

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
2014-2015 Subscription Series

June 5, 6 and 7, 2015

MANFRED MARIA HONECK, CONDUCTOR
CHRISTIAN TETZLAFF, VIOLIN
SIMONA SATUROVA, SOPRANO
JENNIFER JOHNSON CANO, MEZZO-SOPRANO
NICHOLAS PHAN, TENOR
LIANG LI, BASS
MENDELSSOHN CHOIR OF PITTSBURGH
BETSY BURLEIGH, DIRECTOR

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D major, Opus 61
I. Allegro ma non troppo
II. Larghetto —
III. Rondo: Allegro
 Mr. Tetzlaff

Intermission

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Opus 125, "Choral"
I. Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso
II. Molto vivace — Presto — Molto vivace
III. Adagio molto e cantabile
IV. Finale, with soloists and chorus: Presto —
 Allegro ma non troppo — Vivace — Adagio cantabile —
 Allegro — Allegro assai
 Ms. Saturova
 Ms. Cano
 Mr. Phan
 Mr. Li
 Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh
 Betsy Burleigh, director

PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born 16 December 1770 in Bonn; died 26 March 1827 in Vienna

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D major, Opus 61 (1806)

PREMIERE OF WORK: Vienna, 4 April 1720; Theater-an-der-Wien; Ludwig van Beethoven, conductor; Franz Clement, soloist

PSO PREMIERE: 18 November 1898; Carnegie Music Hall; Victor Herbert, conductor; Luigi von Kunits, soloist

APPROXIMATE DURATION: 45 minutes

INSTRUMENTATION: flute, pairs of oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, and trumpets, timpani and strings

In 1794, two years after he moved to Vienna from Bonn, Beethoven attended a concert by an Austrian violin prodigy named Franz Clement. To Clement, then fourteen years old, the young composer wrote, "Dear Clement! Go forth on the way you hitherto have travelled so beautifully, so magnificently. Nature and art vie with each other in making you a great artist. Follow both and, never fear, you will reach the great — the greatest — goal possible to an artist here on earth. All wishes for your happiness, dear youth; and return soon, that I may again hear your dear, magnificent playing. Entirely your friend, L. v. Beethoven."

Beethoven's wish was soon granted. Clement was appointed conductor and concertmaster of the Theater-an-der-Wien in Vienna in 1802, where he was closely associated with Beethoven in the production of *Fidelio* and as the conductor of the premiere of the Third Symphony. Clement, highly esteemed by his contemporaries as a violinist, musician and composer for his instrument, was also noted for his fabulous memory. One tale relates that Clement, after participating in a single performance of Haydn's *The Creation*, wrote out a score for the entire work from memory. Of Clement's style of violin performance, Boris Schwarz wrote, "His playing was graceful rather than vigorous, his tone small but expressive, and he possessed unflinching assurance and purity in high positions and exposed entrances." It was for Clement that Beethoven produced his only Violin Concerto.

The Violin Concerto was written during the most productive period of Beethoven's life: the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, Fourth Piano Concerto, *Coriolan* Overture, three Op. 59 Quartets, and numerous other works clustered within a few months of its composition in 1806. So busy was Beethoven that he was able to finish the Concerto only on the day of the concert, making orchestral rehearsals for the premiere impossible. Clement, who had probably been following the progress of the work as Beethoven was composing it, must have carried the day, however, because the concert proved to be at least a partial success. Johann Nepomuk Möser provided a review of the performance that was typical of many notices Beethoven received during his lifetime: "The judgment of connoisseurs about Beethoven's music is unanimous; they acknowledge some beautiful passages in it, but they admit that the work frequently seems to lack coherence and that the endless repetitions of some trite passages tend to be tiring.... There is some fear that Beethoven, by persisting in this, will do serious harm to himself and to the public.... On the whole," Möser added, "the audience liked this concerto and Clement's fantasias very much." The "fantasias" put on display by Clement that evening were his own works, and probably accounted in no small part for the audience's good response to the concert. Clement was apparently as adept a showman as he was a virtuoso, and he played these pieces, which he programmed between the first two movements of Beethoven's Concerto, with the instrument turned upside-down, virtually assuring a success. The Viennese public knew a master when they saw one.

The sweet, lyrical nature and wide compass of the solo part of this Concerto were influenced by the polished style of Clement's playing. The five soft taps on the timpani that open the work not only serve to establish the key and the rhythm of the movement, but also recur as a unifying phrase throughout. The main theme is introduced in the second measure by the woodwinds in a chorale-like setting. A transition, with rising scales in the winds and quicker rhythmic figures in the strings, accumulates a certain intensity before it quiets to usher in the second theme, another legato strophe entrusted to the woodwinds. The development is largely given over to wide-ranging figurations for the soloist. The recapitulation begins with a recall of the five drum strokes of the opening, here spread across the full orchestra sounding in unison.

Though the hymnal *Larghetto* is technically a theme and variations, it seems less like some earth-bound form than it does a floating constellation of ethereal tones, polished and hung against a velvet night sky with infinite care and flawless precision. Music of such limited dramatic contrast cannot be brought to a satisfactory conclusion in this context, and so here it leads without pause into the vivacious rondo-finale. The solo violin trots out the principal theme before it is taken over by the full orchestra. This jaunty tune returns three times, the last appearance forming a large coda.

Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Opus 125, "Choral" (1822-1824)

PREMIERE OF WORK: Vienna, 7 May 1824; Kärntner Theater; Ludwig van Beethoven and Michael Umlauf, conductors

PSO PREMIERE: 31 March 1939; Syria Mosque; Fritz Reiner, conductor; Elisabeth Schumann, Helen Olheim, Joseph Bentonelli, Julius Huehn, soloists; Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh, chorus

APPROXIMATE DURATION: 67 minutes

INSTRUMENTATION: piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion and strings

"I've got it! I've got it! Let us sing the song of the immortal Schiller!" shouted Beethoven to Anton Schindler, his companion and eventual biographer, as he burst from his workroom one afternoon in October 1823. This joyful announcement meant that the path to the completion of the Ninth Symphony — after a gestation of more than three decades — was finally clear.

Friedrich Schiller published his poem *An die Freude* ("Ode to Joy") in 1785 as a tribute to his friend Christian Gottfried Körner. By 1790, when he was twenty, Beethoven knew the poem, and as early as 1793 he considered making a musical setting of it. Schiller's poem appears in his notes in 1798, but the earliest musical ideas for its setting are found among the sketches for the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, composed simultaneously in 1811-1812. Though those sketches are unrelated to the finished *Ode to Joy* theme — that went through more than 200 revisions (!) before Beethoven was satisfied with it — they do show the composer's continuing interest in the text and the gestating idea of setting it for chorus and orchestra. The Seventh and Eighth Symphonies were finished by 1812, and Beethoven immediately started making plans for his next composition in the genre, settling on the key of D minor but getting no further. It was to be another dozen years before he could bring this vague vision to fulfillment.

The first evidence of the musical material that was to figure in the finished Ninth Symphony appeared in 1815, when a sketch for the theme of the Scherzo emerged among Beethoven's notes. He took up his draft again in 1817, and by the following year much of the Scherzo had been sketched. It was also in 1818 that he considered including a choral movement, but not as the finale: his tentative plan called for voices in the slow movement. With much still unsettled, Beethoven was forced to lay aside this rough symphonic scheme in 1818 because of ill health, the distressing court battle to secure custody of his nephew, and other composing projects, notably the monumental *Missa Solemnis*.

The awesome *Missa* dominated Beethoven's life for over four years. By the end of 1822, the *Missa* was finished except for the scoring and some minor revisions, so Beethoven was again able to take up the symphony sketches and resume work. The chronology of these compositions — the great *Mass* preceding the Symphony — was vital to the creation of the Symphony, and is indispensable to understanding the last years of Beethoven's creative life. American critic Irving Kolodin wrote, "The Ninth owes to the *Missa Solemnis* the philosophical framework, the ideological atmosphere, the psychological climate in which it breathes and has its existence.... Unlike the *Missa*, however, it is a celebration of life, of man's earthly possibilities rather than his heavenly speculations." The 1822 sketches show considerable progress on the Symphony's first movement, little on the Scherzo, and, for the first time, some tentative ideas for a choral finale based on Schiller's poem.

At this point in the creation of the work, in November 1822, a commission from the London Philharmonic Society for a new symphony arrived. Beethoven accepted it. For several months thereafter, he envisioned two completely separate works: one for London, entirely instrumental, to include the sketched first movement and the nearly completed Scherzo; the other to use the proposed choral movement with a German text, which he considered inappropriate for an English audience. He took up the "English Symphony" first, and most of the opening movement was drafted during the early months of 1823. The Scherzo was finished in short score by August, eight years after Beethoven first conceived its thematic material; the third movement was sketched by October. With the first three movements nearing

completion, Beethoven found himself without a finale. His thoughts turned to the choral setting of *An die Freude* lying unused among the sketches for the “German Symphony,” and he decided to incorporate it into the work for London, language notwithstanding. The “English Symphony” and the “German Symphony” had merged. The Philharmonic Society eventually received the symphony it had commissioned — but not until a year after it had been heard in Vienna.

Beethoven had one major obstacle to overcome before he could complete the Symphony: how to join together the instrumental and vocal movements. He pondered the matter during his summer stay in Baden in 1823, but had not resolved the problem when he returned to Vienna in October. It was only after more intense work that he finally hit upon the idea of a recitative as the connecting tissue. A recitative — the technique that had been used for generations to bridge from one operatic number to the next — that would be perfect, he decided. And the recitative could include fragments of themes from earlier movements — to unify the structure. “I’ve got it! I’ve got it!” he shouted triumphantly. Beethoven still had much work to do, as the sketches from the autumn of 1823 show, but he at last knew his goal. The composition was completed by the end of the year. When the final scoring was finished in February 1824, it had been nearly 35 years since Beethoven first considered setting Schiller’s poem.

The Ninth Symphony begins with the interval of a barren open fifth, suggesting some awe-inspiring cosmic void. Thematic fragments sparkle and whirl into place to form the riveting main theme. A group of lyrical subordinate ideas follows. After a great climax, the open fifth intervals return to begin the highly concentrated development section. A complete recapitulation and an ominous coda arising from the depths of the orchestra bring this eloquent movement to a close. The form of the second movement is a combination of scherzo, fugue and sonata that exudes a lusty physical exuberance and a vaulting energy; the central trio is more serene in character but forfeits none of the contrapuntal richness of the Scherzo. The *Adagio* is one of the most sublime pieces that Beethoven, or anyone else, ever wrote, and its solemn profundity is enhanced by being placed between two such extroverted movements as the Scherzo and the finale. Formally, this movement is a variation on two themes, almost like two separate kinds of music that alternate with each other.

The majestic closing movement is divided into two large parts: the first instrumental, the second with chorus and soloists. Beethoven chose to set about two-thirds of the original 96 lines of Schiller’s poem, and added two lines of his own for the baritone soloist as a transition to the choral section. A shrieking dissonance introduces the instrumental recitative for cellos and basses that joins together brief thematic reminiscences from the three preceding movements. The wondrous *Ode to Joy* theme appears unadorned in the low strings, and is the subject of a set of increasingly powerful variations. The shrieking dissonance is again hurled forth, but this time the ensuing recitative is given voice and words by the baritone soloist. “Oh, friends,” he sings, “no more of these sad tones! Rather let us raise our voices together, and joyful be our song.” The song is the *Ode to Joy*, presented with transcendent jubilation by the chorus. Many sections based on the *Ode* follow, some martial, some fugal, all radiant with the glory of Beethoven’s vision.

— Dr. Richard E. Rodda

Baritone

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

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

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.

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

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!

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

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elysium,
wir betreten feuertrunken,
Himmlische, dein Heiligtum.

Joy, brilliant spark of the gods,
daughter of Elysium,
drunk with fire, we enter,
Divinity, your sacred shrine.

Seid umschlungen, Millionen!
Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!

Be embraced, ye millions!
This kiss is for the entire world!

Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen?
Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt?
Such' ihn über'm Sternenzelt!
Brüder! Brüder!

Do you bow down, ye millions?
Do you sense the Creator, World?
Seek Him above the canopy of stars!
Brothers! Brothers!

Über'm Sternenzelt
muss ein lieber Vater wohnen.

Above the canopy of stars
surely a loving Father dwells.

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.

Joy, daughter of Elysium,
Your magic again unites
all that custom harshly tore apart;
all men become brothers
beneath your gentle hovering wing.

Seid umschlungen, Millionen!
Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!
Brüder, über'm Sternenzelt
muss ein lieber Vater wohnen.

Be embraced, ye millions!
This kiss is for the entire world!
Brothers, above the canopy of stars
surely a loving Father dwells.

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elysium!

Joy, brilliant spark of the gods,
daughter of Elysium!