

himself Emperor, he was enraged, declaring his hero to be 'no better than other men'. He destroyed the manuscript's title page, which according to Ries, simply bore the inscription 'Buonaparte – Luigi van Beethoven'. The printed inscription on the 1820 published score was to read '*Sinfonia Eroica*, composed to celebrate the memory of a great man'.

This account of Ries of the genesis of the purpose and dedication of the Symphony has encouraged the idea prevalent during the nineteenth century that the Symphony had a 'programme', closely following the various episodes of the Napoleonic drama. Berlioz certainly maintained this view. More sustainable is Wagner's interpretation of the Symphony. He saw in Beethoven's hero an archetype of man, capable of experiencing all the human emotions of love, sorrow and strength. Certainly with the *Eroica* Beethoven introduced into the form of the symphony a range and intensity of emotion not previously experienced.

The first movement, marked *Allegro con brio*, starts after two brisk staccato chords with a simple theme directly quoted from the Overture to Mozart's youthful opera *Bastien and Bastienne*. The enunciation of this theme is followed by a bridge passage characterised by the contrasting orchestral timbres of oboe, clarinet, flute and strings. The second subject is essentially melodic and features a similar sequence to the bridge passage played by clarinet, oboe and flute.

After the traditional repeat of the exposition, a highly dramatic development section commences, during the course of which a third theme appears which, with its fluid orchestration, provides an element of contrast to what has gone before. The recapitulation opens with a passage in which the second horn, anticipating the return to the home key, plays the common chord of E flat under the harmony of the dominant seventh. At the time of the Symphony's first performance this passage was seen as highly unorthodox and aroused much comment. An extensive coda of 120 bars, in scale matching the development section, brings the movement to an end.

The second movement, the famous 'Funeral March', has been the subject of several interpretations. According to Schindler, Beethoven, on hearing of Napoleon's death, commented that he had composed his funeral march seventeen years earlier. Marked *Adagio*, the movement is in the form of a long song, the main theme of which is divided into three parts, A-B-A, with the third section repeating and developing the first. A second theme in the major key, which has been variously interpreted as representing serenity and an after-life, and played by the oboe, alternates with the first theme. The last appearance of the principal theme is veiled and disrupted by syncopations in a way that recalls the ending of the Overture to *Coriolan*, but in an even more sombre mood.

The third movement, the Symphony's *scherzo*, is marked *Allegro vivace*, and is an enlarged replica of the old Minuet form, with a trio and repeats. The main theme is given out by the oboe over a muttered and staccato string accompaniment, played *pianissimo*. The trio is entrusted to the horns, whose theme has a pronounced 'open-air' character.

The finale, *Allegro molto*, consisted of free variations on a theme previously employed by Beethoven in the incidental music to *The Creatures of Prometheus*, Op. 43, and prior to that in the *Fifteen Variations in E flat*, Op. 35 for solo piano. This initial theme is enriched by a melody superimposed upon it from the third variation, and played by the oboe. This secondary theme gives rise to a series of twelve variations. The climax is the penultimate *andante* variation, richly harmonised and of great power. The final variation, marked *Presto*, provides a peroration to the work of a brilliance entirely in keeping with the Symphony's title 'Heroic'.

© David Patmore