

Ludwig van Beethoven - Sinfonie Nr.6 In F-Dur Op.68 (Pastorale) (1990)

Written by bluesever

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1 Allegro Ma Non Troppo 2 Andante Molto Moto 3 Allegro 4 Allegro 5 Allegretto
Columbia Symphonie Orchester Bruno Walter - conductor, 1958 (CBS Masterworks, Great Performances 7)

Bruno Walter's Pastoral from January 1958 has long been recognized as a classic, and not just by dint of its inclusion in this "Great Performances" series. It was his third (and last) studio recording, after those made in Vienna in December 1936 (I have it on a Dante Lys CD reissue, not listed here, ASIN B000026CK9 on the French sister company, with Walter's pre-US Beethoven recordings) and New York in January 1946 (Walter's complete Beethoven symphonies recorded by Columbia in the mono era have been reissued by Music & Arts, not offered in the US due to copyright restrictions, but available on the European sister companies under ASIN B00022LS5C).

Its endearing characteristics are its moderate tempos and naturalness of phrasings, imparting its first two movements with a touching mood of gentleness and kindness. But tempos notwithstanding, there is always an underlying sense of forward movement, and Walter never drags, as did Furtwängler (Beethoven: Symphonies 6 & 8) or Reiner (Symphonies 1 & 6). The climax of his first movement brings a great sense of exultation (5:50). Despite his moderate tempo, Walter lends an irresistible vigor to the peasants' merry gathering, with great solo work from oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn - and his central section there ("in tempo d'Allegro", at 1:50 and again 4:20) has great urgency and energy; it is in fact faster than Beethoven's metronome mark. The storm remains relatively mellow, nowhere near the terrifying violence of Leibowitz (Beethoven: Symphonies 6 & 8 or Rene Leibowitz conducts Beethoven Symphonies 5 + 6 (Menuet)), as if witnessed from behind the cozy shelter of a farmhouse. Walter goes the full circle by returning, in the finale, to the mood of gentleness and kindness of the beginning, while keeping the tempo suitably flowing. --- Discophage (France), amazon.com

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