

**BEETHOVEN'S
NINTH SYMPHONY
(CHORAL)**

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Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (choral) by George Grove

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BY

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GEORGE F. ELLIS, 141 FRANKLIN STREET.
1882.

SYMPHONY NO. 9, IN D MINOR (OP. 125).*

BEETHOVEN.

MOVEMENTS.

I. INSTRUMENTAL.

1. *Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso* (D minor).
2. (Scherzo) *Molto Vivace* (D minor); (Trio) *Presto* (D major).
3. *Adagio molto e cantabile* (B-flat alternating with D and F-flat).
4. (Recit.) *Presto: Allegro ma non troppo, etc.*
5. *Allegro assai* (D major).

II. VOCAL.

1. Recitative (D minor).
2. Quartet and Chorus: *Allegro assai* (D major).
3. Tenor Solo and Chorus: *Allegro assai vivace: alla Marcia* (B-flat).
4. Chorus: *Andante maestoso* (G major).
5. Chorus: *Allegro energico, sempre ben marcato* (D major).
6. Quartet and Chorus: *Allegro ma non tanto* (D major).
7. Chorus: *Prestissimo* (D major).

The idea of extending the *Finale* of a symphony by several vocal movements seems to have originated with Beethoven. No example of it is to be found in

*Note by the American Publisher.—In reprinting Mr. Grove's valuable analysis of the Ninth Symphony it has been found expedient to abridge it somewhat, and to introduce a new translation of Schiller's Ode in place of the one used in the Richter Concerts.

the works of either Haydn or Mozart, and hitherto it has been followed—at least, with success—only by Mendelssohn, whose *Lobgesang*, or “Hymn of Praise,” is an example of the same class of composition as the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven. In the *Eroica* Symphony (1804), Beethoven had shown how splendidly and appropriately a series of variations could be treated in the orchestra as the *Finale* to a work of the greatest grandeur, just as in Op. 26 he had shown, two years before, how the same form could be employed for the opening movement of a sonata for piano-forte solo. In the Choral Fantasia (1808) again, he had shown with what effect a chorus, in a succession of variations, could be employed for a *Finale*; and he was now to go a step further and employ the same means in a symphony for full orchestra. The work holds the same position among orchestral compositions that the Choral Fantasia does among those for the piano-forte; and it should be remembered not only that there is a strong resemblance between the vocal portions of the two, but that Beethoven himself actually describes the Symphony as being “in the style of the Piano-forte Choral Fantasia, but on a far larger scale.”

It is almost incredible to find him starting in his musical life with the same intention which he carried out only near its close. And yet we discover in a letter from Fischenich to Schiller's sister

Charlotte, written from Bonn,* the following notice of that intention, when Beethoven, at the age of twenty-two, was just beginning his public career: "I have preserved," says he, "a setting† of the *Feuerfarbe* for you, on which I should like your opinion. It is by a young man of this place, whose musical talent is becoming notorious, and whom the Elector has just sent to Vienna to Haydn. *He intends to compose Schiller's 'Freude,' verse by verse.*" This was in 1793.

The musical theme to which Beethoven at last wedded the words thus fondly cherished for thirty years was, as usual with him, no sudden inspiration, but the fruit of long consideration and many a trial. Of this, his sketch-books — leaves of paper, sometimes loose, sometimes sewed together, which the great musician carried about with him, and on which he threw down his thoughts as they occurred on the instant, often in the wildest and most disorderly writing — contain many evidences.

The general relation of the Choral Fantasia to the Choral Symphony has been already mentioned. A more definite connection perhaps exists in the melody of their vocal portions, the close resemblance between which has been often noticed. But it is surely more than a mere coincidence that the melody

*Thayer, *Leben*, i. 237.

†Published in 1805, as Op. 52, No. 2.

of the *Finale* to the Fantasia is note for note the same with a song—*Seufzer eines Ungeliebten*—which was composed by Beethoven at or shortly after the date of his first announcing his intention to compose Schiller's *Freude*. The eventual return to the same melody, or one so closely akin to it, may have been one of those acts of "unconscious cerebration" of which many instances could be furnished in the practice of the arts.

Beethoven has not used the whole of Schiller's words, nor has he employed them in the order in which they stand in the poem; and the arrangement and selection appear to have troubled him much. The note-books already cited abound with references to the "disjointed fragments" which he was trying to arrange and connect, mixed with strange jokes, hard to read and harder to understand, such as "*Abgerissene Sätze wie Fürsten sind Bettler u. s. w. nicht das Ganze.*" Another point which puzzled him greatly was how to connect the vocal movement with the instrumental ones. His biographer, Schindler, gives an interesting description of his walking up and down the room, endeavoring to discover how to do it, and at length crying out, "I've got it, I've got it!" Holding out his sketch-book, Schindler perceived the words, "*Lasst uns das Lied des unsterblichen Schiller singen,*"—"Let us sing the song of the immortal Schiller,"—as a recitative

for the Basses, with the words of the ode itself following immediately for soprano solo. And, though this was altered almost as soon as written down,—the words of the recitative being changed into, "O friends, not these tones! Let us sing something pleasanter and fuller of joy!" and the words of the ode itself being given first to the bass voice,—yet the method of the connection remained the same. How strongly is all this hesitation corroborated by Beethoven's own words to Rochlitz in 1822: "You see, for some time past I have not been able to write easily. I sit and think and think and get it all settled, but it won't come on the paper; and a great work troubles me immensely at the outset. Once get into it, and it's all right."

The first performance of the Symphony was on May 7, 1824, at the Kärnthnerthor Theatre, Vienna, at a concert given by Beethoven, in compliance with a request addressed to him by all the principal musicians, both professional and amateur, of that city.

In a letter to Schindler, quoted by Lenz, he calls the day "*Fracktag*," because he had the bore of putting on a smarter coat than usual. His deafness had by this time become total, but that did not keep him out of the orchestra. He stood by the side of Umlauf, the conductor, to indicate the times of the

various movements. At the close of the Symphony, an incident occurred which must have brought the tears to many an eye in the room. The master, though placed in the midst of this confluence of music, heard nothing of it all, and was not even sensible of the applause of the audience at the end of his great work, but continued standing with his back to the audience, *and beating the time*, till Fräulein Ungher, who had sung the contralto part, turned him or induced him to turn round and face the people, who were still clapping their hands and giving way to the greatest demonstrations of pleasure. His turning round, and the sudden conviction thereby forced on everybody that he had not done so before *because he could not hear what was going on*, acted like an electric shock on all present; and a volcanic explosion of sympathy and admiration followed, which was repeated again and again, and seemed as if it would never end.*

The Symphony starts in an entirely different manner from any other of the nine, with a prologue which is not an introduction, properly speaking, and yet introduces the principal subject of the movement. The *tempo* is the same from the beginning,—

*This anecdote, which is given in several forms in the books, was told to the writer exactly as above by Madame Sabatier-Ungher (the lady referred to), during her visit to London in 1866.