

Programme Notes.



OVERTURE,

Beethoven.

"Leonore," No. 3, in C.

Beethoven's single opera—*Fidelio, or Wedded Love*—was produced at Vienna on the 20th of November, 1805, and was performed three times. The opera was then withdrawn till the 29th of the following March. In the interval which elapsed between these dates, Beethoven had made large alterations in the work—had reduced it from three acts to two, and had rewritten the overture. The overture played on the 20th of November was that known as "Leonore" No. 2. The reason usually assigned for his rewriting it in the form which we are now to hear—viz.: that the wind instrument parts were too difficult—can hardly be respected, since Beethoven was little in the habit of consulting the convenience either of singers or players, and the wind instrument parts in the revised overture are, at least, as difficult as they were in the old one, if not more so. The reason, no doubt, was that the work did not please him; that he found, on hearing it, that it did not express his ideas adequately. But whatever may have been Beethoven's reason for altering his overture, he has not confined himself to mere modifications, but has recast the whole work, and while preserving its original shape and principal subjects, has alternately compressed and developed his former labor, added fresh themes, hastened, strengthened, and, in fact, made a new overture of it—a far larger, grander and maturer work than before. It is impossible, and it would be out of place in a mere programme for the concert-room, to enter at length into these differences.

Taken as pure music—as a piece of concise construction and strict adherence to musical "form"—the "Leonore No. 3" may not perhaps be so remarkable as the same great master's overture to "Coriolan," that miracle of stern heroic grandeur and compression, though not wanting in softer and more graceful lines. But is there not an interest higher even than musical symmetry?—the interest awakened by variety and complexity, and by wild passion and longing and suspense and rapture, such as that of which this great composition is so full from beginning to end—which animates every note from the