

Symphony #9  
Beethoven

4. O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!

O Friends, Not This Music!

Friedrich von Schiller/Ludwig van Beethoven [?]

O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!  
O friends, not these tones!  
Sondern laßt uns angenehmere  
But let us more pleasant ones  
anstimmen, und freudvollere!  
strike up, and more joyful ones!

O friends, not this music!  
Let us strike up something more  
pleasant and more joyful!

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,  
Joy, beautiful divine spark,  
Tochter aus Elysium,  
daughter from Elysium:  
Wir betreten feuertrunken,  
we enter, fire-drunk,  
Himmliche, dein Hieligtum.  
heavenly one, your sanctuary.  
Deine Zauber binden wieder,  
Your magic binds again  
Was die Mode streng geteilt;  
what — custom sternly divided;  
Alle Menschen werden Brüder,  
all mortals become brothers  
Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.  
where your gentle wing abides.

Joy, you beautiful, divine spark,  
daughter from Elysium:  
enflamed with passion, heavenly one,  
we enter your sanctuary!  
Your magic power re-unites  
what custom has sternly divided;  
all mortals become as kin  
wherever your gentle wing abides.

Wem der große Wurf gelungen,  
For whom the great throw was successful  
Eines Freundes Freund zu sein,  
a friend's friend to be,  
Wer ein holdes Weib errungen,  
who a gracious wife gained,  
Mische seinen Jubel ein!  
mix in his rejoicing —!  
Ja— wer auch nur eine Seele  
Yes— who also only one soul  
Sein nennt auf dem Erdenrund!  
his calls on the globe!  
Und wer's nie gekonnt, der stehle  
And who it never was able, that one steal  
Weinend sich aus diesem Bund!  
weeping — away from this union!

Those who have had the great fortune  
to be a friend to a friend,  
those who have won a gracious spouse,  
should join together in rejoicing!  
Yes—all those who also have just one soul  
on earth to call their very own!  
And those who cannot, may they steal  
tearfully away from this company!

Freude trinken alle Wesen  
Joy drink all creatures  
An den Brüsten der Natur;  
at the breasts of nature;  
Alle Guten, alle Bösen  
all good, all evil [ones]  
Folgen ihrer Rosenspur.  
follow its rose-trail.  
Küsse gab sie uns und Reben,  
Kisses gave it to us and grapes,  
Eine Freund, geprüft im Tod;  
a friend, tested in death;  
Wollust ward dem Wurm gegeben,  
bliss was to the worm given,  
Und der Cherub steht vor Gott.

All creatures drink joy  
at nature's breast;  
all, good and evil alike,  
follow its rosy path.  
Joy gave us kisses and grapes,  
a friend, faithful to the end;  
even the worm was granted bliss,  
and the cherub stands before God.

Froh, wie seine Sonnen fliegen  
 Glad, like his suns, fly  
 Durch des Himmels prächt'gen Plan,  
 through the heaven's splendid plane.  
 Laufet, Brüder, eure Bahn,  
 Go, brothers, your way,  
 Freudig, wie ein Held zum Siegen.  
 joyously, like a hero toward victory.

Seid umschlungen, Millionen.  
 Be embraced, millions.  
 Diesen Kuß der ganzen Welt!  
 This kiss for the whole world!  
 Brüder— über'm Sternzelt  
 Brothers, above the star-tent  
 Muß ein lieber Vater wohnen.  
 must a beloved father dwell.

Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen?  
 You fall down, millions?  
 Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt?  
 Sense you the creator, world?  
 Such ihn über'm Sternzelt!  
 Seek him above the star-tent!  
 Über Sternen muß er wohnen.  
 Above stars must he dwell.

Source: Schiller 1867, 1: 47

Variant: (Beethoven = roman, Schiller = italic)  
 Stanza 5, line 3: laufet = wandert

Gladly, like his suns, fly  
 through the splendid plane of the firmament.  
 Thus, comrades, run your course,  
 joyously, like a hero off to victory.

Be embraced, you millions!  
 This kiss is for the whole world!  
 Brothers and sisters—above the starry canopy  
 a beloved father must surely dwell.

Do you prostrate yourselves, you millions?  
 Do you sense your creator, world?  
 Seek him above the canopy of stars!  
 Above the stars he must surely dwell.

JOHANN Christoph Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) was raised in Stuttgart. The city's pride is manifested in the massive statue of the poet in its market square, the "Schillerplatz." Schiller, however, was unhappy there. From age 13 to 21 he resided in a military academy where he felt confined. He graduated from there as a doctor in 1770 and spent the next eighteen months following in his father's footsteps by serving in the army. Simultaneously, however, he wrote dramas and poetry for which he began to acquire some renown.

Neither the army nor Stuttgart was to remain in Schiller's future. At the age of twenty three he left both to begin a new life as a writer. First he went to Mannheim, where opportunity beckoned but faded into penury less than three years later. After two more-successful years in Leipzig he moved to Weimar, where he met and befriended Goethe and spent the rest of his life.

Best known among literary scholars as a dramatist and critical thinker, Schiller's fame among musicians lies in a poem entitled "An die Freude" (Ode to Joy), "an essay in secular religion" (Kerman and Tyson 1980: 387) that Beethoven immortalized in the finale to his revolutionary ninth symphony of 1824. The poem originally appeared in the first issue (February, 1786) of *Thalia*,<sup>9</sup> the successor to a failed theatrical magazine of similar name that Schiller had published in Mannheim the previous year. Schiller wrote the poem in honor of his friendship with Christian Gottfried Körner, who invited him to move to Leipzig from Mannheim, opening his door to Schiller at the most difficult juncture in his life. Körner was to remain lifelong a valued critic and friend of the poet.

As the one late-period Beethoven symphony the Ninth is in a sense retrospective in resuming the "symphonic ideal" which for decades had inspired little music [in Beethoven]; retrospective, too, is the frank echo of revolutionary French cantatas in the choral finale. Yet as a gesture, this finale shows once again Beethoven's uncanny grasp of essences below "the adornments of Art." As Wagner always insisted, words and a choir with soloists to sing them seem to force their way into the symphony in order to make instrumental music fully articulate, to resolve the conflict of the earlier movements with a consummation of unexampled triumph. (Kerman and Tyson 1980: 387)

Nine years before Beethoven, Schubert had set the complete poem as a strophic song—all eight stanzas of eight lines, each followed by a "chorus" of an additional four lines. This tedious type of setting was of no interest to Beethoven, who needed a "custom-built" text for his freer, symphonic context. He thus selected six from among the sixteen sections of Schiller's poem, arranging them according to his own plan.

Beethoven's choices were all from the first half of the poem: stanzas 1, 2, and 3, followed by "choruses" 4, 1, and 3. He arranged his selections to provide two distinct textual sections: the three eight-line stanzas provide an essay on joy and happiness, and the three four-line choruses, distinguished by a different, ab-ba rhyme scheme, exhort humanity to acknowledge the divine—by implication the source of all joy. The third chorus, with its penetrating questions, is a fitting choice to conclude the libretto.

Schiller's poem did not provide Beethoven with the introduction he needed, a transition from musical anarchy into the joyful confidence of Schiller's poem. The composer therefore began with three lines, possibly his own, that call upon his "friends" to change their tune to "something more pleasant and joyful." Beethoven's music, of course, obliges gloriously.

<sup>9</sup>In Greek, *Thalia* means "the flowering of beauty." The name is that of one of the Graces of Greek mythology, the three sister goddesses of beauty.