

REFLECTIONS ON BEETHOVEN'S NINTH

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Introduction

A profile [1] on President Vladimir V. Putin in *The New York Times* three weeks ago, begins, "Speaking in what he called 'the language of Goethe, Schiller, and Kant,' picked up during his time as a KGB officer in Dresden, ... Putin addressed the German Parliament [in] 2001, saying that 'Stable peace on the continent is a paramount goal for our nation.'" The *Times* profile notes, "Today, all togetherness shredded, Ukraine burns."

Several years ago I had selected Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Opus 125, [2]) as my next essay topic. Ludwig van Beethoven is widely regarded as the most famous and influential composer in music history, and the 250th anniversary of his birth was just celebrated. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia under Putin's leadership makes my selection all the more poignant, as Ukraine experiences a rain of Russian bombs, missiles, and artillery shells.

The Ninth is not only a musical masterpiece culminating Beethoven's symphonic compositions. It has for me been a source of enormous satisfaction, to sing it in performances, and to learn about why it is a musical and spiritual masterpiece, with themes that apply across the Abrahamic religions. The symphony is in four movements, with the choral portion in the last. The text by Friedrich Schiller of the choral portion will be a focal point in this essay.

As with Darth Vader, Hitler, Napoleon, and other leaders fictional and real who turn into psychopathic tyrants, the themes of a loving god and human brotherhood from the German Enlightenment authors get trumped by lust for power. Especially in these dark times when lust for power in the form of the

¹ My wife Cheryl North's career has been in music journalism, and I have learned much from her that is reflected in this essay. Minor revisions to this essay in September reflect editorial suggestions from my former wife, Diane M.T. North, who is a history professor with several books published by academic presses. I greatly appreciate the contributions from both of them, and also from Cheryl's son, Christopher Greger.

“special military operation” in Ukraine is again ascendant, we seek the light of “*Alle Menschen werden Brüder*” - “All men shall become brothers”² – and more broadly, the Enlightenment themes of brotherhood, reason, tolerance, faith in a loving Creator God, and freedom.

I, and millions of others, have been profoundly moved by the reaffirmation Beethoven’s Ninth provides. It has been used to celebrate the founding and anniversaries of the United Nations and the European Union.³

This essay describes my personal journey in learning this piece as a choral singer, performing it, and sharing it with my family. For my Chit Chat friends I recount my journey and the ideas from the text of the last movement.

Personal Reflections

I first sang the Ninth with the San Francisco Symphony in 1964 as a Stanford graduate student. Stanford provided its university chorus for the final choral movement, and I was part of it, and thrilled by this experience. (There was no professional Symphony Chorus then. It came later.) The conductor was Josef Krips, from Vienna and famous for his London Symphony recordings of all the Beethoven symphonies. I remember fondly his exhortation on the phrase, “*Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt*” – this kiss for the whole world. “Sing like you mean it!”

In part motivated by this experience, I subsequently spent a summer taking intensive German, the language of many great composers. (I had five years of French in high school and college.)

I have continued singing in choral groups since my student days, including with the Yale Alumni Chorus, which was formed 25 years ago to help three cities

² This phrase was not in the original version of Schiller’s poem, but appeared in the 1803 version. Schiller may have been influenced by Voltaire, *Traité sur la tolérance (Treatise on Tolerance)*, chapter 22, Geneva: Cramer Brothers, 1763.

³ Excellent references for the performance history of the Ninth are the Wikipedia websites [3] and [4], plus the Estephan Buch book, [5]. My former wife believes websites such as Wikipedia can be less reliable than published books and papers. This is a judgment I do not share, based on my experience from a career in science and technology where such websites often have newer information. And for many readers they are easier to access. My former wife has provided publication references that I have added in references [2], [13], [15], [18] and several footnotes.

in China do Beethoven's Ninth. (Sadly, I missed that first tour.) Members of this chorus and singers from the Yale School of Music did the Ninth in Holland under Valery Gergiev. (I was in the audience rather than a participant. Given Gergiev's friendship with Vladimir Putin, I am now thankful I did not sing in that performance.)

In November 2016 I was in a rehearsal with a men's chorus in San Francisco. A friend who is an orchestra musician came in to say, "An ad hoc group of musicians is performing Beethoven's Ninth in Grace Cathedral tomorrow night. We need more men's voices. If any of you know it well enough to do it on one rehearsal tomorrow afternoon, you would be most welcome to join us."

I needed a lift, as I was depressed about the result of the election earlier that week. I was pleased to find I could still sing the words and music as part of the group of excellent singers assembled on short notice. We received a standing ovation from the capacity audience in Grace Cathedral. The *Ode to Joy* text and Beethoven's music obliterated my depression.

I had another chance two years ago. A regional East Bay symphony orchestra and a church choir planned to perform the Ninth. The choir was short on men's voices, and I was asked if I would like to participate. It was another thrilling experience, this time with mostly amateur musicians who met the considerable challenges of this piece.

This past fall the San Francisco Symphony and its professional Symphony Chorus did the Ninth Symphony, The conductor was Daniel Stewart, who had conducted the 2016 performance in Grace Cathedral. He continues to conduct the Santa Cruz Symphony, he is Music Director for the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra, and he assists SF Symphony Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen. Through the club that includes my men's chorus and an orchestra, we have become good friends. It was his first opportunity to conduct the San Francisco Symphony, and he did it superbly well.⁴ I am delighted to have him here as my guest as I present this essay.

⁴ I was pleased to bring all eight member of my immediate family to this concert.

Beethoven's Life as Context for the Ninth.

Especially for those of you who are not great fans of classical music and Ludwig van Beethoven, I next provide a short summary of his life.⁵ He was born in Bonn in 1770 into a musical family. He was given the same name as his grandfather, a singer (and wine merchant) who became Kapellemeister (director of court music) in Bonn. Grandfather died when young Ludwig was three. The father pushed the young boy to become a child prodigy, in the manner of Mozart, and there was some success – young Ludwig was playing complex pieces in public at age seven. His formal education ended when he was ten, but his musical education flourished. He had a teacher named Christian Gottlob Neefe (1748-1798), who taught him Enlightenment ideas as well as music, and may have been a counterweight to Beethoven's dissolute father.⁶ Beethoven became one of the court organists and a violist playing regularly with the court orchestra. His youthful talent impressed Bonn's aristocratic leaders, who sent him at age sixteen to Vienna to study, first briefly with Mozart (1756-1791), which was interrupted by news of his mother's terminal illness and his return to Bonn. Then, in 1792, he went back to study with Haydn. He never returned to Bonn. His mother was dead and he had no interest in seeing his abusive, alcoholic father. His future was in Vienna, the leading center of German musical culture.

He quickly attracted widespread attention as a pianist who could improvise brilliant elaborations on tunes presented to him. In 1795 came his first published pieces, three trios for piano, violin, and cello. By 1802 he had added to his published works three piano concertos, two symphonies, and a large number of other pieces. He was being recognized as the successor to the aging Haydn and departed Mozart as Vienna's leading composer. But at this same time his auditory disturbances were becoming acute. He began avoiding public contact, living in rented rooms in Vienna's suburbs. In 1802 he wrote his *Heiligenstadt Testament*, an unsent letter describing his decision to continue to compose despite his

⁵See Sachs [6] and Tunbridge [7] for much more detail.

⁶ [7]. P. 3.

deafness.⁷ In the next decade, by 1814, the time of the Congress of Vienna, he had written most of the music that would make his reputation as one of the greatest composers of classical music. The Ninth Symphony, the *Missa Solemnis*, the late string quartets, and the “Diabelli” Variations for Piano were yet to come.

I now mention the Choral Fantasy [8], which had its premiere in 1808 in a four-hour marathon private benefit concert [9] of Beethoven’s music at one of Vienna’s main Theaters, the Theater an der Wien. The program included the fourth Piano Concerto, the 5th and 6th Symphonies, and two other pieces.⁸ The finale was the Choral Fantasy, with Beethoven as piano soloist improvising, then joined by the chorus. The Choral Fantasy combined a symphonic-sized orchestra with a chorus, and there is a similarity in the main musical theme.⁹ Schiller’s poem was not used, but the text is about peace and joy. The Choral Fantasy is a way station on Beethoven’s journey toward the Ninth sixteen years later.

Symphony concerts in Beethoven’s time were infrequent. In 1824, the time of the Ninth, Vienna still had no fully professional orchestra. In the present age we think of symphony orchestras as a well-established institution, with Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven as the great composers of early symphonies. But in Beethoven’s time, operas, especially by Rossini, were much more popular, even in Vienna, than symphonies. Beethoven’s symphonies were innovative and complex, and appreciation for this music developed only over time. Symphony concerts in Beethoven’s time were often arranged through wealthy aristocratic patrons and local music appreciation societies. Large orchestra concerts such as the premieres of the Choral Fantasy and the Ninth usually included many amateur musicians as part of the group of performers. Rehearsals were limited and inadequate by today’s standards.

⁷ My wife Cheryl and I have visited the Beethoven birthplace in Bonn, now a museum, and also the house in Heiligenstadt (a Vienna suburb) where Beethoven wrote his 1802 Testament. The Testament text is in [6], pages 43-45.

⁸Details on this remarkable concert are in the Wikipedia website [9]. I heard this concert repeated by the San Francisco Symphony in the War Memorial Opera House in the 1970s, and I sang the Choral Fantasy with the Yale Alumni Chorus about thirty years later, with the Dean of Yale’s School of Music playing the piano part that Beethoven did in the premiere. As described by Tunbridge [7], chapter 4, the premiere of the Choral Fantasy was under-rehearsed and not a success. It must have been a considerable embarrassment to Beethoven at the time.

⁹ Details on the comparison of the Choral Fantasy and the Ninth are in [8].

Beethoven mulled over for years the prospect of writing a symphony with a choral finale based on Schiller's *Ode to Joy* poem.¹⁰ But he had to be persuaded by Viennese friends and patrons to have the first performance of his Ninth Symphony in Vienna, rather than in another city outside Austria, such as Berlin.¹¹ As with the Choral Fantasy, the premiere for the Ninth it was not well rehearsed, and the first performance was problematic.¹²

Just as the premiere of the Choral Fantasy had included much other music by Beethoven, the premiere of the Ninth included three movements from the *Missa Solemnis*, a setting of the Catholic Mass, in Latin. Beethoven had intended this great Mass for the installation of Archduke Rudolph as Bishop for the city of Olmütz. Archduke Rudolph was an important patron and a pupil of Beethoven, since 1804. But Beethoven did not complete the *Missa Solemnis* until 1823, three years after the installation ceremony, and just a year before the premiere concert for the Ninth in 1824. The *Missa Solemnis* had been performed in Vienna only once, and without Beethoven being present. Performance of sacred music in a secular concert was not allowed under the strict rules of Catholic Austria in this period of restoration of the Austrian Empire. Beethoven had to apply for a waiver from the Censorship Office, and he received this waiver only after another of his powerful patrons persuaded the head of the imperial police force.¹³ It was important to Beethoven that both his sacred music and the secular but spiritually oriented Ninth be heard together.

As he aged and his deafness worsened, Beethoven became almost entirely cut off from normal social activities. He lived alone in a shabby, cluttered apartment and communicated with friends via conversation books.¹⁴ While Beethoven had become greatly respected in Vienna, he was regarded as an eccentric but a great cultural treasure. His funeral in 1827 drew large crowds

¹⁰ [7], p. 197 states that "Beethoven had first toyed with the idea of setting Schiller's poem in 1793." This page also clarifies that the 1803 version of the poem was "freely adapted," with Beethoven "selecting and reordering a handful of verses and adding his own recitatives."

¹¹ [6], p. 29.

¹² These problems are discussed at length in [6], p.13-36. See also [7], p. 199-202.

¹³ [6], p. 34.

¹⁴ [6], 27-28.

lining the streets, and Vienna's leading musicians were pallbearers and torch bearers.¹⁵

I conclude this section with comments from two great composers who followed Beethoven.

Richard Wagner loved Beethoven's Ninth in his youth, especially the last movement: Quoting him, it "became the mystical lodestar of all my fantastic musical thoughts and aspirations." At age 17 he wrote to the publisher suggesting that a solo piano arrangement should be printed so that musical amateurs could learn about it by playing the music in their homes. (The publisher was not interested.)¹⁶

Giuseppe Verdi gave a mixed review to the Ninth.

The alpha and omega is Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, marvelous in the first three movements, very badly set in the last. No one will ever approach the sublimity of the first movement, but it will be an easy task to write as badly for voices as in the last movement. And supported by the authority of Beethoven, they will all shout: "That's the way to do it...."¹⁷

I relate to this strongly, based on my reading, my own experience and singers I know who have done the solo roles. The vocal writing is high and hard even for well-trained singers. But with the symphony orchestra and Schiller's text, the Ninth is a masterpiece. Who would want to alter the last movement?

The Influence of the German Enlightenment on Beethoven

In college I read Blaise Pascal's *Pensées*¹⁸ and learned the famous line that, "Man is a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed." God has given us

¹⁵ [7], p. 223-224

¹⁶ [6], p. 182-184.

¹⁷ Letter by Giuseppe Verdi, 1878]; I have used the translation from [4], with its reference ([48]) to *Giuseppi Verdi: Autobiografia delle Lettere*, edited by Aldo Oberdorfer (Milan, Italy: Rizzoli, 1941, p. 325.) See also [6], p. 191-2, with the note on p. 221 giving a 1913 publication as the source for Verdi's letter. [6] has a slightly different translation to English, by author Sachs.

¹⁸ Pascal's writings were published after his death, in 1670. For a modern translation, see Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. By A.J. Krailsheimer, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin Classics, 1995).

the ability to think and to understand. We have the opportunity to think well, and our reason provides a basis for morality, as well as deducing the laws of nature. Humans can act in accordance with reason, rather than being driven by instinct, emotion, and superstition. These ideas developed and flourished in the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century.

The Enlightenment period in German-speaking lands, as well as elsewhere in Europe and its North American colonies, was strongly influenced by the progress in science from Galileo, Kepler, Newton, and Leibnitz. Reason, rather than just faith, was viewed as the path for progress. Spiritual aspects were not rejected but rather could be melded into this path.

What might we imagine as a desirable afterlife? And where should we seek a loving creator God? Beethoven's musical setting of Schiller's *Ode to Joy* provides us with thrilling answers.

Enlightenment Classicism versus Romanticism

Beethoven, although lacking in formal education, admired science as well as art, and he was a master of the complex musical forms comprising the classical style developed by his predecessors Haydn and Mozart.¹⁹ Beethoven wrote in an 1812 letter,²⁰ "Persevere, do not only practice your art, but endeavor also to fathom its inner meaning, it deserves this effort. For only art and science can raise men to the level of gods...".

Complex forms can become restrictive, especially when the creative aspect is less evident. As noted in an essay [15] for the San Francisco Ballet on the shift to romanticism and the success of the ballet *La Sylphide*, audiences in the period following 1824 tired of the classical style based on reason: "The post-revolutionary generation found a spiritual emptiness in the rationalism of the Enlightenment and scientific advances of the Industrial Revolution. The Sylph (*La Sylphide*) was a lightning rod for the disenchanted, an embodiment of the desire

¹⁹ For the details of the complex musical forms of the classical style, an excellent reference is Rosen, [14].

²⁰ [6], p. 50.

for an idealized escape from the predictability of the everyday into passionate emotion and spontaneity.”

Compare the Beethoven’s quote on art and science - “endeavor also to fathom its inner meaning” - with “idealized escape from the predictability of the everyday.” Applying reason to massive and complex forms in art or science is hard work, both for the creator and appreciator. One needs to find spiritual inspiration rather than being left with “spiritual emptiness.” Patience, persistence, and focus on the process are needed. And when you can discern and appreciate the patterns in the massive complex forms, it is thrilling. Thinking, in reference to the quote from Pascal, progresses to new heights.

I like to think of Beethoven as an antidote to such “idealized escape.” I regard him and his Ninth Symphony as iconic for Enlightenment achievement.

Joy and Freedom

Freedom from tyranny is a central theme on the Enlightenment, as is tolerance with respect to religious differences. And tyranny was associated with rules from government, religious dogma, and tradition. Beethoven had only two years of formal education, but he read widely, and he learned Enlightenment ideas from his music teacher Neefe while in his teens.²¹

Beethoven greatly admired Schiller’s poem, *An die Freude*, first published in 1785, the same year Schiller wrote the drama *Don Carlo*, made into an opera by Giuseppe Verdi. Beethoven’s only opera, *Fidelio* is about freedom, with the heroine rescuing her imprisoned husband by disguising herself as male and becoming an assistant to his jailer.²² It has a memorable chorus of the prisoners longing for freedom, which they celebrate in the opera’s final chorus. Both

²¹ [7], p.3. This author uses the phrase “some Enlightenment ethics.”

²² On September 9 when revising this essay I viewed on PBS a rebroadcast of the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra concert at Kennedy Center. The program included soprano Liudmyla Monastyrska as the heroine singing the aria, “Abscheulicher, wo eilst du hin” (Monster, where do you hurry to?) Yes, Beethoven regarded tyrants as monsters. On September 9 Ukraine’s armed forces achieved a breakthrough, capturing thousands of square miles of their territory back from Russian occupiers. Perhaps this breakthrough will lead to an end for Putin’s monstrous “special military operation” that has caused so much devastation in Ukraine.

Schiller and Beethoven excelled in portraying drama. The struggle to achieve freedom from tyranny was a path to joy.

Freedom for oneself only works when combined with tolerance, and I believe this is essential in Enlightenment thinking. Six years earlier before *An die Freude*, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's play, "*Nathan der Weise*" was written. It was not performed until after the author's death. A fervent plea for tolerance between the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths, it is considered a great work of the German Enlightenment, although it is not well known outside German-speaking areas.²³

There is an inherent conflict between order and artistic freedom. Freedom was preeminent in the thinking of Enlightenment scholars such as Kant, Goethe, Lessing, and Schiller. They wanted to enable imaginative and religious freedom, but without losing order and decision making based on reason.²⁴

Many of the ideas of the Enlightenment were incorporated in Freemasonry. Mozart was a Mason, but there is no known evidence that Beethoven was.²⁵ But consider the historical timeline, from the period of Kant and Voltaire through the American Revolution, the French Revolution and the Congress of Vienna and reestablishment of the strict aristocratic order in Vienna and much of Europe. Advocacy of freedom could be not just politically incorrect, but quite dangerous. Advocating joy was safer.

Leonard Bernstein changed *Freude* (Joy) to *Freiheit* (freedom) for a performance of the Ninth at Christmas time in 1989 celebrating Fall of Berlin Wall.

²³ This is a play that I learned about from my wife Cheryl. It was written in 1779, and first performed in 1783, after Lessing's death. Details are found in [10]. The title character is "to a large part modeled after Lessing's lifelong friend, the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn." My wife and I attended a performance at George Mason University, and we so impressed we made a sizable contribution to get it filmed for PBS. It ran only locally. We were the only donors credited. Many others with ties in the Middle East from the Washington D.C. area made contributions, but asked not to be listed in the credits.

²⁴ For the application to works of art, see the Jane Keller paper [11].

²⁵ I've checked with a musician friend who is a Mason and has investigated this question. I also found a article by an expert on Beethoven from 2000 [12]. While there are claims that Beethoven was active in early but not later years, there is no documentary support that he ever joined a Masonic or similar organization. He had many associations with people and organizations closely associated with Masonry and its ideas, especially in his youth. See [7], p. 3 and [12].

Did Schiller consider the use of *Freiheit* in the title of his poem? Yes, it is likely, but not confirmed.²⁶

Was Beethoven the only composer to set Schiller's text? No, in May of 1815 Franz Schubert also set Schiller's *An Die Freude* as one of his more than 600 songs. It is light and lacks drama, a curiosity far below Beethoven's masterpiece.²⁷

Understanding the Meaning of the *Ode to Joy*

Let us now examine the text of *An die Freude* and reflect the on ideas from the German Enlightenment. (The German text is in the Appendix, with the rather free English translation sent out earlier to Chit Chat members by George Hammond.²⁸) There are five stanzas, and I will refer to them by number.

Let us start with the second line of the stanza 1. Who is the daughter of Elysium? Where or what is it?

In Greek Mythology Elysium (also called Elysian Fields or Elysian Plain) is a paradise, to which the heroes on whom the gods conferred immortality were sent.²⁹ In Homer's *Odyssey*, the Elysian Plain is a place where life is easy and the weather is excellent, with a cooling wind and no snow or heavy storms [16]. The Greek poet Hesiod refers to the "Isles of the Blessed." Entrance was gained by a righteous life. After their death, those selected by the gods would live on in a blessed and happy state, carrying on with the occupation and activities they had

²⁶ See the "Ode to Freedom" section in [3] for a good discussion with references.

²⁷ A recording is available, by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Gerald Moore, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nyluKbxF8bs>. A commentary on the music is in the volume by Brigitte Massin on Schubert's works [13] mentions the connection of Schiller's poem to freemasonry, and fear of censors as a reason for Schiller not to use "liberty" instead of "joy" in the title. Massin describes the lightness of Schubert's musical setting with two notes for each syllable, whereas Beethoven uses one note. Schubert's setting reminds me of Schubert's song cycle *Die Schöne Müllerin* (1823). There are other settings by earlier composers listed in [3]. Schubert and Beethoven used the 1803 version with revisions that were included in the version published posthumously in 1808.

²⁸ [Schiller's Ode To Joy, Translated by Michael Kay](#).

²⁹ The word Elysium is still commonly used. It is the name of one of the important avenues in Paris, Champs Élysées. There is a lettuce mix by that same name sold at Trader Joe's, Elysium Pale Ale comes from Australia. There is a Disco Elysium video game.

enjoyed in life. The derivation from Greek words, according to one source is “to be deeply stirred from joy.” Elysium was a pagan word for paradise used by Christian writers. It appears in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, in Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*, and Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*.³⁰

To answer the questions, the daughter of Elysium is joy, and Elysium is a place of joy, with freedom to engage in pleasurable community activities, like feasting, sports, singing, and good conversation. It seems really attractive, more so than many other depictions of heaven, and it avoids reference to any of the Abrahamic religions. In this place, humans become like cherished siblings, fulfilling the “love thy neighbor” commandment of the New Testament.

Stanza 2 extends the challenge of friendship to finding a spouse, definitely cause for jubilation. I don’t connect the wife/spouse of lines 3 and 4 with the failure in the last two lines. Beethoven never married, and I think he would have had a broader interpretation referencing the first two lines on friendship. I offer an interpretation following the poem *Invictus* [19], whose last line is “I am the Captain of my Soul” and Shakespeare’s admonition, “To thine own self be true.” For true friendships and good marriage the soul should be unified, rather than split between reason and emotional excursions in conflict with reason. Others (not so unified) should tearfully steal away from “*diesen Bund*” - the federation of kindred souls.

Stanza 3 celebrates joy in nature. Evil as well as Good is incorporated on Nature’s rosy path. I think of Pascal to help me on this. We need understanding and acceptance. Friendship can be proved in death. On the next to last line, even the worm gets nature’s pleasure. I looked up the German word “Wollust” in

³⁰Two Wikipedias and the Britannica entry on Elysium [16-18] are the source for these references. In Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* Papageno compares being in Elysium to winning his ideal woman: “Des Lebens als Weiser mich freun, Und wie im Elysium sein.” (“Enjoy life as a wise man, and feel like I’m in Elysium.”) My introduction to opera was singing the role of Papageno in a production of *The Magic Flute* in Palo Alto shortly after I sang Ninth in 1964 with the San Francisco Symphony. The conductor, Henry Holt, was born and educated in Vienna, and he wrote his own English translation to *Die Zauberflöte*.

several dictionaries. It means lust. So the *Ode to Joy* includes the joy of sex, extending from spouses down to worms. And, in the last line, on a much higher level, even the Cherub is accountable to God.

Stanza 4 addresses process, following the plan of celestial bodies in their orbits or in living your life. Run your course joyfully, like a hero achieving victory. The victory is leading a moral life, even if evil and disaster should overcome you. Recall Pascal's insight. We are fragile reeds, and there is much in Nature (including human nature) with the potential to destroy us.

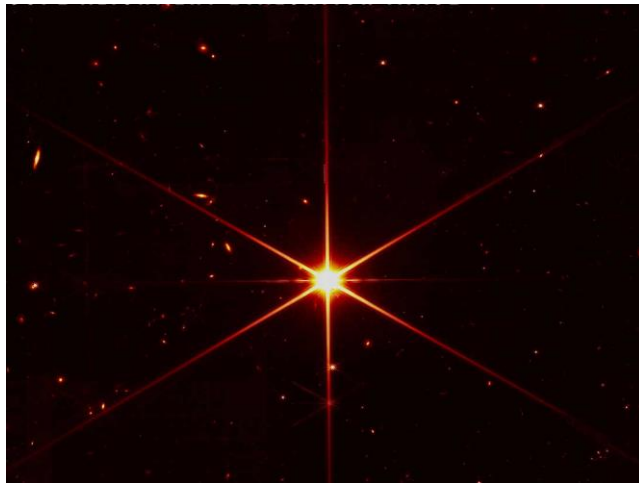
Stanza 5 celebrates God's love and the First Great Commandment [20]: A kiss to the whole world, embracing a loving Creator God, and learning where to seek Him. "*Brüder - überm Sternenzelt muss ein lieber Vater wohnen*" - Above the canopy of stars must dwell a loving Father. Seek Him!

The text of this line is sung in unison by tenors and basses in a phrase with the top note so high (F) that many bass singers cannot do it. I can still do it, and every time it gives me an awesome thrill to sing these words with my voice blending with a chorus of excellent singers who can hit the notes. If some basses cannot sing the Fs, they can just drop out and listen, and be thrilled listening and by the rest of the music they sing.

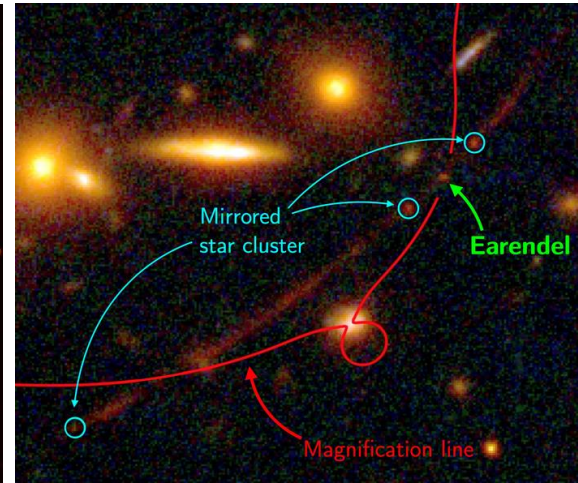
Earlier this year the James Webb telescope reached its destination at the Lagrange L2 point, nearly a million miles behind the earth, away from the sun. In a few months this new telescope should give us pictures of the canopy of stars, greatly improving on those from the Hubble telescope. The pictures may include the first stars formed after Creation, via the "Big Bang." On March 16 a "supersharpest" image of a single star was released, indicating that precise alignment has been achieved for the 18 separate mirror elements [21].

Astronomers using the Hubble telescope have just found a star whose light is amplified by a gravitational lens, that is, the bending of light by an intervening galaxy. This star, the most distant to be discovered, is almost 13 billion light years away [22]. The light we see from it was emitted less than a billion years after the Big Bang Creation Event. In the coming months the James Webb telescope will

provide a better view, over the canopy of stars, going back to the time when the first stars were formed.



James Webb Telescope image of a star 2000 light years away [21]



Hubble Telescope image of Earendel, a star 12.9 billion light years away [22]

I close with words I found on the San Francisco Classical Voice website essay on Beethoven [23]: Experience this musical masterpiece in a live performance at least once before you die! Reflect on Beethoven’s music and Schiller’s text. And look at the NASA website [24] for the latest pictures from the James Webb and Hubble telescopes.

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[1]. Roger Cohen, “The Making of Vladimir Putin,” *The New York Times*, March 26, 2022, updated April 14, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/26/world/europe/vladimir-putin-russia.html>.

[2]. Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphonies Nos. 8 and 9 in Full Score*, New York: Dover, 1989. Much Information on Beethoven is available in: Joseph Kerman, Alan Tyson, Scott G. Burnham, Douglas Johnson and William Drabkin, “Beethoven, Ludwig van,” *Grove Music Online*, 2001, ©Oxford University Press 2022, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040026>. (I used other, more recent, sources, listed below.)

[3]. Wikipedia, “Ode to Joy”: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ode_to_Joy.

- [4]. Wikipedia, "Symphony No. 9 (Beethoven)": [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._9_\(Beethoven\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._9_(Beethoven)).
- [5]. Esteban Buch, *Beethoven's Ninth: A Political History*, translated by Richard Miller, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
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Most websites above were last accessed during April 10-12, 2022. Those in [13], [22] and [24] were accessed September 5-6, 2022.

APPENDIX

Freude, Schöner Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elysium,
Wir betreten feuer-trunken,
Himmlische, dein Heiligthum!
Deine Zauber binden wieder,
Was die Mode streng geteilt;
Alle Menschen werden Brüder,
Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.

Wem der grosse Wurf gelungen,
Eines Freundes Freund zu sein,
Wer ein holdes Weib errungen,
Mische seinen Jubel ein!
Ja, wer auch nur eine Seele
Sein nennt auf dem Erdenrund!
Und wer's nie gekonnt, der stehle
Weinend sich aus diesem Bund!

Freude trinken alle Wesen
An den Brüsten der Natur;
Alle Guten, alle Bösen
Folgen ihrer Rosenspur.
Küsse gab sie uns und Reben,
Einen Freund, geprüft im Tod;
Wollust ward dem Wurm gegeben,
Und der Cherub steht vor Gott.

Joy! A spark of fire from heaven,
Daughter from Elysium,
Drunk with fire we dare to enter,
Holy One, inside your shrine.
Your magic power binds together,
What we by custom wrench apart,
All men will emerge as brothers,
Where you rest your gentle wings.

If you've mastered that great challenge:
Giving friendship to a friend,
If you've earned a steadfast woman,
Celebrate your joy with us!
Join if in the whole wide world there's
Just one soul to call your own!
He who's failed must steal away,
shedding tears as he departs.

All creation drinks with pleasure,
Drinks at Mother Nature's breast;
All the just, and all the evil,
Follow down her rosy path.
Kisses she bestowed, and grape wine,
Friendship true, proved e'en in death;
Every worm knows nature's pleasure,
Every cherub meets his God.

Froh, wie seine Sonnen fliegen
Durch des Himmels Prächt'gen Plan,
Laufet, Brüder, eure Bahn,
Freudig, wie ein Held zum Siegen.

Seid umschlungen, Millionen!
Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!
Brüder über'm Sternenzelt
Muss ein lieber Vater wohnen.
Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen?
Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt?
Such' ihn über'm Sternenzelt!
Über Sternen muss er wohnen.

Gladly, like the planets flying
True to heaven's mighty plan,
Brothers, run your course now,
Happy as a knight in victory.

Be embracéd, all you millions,
Share this kiss with all the world!
Way above the stars, brothers,
There must live a loving father.
Do you kneel down low, you millions?
Do you see your maker, world?
Search for Him above the stars,
Above the stars he must be living.