

**Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125, Choral**  
**– Ludwig van Beethoven**

Born December 16, 1770, in Bonn, Germany

Died March 26, 1827, in Vienna, Austria

*This work was premiered on May 7, 1824, at the Kärntnertor Theater in Vienna, with Michael Umlauf conducting. It is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two, oboes, two, clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion, strings, SATB choir, and SATB soloists.*

Of all the monolithic works of western musical history, perhaps no individual piece is the subject such adulation as Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. His nine symphonies comprise probably the greatest body of work ever written in symphonic form. Even its composer was not able to outdo himself, leaving fragmentary sketches for a tenth symphony in disarray at his death.

The Ninth's history is a multifaceted one. As early as 1793, the composer entertained the idea of setting Friedrich Schiller's 1785 *Ode to Joy*. Potential settings of the poem included one for solo voice. He then used sections of the poem in his 1790 *Cantata on the Death of Emperor Leopold II*, and would again draw from the poem in the 1806 version of his opera, *Fidelio*. Beethoven's attachment to this text was no accident. It is often forgotten that Bonn was a regular stop for refugees of the French Revolution. Schiller's message of joy through universal brotherhood resounded loudly, resonating deeply in the soul of the young composer as he heard stories of oppression from those fleeing the battles.

As the years mounted, so did Beethoven's deafness. His attraction to the text takes on a new facet. With his gradually withdrawal into a life of seclusion, Beethoven yearned for companionship, although he often purposely avoided it. Schiller's text is a *geselliges Lied* (social song), and was meant to be sung by a group of friends while raising their glasses and pontificating on the meaning of happiness – in short, a drinking song. Therefore the poem's meaning progressed over thirty years from an intimate ode for a small circle of friends, to a plea for the world to come together in one voice. To achieve this purpose, Beethoven trimmed the ninety-six lines of Schiller's text down to around thirty – reordering stanzas and editing as needed. The introduction sung by bass soloist, is a setting of Beethoven's own lines.

By the time Beethoven began work in earnest on the symphony in 1822, he was firmly entrenched in the austere style of his final period of composition. However, much of the music in the Ninth Symphony seems to be more related to the Eighth Symphony from twelve years earlier than to the final string quartets. Despite this, there are moments of extreme experimentation. The opening of the first movement with its hollow sound of sustained fifths was certainly not common practice. Wagner would imitate it in *Das Rheingold* to represent the flow of the Rhine. Mahler used a strikingly similar idea to open his first symphony. Also innovative is Beethoven's recall of the principal theme of previous movements just before the first vocal entrance in the finale. Of course, the use

of voices in a symphony, although used occasionally after the Ninth, was revolutionary at the time.

The opening of the first movement sneaks up on the listener, as the sustained notes seem to have no beginning. Fleeting hints of melody spring from within the textures, eventually coalescing into the rhythmically-defined fortissimo theme and revealing the key of D minor for the first time. Many secondary themes reveal themselves only to be transformed, as Beethoven's masterful abilities become apparent in an extensive development section. After the themes return in the recapitulation, a massive coda decisively ends the movement. The *scherzo* follows with its famous rhythmic hammered motif. A fleet-footed fugue follows, played softly but interrupted by several loud interjections, most notably by the timpani. A legato theme contrasts with the quick fugue. The *Adagio molto e cantabile* is a double variation – one based on two themes. Transcendently beautiful, the movement is full of spirituality.

The heart and soul of the ninth is in its finale. The movement opens with an apocalyptic fanfare, full of clashes and urgency, only to be answered by the cellos and double basses. This recitative, traditionally an operatic device for setting conversations to music, uses speech-like rhythms in an ingenious dialogue with the rest of the orchestra. Within the recitative, the orchestra interjects thematic recollections of the previous three movements. Upon completion, the orchestra finally introduces the famous *Ode to Joy* theme and adapts it through three pastoral variations. The fanfare returns and the bass soloist enters with the recitative previously heard in the low strings. On the words "O friends, not these sounds," he sings the *Ode to Joy* theme, which is then taken up by the chorus. After two variations and a brief codetta, Beethoven jokingly sets the theme as a puckish Turkish march, complete with cymbals and triangle. The tenor soloist joins. In the slow and stately *andante maestoso* that follows, the chorus evokes a call for universal brotherhood with an expressive new theme doubled in the trombone – an instrument traditionally associated with the voice of God in sacred music of the day. The music suddenly rushes into an *allegro* tempo as the chorus enters in 6/4 time. The meter changes again as the soloists enter, soon to be joined by chorus on the words *Alle Menschen* (All mankind). The soloists again break away, this time in a florid simultaneous cadenza. Rhythmic activity boils over as all forces join together for one final grand statement of the *Ode to Joy* theme, bringing this monument of music to an electrifying conclusion. The deaf Beethoven, who stood next to the conductor during the premiere flailing his arms madly while leading his own imaginary orchestra's sounds, had to be turned around to see the audience's warm applause.

## TEXT

### **Baritone**

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

### **Baritone and Chorus**

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.

### **Quartet and Chorus**

Wem der grosse Wurf gelungen,  
eines Freundes Freund zu sein,  
wer ein holdes Weib errungen,  
mische seine 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!  
Freude trinken alle Wesen  
an den Brüsten der Natur,  
alle Guten, alle Bösen  
folgen ihre Rosenspur.  
Küsse gab sie uns und Reben,  
einen Freund, geprüft im Tod;  
Wollust ward dem Wurm gegeben,  
und der Cherub steht vor Gott!

### **Tenor and Chorus**

Froh, wie seine Sonnen fliegen  
durch des Himmels prächt'gen Plan,  
laufet, Brüder, eure Bahn,  
freudig wie ein Held zum Siegen.

### **Chorus**

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,  
Tochter aus Elysium,  
wir betreten feuertrunken,

### **Baritone**

O friends, not these sounds!  
Rather let us  
sing more pleasing songs,  
full of joy.

### **Baritone and Chorus**

Joy, brilliant spark of the gods,  
daughter of Elysium,  
drunk with fire, we enter,  
Divinity, your sacred shrine.  
Your magic again unites  
all that custom harshly tore apart;  
all men become brothers  
beneath your gentle hovering wing.

### **Quartet and Chorus**

Whoever has won in that great gamble  
of being friend to a friend,  
whoever has won a gracious wife,  
let him join in our rejoicing!  
Yes, even if there is only one other soul  
he can call his own on the whole earth!  
And he who never accomplished this,  
let him steal away weeping from this company!  
All creatures drink of joy  
at Nature's breast,  
All men, good and evil,  
follow her rose-strewn path.  
Kisses she gave us and vines,  
a friend, faithful to death;  
desire was even given to the worm,  
and the cherub stands before God!

### **Tenor and Chorus**

Joyously, just as His suns fly  
through the splendid arena of heaven,  
run, brothers, your course  
gladly, like a hero to victory.

### **Chorus**

Joy, brilliant spark of the gods,  
daughter of Elysium,  
drunk with fire, we enter,

Himmlische, dein Heiligtum.  
Deine Zauber binden wieder  
was die Mode streng geteilt;  
alle Menschen werden Brüder  
wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.  
Seid umschlungen, Millionen!  
Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!  
Brüder, über'm Sternenzelt  
muss ein lieber Vater wohnen.  
Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen?  
Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt?  
Such' ihn über'm Sternenzelt!  
Über Sternen muss er wohnen.  
Freude, schöner Götterfunken,  
Tochter aus Elysium,  
wir betreten feuertrunken,  
Himmlische, dein Heiligtum.  
Seid umschlungen, Millionen!  
Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!  
Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen?  
Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt?  
Such' ihn über'm Sternenzelt!  
Brüder! Brüder!  
Über'm Sternenzelt  
muss ein lieber Vater wohnen.

#### **Quartet and Chorus**

Freude, Tochter aus Elysium,  
deine Zauber binden wieder  
was die Mode streng geteilt;  
alle Menschen werden Brüder  
wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.  
Seid umschlungen, Millionen!  
Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!  
Brüder, über'm Sternenzelt  
muss ein lieber Vater wohnen.  
Freude, schöner Götterfunken,  
Tochter aus Elysium!

Divinity, your sacred shrine.  
Your magic again unites  
all that custom harshly tore apart;  
all men become brothers,  
beneath your gentle hovering wing.  
Be embraced, ye millions!  
This kiss is for the entire world!  
Brothers, above the canopy of stars  
surely a loving Father dwells.  
Do you bow down, ye millions?  
Do you sense the Creator, World?  
Seek Him above the canopy of stars!  
Above the stars must He dwell.  
Joy, brilliant spark of the gods,  
daughter of Elysium,  
drunk with fire, we enter,  
Divinity, your sacred shrine.  
Be embraced, ye millions!  
This kiss is for the entire world!  
Do you bow down, ye millions?  
Do you sense the Creator, World?  
Seek Him above the canopy of stars!  
Brothers! Brothers!  
Above the canopy of stars  
surely a loving Father dwells.

#### **Quartet and Chorus**

Joy, daughter of Elysium,  
Your magic again unites  
all that custom harshly tore apart;  
all men become brothers  
beneath your gentle hovering wing.  
Be embraced, ye millions!  
This kiss is for the entire world!  
Brothers, above the canopy of stars  
surely a loving Father dwells.  
Joy, brilliant spark of the gods,  
daughter of Elysium!