

L. van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 4 in B flat major, Op. 60*



Symphony No. 4 in B Flat Major, Op. 60, was written in 1806. It was premiered in March of 1807 at a private concert of the home of Prince Franz Joseph von Lobkowitz. The Coriolan Overture and the fourth piano concerto were premiered in that same concert. It comprises four movements:

1. **Adagio – Allegro vivace**
2. **Adagio**
3. **Allegro vivace**
4. **Allegro ma non troppo**

The symphony is scored for a flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets in B flat, 2 bassoons, 2 horns in B flat and E flat, 2 trumpets in B flat and E flat, timpani and orchestral strings. It is approximately 30 minutes long.

Ludwig van Beethoven (c. 16 December 1770 – 26 March 1827) was a German composer and pianist. He was a crucial figure in the transitional period between the Classical and Romantic eras in Western classical music, and remains one of the most acclaimed and influential composers of all time. Born in Bonn, Germany, he moved to Vienna, Austria in his early twenties and settled there, studying with Joseph Haydn and quickly gaining a reputation as a virtuoso pianist. His hearing began to deteriorate in the late 1790s, yet he continued to compose, conduct, and perform, even after becoming completely deaf.

The Fourth Symphony was dedicated to Count Franz von Oppersdorff, a relative of Beethoven's patron, Prince Lichnowsky. The Count met Beethoven when he traveled to Lichnowsky's summer home where Beethoven was staying. Von Oppersdorff listened to Beethoven's Symphony No. 2 in D Major, and liked it so much that he offered a great amount of money for Beethoven to compose a new symphony for him.

The first movement begins with a slow introduction which contains all the traces of the entire symphonic discourse, coming as a true synthesis of the symphony. The two themes are successively shown in the form of sonatas with great concision, the movement ending in a Coda which is nothing but a culmination, not a conclusion, as we might have expected from Beethoven's previous works. The second movement introduces its main theme in the violins, followed by another theme with resonances from the previous symphony. The third movement is a typical Beethovenian scherzo, lively and joyful. Thematic elements can be easily recognized from the introduction of the first part. The Finale is in the form of a sonata with a large Coda that expresses the same vital force and joy of life.

The freshness and spontaneity of the themes, the lack of tragic motives and the perfection of the form triggered the enthusiasm of his contemporaries. German composer Robert Schumann was comparing it to "a supple Greek girl, standing in between two giants from the West".