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**JOSHUA
BELL**

CONDUCTS

BEETHOVEN

SYMPHONIES NO. 4 & 7

**ACADEMY OF
ST. MARTIN
IN THE FIELDS**

SONY CLASSICAL

JOSHUA

BELL

CONDUCTS

BEETHOVEN

SYMPHONIES NO. 4 & 7

ACADEMY OF

**ST. MARTIN
IN THE FIELDS**

LUDWIG VAN
BEETHOVEN

(1770-1827)

**ACADEMY OF ST MARTIN
IN THE FIELDS**

JOSHUA BELL
CONDUCTOR & CONCERTMASTER

SYMPHONY NO. 4 IN B-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 60

- 1 I. ADAGIO – ALLEGRO VIVACE 11:19
- 2 II. ADAGIO 9:26
- 3 III. ALLEGRO MOLTO E VIVACE 5:37
- 4 IV. ALLEGRO MA NON TROPPO 6:42

SYMPHONY NO. 7 IN A MAJOR, OP. 92

- 5 I. POCO SOSTENUTO – VIVACE 14:22
- 6 II. ALLEGRETTO 8:07
- 7 III. PRESTO – ASSAI MENO PRESTO (TRIO) 8:16
- 8 IV. ALLEGRO CON BRIO 8:41



A NOTE ON THE RECORDING

BY JOSHUA BELL

Two centuries have passed since the Beethoven symphonies were conceived, yet orchestral musicians continue to draw their bows and their breaths, and conductors continue to wave their batons in response to the challenges these glorious works present. The symphonies are familiar to all of us, yet eternally new, perpetually daring, and always awe-inspiring in what they demand and reward. Listening to a Beethoven symphony offers a glimpse into the essence of the human spirit – its joys, its struggles, its triumphs. For that reason, people will forever flock to the concert halls, unwrap new compact discs, or download the latest recordings of these masterpieces in order to take part in the Beethoven experience.

My own journey with Beethoven started with the Seventh Symphony. My mother's favorite, it was often on our record player when I was a child. I could listen to it over and over again. I don't even remember who was playing, and at that time I paid no attention to whether the orchestra was getting the dotted "galloping" rhythm just right in the first movement, or whether the conductor was taking the *Allegretto* too slowly. I didn't worry about whether the orchestra was losing the "purity" by using too much vibrato, or if the oboist was taking too much time in his solo, thus weakening the structure of the entire piece. I was just a kid, caught up in the music's magnificence, and marveling at my new discovery – the first jewel I had found in the treasure chest of symphonies by Beethoven.

Not too long after, I was given a video of the great conductor Carlos Kleiber directing two of the Beethoven symphonies, and I immediately fell in love with the Fourth. I'll never forget watching for the first time how Kleiber, using simple movements of the baton and subtle facial expressions, created the perfect atmosphere of mystery and expectation at the start of the symphony, and how the music, as it headed toward the recapitulation in the first movement, started to build and build, eventually erupting into a kind of joy and affirmation that only Beethoven could have expressed so well.

Kleiber became a hero of mine, and it was through him that I started to form my image of the ideal conductor: a vessel for the music, somehow managing to be a part of the orchestra, yet unmistakably its leader, giving the orchestra direction when necessary, but not exaggerating gestures in order to justify his existence. A great conductor conveys a clear vision of how the music should unfold while giving the orchestra confidence in their own musical initiative, and generally making everyone on stage feel like they are part of something truly magical.

During my last three decades as a touring violin soloist, I have had the great fortune of collaborating with hundreds of conductors – some great, others less so – and I have learned from all of them. One of the great benefits of being invited by an orchestra to be their soloist is that I am often free during the second half of the concert. On the night of my debut at the age of fourteen, after finishing my Mozart concerto, I went out into the hall to watch Ricardo Muti work his magic with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Thus began my "conducting education," and over the years I have continued to seize any opportunity to absorb the great symphonic repertoire through listening and observation. Naturally, I have witnessed countless interpretations of the Beethoven symphonies, and, whenever possible, I have enjoyed "picking the brains" of the conductors in order to understand each one's unique perspective.

Some years ago, I began to get the urge to play and direct these masterpieces myself, in ways that would reflect my own musical philosophies. I wanted to incorporate some of the refreshing approaches to vibrato and articulation held by historically informed conductors like Gardiner and Norrington (with whom I recorded the Beethoven violin concerto many years ago), while taking advantage of the power and musical flexibility that modern instruments can offer.

I was finally given this chance by the acclaimed Academy of St Martin in the Fields. It has been almost a decade since I first played and directed a Beethoven symphony with this remarkable orchestra, and we have continued to explore the repertoire ever since. Collaborating with the Academy has been one of the great joys of my life, and with this recording of Beethoven Symphonies Nos. 4 and 7, my first as Music Director, I could not imagine any music more capable of reflecting this joy.

ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN: Miranda Playfair, Fiona Brett, Helen Paterson, Amanda Smith, Robert Salter, Jeremy Morris, Martin Burgess, Jennifer Godson, Mark Butler, Matthew Ward, Catherine Morgan, Clare Hoffman

VIOLA: Robert Smissen, Duncan Ferguson, Catherine Bradshaw, Kate Read

CELLO: Stephen Orton, John Heley, Martin Loveday, William Schofield

BASS: Leon Bosch, Lynda Houghton

FLUTE: Samuel Coles, Sarah Newbold

OBOE: Christopher Cowie, Rachel Ingleton

CLARINET: Matthew Hunt, Marie Lloyd

BASSOON: Gavin McNaughton, Richard Skinner

HORN: Timothy Brown, Peter Francomb, Stephen Stirling, Susan Dent

TRUMPET: Mark David, Michael Laird, Simon Ferguson

TIMPANI: Adrian Bending

Produced by ANDREW KEENER
Engineer: SIMON EADON
Assistant Engineers: CHRIS BARRETT
& LAWRENCE ANSLOW
Editor & Production Assistant: BILL SYKES

A&R Manager: DAVID LAI
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