

# BEETHOVEN'S 9<sup>TH</sup>

## The USC Thornton Symphony and USC Thornton Choral Artists

Friday, March 30, 2018, at 7:30 p.m.  
Bovard Auditorium  
University of Southern California

### KNOW BEFORE THE SHOW

- Beethoven's 9th is one of the most famous works in western musical history.
- It was first performed in Vienna in 1824.
- The symphony will be performed by student groups from the USC Thornton School of Music: the USC Thornton Symphony, USC Thornton Chamber Singers, and USC Thornton Concert Choir.

### LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

German composer Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) is widely regarded as one of the greatest composers of all time. He was the towering musical figure in the transition between the Classical and Romantic eras. Some of his most important works were composed during the last 10 years of his life, as he struggled with deafness.

### BEETHOVEN'S SYMPHONY NO. 9

Beethoven's Symphony no. 9, or Beethoven's 9th, is one of the masterworks of late Classical music. It was Beethoven's last complete symphony, and it is widely considered his greatest work. Also known as *The Choral*, this was the first symphony by a major composer to involve singers. The vocal parts include the celebrated "Ode to Joy," the lyrics of which are based on a poem by the German dramatist, poet, and philosopher Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805).

While there is overwhelming consensus about the greatness of the symphony, interpretation of it varies widely. Tom Service wrote in *The Guardian* that Beethoven's 9th has "been held up as the central work of Western classical music both by those who imagine it as the *ne plus ultra* of symphonic, technical, and compositional imagination and mastery, and by those who want to say that . . . the piece is a sounding bell of social change, of emotional hope, and even of political reform."

Musically, Beethoven's 9th had a tremendous influence on composers including Berlioz, Brahms, Wagner, Bruckner, Mahler, and Schubert. Wagner remarked that the symphony pointed the way to the "music of the future," which would unite words and music, as Wagner would do in his own monumental operas.

The progression of the first movement from subtle strings (like an orchestra tuning) to a strong, loud theme was a radical new experience for concertgoers. Beethoven also surprised audiences—and inspired later composers—by changing the conventional order of movements, placing the fast-paced scherzo before the slow movement. The fourth movement is the famous choral finale, which pianist and scholar Charles Rosen has described as "a symphony within a symphony."

Beethoven's 9th premiered in Vienna in 1824, performed by the largest orchestra Beethoven had ever assembled. The symphony has been widely and frequently performed ever since, including as an anthem and a symbol of unity at major world events such as the Olympic Games, the protests in Tiananmen Square, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the end of the year in Japan.

## WIDELY BELOVED AND VARIOUSLY INTERPRETED

Beethoven's 9th, and especially its "Ode to Joy" section, has been performed at momentous occasions around the world, and embraced by political regimes from the democratic to the authoritarian. Stanley Kubrick used the symphony to sinister effect in *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), and the symphony creates an exultant, triumphant effect in *Dead Poets Society* (1989). Perhaps the most striking example of the symphony's contradictory interpretation—or universal appeal—is this: Hitler celebrated his birthday with Beethoven's 9th, which was also beloved and played by prisoners in Nazi concentration camps.

## USC THORNTON SYMPHONY

Led by Carl St.Clair, the USC Thornton Symphony has worked with some of the world's greatest composers, including Henryk Górecki, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Yo-Yo Ma, Michael Tilson Thomas, James Conlon, John Williams, and Joan Tower. The group regularly collaborates with the USC Thornton Opera program and each year presents its New Music for Orchestra concert featuring orchestral works by Thornton student composers.

## USC THORNTON CHAMBER SINGERS

Initially called the Madrigal Singers, the USC Thornton Chamber Singers was formed in 1939. In 1956, the Chamber Singers adopted its current name in a move designed to better reflect the group's repertoire. In 2016, the Chamber Singers performed Bach's *Wachet Auf* with Jeffrey Kahane and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, an all-English program with Simon Carrington, and Gubaidulina's *Sonnengesang* with cellist David Geringas for the Piatigorsky International Cello Festival. The group received the 2015 American Prize in Choral Music and in 2014 was one of only 25 choirs invited to the World Symposium on Choral Music in Seoul, Korea. The USC Chamber Singers is conducted by Jo-Michael Scheibe.

## USC THORNTON CONCERT CHOIR

The USC Thornton Concert Choir, under the direction of Dr. Cristian Grases, is a large choir of approximately 60 voices. The group explores classical and global repertoire from the Renaissance through the 21st century and is noted for its support of student composers. In addition to on-campus performances, the concert choir periodically performs at Walt Disney Concert Hall and Segerstrom Center for the Arts.

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- What emotions did Beethoven's 9th evoke in you?
- How does one interpret a piece of music?
- Why do you think this symphony has been used in so many different contexts, for so many different purposes?

## IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MAY WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- The USC Thornton Symphony  
[music.usc.edu/usc-thornton-symphony-orchestra](http://music.usc.edu/usc-thornton-symphony-orchestra)
- The USC Thornton Chamber Singers  
[music.usc.edu/usc-thornton-chamber-singers](http://music.usc.edu/usc-thornton-chamber-singers)
- The USC Thornton Concert Choir  
[music.usc.edu/usc-thornton-concert-choir](http://music.usc.edu/usc-thornton-concert-choir)
- Concerts at Walt Disney Concert Hall, home of the LA Philharmonic  
[laphil.com](http://laphil.com)
- Los Angeles Master Chorale  
[lamasterchorale.org](http://lamasterchorale.org)

The Classical period of western classical music was 1730 to 1820, the time of Mozart and Haydn. The Romantic period of 1780 to 1910 coincided with a literary and intellectual movement that arose in response to the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. Romantic music (from works by Schubert and Chopin, to Tchaikovsky and Verdi, to Mahler, Strauss, and Puccini, among many others) is generally more expressive and emotional than light, clean Classical music. Beethoven spanned the two periods and shaped the transition between them. Lowercase "classical music" is a broad term for western art music from the Middle Ages to the present.



Photo: Peter Shin

USC Thornton Symphony



Photo: Dario Griffin

USC Thornton Chamber Singers



The audio capacity of the CD was set at 74 minutes when the new technology was developed in the 1980s, reportedly to allow for a complete recording of Beethoven's 9th.



## DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

**ANDREW JUSTICE** of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about tonight's performance. Those with a call number (e.g., books and DVDs) are physical items which you can find in our campus libraries; most of those such items below are in the Music Library, located on Doheny Memorial Library's ground floor. Those without a call number (e.g., dissertations and databases) are electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at [libraries.usc.edu](http://libraries.usc.edu).

### BOOKS

- Buch, Esteban. *Beethoven's Ninth: A Political History*. Richard Miller, trans. University of Chicago Press, 2003.  
Music Library: ML410.B42 B8213 2003
- Cook, Nicholas. *Beethoven Symphony No. 9*. Cambridge University Press, 1993.  
Music Library: ML410.B42 C66 1993 & ACLS Humanities eBook (database)
- Reynolds, Christopher. *Wagner, Schumann, and the Lessons of Beethoven's Ninth*. University of California Press, 2015.  
Music Library: ML410.B42 R49 2015 & ebrary Academic Complete (database)
- Sachs, Harvey. *The Ninth: Beethoven and the World in 1824*. Random House, 2010.  
Music Library: ML410.B4 S117 2010
- Schenker, Heinrich. *Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: A Portrayal of Its Musical Content, with Running Commentary on Performance and Literature as Well*. John Rothgeb, trans/ed. Yale University Press, 1992.  
Grand Depository: MT130.B43 S313 1992

### SCORE

- Autograph Manuscript Facsimile [1824]. Commentary by Lewis Lockwood, Jonathan Del Mar, and Martina Rebmann. Bärenreiter, 2010.  
Music Library Reference Oversize ML96.5 .B44 op.125 2010

### ARTICLES

- Meredith, William. "The First Edition of the Instrumental Parts of the Ninth Symphony, 'Ode to Joy' Opus 125." *The Beethoven Journal* 26/1 (2011): 45-46.  
ProQuest Music Periodicals (database)
- Taruskin, Richard. "Resisting the Ninth." *19th-Century Music* 12/3 (1989): 241-256.  
Doheny Memorial Library Journal Stacks: ML1.N5 & JSTOR / University of California Press Journals (databases)

### AUDIO-VISUAL

- Bayreuth Festival Orchestra and Chorus, Wilhelm Furtwängler. EMI Classics, 1951.  
Classical Music Library (database)
- Berlin Philharmonic and Vienna Singverein, Herbert von Karajan. Deutsche Grammophon, 1984.  
Music Library: CD-AUDIO 8182mus
- Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and Choir, Kurt Masur. ArtHaus Musik, 2012.  
Classical Music in Video (database)
- Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Netherlands Radio Choir, Iván Fischer. C Major Entertainment, 2013.  
Academic Video Online (database)
- Vienna Philharmonic and State Opera Chorus, Leonard Bernstein. Kultur, 2005.  
Music Library: MUSDVD 815 v. 2

