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BEETHOVEN'S 9th

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JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)
Cantata BWV No. 78 “Jesus, 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

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controversy, begins with a furious orchestral extrapolation, 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 Freund, nicht so rausch! 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 virtuoso “symphony within a symphony,” with a grand “opening movement” in D, on almost dance-like “Turkish March” section in B-flat and 4/8 time, a stately “slow movement” in G, and a “finale” that combines the “Freude” and “Sieg umschlingert” (“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 received 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. Reaching that point, he did 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 Schneider, 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 Lorellete 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 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 to refine them; and in my head... [the work] rises, it grows, it takes shape and the image in front of me does not alter... and only the labor of writing it down remains... I turn my ideas into tones that resound, roar, and rage untiringly 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 clarinet, and Maria Magdalena, the widow of a volet. 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 musical director H. G. von Sorge, who offered him a position. 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 Alkos 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 I have become the heartfelt echo of how joy has been strange to me. Oh when - oh when, oh Divine One - can I feel it all again in the temple of nature and of mankind - Never No - oh that would be too hard."

Perhaps it was the possibility of an 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 beheld for his livelihood to the nobility, he has the 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, now known as the "Choral" Symphony, is a work of monumental proportions. Its innovative musical syntax has influenced virtually every Western composer, particularly Mendelssohn and 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 1889, students played its finale through loudspeakers in Tiananmen Square to inspire courage, and Leonard Bernstein led a performance in Berlin to celebrate the end of World War II, 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 choral movement was composed in 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

Bach – Cantata No. 78
BWV 78 - "Jesu, der du meine Seele"

Cantata for the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

1. Chorus
Jesu, der du meine Seele
Hast du nicht meinen Tod
Aus dem Feuels finstem Hölle
Und der schwarzen Seelennot
Kräftiglich herausgerissen
Und mich von solcher Laster treiben
Durch dein angenehmes Wort,
Sei doch ist, o Gott, mein Hort!
("Jesu, der du meine Seele." verse 1)

2. Aria (Duet) A
Wir eilen mit schwachen, doch emsigten Schritten,
O Jesu, o Meister, zu helfen zu dir.
Du suchest die Kranken und Irrenden treulich,
Ach höre, wie wir
Die Stimmen heben, um Hülfe zu bitten!
Sei uns dein gnädiges Anltitz erfreulich!

3. Rezitative T
Ach ich bin ein Kind der Sünden,
Ach ich im weite und breit,
Der Sünden Austritt, so an mir zu finden,
Verächtlich nicht in dieser Sterblichkeit.
Mein Weib trachtet nur nach Bösen.
Der Geist zwar spricht: acht! 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 vernehmen,
So kann ich nix wie oft ich fühle, hören.
Dann nehme ich nun der Sünden Schmerz und Pein
Und meiner Sorgen Bürde.
So mir sonst unerträglich würde,
Ich legt eure Hände zu Jesu, seufzend ein.
Rechne nicht die Müßigkeit.
Die dich, Herr, erzäumt halt!
("Jesu, der du meine Seele." verses 3.4.5)

4. Aria T
Das Blut, so meine Schuld durchbreicht,
Macht mir das Herz wie wieder leicht
Und spricht mich frei.
Ruft mich der Hölten Heer zum Streite,
So stehet Jesu mir zur Seele,
Daß ich beharret und sieghalt.

5. Rezitative B
Die Wunden, Nächel, Kron und Grab.
Die Schläge, so man dort dem Heiland gab.
Sind ihm nunmehro Segenzeichen
Und können mir verneute Kräfte reichen.
The seven-movement Cantata 78, Jesu, der du meine Seele, is a four-part work, with a chorus 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 twelfth-century hymn, Jesu, der du meine Seele ("Jesus, by whom my soul..."). It dates from 1641, by Johann von Riit, and also contains some material related to the Gospel reading for this Sunday, St. Luke 16. This is the story of Jesus' healing of ten lepers. The first and last movements are verse-form settings of the opening and closing verses of Riit'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 the hymn's text. 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 style and 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 bass line 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 distinct themes with which they interpret the chorale text (e.g., the rising theme that continues with jerking leaps and sixteenth-note staccato that illustrates the text, "forcibly tipped out!"). And not only embroider the soprano part, in which the eight-phrase hymn melody appears, with intertwining melodic lines, but introduce long melismatic lines and their presentation of a line of the chorale, thus stitching the chorale melody to the fabric of the passacaglia.

A delightful canon duet for soprano and alto also follows the opening lament and, with its glisteningly effervescent lines, contrasts beautifully with it. In this movement, the best-known of the cantata, a light-hearted ascending theme, accompanied by sprightly carelessly 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. The bass is characterized by providing it with a highly expressive melodic flourish and a rich accompaniment. Perhaps the expiring 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 tenor faces a baroque situation (one note, two notes, etc.) against the "battie" against Hell's host's 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 care in the vocal lines, 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 text. The theme is so strongly embalmed 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 whiffwind 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 Lorelrite Knowles

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 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.

If 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,
 nobody will ever steal them out of Your hands.

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.

Jesu, der du meine Seele (verse 12)

"Jesu, der du meine Seele," Johann Riiit 1641 (verses 1.3-5,10,12 - movt.1. 1.3,5,7; source for the other movements)

Beethoven — Ode to Joy — Ode an die Freude

O Freund(e), nicht diese Töne Sonder laß uns angenehmere anstimmen und freudvollerer Freude, schöner Götterfunken.

Tochter aus Elysium, Wir betreten feuerfunkten, römischer Heiligtum.

Die Zauber beginnt wieder.

Manchmal sind auch die stärkeren, Weh, der große Wurf gelungen, Eines Freunds Freund zu sein.

Manchmal ist auch eine Seele

Sein nennt auf dem Erdensumpf

Und wer's nie gekonnt, der stehe

Weinend sich aus diesem Bund.

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

Joy, a wondrous spark divine, Daughter of Elysium, Drum 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 that's his. 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?
Ahnst du den Schöpfer, Welt?
Such ihn überm Sternenzelt,
Über Sternen muß er wohnen.

Schiller

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.

Translation: Clive Williams

SOLOIST BIOGRAPHIES

Eleanor Stallop-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, and 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 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 Bohème 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, "Ist du von mir? Und du von mir?"
by J. S. Bach, is a profound piece of music that explores the duality of love and its complications. The opening chorus begins with a question that sets the stage for the ensuing sections: "Ist du von mir? Und du von mir?" (Are you from me? And are you from me?). The chorale melody is presented in a series of verses, each exploring different facets of the relationship between two souls. The music, with its intricate counterpoints and expressive motivic development, truly captures the emotional depth of the text.

The closing chorus, "Ja – auch wenn dir eine Seele
Sein nennt auf dem Erden mund
Und dar’s nie gekommen, der stehe
Weinend sich aus diesem Bund"

(...and the chorus ends with a question that sets the stage for the ensuing sections: "Ist du von mir? Und du von mir?"

The music, with its intricate counterpoints and expressive motivic development, truly captures the emotional depth of the text.

The movement of the cantata, a dramatic bass recitative of deep pathos accompanied by strings and featuring frequent tempo changes and great expressiveness, is reminiscent of similar sections of Bach's Passions. The quotation from the tenor verse of the hymn text at the end of the movement is set to the middle section of the chorale melody, making it a fitting conclusion to the work. 

In summary, Cantata 78 is a profound exploration of the complexities of love and relationships, rendered with Bach's characteristic depth and breadth of musical expression.
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
Verse 1
1. Nu hintern dich in bitter Tod
1. Aus dem Teufels finstem Hölle
1. Und der schweren Seelennot

Die Stimmen erheben, um Hülfte zu bitten! Sei uns dein gnädiges Antlitz erfreulich!

3. Rezitativ T

4. Aria T
Das Blut, so meine Schuld durchstrichte, Macht mir des Herzen wieder leicht, und spricht mich frei.

2. Aria (Duet S)
Wir haben nichts, noch eher gethrung, o Jesus, o Master, zu You for help. You faithfully seek the light and erring. Ah, hear, how we lift up our voices to beg for help! Let your gracious countenance be joyous 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 compete flesh and blood to complete good actions, is greater than all my strength. If I were not to conceal my wickedness, I would be sentenced how often I fall. Therefore I take now the pain and hurt of sin and the burden of my troubles, which otherwise were unbearable to me, and commended them sorrowfully to You, Jesus. Do not reckon the transgressions that have angered You, Lord!

4. Aria T
The blood that cleanses 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. Rezitativ B

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... 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 Magdelena, the widow of a violer. 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 violinist at 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 musical directors of Bonn and Cologne. In 1787 and 1788, he 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 virtuosic pianist toward one as a composer, writing piano concertos and sonatas, chamber works for winds and strings, and then symphonies. But though by 1808 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 I have found the heart to echo such joy has been strange to me. Oh when - oh when, oh Divine One - can I feel it again in the temple of the nature and of mankind - Never No - oh that would be too hard." Perhaps it was the fleeting, unenquenchable 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, fever, 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 beheld for his livelihood to the nobility, but in 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, known as the "Choral" or "Forsyth," is a work of monumental proportions. Its innovative music syntax has influenced virtually every Western composer, particularly Mendelssohn in Venice, Wagner, Brahms, 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 1899, students played its finale through loudspeakers in Tiananmen Square to inspire courage, and Leonard Bernstein led a performance in Berlin to celebrate the 1969 establishment of 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 choral finale, which fantasizes 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 had 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 work forms 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, heterophonic 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 forebears 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 chorale 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 Freunde, 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 virtuoso “symphony within a symphony,” with a grand “opening movement” in D, on almost dance-like “Turkish March” section in B-flat and G-flat 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 incomerent; but the work enjoyed a sensual 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. Reactions that Beethoven did 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 Loreltee Knowles
BEETHOVEN'S 9th

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

ORCHESTRA SEATTLE
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George Shangraw, conductor

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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 – Refrainativo – Allegro assai vivace alla Marcia – Allegro ma non tanto

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