

# Beethoven's Ninth Onward and Upward Forever

*By Brian Arrowsmith*

Beethoven's mission is said to have been "to portray in sound every variety of human emotion." He is said to be the forerunner of the science of psychoanalysis. By listening to, or more importantly, playing Beethoven's music it can be a means of unburdening oneself of some inexplicable fear or desire, and so lighten the soul. It has a "releasing" effect upon the subconscious. Beethoven's music helped to bring about a greater unity between the heart and the mind: it helped to humanize humanity.

The high spiritual keynote that is resounding (a spiraling vortex) through all creation is "onward and upward forever." Beethoven was born with the sun in Sagittarius and this most Sagittarian seed thought, this onward-striving tendency was the theme made articulate in his incomparable creations, and in particular the Ninth Symphony. Beethoven was aware of what he called the "higher truth" in music. He also had a highly developed sense of direction and controlling will, so the Sagittarian keywords, "I see the goal, I reach that goal, and then I see another," are most appropriate.

Eleven years separated the Eighth from the Ninth Symphony – years of over-whelming significance in Beethoven's life. During them he passed through a spiritual crisis of such import that it entirely changed him both as a man and musician. For nearly a decade he wrote little, and then emerged creatively reborn and so entered the miraculous "third period" to which the Ninth belongs. It is an immense work and the entire conception and execution is transcendent. It is cosmic; space music. Beethoven was a musical prophet. There have been many mystical experiences associated with the hearing of this progressive and evolutionary masterpiece. It seems to evoke the qualities of a unifying buddhic

consciousness, embodying divine joy and love.

With the writing of the Ninth, Beethoven had been three times around the triangle, his work was completed, his destiny fulfilled, his "fixed design" was accomplished. It is interesting to note that, like Beethoven, Schubert, Dvorak, Bruckner and Mahler did not exceed nine symphonies. The spiritual keynote of Beethoven's Ninth is consummation. Nine is the most important number in relation to mankind's present stage in evolution. It is the number of humanity; it is also the number of initiation. It has been said that the even numbers of Beethoven's symphonies typify the feminine characteristics centered in the heart or love center, and the odd numbers typify masculine characteristics centered in the head, the mind or the intellect. As an aspirant passes along the path of life he learns to balance the forces of mind and heart, to fuse intelligence and love. This union is known as the Mystic Marriage and it is this beautiful rite that is described in the music of the Ninth.

The opening theme of the first movement is mighty in inspiration, rugged in power. It is cosmic in its implications; destiny is no longer personal and individual but universal. It is charged with omnipotent creative power as though the whole universe were awakening to new life. After cataclysm and in rising sequences it marches remorselessly onwards. E. Markham Lee, writing in "The Story of Symphony" says: "There can be scarcely anything finer in all music; so serenely simple and at the same time so majestic in its ideas. Technically, its manifold manipulation of material is little short of marvelous, and its expressive qualities are very great."

The second movement, a Scherzo, has been considered by many musical critics as one of

Beethoven's most notable achievements. One writer has referred to it as "strongly intermixed with a mystic vein; a little like a dance of will-o'-the-wisps." From an arcane view it is felt that Beethoven's sense of sardonic humor, a jocularity of despair, is there to affect the inner being and make for greater understanding, sympathy and compassion.

"Words fail us," writes Markham Lee, "to comment adequately upon the third movement (the Adagio), one of the most perfectly beautiful pieces of orchestral music that can ever be penned." The Adagio opens with a melody of the utmost nobility and of a marvelous serenity. It is characterized by endless melodic expansion. The devout feeling of mysticism and awe increases until the final chorus. Perhaps from the arcane view it may possibly be referred to as the sound of the "Divine circulatory flow," as the sound of the everlasting flow of spirit that infuses all.

Beethoven felt he had gone as far as he could with purely orchestral forces, and resorted to the human voice in the last movement as an aid to what he wanted to express. This final movement, for vocal quartet and choir is a setting of Schiller's Ode to Joy, written during the French Revolution, with its overall theme of the brotherhood of all mankind—a sentiment very close to Beethoven's revolutionary heart. The words of the "Hymn to Brotherhood" hold a symbolic significance of the brotherhood of man and joining of man and music:

*O friends, friends, no more of those sad tones!  
Instead, let us all raise our voices in a joyful song!  
Praise to Joy, daughter of Elysium,  
Born of God!  
Goddess, merging love and laughter,  
To thy shrine we come!  
By this magic is united  
What the harsh past held apart,  
All mankind are sworn brothers Where  
the gentle wings abide!*

In the discordant clamor that heralds the "Ode to Joy" at the end of the Ninth Symphony, Beethoven seems to be shouting "Listen to me world—what I have to say to you now. You must hear!" It begins with this thunderously discordant outburst through the whole orchestra, after which the themes of the three preceding movements are recalled and rejected. The baritone soloist declaims, "Oh friends, not these sounds; rather let us strike up more pleasing and joyful ones" (these words are Beethoven's own). Before the baritone's entry, the great diatonic tune that dominates the finale had been presented by the orchestra. It is now taken up in varied succession, first by the baritone and then by the chorus and the other soloists in different forms to make a tremendous and conclusive testament to mankind, marching forward to a new and transformed future. Finally soloists, choir and orchestra unite in a frenzied dithyramb in praise of a Joy that shall fuse all mankind into one universal brotherhood.

From an arcane view one becomes aware of the emancipation of the soul, the freedom of the spirit from all physical and material limitations, the freedom to soar at will through the higher spiritual realms. The final chorus sounds the highest keynote of human achievement which is self-emancipation and penetrates our innermost depths, and thus creates a new life-force and leads one's whole being to perfection. Therein lies the fulfillment of human life and the purpose of evolution: "Onward and Upward Forever."

Let us consider the words of the Tibetan D.K. to a disciple. "One of the major linking and blending processes is the creative work of music, particularly orchestral music. Permit music to play a major part in your life rhythm; choose only the best music such as that played by the great symphony orchestras. God created by the power of sound, and the "music of the spheres" holds all life is being. The soul on its tiny scale can create "the new man" by the power also of sound, and a musical rhythm can usefully be imposed upon the personality life by the disciple.

This is what you need - music in your life, literally and figuratively. Let the great music of the Masters of sound enter (in a new powerful way) into your consciousness. Let love and light and music enter more definitely into your daily life. Give your mind the opportunity, through the massed sound of music to break down the personality-imposed barriers between the free flow of soul life and you. " This last sentence of D.K.'s links up with our thoughts when we considered the third movement (the Adagio) of Beethoven's Ninth and likened it to the sound of the 'Divine circulatory Row. When one listens to the world's great orchestras and choirs producing the Ninth, when instruments and voices unite to form one glorious sound, one can truly say this is the power of the One Life.

How ought we to listen to Beethoven's Ninth? Ernest Newman, noted music critic, says that what Beethoven had to say he said in musical notes-sound so organized as to carry a logical train of thought and obeying no laws but those of sound. He says that the "secret" of a great musical work is to be sought and found, if anywhere, in the music of it. There is a purely musical current; "absolute" musical impulses. He says that our answer can only be that we must listen to it primarily and predominantly as music, listen to it with every fiber of something that we can only call our musical faculty.

Perhaps we may refer to this as our soul; we listen to it with our soul. Only then will it reveal itself to us as it really is. Ernest Newman says that the best way to get to the heart of Beethoven's symphonies is to go on listening to them until one knows them by heart as music. Ernest Newman writes that the Ninth is still, to a great extent, a mystery - particularly the vocal Finale, of which no really satisfactory explanation has yet been given. He then asks, did Beethoven finally resort to the Ode simply because he was in the grip of a compulsion against which he felt himself to be powerless? He goes on to say that it is conceivable, then, that the Ode, summing up for Beethoven as it did, has yearning for

spiritual joy, and his passionate sense of human brotherhood had come in the long course of time to exercise a tyranny over him that there was no resisting.

Perhaps we may put forward a very simple suggestion as to the mystery of Beethoven's invocation - the "Ode to Joy." Maybe it is the voice of the soul. Sound has been called the voice of the soul and music the food of the soul.

In writing of the expanding spiral of evolution the Tibetan D.K. says: "It should be noted that this rotary activity is of a spiral-cyclic nature, and it is from this ever present spiral tendency that the forward and upward movement arises, which in turn is responsible for all evolutionary processes." Berlioz has written concerning the Ninth Symphony: "It is certain that Beethoven, when finishing his work, and when contemplating the majestic dimensions of the monument he had just erected, might well have said to himself "let death come now, my task is accomplished." It has been said that when the soul's earthly stay is ended, it will be to strains of music that the soul will gain its release. If one should wish a requiem at their transition nothing could be finer than the playing of a record of the Finale of the Ninth. Beethoven's work was completed with his Ninth Symphony and in the final measures one is aware of a great expanding and spiraling upwards vortex of sound, which the rhythm accentuates. A great uplifting funnel of energy, a great shout of joy. Perhaps this may be looked upon as the upward path of Beethoven's soul: "Onward and Upward Forever.

## References

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