JACOB THOMPSON-BELL

LUDWIG IN
THE ROOM

For symphony orchestra
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COMPOSER’S NOTE

Written as a companion to Beethoven’s Eroica Symphony, this piece is a mixture of quotation and recomposition of Beethoven’s work, and original materials newly composed.

Ludwig in the Room imagines the erosion and decomposition that Beethoven’s symphony might have endured as a physical object. Beethoven’s work is around 200 years old, and yet this recession into history is forgotten each time the score is revived in a fresh performance. Eroica is a sculpture in sound – impermanent, evaporating even as it is played, and yet never truly leaving us. Contrast this with the composer’s manuscript which, as a bundle of paper and ink, has a permanency unachievable through its performance as a piece of music, but has a finite life, gradually crumbling into dust.

Instead of offering a window onto a heroic adventure, as in Beethoven’s symphony, my piece paints an impersonal environment, whose terrain is marked by features both common to and alien from the drama of the original. Beethoven’s language is blurred by time, now heard as a series of dislocated statements. The locomotive thrust of his musical voice is stalled, allowing us instead to bask for a short while in the opening sonorities of the Eroica, the first chord of which suffuses my composition.

This piece is, at the same time, a kind of incantation, punctuated throughout by the deep tolling sound of a bell, as if to summon Beethoven’s spirit into the performance space, not through a literal replaying of his music, but via a contemporary appropriation of it.

INSTRUMENTATION

2 Flutes
2 Oboes
2 Clarinets in B♭
2 Bassoons
3 Horns in F
2 Trumpets in B♭
Percussion: 1 player
[Large bell* \ Timpani \ 2 Wood Blocks]

14 Violin I
12 Violin II
10 Viola
8 Violoncello
6 Double Bass

*Can be chosen from available equivalents.
The sound of the bell should be deep and resonant, with a noticeable attack.

Score in C. Usual octave transpositions apply

DURATION

Approx. 8 - 10 minutes
LUDWIG IN THE ROOM

Allegretto $\frac{3}{4}=72$

Flute 1 & 2

Oboe 1 & 2

Clarinet 1 & 2

Bassoon 1 & 2

Horn 1 & 2

Horn 3

Trumpet 1 & 2

Percussion

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

Performed by the Orchestra of Opera North for DARE New Composers Forum 2013

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*Approx 1/4 tone flat
Allow natural resonance to die away entirely