



## How to use a musical score

*How does a score help develop the interpretation?*

### **Catherine:**

OK. So we've touched before, I think, on this matter of interpretation, you know. You've got this score, and in fact, everyone that does-- everyone that conducts Beethoven 5, will have a very similar, if not identical, set of information in front of them. But yet, we know there are huge numbers of performances, and all of them have their own character. All of them sound a little bit different. How do you make something that's so established, and so well known, sort of fresh, and new, and exciting?

### **Mark:**

Exciting for sure, one hopes. And new, I don't know. I mean, new, old, old fashioned, new. I mean there's this whole thing of the performance of the music of Beethoven's time, which through the kind of beginning of the recorded age. So I guess if we started in the 1950s when Karajan, and the Berlin Philharmoniker, and orchestras like that were in the golden age of the recorded era. They were playing music of this time, you know, through the lens of the 20th century, in a way. That was then the historically informed performance music, otherwise known as hip, which kind of tried to recreate the way that the music would've been played in Beethoven's time.

So therefore, the sort of slightly more modern approach is, in a way, the ancient approach, rather than the old fashioned approach, which is the 20th century approach, it that makes any sense, at all. The ways in which those different performances come out, are many and varied. There are very simple, straightforward things like how fast you choose to go. And if you look using, again, Beethoven's Fifth, as an example, one of the shortest recordings when I do this morning online, the shortest times for the first movement was a performance by Sir John Eliot Gardiner with his period orchestra, using original instruments, or copies of original instruments of the day. And a relatively small size of orchestra.

Now he gets through the first moment of Beethoven 5 in six minutes, and 30 seconds. One other hand, a Romanian conductor called Sergiu Celibidache, who would have been in a different time, 30 years ago or so, would have been conducting this music with a much larger orchestra. Perhaps double the number of string players. And he takes almost 9 and 1/2 minutes for the same music. So that's a different-- Getting on for 50% difference. So those very basic choices about how fast you want to go have a tremendous effect.

**Catherine:**

And I guess that's before we even get to the sound of the orchestra. Which, obviously, if you're using instruments from Beethoven's day, it's going to sound very different than if you're using modern instruments. And the number of players is going to make a huge difference.

**Mark:**

The factors are the number of players, the kind of instruments. The hall that you're in has a tremendous effect. If you're in a very, very resonant, acoustic, you might have to take a slightly slower tempo than you would do in a drier acoustic, because the detail might just be a little bit lost. Every orchestra will have its own history of playing a certain piece. The string players would, perhaps, use different bowings than they would do. They would be changing from ups to downs at different times, from what a different orchestra might do. And that would all effect the performance.

And that's really why you can attend as many live performances of Beethoven Five as you like, and every one would be different. And every one would appeal to different people in different ways, I suppose.

**Catherine:**

Absolutely.

**Mark:**

And that's a little bit the same, to come back to the conductor's role in that, of our sort of overview of the whole process. And what an orchestra wants is a vision from a conductor. You have 80, 90, 100 incredibly talented, professional, opinionated people in front of you. You know, there's absolutely no way that everyone is going to agree with every decision you take. But as long as there's a decision, they'll go with you. And some of them might really like it, some of them might be a little bit ambivalent about it, and some of them might actually, actively dislike some of your decisions. But if you're there taking those decisions, then there is a unity to the performance.

And they will go with that. And the next time they do that same piece with a different conductor, two years down the line, it'll be different. And the decisions will be different, the performance will be different.

**Catherine:**

So I think it's just really, really, worth thinking about. Isn't it?

That everyone has essentially worked from that same text, but the music itself-- MARK: It's a starting point. And if it was absolutely possible to express everything about the music on the printed page, nobody would ever need perform it. So it's, in the same way as for a theatre show. The same way as they have words written out on the page, and that's how they learn the words, that's only the starting point. They then go off and interpret how to do that, and how the different characters interact with each other. And who stands at the front of the stage? And who speaks a little bit louder at certain points.

Those are, then, the decisions that are taken in the preparation for the performance. And it's really very much the same approach with a rehearsal process towards any piece of orchestral, or ensemble, music.

**Catherine:**

That's great. Thank you very much, Mark.

**Mark:**

Thank you.