

Montgomery Philharmonic 2018 - 2019 Our 13th Season : They Changed The World

Concert 2, December 1 and 2, 2018, 4 PM: At the Intersection

Beethoven | Bernstein | Bass

About Ludwig van Beethoven –

Ludwig van Beethoven was a German composer and pianist. A crucial figure in the transition between the Classical and Romantic eras in Western art music, Beethoven remains one of the most famous and influential of all composers. Beethoven started his professional study as a pianist in 1779 in Bonn with Neefe, who was appointed Court Organist. Neefe also taught him composition. Beethoven's first job was working as Neefe's assistant. During this time, his first works were published – a set of piano variations and three sonatas. Soon afterward, Beethoven moved to Vienna, intending to study with Haydn. It is not clear how much he actually studied with him, but Beethoven did study counterpoint with Haydn. At the same time, Beethoven established himself as a piano virtuoso and violinist.

In the early 1800's, Beethoven began to write symphonies, chamber music, and piano sonatas, and he also accepted piano students. The first signs of tinnitus began to appear also at this time, and by 1811, he was having great difficulty playing his own work, the *Emperor Concerto*; by 1814, he was completely deaf. Beethoven's deafness has been attributed to lead poisoning. He kept his wine in a ceramic container that had a lead-based glaze, and a recent analysis of a few strands of his hair found that it contained abnormally high levels of lead.

Beethoven's last period of composition began in 1815. At this point, he became an innovator in forms of composition and his music had a striking intellectual depth and intensity of expression.

- **Born:** December 16, 1770, in Bonn, Germany
- **Died:** March 26, 1827, in Vienna, Austria
- **Parents:** Maria Magdalena Keverich, Johann van Beethoven
- **Siblings:** Kaspar Anton Karl van Beethoven, Nikolas Johann van
- **Compositions:** 9 symphonies, 7 concerti, 1 opera, numerous works for piano including 32 piano sonatas, 16 string quartets, and dozens of other chamber music works

Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Opus 125 "Choral" (1824) – Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* is arguably the most enjoyed piece of classical music in the canon. The symphony sits at the intersection of Classic era and Romantic era music and was the first major symphony to use vocal soloists and a choir in a symphony. Interestingly, it was not well received by all. Giuseppe Verdi did not like the finale and wrote a letter to his friend Clarina Maffei on April 20, 1878, saying that the symphony was, was "marvelous in its first three movements, very badly set in the last. No one will ever surpass the sublimity of the first movement, but it will be an easy task to write as badly for voices as is done in the last movement."

The first movement can be described in one sentence: It is a sonata form with some of the most sublime writing to this point. The second movement is a scherzo and trio and is out of place for the Classical era. This would normally occur as a third movement, but Beethoven had begun to rethink the symphony, beginning with his third symphony, when Beethoven stretched the boundaries of form, length, harmony, and perceived emotional and possibly cultural content. He put a scherzo as the third movement rather than an minuet and trio; moving the scherzo to the second movement position caused quite a stir in the music community. The third movement is a lyrical movement employing a loose theme and variations form, with each variation becoming more rhythmically complicated and interrupted by loud fanfares in the full orchestra and later answered by octaves in the violins. It is the fourth movement that is written about, criticized, and analyzed the most. The fourth movement seems to stand on its own as a symphony within a symphony. It takes fragments of thematic material from each movement and introduces these fragments as a theme and variation in the introduction. Additionally, the fourth movement contains a "Turkish style" military march, a slow section that has been described as a meditation, a fugato, a stormy presto passage, vocal recitative, a short set of variations for the orchestra alone, another presto section where the bass soloist sings recitatives based on themes previously played by the cellos and basses, and, finally, the main theme undergoes variations once more, only this time for vocal soloists and chorus, and there is a coda presto section for orchestra alone.

Text and translation of the fourth movement –

Instrumentation – piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, violin 1, violin 2, viola, cello, double bass

Artifacts –

Sketches of the piece in Beethoven's hand

Article about which Beethoven – *Symphony No. 9* is the best recording to buy

Evan Fischer talks about Beethoven – *Symphony No. 9*



Beethoven: The Complete Symphony Collection

Beethoven: Symphony No. 9, "Choral"

Beethoven: Symphony No. 9 & Fidelio Overture

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Beethoven: Symphony No. 9

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Beethoven: The Music and the Life

YouTube.com Links –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIQ32q2k8Uo>

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IInG5nY_wrU&t=6s