Ferdinand Ries (1784–1838)



Ferdinand Ries after a Lithography by Hove

Ferdinand Ries was from a musical family that had been linked to the court ensemble of the Bonn prince electors ever since the times of his grandfather Johann (1723–84). His father Franz Anton (1755–1846) shined as a child prodigy on the violin and received a post in the court ensemble at the age of eleven. He instructed the young Beethoven and lent him support, in particular after the death of his mother in 1787. Ferdinand Ries's life may be seen as a model example of the uncertain and risky existence that might be led by a musician and composer during the decades marked by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars.

Ries received piano and violin lessons from his father and instruction in violoncello from Bernhard Romberg (1767–1841), then a famous virtuoso. Since the Bonn court ensemble was dissolved in 1794 in the wake of the revolutionary wars, the young Ferdinand did not have the opportunity to follow in his father's footsteps in Bonn. Nevertheless he spent most of the following seven years in Bonn with his father. Alter a half a year of study with Peter von Winter in Munich, he

made his way to Beethoven in Vienna in 1801 with a letter of recommendation from his father. According to Ries's own testimony, he received a hearty welcome from Beethoven. Ries studied piano and served as a sort of private secretary to Beethoven. In a concert at the Augarten in Vienna on August 1, 1804, Beethoven entrusted Ries, who was not yet twenty years old, with the soloist's part in the Piano Concerto No. 3 op. 37. Ries was also allowed to write his own cadenza. His apprenticeship under Beethoven ended abruptly in the autumn of 1805 when Ries, a citizen of the French-occupied Bonn, was drafted into the French military. Alter he had made his way to French army headquarters in Koblenz by way of Prague, Dresden, and Leipzig, he was found unfit for active military service and spent more than a year with his family in Bonn. His op. 1 had been published in 1806; it consisted of two piano sonatas with an elaborate French dedication to Beethoven. Ries tried his luck in Paris at the beginning of 1807 but was so unsuccessful that for a while he thought of abandoning the musical profession and becoming a civil servant. He could count on a recommendation from an influential friend to get the latter career going. When Ries returned to Vienna in August 1808, he thus had a few more bitter experiences behind him. He resumed his contact with Beethoven, but the two had a falling out over the post of court music director to Jerôme Bonaparte, King of Westphalia, in Kassel. The post was offered to Beethoven and, so it seems, to Ries as well, but in the end neither of the two received this appointment. Ries left Vienna suddenly in July 1809. This time he was supposed to be drafted by the Austrian military, but Napoleon's victory averted this danger. Ries again returned to his native Bonn for a year, and it was there that he composed his first symphony, the Symphony in D major op. 23. At the end of 1810 he embarked on a journey to Russia, which he reached in August 1811 alter six months in Kassel and stops in Hamburg, Copenhagen, and Stockholm. He met his old teacher Bernhard Romberg in St. Petersburg and undertook a concert tour with him. Once again the military, this time in the form of Napoleon's Russian campaign, thwarted his plans. At the turn of the year 1812/13 Ries left Russia for Stockholm, where he gave a few concerts and was made a member of the Royal Academy of Music, a distinction to which he referred with pride even many years later. In the meantime he had published more than thirty works. His old Bonn friend Simrock had printed most of them, including a piano concerto and his first symphony in 1811. In German-speaking Europe he had earned a reputation "*as a young man of talent and an energetic pianist, from Beethoven's school*", as a review from 1807 had put it. His first symphony had been performed at the Leipzig Gewandhaus on October 4, 1812, and had met with a favorable reception from the critics.

Nevertheless the political situation on the Continent on the eve of the wars of liberation may have seemed too precarious to Ries, considering that he had already had enough of unpleasant experiences with the military. In the spring of 1813 Ries decided on short notice to go to London, arriving there in April. Johann Peter Salomon, who had brought Haydn to London twenty years before and thus occasioned the composition of his London Symphonies, introduced Ries into the city's musical and social circles. It was in London that Ries finally obtained the success which he had hoped to win for so long. He came into fashion as a piano teacher among rich bankers and merchants and joined the Philharmonic Society, which he directed from 1815 to 1821. During his London period (1813–24) Ries wrote fantasies, variations, and rondos on well-known themes in keeping with the taste of the middleclass public of those times as well as six of his total of eight symphonies. He must have earned a fine sum of money and had the resources to start a family. On July 25, 1814, he married Harriet Mangeon (1796–1863). Quarrels with the Philharmonic Society developed beginning in 1820, and Ries complained that his symphonies were not being performed frequently enough. In 1821 he resigned from the directorship and began devising plans for a return to his native Rhineland.

In July 1824 these plans became a reality, and Ries spent the next three years in the relative retirement of Godesberg with his wife and children. He was a well-to-do man who could afford to turn down various offers. He was also unsuccessful in his bids for music directorships in Munich and

Dresden, in the latter city as C. M. von Weber's successor. His most important musical activity during this period was his directing of several Lower Rhine Music Festivals, for which he composed an oratorio and performed some of his symphonies. He moved to Frankfurt am Main in April 1827 but was constantly unhappy about his position in the music world. He thought of going to Vienna, Paris, and Berlin or back to London but continued to reside in Frankfurt, apart from some trips. From 1830 on he became increasingly embittered, complained about modern musical taste, and composed only a little. If his works were accepted for publication, then it was only by unimportant publishers for low fees. When he died at fifty-three on January 13, 1838, he had already fallen into such oblivion that none of the leading music journals published his obituary. It was not until 1839 that the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* founded by Robert Schumann published an appreciation of Ries's personality and work. There we read in somewhat florid images what is nonetheless certainly a fitting description of his symphonies: "His symphonies, even though they cannot be placed side by side with Haydn's eternally young creations bubbling with divine cheerfulness or with Mozart's ethereal designs imbued with pain and eternal yearning, even though they do not hold up to comparison to the heaven-storming boldness, to the gigantic flights of imagination of the musical titan Beethoven, they nevertheless will always belong to the best that more and most recent times have brought forth in this genre."

Together with Louis Spohr (1784–1859), George Onslow (1784–1853), and Friedrich Ernst Fesca (1789–1826), Ferdinand Ries belongs to a generation of symphonists who have been neglected – understandably but wrongly so – in the annals of music history. Most of their symphonies were published during the period between the time when Beethoven's seventh and eighth symphonies became known in 1813 and the gradual spread of the success of Schubert's Symphony in C major after 1839. Although Ries, Spohr, Onslow, and Fesca were highly acclaimed by their contemporaries, their symphonies disappeared from concert programs after 1840. The public had elevated Beethoven's symphonies to the status of a norm by which all subsequent works of the genre were to be measured. As a critic of those times so accurately observed in 1829: "*If these tone poems of other composers come too close to Beethoven's, they are only too easily rejected as imitations; if they are too far removed from them, they as a rule do not appeal.*" It is thus not surprising that thoroughly individual formal designs and original personal styles did not receive the sort of recognition that they deserved.

Ries occupies a special position among the four abovementioned composers because he was the closest to Beethoven both on the personal level and in his musical style. Between 1801 and 1804 Ries had the benefit of instruction from Beethoven and served as his copyist and private secretary. A brief falling out between the two composers over the music director's post in Kassel in 1808, which presumably was offered to both men, did not seriously cloud their friendship. After Ries had settled in London in 1813, he arranged commissions for compositions for Beethoven from the city's Philharmonic Society, whose director he became in 1815, supplied him with news about London's music life, and looked for London publishers for his works. Ries dedicated his Symphony No. 2 composed in 1814 and published in 1818 to Beethoven, and Beethoven intended to return the fav or by dedicating the *Diabelli Variations* to Ries's wife. However, he ended up not doing so – which may have had to do with the fact that he repeatedly requested by letter a copy of the symphony dedicated to him (for the last time as late as 1823) but never received it. May it hove been that Ries shied away from submitting his work to Beethoven's critical perusal? At any rate, it was precisely this symphony that in reviews of those times was charged with being strongly reminiscent of the *Eroica* in some passages. Beethoven's judgment of Ries's music had its two sides. On the one hand, Beethoven is supposed to have had very positive things to say about Ries's piano playing and compositions; on the other hand, Beethoven's statement that Ries "imitates me too greatly" has also come down to us. For his part, Ries made no secret of his absolute admiration for his Former teacher; on the occasion of a performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 conducted by Ries, Ries wrote to Beethoven: "*It is a*

work which has no equals, and if you had written nothing but it, you would have made yourself immortal – where will you lake us next?" His absolute amazement at the novelty of the Ninth is quite unmistakable in the concluding question.

Symphony No. 1 in D major, op. 23

1. Adagio – Allegro molto vivace
2. March funèbre
3. Menuetto. Moderato
4. Allegro

When Ferdinand Ries, who was not even twenty-five years old at the time, wrote his first symphony in his native Bonn during the second half of 1809, he had a whole wealth of experience to work through. After busy and productive years of learning in Bonn, Ries had mode his way to Vienna in 1801 in order to continue his education with Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827), who was an old friend of his father and by then already famous as a pianist and composer. He received instruction in piano and served Beethoven as a sort of private secretory. Beethoven the teacher was evidently quite pleased with his pupil's accomplishments inasmuch as he let Ries, who was not yet twenty years old, perform the soloist's part in his Piano Concerto No. 3 op. 37 at a concert in Vienna's Augarten on August 1, 1804. Ries was even allowed to write his own solo cadenza for this concerto.

These apprentice years came to an abrupt end, however, when Napoleon marched on Vienna in November 1805 and Ries, as citizen of French-occupied Bonn, was drafted into the army. Penniless but with a letter of recommendation from Beethoven to a noble patroness, Ries made his quick getaway from Vienna at the beginning of November 1805. Since he ended up being judged unfit for military service, he did not have to serve in the war. After a one-year stay with his father in Bonn, he tried to establish himself as a pianist and composer in Paris. This plan was such a miserable failure that he even considered abandoning his career as a musician and entering the civil service – through the good offices of an influential friend.

Wiser after some bitter experiences, Ries returned to Vienna in August 1808. He resumed contact with Beethoven, but the two had o falling out over an appointment as music director to Jerôme Bonaparte, the King of Westphalia, in Kassel, a post that was offered to Beethoven and supposedly also to Ries. In the end neither of the two received the post. Beethoven and Ries soon reconciled, but Ries once again was driven from Vienna by force: on April 5, 1809, the Austrian emperor Franz I had again declared war on Napoleon, and after the Austrian army had suffered a severe defeat at Regensburg, Napoleon's troops made their way to Vienna. The Vienna garrison refused to capitulate, and so things come to the memorable bombardment of Vienna on May 11 that darkened the last days of the aged Joseph Haydn (he died at seventy-seven on May 31, 1809), and, according to a report by Ries, led Beethoven to seek the shelter of the cellar in his brother Caspar's home with a pillow over his ears. Vienna surrendered on May 12 but not the whole of the Austrian army. It was only after the final defeat of the Austrians at Wagram that a truce was declared on July 12 and the Peace of Schönbrunn was signed on October 14, a treaty which brought with it many losses for Austria. During the final phase of the military operations the commanders of the Austrian army tried to mobilize all the fighting men fit for duty, and so it is not surprising that Ries, who was of prime recruitable age, was once again supposed to be called to military service, this time by the Austrians. He evidently got around this imposition by fleeing to Bonn, where he arrived in July and then spent the next one and a half years.

It was under these circumstances that Ries composed his **Symphony No. 1 in D major op.23**, which, as is hardly surprising, has a decidedly, even if compositionally sublime, martial character. It is not only that the second movement is a funeral march; elements of the martial force their way into all the other movements as well. Already the *Adagio* introduction to the first movement offers something unheard-of up until then: it begins with a dissonant *fortissimo* beat with a clear harmonic function – the sudden breaking-in of the unexpected and fateful. The key may clarify itself in three further chord beats moving toward G minor, the minor subdominant of the principal key, but a *piano* phrase in the strings with melody fragments in the horn and oboe immediately modulates to E flat major by way of B flat major. The whole section, including the *fortissimo* chords, is repeated a fifth lower, so that now the modulating even goes as far as A flat major. What had been gently pulsating string motion slackens off, and aimlessly wandering leaps in the strings end up hitting upon the key of D major for the first time after a fivefold descending fifth sequence. (Although the harmony is goal oriented, the character of this passage creates the impression of aimlessness because the leaps in part do not seem to have a harmonic motivation.) After cadential reinforcement the principal key forms a transition to *Allegro molto*. The principal theme enters mightily in the orchestral tutti after the six measures forming a dominant intensification phase. Its characteristic fanfare stamp is reinforced even more by triadic blaring in the horns and trumpets, and it goes over into precipitous cadential motion recalling the corresponding passages in Mozart's *Jupiter Symphony* or in Beethoven's Symphony No. 1. The following transitional section makes a surprising modulation to A minor. The melody fragments presented by the woodwinds over the continuous foundation of the string part suggest sighing; even though they are set harmonically as a period, they do not convey the impression of a self-contained melody. Whether one in this passage can hear the whimpering and moaning of the wounded, is something that will have to be left up to the listener's imagination. In any case, Ries assigned such great importance to the passage that he repeated it in full in the recapitulation, this in contrast to his usual practice with transitional sections. But the further course of musical events also has its surprises in store. When the expected dominant of the principal key, A major, has finally been reached, an orchestral tutti, gliding downward chromatically, directs the harmony to the unexpected Neapolitan key of B flat major before the sharp dissonance of diminished seventh chords and a short cadential section are followed by the repetition of the whole process. A second subject proper is never really formed. The goal key of A major is present latently throughout the whole passage but does not become firmly established until a clearly cadential closing group enters after a new chromatic unison descent in the strings. The closing group lends shape to two short interrelated concluding motifs. The second of these motifs proceeds into harmonically remote regions (D flat major) in the following development section together with multiple stretti before the movement comes to a standstill on F major with the motif in the bass. A fivefold ascending fifth sequence (B flat-F-c-g-d-A) employing the first motif from the closing group forms a transition to a recapitulation corresponding completely to the exposition. It is in the initial harmonies of the coda concluding this movement that the author of the review cited below may well have seen one of the "reminiscences" of Beethoven with which he found fault. Like the beginning of the coda of the first movement of Beethoven's *Eroica* (1804), this coda modulates by degrees and in descent (from D by way of C to B flat) and then has the fanfare principal theme in the "wrong key" of B flat major. Unlike Beethoven, however, who expands the coda to a second development section, Ries "corrects" this procedure after a few measures of harmonic transition by having the theme sound in D major in the woodwinds. The stretta swing of the coda is interrupted by an eight-measure *piano* insert in which the motif from the closing group is heard one last time before the movement concludes amid the blaring sound of fanfares.

The second movement, a *Marche funèbre* in A minor without further indication of tempo, is a sonata movement in its form. Its structure also has an overlay of formally unmotivated surprise effects

bearing an essential relation to the type deriving from the music of the French Revolution. Immediately after the harmonizing repetition of the march theme heard at the beginning in the string unison, a horn signal forms a transition to violent *fortissimo* outbursts of the orchestral tutti on diminished seventh chords. These chords proceed into a cutting brass unison of the triplet march rhythm: the melodic and harmonic substance is reduced ta the basic rhythm of the model type, which fades away like an echo while the horn abandons its harsh character. A very cantabile theme in the clarinets and bassoons follows without a mediating transition and over a gentle foundation in the strings. The next unit, a short development section, serves more to rehabilitate the striking march rhythm from diffuse thirty-second notes than just to work out previously expounded thematic components. After two *fortissimo* beats in the tutti again suspending the march rhythm, the recapitulation enters with the initial theme in the bass, with the triplet motion now taking complete control of the accompaniment. The lyrical second theme is greatly abbreviated, and it now exhibits more of the character of a concluding closing group motif. The movement fades away in triple *piano* amid fragmentation of the head of the principal theme; this is the only technique, apart from similarities dictated by the type, recalling the funeral march in Beethoven's *Eroica*.

Nor is the belligerent and martial element lacking in the third movement, a *Menuetto moderato* in D minor. The dance character is modified already in the first measure by fanfares in the horns and trumpets, and it is not until the elegiac consequent phrase that the gentle swaying of the 3/4 time manages to establish itself. Violent tutti outbursts form a transition to the mirror-inverted repetition of the minuet theme. Initially, the fanfare is replaced by the flute tonic embellishment, before it establishes itself with even greater vigor. The bright idyllic mood of the *Trio* in A major is also interrupted unexpectedly by an orchestral tutti. With its opposition of triplet rhythm in the strings and bassoon and sharply accentuated sixteenth upbeats in the winds, this tutti creates the impression of the intrusion of chaos into the perfect world of the idyll. This intrusion continues to make itself felt in the nervous triplet accompaniment forming the underlay in the oboe for the return of the trio theme.

The theme head of the *Finale. Allegro* does not have a strong melodic profile but is quite clearly stylized as a military drum signal. It has a sharply dotted rhythm and holds sway over large stretches of the movement, apart from the principal thematic complexes, above all the development section and the intensifying and transitional parts. Viewed formally, the movement follows the scheme of the sonata form and only has something of the rondo about it because the thirty measures of the principal thematic complex are repeated in full before the beginning of the development section. The thematic material of the second subject forms two thematic blocks. The first of these blocks persists harmonically on the seventh chord of the double dominant (E major) and forms a theme of recitative-laconic character. After a tutti implosion the second motif has a wind theme in trio character. The development section begins like a model fugue with entries of the four-measure subject at the interval of a fifth. Nevertheless, it has anything but the effect of the well-orderedness that one would expect from a baroque fugue; rather, it conveys more of the impression of upheaval and confusion swelling up under the surface, only then to ebb away again. This effect is to be traced above all to the sequenced turn figure forming part of the subject, a figure which is not at all in keeping with the fugue, as well as to the continuous presence of the drum signal in the winds. After a recapitulation with a minimum of abbreviation and abrupt harmonic modulations, a *più Allegro* coda concludes the work amid the triumphant sound of fanfares.

The publisher Nikolaus Simrock (1751–1832), an old friend of the family in Bonn, published the part edition of the symphony in the autumn of 1811, and during the following years piano arrangements were published in Leipzig, London, and Paris. The premiere was performed by the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig on October 4, 1812, and the work met with a well-intentioned response from the critics. A report about the premiere in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* spoke of

"manifold and very favorable effects". In matters of detail, however, things were weighed out very precisely: "We found the thoughts to be always good, if not always new, and the elaboration mostly praiseworthy, if not always solid, and the instrumentation original and very effective." But the complaint that would accompany Ries his whole life long was also not lacking. The reviewer found "closer reminiscences (especially from Beethoven's symphonies) than is reasonable". Nevertheless, apart from the Symphony in C minor to be discussed below, the first symphony was Ries's most successful symphonic work. It was performed every year in Leipzig until 1823 and after that in Vienna in 1825 and then again in Leipzig in 1831.

Symphony No. 2 in C minor, op. 80

1. Allegro ma non troppo
2. Andantino
3. Menuetto Allegretto
4. Allegro ma non troppo

After a concert tour that took Ries to Russia by way of Stockholm, he made his way to London in April 1813. The English capital would be his home for more than a decade, and it was also in London that he finally obtained the success that he had hoped to achieve for so long. He came into fashion as a piano teacher among rich bankers and businessmen and was made a member of the Philharmonic Society, which he directed from 1815 to 1821. It was also in 1813 that he composed a Symphony in D minor for the society, but it was not published until 1823, as his Symphony No. 5 op. 112. The success of the premiere of this symphony on February 14, 1814, may have inspired Ries to take up the immediate composition of a further symphonic work to present to the London public. The **Symphony No. 2 in C minor op. 80** was presented in a concert of the Philharmonic Society a mere two months later, on April 18, 1814.

Ries did not find a publisher for the work at the time; as he stated to the Leipzig publisher Carl Friedrich Peters in April, in London symphonies could be sold only in the form of arrangements. The part editions of all six of Ries's printed symphonies were published in Germany. Peters did not accept the symphony, which ended up being published by the composer's friend Simrock in Bonn in 1818. Ries dedicated it to Beethoven, who in 1816 had asked Ries if he did not want to dedicate a composition to him. In German-speaking Europe the second symphony became Ries's most successful work. Alter the Leipzig first performance on October 21, 1819, the reviewer in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* wrote with enthusiasm, "And in fact: it is a work full of spirit and life, in the genuine style of the genre in which namely this now is employed and elevated; in this style of original invention, thorough elaboration, outstanding instrumentation, and thus interesting both for experts and nonexperts". Of course, the obligatory complaint was also not lacking, the objection that there were some "reminiscences" of the *Eroica* in the first movement.

Indeed it is true that there are some similarities between this first movement, an *Allegro ma non troppo* in 3/4 time, and the corresponding movement in the *Eroica*. The theme of the second subject, for example, is almost identical to the transitional theme in Beethoven's work. Moreover, common elements in the elaborative technique in the development section (the employment of a horn motif as a modulating hinge) stand out. The principal theme gets the movement off to an energetic start, and there is no slow introduction. Even so, the theme corresponds to the C minor theme type such as was employed by Mozart in his Piano Concerto KV 491: a theme head embellishing the triadic-chord tones of C minor is followed by a consequent phrase in a descending sequence at the interval of two measures and emphasizing in resigned melancholy the rocking character of the 3/4 time. The theme concludes with *fortissimo* cadential beats of the full orchestra. But the movement also exhibits peculiar

features of its own which may be regarded as forming part of Ries's personal style. The mighty orchestral tutti in the closing group confirming the key of E major, which is still unclear in the second subject, and the mysteriously chromatic descent of the strings contributing an element of uncertainty to the sense of key are among the elements that would have to be mentioned here.

The second movement, an *Andantino* in A flat major and 2/4 time, is unusual in every respect. Formally, it adheres to the sonata scheme and contains something that is extremely rare in slow movements and not only those by Ries, namely on extended development section. Neither the first nor second thematic complex leads to the forming of a pronounced theme; instead, Ries employs melodic-motivic fragments of the most different character. In the first complex there are no less than four: the first fragment is a tone repetition introducing the movement and followed by a turn figure, the second fragment is an immediately following cantabile motif of completely contrary character, the third is in the form of a playfully descending sixteenth figure in staccato, and the fourth is a motif presented in unison by the first violin and violoncello and sounding as if it had been derived from an old fugue (and which in fact is set imitatively in the corresponding passage in the recapitulation). After a repetition of the whole first complex with variation in the form of figuration and voice exchange, the second subject comes in with the function of a harmonic transition and to a march-like motif which in its thematic substance is completely independent of the preceding material. A triadic-chord motif followed by a cadential sixteenth figure holds sway in the second complex in the dominant key of E flat major. Contrary to its character, the motif is to be executed *legato*, but its flexibility makes it ideal for use as a modulating hinge. Thematically, the development section is largely stamped by the cantabile motif. The motif, in turn, is followed by a descending playing figure, which, for its part, is counterpointed with its rising inversion. Only the preparation for the entry of the recapitulation employs the flexibility of the triadic-chord motif, in order to reach the principal key of A flat major in a multiple fifth descent.

The *Menuetto. Allegretto* in C minor is in many a respect like the minuet of the first symphony. Although belligerent fanfares do not occur at the beginning, the melody of the first subject is almost identical to the consequent phrase in the first part of the earlier minuet. The *Trio* in C major forms an effective contrast in that a more static wind sound is opposed to the rocking motion of the minuet emphasizing all the metrical units.

Evidence that Ries was aiming at lending the works a characteristic unity comes in his renewed choice of the *Allegro ma non troppo* tempo for the finale. The tone repetition with the turn figure from the first motif of the second movement also finds employment in the first subject of the finale. Although it is not designated as such, this finale exhibits more features of a rondo on the foundation of an overall sonata form than other finale movements by Ries: not only the first subject, as is very common in his finale movements, is repeated in full in the principal key at the end of the exposition, but the second complex modulates to A flat major and thus avoids the character of harmonic tension that otherwise tends to distinguish the second theme from the first theme. The second subject has the effect more of an intermittent couplet. The impression of a loose serial structure is reinforced by the insertion of a march-like C major section before the development section, which, for its part, as in the first symphony, begins like a model fugue with a subject in six entries from the C major section. Surprisingly, the first subject is repeated in major at the beginning of the recapitulation, but this brightening is dimmed by the transfer of the second subject into the principal key and the renewed C minor transfer of the entry of the principal theme in the accelerated coda.

Symphony No. 3 in E flat major, op. 90

1. Grave – Allegro
2. Larghetto quasi Andante
3. Menuetto. Moderato
4. Finale. Allegro vivace

To judge by its performance statistics, this symphony premiered at the Philharmonic Society on May 15, 1815, was Ries's most popular work of this genre in London. In Germany, however, it was not at all able to establish itself.

The instrumentation of this symphony is also unusual. Ries employed clarinets instead of oboes, doing entirely without the latter instruments, and the only member of the trombone family that he used was the bass trombone.

In the first movement of the symphony Ries undertook to set himself off from his great model Beethoven in another way. Here he strictly simplified the thematic material of the movement and thus anticipated techniques such as would be employed by Schumann in his first symphony. The *Grave* introduction of nineteen measures presents in minor and in long note values what is to serve as the main theme in the following *Allegro* in major. For its part, this theme is fragmented and punctuated by orchestral tutti typical of Ries in the transition and leads over several stages of metamorphosis into the secondary theme, which surprisingly is in C major. The motif of the closing group offers an inversion of the contours of the main theme and brings the exposition to its conclusion in two diminutions. The development section employs the material from the secondary theme at its beginning. The similarity of this material to the following eighth series from the closing group is exposed by splintering and sequentializing. Like the exposition, the development closes with the resumption of the primary theme in long note values and in minor. Alter the recapitulation the closing group extended to a coda and sped up to a *Più Allegro* brings the movement to its conclusion.

The second movement of the E flat major symphony creates the impression of being a duplicate of the slow movement of the D minor symphony in a number of respects – not only in the almost identical tempo marking, *Larghetto quasi Andante*, but also in its similar formal design and thematic character, which extends to the identity of motifs. If too, with its mere eighty measures, bears the character of an intermezzo. For its part, however, the middle section is of considerably denser design and harmonically more interesting than the corresponding section in op. 112. The middle section in op. 90 is distinguished by imitations between the first clarinet and first bassoon and by swift modulations hastened on by suspensions in the basses.

The *Menuetto Moderato* third movement in no way reflects the archaizing tendency suggested by the title. Unlike the *Tempo di Menuetto* in Beethoven's eighth symphony, which, for all its then modern orchestration technique, retains the daintiness of the court dance, Ries's minuet employs techniques corresponding to the scherzo style of the times: unexpected modulatory imitations between the flute and first violin or mysteriously anticipatory string unisons. Ries's endeavoring to lend the movement symphonic weight is also underscored by the presence of two trios of strongly contrasting sound character.

The *Allegro vivace* concluding the symphony is marked by an ambivalence similar to that of the finale in Beethoven's fifth symphony. The principal motif holding sway over long stretches of the movement is an inversion of the principal motif of the first movement taking into proper consideration the harmonic givens and underscores Ries's striving to produce a uniform thematic-cyclical design for the whole symphony. The formal design is also original in that the development section is introduced by the resumption of the first part of the exposition and the recapitulation begins with the transition,

which is only fitting after its vehement modulatory outbursts, and leaves out the first part. In the end this movement confirms rather than denies a well-known fact: it was difficult to come up with a convincing finale design after Beethoven.

Symphony No. 4 in F major, op. 110

1. Andante – Allegro
2. Andantino
3. Scherzo. Allegro
4. Finale. Allegro molto

The ambivalence of the Beethoven succession and Ries's endeavoring to obtain his own originality are in no way denied by the **Symphony No. 4 in F major op. 110** composed by Ries in London in 1818. A contemporary critic put it concisely and precisely when he wrote that the work "reveals the master in the pupil and in the pupil the master".

The triumphal character of the main theme of the first movement automatically recalls the beginning of the finale of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5; the theme of the transition to the second part of the exposition alternates measure by measure between various woodwind instruments and the first violin in so-called filigree work and is reminiscent of corresponding instrumentation techniques in the first movement of Beethoven's *Eroica*; the rocking or swaying quality of the *Andantino* reminds us of the *Szene am Bach* from Beethoven's *Pastorale*; and the diminished seventh chords with echoing winds in the transition to the second part of the exposition in the finale represent an almost exact replica of the parallel material in the last movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 4. On the other hand, it is unmistakably clear that Ries was engaged in a sort of summing up and taking stock of his previous development as a symphonist. He returns to the idea of an introduction with a dissonant beginning from his Symphony No. 1, but in the new work, in contrast to the old work, the dissonant interval of the descending diminished fifth with which the work begins now is of structural importance for the following allegro. The gradual, steadily intensifying buildup, both in instrumentation and dynamics, to the *fortissimo* outburst of the main theme in the first movement is also from the first symphony, while the scherzo in 6/8 time, albeit now exhibiting a very different thematic construction, is from the Symphony in D minor op. 112 (irritatingly counted as Ries's Symphony No. 5). Another formal feature tested in Ries's earlier symphonies is represented by the addition of a coda in accelerated tempo in the first and last movements and as a strategy for the intensification of the finale effect. The fact that Ries once again draws on the rousing-finale type in sonata-rondo form, a technique also employed by him in his Symphonies Nos. 1–3, renders evident a special problem in composing in the post-Beethoven era: after his *Eroica*, his third symphony, Beethoven himself had abandoned this type in favor of a finale fitting the character of the particular work. In the finale of his seventh symphony Beethoven even mocked this type in a sort of grim exaggeration, and in his ninth symphony (of course not yet composed when Ries wrote his work) he replaced it with a monumental finale with chorus and solo voices. In contrast, Ries returned to the type of the pre-Beethoven era. In 1848 a later reviewer observed "a Mozartian touch" in the finale of the Symphony No. 4 on the occasion of a performance by Spohr. Nevertheless, a tendency toward the outdoing of the precedent set by Beethoven is apparent already in the instrumental dimensions of the orchestra, which, as Beethoven had previously done only in the finale of his Symphony No. 5, increase the size of the usual orchestra to include three trombones and the contrabassoon.

The autograph of the Symphony No. 4 is no longer extant. Ries entered its date of composition in his own catalogue of his works in 1818. Nothing is known about the more precise circumstances of its composition; in his letters Ries was very reticent when it came to offering information about his

composing. The symphony was published in Leipzig in 1823 and dedicated to Louis Spohr, the abovementioned fellow composer and violin virtuoso whom Ries invited to London for a season in 1820. Spohr evidently highly valued Ries's symphonies. In his capacity as Kassel court music director, he was still performing symphonies by Ries in the 1840s, at a time when Ries's works were already on the verge of falling into complete oblivion.

Symphony No. 5 in D minor, op. 112

1. Allegro
2. Larghetto con moto quasi Andante
3. Scherzo. Allegro assai – Trio
4. Finale. Allegro

This symphony premiered in London on February 14, 1814, was the first such work composed by Ries especially for the Philharmonic Society. Its instrumentation is unusual. Ries does without clarinets, even though they had belonged to the standard orchestra in Beethoven ever since his first symphony of 1800 and in very large part were the rule among other composers of those times as well. On the other hand, Ries calls for three trombones in the first, third and fourth movements, a quantity of brass instruments such as up until then not even Beehoven had prescribed (trombones are called on only in the finale of his fifth symphony). The only precedent was in Louis Spohr's first symphony, a work composed in 1811.

There are strong reminiscences of Beethoven in the first movement. The principal motif with its 3/8 upbeat and third ascent followed by a fourth descent from tonic to dominant is practically a combination of the corresponding motifs from Beethoven's third and filth symphonies. In some passages the treatment of the woodwind and brass instruments is strongly reminiscent of their treatment in the *Eroica*; but the tendencies toward the formation of a unique personal symphonic style can hardly be overlooked in this movement. Examples include the beginning with dissonant chord beats and the elaboration of a thoroughly harmonized tutti theme in the transition. Ries had already tried out a beginning with dissonant chord beats in his first symphony, but here in the fifth symphony he does without the slow introduction. The method employed by Ries for the combination of motifs from the exposition and their stretto in the development contrasts to Beethoven's technique of thematic liquidation in this same section. Through this combination Ries densifies the texture and heightens its suspense and tension.

The second movement, a *Larghetto con moto quasi Andante* in B flat major, represents the first instance of the type of the episodic, intermezzo-like slow movement that Ries would go on to use again in his subsequent symphonies. Evidently Ries – like the middle Beethoven and Schumann in his early symphonies – wanted to avoid the composition of a long and heavy adagio as a slow symphony movement. In form the movement follows a modified sonata scheme. Ries begins it with a theme of rhythmic stamp accentuating the striding pace of the meter. After a cadence in the principal key and a few measures of harmonic transition, the theme is followed by an elegiac melody in G minor. The melody remains episodic and yields to a broad cadence moving toward the F major dominant and strengthened by deceptive cadences and dissonant suspensions. The middle section modulating into remote regions (to D flat major and E flat minor) suggests a development structure and forms a transition to the abbreviated recapitulation concluding the movement.

What we said about the first movement also applies to the third movement, a *Scherzo. Allegro assai*. Here too certain resemblances to Beethoven's scherzo style can hardly go unnoticed, and the employment of seemingly polyphonic imitations is certainly to be interpreted as a reaction to similar

techniques in the scherzo of the *Eroica*. Nevertheless Ries explores new musical territory already by the mere fact of his employment of 6/8 time, which, in combination with the abovementioned techniques, lends the movement an undercurrent of agitation. The trio in G major is in 2/4 time. Here too some dependence on the middle section of the third movement of the *Pastorale* may be detected, but the differences are what is important. While the change of meter marks the high point of the "*Lustiges Zusammensein der Landleute*" in Beethoven, it forms a surprising contrast to the *perpetuum mobile* character of the 6/8 meter for the listener in Ries.

The *Allegro* finale creates a mixed impression. The initial theme points back to Haydn and to the beginning of the finale of his Symphony No. 101, to name one example. It has a laconic beginning delineating a simple cadence and a character determined by duple eighth motion. There are other indications, however, that Ries wanted to lend the finale a weight departing from the traditional rousing finale type. The laconic character of the theme is punctuated by vehement tutti beats already in the twelfth measure, and they are followed in turn by two chromatic series of the whole orchestra. In what follows the music modulates in *fortissimo* from the dominant of the principal key to the dominant of the secondary complex (F major), with *sforzati* on weak metrical points intensifying the harmonic tension. The secondary complex itself works with the means of the "*serious style*" such as imitations and stretti. The design of the development section is completely without precedent and points far ahead into the future. The first half is formed by a cantilena of the woodwind instruments extending over forty measures and stamped by the first oboe. Something similar to this would not be encountered again until the first movement of Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. Ries concludes the movement after an abbreviated recapitulation (this too is new for him) with a stretta-like *Più Allegro* in the D minor principal key.

Symphony No. 6 in D major, op. 146

1. Larghetto con moto – Allegro
2. Menuetto. Moderato
3. Larghetto con moto
4. Finale. Allegro con brio

Nor is anything known about the circumstances of the composition of Ries's **Symphony No. 6**. The autograph is dated to 1822, and the work was performed in a concert of the Philharmonic Society on June 13, 1822. Whether or not this performance was the premiere, however, cannot be determined. A London correspondent of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* published in Leipzig who was evidently very favorably disposed to Ries wrote a detailed and very enthusiastic report about this performance, complete with examples from the score. From this report it is to be gathered that the symphony at this time did not yet contain "Turkish music" (piccolo, triangle, cymbals, and bass drum) in the finale; since the employment of these instruments had already become very rare, the correspondent would surely have mentioned them if they had been used. This conjecture is confirmed by a letter of Ries from June 1826 which he wrote after his return from Germany and his performance of the symphony at the Lower Rhine Music Festival in Düsseldorf: "I have composed entirely anew the whole of the adagio, which never really satisfied me, and set Turkish music, the effect of which is very extraordinary, in the finale."

Ries's statement that he had composed the slow movement "entirely anew" seems suspicious, however, because the beginning of the *Larghetto con moto* is printed as a score example in the abovementioned London report of 1822, and a comparison to the part edition printed in 1827 shows that at least the beginning remained unchanged.

In contrast to the fourth symphony, in the sixth symphony Ries pursues entirely new paths. He does so by making repeated reference to preclassical models (which are almost to be interpreted as a distancing from the Beethoven style) but without denying the instrumental and stylistic means of contemporary compositional practice, with the sixth symphony exhibiting the addition of a second pair of horns, this in contrast to the fourth symphony. Alter the slow introduction (anticipating the thematic substance of the first movement) the first movement presents an *allegro* of cheerful animation in 6/8 time drawing formally on features of older symphonic composition: the first and second subjects are identical, and the transition from the development section to the recapitulation is designed with the surprising change of meter in *fortissimo* that in the exposition had formed the transition to the sounding of the theme on the dominant. It is thus that an interlocking of the development section and recapitulation is brought about. As a consequence, the latter does without the repetition of the complete first part of the exposition; it has only the first ten measures from this section and then immediately proceeds to the second part. Nevertheless, the formal balance is again brought about by the resumption of the orchestral tutti stamping the first part of the exposition at the conclusion of the coda.

The *minuet* presents itself with such a festive emotional quality that already in the abovementioned London concert report it was certified that in "idea and expression" it recalled "perhaps a little the great Handel". The trio has a cheerful bucolic tone. And in the minuet-recapitulation counterpointed eighth runs in the string bass of solo instrumentation intone the festive melody in the woodwinds.

The refunctioning of the slow movement means that it is ranked as a sort of extended introduction to the finale in the scale of values. In general, it is also striking that Ries did not compose a major adagio in any of his symphonies; in this practice, however, he was following Beethoven in his middle period. Nevertheless, the movement fills out a complete sonata form (however, as was customary in slow movements of the time, without a development section). Its first subject is punctuated by rests and characteristically colored by the minor sixth of *e flat* unexpectedly entering in the F major context, and the second subject is of lyrical cantability.

What stands out the most, however, is the already mentioned employment of Turkish music in the finale, an exotic appeal which originally in the 1780s above all in Vienna had helped people to cope with the mixture of horror and fascination they were experiencing on the immediate borders of the Ottoman Empire. (In 1788 things actually come to military conflict.) Mozart's singspiel *The Abduction from the Seraglio* is the best known example of this trend. If was Haydn who introduced the instrumental effect into symphonic music in his so-called Military Symphony Hob I:100 of 1794. Some works by composers such as Andreas Romberg (1767–1821) and Friedrich Witt (1770-1836) emulated this example. In the 1820s, however, Turkish music had long since become obsolete, if we pass over the fact that Beethoven had returned to it in the finale of the Symphony No. 9, albeit with an entirely different intention and with an untypical use of it. It was precisely at the Lower Rhine Music Festival held in Aachen during the previous year, namely in 1825, that Ries had performed Beethoven's last symphony. What, then, could be more obvious than the idea that Ries, coping with the problems posed by his finale design, endeavored to enhance the effect of the movement through the employment of Turkish music? However, Ries also goes beyond the achievements of his previous symphonies in the form of this movement. The finale movement in sonata form concludes with a coda again accelerated to *Presto*, encompassing almost a third of the whole movement, and thus virtually representing the conclusion and crowning culmination of the entire work.

Despite all these reservations, the first performance of the revised version of the symphony was a great success for Ries. He himself reported to his brother Joseph in June 1826: "My symphony/:the

last in D major:/was of all the things which were presented the most excellently executed and applauded and after the last finale so unanimous that it must have seemed especially striking to some people." All music newspapers with a wide circulation showered hymns of praise on the work. The *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of Berlin spoke of "greatest beauty and perfect command of all the artistic means", and the Leipzig newspaper of the same name stated that it was a "work equally rich in melodies and harmonies", while the reviewer of *Caecilia* published in Mainz even stated that Ries had succeeded in "making clear the intrinsic significance of the symphony [as a genre]" and illustrated this claim with a poem by Goethe. It was thus only natural that Ries repeatedly included this work on the programs of the sporadic concerts that he presented in subsequent years.

In conclusion, however, we would like to give one reviewer of those times the opportunity to express himself in somewhat greater detail. He described the symphony as a whole and its component movements in a few words and clearly demonstrates what the then public expected from so-called absolute music: "Pleasant movements rich in melodies alternated with passages of the highest harmonic art; the ear is satisfied, and the soul finds occupation. No diffuseness, no dryness, no false effect! Happy and yet serious, the first Allegro moderato. Then immediately minuet and trio, the former somewhat pensive with jocular motifs, the latter the most innocent, roguish joy, entirely pastoral. Then an exquisite andante, full of grief and love, pervaded by gloomy clouds and vigorous soaring flights. I regard this as the highlight of the work. At the end, a bacchantic presto, which, in its robustness, nevertheless bears traces of the highest perfection and concludes a gala symphony in the most ambitious fashion."

Symphony [No. 8] in E flat major, WoO 30

1. Adagio con moto – Allegro vivace
2. Andante con moto
3. Scherzo. Vivace
4. Finale. Allegro

As is indicated in the autograph, Ferdinand Ries composed his **Symphony in E flat major WoO 30** in London in 1822, at about the same time as the Symphony No. 6 in D major op. 146. The fact that Ries did not include the former work in the numbered list of his symphonies is less an expression of a negative evaluation of about it on his part than a consequence of his habit of numbering his works in the order of their publication. Thus, for example, the second symphony in chronological order became the Symphony No. 5 op. 112. Since WoO 30 was not published (a fact that admittedly might also be interpreted to mean that the composer had reservations about it), this symphony was not counted with the others. Nothing is known about possible performances of if during Ries's London period (until the summer of 1824).

After his return to his native Rhineland, however, he availed himself of the opportunity to perform works of his own composition in his capacity as the director of the Lower Rhine Music Festival, a responsibility that he was assigned on various occasions. Thus, at Pentecost 1825 in Aachen the festival program included not only the first performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 after its Vienna premiere but also a symphony in E flat major by Ries with its composer as the conductor. It is unclear, however, whether the E flat major symphony was WoO 30 or the Symphony No. 3 op. 90, which is also in the key of E flat major. The work concerned probably was WoO 30, since op. 90 was in the press at precisely this time, and performances of it were planned for Leipzig and other cities. And Ries would have had little interest in performing a symphony already announced for other places at the music festival. Critics reacted positively to the work. While Karl Breidenstein, a professor in Bonn and the Rhineland correspondent of the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* published in Leipzig,

singled out the instrumentation for its "dazzling and highly effective" quality and defended the work against the charge of an all-too-great proximity to Joseph Haydn's musical idiom with a reference to the "Beethovian genius" prevailing in it, the reviewer of *Caecilia*, a Mainz publication, soared to the heights of poeticizing metaphors: "This introit is of majestic pomp; if reveals the whole mighty weight of the mass and through it deeply grips the listener and befriends him with it. It is the glorious rising of the daystar, of the magnificent sun, which illuminates the life of a heavenly bright, delightful May day with its high splendor. For truly, the symphony shows us bright, cheery life and activity; one finds oneself in the midst of it all: a festival day begins; mirth and good humor, joy and sheer delight prevail; the young gather together for jubilant games; full glasses tinkle among the old; gaiety appears everywhere and builds the throne for love. Song and dance conclude the celebration, and as the joy had begun, so the crowd goes off in merry spirits."

Even if it can only be regarded as probable that the work characterized in this manner was the Symphony WoO 30, it is certain that this symphony was performed on Easter Monday 1834, when Ries again was in Aachen for the preparation of the Lower Rhine Music Festival. According to his own testimony, he was asked to present a concert prior to the music festival: "*I was left no peace until I had decided to present a major concert in the theater on Easter Monday. The whole society is helping, the Pentecost Committee has assumed responsibility for the organization. The performance consists of one grand symphony in E flat major in the manuscript [...].*" Two years later Anton Schindler, who had been appointed director of the lower Rhine Music Festival in 1836, asked Ries for the score of a symphony in E flat major. Ries answered on April 11, 1836, "I am happy to make available the score of my symphony in E flat major to you, as that of any other. But I have written two in this key. Which one do you want, the engraved one or the unengraved one?" Schindler's answer is evidently no longer extant, and the letter accompanying Ries's mailing of the score once again does nor clearly indicate whether op. 90 or WoO 30 is meant: "*Here you receive the score of the symphony, on which I beg that you do not let the hand of criticism fall too heavily and wish that it give you some pleasure. The tempos are also marked with M. M., etc. I wish that I could listen to it in a little corner – a joy that is hardly ever offered to me here. I too wish that my symphony might have more impact on the public than the A major symphony by B. – but ten times more than it deserves it, even if you boo me down afterwards. But in both fervent wishes I recognize my true standpoint and remain patiently waiting.*" The resignation echoing in Ries's last sentence is understandable when one considers the fact that in March of the same year he had tried two times – in vain – to get a publisher to accept the still-unpublished symphony. Schindler's wish that his, Ries's, symphony might have "more impact" than Beethoven's seventh must have sounded like scorn to him.

The fact that WoO 30 must have been performed on various occasions is reflected in traces of use in the autograph in the form of numbers as well as letters serving as points of orientation. Like the formal aspect of the Symphony No. 6 op. 146 composed at about the same time, the thematic design of WoO 30 exhibits a certain proximity to pre-Beethovian models, and the abovementioned reference to Haydn in nineteenth-century reception can hardly be coincidental. For the first and only time in his symphonic oeuvre, Ries composed a complete and regular eight-measure period as the main theme of a first movement. Its characteristic feature, a sixth ascending stepwise in eighth motion contrary to the meter, is anticipated in the *piano* section of the slow introduction. A second theme in the minor variant of the dominant (B flat minor), however, provides for an elegiac darkening foreign to the classical model (but typical of Ries's personal style), and then a closing-group theme in the woodwinds, again of regular periodic formation, finally establishes the dominant key. The first part of the development section submits the head motif of the main theme to contrapuntal procedures – stretti in the original form and inversion outdo one another – while its second part proceeds in thematically unspecific, rhythmically accelerating modulatory steps to a dominant pedal point crescendoing and

descrescendoing dynamically and preparing for the return of the main theme – unscathed and in the principal key. After a slightly abbreviated recapitulation a coda encompassing seventy measures and culminating in a dazzling *più stretto* concludes the movement.

The following *Andante con moto* (B flat major, 2/4 time) has an initial theme automatically bringing to mind the variation theme from the slow movement of Haydn's *Drumroll Symphony* (E flat major, Hob I:103) with its repeated emphasis on the augmented fourth. The andante also combines elements of the sonata-form movement and the variation form in unusual fashion: instead of a second subject a variation of the initial theme is heard in the mediant key of D major, which, in turn, is followed by another, very short *forte* variation in G minor surprising for its sudden *forte* entry. After a passage elaborating select fragments of the theme in developmental fashion, the initial theme is resumed in keeping with its harmonic structure in a concluding recapitulation, while its thematic contour gradually breaks down into accompaniment figures.

The beginning of the third movement (*Scherzo. Vivace*) combines an antecedent phrase breaking in with Beethovian humor and suddenly modulating from E flat to D with a consequent phrase seeming to have been derived from nineteenth-century inn music with its back-and-forth between tonic and dominant. Amid tireless confrontation between major and minor and manifold instrumental echo effects, the *trio* seems to suggest a moment of peace before the renewed outburst of the scherzo main part.

In the finale Ries offers, as often in his symphonic music, a peculiar contamination of a sonata-form movement with elements of the rondo form. In its overall structure the movement follows the scheme of the sonata-form movement with the repetition of the first part of the movement, a rudimentary second subject in the dominant, repeated in the tonic in the second half of the movement, and an effective fugato as the development section. Nevertheless, the *scherzando* character of the first subject as well as the many episodic sections, among them a surprising lyrical passage in E major where a second subject would be expected in the sonata scheme, corresponds more to the conventions of a rondo. The beginning of the coda briefly touches on the E major episode eliminated in the recapitulation, before a stretta, largely built on a two-measure ostinato and accelerated to *Allegro assai*, brings the work to its highly effective conclusion.

Symphony No. 7 in A minor, op. 181

1. Allegro con spirito
2. Larghetto con moto
3. Scherzo. Allegro non troppo
4. Introduzione. Largo – Finale. Allegro vivace

Ferdinand Ries composed his seventh and last symphony in the spring and summer of 1835, twelve years after his composition of the Symphony No. 6 and the (unnumbered) Symphony WoO 30. The occasion was evidently a compositional commission, as Ries reported to his brother Joseph, a London resident, on March 9, 1835, "[...] I now want to write a symphony ordered for Vienna". After years without success Ries seems to have set certain hopes on the symphony that would become his **Symphony No. 7 in A minor**. On April 20 his brother learned, "I have great expectations about the symphony on which I am working". At the beginning of July Ries communicated to his brother that he had begun the composition of the finale, not without once again referring to the fact that a commission was involved, "From Vienna a society of music-lovers has ordered a symphony from me; I am in the last allegro; it will not be bad, that I can tell you".

Ries must have worked at a brisk pace because on July 24 he noted on a copy of the score the transfer of the rights of ownership to the Vienna publisher Trentsensky & Vieweg. On August 31 the score was again sold to the S. A. Steiner publishing owned by Tobias Haslinger. It was precisely in 1835 that Haslinger had a large hand in the organization of a symphonic competition, and from the publicity connected with it he hoped to gain advantages for the sales potential of his publishing products. Composers who participated in the competition were asked to submit their symphonies anonymously while supplying them with a motto serving as a means of identification. The official text announcing the competition was published in various German-language music journals and requested that the symphonies "be sent postmarked to the Imperial and Royal Court and Privileged Art and Music Dealership of Mr. Tobias Haslinger in Vienna". The winner could look forward to a prize of fifty ducats and performances of the prizewinning work in the esteemed Viennese Concerts spirituals. Haslinger seems to have acquired Ries's symphony in order to submit it as a competition entry and (in case it received a prize) to be able to bring a prizewinning work out on the market. The copy of the symphony sent to Vienna received a new title page without the composer's name but with the motto, "I have done my part". The publication of the keys and mottoes of the fifty-seven submissions in December 1835 demonstrates that Ries's symphony was indeed submitted. No. 15 on this list is a symphony in A minor with the motto "I have done my part". Ries himself does not seem to have been asked for his permission for its submission and only later seems to have been informed of his involuntary participation in the competition. On June 16, 1836, he wrote to his brother Joseph, "A new symphony also will come out soon. You will recall that a society of music-lovers in Vienna ordered a symphony from me last summer. I now learn to my great astonishment that Haslinger, who has always made such poor offers to me, so that I never could or wanted to offer him a manuscript, bought this symphony for himself from these music-lovers and submitted it to a prize competition for symphonies. Talk about crazy occurrences!"

Hopes for the publication of the symphony were in vain. Already in January 1836 the jury had announced the prizewinner, Franz Lachner, and named some other compositions meriting honorable mention, but Ries's symphony was not among them. To Ries's credit, it should be mentioned that contemporary observers already doubted that a jury consisting solely of Viennese composers based its judgment exclusively on the basis of musical criteria. The winner Lachner was also a Viennese composer. At any rate, Haslinger must have no longer had any interest in publishing Ries's symphony. And so Ferdinand Ries's last symphony remained unpublished; nor is its performance attested. The present recording thus represents its premiere, almost 170 years after its composition. For his part, Ries later seems to have distanced himself from his initial optimism about the symphony. During one of his last concert tours he had the opportunity to have one of his symphonies performed by the Paris Conservatory Orchestra, an orchestra famous for its precision and performance culture, and decided in favor of his fourth symphony.

As has already been stated, Ferdinand Ries's last symphony was composed more than a decade after the two symphonies immediately preceding it, the Symphonies No. 6 and WoO 30. Its harmony is characterized by much greater abruptness and boldness, and its instrumentation involves much greater contrasts than in his earlier works. The beginning of the first movement already reveals Ries's intention to emancipate himself from the symphonic conventions to which he more or less remained true until that time. There is no slow introduction (as in Symphonies Nos. 1, 3, 4, 6 and WoO 30) and no head theme in the proper sense (as in Symphonies Nos. 2 and 5) but merely a *fortissimo* with a doubled upbeat in the A minor chord erupting in the winds, with its components being emphasized in the manner of afterbeats in the string unison. The process is then repeated on the subdominant. Ries composed a symphonic-orchestral opening with an elemental magnificence hardly encountering its equal in the symphonic literature of those times. At the same time, the doubled upbeat functions as a

structural element combining all the essential thematic-motivic formations of the movement: as a continuous element integrated into the course of a melody line as in the tuttis of the first part of the exposition and of the second part of the exposition (identical to the first part and in the tonic parallel of C major), as a motion impulse in the string unisons of the transition, isolated in compositional technique as erratic forms (with the formal logic of this unit of course in this way being questionable), as a cadencing closing formula in the forward-driving melodic strain of the closing group. The development section consists for the most part of successive or simultaneous combinations of fragments of motifs and themes obtained in such a manner. Finally, the coda is once again dominated entirely by the original formation, the wind chord with the echoing in the string unison.

The elimination of the trombones and timpani in the slow movement (*Larghetto con moto*, D major, 3/4 time) means that it is reduced in instrumentation. In this movement too Ries set out on new paths that prior to the seventh symphony at the most had been traced in the *Andantino* of the fourth symphony. Here a sonata-form movement is involved. Its first theme begins imitatively and is harmonically iridescent, and in its second part it is presented amid the constant alternation of the wind and string sections. The cantabile transitional motif in the cello is the first tonally and periodically firmly constructed figure, even if it is only episodic. The second theme unravels into figurative embellishments immediately after its entry. The passage of the greatest tonal stability is found, paradoxically so, in the development section when the cantabile transitional motif in A flat major, a key which is just about as far as one can get from the main key, amid the alternation of the violin and solo woodwinds. The recapitulation is abbreviated by the elimination of this motif; instead, it is heard in the coda, and its three-tone upbeat is the essential motivic characteristic of the closing unit of the unit.

The farm and thematic design in the *scherzo* (*Allegro non troppo*, A minor, 6/8 time) are just as innovative and progressive. The first theme develops stepwise over an almost noisy slide unison in the strings while being punctuated by a hopping, intermittent *scherzando* part in 2/4 time alternating between the woodwinds and strings. After the theme has fully developed its stamping character, it yields to the first trio, in A major, which contains a hymnic melody in the woodwinds and horn and again shifts ta 2/4 time. The resumption of the scherzo main part is followed by a second trio alternating between F major and D minor as well as between 2/4 and 6/8 time. The scherzo main theme is present latently in the triple-time minor section of the trio. A last repetition of the whole scherzo main part, greatly modified, rounds off the movement.

As far as structural matters are concerned, Ries employs a mixture of rondo and sonata form in the finale (as in the last movement of WoO 30) – but how the expressive spectrum of this last symphonic finale movement composed by Ries has been expanded over against earlier finale movements! The introduction evanescing from heavy pathos to total fade-out demonstrates on entirely different opening character than the *perpetuum mobile* themes of the finale rondos in Ries's previous symphonies. There is a return to the introduction at the formal divisions of the movement, between the exposition and development section as well as between the recapitulation and coda, and only when it is heard for the last time does it expand to a long-resonating melody line in the clarinet. The first theme takes up the heavy stamping of the scherzo main part and intensifies it to a swift march. Vehement modulation occurs in the transition and in the exposition of the second theme, and the goal keys are reached only in the concluding cadences, while the beginning of the development section, entering in C major, soon proves to be a stable rondo refrain in the main key of A minor. The coda following the third, now more extended presentation of the *Tempo primo* begins analogously to the development section but transposed by a fifth to F major, in the manner of a recapitulation, before the stamping swift march, ultimately intensified to *più mosso*, brings the work to its magnificent conclusion.

The Numbering of the Symphonies

Ries wrote a total al eight symphonies and numbered them more or less according to the order of their publication. The numbering does not correspond to the chronological order of their composition. Two symphonies remained unpublished. For the sake of greater clarity, the symphonies have been listed here in the order of their composition together with the numbers assigned to them by Ries:

Symphony No. 1 in D major op. 23:
composed in 1809, published in 1811

Symphony No. 5 in D minor op. 112:
composed in 1813, published in 1823

Symphony No. 2 in C minor op. 80:
composed in 1814, published in 1818

Symphony No. 3 in E flat major op. 90:
composed in 1815, published in 1825

Symphony No. 4 in F major op. 110:
composed in 1818, published in 1823

Symphony in E flat major, work without opus number 30: composed in 1822

Symphony No. 6 in D major op. 146:
composed in 1822, revised in 1826, published in 1827

Symphony No. 7 in A minor op. 181:
composed in 1835

Bert Hagels
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