Music Understanding Extra Credit Assignment

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**Introduction**

The symphony chosen to do this paper is Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125 by Beethoven. It is difficult to think of a more influential work than Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9. The beautiful piece of music was written in 1785. The reason behind its descriptive title is due to the remarkable finale. This is the part the soloists and the chorus chant beautifully a few portions of Frederick Schiller’s poem “An Die Freude (Ode to Joy).” Due to the abuse that was faced by the power of the French Revolution, Schiller became delusional and disowned his own poem. However, Beethoven stood by his idealism and even tried to reflect it in his music both in 1790s and later in 1812. In 1817 Beethoven started the first two movements of a new symphony. After creating exceptional works like “Diabelli and Missa Solemnis” in 1823, masterpieces that helped shape and initiate his vocal and piano writing. A few months prior to the premiere of his Ninth symphony, Beethoven himself started having doubts on a choral finale, but it all worked for the best and created history. It made this symphony Beethoven’s greatest and most performed work.

**The Instruments used for the Symphony**

The instruments used were 3 flutes, 2 clarinets, 4 horns, 3 trombones, bass drum, 2 oboes, 3 bassoons, timpani, strings, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, triangle, crash cymbals and solo chorus.

**Movements**

The First Movement

Even though the choral finale of the final movement is usually the most talked about when it comes to the ninth symphony by Beethoven, but the opening of the masterpiece is every bit as significant like its finale. The beginning of the Ninth symphony is nothing like the predecessor eight symphonies. The beginning of the symphony is very novel initiating with suspense and pure atmosphere. The composer first teases with the basic three elements of music; rhythm, melody and tonality. The pulse sounds similar to the rhythm-less tremolo, but is written as sextolets. Then comes the time that the notes A’s and E’s start to waterfall. Slowly but on purpose, these shapeless elements merge into a powerful and sharp dotted theme. It confidently and determinedly drops two octaves in an adamant 2/4 time and strikes back home to d-minor. The first movement is quite dramatic, developing and summarizing of established Sonata form. A thundering supple chromatic figure spreads upward from the bass.

The Second Movement

Talking about the second movement, it remarkably incorporates blissful outbursts and nervous tensions. This movement is overshadowed by the others, but it also initiates with an astonishing novelty of tympani. They are used not just in their standard way as rhythmic strengthening but also as a musical solo.

The Third Movement

The third movement is more conventional out of all four movements. It is a lovely desire of different variations on two complementary themes, which sooth down the audience and prepare them for the emotional finale.

The Fourth Movement

All the movements of the symphony carry their own importance but the finale has the most significance. It initiates with unexplainable outbursts of winds and brass to clear down the air. It is followed by the mesmerizing adagio. Then the basses and celli speak in a wordless passage. It is labeled by Beethoven as “selon le caractere d’un recitative, mais in tempo.” Further, the orchestra commands fragments from the previous three movements, which are all interrupted or rejected by the celli. Content with the first declaration of the full theme by the basses and celli, the orchestra synchronizes and replicates it four times leading to a stirring and victorious climax. After the repeat of the outburst, the voices finally enter. A solo baritone openly states what the orchestral forces recommended so efficiently, his actual text added by Beethoven. “Ode to Joy” that Beethoven idealized into a masterpiece materialized after around 200 attempts.

**Conclusion**

The Symphony No. 9 by Beethoven is to this date the most significant of Beethoven’s work, a true masterpiece. It carries great importance in the musical history. Beethoven was partially deaf when the symphony was first performed, which is the saddest thing that can be faced by a musician, but it helped Beethoven listen on a level that no other musician could. Further, all the movements carry their importance but the finale is the most significant out of all.

**References**

Beethoven, L. V. (2017). *Symphony No. 9 D minor: Op. 125," Choral"*. Eulenburg.