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New Classical Tracks: Pittsburgh Symphony releases Beethoven live album

[Classical Music Features Julie Amacher](#) · St. Paul, Minn. · Jan 20, 2016

Beethoven: Symphonies Nos. 5 & 7 / Honeck, Pittsburgh Symphony Reference Recordings

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Beethoven: Symphony No. 5 & 7 - Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (Reference Recordings)

"My parents used to listen to the Met Opera broadcasts on Saturday afternoons," recalls William Caballero. "My mom loved the French horn and she would pretend to buzz her lips, and I think at the young age of four or five, I told her, 'Don't worry; I'll do it for you'."

And the rest, as they say, is history for Caballero, who has sat in the principal horn chair of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra for the past 26 years. Bill is also a committed teacher, spending 12 hours every Monday with about 10 horn students at Carnegie Mellon University. You might be wondering why he's so dedicated to this Orchestra? I asked Bill what's so special about the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. "In one word: energy," he says. "There's a vibrancy. I think the other key, as well — there are several of us who have been working together for a long, long time, 20, 25 years. We're getting into the 30-year range now. And these people are still playing great. A lot of us worked with Lorin Maazel and Mariss Jansons and here we are with Manfred Honeck and that's quite a legacy, a line of conductors that we've worked with."

On the latest recording, Manfred Honeck leads the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in two of Beethoven's most popular symphonies, No. 5 and No. 7. Bill Caballero says what makes this recording remarkable is that it's live. "So in one sense that's a plus," he says. "You're getting a vibrant performance here. But what comes across in the recordings, which is really remarkable ... yes, the energy of the orchestra. But you hear this precision, and you hear this shape that I sometimes don't really experience in the back of the orchestra. I can't tell what Manfred is hearing. I'm doing what he's asking me to do in the sense of dynamics and articulation and shape. But when you listen to the recording, it is remarkable, the shape, the feel, the excitement."

"And the inner details, I think that's the uniqueness of Manfred, just about with everything we play," Bill continues. "There are traditional spots where things get covered up by brass or

woodwinds and you don't hear the detail. And Manfred makes those adjustments that you hear these inner moving lines that you just don't hear all the time."

As you listen, you may notice the unusual accents in the first movement of the Fifth Symphony, while the buoyancy of the second movement allows the woodwinds to shine. "The tempi is always a discussion with any Beethoven symphony and his tempi are definitely on the brisk side," Bill says of Honeck's approach. "The first movement is extremely fast and the second movement as well. Buoyancy is a very good way of wording it. I like that. You don't want it to get bogged down. Tempi with Maazel — he would react to humidity. He would tell me this ... if it was very humid, he would tell me he'd conduct it slower because sound travels slower in humidity! And in the winter he'd conduct pieces faster ... but Manfred, I don't think he cares about humidity. We're going to do it the way he wants to do it."

There are dozens of recordings of these two Beethoven symphonies, so I asked Bill how the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra puts its stamp on the familiar Symphony No. 7. "Manfred's very careful about balance," Bill explains. "He concentrates on the precision of notes. Oddly enough, Manfred likes to compress rhythms. He likes to make things very tight, very clear. So we have to concentrate extremely hard on the beginnings of our notes."

Being in the horn section has some unique advantages, according to Bill Caballero. There are times when you're not playing at all, like in the second movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 7, where you can just sit and let the sound of the orchestra wash over you. And then, there are moments when you have to unleash the hounds, like in the final movement. "The build-up before the ending where the basses are doing this two-note grind, just pushing," Bill says, "and then you hear the orchestra climbing, the violins passing things back and forth and the orchestra's getting louder and louder and eventually the orchestra comes full weight with the timpani and then the horns have their call. There's nothing that can beat that kind of energy. I just can't imagine what that was like when it was premiered in Beethoven's time ... it must have just blown people over."

The time-honored energy, and commitment of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra continues with Manfred Honeck at the helm in this vibrant, live recording of the Symphony No. 5 and 7 by Beethoven.

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This week on New Classical Tracks, you can enter for a chance to win a copy of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra's recordings of Beethoven's Symphony Nos. 5 and 7 on CD. Winners will be drawn at random. Be sure to enter by midnight CST on Tuesday, Jan. 26, 2015.