Ludwig van Beethoven – Symphony No. 4 in B-flat major, Op. 60

Composed in 1806, Beethoven's *Fourth Symphony* often stands in the shadow of the monumental Third (*Eroica*) and the stormy Fifth. Yet this symphony, praised by Robert Schumann as a "slender Greek maiden between two Norse giants," reveals another side of Beethoven: a work full of grace, wit, and classical clarity, but still marked by his unmistakable originality.

The symphony begins in mystery. A hushed, slow introduction (*Adagio*) gropes through shifting harmonies, as though searching for the key of the piece. Suddenly, a bright and energetic *Allegro vivace* bursts forth, brimming with youthful exuberance.

The second movement (*Adagio*) is serene and lyrical, with long-breathed melodies and delicate accompaniments that evoke gentle song. Here Beethoven demonstrates his gift for creating vast beauty from simple means.

The third movement, labeled *Allegro vivace* rather than the traditional minuet, is playful and robust—a scherzo in all but name. Its quicksilver rhythms and surprise accents reflect Beethoven's mischievous humor.

The finale (*Allegro ma non troppo*) is a whirlwind of joyful energy, driven by relentless rhythmic propulsion. It closes the symphony not with majesty but with infectious high spirits, leaving listeners exhilarated.

Though less frequently performed than its famous neighbors, Beethoven's *Fourth Symphony* offers pure delight, balancing classical grace with flashes of Beethoven's genius that point toward the symphonic revolutions to come.