

BEETHOVEN'S 9th

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2009 – 7:00 PM
FIRST FREE METHODIST CHURCH

ORCHESTRA SEATTLE
SEATTLE CHAMBER SINGERS
George Shangrow, conductor

Eleanor Stallcop-Horrox, soprano
Melissa Plagemann, mezzo-soprano
Stephen Wall, tenor
Charles Robert Stephens, bass

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)
Cantata BWV No. 78 "Jesu, der du meine Seele"

- I. Chorus
- II. Duet – Soprano and Alto
- III. Recitative – Tenor
- IV. Aria – Tenor
- V. Recitative – Bass
- VI. Aria – Bass
- VII. Chorale

– Intermission –

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)
Symphony No. 9 in d minor, Op. 125 (Choral)

- I. *Allegro non troppo, un poco maestoso*
- II. *Molto vivace*
- III. *Adagio molto e cantabile*
- IV. *Presto – Allegro assai – Presto – Rezitativo – Allegro assai vivace alla Marcia – Allegro ma non tanto*

Please disconnect signal watches, pagers and cellular telephones. Thank you.
Use of cameras and recording equipment is not permitted in the concert hall.

ORCHESTRA SEATTLE

Violin

Cecilia Archuleta*
Susan Carpenter
Lauren Daugherty
Dean Drescher
Stephen Hegg
Sue Herring
Jason Hershey
Manchung Ho
Emmy Hoech
Maria Hunt
Fritz Klein
Avron Maletzky
Gregor Nitsche
Stephen Provine**
Theo Schaad
Andrew Schirmer
Janet Showalter
Kenna Smith-Shangrow
Sam Williams

Viola

Deborah Daoust
Katherine McWilliams*
Hakån Olsson
Lorraine Perrin
Robert Shangrow
Karoline Vass
Ella Wallace

Cello

David Boyle
Kaia Chessen
Peter Ellis
Christy Johnson
Erica Klein
Katie Sauter Messick
Annie Roberts
Valerie Ross
Matthew Wyant*
Karen Thompson

Bass

Jo Hansen*
Ericka Kendall
Kevin McCarthy
Steven Messick

Flute

Jenna Calixto
Shari Müller-Ho*

Piccolo

Melissa Underhill

Oboe

David Barnes*
Amy Duerr-Day

Clarinet

Alan Lawrence*
Stephen Noffsinger

Bassoon

Jeff Eldridge
Judith Lawrence*

Contra-Bassoon

Gary Claunch

Horn

Barney Blough
Don Crevie (4th)
Laurie Heidt
Jim Henderson*

Trumpet

Dan Harrington
Janet Young*

Trombone

Paul Bogataj
Moc Escobedo*
David Holmes

Timpani

Daniel Oie

Percussion

Virginia Bear
Eric Daane
Robert Kechley

Organ

Robert Kechley
** *concertmaster*
* *principal*

SEATTLE CHAMBER SINGERS

Soprano

Barbara Anderson
Hilary Anderson
Sue Cobb
Cinda Freece
Alexandra Heron
Kiki Hood
Jill Kraakmo
Peggy Kurtz
Jana Music
Kia Sams
Nancy Shasteen
Melissa Thirloway
Liesel Van Cleeff
Patricia Vetterlein

Alto

Sharon Agnew
Julia Akoury Thiel
Jane Blackwell
Deanna Fryhle
Pamela Ivezic
Courtney Juhl
Ellen Kaisse
Theodora Letz
Lila Woodruff May
Laurie Medill
Annie Thompson
Kristin Zimmermann

Tenor

Ronald Carson
Ralph Cobb
Alvin Kroon
Jon Lange
Timothy Lunde
Thomas Nesbitt
Vic Royer
Jerry Sams

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Stephen Brady
Andrew Danilchik
Douglas Durasoff
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Dennis Moore
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TEXTS

Bach – Cantata No. 78

BWV 78 - "Jesu, der du meine Seele"

Cantata for the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

1. Chor

Jesu, der du meine Seele
Hast durch deinen bitterm Tod
Aus des Teufels finstern Höhle
Und der schweren Seelennot
Kräftiglich herausgerissen
Und mich solches lassen wissen
Durch dein angenehmes Wort,
Sei doch itzt, o Gott, mein Hort!
("Jesu, der du meine Seele," verse 1)

2. Arie (Duett) S A

Wir eilen mit schwachen, doch emsigen Schritten,
O Jesu, o Meister, zu helfen zu dir.
Du suchest die Kranken und Irrenden treulich.
Ach höre, wie wir
Die Stimmen erheben, um Hülfe zu bitten!
Es sei uns dein gnädiges Antlitz erfreulich!

3. Rezitativ T

Ach! ich bin ein Kind der Sünden,
Ach! ich irre weit und breit.
Der Sünden Aussatz, so an mir zu finden,
Verläßt mich nicht in dieser Sterblichkeit.
Mein Wille trachtet nur nach Bösen.
Der Geist zwar spricht: ach! wer wird mich erlösen?
Aber Fleisch und Blut zu zwingen
Und das Gute zu vollbringen,
Ist über alle meine Kraft.
Will ich den Schaden nicht verhehlen,
So kann ich nicht, wie oft ich fehle, zählen.
Drum nehm ich nun der Sünden Schmerz und Pein
Und meiner Sorgen Bürde,
So mir sonst unerträglich würde,
Ich liefre sie dir, Jesu, seufzend ein.
Rechne nicht die Missetat,
Die dich, Herr, erzürnet hat!
("Jesu, der du meine Seele," verses 3,4,5)

4. Arie T

Das Blut, so meine Schuld durchstreicht,
Macht mir das Herze wieder leicht
Und spricht mich frei.
Ruft mich der Höllen Heer zum Streite,
So stehet Jesus mir zur Seite,
Daß ich beherzt und sieghaft sei.

5. Rezitativ B

Die Wunden, Nägel, Kron und Grab,
Die Schläge, so man dort dem Heiland gab,
Sind ihm nunmehr Siegeszeichen
Und können mir verneute Kräfte reichen.

1. Chorus

Jesus, You, who my soul,
though Your bitter death,
out of the devil's dark pit
and the heavy anguish of the soul
have powerfully rescued,
and have let all this be known to me
though your delightful Word,
be now, o God, my treasure!

2. Aria (Duet) S A

We hasten with weak, yet eager steps,
O Jesus, o Master, to You for help.
You faithfully seek the ill and erring.
Ah, hear, how we
lift up our voices to beg for help!
Let Your gracious countenance be joyful to us!

3. Recitative T

Alas! I am a child of sin,
Alas! I wander far and wide.
The leprosy of sin, which can be found in me,
will never leave me in this mortal state.
My will bends only towards evil.
Indeed the spirit says: alas! who will rescue me?
But to compel flesh and blood
to complete good actions,
is greater than all my strength.
If I were not to conceal my wickedness,
then I could not count how often I fail.
Therefore I take now the pain and hurt of sin
and the burden of my troubles,
which otherwise were unbearable to me,
and commend them sobbingly to You, Jesus.
Do not reckon the transgressions
that have angered You, Lord!

4. Aria T

The blood that cancels my guilt
makes my heart light again
and pronounces me free.
If the host of hell calls me to battle,
then Jesus stands by my side,
so that I am encouraged and triumphant.

5. Recitative B

The wounds, nails, crown and grave,
the blows given there to the Savior,
are from now on His signs of triumph
and can provide me with renewed strength.

Wenn ein erschreckliches Gericht
Den Fluch vor die Verdammten spricht,
So kehrt du ihn in Segen.
Mich kann kein Schmerz und keine Pein bewegen,
Weil sie mein Heiland kennt;
Und da dein Herz vor mich in Liebe brennt,
So lege ich hinwieder
Das meine vor dich nieder.
Dies mein Herz, mit Leid vermengt,
So dein teures Blut besprenget,
So am Kreuz vergossen ist,
Geb ich dir, Herr Jesu Christ.
("Jesu, der du meine Seele," verse 10)

6. Arie B

Nun du wirst mein Gewissen stillen,
So wider mich um Rache schreit,
Ja, deine Treue wird's erfüllen,
Weil mir dein Wort die Hoffnung beut.
Wenn Christen an dich glauben,
Wird sie kein Feind in Ewigkeit
Aus deinen Händen rauben.

7. Choral

Herr, ich glaube, hilf mir Schwachen,
Laß mich ja verzagen nicht;
Du, du kannst mich stärker machen,
Wenn mich Sünd und Tod anficht.
Deiner Güte will ich trauen,
Bis ich fröhlich werde schauen
Dich, Herr Jesu, nach dem Streit
In der süßen Ewigkeit.
("Jesu, der du meine Seele," verse 12)

"Jesu, der du meine Seele," Johann Rist 1641 (verses 1,3-5,10,12 - mov'ts. 1,3,5,7; source for the other movements)

Beethoven – Ode to Joy – Ode an die Freude

O Freunde, nicht diese Töne! Sondern laß uns
angenehmere anstimmen und freudenvollere!

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elysium,
Wir betreten feuertrunken,
Himmlische, dein Heiligtum.
Deine Zauber binden wieder,
Was die Mode streng geteilt;
Alle Menschen werden Brüder,
Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.
Wem der große Wurf gelungen,
Eines Freundes Freund zu sein,
Wer ein holdes Weib errungen,
Mische seinen Jubel ein!
Ja – wer auch nur eine Seele
Sein nennt auf dem Erdenrund!
Und wer's nie gekonnt, der stehle
Weinend sich aus diesem Bund!

If a terrifying judgment
speaks a curse upon the damned,
You will turn it into blessing.
No pain or hurt will move me,
since my Savior knows them;
and since Your heart burns for me in love,
then I again lay
mine down before You.
This my heart, crowded with sorrows,
thus sprinkled with Your precious blood
which was poured out on the Cross,
I give to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

6. Aria B

Now You will still my conscience,
which clamors for vengeance against me,
Yes, Your love will fulfill it,
since Your word builds up hope in me.
If Christians believe in You,
no enemy will ever
steal them out of Your hands.

7. Chorale

Lord, I believe, help my weakness,
Let me never despair;
You, You can make me stronger,
when sin and death assail me.
I will trust in Your goodness,
until I joyfully see
You, Lord Jesus, after the battle
in sweet eternity.

O friends! Not these sounds! But let us strike up
more pleasant sounds and more joyful!

Joy, o wondrous spark divine,
Daughter of Elysium,
Drunk with fire now we enter
Heavenly one, your holy shrine.
Your magic powers join again
What fashion strictly did divide;
Brotherhood unites all people
Where your gentle wings spread wide.
The man who's been so fortunate
To become the friend of a friend
The man who has won a fair woman –
To the rejoicing let him add his voice!
The man who calls but a single soul
Somewhere in the world his own!
And he who never managed this –
Let him steal forth weeping from our throng!

Freude trinke alle Wesen
An den Brüsten der Natur,
Alle guten, alle Bösen
Folgen ihrer Rosenspur.
Küssen gab sie uns und Reben,
Einen Freund, geprüft im Tod,
Wollust ward dem Wurm gegeben,
Und der Cherub steht vor Gott.

Froh, wie seine Sonnen fliegen
Durch des Himmels prächt'gen Plan,
Laufet, Brüder, eure Bahn,
Freudig wie ein Held zum Siegen.

Seid umschlungen, Millionen!
Diesen Kuß der ganzen Welt!
Brüder – überm Sternenzelt
Muß ein lieber Vater wohnen.

Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen?
Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt?
Such ihn überm Sternenzelt,
Über Sternen muß er wohnen.

Schiller

Translation: Clive Williams

SOLOIST BIOGRAPHIES

Eleanor Stallcop-Horrox is a familiar face to Northwest audiences. Originally a Seattle native, she returned to this area after studies in Ellensburg, Philadelphia, and Colorado Springs. A member of the Seattle Opera Regular Chorus since 1997, she has also appeared in principal roles with Bellevue Opera, Willamette Concert Opera, Bel Canto Northwest and Kitsap Opera & Bremerton Symphony and, this past October, as the Fifth Maid in Elektra with Seattle Opera, which garnered favorable mention for her in the Metropolitan Opera News. She maintains an active career as a soloist and has appeared with Orchestra Seattle, Choir of the Sound, Lake Union Civic Symphony and Cascadian Chorale.

She was the 1989 Winner of the Bel Canto Foundation competition and sang at their Buon Viaggio Gala in Chicago. She has also been heard in recital at the Teatro Rozzi in Siena, Italy where she coached with Maestro Walter Baracchi of La Scala. Here at home, she was a student of the late Ellen Faull.

Upcoming performances include a performance of Richard Strauss's *Vier Letzte Lieder* with Orchestra Seattle during the 2009-10 season.

Melissa Plagemann has been praised by audiences and the press for her "clear, burnished voice" (Tacoma News Tribune) and "attractively expressive mezzo" (Crosscut Seattle). She performs frequently

Joy is drunk by every creature
From Nature's fair and charming breast,
Every being, good or evil
Follows in her rosy steps.
Kisses she gave to us, and vines,
And one good friend, tried in death;
The serpent she endowed with base desire,
And the cherub stands before God.

Gladly as his suns do fly
Through the heaven's splendid plan,
Run now, brothers, your own course,
Joyful like a conquering hero.

Embrace each other now, you millions!
This kiss is for the whole wide world!
Brothers – above starry firmament
A beloved father must surely dwell.

Do you come crashing down, you millions?
Do you sense the Creator's presence, World?
Seek him above the starry firmament,
Far above the stars he surely dwells.

with the finest musical organizations throughout the Pacific Northwest, and is rapidly becoming known for the passion and musical intelligence she brings to performances on opera and concert stages alike. Upcoming performances include Handel's Messiah with the Tacoma and Auburn Symphonies, Saint-Saëns' Christmas Oratorio with Orchestra Seattle, The Nutcracker and West Side Story Suite with Pacific Northwest Ballet, Rosina with the newly formed Vashon Opera, and performances with the Second City Chamber Series, the Affinity Chamber Players, and at the American Harp Association national conference. She is on the faculty at Pacific Lutheran University.

Tenor **Stephen Wall** has appeared frequently with Orchestra Seattle and the Seattle Chamber Singers. He has been featured in leading and supporting roles with Seattle Opera for the past 25 years. He also has appeared with the Portland Opera, Utah Festival Opera, and Tacoma Opera. He has soloed with the symphonies of Seattle, Vancouver, Spokane, Everett, Bellevue, Yakima, Pendleton, Great Falls and Sapporo (Japan). Mr. Wall appears on the OSSCS recording of Handel's *Messiah*. In addition to his solo appearances Mr. Wall has served as the music director for many music theater productions in Western Washington. He maintains an active voice studio in Seattle.

Charles Robert Stephens' career spans a wide variety of roles and styles in opera and concert. His performances show "a committed characterization and a voice of considerable beauty." (Opera News) With the New York City Opera, he recently sang the New York premiere of Adamo's *Little Women*, and was hailed by *The New York Times* as a "baritone of smooth distinction." Since his 1995 debut in *La Boheme* with the NYCO, he has also sung leading roles in *Die Tote Stadt*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *La Traviata*.

Mr. Stephens has sung on numerous occasions as guest soloist at Carnegie Hall with the Oratorio Society of New York, the Masterworks Chorus, *Musica Sacra* and with Opera Orchestra of New York.

Since moving to the Pacific Northwest in 2004, Mr. Stephens has performed with most of the orchestras and opera companies in the PNW including those of Spokane, Tacoma, Portland and Seattle.

Mr. Stephens teaches voice at Pacific Lutheran University and the University of Puget Sound.

PROGRAM NOTES

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

(Born March 21, 1685, Eisenach, Thuringia, Germany; died July 28, 1750, Leipzig)

Cantata BWV 78: Jesu, der du meine Seele

Johann Sebastian Bach was born into a family that had produced church and town-band musicians for over 150 years. Orphaned at ten, he was raised by an older brother who was an organist, and who taught young Sebastian music. The boy was endlessly curious about every aspect of the art. "I had to work hard," he said; "Anyone who works as hard will get just as far."

Bach began his professional musical career at the age of 18, when he was appointed organist at a church in Arnstadt. At 23, he became court organist and chamber musician to the Duke of Weimar; in this post, which he held from 1708 to 1717, he gained fame as an organ virtuoso and a composer. For the next six years, Bach served the Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen, producing suites, concertos, sonatas for various instruments, a large amount of keyboard music, and the six wonderful Brandenburg Concertos. Maria Barbara, Bach's wife and the mother of his seven children, died in 1720, and the composer soon married Anna Magdalena, a young singer who proved to be a loyal and supportive wife, and who provided her mate with thirteen more children.

When he was 38, Bach (despite being considered by the town officials to be only a

mediocre musician!) obtained the position of Cantor of St. Thomas' Church in Leipzig, one of the most important musical posts in Germany. He taught at the choir school, which trained the choristers of the city's chief churches (he had to teach non-musical subjects as well); he also served as music director, composer, choirmaster, and organist of St. Thomas' Church. In this post, which he held for the rest of his life, Bach produced monumental musical masterworks, including the Christmas Oratorio, the St. John and St. Matthew passions, the Mass in B Minor, The Musical Offering, and The Art of the Fugue, though he was occupied by the cares of his large family and circle of friends, the tasks of a very busy professional life, and ongoing struggles with the officials of town, school, and church who never recognized that they were dealing with perhaps the greatest musical genius ever born. Though the composer described himself as living "amidst continual vexation, envy, and persecution . . ." he remained in Leipzig for 27 years. At last, his eyesight failed, and he suffered a stroke followed by a raging fever. He died July 28, 1750, leaving only a very modest material estate, but bequeathing to us a wondrous wealth of musical treasures.

A cantata (from the Italian word, "cantare," "to sing"), is a composite form of vocal music typically consisting, in Bach's time, of four to six or more separate movements, including solo arias and recitatives (short passages of music based on the rhythms of speech), duets, and choruses, most frequently accompanied by an orchestra featuring a variety of instruments. Cantatas were based on a dramatic or lyric poetic narrative, either religious or secular. In Germany, the cantata developed into the most significant type of Lutheran sacred music, its various elements unified by the all-encompassing presence of the Lutheran chorale, or hymn. The sacred cantata was an integral part of Lutheran worship, being related, along with the sermon and its associated prayers, to the Gospel reading for the day. Cantors of Lutheran churches were required to furnish cycles of about sixty cantatas per year--one for each Sunday and additional works for holy days and special occasions. Bach, the greatest master of the cantata form, seems to have composed five cycles of cantatas, but out of more than 300 works, only about two hundred have been preserved. No general description can begin to suggest the infinite variety and the indescribable wealth of musical creativity, technical expertise, and passionate spirituality found in these marvelous works, which constitute the core of Bach's vocal output.

The seven-movement Cantata 78, *Jesu, der du meine Seele*, scored for four soloists SATB and four-part chorus, with an orchestra of flutes, oboes, violins, viola, cello, bass viol, and organ, with a horn for the opening chorus, is part of a series of chorale cantatas (cantatas built around Lutheran hymn tunes) written in 1724-1725 during Bach's second year in Leipzig. In these works, Bach probably made his most distinctive contributions to the Lutheran cantata as a musical genre. Composed for the fourteenth Sunday after Trinity (which usually falls in late summer), it probably received its first performance on September 10, 1724. The text, by an unknown librettist, is based on a twelve-verse hymn, *Jesu, der du meine Seele* ("Jesus, by whom my soul. . ."), dating from 1641, by Johann von Rist, and also contains some material related to the Gospel reading for this Sunday, St. Luke 17:11-19, which is the story of Jesus' healing of ten lepers. The first and last movements are verbatim settings of the opening and closing verses of Rist's hymn; the second and sixth movements are paraphrases of the hymn's verses 2 and 6 respectively; and the texts of the other movements are paraphrases based on the other hymn verses that sometimes include literal quotations of some of lines of the hymn (the third movement is based on hymn verses 3-5, the fourth on verses 6-7, and the fifth on verses 8-10). The hymn (and hence cantata) deals with the subject of healing only obliquely, and centers instead around the Passion of Christ that heals the soul and quiets the conscience.

The movements of Cantata 78 are strikingly diverse in form and emotional color. The complex opening chorus is a passionate passacaglia (a slow, stately dance in triple meter of Spanish origin that features continuous variations above a repeated series of notes, often descending by half-steps, in the bass) in g minor. In Bach's time, a chromatically descending bass line was often used to accompany vocal laments, and the passacaglia is thus an appropriate form in which to cast the text of the first movement. The chromatically descending theme, one of the most finely-delineated in all of music according to Bach expert Alfred Dürr, appears twenty-seven times in this movement, often in the company of a "short-short-long" rhythmic figure, sometimes inverted and sometimes moved to an upper voice or transposed to other keys. Meanwhile, the three lower vocal lines present distinctive themes with which they interpret the chorale text (e.g., the rising theme that continues with jerking leaps and sixteenth-note slashes that illustrates the text, "forcibly ripped out"), and not only embroider the soprano part, in which the eight-phrase hymn

melody appears, with intertwining melodic lines, but introduce, in imitation, each soprano presentation of a line of the chorale, thus stitching the chorale melody to the fabric of the passacaglia.

A delightful canonic duet for soprano and alto follows the opening lament and, with its glitteringly effervescent lines, contrasts beautifully with it. In this movement, the best-known of the cantata, a light-hearted ascending theme, accompanied by sprightly cello and marked double bass, illustrates two believers chasing and calling to one another as they hurry to Jesus with "weak yet eager footsteps."

Again the mood changes with the tenor recitative that follows the duet; the wide intervallic leaps depict a sinner's anguish and despair. Bach emphasizes the quotation of verse five of the chorale text at the end of the recitative by providing it with a highly expressive melodic flourish and a richer accompaniment. Perhaps the expunging of the sinner's guilt through Christ's Passion is referenced in the following fast-flowing tenor aria by the scale figures in the flute (wiping the heart clean) and the staccato figures (the beating of the calmed heart). Though the believer faces a barrage of sixteenth-notes as the "battle" against Hell's hosts rages, Jesus "stands" at the believer's side on the high ground of a long-sustained D to provide support and, at last, bring victory.

The fifth movement of the cantata, a dramatic bass recitative of deep pathos accompanied by strings and featuring frequent tempo changes and great leaps in the vocal line, is reminiscent of similar sections of Bach's Passions. The quotation from the tenth verse of the hymn text at the end of the movement is set to the middle section of the chorale melody, but it is so extensively embellished that it is very difficult to detect. The intricately-structured aria that follows is structured around the repetition of an eight-measure phrase for strings and oboe together with a constant alternation of instrumental and vocal material. It resembles a little three-section concerto for solo oboe and solo bass voice in which "eternity" rests on a single note for a long measure and a half, "hope" springs up in a fountain of sixteenth-notes, and another whirlwind of sixteenth-notes makes it impossible to "steal" the believer from Jesus' hands. The cantata ends with a simple, peaceful four-part setting of the original hymn's final verse and its melody in which the believer is assured of eternal healing in God's presence.

--notes by Lorelette Knowles

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

(Baptized December 17, 1770, Bonn, Germany;
died March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria)

Symphony No. 9 in d minor, Op. 125 ("Choral")

"I carry my thoughts about with me for a long time... before writing them down... once I have grasped a theme I shall not forget it even years later. I change many things, discard others, and try again and again until I am satisfied; then, in my head... [the work] rises, it grows, I hear and see the image in front of me from every angle... and only the labor of writing it down remains... I turn my ideas into tones that resound, roar, and rage until at last they stand before me in the form of notes."

So said Ludwig van Beethoven, probably born on December 16, 1770, to Johann van Beethoven, a tenor at the Elector's court and a competent teacher of violin and clavier, and Maria Magdalena, the widow of a valet. The child prodigy grew up amid destitution, discord, and distress. His father was very demanding, became an alcoholic, and was dismissed from court service in 1789, and of Ludwig's seven siblings, only two survived infancy. At the age of eleven, the unhappy Ludwig was taken away from school to pursue musical studies exclusively. He learned to play the organ, piano, violin, and viola, and began to compose as well, and in 1784 he was appointed second organist in the Electoral Chapel in Bonn. For the next eight years, Beethoven was very active in the musical life of his city, and his talents were noticed by the musically discerning. He visited Vienna in 1787 and took some composition lessons from Mozart, but he had to return home to manage household affairs when his mother died that same year. He left Bonn and settled permanently in Vienna in 1792, when the Elector fled the city as a revolutionary French army advanced.

In Vienna, Beethoven studied first with Haydn, from whom he claimed to have learned nothing, and then with Johann Albrechtsberger, whom Beethoven found overly strict, and then with Aloys Förster, a composer of string quartets, to whom he gave the most credit as a teacher. The young Beethoven survived financially by teaching and playing the piano at private music-meetings, where his dynamic, emotionally charged performances began to attract attention. He moved increasingly from a career as a virtuoso pianist toward one as a composer, writing piano concertos and sonatas, chamber works for winds and strings, and then symphonies. But though by 1800 his musical prestige was considerable and his material fortunes were blossoming, he became aware that his hearing was deteriorating, and

deafness soon threatened not only his musical life, but his social and personal life as well. He became increasingly morose, withdrawn, and distrustful, and contemplated suicide in 1802, writing that only art, and his belief that he had much of importance to express musically, withheld him from ending his wretched existence. He also wrote of his longing for a single day of joy: "O Providence - grant me some time a pure day of joy. For so long now the heartfelt echo of true joy has been strange to me. Oh when - oh when, oh Divine One - can I feel it again in the temple of nature and of mankind - Never? No - oh that would be too hard." Perhaps it was this unquenchable hope for joy that enabled Beethoven to survive his innumerable troubles, which included increasingly poor health (he suffered from asthma, lupus, eye disease, liver ailments, dropsy, fevers, and pneumonia, in addition to his deafness), financial misfortune, political and social turbulence, and disappointment and tension in his personal life. Indeed, over the next quarter century he composed some of the most dramatic and passionate of all musical works, and he became a public figure in a way that no composer had before him. When he died in Vienna in March of 1827, it is said that some 20,000 people attended his funeral. Never beholden for his livelihood to the nobility, he helped to create a new musical age, that of the artist as hero who belongs to all humanity.

Beethoven's ninth and final symphony, Op. 125 in d minor, generally known as the "Choral Symphony," is a work of monumental proportions. Its innovative musical syntax has influenced virtually every Western composer, particularly Mendelssohn, Brahms, Wagner, Bruckner, and Mahler, since its first performance on May 7, 1824, at a concert in the Kärntnertor Theatre in Vienna. Performances of the Ninth Symphony have also marked epochal public occasions: in 1989, students played its finale through loudspeakers in Tiananmen Square to inspire courage, and Leonard Bernstein led a performance in Berlin to celebrate the Wall's razing, substituting the word "Freiheit" ("freedom") for "Freude" ("joy").

Before he left Bonn in 1792, Beethoven seems to have been contemplating a musical setting of Schiller's "Ode to Joy" ("An die Freude"), which, because of its expression of utopian ideals and its delirious praise of "Joy," had been an inspiration to the composer since his earliest years. In 1810, the outline of the chief melody appeared in the Fantasia for piano, orchestra, and choir (Op. 80), in which a poem in praise of music forms the foundation of a brilliant choral finale. Beethoven

worked on the Ninth Symphony from 1822 to 1824, after he had become almost completely deaf and could hear his music only in his mind's ear, and through it, the melody to which he finally set portions of Schiller's poem became one of the best-known and most-dearly-loved tunes of all time, a symbol of humanity's desire for universal joy and fraternity.

The symphony is structured in the traditional four-movement design of earlier symphonies, but in size, scope, complexity, and difficulty it goes far beyond all previous examples of the genre, and stretches the symphonic framework nearly to the breaking point. It was first performed employing about 24 singers for each of the four choral parts, and the large orchestra includes strings, woodwinds (flutes, piccolos, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and double bassoons), brass (horns, trumpets, trombones), timpani, and percussion. Some see in this symphony Beethoven's continuing struggle to find his "day of joy," and if he did not succeed in finding it for himself, he has undoubtedly led others to discover joy of their own. The work is, in any event, the magnificent culmination of his career as the symphonist whose works form the bridge between the Classical and Romantic periods of musical style. It shines as the prime example of Beethoven's belief that music expresses, and is to be understood through, the feelings.

The first two movements of the work, with their persistent, powerful, and percussive dotted rhythms, evince tension and conflict. The mystery and emptiness of the first movement's opening chord seem to evoke desolation and despair, and the darkness is deepened by the descending minor melodic figures in the movement's first musical theme. But the mood lightens a little in the rest of the movement: its second theme is in the brighter B-flat major, and occasional melodic hints seem to anticipate the finale. A rapid, helter-skelter musical chase, which Beethoven spoke of in a sketch as "mere sport," opens the second movement, also in d minor. This is followed by a gentler trio section in major, in which melodic foretastes of the finale again appear. The slow, contemplative third movement is also built on two contrasting themes, the first in B-flat and serenely song-like, and the second in D and somewhat faster. The slow first theme is decorated with increasingly complex musical pattern-work in its two variations and lengthy coda. Prior to each of the variations, the second, somewhat faster-moving theme appears, first in D and then in G, providing tonal contrast.

The gigantic choral finale of the symphony, which has caused the most comment and

controversy, begins with a furious orchestral expostulation, followed by a "rejection" of the material of the first three movements, the themes of which are quoted in turn. The "Freude" ("joy") theme is then presented and given three variations before an even more dissonant outburst signals the entry of the voices. A solo baritone sings, "O Friends, not these sounds! Rather, let us turn to sounds more pleasant and joyful," and soloist and chorus then join in the "Freude" theme. This is worked into a huge musical structure in which four soloists, chorus, and orchestra combine in a virtual "symphony within a symphony," with a grand "opening movement" in D, an almost dance-like "Turkish March" section in B-flat and 6/8 time, a stately "slow movement" in G, and a "finale" that combines the "Freude" and "Seid umschlungen" ("be embraced") themes.

Many of the symphony's early critics, especially in England, found the final choral movement completely incomprehensible and incoherent, but the work enjoyed a sensational reception. The composer, who by this time was completely deaf, conducted the performance, and it is said that, at its conclusion, the applause was thunderous. Realizing that Beethoven could not hear the ovation, the singer Caroline Unger turned him to face the audience to receive their plaudits. Following the concert, the exhausted composer fainted. He later made his way to the home of Anton Schindler, his friend and first biographer, and there, too drained to eat or drink, he fell asleep fully clothed and remained so till morning. The unkempt man with broad shoulders and a mass of unruly hair, who was poorly-educated and ill-mannered, who clashed with himself and the world, did what his one-time hero, Napoleon, had tried but failed to do: Beethoven, through his musical talent and tenacity, conquered the world.

--notes by Lorelette Knowles

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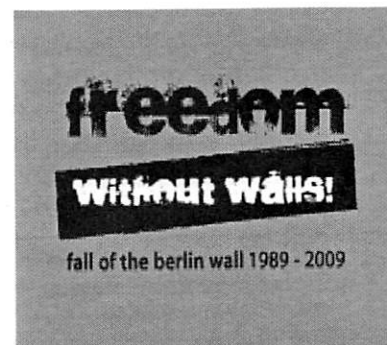
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