, the symphony’s compositional complexity and performance difficulties contributed to its status as an esteemed work. Some of them held the audience’s increasingly positive reaction to the Pastoral Symphony as evidence of improving tastes. Although these topics relate to concerns of a range of people from casual listeners to music critics, those educated in music seem to have had a greater stake in viewing the symphony as higher music.

That the appeal to readers to consider the Pastoral Symphony to be a piece of morally superior music did not occur in concert reviews comes as no surprise. The purpose of concert reviews is to help readers know which ensembles are worth paying money to hear, and perhaps

47 “What Has Jullien Done?” Eliza Cook’s Journal, November 20, 1852, 59-60.
which sorts of pieces a particular ensemble is good at playing; a short review of the music as such comes as an occasional bonus. Yet newspaper critics were not the only writers who mentioned the Pastoral Symphony. That the symphony was a perennial favorite among audiences made it a useful example in several other kinds of writing.\textsuperscript{48}

One such author who cited the Pastoral Symphony was writing about the plight of music in England.\textsuperscript{49} He compares reception of music with that of other fine arts and connects the decline of music in England to the decline of the Church. He himself has a high opinion of music as an art:

Unlike either poetry or painting, music can never be made the medium of an immoral or unholy thought. The worst effect of the most worthless music, is to leave the mind of the hearer unimpressed either for good or ill; but when listening to the strains of a Handel or a Beethoven, who can doubt the moral and religious influence of music? Who ever heard the “Messiah” without feeling for the time a better if not a wiser man? or whoever listened to the Pastoral Symphony, without recognizing a higher object in the art than the mere amusement of the hour?\textsuperscript{50}

Although this author may go a bit too far in emphasizing his opinion of music’s innate morality (ignoring a long tradition of bawdy songs), it is significant that he chose the Pastoral Symphony as an example. Messiah is an obvious choice for music with a loftier purpose since its text is religious, but the Pastoral Symphony’s text lies merely in its programmatic titles. Its lack of a sacred text does not preclude a religious reading, however. Richard Will notes that Friedrich Mosengeil’s interpretation of the storm as a manifestation of a deity has precedents in the

\textsuperscript{48} This statement is true for the nineteenth century not only in England but also in America. Several different authors from both countries note that the Pastoral Symphony is the best-known or the best-loved of Beethoven’s symphonies, usually after the Fifth or the Ninth Symphony. In fact, in several stories and anecdotes, authors choose to write about the Pastoral Symphony instead of other works, a fact which attests to how well known the symphony is and which could shed some light on its popularity.


\textsuperscript{50} “A Musician’s Plea for His Art,” Union Magazine, January 1846, 67.
writings of other authors such as Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock. Both Will and Wyn Jones also observe the references to a deity in titles Beethoven gives to parts of the finale both in his sketches and in the performance parts; they further note that Beethoven treats some of the finale’s themes in a hymn-like manner. The idea of religiosity as the basis for approving of the Pastoral Symphony, however, seems to belong more to those in positions related to the church than to music critics as a whole.

Other writers drew attention to the compositional skill evinced within the Pastoral Symphony. Only one or two critics commented on this directly. In the earliest review I found that addressed the symphony’s compositional quality, the critic, possibly Alfred Novello, writes that the symphony

is one of those happy efforts of genius, which at the time it addresses the most cultivated and refined intellects, makes as unerring an appeal also to the more ordinary apprehension. A person with two ideas only, as regards musical combination, must feel that not only has a great work been achieved, as regards learned composition; but that it is a poem of a richly imaginative, and at the same time vividly descriptive character.

Here, the limitations of newspaper reviews become apparent: the space allowed for a concert review precluded extensive analysis. In this review, the critic only writes in general terms noting that the piece exemplifies “learned composition” and that it appeals to the intellect; he also notes that that coupled with the intellectual attraction is an also pleasing, though not intellectually rigorous, descriptive aspect. The critic’s comments clearly demonstrate a mindfulness of different levels of musical appreciation among listeners and perhaps also among his readers.

One other critic, writing in 1845, reflects on Beethoven’s compositional skill in this work. Using the name “George French Flowers,” he mentions the symphony in an article about

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51 Will, 179-81.
52 Will, 181-84 and Wyn Jones, 38-43.
53 Unsigned review of concert performance by the London Philharmonic Society, Musical World, June 16, 1837, 11. The sentence beginning “A person with two ideas only” is difficult to interpret; however, I believe that here the critic means to say that even someone who is not knowledgeable about music must recognize and acknowledge the piece’s merits.
*Le désert* by Félicien David. Comparing David’s symphony unfavorably with Beethoven’s,

Flowers remarks thus:

> If the *Desert* be regarded as a fair specimen of David’s genius, it would appear to me that he is less skilled in counterpoint than is essential to form a great musician: this at once throws him oceans behind Beethoven, for his music teems with inventions of all descriptions. Allow me in conclusion to inform your readers who have not studied music as a science, that, when I speak of *counterpoint*, I do not mean to associate it *with fugue*. I mean rather the art of invention, and the interweaving and colouring of pure flowing melodies in each voice of the harmony. Composers who seek to convey ideas without regard to counterpoint, trust too much to the effects produced by the dynamic and rhythmic divisions of music, and thus touch only the outskirts of musical science, and forget that it is the thoughtful combinations of sounds which give soul and colour to descriptive music. Such is the exalted character of Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony, a feature wanting in David’s Ode-Symphony, and those who draw the slightest comparison between these two symphonies are sadly deficient in their knowledge of *counterpoint.*

The author of this article obviously holds the *Pastoral Symphony* in high regard, especially as a work of Beethoven. He seems to think that compositional skill, what he calls “counterpoint,” is particularly important in “descriptive music,” important enough that he takes the time to clarify the point for readers who might confuse his meaning. He proceeds to point out the differences between Beethoven’s approach to composition and that of David and encourages his readers not to give too much credence to those who cannot hear such differences. By making such points, this author is presenting a learned perspective to those less knowledgeable about technical details in music.

Discussions of how difficult it was to perform the *Pastoral Symphony* occur far more often than do discussions of its audibly discernable compositional skill. Many of these discussions were limited to one statement. For example, the critic for the *Musical World* writes in 1858 that “The performance [by Anton Jullien’s orchestra] commenced with the overture to Der Freischütz, and at once convinced the auditors of the splendid quality of the band. The

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Andante, Scherzo, and Storm, from the Pastoral Symphony of Beethoven, fully confirmed this opinion.”55 Then, in 1860, another reviewer reports on a concert at Floral Hall, remarking, “The manner in which Mr. Mellon’s magnificent orchestra executed the Scherzo and Storm from Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony reflected the highest credit upon both conductor and his able coadjutors.”56 At least some critics thought the symphony difficult to perform and therefore used its performance as a measure of an orchestra’s abilities.

Although many critics who remarked on the symphony’s difficulty restricted what they wrote to one or two sentences, some critics took the time to comment on the bases for their opinions. Several critics noted the expression conveyed (or not conveyed) by the orchestra, that is, its ability (or inability) to achieve dynamic contrast. Some of these critics referred to dynamic contrast with the term “light and shade,” which seems to mean nuances in dynamics not possible on the part of less capable orchestras. One of these inferior ensembles, according to the critic of the Harmonicon, was the Philharmonic Society in its 1830 incarnation. The critic writes thus on a performance by this orchestra:

Its [the Pastoral Symphony’s] execution might still be more perfect; the great, we might almost say the only, defect of this band, is its want of light and shade; it rarely accomplishes a pianissimo, and this failing was sorely felt in the present piece, parts of which can hardly be played too softly, for the orchestra never achieved anything beyond a mezzo forte, notwithstanding the exertions of the leader to carry so important a point.57

Indeed, there are passages in the Pastoral Symphony, especially in the Andante, that require a nuanced approach to the softer side of the dynamic range. One orchestra, however, was able to perform the symphony using an effective interpretation of dynamics. In 1855, Alfred Mellon

conducted the orchestra at Covent Garden in a successful performance, at least in the opinion of the critic for the *Musical World*:

> We have seldom, if ever, been more entirely satisfied with a performance of the “Pastoral Symphony,” than on Monday night. …The same vigour, precision, and point was everywhere observable; the same delicacy and care for *nuances* and details. Nor was it at all mere mechanical work. Although Mr. Mellon never departed from the intentions of the composer, he gave a reading of his own, and a good one, to each movement, controlling his executants with the utmost ease. There was no hesitation, no confusion, no false intonation in “wind” or “string.” There were “*pianos*” and “*pianissimos,*” *fortes* [sic] and “*fortissimos,*” with the difference so often sought, so rarely obtained, between them. In short, the execution was worthy of the music. The fact deserves to be emphatically recorded. Mr. Alfred Mellon and his enlarged band made a reputation in one night—nay, in one performance.58

Although casual listeners might have commented on how difficult they perceived the performance of the *Pastoral Symphony* to be, it seems that music critics are more likely than lay people to discuss the importance of nuanced dynamics: Many who made up the audience were more inclined to concentrate on other aspects of the symphony, such as its programmatic elements.

The earliest account in which a writer remarks on the musical difficulty of the *Pastoral Symphony* is by a self-proclaimed “Musical Amateur.” In an article about the different performing ensembles present in London in 1821, the author writes as follows:

> The Philharmonic Society….is the only band in Europe where effect can be given to the Sinfonias of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. The simultaneous effect of forty masters upon the stringed instruments, performing with an identity of taste and expression, is truly astonishing…. But we must hear the performance of Beethoven’s *Pastoral Sinfony* [sic] before we can appreciate the talents of this extraordinary orchestra. This piece exhibits, by the power of sounds alone, a picture of the events of a summer’s day,—the sunrise—the freshness of the morning—the singing of birds—the buzz of insects—the storm—the calm—the rustic song and dance—and the close of the evening.59

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To this writer, the ability of the Philharmonic Society to portray such ideas as appear to him in the Pastoral Symphony grants it a high status. The symphony is valuable in that it exhibits better than other pieces what an orchestra can do.

Since the evidence of skill in composition and performance marked the Pastoral Symphony as a piece of higher music, several critics held the audience’s appreciation of the piece as a measure of its improving taste. For example, the critic for the Musical World reported on a concert at the Crystal Palace in 1868, writing thus:

The concert was further remarkable for such a performance of Beethoven’s “Pastoral Symphony” as can be heard nowhere in England—nowhere, indeed, in Europe—except at the Crystal Palace. The eager attention with which this singularly fine performance was listened to, and the extraordinary delight it created, must have been as gratifying to those who watch with interest the progress of music among us as the irreproachable nature of the execution itself.\(^6\)

This excerpt suggests a concern among some proponents of higher music that the tastes of audiences be brought closer to their standards, so that audiences would value more serious genres such as symphonies and string quartets over lighter music such as waltzes and polkas. Critics such as the one quoted above desired the performance of works such as the Pastoral Symphony and watched the audiences’ reactions to the performances.

Critics appear to have realized that their writing was not solely responsible for the improvement in the audiences’ tastes. One critic who came to this realization was the reviewer for the Musical World who comments on the fact that Alfred Mellon programmed only the third and fourth movements in his 1860 concert discussed above.\(^6\) Expressing faith in the audience’s ability to listen to an entire symphony by any great composer, he attributes the progress made in


this regard to the work of Anton Jullien. He is not the only person to make such a statement; a reporter for *Eliza Cook’s Journal* also attributes an improvement in the tastes of the audiences to Jullien. In fact, Jullien seems to be the only person whom critics in England consider to have achieved any results in improving the tastes of the audiences so that they would appreciate serious music. Several of his concerts included movements from the *Pastoral* Symphony, and others included the entire symphony. In fact, the critic for the *Musical World* remarks correctly in 1850 that “the Pastoral Symphony has been one of the mainstays of M. Jullien for five or six years.”

Discussions of the *Pastoral* Symphony as a piece of higher music involve the opinions of both music critics and audiences in general; however, the viewpoints of those who studied music regularly seem to have greater representation in music criticism regarding the symphony’s worth. For example, issues of compositional difficulty in the symphony are most apparent to those who have studied compositional techniques in various works. The idea of the symphony’s performance difficulty is easier for amateur music-lovers to appreciate, although they appreciate it from a different viewpoint than that of most music critics. Finally, the subject of the audiences’ tastes concerned a variety of critics, often those who studied music, but also those who connected music’s purpose with morality. Since these writers identified the *Pastoral* Symphony as a piece of higher music, they promoted its appreciation as evidence of good taste, especially among the masses who, in their opinion, began with very little idea of what constitutes good taste in music.

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62 Jullien conducted concert series in London for several years, which, in the beginning, were primarily miscellaneous concerts of lighter music, but into which he slowly incorporated more and more cultivated music. Eventually, he was able to conduct concerts consisting entirely of cultivated music, and held several concerts which featured the music of one composer, such as Beethoven or Mendelssohn.
63 “What Has Jullien Done?” 59-60.
CHAPTER 4

POSITIVE REACTIONS TO PROGRAMMATIC ELEMENTS

A great deal has been said against those imitations of natural sounds in music. But examples are full to defend the practice. Remember the Creation, the Pastoral Symphony. Even dainty Mendelssohn makes poor Bottom bray in the overture to the Midsummer Night’s Dream.65

Description in music was the most popular topic linked to the Pastoral Symphony in both Great Britain and the United States. Critics in London and Boston wrote on this matter, expressing a full range of reactions throughout the period in question. One common position regarding this issue was the wholehearted approval of any type of musical description in the symphony. General audiences were more likely than those who knew more about music to appreciate the programmatic elements of the symphony as a way of engaging with it. When critics took this position, their writing reflected the opinions of the audience.

Many of the authors who wrote about musical depiction in the Pastoral Symphony approved of it as a whole. Not only did description in music make cultivated music more accessible to audiences, but very little training was required to hear and make sense of extra-musical references, particularly tone painting, which helped to clarify the music’s meaning for the listener. Furthermore, following a program or creating one’s own was seen by some as a legitimate means of relating to pieces of cultivated music, especially those works that did not indulge the audiences’ tastes by alluding to dance music or marches.

The simplest approach to writing about the programmatic elements of the Pastoral Symphony in nineteenth-century England was merely to label it a piece of descriptive music. For example, the critic for the Musical World in 1842 calls the symphony “Beethoven’s musical

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picture gallery.” Then, in 1864 the critic for the London Review of Politics, Society, Literature, Art, and Science calls the symphony “that most poetical piece of ‘picture music.” Such epithets might have attracted new listeners by announcing, albeit very briefly, that because it conveys extra-musical ideas, the symphony would be easier to follow than more abstract pieces of music. Probably, many readers agreed with these short characterizations of the symphony. This approach concisely conveyed the authors’ points; however, only a few critics limited their opinions about the descriptive nature of the Pastoral Symphony in such a manner.

In one passage discussed above, the critic for the Musical World in 1837 described the symphony as “a poem of a richly imaginative, and at the same time vividly descriptive character.” He appears to believe that the symphony’s “vividly descriptive character” will appeal primarily to “the more ordinary apprehension.” Continuing, he praises the fourth movement in particular: “The ‘Storm’ movement alone, is worthy of any genius that ever lived; it may be ranked with Gaspar Poussin’s celebrated Land-tempest.” That the author singled out the most overtly programmatic movement for praise indicates that he favors musical depiction, at least in this piece; he also compares the symphony with a landscape painting of a similar subject, suggesting that he ranks the descriptive powers of the Pastoral Symphony with those of

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69 Unsigned review of concert performance by the London Philharmonic Society, June 16, 1837, 11.
70 Gaspar Poussin, also known as Gaspard Dughet, was an Italian painter in the seventeenth century. Many of his paintings were landscapes. The painting in question, entitled “Landscape with a Storm,” may be viewed on the London National Gallery’s website at http://nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/gaspard-dughet-landscape-with-a-storm. Grove Art Online, s.v. “Dughet [Poussin], Gaspard [Gaspar; Gaspare; Gasper; Gaspero] [le Guaspre],” http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T023968 (accessed February 12, 2011).
Poussin’s painting. This gesture on his part would also have appealed to his readership; since, as Nicholas Temperley notes, the English who were educated were less likely to have studied music than other arts, such a comparison could have helped them to appreciate the symphony’s extra-musical elements.

Another review that records a positive reaction to the programmatic elements of the symphony was submitted to the *Musical World* in 1867 by a man who took the pseudonym “Drinkwater Hard”:

> What, for instance, could be finer than the *Pastoral Symphony* of Beethoven, on Saturday last? From the first note of the bright, cheerful *allegro*, with which it opens, to the end of the final *allegretto*, every note had force and meaning, while the exquisitely reposeful *andante* and the wonderfully-real storm held all hearers spell-bound.

Here, the most telling piece of evidence of Drinkwater Hard’s enjoyment of descriptive music is the phrase “the wonderfully-real storm”: he would not have emphasized its authentic sound in such a positive manner if he truly disapproved. Of course, his description of the audience’s reaction to the storm movement could have been nothing more than a matter of attributing his personal feelings to others. Still, earlier in his article he writes:

> The directors [of the Saturday concert series] are honestly entitled to all praise for the fulfilment of their promise that “no pains would be spared to render the programmes varied and interesting, and attractive to all sections of the musical public;” and it is in every way gratifying to find that…the musical public [has] been delighted.

Presumably, “all sections of the musical public” includes those with a taste for cultivated music as well as those with a taste for lighter music. It seems that Drinkwater Hard had been watching the audience’s reactions and was concerned that they be pleased by the music.

Some who wrote about the *Pastoral* Symphony’s programmatic elements included descriptions of which elements went with which movements. In fact, sometimes the author

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71 Temperley, 13.
73 Ibid., 247.
seemed to feel that relating a programmatic account of the symphony was sufficient to describe
the music, a gesture that would appeal to the tastes of many who enjoyed lighter music. Such an
account appears in the *Harmonicon*, whose critic lists the movements in the symphony,
reprinting the descriptions of the movements found in the concert’s program notes:

First movement (2/4) Pastoral.
Second . . . . . (12/8) Scene on the bank of a rivulet.—(Imitation
of the nightingale and the cuckoo.)
Third . . . . . (3/4) Rustic dance.
Fourth . . . . . . . Storm.
Last . . . . . . . (6/8) The shepherd’s song of gratitude.74

When directors of ensembles provide audiences with program notes, the usual purpose is to
assist the listeners in understanding the music or to increase their interest in the music by giving
historical or analytical information about the pieces being performed.75 Readers of concert
reviews, however, are removed from the concert, so including information about the program—
indeed, writing about the music at all—may be called into question. Perhaps this critic meant to
attract new listeners to later concerts by including information about the music that would be of
interest to them.

Another critic, one from Boston, also included the symphony’s program in his article. In
this article, the writer seems at first to be receptive to the idea of description in the *Pastoral
Symphony*. He notes, “The different movements in this piece were inscribed by their author with
words intended to bring pastoral scenery before the fancy of the hearer, while listening.”
Working from a French transcription of the symphony for piano by Kalkbrenner, the reviewer
translates the titles of the movements from the French, and in doing so does not always render

74 “Fourth Concert,” June 1826, 130.
75 Although audiences did not usually receive program notes at concerts until later in the century, audiences
for several earlier performances were provided with them, as evidenced by this article. Furthermore, according to
Wyn Jones, Beethoven provided handbills for the première of the *Pastoral* in 1808; he writes in an endnote that
although the handbills were lost, their matter was given in an article reviewing the concert. Wyn Jones, 1 and 89, note 2.
Beethoven’s German accurately. The author adds to the title of the third movement, which he calls “Gaiety of the country people,” a summary of what he thinks is happening in the program for that movement: a dance. He also calls the storm “especially fine.” These statements suggest an appreciation of description in music, although in this case, the author gives the information principally to prepare listeners to follow the music. He writes in his last paragraph, “We have thus briefly particularized the movements, as an assistance to those who may for the first time hear the piece [in the upcoming performance by the Boston Academy].”

As part of this particularization, the critic not only names the movements and describes several aspects of the program, but also gives the time signature and key of each movement, along with one or two expressive markings. It is likely that many amateur musicians in the audience could appreciate these details, which help in distinguishing one movement from another. Armed with such information, the listener could more readily understand what is occurring in the music and engage with it more deeply.

One London critic refers to a statement by Sir John Hawkins that in his day, people did not pay attention to symphonies, because they were in a state of mind that afforded them a “total absence of thought.” The critic then responds to Hawkins’s statement, writing that “the point concerning the total absence of thought, alluded to by the above musical historian, is to be guarded against by all symphony writers. No composition of this kind should consist of a mere bundle of movements, [sic] there should be a sort of story like the Pastoral Symphony.” The critic is suggesting that compositions be accompanied by a narrative or poem, or even just an idea, as a way to engage the audience. It is clear that he approves of listeners’ familiarity with the

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ideas that accompany the Pastoral Symphony, at least for the audience’s sake. This shows a concern especially for those audience members who have not had much musical training and who would have difficulty following music without verbal clues.

Some critics, along similar lines, advocated that listeners familiarize themselves with the symphony’s program before listening to the piece. The author of the article on Beethoven in A Dictionary of Musicians: from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time even recommends a particular program:

Let the student, who is inclined duly to appreciate the comparative merit of Beethoven’s works, endeavour further to hear the performance, by a good orchestra, of his Pastoral Sinfonia; and in order properly to estimate this grand and difficult work of art, it is even desirable that he should first read, with attention, the beautiful and spirited description of this exquisite masterpiece, given by Mr. Frederick Mosengeil, of Meiningen, in No. 133 of the Zeitung f. die eleg. Welt, 1810.

Although not many critics recommended reading the program before listening to the Pastoral Symphony, nearly anyone who had heard of the symphony knew it had a program, and, as demonstrated above, at least one conductor included program notes in the concert’s handbills. It is possible that audience members with the means to do so acquainted themselves with a programmatic description of the symphony before arriving at the concert.

Some writers used the Pastoral Symphony as an example of music that imitates nature, often when they were discussing other pieces. For example, one critic for Dwight’s Journal of Music, writing about Handel’s Israel in Egypt, contrasts the Pastoral Symphony with the oratorio:

Later composers, since the great development of orchestral resources, have given us admirable specimens of descriptive instrumental music, like the “Pastoral Symphony,”

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79 There even exists a fictional account, part of a short story, of a young girl who goes to hear the Pastoral Symphony at a concert; she reads a programmatic account of the music before attending, and it colors her experience of the symphony in that she has pastoral-themed reveries while listening. Mill, “Uncle Featheryfoe,” Ladies’ Companion, March 1857, 142.
the accompaniments to the “Creation,” the overture to “William Tell,” &c. But Handel paints us his stupendous pictures mainly through the instrumentality of a vast choral multitude of voices, eking out the effect with only such secondary suggestions as he could draw from the meagre (to borrow a term from painting) almost monochromatic orchestras of his time.\textsuperscript{80}

This author seems to view description in music as a good thing, especially in light of the genius required of Handel, in particular, to create such effects with supposedly limited resources. Other critics acknowledged the position of some opponents of tone painting and used the Pastoral Symphony as a reason to justify the composition of such music. The Boston critic cited at the outset of this chapter writes, “A great deal has been said against those imitations of natural sounds in music. But examples are full to defend the practice. Remember the Creation, the Pastoral Symphony. Even dainty Mendelssohn makes poor Bottom bray in the overture to the Midsummer Night’s Dream.”\textsuperscript{81} By pointing out pieces of higher music with tone painting such as Creation and the Pastoral Symphony, these authors are justifying the preference of some audience members towards overt imitation of nature; furthermore, the authors are directing audiences towards these pieces as examples of good music that would fit this preference.

The Pastoral Symphony was a special favorite of those who enjoyed writing fanciful, poetic descriptions of what passed through their minds when they heard the piece. The programmatic elements in the symphony facilitate such descriptions by providing the listener with a subject to imagine. Although these poetic descriptions do not necessarily indicate that their authors support all kinds of depiction of nature in music, those who write about the symphony in such a fashion do seem, however, to be open to the idea of at least some musical description. For example, in Dwight’s Journal in 1862, a critic applied poetic language when he commented on the birdcalls in the second movement:

\textsuperscript{80} “Handel’s ‘Israel in Egypt,’” Dwight’s Journal of Music, November 21, 1857, 270. 
\textsuperscript{81} Schmitt, 389.
That first movement, considering its difficulty, the delicate rendering of little mingling phrases and melodic fragments required, and considering the reduced size and of course somewhat make-shift composition of the orchestra, went very satisfactorily. And so did the next movement, which is also the next best, the Andante “by the brookside,” flowing rich and cool and mellow, with bright gleams of sunshine and brighter flashes of bird notes ever and anon crossing the shadows. One forgives the good Beethoven those imitations of nightingale, &c., to which we pause and listen at the end; for he was happy then; it as if [sic] he smiled when it was done, and done so beautifully.

It is not likely that the critic who wrote this passage opposed the idea of tone painting: he goes on to describe how well Beethoven depicted, for instance, the storm, including the raindrops. Despite his personal approval, he appears to have been aware of the objection of others to gestures that literally imitated sounds of nature. Poetic descriptions of this kind appear to have been popular among both British and American writers, appearing often in newspapers, at times in place of technical accounts of the music. These accounts were probably popular among readers who, on the one hand, would have appreciated the writing style and, on the other hand, would have had trouble grasping technical points about music.

Critics who praised descriptive gestures in the Pastoral Symphony were engaging with the piece as many audience members presumably did. It is likely that listeners who could not engage with the music on a technical level appreciated discussions in which critics labeled the symphony as poetic, used a program to describe the music, or gave an account of the music using rhapsodic language. By writing in a positive manner about the descriptive elements in the symphony, critics may have been not only appealing to the sensibilities of audiences’ taste for such music, but also representing the audience’s viewpoint in the ongoing discussion about meaning in music.

CHAPTER 5

DIVERGENT VIEWPOINTS IN DISCUSSIONS OF MUSICAL DESCRIPTION

Throughout this symphony Beethoven has, with two exceptions, rather produced by music the state of mind, which the scenes indicated call forth, than given a mere matter of fact description of the scenes themselves. These two exceptions are the song of the birds at the end of the Andante and the thunderstorm.83

Many critics in London and Boston saw two kinds of musical description in the Pastoral Symphony. These critics distinguished between music which appeared primarily to express emotions or mental states and that which seemed to imitate objects and events found in nature. Many of them valued emotional expression above imitation of nature, often because they thought imitation of nature was unsophisticated or because of their belief that tone painting is an unnatural application of musical description. These critics’ definitions of emotional expression were not always consistent, however: sometimes they were referring to the composer’s mental states being conveyed through the music, and other times, various feelings inspired in the listeners by the music. Through these arguments, writers on music engaged in a debate about meaning in music: what music can portray and whether it should portray anything. This debate represented the concerns of those who thought more seriously about music rather than those of general audiences.

Other issues arose with the discussion of meaning in music. One of these issues was that of inconsistent terminology describing the portrayal of extra-musical phenomena. Critics wanted different terms for music that primarily imitated nature and for music that primarily expressed emotions. Standardization of such terms would help audiences to recognize the difference between the two kinds of music and lend credence to critics’ arguments that emotional expression was better than tone painting. Additionally, some critics discussed how they thought

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Beethoven’s status as a genius enabled him to use tone painting and the expression of his feelings or the inspiration of emotions in the audience. They used this discussion to support their devaluing of tone painting and their valorization of emotional expression.

Many critics who differentiated between emotional expression and imitation of nature in music saw emotional expression as the depiction of the composer’s feelings. In many sources, these critics dismiss the idea of tone painting as unworthy of a listener’s attention without further explanation other than labeling such overtly descriptive gestures as unsophisticated. One Boston critic, however, gives a clearer reason for his opinion. Reacting in 1860 against Adolf Marx’s analysis of the *Eroica* Symphony included in his Beethoven biography, the reviewer discusses pieces by Beethoven that correspond primarily with emotional expression or the imitation of nature, respectively. He takes Beethoven’s inscription from the *Pastoral* Symphony and applies it both specifically to the *Eroica* Symphony and generally to other compositions:

“Rather the expression of feeling than musical painting” seems to us a key to the understanding of this [Beethoven’s *Eroica* Symphony], as well as of the “Pastoral Symphony.” Mere musical painting, and the composition of works to order…Beethoven could and did despatch with extreme rapidity; but works of a different order, for which he could take his own time, and which were to be the expression of the grand feelings of his own great heart, — the composition of these was no light holiday-task. …His difficulty was not in writing music, but in mastering the poetic conception, and finding that tone-speech which should express in epic progress, yet in obedience to the laws of musical form, the emotions, feelings, sentiments to be depicted.\(^\text{84}\)

In this excerpt, the reviewer shows a different side to the favoring of expression of emotions over imitation of nature. This quotation contains the longest explanation among the sources studied here of the ideas behind the veneration of emotional expression over tone painting. The reviewer’s argument is not so much that tone painting is easy as that expression of one’s own feelings in music is difficult.

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Some authors, in discussing Beethoven’s emotional depiction, attributed his expressive abilities to his genius. One of these was the critic for the *Musical World*. Praising Beethoven’s *Pastoral Symphony* as a work in which the composer attempts to convey his emotions instead of making tone painting his primary object, the critic writes thus:

We have no faith...in what is called “descriptive” music, since few things in nature admit of direct imitation by musical sounds, and these appeal in general to the vulgarest kind of art. But when an intellectual musician like Spohr, a man of genius, if ever the art possessed one, employs the term “descriptive,” we are naturally led to adopt a nobler signification. It is clear that spring, summer, autumn, and winter, cannot be literally “imitated” by means of music, and we must conclude that Spohr, in *The Seasons*, as Beethoven in the *Pastoral Symphony*, aimed simply at giving expression to the influence produced on his own mind by the natural phenomena which mark the different periods of the year.\(^{85}\)

It is clear that this author admires the way that Beethoven concentrated on expressing his mental state instead of imitating nature, because of the impossibility of depicting some ideas with tone painting. He grants Spohr a concession in saying that his goals were similar to those of Beethoven. Furthermore, this critic seems to say that the “nobler signification” of “descriptive” music” belongs to the realm of genius occupied by Spohr and, since he thinks Spohr was trying to imitate him, Beethoven.

In 1865, a critic for *The London Review of Politics, Society, Literature, Art, and Science* discusses the *Pastoral Symphony* in light of Beethoven’s use of both tone painting and emotional expression. He writes:

Beethoven's pastoral symphony, however, is suggestive rather than imitative, save in a few passages in the “Rivulet” movement, where he has been betrayed into direct imitation of the notes of the cuckoo, the nightingale, and the quail—a species of literalness which is only justified by the genius with which it is accomplished. The magnificent storm movement also comes somewhat within the same category. No rules, however, can be laid down for the highest order of genius and imagination; all that is desirable is to prevent similar efforts by smaller minds. “Great wits may gloriously offend,” &c. The pastoral symphony is an embodiment, in music, of the sublime

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sensations of a poetical mind under the influences of natural scenery and phenomena—the impressions of a grand genius finding their expression through the medium of music.  

This critic also seems to admire the way that Beethoven conveys his sensations, calling attention to the way he sees Beethoven’s genius in the “suggestive” music. Even though “sensation” evokes sensory perceptions of the world around a person rather than that person’s feelings, it nevertheless portrays a mental state. To this critic, at least, the depiction of sensations in music may have the same value as emotional expression would to another critic, especially when it is considered in opposition to tone painting. The critic applauds Beethoven’s portrayal of his emotional state and emphasizes his genius in conveying such a subject through composition. In fact, even though the critic does not approve of tone painting, he excuses its appearance because it displays Beethoven’s musical genius as well. It is also possible that the suggestive nature of the rest of the work led the critic to look past the moments of imitation.

Although many critics considered the expression of the composer’s emotions as the most desirable aspect of musical description, some critics saw music differently. These critics considered that the audience played a role in interpreting the music, even when the resulting interpretation entailed the depiction of emotions rather than tone painting. One of these critics was Henry C. Lunn, who writes thus in 1868:

It must be understood that we have hitherto confined our remarks to music that is simply suggestive: imitative music will, of course, call up the same feelings in the minds of all; and is, therefore, as we believe, belonging to a much lower department of art. In truth, whenever reality obtrudes itself where realistic ideas are not sought for, it immediately depresses the art it is intended to raise. …We shall, of course, be reminded that Handel and Haydn have often had recourse to these devices to heighten the effect of their music; and that even Beethoven, in his “Pastoral Symphony,” has introduced the sounds of the cuckoo and the nightingale; but we cannot allow these few instances to shake our conviction of the truth of the theory we have advanced. Most assuredly neither Handel nor Haydn have done more than vulgarise their music by venturing beyond the legitimate

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province of an art which they have done so much to elevate; and, exquisitely as Beethoven has written the passage to which we have alluded, we should have infinitely preferred the “Pastoral Symphony” without it, because the suggestive character of the work (which all must feel to be its great beauty) would then be in perfect keeping throughout.\footnote{Henry C. Lunn, “Descriptive Music,” \textit{Musical Times, and Singing Class Circular}, December 1, 1868, 600.}

Lunn’s preference for “suggestive” music is based on the effect such music has on the audience:

He implies that one good aspect of suggestive music is that it produces different emotions in the minds of different listeners. In fact, earlier in the article, he rejects the idea that audiences should be able to tell a composer’s intended meaning in the music simply by listening to it:

That it is the mission of music to awaken a train of ideas in the mind of an auditor is universally admitted; but that these ideas should be the same with all is a manifest absurdity. A composer may have a real intention underlying every passage in his work; but he would rarely be satisfied with the interpretation of these passages, even by the most intellectual thinkers, because it would be utterly impossible for them to do more than hazard a series of guesses on the subject— the hearers being compelled to translate music into words, whilst the composer translates words into music.\footnote{Ibid., 599.}

Lunn’s opinion is unusual in that he does not have much faith in the audience to understand what the music means exactly, if, indeed, it means anything. Charles Cowden Clarke, who wrote an article in 1871 for \textit{The Gentlemen’s Magazine} in London, expresses a similar point of view:

Its [music’s] phraseology can suggest emotions of tenderness, of hilarity, of gravity, and even of awe; and it is greatly convertible in heroic and martial sentiments: but beyond these broad and distinctive classes of passions, music must rely for true utterance upon the illustrative glossary of language…. A greatly descriptive tone-poet, like Beethoven, may convey in musical language, divested of the accompaniment of words, his ideas of a subject, a scene, or a story, as may be instanced in those sublime compositions of his, the “Sinfonia Eroica,” and the “Pastoral Symphony;” but even in these his design must be previously promulgated, or his auditors will not be able accurately to appreciate his intention. …Music will suggest, as well as illustrate, the most divine thoughts; and he is indeed of a rude and unenviable nature who can recognise no touch of its sweet quality; but in universality of appeal to the senses of imagination and judgment, it must, I think, be pronounced an ineffective art, when compared with those of poetry and painting.\footnote{Charles Cowden Clarke, “On the Comic Writers of England: VII.—Burlesque Writers,” \textit{Gentleman’s Magazine}, October, 1871, 560.}
It appears that Clarke is of the same opinion as Lunn: Clarke states that no emotions can be conveyed by music except general ones, and that no interpretation of the meaning of a piece of music is universal.

One critic, writing in 1839 for the *Monthly Chronicle*, also expresses doubt about the effectiveness of music for exact description. Although he believes that Beethoven was trying to depict the countryside rather than emotions inspired by it, he shares the opinion discussed above about music’s incapability to convey accurately the composer’s intentions:

Witness the symphonies of Berlioz and others, where attempts are made to describe, by the modulation of sound, a series of landscape scenes. This is, indeed, carrying music far beyond its natural bounds; and we do not hesitate to assert, that without the guide of the programme before them, but few, if any, would guess the true design of the composer by listening to the sound alone. Even Beethoven has failed in a similar attempt in his pastoral symphony. All we can expect from the most perfect harmony, is the expression of our inward emotions and sensations, but nothing beyond.  

Here it is unclear whose emotions the critic thinks can be expressed, whether those of the composer or of the audience; this lack of clarity stems from the mimetic purpose he attributes to Berlioz and Beethoven. The critic’s doubts about the audience’s ability to correctly interpret the music, however, make it seem as though he would agree with the critics cited above that audiences hear their own emotions expressed in the music rather than those of the composer.

Other writers are also unclear in their writing about whose emotions are represented in the *Pastoral Symphony*. One critic refers to Beethoven’s inscription *mehr Ausdruck der Empfindung als Malerei* as a standard for evaluating music. He writes thus:

Beethoven’s work [the *Pastoral Symphony*] need not detain us save to point out, once more, what “G.” properly calls the “true principles” of programme music—principles Beethoven himself defined, in the heading of his great symphony, as “rather the record of impressions than the actual representation of facts.” We are glad to read in “G.’s” analysis that this is “a canon which fixes for ever [sic]” what programme music ought to be. …“G.” speaks of Mendelssohn’s “Italian” and “Scotch” [sic] symphonies, and of his overtures to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Fingal’s Cave* as “programme music.”

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The term, though allowable when used as “G.” uses it, in the Beethoven sense, may convey a false idea, because it is now associated with music which aims at portraying a series of occurrences. …It is necessary, therefore, to hit upon some new term wherewith to describe compositions which occupy a position midway between “pure” and “programme music.” How if we were to call them “impression music?” The term would have the high authority already quoted, and at least, would save glorious productions from the chance of confusion with others which are not glorious.\footnote{P. M. G. [pseud.], “Four Crystal Palace Symphonies,” review of the Pastoral Symphony by Beethoven, Symphony in E Minor, op. 67 by Ferdinand Hiller, Symphony no. 3, op. 97 by Robert Schumann, and Symphony no. 1 by Sir Frederic Hymen Cowen, Musical World, April 23, 1870, 282. “G.” is probably George Grove, who wrote program notes for concerts at the Crystal Palace and who signed his articles in Grove’s Dictionary of Music in the same way.}

This critic values what he calls “impression music,” music that conveys emotions, above “music which aims at portraying a series of occurrences.” Although the critic does not say whose impressions Beethoven intended to record, he seems not to be considering the audience’s emotions: How could the composer record the audience’s impressions? Even if a composer intends to inspire particular emotions in his listeners, he has no guarantee that he will be successful, because listeners all approach the music differently, according to their personalities and experiences. Rather, it seems probable that this critic views the Pastoral Symphony as conveying the composer’s own emotions.

In 1872, another author from London wrote an essay on Beethoven, in which he tried to dissuade his readers from believing that the music is meant to depict the countryside.

This [the Pastoral Symphony] is sometimes regarded solely as a piece of imitative music. But it seems to us that this is mistaking Beethoven’s point of view, and that the work should be looked upon not as a description of the country and its scenery, but as painting the emotions which these cause. The author himself has entitled the first movement ‘Awakening of joyful feelings at the arrival in the country.’ It is true that in some parts of the symphony, the sounds of the country seem to be imitated, as for example in the Andante (a scene by a stream), where one hears the ripple of the waters, the rustle of the wind among the leaves, and the song of the birds in the trees; but this is everywhere secondary to the depicting of the feelings which these sounds excite.\footnote{“Beethoven,” British Quarterly Review, January 1, 1872, 48-9.}
Again, this writer does not clearly state whose emotions the music is supposed to portray. By the same logic as above, the author could mean that Beethoven intended to convey his own feelings, but this writer could also believe that Beethoven was trying to evoke a shared experience.

John Sullivan Dwight, who wrote prolifically on musical matters, had a unique viewpoint in which he combined the expression of the composer’s emotions and the identification of the audience with those emotions. In an 1840 article for *The Dial*, he compares the tone painting in Haydn’s *Creation* with the expression of emotion in Beethoven’s *Pastoral Symphony* and *Pastoral Sonata*:

Literal description of nature is carried even too far in it [The Creation]. Beautiful and surprising as those imitations are…yet often they seem too mechanical and curious, and out of the province of Art, which should breathe the pervading spirit of Nature, as a whole, and not copy too carefully the things that are in it. Whoever has studied the Pastoral Symphony, or the Pastoral Sonata of Beethoven, will feel the difference between music which flows from an inward feeling of nature, from a common consciousness (as it were) with nature, and the music which only copies, from without, her single features. These pieces bring all summer sensations over you, but they do not let you identify a note or a passage as standing for a stream, or a bird. They do not say; look at this or that, now imagine nightingales, now thunder, now mountains, and now sunspots chasing shadows; but they make you feel as you would if you were lying on a grassy slope in a summer’s afternoon, with the melancholy leisure of a shepherd swain, and these things all around you without your noticing them.\(^{93}\) Dwight here appears to allow some direct imitation of nature; however, he seems to think that Haydn’s use of it in *The Creation* is too literal and consequently interferes with the indefinite nature of music. He seems to believe that music should not necessarily bring images to listeners’ minds, but rather inspire feelings in them, feelings that are related to those which the composer intends to express in his music. His language regarding Beethoven’s music in the *Pastoral Symphony* and the *Pastoral Sonata* seems to express a reverence for the expressive power of Beethoven’s music, especially his ability to convey “a common consciousness…with nature.”

\(^{93}\) D. [John Sullivan Dwight], “The Concerts of the Past Winter,” *Dial*, July 1840, 128. Although he does not give his full name, Dwight scholars attribute this article to him. A similar situation exists for the next article I discuss.
Dwight did not limit his admiration for Beethoven’s expressive powers to that article. One article in the *Harbinger*, written by Dwight himself, contains a lengthy (for a newspaper) description of the *Pastoral* Symphony, mingled with images produced in his mind by the music. In several places in the article, Dwight comments on how Beethoven describes nature in music:

> ‘*Sensations on arriving in the country,*’ is the title which he has prefixed to the first movement, the Allegro. And in this he is true to the genius of Music, in not attempting to describe the country, but only the sensations with which its [various aspects] … inspire one.\(^9^4\)

Haydn’s descriptive pieces are *Idyls*, simple, cheerful pictures out of common life. They paint the actual merely. Beethoven’s make the outward world a mirror of the soul. He does not copy the forms, but communes with the *spirit* of nature.\(^9^5\)

Although Dwight does not dismiss the presence of tone-painting in the passages above, he seems to say that composers do better to express mental states in music, as Beethoven does, than to attempt literal imitation of nature, even if those states are inspired by nature. This opinion fits with other statements he makes regarding the relationship between nature and music:

> It is idle to go to music for a description of nature; but sometimes a description of this music is helped out by an allusion to nature.\(^9^6\)

> We feel that this Symphony answers the whole question about the *descriptive* or *imitative* powers of music. It shows us how far, and in what way, outward nature may be conveyed in music. Abounding as it does in such allusions, we do not feel that any part of it is artificial and forced, or a perversion of music to other than its legitimate uses. And that for this reason: that it does not literally copy nature, but only utters the poet’s *feeling* of nature, which, like every feeling, can summon up a thousand shapes and scenes by it’s *sic* enchantment. If such music in Haydn is often only cold and outside *imitation*, in Beethoven it is *interpretation* of nature.

> In strict truth, music cannot imitate nature, since *nature imitates music.*\(^9^7\)

Dwight elaborates on this last statement, saying that as nature strives towards the perfection found in humankind, sounds in nature strive towards the perfection found in music:

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\(^9^5\) Ibid., 331.

\(^9^6\) Ibid., 330.

\(^9^7\) Ibid., 331-32.
Throughout all material nature we discern glimmerings of a higher idea, strivings upward towards that perfection only revealed in man…. So with sounds. All the material laws of sound are tending towards the highest art or music. In nature they already produce an imperfect music; in man they attain to Art. Let man give utterance to his own high feeling of nature, or of the harmony, the unity in variety, of all things, in worthy strains of music, and unconsciously that music will suggest all those feeble imitations and predictions of the same, with which the tuneful air of nature swarms. Thus we have nature in music, and yet music the language of feeling, which we have all along assumed it to be. Sing the feeling which you had with nature, and you are at once transported to her lap. This Beethoven does. Nature lives to him. He penetrates to the heart of every subject and brings out its latent music.  

Through the statements above, Dwight makes clear the philosophy behind his attitude toward the descriptive nature of music: that in putting their feelings into music, composers will be able to produce similar emotions in their listeners, thereby evoking images in the listener’s mind similar to those which they experience. This philosophy is rooted in the doctrine of correspondence, a belief held by several noted Transcendentalists in which material objects and relationships, particularly those found in nature, not only are manifestations of spirit but also function as symbols of the same. Transcendentalist thinkers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson believed that by studying nature one could gain insight into the divine, primarily through intuition rather than through another person’s teachings. In the above quote, Dwight connects nature, feeling, and music to each other; given a correspondence between nature and spirit, feelings that are of a spiritual rather than a material nature, and music as an art which expresses feelings, the connection Dwight makes between the three seems persuasive. He continues his discussion of the Pastoral Symphony with a bald statement of this doctrine:

98 Ibid., 332.
Every thing in Nature has a correspondence to something in the soul of man. This correspondence a deep and earnest soul not only sees, but feels; and every feeling has its melody; thus every object has its music.100

Dwight’s discussion of the Pastoral Symphony was an apt one to introduce his beliefs, since in it Beethoven also makes a connection between nature, feelings, and music.

The differing viewpoints held by these writers were reflected in another problem that arose: that of terminology. Just as disparities existed between the ways these critics discussed the expression of emotions, so did they exist between the ways in which listeners described music that depicted extra-musical phenomena. Several writers in London noted this issue in their reviews and essays on music. For example, one critic discussed above wrote about Spohr’s The Seasons in an 1850 issue of the Musical World, noting that some people call it a “descriptive symphony.” He takes issue with the term “descriptive,” commenting that “few things in nature admit of direct imitation by musical sounds.” Given the inability of music to imitate much of nature and his opinion of Spohr as a genius, he writes, “we must conclude that Spohr, in The Seasons, as Beethoven in the Pastoral Symphony, aimed simply at giving expression to the influence produced on his own mind by the natural phenomena which mark the different periods of the year.” Because the word “descriptive” does not fit the piece, he decides to give a different name to music that expresses emotions: “In this light, then, we must regard The Seasons as a piece of didactic music, in which feelings are to be communicated rather than material things described.”101

Other writers on music who wrote about different levels of descriptive music also sought to give different names to the kinds of description for clarity’s sake. For instance, in his 1868 essay on descriptive music quoted above, Henry C. Lunn called music that was intended to

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100 [Dwight], “Musical Review,” 332.
101 Unsigned review of concert performance by the National Concerts, 765.
illustrate emotions “suggestive” and gave the designation “imitative” to music that attempted
tone painting.\textsuperscript{102} Lunn’s terms for music with tone painting are unique to him, with the exception
of one writer: the critic reviewing an 1865 performance of the \textit{Pastoral} Symphony who contrasts
the piece with works that are purportedly imitative.\textsuperscript{103} The British community as a whole
neglected to codify terms for different kinds of imitation, each critic instead using his own.

The critics’ concern regarding terminology for different types of descriptive music
intensified with the use of another word, “program.” Even though this term might have been
current in the British community with reference to the \textit{Pastoral} Symphony, as yet I have not
found it thus applied before the late 1860s. For instance, in 1868, the critic for the \textit{Morning Post}
cites the \textit{Pastoral} Symphony as “the origin of what has been absurdly christened ‘programme
music.’”\textsuperscript{104} Although this is the earliest use I have found of the term, the manner in which the
critic discusses its meaning indicates that it had been in use long enough to gain popularity,
possibly several years. Another critic who complains about the term refers specifically to its
connotations of being “music which aims at portraying a series of occurrences.” Seeking a
different term for music in which the composer primarily aims to express emotions, he suggests
the term “impression music.”\textsuperscript{105}

Despite the concern of these critics, writers continued to use terms such as “descriptive
music” and “program music” indiscriminately, both in London and in Boston. Their application
of these terms may reflect the way that many audiences used them, applying them to music with
any extra-musical reference. It makes sense that music critics who valued emotional expression

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\textsuperscript{102} Lunn, 600-1.
\textsuperscript{103} Unsigned review of concert performance by the Crystal Palace orchestra, \textit{London Review of Politics},
March 11, 1865, 274.
\textsuperscript{104} Unsigned review of concert performance by the London Philharmonic Society, Hanover Square Rooms,
\textsuperscript{105} P. M. G., 282.
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over tone painting would call for the use of divergent terminology, whereas a less discerning audience would be less concerned about precise usage.

Discussions of meaning in music in which writers differentiated between tone painting and the expression of emotions pertained more to those who thought about music in a critical manner than to those who did not. Elite listeners tended to value emotional expression, whether of the composer, of the audience, or both, above tone painting. Nevertheless, the critics who participated in such discussions were not very careful about explaining whose emotions the music represented. Perhaps they viewed the problem of getting audiences to be more discerning with regard to tone painting as more important than that of determining whose feelings were evoked in the music. Until these critics could persuade their readers to their viewpoints in general, they did not need to worry about debating the particulars.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

Criticism of Beethoven’s *Pastoral* Symphony in London and Boston from 1819 to 1874 includes the opinions of a wide range of listeners, from the music connoisseur to the amateur music lover. The symphony’s length and static nature, its status as a piece by Beethoven, and its programmatic elements provided several topics of interest to audiences. Among music critics in these cities, each writer’s choice of topic, as well as the opinion he expressed, reveals a viewpoint he or she chose to espouse that represented, variably, what a general audience member or someone knowledgeable about music might think. By giving voice to such a range of opinions, music critics mediated between the two groups.

Several London music critics in the first half of the nineteenth century took issue with the *Pastoral* Symphony’s length, especially in view of its static nature: They perceived that audiences got bored when listening to the music, particularly during the second movement. These critics advocated shortening the symphony, seemingly on behalf of the audience; other critics, however, wrote against the idea of abridgment and the actions conductors took to make the symphony shorter. They wanted to preserve the artistry inherent in the entire symphony, out of respect for the symphony as a work of art and for Beethoven himself. This latter stance may have matched the views of music critics.

Towards the middle of the century, London critics started writing about the *Pastoral* Symphony as a piece of “higher” music. They extolled its value in discussions related to compositional complexity and performance difficulty. Most of these discussions were from the viewpoint of the music critic, especially those that involved compositional matters. Performance difficulty, too, reflected the views mainly of the music critic: writers tended to concentrate on
those aspects of performance that took a practiced critical ear to discern. One or two writers, however, expressed opinions typical of casual listeners.

Most music criticism regarding the Pastoral Symphony addresses the programmatic elements of the symphony. This topic recurred throughout the period in question in both London and Boston. Its popularity as a subject of discussion probably lay in the fact that even audience members who knew nothing about the technical aspects of music could identify with the symphony through its extra-musical associations. Many critics who wrote in favor of most, if not all, of the musical description in the symphony may have represented the viewpoint of the common concertgoer. Other critics differentiated between tone painting and the expression of emotions, approving the latter but not the former. This probably corresponded to the view of most music critics, who tended to view tone painting as unsophisticated. A select few, however, doubted the ability of music to portray anything at all.

The wide range of opinions critics express about the Pastoral Symphony suggests several ideas. First, these critics may not have conveyed their own opinions fully. It is probable that many people, both critical listeners and general audience members, had access to these articles, whether they had subscriptions to the journals that contained them or whether they accessed the journals by utilizing resources such as public libraries. Even if music critics had opinions of their own in mind, they had to consider their audience, and for that reason may have argued points about the music that they did not believe. These critics may have suppressed their own opinions in order to meet several hypothetical goals: a wider readership, greater concert attendance, or more frequent performances of high-quality music. Discerning the critics’ true opinions and goals would likely require a comparative study encompassing all the available writings of each critic. Unfortunately, many of these articles are unsigned, and of those that are signed, the by-
lines typically consist of initials or pseudonyms, many of which are as yet unidentified. For some critics, however, the question may be answered, and scholarly work has already attempted to clarify the opinions of specific writers such as Dwight.\textsuperscript{106}

Second, the variety of viewpoints given is important in tracking the acceptance of certain ideas by audiences, including both music critics and casual listeners. The opinions of these groups often conflicted; consequently, critics sometimes attempted to convince their readers to adopt one opinion or another, giving reasons for the viewpoints they espoused. Music criticism about the \textit{Pastoral} Symphony therefore shows not only how prevalent opinions were but also the reasoning behind most of them. This, in turn, illustrates the advancement of ideas such as the glorification of genius and theories of meaning in music in these cities. For example, it may be significant that complaints about the symphony’s length started to die down around the same time that critics started to discuss the symphony’s status as a piece by Beethoven: wider acceptance of the idea of Beethoven as a great composer may have caused critics—and, indeed, audiences in general—to be more restrained in making negative remarks about Beethoven’s works.

Since the opinions represented by music critics in Boston and London from 1819 to 1874 regarding Beethoven’s \textit{Pastoral} Symphony reflect both those of amateur listeners and those of music critics, they may be taken as a sample of audience opinion during this period. In discussions that include complaints about the symphony’s length in performance and praise for its programmatic elements, these critics express divergent points of view on a variety of topics. This opposition, however, allows for further discussion of such points in relation to ideas common in the world of Western art music such as the integrity of the artwork, the elevation of

\textsuperscript{106} See, for example, Ora Frishberg Saloman, \textit{Beethoven’s Symphonies and J.S. Dwight: The Birth of American Music Criticism} (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995), and Saloman, “American Writers.”
the concept of genius, and the ability of music to express emotion. Criticism of the *Pastoral* Symphony in these cities therefore allowed critics as a group to include their readership in discussions of musical aesthetics, whichever thoughts they represented in their writings.
APPENDIX

SELECTED CONCERT PROGRAMS
In order to give the reader a picture of what conductors programmed on their concerts during this period, I have transcribed a few concert programs as they were reported in some of the journals I discuss in this paper. For clarity’s sake, I standardized some formatting issues; for instance, not all newspaper editors italicized the titles of larger works such as operas.

London

London Philharmonic Society
Argyll Rooms, London, Monday, April 17, 1826.107

Act I.
Sinfonia Pastorale .................................................................Beethoven.
Aria, Madame Vigo, “Eco pietosa” ..............................................Rossini.
Concertante for two Violoncellos, Mr. Lindley and Mr. W. Lindley ...............Lindley.
Duet, “Oh gracious Heaven!” Mad. Caradori Allan
and Mr. Begrez (The Mount of Olives) ........................................Beethoven.
Overture, Jessonda.....................................................................Spohr.

Act II.
Sinfonia in G Minor.................................................................Mozart.
Aria, “Parto,” Madame Caradori Allan, accompanied
on the Clarinet by Mr. Willman (La Clemenza di Tito).......................Mozart.
Quartetto, two Violins, Viola, and Violoncello, Messrs.
Spagnoletti, Oury, Moralt, and Lindley ........................................Spohr.
Vigo, and Mr. Begrez (Idomeneo) .............................................Mozart.
Overture, The Men of Prometheus ..............................................Beethoven.

Leader, Mr. Mori.—Conductor, Mr. Attwood.

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107 “Fourth Concert,” May 1826, 106. Although the critic does not name the location of the concert, Cyril Ehrlich states that the Argyll Rooms were “where [the Philharmonic Society’s] concerts were held until…1830.” Cyril Ehrlich, First Philharmonic: A History of the Royal Philharmonic Society (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 14.
London Philharmonic Society
Hanover Square Rooms, London, Monday before June 16, 1837

Act I.
Sinfonia, Pastorale .................................................................Beethoven.
Aria, Herr Kroff, ‘Ciel pietoso’ ............................................Lindpainter.
Fantasia, Pianoforte, M. Thalberg,
    introducing favourite Themes from Mose [sic, Mosè] in Egitto.........Thalberg.
Recitativo ed Aria, Signora Eckerlin, ‘Ciel pietoso’ (Zelmira) .................Rossini.
Overture, Anacreon ...................................................................[Cherubini?]

Act II.
Sinfonia, in E flat ........................................................................Spohr.
Recitativo, Mme. Schroeder Devrient e Herr Kroff, ‘Don Ottavio, son morta,’
Concerto, Contra Basso, Signor Anglois ........................................Anglois.
Duet, Mme. Schroeder Devrient and Herr Kroff,
    ‘Der Liebe holdes Glück’ (Die Zauberflöte) ................................Mozart.
Overture, Euryanthe ....................................................................Weber.

Leader, Mr. Loder.—Conductor, Sir George Smart.

Societa Armonica
Opera Room, London, March 27, 1842

First Part.
Symphony, (Pastorale) ....................................................................Beethoven.
Duetto, Madlle. Ernesta Grisi and Sig.
    Sanguirico, “Senza Tanti Complimenti,” (Burgomastro) ..................Donizetti.
Quintetto. Piano Forte, Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Contra Basso,
Terzetto, Madlle. Moltini, Madlle. Ernesta Grisi and Sig. Guasco,
    Cruda sorte” [sic] (Ricciardo) ....................................................Rossini.
Overture, Oberon .........................................................................Weber.

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108 Unsigned review of concert performance by the London Philharmonic Society, June 16, 1837, 11. As in the review of the April 17, 1826 concert by the same ensemble, the critic neglects to name a location. Ehrlich notes that in 1830, the Philharmonic moved their performance venue to the King’s Theatre in Haymarket, where they performed for three seasons, moving hence to “the Hanover Square Rooms, where [they] stayed until 1869.” Ehrlich, 37-38.

109 Unsigned review of concert performance by the Societa Armonica, 102.
Second Part.
First movement of Symphony, No. 3, D. Minor, (First time of Performance) ....Kalliwoda.
Aria, Sig. Guasco, “In terra ci devisero,” (Le due Illustri Rivalli) ...............Mercadante.
Concerto, Violin, Mr. Thomas, ..........................................................De Beriot.
Duetto. Madlle. Moltini and Sig. Guasco, “Non ever non e quel
tempo,” (Gemma di Vergy) ...............................................................Donizetti.
Aria, Sig. Sanguirico, ‘Miei rampolli,’ (Cenerentola) ...............................Rossini.
Overture, Berggeist ...........................................................................Spohr.

Conductor, Mr. Forbes.—Leader, Mr. Loder.

London Philharmonic Society
Hanover Square Rooms, London, Monday, May 20, 1850

Part I.
Sinfonia in D, No. 4 ........................................................................Mozart.
Trio, two violoncellos and contra-basso, Messrs. Lindley, Lucas, and Howell ..Corelli.
Aria “Porgi, Amor” (Le Nozze di Figaro), Madame Madeleine Nottes ..........Mozart.
Concerto in D Minor, pianoforte, M. Thalberg ........................................Mozart.

Part II.
Sinfonia Pastorale ...........................................................................Beethoven.
Aria, “O tu, la cui dolce possanza” (Fidelio), Madame Madeleine Nottes .......Beethoven.
Variations of the Barcarolle in L'Elisir d'Amore, pianoforte, M. Thalberg .......Beethoven.
Duetto “Durch die Nacht” (Les Huguenots), Madame
Madeleine Nottes and Herr Formes ......................................................Meyerbeer.
Overture, Anacreon ...........................................................................Cherubini.

Conductor, Mr. Costa.

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110 Unsigned review of concert performance of the London Philharmonic Society, May 25, 1850, 318. Once again, the critic gives no location for the performance, so, given the date, I surmised that the ensemble performed in the Hanover Square Rooms, according to Ehrlich’s assertion stated above in note 108. Ehrlich, 37-38.
Boston
Orchestral Union
Boston Music Hall, Boston, March 7, 1855

Sinfonie Pastorale ................................................................. Beethoven.
Etude de Concert for two violins, Messrs. Schultze and A. Fries ............... De Beriot.
Overture to Martha ................................................................. Flotow.
“Serenade,” [from Fierrabras?] arr. ........................................ Schubert.
“Magic Sounds” Waltz ........................................................... Wittmann.
Adagio from Lobegesang ....................................................... Mendelssohn.

Carl Zerrahn, Conductor

Boston Philharmonic and Orpheus Glee Club
Boston Music Hall, Boston, week of January 18, 1862

Part I
“Pastoral Symphony” ............................................................ Beethoven.
Philharmonic

“Love and Wine” ..................................................................... Mendelssohn.
Orpheus Glee Club

Part II
“Hymn to Music” ..................................................................... Lachner.
“The Forest” ........................................................................ Haeser.
Orpheus Glee Club

Overture to Tannhäuser .......................................................... Wagner.
Finale to Don Giovanni, Act I ............................................... Mozart.
Philharmonic

Carl Zerrahn, conductor, Boston Philharmonic
[August] Kreissmann, conductor, Orpheus Glee Club

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111 Unsigned review of a concert performance by the Orchestral Union, Dwight’s Journal of Music, March 10, 1855, 181-82. Instead of giving the program at the beginning, the author of this review simply discusses each piece in turn. His language within the article suggests, however, that he is discussing the pieces in the order in which the orchestra performed them.

112 Unsigned review of a concert performance by the Boston Philharmonic and the Orpheus Glee Club Dwight’s Journal of Music 20, No. 16 (January 18, 1862), 334-35. As in the review of the performance by the Orchestral Union on March 7, 1855, the critic does not provide a program at the beginning of the review, but appears to review the pieces in order of performance.

113 The critic neglects to give Kreissmann’s first name; however, the American Supplement to the fifth edition of Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians notes that August Kreissmann led the Orpheus Club, as does A Handbook of American Music and Musicians. Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 5th ed., American
Theodore Thomas and His Orchestra
Boston Music Hall, Boston, Wednesday, October 5, 1870

Pastoral Symphony .................................................................Beethoven.
Piano Concerto, No. 2, in A ..........................................................Liszt.
“Eine Faust Ouverture” ...............................................................Wagner.
March of the Pilgrims (in the “Harold” Symphony) .......................Berlioz.
Kamarinskaja ........................................................................Glinka.
Overture to Genoveva ...............................................................Schumann.

Theodore Thomas, Conductor


114 Unsigned review of concert performance by Theodore Thomas’s orchestra, Dwight’s Journal of Music, October 8, 1870, 327.
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