



BEETHOVEN

The Creatures of Prometheus

Turku Philharmonic Orchestra

Leif Segerstam



Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus, Op. 43 ('The Creatures of Prometheus')

Born in Bonn in 1770, Ludwig van Beethoven was the eldest son of a singer in the musical establishment of the Archbishop-Elector of Cologne, and grandson of the Archbishop's former Kapellmeister, whose name he took. The household was not a happy one. Beethoven's father became increasingly inadequate both as a singer and as a father and husband, with his wife always ready to draw invidious comparisons between him and his own father. Beethoven, however, was trained as a musician, however erratically, and duly entered the service of the Archbishop, serving as an organist and as a string player in the archiepiscopal orchestra. He was already winning some distinction in Bonn, when, in 1787, he was first sent to Vienna, to study with Mozart. The illness of his mother forced an early return from this venture and her subsequent death left him with responsibility for his younger brothers, in view of his father's domestic and professional failures. In 1792 Beethoven was sent once more to Vienna, now to study with Haydn, whom he had met in Bonn.

Beethoven's early career in Vienna was helped very considerably by the circumstances of his move there. The Archbishop was a son of the Empress Maria Theresa and there were introductions to leading members of society in the imperial capital. Here, Beethoven was able to establish an early position for himself as a pianist of remarkable ability, coupled with a clear genius in the necessarily related arts of improvisation and composition. The onset of deafness at the turn of the century seemed an irony of fate. It led Beethoven gradually away from a career as a virtuoso performer and into an area of composition where he was able to make remarkable changes and extensions of existing practice. Deafness tended to accentuate his eccentricities and paranoia, which became extreme as time went on. At the same time it allowed him to develop his gifts for counterpoint. He continued to revolutionise forms inherited from his predecessors, notably Haydn and Mozart, expanding these almost to bursting point, and introducing innovation

after innovation as he grew older. He died in 1827, his death the occasion of public mourning in Vienna.

Nephew of the composer Luigi Boccherini, the dancer and choreographer Salvatore Viganò won considerable success in Vienna with ballets that he described as *coreodramma*, involving an element of naturalism in a narrative dramatic structure. It was for Viganò that Beethoven was commissioned to provide music for the ballet *The Creatures of Prometheus*, which was staged in Vienna at the Burgtheater in March 1801. A piano version of the score was published in the same year as *Op. 24*, a numbering that later had to be changed, and with a dedication to 'Princess Maria Christine Lichnowsky', the wife of Beethoven's patron, Prince Karl Lichnowsky. The score of the *Overture* and orchestral parts were published in 1804 by Hoffmeister. The libretto has not survived, but something of the narrative may be derived from the theatre playbill, and from Beethoven's sketch book. In mythology Prometheus is not only the victim of divine justice when he is punished by Zeus for the theft of fire for mankind, chained to a rock in the Caucasus, where daily an eagle pecked out his liver, but is also credited with the creation of mankind. It is on this that Viganò bases his drama, although in a Milan restaging in 1813 he used the fuller legend and different music. The playbill explains the project:

This allegorical ballet is based on the myth of Prometheus. The Greek philosophers who knew him tell the story thus: they depict Prometheus as a lofty spirit who, finding the human beings of his time in a state of ignorance, refined them through art and knowledge and gave them laws of right conduct. In accordance with this source, the ballet presents two animate statues who, by the power of harmony, are made susceptible to all the passions of human existence. Prometheus takes them to Parnassus to receive instruction from Apollo, god of the arts, who commands Amphion, Arion and Orpheus to teach them music, Melpomene and Thalia tragedy and comedy. Terpsichore, muse of dance, aids Pan who

introduces them to the *Pastoral Dance* which he has invented, and from Bacchus they learn his invention – the *Heroic Dance*.

In Act I Prometheus enters, running through the forest to the two clay figures he has made and pursued by the wrath of Zeus. The *Introduction* that links the *Overture* [1] to the following number represents a storm [2]. The two inanimate clay figures, representing man and woman, come to life, but lack reason and feeling. The figures try to escape from Prometheus, but are finally captured [3]–[5].

Act II is set in pastoral Greece, where, on Mount Parnassus, Prometheus seeks the aid of Apollo, with the nine Muses, the three Graces and Bacchus. The clay figures start tentatively to come to life [6]. The flute-playing Muse Euterpe starts to play, with the legendary semi-divine musicians, Orpheus, Amphion and Arion to teach the newly created figures music, Amphion on the lyre (the harp), Arion with the bassoon and Orpheus with clarinet.

Apollo is represented by the cello [7]. The figures start to gambol and disport themselves [8]. Terpsichore and the Graces teach the dance [9], and Pan the pastoral dance. Bacchus and his followers, in warlike mode, enter [10], and Melpomene adds a reminder of human mortality and, for the moment, death to Prometheus [11]. Pan's lilting *Pastorale* follows convention [12] and there are dances for the Italian primo ballerino Gaetano Gioia [13]–[14], briefly in Vienna. The three leading figures of the ballet appear in grotesque masks [15]. There is a solo for the prima ballerina, Maria Casentini, the female clay figure of the plot [16]. The creator of the ballet, Salvatore Viganò, who presumably danced the title-role, has a solo [17]. The *Finale* [18] brings the very familiar *Prometheus* theme, later to be used in the '*Eroica*' *Symphony* and the '*Eroica*' *Variations*, in a conclusion of heroic optimism for humanity.

Keith Anderson

Turku Philharmonic Orchestra



recording *Transient Moods*. The orchestra gives weekly concerts, often streamed live throughout the world, while its chamber music ensembles perform in the historical venues of Turku. The orchestra also organises family concerts and performs in opera productions. The Turku Philharmonic is a pioneer in audience accessibility, providing access to concerts online in hospitals, residential care homes and schools.

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Leif Segerstam



important ambassadors for Sibelius's 2015 anniversary year. Segerstam began his conducting career in the opera houses of Helsinki, Stockholm and Berlin, and has made guest appearances at international opera houses and festivals. His many recordings have been critically acclaimed and feature works by contemporary composers as well as the complete symphonies of Mahler, Sibelius and Nielsen among many others. Segerstam is a voracious composer, notably developing a free-pulsative style in Rosenkranz form for his later symphonies which are performed without conductor. He was professor of conducting at the Sibelius Academy, Helsinki. Segerstam was awarded the 1999 Nordic Council Music Prize and the Swedish Cultural Foundation's Prize for Music in 2003. In 2004 he was given the annual Finnish State Prize for Music and in 2005 the Sibelius Medal.

The Turku Musical Society, which later formed the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra, was founded in 1790. As the oldest orchestra in Finland, the ensemble continues to develop and flourish under the baton of renowned conductors. From 2012 to 2019, the orchestra's 74 musicians have been under the artistic leadership of Leif Segerstam. The orchestra's resident composer is Mikko Heiniö. Several of the Turku Philharmonic's recordings have been awarded platinum discs and other prizes. In 2019 the orchestra won the International Classical Music Award for Best Collection with their recording of Jean Sibelius's *Incidental Music*. In 2009 the orchestra was awarded the EMMA Classical Album of the Year for the

Born in 1944, Leif Segerstam is recognised internationally as a conductor, composer, violinist and pianist. He studied at the Sibelius Academy, Helsinki and The Juilliard School. He is chief conductor emeritus of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, and holds honorary titles with the Malmö Opera, the Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz and the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra. He has also been chief conductor of the Austrian and Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestras plus the Royal Swedish Opera and director of the Finnish National Opera. He has also conducted most of the world's most prestigious orchestras and was one of the most

Beethoven was commissioned to write his first stage work – a ballet score for *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus* ('The Creatures of Prometheus') – for the dancer and choreographer Salvatore Viganò, nephew of composer Luigi Boccherini. In the myth, Prometheus is punished by Zeus for stealing fire for the benefit of mankind; in the allegorical ballet, Prometheus brings Enlightenment ideas of art and science to humanity. The overture remains popular and the finale – the theme of which Beethoven was later to use in his '*Eroica*' *Symphony* – offers a heroic conclusion.

Ludwig van
BEETHOVEN
(1770–1827)

Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus, Op. 43
(‘The Creatures of Prometheus’) (1801)

1 Ouverture: Adagio – Allegro molto con brio	5:25	10 No. 8. Allegro con brio – Presto	4:34
2 Introduzione, ‘La Tempesta’: Allegro non troppo	2:14	11 No. 9. Adagio – Allegro molto	5:05
Act I		12 No. 10. Pastorale: Allegro	2:51
3 No. 1. Poco adagio	3:39	13 No. 11. Coro di Gioja: Andante	0:31
4 No. 2. Adagio – Allegro con brio	2:25	14 No. 12. Solo di Gioja: Maestoso – Allegro	3:11
5 No. 3. Allegro vivace	2:03	15 No. 13. Terzetto i grotteschi: Allegro – Comodo	4:35
Act II		16 No. 14. Solo della Cassentini: Andante – Adagio – Allegro – Allegretto	6:11
6 No. 4. Maestoso – Andante	1:21	17 No. 15. Coro e Solo di Viganò: Andantino – Adagio – Allegro	4:52
7 No. 5. Adagio – Andante quasi allegretto	9:06	18 No. 16. Finale: Allegretto – Allegro molto	6:52
8 No. 6. Un poco adagio – Allegro	1:40		
9 No. 7. Grave	9:40		

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