

2005-04

# "Not These Sounds": Beethoven at Mauthausen

---

Schmidt, James. "Not These Sounds": Beethoven at Mauthausen. *Philosophy and Literature* 29 (2005): 146-163.

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/3769>

*Boston University*

# “Not These Sounds”: Beethoven at Mauthausen\*

James Schmidt

## I.

On May 7, 2000, the British conductor Simon Rattle led the Vienna Philharmonic in a memorial performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony at the site of the former Nazi concentration camp at Mauthausen.<sup>1</sup> The concert marked the fifty-fifth anniversary of the liberation of the Austrian camp, which had been established shortly after the *Anschluss* to receive prisoners who — in the argot of the Third Reich — were classified as “unreformable” and “scarcely trainable.”<sup>2</sup> Those initially imprisoned included Austrian and German criminals, political prisoners, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Roma. They were later joined by Poles, Spanish civil war refugees who had been interned in France and were turned over to German authorities by the Vichy government, Soviet and other prisoners of war, and Jews, many of whom were transferred from camps abandoned in the face of advancing Soviet troops during the last year of the war.<sup>3</sup>

The function of Mauthausen was to work inmates to death. It proved to be ruthlessly efficient in carrying out its mission. Estimates of the total number killed range upward from 119,000 and the mortality rate was surpassed only by the extermination camps established in occupied Poland in 1941 and 1942.<sup>4</sup> The camp was built around a working quarry, and prisoners were compelled to carry loads of stones up the 186 steps that led from the base of the quarry to the surface. Inmates were regularly killed in falls or struck by falling rocks. But not all of the deaths at Mauthausen were the result of these horrific working conditions. Guards regularly forced prisoners outside the boundaries of the camp and then shot them on the pretense that they were attempting to escape. Between October 1941 and January 1942 prisoners were driven *en masse* into bathing areas where they were subjected to extended showers in frigid water: the weaker inmates

\* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Scientific Conference of the St. Petersburg Composers’ Union, St. Petersburg, Russian Republic, in May 2002. The author wishes to thank Mikhail Bialik and Ludmilla Leibman for their interest and support and Bernard Yack and Lydia Goehr for comments that led to some substantial revisions.

collapsed and were drowned, their bodies clogging the drains, while guards forced others beneath the rising waters. Still other prisoners seized the only means of escape they could find and jumped to their death from the top of the quarry, prompting civilian laborers employed at the camp to complain to authorities about having to work amidst gore and pieces of brain.<sup>5</sup>

Authorities responded to epidemics of typhus and dysentery – the result of overcrowding in the camp – by shooting the sick. With the arrival of POWs from the Russian front, mass executions by firing squads began, and in 1941 the first gassing chamber was built at the nearby Castle Hartheim. As the slaughter increased, the municipal crematorium south of the camp was supplemented by three new crematoria constructed within the boundaries of the camp itself. When they were operational, tufts of human hair flew out of their chimneys onto the streets of Mauthausen itself, a peaceful town of about 1,800 residents who — while annoyed by the stench of burning flesh and not insensitive to the coarsening of life that the presence of so many soldiers brought to the region — generally kept to themselves and tried not to raise too many questions about what was going on at the camp.<sup>6</sup>

It was to this spot, then, that the Vienna Philharmonic came, in the late spring of 2000, to perform a symphony that ends with a choral setting of Friedrich Schiller’s “Ode to Joy.” Given the history of the place, it would be difficult to think of a more peculiar choice.

## II.

The concert at Mauthausen was intended as a contribution to a process of commemoration and reconciliation. In the eyes of those involved in its planning, it was a way to remember those who perished and to confront a part of Austrian history that was largely ignored by a nation that tended to see itself more as an unwilling victim of the

horrors of the National Socialist period than as an active participant in their commission. Yet, almost from the outset, the concert was plagued with controversy.

Elections held in the previous autumn resulted in the formation of a government that included Jörg Haider's Freedom Party.<sup>7</sup> Haider had gained notoriety for past expressions of admiration for the "orderly labor policy" of the Third Reich, his praise for the "upstanding character" of veterans of the *Waffen-SS*, and his concern with the *Überfremdung* —Nazi jargon for a surplus of foreigners — in Austria. The inclusion of his party in the government sparked expressions of outrage from other members of the European Community, and the Mauthausen concert was quickly pulled into the controversy. The prospect of representatives from a government that included Haider's party appearing at the concert prompted a group of Mauthausen survivors to announce their opposition to the event.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, Elie Wiesel, who had been scheduled to attend, wrote an open letter in March withdrawing from the ceremony, explaining, "In a country where there is a Mauthausen there should not be a Haider."<sup>9</sup>

The presence of the Vienna Philharmonic at the ceremony also drew criticism. In announcing plans for the concert, Leon Zelman — a Mauthausen survivor who had been active in encouraging descendants of Jews expelled from Austria in 1938 to return to Vienna — had hailed the orchestra as "our best ambassadors."<sup>10</sup> Others, however, were less than enthusiastic about the choice and noted the orchestra's past role as a cultural icon of the National Socialist state and current controversies involving a hiring policy that excluded women and non-Europeans from membership.<sup>11</sup> The musicologist Thomas Dombrowski, observing that the orchestra's ranks included "enthusiastic Nazis" until "well into the seventies," described it as "the most unworthy ensemble in the world for such a task" and sarcastically commented that it was a shame that the orchestra had been unable to obtain the services of conductors Karl Böhm or Herbert von Karajan, both of whom had been members of the Nazi party and had successful careers during the Third Reich.<sup>12</sup> The reviewer of the concert for *The Beethoven Journal*, while praising the

selection of the disabled bass Thomas Quasthoff and the African-American tenor Vison Cole (both of whom would have been marked for extermination by the Nazi state) as soloists, found the participation of the “unashamedly racist and sexist” Philharmonic to be “unfortunate, to say the least.”<sup>13</sup> And the composer William Osborne, a long-time critic of the orchestra’s hiring policies, characterized the concert as “a hypocritical and self-serving public relations spectacle” aimed at repairing the reputation of the orchestra. Noting that concert planners had sought to limit participation of officials from the increasingly right-wing government he observed, “With so many wolves in one place, there could be a shortage of lamb suits.”<sup>14</sup>

Finally, a number of critics were repelled by the very idea of a concert at the Mauthausen site. Their disgust only increased after the responsibility for planning the concert was turned over to an advertising firm that opted for the construction of a six-story orchestra shell, giant video screens (both at the camp and at remote locations in Linz and Vienna), an elaborate amplification system involving individual microphones on all the musicians, the use of colored lights on the walls of the quarry, and a satellite broadcast of the concert throughout Europe.<sup>15</sup> Marta Halpert, the director of the central European office of the Anti-Defamation League in Vienna insisted, “Anything that changes this uniquely brutal slaughterhouse on Austrian soil into a concert house is frivolous and tasteless,” and noted bitterly that the elaborate arrangements for the concert ensured that “the crescendo of the Philharmonic’s brass will drown out the screams and lamentations of the abused.”<sup>16</sup> The Viennese historian Marie-Theres Arnborn was likewise appalled by the prospect of the quarry being transformed into a “virtual concert hall” in which loudspeakers would blast the “Ode to Joy” over a place where “defenseless men were tortured to death.”<sup>17</sup>

### III.

The final movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony opens with a dissonant fanfare which the composer Richard Wagner aptly dubbed the *Schreckensfanfare* ("terror fanfare"). It is repeated immediately before the entry of the baritone soloist, who implores, "Oh friends, not these sounds, rather let us sing more pleasant ones, and more full of joy." Beethoven's sketches suggest that, initially, he had planned a lengthier recitative. In the drafts the baritone begins by announcing, "Today is a festive day my friends ... let us celebrate it with song." Themes from earlier movements of the symphony are then quoted, followed by critical comments by the baritone – e.g., "No, that would remind us of our despair" – until at last the familiar theme of the "Ode to Joy" is heard, which draws the comment, "Ah! There it is! It's been found! Let us sing the immortal Schiller's song!"<sup>18</sup> In the final version, Beethoven opted for a more subtle approach: the opening *Schreckensfanfare* is followed by a statement by the orchestra's basses of the melody that is subsequently used for the baritone recitative. This purely instrumental statement of the recitative is interrupted by fragments from the earlier movements. An instrumental statement of the "joy" theme and a set of variations on the theme follow, culminating in the reprise of the *Schreckensfanfare*, which serves to introduce the baritone recitative and the extended choral finale.

The rejected sketches only make explicit what listeners to the Ninth Symphony have long sensed. When the baritone implores "Not these sounds," more is rejected than just the *Schreckensfanfare*. What is also banished is the memory of the struggles and sorrows – both those that have been traced in the symphony's earlier movements and, by implication, those that listeners have endured in their own lives. If Beethoven's later quartets and piano sonatas are notoriously ambiguous and introverted, the Ninth tends to strike the casual listener as expansive and affirmative: it opens in hushed silence and

ends with a hymn to brotherhood that is cosmic in its reach. Much of the apparent intelligibility of the work stems from the presence of Schiller's text which lends a coherence to a work that might otherwise pose many of the challenges that define Beethoven's late style. By overcoming the division between symphonic and choral works, Beethoven's music seems to enact what Schiller's poem promises: that which had been separated by "stern custom" is now joined together. Through its magic, music achieves what Schiller claimed that joy might do through its and an audience that might otherwise be divided is bound together in the act of listening. As Arnold Schoenberg once observed, "music uses time. It uses my time, it uses your time, it uses its own time."<sup>19</sup> To listen to the Ninth is to share a portion of one's life with others, and in following the work from its hesitant beginning to the thunderous climax listeners are joined together into a community that embraces not only the millions alluded to in the closing chorus, but also reaches beyond the stars to that place where, the music assures us, a loving Father must surely dwell.

It is little wonder, then, that the Ninth tends to be a work to which our culture turns in order to mark significant public events, especially since other musical settings — such as the Te Deum or the Requiem — have become somewhat problematic for those political communities that have rid themselves of their religious establishments.<sup>20</sup> The Mauthausen concert had been preceded, a decade earlier, by performances of the Ninth Symphony marking the fall of the Berlin Wall.<sup>21</sup> Leonard Bernstein conducted a group of musicians pulled together from countries that lay on differing sides of the border that, until a few months earlier, had divided Europe in concerts held on December 23, 1989 in the *Philharmonie* in the former West Berlin and on Christmas day at the *Schauspielhaus* in the former East Berlin. These concerts, like the one at Mauthausen, were not without controversy. Bernstein took the liberty of substituting the word "*Freiheit*" ("Freedom") for Schiller's "*Freude*" — an alteration he justified by appealing to the spirit of the moment, rather than to the long-discredited claim by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn that Schiller

had initially conceived the poem as an “Ode to Freedom” but, under fear of the censor, opted for the more innocuous “*Freude*.”<sup>22</sup> The audience in the Schauspielhaus seemed more than willing to accept the revision. The correspondent from the *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung* reported that many in hall “shed tears unashamedly.”

Bernstein raised the finale to a dionysian ecstasy. One moment of silence: and then all people jumped jubilantly from their seats and fell into one another’s arms.<sup>23</sup>

Bernstein’s sense of showmanship must have confirmed what the musician in him already knew: this is the perfect piece of music to mark the falling of barriers, the end of divisions, the reuniting of peoples — and let us not underestimate one final factor that would not have been lost on such a consummate professional as Bernstein: orchestras already have it in their repertoire, which makes it possible to pull off an event like this on rather short notice. Yet, the fact that a performance of the Ninth might have been a fitting way to mark the end of the *annus mirabilis* 1989 only makes its role at Mauthausen in the late Spring of 2000 all the more peculiar. For what was it supposed to do there?

Zelman saw the concert at Mauthausen as an attempt “to say farewell to a Europe of war, cruelty and crimes” that might serve as “a symbol for the start of a new millennium, full of hope.”<sup>24</sup> While such sentiments are at one with the gesture which closes the Ninth Symphony – a turning away from the memory of sorrow to join in a song in praise of joy – it is difficult to reconcile them with the emphasis on remembrance and recognition of responsibility that played so large a role in the published justifications for the event. There was, however, a further argument for choosing the Ninth. Noting that a large proportion of those interned in the camp were political prisoners, Zelman argued, “The dead of Mauthausen were mainly freedom fighters who died for a certain vision of Europe, and on the eve of a new millennium I wanted to do something for this



dream of a new Europe.” Pointing to the symbolic function of the Ninth within the European Community, he observed, “The Ninth Symphony is the hymn of Europe.”<sup>25</sup>

The notion of the Ninth Symphony as a “hymn of Europe” reaches back into the nineteenth century and, in 1971, the so-called “Prelude to the Ode to Joy,” i.e., the initial instrumental statement of the principal theme of the last movement, was officially adopted by the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe as the “European Anthem.”<sup>26</sup> In making the case for this choice, the Committee on Regional Planning and Local Authorities argued that it would “be preferable to select a musical work representative of European genius and whose use on European occasions is already becoming something of a tradition.”<sup>27</sup> There was a considerable tradition to draw upon. Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, founder of the “Union Paneuropéenne” had proposed the adoption of the Ode to Joy as the “European anthem” in the 1920s and revived the proposal in the mid-fifties.<sup>28</sup> The “Ode to Joy” has been pressed into service to mark the opening of NATO’s headquarters in Brussels (though the American general who presided over the ceremonies was reported to have been under the impression that the music he was hearing was the Belgian national anthem) and had been performed in 1959 at ceremonies marking the tenth anniversary of the Council of Europe’s founding.<sup>29</sup>

Yet, if the Ninth Symphony expresses an ideal of Europe that had been embraced by those who perished at Mauthausen, it also figured prominently in the cultural life of those who slaughtered them. There is a rather chilling film of a 1942 performance of the Ninth Symphony by Wilhelm Furtwängler and the Berlin Philharmonic. Near the close of the last movement, the camera catches the concertmaster gazing backwards at the Bruno Kittel Chorus while he is playing, as if to revel in the sounds they are producing. The camera then pulls back, bringing into view the huge swastika banners on either side of the stage, and pans up to the balcony, where Adolph Hitler can be seen. It is his birthday, and Furtwängler is discharging a task that he had managed, up until this point, to avoid.<sup>30</sup>

The program was hardly unusual: Beethoven's works occupied a central place in Nazi musical culture. Explaining the "political effect" of Beethoven's music, the Nazi musicologist Walter Vetter observed, "all the peoples of the earth it has peacefully subjugated consider his art an admirable manifestation of German style. . . . It is Beethoven that we have to thank for founding a musical world literature of German national origins." In the Nazi interpretation of Beethoven, the *Eroica* marks the turning point in his development: here Beethoven rids himself of his early flirtation with the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution and "felt his heart yearning for a born *Führer* personality." Likewise, the Fifth Symphony was interpreted by Nazi ideologues as the "fight for existence waged by a *Volk* that looks for its *Führer* and finally finds it."<sup>31</sup>

Though the Ninth Symphony figured regularly on orchestral programs during the Nazi period, there were some difficulties in reconciling the Ninth with Nazi ideology. It ends, after all, not like Wagner's *Meistersinger* (Hitler's favorite work), with a celebration of "German art," but with a hymn of brotherhood. Some hard-line Nazis had reservations about the work, suggesting that the kiss Beethoven offered to the entire world was "shameless" and calling for research to determine whether it was true that Beethoven had been a Freemason.<sup>32</sup> Others maintained that the community of brothers depicted in the work was something that lay in the future, once Germany had been "purified." For this reason, even after the Ninth came to be performed at ceremonies within Germany, "live concerts of the Ninth were forbidden to the populations of occupied areas, particularly Eastern territories."<sup>33</sup> In other words, *some* men become brothers. The rest become ashes.

#### IV.

Asked whether he thought that the performance at Mauthausen "worked as an event," Rattle responded,

No, fortunately it wasn't an event. It worked as a ritual. ... Not only did we play in this terrible place for twenty thousand people, including many survivors and children of survivors, who managed to stand with candles in complete silence at the end. It was also broadcast on the major television channel throughout the country. There were big screens in several towns where parents with young children came together. ... There were also some very-hard hitting speeches saying, 'This is what happened. Remember this.'<sup>34</sup>

While it is not clear how Rattle distinguishes an "event" and a "ritual," his comments do underline one of the more striking features of the performance at Mauthausen: the extent to which the organizers attempted to have Beethoven's Ninth serve as the centerpiece for an event that was saturated with extra-musical symbolism.

Beethoven conceived the work for the concert hall. Premiered on May 7, 1824 at a concert that included Beethoven's "Consecration of the House" overture, a revised version of "The Ruins of Athens," and the *Kyrie*, *Credo*, and *Agnus Dei* from the *Missa Solemnis*, it is a work that – unlike the *Missa Solemnis* – has no liturgical function and – unlike such earlier works as the *Glorious Moment* or the *Cantata on the Death of Joseph II* – was not composed to mark a particular public event. Yet, over the last two centuries, it is a work that has come to play an important role in any number of different, and often conflicting, rituals. From as early as the 1845 ceremonies in Bonn marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Beethoven's birth, it has played a central role in the creation of a cult around the figure of Beethoven as the creative genius responsible for founding a new "religion of music," an idea which would shape how Beethoven's work would be received by subsequent generations of admirers.<sup>35</sup> Richard Wagner conducted the work at the ceremony marking the laying of the cornerstone for the Bayreuth *Festspielhaus* in 1872, a gesture that was repeated in 1933, when Richard Strauss led a performance of the work at the opening of the first Bayreuth Festival of the Nazi era, and in 1951, when

Wilhelm Furtwängler conducted the work a ceremonies marking the first festival of the post-war period.<sup>36</sup> Hans Pfizner conducted it at 1934 ceremonies marking Schiller's 175<sup>th</sup> birthday – an occasion on which Hitler visited the house in which Schiller died and the poet was hailed as a “precursor of National Socialism.”<sup>37</sup> Four years later this “hymn for World peace and joy” was performed by Walter Damarosch at a concert in New York.<sup>38</sup> The Berlin Olympics of 1936 opened with a performance of the “Ode to Joy” by the National Socialist party orchestra.<sup>39</sup> The opening ceremonies of the Winter Olympics in Nagano featured a performance of the Choral Finale in which Seiji Ozawa conducting -- though a satellite hook-up -- orchestras on five continents. The list could be extended and would only serve to confirm what Schiller's poem had already confessed: joy is rather indiscriminate in what it brings together. “All things good, all things evil, follow her rosy trail.”

The various rituals that have accompanied these performances represent a series of attempts to claim a particular significance for a work that, as the diversity of these rituals amply testifies, has been open to a staggering number of differing interpretations. The gesture that opens the final movement is fraught with ambiguity: even as the orchestral basses anticipate the recitative in which the baritone will implore listeners to turn away from the sounds that haunted the previous movements, the orchestra reiterates them. No sooner has the “joy theme” been introduced than it is subjected to an increasingly complex set of variations. Every apparent resolution of the work – save the actual closing measures – only serves to push the work into new and unexpected directions.<sup>40</sup> Much has been lost in the transformation of an ode to joy that encompasses all creation from worms to cherubs into an “Anthem for Europe.” A work that embraces a staggering diversity of musical material has been reduced to the instrumental prelude to the chorale finale (arranged by Herbert von Karajan, whose estate still holds the copyright).<sup>41</sup> The fate of the Ninth could thus serve as a prime example of what

Theodor Adorno labeled “the musical fetish”: works have come to reduced to a single, identifying “tune” and everything that resists such identification tends to be forgotten.<sup>42</sup>

At Mauthausen the Ninth Symphony was performed in its entirety, but everything that surrounded the performance was intended to provide a context where a concert work with no liturgical function could serve as the centerpiece for a quasi-religious ceremony. The work was preceded by the singing of “El Mole Rachamim,” a Jewish prayer of mourning in an arrangement for cantor and string sextet, and by a recitation of the Kaddish. The audience was instructed not to applaud at the end of the Ninth Symphony but instead to stand silently with candles that had been provided prior to the performance. Martin Kettle, reviewing the event for *The Guardian*, praised Rattle for getting “it right, politically as well as musically,” and concluded, “There can be little doubt that the final verdict on the Mauthausen Memorial event is that the decent people have done some good.”<sup>43</sup> Yet, as the audience at Mauthausen lit their candles and refrained from the applause which, in the concert hall, breaks the spell and returns the audience to the everyday world, on the massive video screens outside the quarry and on television sets throughout Europe they were becoming what the historian Marie-Theres Arnborn feared they would become: “extras in a mass-spectacle.” In an age when art works are mechanically reproduced and electronically disseminated, the line between cult and kitsch is a treacherous one.

It is sometimes maintained that if anything distinguishes modernity from previous epochs, it is the insistence on making a clear distinction between differing value spheres.<sup>44</sup> To be modern is to understand that there are significant differences between claims of empirical validity, normative rightness, and aesthetic beauty. If this line of reasoning is at all compelling, events like the concert at Mauthausen begin to look rather suspect. “Art,” as Theodor Adorno once observed, “is magic freed from the lie of being true.”<sup>45</sup> To take music out of the concert hall, a sphere in which it is freed from the pretense of being true, and to perform it in a setting like Mauthausen would seem to be a

reversion to pre-modern attitudes towards works of art. It is to behave as if their magic might somehow still be real, as if they might indeed have the power of binding together what custom has separated. If the claims that music makes are aesthetic rather than moral, then best that can be said about the performance at Mauthausen is that it was pointless. The proper place for the Vienna Philharmonic is back in the concert hall, and what we need to do at places like Mauthausen is to remember what happened there, which is something that can be done more easily if we are not distracted by an orchestra playing Beethoven.<sup>46</sup>

Yet the border that separates aesthetics from morality may be difficult to police. For if the idea of bringing an orchestra to Mauthausen in hopes of saying farewell to the evils of the past is unsettling, no less unsettling is the idea that all those Nazis in the film of Hitler's birthday concert could be moved by a work which we might regard as one of the most powerful expressions of everything in our culture that stood opposed to their barbarism. For years the composer Michael Tippett carried in his wallet a review of Peter Weiss's play *The Investigation* that described an incident reported in the play, which was based on transcripts of the trials of Nazi war criminals. It told how one of the camp guards at Auschwitz, pursuing graduate studies in the humanities, pulled inmates off the ramps to the gas chambers and had them listen to a lecture he was preparing on "Humanism in Goethe." Tippett carried the clipping as a way of mitigating any vanity that he might feel as an artist and to free himself of "any lingering belief that humanist art could achieve that moral power over and within humanity which religious art, and, indeed, traditional religion itself had not."<sup>47</sup> It was a reminder that whatever power art still might possess, it was not strong enough to resist that evil. A reminder of the weakness of the moral claims that art works might make is not, however, the same thing as saying that they are without moral significance.

## V.

The Auschwitz survivor Otto Dov Kulka recalled that, as a member of a Jewish children's choir, he once rehearsed the Ode to Joy in the public lavatory barracks at the camp. As the years past, he found himself more and more perplexed by what the conductor of the choir – a Jew imprisoned in the camp – had in mind in “choosing these words and this composition.” Kulka was torn between two conflicting interpretations:

Sometimes I think it was a wonderful, magnificent manifestation of the spirit of universal values, which can survive even the most inhumane deeds of man. ... But sometimes I have doubts about this interpretation. It may well be that this performance and this choice were an expression of an extreme sarcasm, an almost satanic gesture. Mass murder is unequivocal. It is something which is the extreme of radical evil. But using those innocent children and those solemn texts and music, regarded as the highest achievement of the spirit, is also evil. In this situation, perhaps the only possible way for the grown-ups to confront the radical evil facing them was with another radical distortion of values, using sarcastic scorn.<sup>48</sup>

While Kulka tended to prefer the first interpretation “which is pleasant,” he also thought that there was something to be said for what the second implied: “The only possibility of spiritual survival was not by believing, but by disbelieving.”<sup>49</sup>

This second interpretation echoes something of the stance of Adrian Leverkühn, the composer protagonist of Thomas Mann's novel *Doctor Faustus*. Faced with the realization that it is impossible to reconcile the aspirations of the Ninth Symphony with the horrors of the world in which he lives, Leverkühn resolves to “take back” the Ninth Symphony and replace it with “the most awful lament of man and God ever intoned on this earth.”<sup>50</sup> In Mann's novel, the revocation of the Ninth Symphony is accomplished

through a work that reverses Beethoven's trajectory. In the Ninth Symphony, instrumental music issues ultimately in song; in Leverkühn's *Lamentation of Doctor Faustus* the chorus ultimately falls silent, leaving only the orchestra:

One instrumental group after the other steps back, and what remains as the work fades away is the high G of a cello, the final word, the final sound, floating off, slowly vanishing in a *pianissimo fermata*. Then nothing more. Silence and night. But the tone, which is no more, for which, as it hangs there vibrating in the silence, only the soul still listens, and which was the dying note of sorrow — is no longer that, its meaning changes, it stands as a light in the night.<sup>51</sup>

*The Lamentation of Doctor Faustus* was a piece of fiction, a work that Theodor Adorno imagined and sketched at Mann's request.<sup>52</sup> There is, however, at least one composition that has attempted the revocation of Beethoven's Ninth that Mann imagined.

The second part of Michael Tippett's Third Symphony opens with a subdued fanfare for the horns and soon develops into a chaotic scherzo in which skittering violin passages and an vigorous melody for the basses are played off against the strangely impassive horns.<sup>53</sup> With the entry of a piano, seemingly on a mission of its own, the movement soon creates a complex, multilayered sound world that owes much to Charles Ives.<sup>54</sup> Then, about five minutes into the movement, everything comes unexpectedly to a halt and Tippett inserts a literal quotation of the *Schreckensfanfare* from the Ninth, a quotation that is supplemented by a brief, dissonant twisting of the last phrase of the fanfare. Conditioned by habit, the listener waits for the great, emphatic upsurge with which the baritone recitative opens, but instead is greeted by a quiet, wavering passage for violins. Several measures later a flugelhorn enters, then a soprano soloist singing a slow blues that constitutes the first of what will be a complex series of interlocking reflections (as was his usual practice, the text is Tippett's own) on the prospects for joy in a world drenched with sorrow. Her singing is interrupted three more times by reiterations



of the *Schreckensfanfare*,<sup>55</sup> the penultimate quotation coming at the climax of a dense and dissonant passage in which Tippett's text directly confronts Schiller's images:

So if the worm was given love-lust,  
 Let him stay patient in his place.  
 But if the cherub stands b'fore God,  
 Let him demote himself to man,  
 Then spit his curses across the celestial face  
 Though he be answered (Answered!?)  
 With annihilation from the whirlwind.

These lines lead immediately into the final quotation of the *Schreckensfanfare*. Then, in one more striking juxtaposition, there is a quiet passage for the orchestral strings, over which the soprano sings the words,

It is our agony  
 We fractured men  
 Surmise a deeper mercy,  
 That no god has shown.

From here the work proceeds towards an uneasy conclusion in which an ecstatic vision of a dream of salvation that draws its possibility from human efforts, not divine blessing, is juxtaposed to the realization – set to music drawn from the ethereal Adagio which closed Part I of the symphony – that though such dreams must crack, they shall be remade:

Staring with those startled eyes at what we are –  
 Blood of my blood  
 Bone of my bone  
 We sense a huge compassionate power  
 To heal  
 To love.

Yet even here, as Tippett brings back the most consoling of the sounds from the first part of the symphony, there is no resolution: the work ends with alternating chords, forte and pianissimo, neither of which offers a place for this strange work to rest.

Maynard Solomon once described Beethoven's Ninth as an "extended metaphor of a quest for Elysium," a quest that is dramatically extended by a musical structure that postponed until the last minute the arrival of the "visionary D major" that finally provides an answer to the mysterious D minor that opens the work.<sup>56</sup> However, as Solomon has also noted, Beethoven seems to have had doubts about the appropriateness of this final movement. At one point he entertained the idea of replacing the Choral Finale with a purely instrumental movement (ideas for the movement were later put to use in the A-minor String Quartet, op. 132), just as he had earlier replaced the massive *Grosse Fuge* that closed the String Quartet in B-flat, op. 130 with a finale less likely to eclipse the work's earlier and subtler movements. Solomon suggests, "Perhaps Beethoven was concerned that, by their crushing affirmations, his colossal endings tended to overwhelm the works they were intended to crown ...."<sup>57</sup> Tippett's Third Symphony remains true to Beethoven by siding with his doubts: its finale opens with a D minor slow blues and never finds its way to D major. On the way to not finding its way, it questions the promises of Schiller's Ode, and turns the *Schreckensfanfare* into an emblem for all those sounds – painful though they may be – which cannot, and perhaps should not, be banished. The closest approach that this troubling work makes to the joyful solidarity of the Ode to Joy comes not with a new and more joyous melody but rather with a hesitant reminiscence of the fleeting vision of tranquility that closed the symphony's first movement.

There might be a lesson to be learned from Beethoven's reticence about his final movements that could be applied not only to issues in musical composition but also to the ethics of performance. There are times and places when affirmations such as the one that closes the Ninth – with its emphatic rejection of past memories of sorrow – ring false.

The performance of the Beethoven Ninth at Mauthausen was one of them: its sounds were not for that place.

James Schmidt  
Boston University

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> For discussions of the concert, see Paul M. Ellison, "Specter of Austria's Nazi Past Haunts 'Ode to Joy' at Mauthausen," *The Beethoven Journal* 15:1 (Summer 2000) 25-28; Martin Kettle, "Ode to Joy at Mauthausen," *The Guardian*, April 28, 2000, and Roger Cohen, "Music at Nazi Death Camp Ignites Protest," *New York Times*, May 6, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> For a general discussion of the camp, see Gordon J. Horwitz, *In the Shadow of Death: Living Outside the Gates of Mauthausen* (New York: Free Press, 1990) 7-22.

<sup>3</sup> David Wingeate Pike has written an exhaustive study of the fate of Spanish Republicans at Mauthausen. See *Spaniards in the Holocaust: Mauthausen, the Horror on the Danube* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Horwitz 10.

<sup>5</sup> Horwitz 52-53.

<sup>6</sup> Horwitz 60-2.

<sup>7</sup> The political controversy is summarized in the articles by Ellison, Cohen, and in Stephen Moss, "A Fragile Harmony," *The Guardian*, March 10, 2000. See also the collection of documents assembled by William Osborne at his web site, <http://www.osborne-conant.org>.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Mayr, "'Europaeischer Event' und das Gedenken," *Der Standard*, March 4, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Ellison 26.

<sup>10</sup> Zelman's characterization comes from a booklet released by the "Mauthausen 2000" committee at the time of the announcement of the concert.

- <sup>11</sup> For the orchestra's role during the Anschluss see Clemens Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige: Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker* (Mainz: Musikverlag Schott, 1992) 459-505 and William Osborne, "Symphony Orchestras and Artist-Prophets: Cultural Isomorphism and the Allocation of Power in Music," *Leonardo Music Journal* 9 (1999), which also addresses the issue of the orchestra's resistance to the hiring of women or individuals with a "foreign appearance" (e.g., musicians of Asian descent). See also Elena Ostleitner, *Liebe, Lust, Last und Lied* (Wien, Bundesministerium für Unterricht und Kunst, 1995).
- <sup>12</sup> Thomas Dombrowski, "Ein Thesaurus des Gedenkens," *Der Standard*, May 4, 2000
- <sup>13</sup> Ellison, 47.
- <sup>14</sup> William Osborne, "Bomb Scares and Concentration Camp Memorial Concerts," article posted to various musical internet discussion lists, April 5, 2000 (archived at <http://www.osborne-conant.org>).
- <sup>15</sup> Anton Falkeis, et al., "KZ-Konzert: Notwendige Kritik, falscher Adressat," *Der Standard*, May 16, 2000.
- <sup>16</sup> Marta S. Halpert, "Ein Schlachthof ist kein Konzertsaal," *Der Standard*, March 4/5, 2000. Halpert noted that the Philharmonic had been less than forthcoming in its discussion of its own past and observed that its website treats the National Socialist period as if it were a "natural catastrophe," with no discussion of the enthusiasm with which a significant number of the orchestra's members embraced Nazism.
- <sup>17</sup> Marie-Theres Arnborn, "Beleidigendes und frivoles Spektakel," *Der Standard*, May 6/7, 2000.
- <sup>18</sup> For a discussion of these drafts see Maynard Solomon, "The Ninth Symphony: A Search for Order," in Solomon, *Beethoven Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988) 17 and Robert Winter, "The Sketches for the 'Ode to Joy,'" in *Beethoven, Performers, and Critics*, ed. Robert Winter and Bruce Carr (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980) 176-214
- <sup>19</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975) 116.
- <sup>20</sup> For a fascinating discussion of some of the uses to which the Ninth has been put, see Esteban Buch, *Beethoven's Ninth: A Political History*, translated by Richard Miller (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003)
- <sup>21</sup> For discussions of the event, see Buch 359-362 and David B. Dennis, *Beethoven in German Politics, 1870-1989* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996) 1-3, 197-203.

- 22 Bernstein's explanation, in a program note which also accompanied the compact disc recording of the concert (which, initially, included a piece of the Berlin Wall) is quoted in Buch 261-2. For the history of Jahn's claim, see Buch 157
- 23 Quoted from Dennis, 203.
- 24 Quotations from the booklet may be found in Martin Kettle's article in *The Guardian*.
- 25 Cohen, "Music at Site of Nazi Camp Ignites Protest." The role of the Ninth Symphony as the "Anthem of Europe" was also noted in speeches at the event by Austrian President Thomas Klestil and European Commissioner Franz Fischler.
- 26 For a discussion, see Buch 236-242.
- 27 "Report on a European Anthem," Consultative Assembly, Council of Europe, 10 June 1971. The report and other documents relevant to the adoption of the Ode to Joy as the "European Anthem" are available on the European Community website:  
[http://www.coe.int/t/E/Communication\\_and\\_Research/Library\\_and\\_Archives/Services/Archives/hymn1.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/E/Communication_and_Research/Library_and_Archives/Services/Archives/hymn1.asp).
- 28 See the letter from Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi to Paul M. G. Levy of August 3, 1955 (European Community website) and the discussion in Buch 203-4.
- 29 Buch 221, 236. Documents tracing the EU deliberations, including the matter of von Karajan's royalties, are available from the EU website:  
[http://www.coe.int/t/E/Communication\\_and\\_Research/Library\\_and\\_Archives/Services/Archives/hymn1.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/E/Communication_and_Research/Library_and_Archives/Services/Archives/hymn1.asp)
- 30 For an assessment of Furtwängler's ambivalent stance towards the regime, see Michael H. Kater, *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and their Music in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 195-203.
- 31 Quoted from Dennis, 150-1.
- 32 See Dennis 151 for the "shameless" kiss and Buch 218 for the investigation of Beethoven's Masonic affiliations.
- 33 Dennis, 168.
- 34 Rattle, interview with Nicholas Kenyon, in Kenyon, *Simon Rattle: From Birmingham to Berlin* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001) 303.
- 35 On the 1845 performances see Buch, 133-155. See also Buch's discussion of the role of the work in the 1927 centenary, 178-200.

36 Buch 162, 205, 222

37 Buch 208.

38 Buch 215

39 Dennis 162; Buch 209-10.

40 For a detailed analysis, see James Webster, “The Form of the Finale of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony,” in *Beethoven Forum*, Vol. 1, ed. Lewis Lockwood and James Webster (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992) 29-62.

41 As Buch notes (240), this means that “ from a legal standpoint – and unlike national anthems or the Ninth Symphony itself, which are works in the public domain – the European anthem is a work by Herbert von Karajan.”

42 Theodor Adorno, “On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening,” in Adorno, *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard Leppert (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2002) 288-317.

43 Martin Kettle, “Sound of Silence,” *The Guardian*, May 10, 2000. See also the favorable assessment of the event by Wolfgang Weisgram, “Ode an die Räude oder: Von der Würde ohne falsches Pathos,” *Der Standard* May 9, 2000.

44 For one version of this argument, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987) 336-376.

45 Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: NLB, 1974) 222

46 In this context, see Michael Hausenblas’s discussion of the objections by historians to the Austrian government’s expenditure of some \$1.5 million on the concert even as the government refused to provide the funding necessary for the site’s maintenance and historical documentation. See Hausenblas, “Vom Mahnen an das Gedenken,” *Der Standard*, April 22, 2000.

47 Michael Tippett, *Moving into Aquarius* (Frogmore, St. Albans, Herts: Paladin, 1974) 163. Tippett miscredited the authorship of the play to Bertolt Brecht.

48 “Daniel K.” [pseudonym for Otto Dov Kulka], “Singing the Ode ‘To Joy’ in Auschwitz: A Ten-Year-Old’s Story,” *Beethoven Journal* 10:1 (1995) 4-5. For the identification of “Daniel K.” as Kulka, see Joza Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945* (New York: Beaufort Books, 1985) 158-9  
49 *Ibid.* 5.

50 Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus*, trans. John E. Woods (New York: Knopf, 1997) 501, 509

51 Mann, *Doctor Faustus* 515.

- <sup>52</sup> For a discussion of their collaboration, see Rolf Tiedemann, “Mitdichtende Einfühlung: Adornos Beiträge zum *Doctor Faustus* — noch einmal,” *Frankfurter Adorno Blätter* I (1992) and my “Mephistopheles in Hollywood: Adorno, Mann, and Schoenberg,” in Thomas Huhn, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 148-180.
- <sup>53</sup> Michael Tippett, *Symphony No. 3* (London: Schott & Co., 1974). The work was first performed in July 1972 by the London Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Colin Davis.
- <sup>54</sup> The debts to Ives are discussed in the analyses of the work by Ian Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and his Music* (London: Eulenburg Books, 1984) 447-8 and Meirion Bowen, *Michel Tippett* (London: Robson Books, 1997) 184.
- <sup>55</sup> Kemp (450) provides a helpful table comparing Tippett’s and Beethoven’s finales.
- <sup>56</sup> Solomon, “The Ninth Symphony,” 13-4, 21-2.
- <sup>57</sup> Maynard Solomon, “The Sense of an Ending,” in Solomon, *Late Beethoven: Music, Thought, Imagination* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2003) 219.