

# Beethoven Symphony 6

## 1st Movement

Tempo. Beethoven's tempo marking from 1817 (9 years after the first performance) is of *minim* = 66. Almost all performances are slower than this but I would suggest that the key point is that is felt in 2 rather than 4.

### 1. 1st Movement: Bars 1-4

Like the 5th symphony the 6th has a pause before it's had a chance to get started! But what a different effect there is here! Some small rit is implied by the pause, but just a small one. The pedal note (in the violas and cellos) announces the many drone-like pedals that occur in this piece.

**Allegro ma non troppo**



### 2. 1st Movement: Bars 54-6

Wedges in Beethoven's music tend to be played as short, separated notes, often with a bouncy feel. I would suggest that they often are simply there to show that there is not a slur, as in the following passage. They certainly need some separation and shortness, but I can do without the 'bounce'!



### 3. 1st Movement: Bars 67-72

What the ear is often drawn to here is the violin arpeggiation. But this is just figuration around the actual melody which is in the cellos. Some balancing needs doing here to bring this out.



### 4. 1st Movement: Bars 378-381

What do the dynamics mean here? Is the forte marking on the final chord just to remind the player of the dynamic? Surely not! It is an example of Beethoven using the forte marking to mean an accented note. It is the same a few bars later, when the same passage is repeated but with *ff* as the general dynamic but still with an *f* on the final note. The final note is not softer than the *ff* but louder!



### 5. 2nd Movement

Here is a place where Beethoven's tempo works so well. Certainly the tempo of dotted crotchet = 50 can feel fast to the inner string parts, but it makes good sense of the somewhat fragmented melody. In fact it also makes the long slurs required in the inner string parts (whole bars of semiquavers) much more manageable. Additionally it should be noted that careful balancing needs to be done here in order for the 2 solo muted cellos balance the viola and 2nd violin sections. Finally, the lower strings need to phrase their parts, giving lightly more volume at the beginning of each slur and the tiniest of gaps before the following slur - but this must not be at the expense of the overall line which must keep flowing on (we're listening to a brook flow past after all!).



### 6. 2nd Movement: Bar 12

The tune in the clarinet here has slurs with dots. The clear 18th century meaning of this was akin to portato - i.e. longish, slightly separated notes - and there's no reason to suggest this has changed by 1808.



### 7. 2nd Movement: Bars 31-32

Another example of wedge marks used to clarify where the slurring stops. Only one group of semiquavers receives the wedges - the point has been made.



### **8. 3rd Movement: Bars 1-4**

I seem to have got wedges on the brain (or maybe it's Beethoven's fault ...) but here again there is no need for these notes to be 'bouncy'. Anyhow making it really 'bouncy' tends to make extra sound (especially in the strings) and so it ends up *mp* rather than *pp*.



### **9. 3rd Movement: Bars 165-9**

Certainly every 4 bars in this section need a breath. In the tune quite probably every two, and in the woodwind really every bar so as to really hear the sforzandi. An alternative would be to treat it in a more hurdy-gurdy manner, although I don't think this produces the dance-like feeling which I suspect is demanded by a 'Happy Gathering of Country Folk' (the movement's title).



### **4th Movement**

It is amazing to note that this is the only movement where Beethoven employs the timpanist - but to what effect! The trombones come in for the first time as well, to give the very loudest moment in the storm. In a sense this movement could be seen more as a bridge than a movement in its own right - certainly there is no break before or after it.

### **10. 4th Movement: Bars 21-2**

At the speed Beethoven suggests it is nigh-on impossible for the cellos and basses to play accurately what is written. This is a wonderful example of writing for effect, and long before most composers tried anything so radical.



### **11. 4th Movement: Bars 154-5**

Nothing before the final 2 bars of the movement needs to slow, but a slight pulling back here in the flute just prepares the way for sunshine of the final movement.



**5th Movement**

Notice that Beethoven marks this movement at 60, which is not that fast. [And, by the way, this shows that Beethoven's metronome can't have been going slow all the time!]

12. 5th Movement: Bars 14-6

The crescendo at the end of the first statement of the theme needs to be delayed. It is just the beginning of a 9 bar crescendo and should be thought of as implying pianissimo. And it is also a resolution from the previous bar, and should therefore be fractionally weaker.



12. 5th Movement: Bars 34-5

Here the tenuto mark counters the phrasing of the slur which would suggest a dying away on the F. The implication is to repeat the tenuto mark on the following two beats.

