



BEETHOVEN: SYMPHONY NO. 9 (CHORAL) in D minor Op. 125

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Abstrak

Simfoni no. 9 bukan hanya sekedar symphony terakhir dari Beethoven, tetapi juga dinyatakan sebagai simfoni yang menyuarakan kebebasan hak-hak asasi manusia. Karya ini terdiri dari 4 movements. Keunikan karya ini terdapat pada movement terakhir, di mana Beethoven menambahkan suara vokal manusia. Symphony no. 9 pertama kali dimainkan di Royal Imperial Court Theatre tahun 1824. Walaupun para pemainnya hanya melakukan dua kali latihan untuk pertunjukan perdana, tetapi dari pertunjukan ini sendiri memberikan efek yang sangat kuat pada para penontonnya. Detail yang lebih jelas mengenai latar belakang, orkestrasi, dan analisa dapat dibaca lebih mendalam di esai ini.

The Ninth Symphony by Beethoven is one of the most ambitious symphonies of all times, not only because it is the final symphony of all Beethoven's achievements, colossal as they are even without the Ninth, but also because it voices the message of one who had risen above himself, beyond the world and the time in which he lived. The Ninth has a different concept compared to other symphonies. For the first time, Beethoven added human voices in his symphonies. It adopts a style of mixed music capable of serving as a connecting link between the two great divisions of the symphony. It was the instrumental "recitative" (which thus became the bridge) that he ventured to throw out between chorus and orchestra, and over which the instruments passed to attain a junction with the voices. It took him thirty years to complete this master piece, starting with Schiller's poem in the 1890s to sketches between 1812 and 1824.

The Ninth Symphony was composed at the height of the restoration, a period that witnessed the birth of modern political musical compositions: God Save the King, secular ceremonies of revolutionary France, drawing upon the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau – all began to make



an innovative use of symbolism and created through the Marseillaise in particular the myth of the nation speaking with a single voice, the Emperor's Anthem by Haydn. Later, Beethoven combined the people's voice and the Baroque sublime cantata *Der gloeereiche Augenblick* (the glorious moment), op.136.

Beethoven had made plans to set this poem to music as far back as 1793, when he was only 22 years old. Beethoven's sketchbooks show that bits of material that ultimately appeared in the symphony were written in 1811, 1815, and 1817. Completed in 1824, it includes part of the ode *An die Freude* ("Ode To Joy") by Friedrich Schiller, as text sung by soloists and a chorus in the last movement.

The premiere of the 9th Symphony was made at yet another monumental concert, at the Royal Imperial Court Theatre on May 7th, 1824. The other pieces performed were the grand overture 'Weihe des Hauses' op.124, and the Kyrie, Credo and Agnus Dei from the Missa Solemnis op.123. Although the performance was far from perfect (the performers had only two rehearsals), and as strange as the music must have sounded to the audience, the effect of the symphony was overwhelming on the audience, and the applause was tumultuous. Beethoven, in his deafness oblivious to this reception, had to have his attention drawn by the alto singer Karoline Unger, who pulled his sleeve and directed his gaze towards the clapping hands and waving hats. Financially the concert made a poor return for Beethoven, due to the very large overheads for the performance.

The Ninth Symphony is scored for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, triangle, cymbals, bass drum, a string section consisting of the usual first and second violins, violas, cellos, double basses, four vocal soloists (soprano, alto, tenor, bass), and a chorus singing in four parts (soprano, alto, tenor, bass). These are by far the largest forces needed for any Beethoven symphony; at the premiere Beethoven expanded them further by assigning two players to each wind part.

Beethoven put his own metronome markings in the Ninth Symphony. The first edition was published by Messrs Schott, of Mainz, at the end of 1825 or the beginning of 1826, with the *Mass in D* and the *Overture in C* (Op.124), in a score (folio) and parts. The publisher number for the score is 2,322, and for the parts 2,321. The metronome marks were added to the edition later. In 1867 Messrs. Schott published a second edition in 8 volume, numbered as before 2,322; and the engraved plates of the first edi-



tion were then melted down. In 1863 or 1864 the word appeared in the 'critical and correct edition' of Messrs. Breitkopf and Härtel. Neither of these two reprints adequately represents the original edition.

This master piece consists of four distinct movements. The first movement is in sonata form, 2/4 meter, following a formal model that had guided Beethoven throughout his composition. It is marked in *allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso* in D minor. This is the only of Beethoven's symphonies that uses a minor key for the first movement. This movement does not resemble anything that Beethoven had previously written: the harmony is sometimes of an excessive boldness, and designs of the most original kind; features of the most expressive order meet, cross and interlace in all ways without producing either obscurity or encumbrance. There are two essential analytical observations of the first movement: (1) the quality of expression found in its opening is unprecedented, even for Beethoven and (2) that its cumulative effect projects an immense time scale.

The opening of the symphony starts with a very mysterious, hollow sound of the open fifth in the cellos, second violins, and horns, suggesting the vague or indescribable. The first theme is preceded by an Introduction of sixteen bars, which is based on only two harmonies. Yet more impressive, however, is the significance of the introduction from the thematic standpoint: it is nothing less than the birthplace of the Ur-motif that gives the first movement its special stamp.

The recapitulation is unexpected as it is astonishing. The recapitulation normally represents an area of affirmation and stability after the turbulence and tonal meandering of the development section. Never before had a composer destabilized this critical formal juncture as Beethoven does with his first inversion D major triad. And never before had a major chord sounded so apocalyptic. A sense of arrival is unequivocal, but the effect is, at the same time, profoundly disturbing.

Beethoven codas, even more than his recapitulations, are segments in which the conflicts posed by the exposition section are resolved. Beethoven begins this coda by expanding the principal theme into broad four-measure phrases, lending the melody a regularity of phrasing only hinted at in the development section. It starts with a prologue, which is not an introduction properly speaking, and yet introduces the principal subject of the movement. The coda has some influences from "Dido's Lament" from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* – low instruments, as the brass and winds intone a funeral march above it. Felix Mendelssohn has left



his opinion of this portion of the symphony on record in the following interesting words: "The conclusion of the first movement (of Beethoven's violin sonata in C minor, Op. 30 No.2) has a 'go' (Schwung) which I hardly know in any other piece of his; except perhaps the end of the first movement of the ninth symphony, which certainly surpasses in 'go' everything in the world."

The second movement of the Ninth is the only one of Beethoven's symphonies to place a scherzo. It is marked in *molto vivace*, scherzo and trio, $\frac{3}{4}$ meter. Precedents may be found for this placement: Haydn's String Quartets, op.33 ("Gil scherzo"), Mozart's String Quartet in G major, K.387, and Beethoven's String Quartet, Op. 59, no. 1, and Piano Sonatas, op.101 and 106.

The second movement is likewise in D minor, with the opening theme being a kind of echo of the theme of the first movement, a pattern also found in the Hammerklavier piano sonata, written a few years earlier. It is notable for its propulsive rhythm and timpani solos (for this purpose the two timpani are tuned, unusually, an octave apart). The Scherzo dominates almost the entire movement, and such is its importance that the opening and closing measures contain only octave leaps in unison. The principal subject is a bright, terse phrase of four bars, which appears first in the second violins and is then turned over, fugato-wise, to the violas, next given to the cellos, then first violins, last to the basses, while each preceding voice continues on its way. The head of the fugue subject in the scherzo is derived from the dotted rhythmic figure and the characteristic octave leap of the first eight measures, now followed by staccato quarter notes in conjunct motion. The first part of the scherzo ends with repeated suggestions of the octave skip given out by the strings and wind instruments in turn, *pianissim*.

After the repeat of the exposition of the second movement, Beethoven enters into a transitional passage designed to lead to the development section. The onset of the development section is marked by a change in the key signature from one flat to one sharp. The entrance of the woodwinds, led by the droll bassoons, gives the impression that Beethoven has again resumed the fugal texture from the exposition, but this time it is merely an illusion, as the oboe and clarinet answer the bassoon on the same pitch level. Beethoven is determined to keep things off balance in this scherzo.

The opening gesture of the trio is fraught with referential meanings. Its octave leaps represent not only a compression of the opening of the



scherzo, but the omission of its third (the notes here being only A and D) is an unmistakable reference to the opening of the first movement. The trio is like the "Pastoral," a musette, a designation that is confirmed by the drone of the second horn. The musette, with its lazy harmonic rhythm, should be pointed out, was a small rustic bagpipe. In 18th and 19th c. music, the evocation of its sound was meant to suggest to the listener the world of nature. The reprise of the scherzo is played without any repeat. In a letter to Charles Naete in London, Beethoven gave a clear instruction that the reprise of the scherzo should be performed without repeats:

"I seem to have omitted in the 2nd movement of the Symphony that at the reprise of the minor after the Presto, one should begin again at the sight, and then continue without repeats until the fermata: then go immediately to the Coda."

Rossini said to Ferdinand Hiller: "I know nothing finer than that Scherzo. I myself could not make anything to touch it. The rest of the work wants charm, and what is music without that?"

The third movement is a theme and variation in sonata-rondo with varied reprises, 4/4 meter, marked in *adagio molto e cantabile*. It is original in form and in effect more calmly, purely, nobly beautiful amongst all his symphonies. The *adagio* is built along the lines of the lied (a poignant song resembling a prayer) and presents a steadily moving, endless melody. This movement consists of two distinct pieces – distinct in tune, in character, in key, and in speed – which is heard alternately until the one yields, as it were, to the superior charms of the others, and retires. The main theme yields into two decorative variations (variations being another signal feature of Beethoven's late style): (1) the progenitor of many lyrical moments in the late quartets, most notably the *Adagio Cantabile* of op.127 (which was composed at about the same times as the ninth symphony), and (2) the cadential echoes found in the *Cavatina* from op.120. The variations in the *Adagio* of the Ninth seem rather perfunctory, relying on decorative figurations more characteristics of Beethoven's earlier style, that the profounder insights one encounters in the variations of the later quartets, sonatas, and the "Diabelli" Variations op.120.

Beethoven has specified the metronome marking for the principal theme as quarter note = 60. The theme can achieve its full effect only through performance in *mezza voce*, as Beethoven has expressly indicated. The conclusion of this movement hangs over into the start of the finale. Robert Winter stated: "Beethoven seems to have retreated into a world where time has stopped and eternity has begun."



The fourth movement is the choral finale. The finale can be divided into three sections. The first section consists of two parts – purely instrumental and vocal. The second section, sung by the chorus without the vocal soloists, begins with “Seid umschlungen.” The third section comprises three smaller subsections: a) m.655-762, defined by the chorus alone and beginning the contrapuntal joining of “Seid umschlungen” with the “Freude” theme, b) mm.763-850 (beginning with the *Allegro ma non tanto*), defined by the use of soloist and chorus, and c) mm.851-940, beginning with the *Prestissimo* in which the soloist no longer participate.

The finale has four inner movements. The introduction of the finale starts with the *tutti* orchestra, which completely and rudely shatters the serene ending of the third movement. It is inconvenient to re-tuning the timpani or changing crooks of natural horns and trumpets, so Beethoven indicated that the last movement should ensue in an uninterrupted segue. The opening harmony of the *Presto* is a tonic D minor chord in first inversion (the F contrabassoon sounding below the A in the timpani), over which is sounded an octave B flat in the flutes, oboes, and clarinets. Clearly, the B flat is the source of the harmonic clash, and while the opening of Beethoven’s First Symphony demonstrated that the composer had no compunction about beginning a piece with an unprepared dissonance, the dissonance that opens the finale of the Ninth Symphony is a prepared one – prepared by the B flat tonality of the *Adagio* movement that precedes it. David Levy in his book *Beethoven: The Ninth Symphony* states: “The purposes of beginning this movement with a suspension, as well as with the chaotic measures that follow it (Wagner referred to it as the *Schreckensfanfare* – the fanfare of terror) is to disrupt the mood of the preceding *Adagio* in the rudest possible fashion.”

The first inner movement of the finale is marked as *allegro assai*. The variations of the “Freude” theme are introduced by the first two instrumental, with their respective three-and four-voice counterpoints. It brings no essential alterations to the tune itself, except for the octave in which it is sounded and the instruments that play it (two additional features the finale of the Ninth shared with Haydn’s “Emperor” Quartet, as well as with the finale of the “Eroica” Symphony).

Beethoven used text as a transition from the introduction of the finale to the music of Schiller’s poem. The music “O friends, not these sounds” is a slightly varied version of the first phrase of the previously heard instrumental recitative, while the pitches given for “rather let us sing more pleasant ones” closely follow the second phrase. Only then



does the key signature revert to D major for the words “and more full of Joy,” as the voice invokes the sixth and final phrase of the instrumental recitative. There are some elements of text painting in this movement. The choral echo tune omits the soprano voice, a feature that continues through the first phrase of the first vocal variation (“Whoever has been so fortunate”). It’s likely that by holding the soprano in reserve.

The second inner movement is a scherzo. Beethoven composed it in a hymn-like style to suit Schiller’s poem. This movement is a reprise of the first verse of Schiller’s poem in D major, now enthusiastically proclaimed by the full chorus and orchestra.

The third inner movement is marked as *andante maestoso*. Beethoven used trombone as one of his semiotic codes. Traditionally, the trombone is used in sacred music. The splendor of Beethoven’s “church” is enhanced in a repetition of the theme, now harmonized with full chorus and orchestra. An E flat major chord marks the climax of this movement. It places both voices and emotions at a point of great tension; the world is assured that the seat of God lies not in the dust, but beyond the stars. In Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*, Beethoven also used an E flat major chord as the climax of the credo. Some Beethoven scholars assume that Beethoven uses the E flat major chord as a symbol for the present of deity.

The last inner movement of the finale continues pianissimo in alla breve meter with rapidly-moving strings, which play a version of the “Freude” theme in diminution, joined by the return of the vocal soloist. There are eight changes of tempo in this movement. It is clear that Beethoven uses different a kind of tempo to support the characters of Schiller’s poem. The theme of “Ode to Joy” appears right up to the end of the symphony, and it is always recognizable, although its aspect changes continually. The study of these various transformations presents an interest, because each one of them gives a new and decided tint to the expression of one and the same sentiment that of joy. The finale ends with the complete orchestra burst forth in a very impressive and sonorous statement of the Hymn.

The Ninth Symphony was to be hailed as a glorification of human freedom, in which any trace of the state is, by definition, absent. It is dedicated to the mankind. The Ninth symphony has become the work that has done the most to create its composer’s unique public status. Yet that does not mean that it has always been viewed as his finest composition. It is also the most difficult symphony of all by Beethoven, its performance necessitating study, both patiently and repeatedly; but above all, well



directed. It requires, moreover, a number of singers greater than would otherwise be necessary, as the chorus is evidently supposed to cover the orchestra in many places, and also because the manner in which the music is set to the words and the excessive height of some of the vocal parts render voice production difficult, and diminish the volume and energy of the sounds produced.

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