

Musical Treasure Chest #26

As I typed the number of this Musical Treasure Chest, I was struck by the fact that I have been writing these weekly pieces for half a year now! I cannot quite wrap my head around that. MTC did not start until April, so that means more than six months of no live concert activity, virtual programming only, and student lessons confined to the internet, this also means more than 30 concerts as part of the Musical Sanctuaries at First Reformed Church (we started back in mid-March, and have sometimes done more than one per week). Wow, that is rather staggering when I think about it. On the truly positive side, I have had a chance to learn and perform some wonderful repertory that during non-COVID times, I would probably never have done.

This Sunday's Musical Sanctuary is part of our larger **Beethoven 250th anniversary celebration** program that we will be live-streaming from the Schuyler Mansion on Sunday, November 1st. In the midst of the virus, regular arts programming has become so disrupted that an important musical landmark, such as Beethoven's birth year, had faded into the background. But for classical musicians, Beethoven's music remains an absolute staple of the repertory. His compositions are an inspiration to play, and each work offers a wonderful experience to rehearse and practice. Our "big" piece for the program is the op 25 Serenade. Written in 1801 immediately after his delightful Spring Sonata for violin and piano, the piece is scored for flute, violin and viola. Taking a bit of liberty with the instrumentation (a practice common in Beethoven's time), we are substituting guitar for the viola. I, of course, want to give our incredible guitarist Sten Isachsen a chance to play on this program (Beethoven wrote no pieces for guitar), but also I believe in the validity of this transcription. And, I hope if Beethoven heard it, he would approve!

My love of Beethoven goes back for most of my life. I mentioned in a much earlier MTC how as a young kid I would listen to the Eroica Symphony (I "discovered" this work in 4th grade). In high school (Niskayuna) we had a great orchestra teacher Harold Weaver, who would program major works for us to play: Borodin Symphony

No 2; Mozart Sinfonia Concertante and Symphony No 40; Bruch Violin Concerto are just a few of the masterpieces that I was exposed to. In my sophomore year Mr. Weaver put Beethoven's 7th Symphony on our music stands. This piece was revelatory, I listened to it, practiced it, and absorbed it for the entire year. To this day, I can hear every note of every phrase (that's how it is when you learn something when you are young, I guess). When Mr. Weaver retired at the end of my junior year, I was devastated. He has long since passed away, but to this day I thank him for all the wonderful musical gifts he gave me.

So today for listening, I share with you the **Seventh Symphony**. Each movement is its own incredible journey, and the whole symphony is powerful and moving and completely unique. Perhaps I am particularly fond of it because I cannot listen to it without thinking about the first time I played it all those years ago and how exciting it was.

Here is a performance with the Vienna Philharmonic and the legendary Karl Böhm.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICr6KZ4zpe0>