

2026–2027 | 127TH SEASON
MARIAN ANDERSON HALL

THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

Thursday, September 24, at 7:00

Opening Night Celebration: A Benefit Concert for the Musicians' Retirement Fund

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Conductor

Leah Hawkins Soprano

J'Nai Bridges Mezzo-Soprano

Issachah Savage Tenor

Ryan Speedo Green Bass-Baritone

Philadelphia Symphonic Choir

Joe Miller Director

Hisaishi *Orbis*, for chorus, organ, and orchestra

United States premiere—First Philadelphia Orchestra performance

Raphael Vogl, organ

Beethoven Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125 (“Choral”)

I. Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso

II. Molto vivace—Presto

III. Adagio molto e cantabile—Andante moderato—Tempo I

IV. Presto—Allegro assai—Presto (Recitativo)—Allegro assai—

Allegro assai vivace: alla marcia—Andante maestoso—Allegro energico—

Allegro ma non tanto—Poco adagio—Poco allegro, strigendo il tempo—

Prestissimo

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 30 minutes, and will be performed without an intermission.

The musicians of The Philadelphia Orchestra and Music and Artistic Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin are graciously donating their services for this concert.

Philadelphia Orchestra concerts are broadcast on WRTI 90.1 FM on Sunday afternoons at 1 PM and are repeated on Monday evenings at 7 PM on WRTI HD 2. Visit www.wrti.org to listen live or for more details.

OPENING NIGHT *Celebration*



The Philadelphia Orchestra extends a very special thank you to
2026 Opening Night Co-Chairs Robert Heim, Christian Gray, and
Irina Sipe; Vice Chair Judith Sills Swartz; Volunteer Committees
President Deborah Ledley; Volunteer Committees Immediate
Past President Richelle Rabenou; Board Chair Ralph W. Muller;
and our many generous benefactors and volunteers for their hard
work, support, and dedication in creating a spectacular evening to
celebrate the start of our 2026–27 season!

Photo by Pete Checchia



THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

The world-renowned Philadelphia Orchestra strives to share the transformative power of music with the widest possible audience, and to create joy, connection, and excitement through music in the Philadelphia region, across the country, and around the world. Through innovative programming, robust education initiatives, a commitment to its diverse communities, and the embrace of digital outreach, the ensemble is creating an expansive and inclusive future for classical music.

The Philadelphia Orchestra takes great pride in its hometown, performing for the people of Philadelphia year-round, at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, throughout the community, over the airwaves, and online. The Kimmel Center has been the ensemble's home since 2001, and in 2024 Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center was officially rededicated as Marian Anderson Hall in honor of the legendary contralto, civil rights icon, and Philadelphian. The Orchestra's award-winning education and community programs connect, uplift, and celebrate nearly 40,000 Philadelphians and 250 schools from diverse communities annually, through inclusive arts education and vibrant engagement that reflect our city's voices and expand access to creative opportunities. Students, families, and other community members can enjoy free and discounted experiences with The Philadelphia Orchestra through programs such as the Jane H. Kesson School Concerts, Family Concerts, Open Rehearsals, Play!Ns, and Our City, Your Orchestra community concerts.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is now in his 15th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. His connection to the ensemble's musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics, and he is esteemed by the musicians of the Orchestra, audiences, and the community. In addition to expanding the repertoire by embracing an ever-growing and diverse group of today's composers, Yannick and the Orchestra are committed to performing and recording the works of previously overlooked composers.

The Philadelphia Orchestra believes deeply in the power of music to connect people and the role cultural diplomacy can play in affecting change. Through concerts, national and international tours, residencies, and recordings, the Orchestra is a global ambassador and one of our nation's greatest cultural exports. It performs annually at Carnegie Hall, the Highmark Mann Center, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and the Bravo! Vail Music Festival. The Orchestra also has a rich touring history, having first performed outside Philadelphia in its earliest days. In 1973 it became the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China, launching a now-five-decade commitment of people-to-people exchange through music.

Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording with 15 celebrated releases on the Deutsche Grammophon label, including the GRAMMY® Award-winning *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of radio listeners with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM. For more information, please visit www.philorch.org.

MUSIC AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



London Nordeman

Canadian-born conductor and pianist Yannick Nézet-Séguin is currently in his 15th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. An inspired leader, Yannick is both an evolutionary and a revolutionary, developing the mighty “Philadelphia Sound” in new ways. His collaborative style, deeply rooted musical curiosity, and boundless enthusiasm have been heralded by critics and audiences alike. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* has said that under his baton the Orchestra is “at the top of its considerable form”; the Associated Press has called it “a premier orchestra at its peak”; and *The New York Times* wrote, “the ensemble, famous for its glowing strings and homogenous richness, has never sounded better.”

Yannick has established himself as a musical leader of the highest caliber and one of the most thrilling and sought-after talents of his generation. He became the third music director of New York’s Metropolitan Opera in 2018. In addition, he has been artistic director and principal conductor of Montreal’s Orchestre Métropolitain since 2000. In 2017 he became the third-ever honorary member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. He served as music director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic from 2008 to 2018 (he is now honorary conductor) and was principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic from 2008 to 2014. He has made wildly successful appearances with the world’s most revered ensembles and at many of the leading opera houses.

Yannick has shown a deep commitment to expanding the repertoire by embracing an ever-growing and diverse group of today’s composers and by performing and recording the music of underappreciated composers of the past, including Florence Price, Clara Schumann, William Dawson, Lili Boulanger, Louise Farrenc, and William Grant Still. In 2018 he signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon. Under his leadership The Philadelphia Orchestra returned to recording with 15 releases on that label, including *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*, which won a GRAMMY® Award for Best Orchestral Performance in 2022.

A native of Montreal, Yannick studied piano, conducting, composition, and chamber music at Montreal’s Conservatory of Music and continued his studies with renowned conductors, most notably Carlo Maria Giulini; he also studied choral conducting at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey. Among Yannick’s honors are an appointment as Companion of the Order of Canada; Companion to the Order of Arts and Letters of Quebec; an Officer of the Order of Quebec; an Officer of the Order of Montreal; an Officier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres; *Musical America*’s 2016 Artist of the Year; ECHO KLASSIK’s 2014 Conductor of the Year; a Royal Philharmonic Society Award; Canada’s National Arts Centre Award; the Prix Denise-Pelletier; the Oskar Morawetz Award; and honorary doctorates from the University of Quebec, the Curtis Institute of Music, Westminster Choir College of Rider University, McGill University, the University of Montreal, the University of Pennsylvania, Laval University, and Drexel University.

To read Yannick’s full bio, please visit philorch.org/conductor.

SOLOISTS

Curtis Brown



Soprano **Leah Hawkins** is the recipient of the Metropolitan Opera's 2024 Beverly Sills Artist Award and a graduate of the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. Additional honors include the Dallas Symphony's Women in Classical Music Career Advancement Award, a Richard Tucker Foundation Career Grant, and the Marian Anderson Award. In addition to tonight's performance, highlights of her 2026–27 season include her house debut with Lyric Opera of Chicago in the title role of Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* and returns to

the Metropolitan Opera in the title role of Verdi's *Aida* and for the Diamond Jubilee gala. She also joins Monte Carlo Opera as Serena in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* and Hamburg Opera as Amelia in Verdi's *A Masked Ball*. This past summer she joined The Philadelphia Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin for performances of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center and the Bravo! Vail Music Festival. She also performed Beethoven's Ninth at the BBC Proms with the BBC Philharmonic conducted by Gianandrea Noseda. She received her Master of Music in Voice from Yale University and her Bachelor of Arts in Music from Morgan State University. She made her Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2017.

Arvin Prem Kumar



Two-time GRAMMY Award-winning American mezzo-soprano **J'Nai Bridges** made her Philadelphia Orchestra debut on a 2012 Family Concert as a winner of the 2011 Philadelphia Orchestra Albert M. Greenfield Student Competition. In August she appeared at the BBC Proms at London's Royal Albert Hall as Puck in Weber's *Oberon* with the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique conducted by Mark Elder. In the 2026–27 season she joins Anthony Parnter and the London Symphony for the world premiere of David

Ōnaç's *Atlantic Requiem*; tours with the Sphinx Virtuosi, appearing at Carnegie Hall, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, the University of Notre Dame, and the University Musical Society at the University of Michigan; and joins the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin for Mozart's Requiem. She also returns to the Seattle Symphony for Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet*; performs Lieberman's *Neruda Songs* with the China National and New Jersey symphonies; joins the New Japan Philharmonic and conductor Marin Alsop for Bernstein's "Jeremiah" Symphony; and appears at the Metropolitan Opera for its Diamond Jubilee: 60 Years at Lincoln Center concert alongside an extraordinary roster of Met stars conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

SOLOISTS



Jiyang Chen

Dramatic tenor **Issachah Savage** made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2023 and has appeared with many of the world's leading orchestras, including the New York, Los Angeles, and Rotterdam philharmonics; the Cleveland Orchestra; the Boston, San Francisco, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Toronto, St. Louis, Detroit, Danish National, and Melbourne symphonies; and the Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo. He has collaborated with many of today's foremost conductors including Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Gustavo

Dudamel, Riccardo Muti, Fabio Luisi, James Conlon, Gianandrea Noseda, Marin Alsop, Jaap van Zweden, Robert Spano, Lorenzo Viotti, and Susanna Mälkki. His wide-ranging symphonic repertoire includes Smyth's *Mass in D*, Giddens and Abels's *Omar's Journey*, Mozart's and Verdi's Requiems, Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, and Schoenberg's *Gurre-Lieder*. He has sung much of the great tenor repertoire, including the title roles in Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and *Rienzi*, Verdi's *Otello*, and Britten's *Peter Grimes*. He is the winner of the Seattle International Wagner Competition. Among his many awards, he was honored in the early stages of his career as the first-ever Scholar Artist of the Marian Anderson Society of Philadelphia.



Jiyang Chen

Three-time GRAMMY Award-winning bass-baritone **Ryan Speedo Green** made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2014 at the Highmark Mann Center. Highlights of his 2026–27 season include house and role debuts at both American and European opera houses. He returns to the Metropolitan Opera as Banquo in Verdi's *Macbeth*, conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin and broadcast as part of the Met's *Live in HD* series. Also at the Met, he sings Klingsor in Wagner's *Parsifal*, again conducted by Mr. Nézet-Séguin, and appears at the Diamond

Jubilee: 60 Years at Lincoln Center gala. He makes his house and role debut in the title role of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* with Dutch National Opera and his house debut in the same role at Atlanta Opera. Recent and upcoming orchestral highlights include Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Gustavo Dudamel and Mahler's Symphony No. 8 with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra conducted by Mr. Nézet-Séguin. Mr. Green is the subject of the 2016 *New York Times* bestseller *Sing for Your Life* by Daniel Bergner, which tells the inspiring story of his personal and artistic journey from a trailer park in southeastern Virginia and time spent in the state's juvenile facility of last resort to the Met stage.

CHOIR



Jeff Fusco

The Philadelphia Symphonic Choir made its debut in December 2016, performing in three programs with The Philadelphia Orchestra that season. Consisting of talented vocalists auditioned from around the country, the ensemble was created to marry gifted and unique voices of Philadelphia and beyond with the legendary “Philadelphia Sound.” Performance highlights with the Orchestra include the world premiere of the concert version of Kevin Puts’s opera *The Hours* and Beethoven’s *Missa solemnis* in Philadelphia and at Carnegie Hall. The ensemble has also sung in performances of Puccini’s *Tosca*, Mozart’s Requiem, and multiple season performances of Handel’s *Messiah*. The Philadelphia Symphonic Choir is directed by Joe Miller, music director of the Vocal Arts Ensemble of Cincinnati, who has conducted and prepared choruses for leading orchestras, opera companies, festivals, and concert venues throughout the United States and abroad. A passionate educator and mentor, he has also maintained a strong connection to the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where his work combines performance, teaching, and the development of the next generation of choral musicians. The American Guild of Musical Artists, AFL-CIO, the union of professional singers, dancers, and production personnel in opera, ballet, and concert, represents the choral artists in this performance.

Sopranos

Katharine Burns
Rachel Carlson
Lily Carmichael
Abigail Chapman
Lauren Cohen
Ryan Colbert
Maria Palombo Costa
Marisa Curcio
Natalie Esler
Mary Fetterman
Laura Fishman
Julie-Ann Green
Jina Jang
Erica Johnson
Colleen Kinderman
Rachael Lipson
Zoe-Elizabeth McCray
Jessica Moreno
Olivia Prendergast
Rebecca Shimer

Altos

Eliana Barwinski
Serafina Belletini
Lori Cummines-Huck
Joanna Gates
Alyson Harvey
Monica Isomura
Shannon Lally
Renee Macdonald
Kimberly Martinez
Megan McFadden
Megan McGinty
Heather Mitchell
Katherine Doe Morse
Natasha Nelson
Lindsey Polcyn
Sarah Robbins
Rebecca Roy
Sarah Sensenig
Cecelia Snow
Kaitlyn Tierney

Tenors

Sam Barge
Brendan Barker
Greg Boatman
Roberto Guevara, Jr.
Jonathan Hartwell
Bryan Umberto
Hoyos
Joshua John
Jordan Klotz
Tom Leighton
William Lim, Jr.
Josh Lisner
Max Marques
Timothy Morrow
Jacob Nelson
Kev Schneider
Royce Strider
David Taylor
Tyler Tejada
Maxwell Trombley
Knox Van Horn

Basses

Christopher Aldrich
Kim Barroso
Maxwell Brey
Vinroy D. Brown, Jr.
Roy DeMarco
Sam Duffey
Connor Fluharty
Loren Greer
Oliver Holt
Robert James Lamb
Daniel Laverriere
John Monk
Ethan Neal
Alexander Nguyen
Carlos Pedroza
Erik Potteiger
Scott Purcell
Sam Scheibe
Andrew J. Shaw
Kirby Traylor

Cris Frisco,
Collaborative Pianist

FRAMING THE PROGRAM

PARALLEL EVENTS

1824 Beethoven Symphony No. 9	Music Mendelssohn Concerto for Two Pianos Literature Scott <i>Redgauntlet</i> Art Ingres <i>Vow of Louis XIII</i> History Eric Canal finished
2007 Hisaishi <i>Orbis</i>	Music Higdon <i>The Singing Rooms</i> Literature Díaz <i>The Brief</i> <i>Wondrous Life of</i> <i>Oscar Wao</i> Art Hockney <i>Bigger Trees Near</i> <i>Warter</i> History The first iPhone released

The Philadelphia Orchestra festively opens its 127th season with the American premiere of a composition that serves as an introduction to Beethoven’s monumental Ninth Symphony.

Philadelphia Orchestra Composer-in-Residence Joe Hisaishi wrote *Orbis*, a work for chorus, organ, and orchestra, as an overture to be performed in Osaka, Japan, at the 25th anniversary concert of “Suntory Presents Beethoven’s Ninth with a Cast of 10,000.” The Latin title *Orbis* means “circle” or “connection,” and its text resonates with some of the German words Beethoven used in the finale of his Symphony.

In the history of Western music, there are a handful of masterpieces that changed its course. Beethoven’s Ninth is one of them: a work celebrated both for its musical qualities and its extra-musical implications. The innovations and ambition of the Ninth, together with its humanistic message, have inspired musicians and audiences for more than two centuries. The Symphony starts the Philadelphia season with a joyful noise.

The Philadelphia Orchestra is the only orchestra in the world with three weekly broadcasts on SiriusXM’s *Symphony Hall*, Channel 66, on Mondays at 7 PM, Thursdays at 12 AM, and Saturdays at 4 PM.

THE MUSIC

Orbis

Joe Hisaishi

Born December 6, 1950, in Nagano, Japan

Nick Rutter



Composer, conductor, and pianist Joe Hisaishi is a formidable force in contemporary music, known for his delicately crafted symphonic and solo works, as well as his globally successful film music. He began to develop his unique style in minimalist music when he graduated from conservatory in Tokyo. His career started with the debut of his first solo musical project, MKWAJU, in 1981 and the release of his first album, *Information*, the next year. Since then, he has released nearly 40 solo albums, including *Minima_Rhythm*, *Melodyphony*, and *Minima_Rhythm 4*. In 2023 he signed an exclusive

recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon, with four albums appearing on that label.

Hisaishi is renowned for his long-standing collaboration with Japanese anime director Hayao Miyazaki. After *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, he went on to produce music for *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Kiki's Delivery Service*, *Spirited Away*, *Howl's Moving Castle*, and *The Boy and the Heron*, among others. His soundtracks, including non-Miyazaki projects such as *Hana-Bi*, *Departures*, *Villain*, and *The Tale of Princess Kaguya*, capture his sensitive and imaginative amalgamation of the symphonic and minimalist genres and have won numerous international awards.

An Acclaimed Classical Composer In recent years, Hisaishi has written a number of classical works including *The East Land Symphony* (Symphony No. 1; 2016), *Symphony No. 2* (2021), *Metaphysica* (Symphony No. 3; 2021), and *Viola Saga* (2023). His Harp Concerto received its world premiere with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in November 2024, and in May 2026 he conducted the world premiere of his Concerto for Orchestra with the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO). The work was co-commissioned by 10 leading orchestras and music institutions worldwide, including the NSO, Carnegie Hall, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony, and the Orchestre de Paris.

In 2025 Hisaishi became composer-in-residence of The Philadelphia Orchestra and in March 2027 will lead it in the world premiere of his Piano Concerto. He is also composer-in-association of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, composer-in-residence of the Philharmonie de Paris, and composer in focus with the Los Angeles Philharmonic for the 2026 season.

As a conductor, Hisaishi has led many of the world's leading ensembles including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, and the Helsinki Philharmonic. Alongside his film music, he conducts classical repertoire by Brahms, Musorgsky, Ravel, Reich, and Pärt, among others, and his own symphonic compositions. In 2004

he became the first music director of the New Japan Philharmonic “World Dream Orchestra,” and in April 2025 he was named music director of the Japan Century Symphony Orchestra.

A Closer Look *Orbis* was commissioned as an overture to be performed at the 25th anniversary of the annual concert “Suntory Presents Beethoven’s Ninth with a Cast of 10,000” in 2007 in Osaka, Japan. The title *Orbis* means “circle” or “connection” in Latin. The 11-minute piece is written for mixed chorus, organ, and orchestra. The composer chose Latin words—such as *lactitia* (joy) and *paradisus* (paradise)—that convey themes similar to those found in the finale of Beethoven’s Symphony.

In 2015, Hisaishi expanded *Orbis* into a three-movement, 25-minute work that had its premiere in December 2015 with the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, again performed with Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. It was important for Hisaishi to compose a bright and positive work that connects with Beethoven but that could also be seen as a hymn celebrating the human act of living.

—The Philadelphia Orchestra

Orbis was composed in 2007 and expanded in 2015.

This is the United States premiere of the 2007 version of the work.

The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbal, glockenspiel, marimba, snare drum, suspended cymbal, tubular bells), harp, piano (doubling celesta), solo organ, strings, and mixed chorus.

The work runs approximately 11 minutes in performance.

Orbis

*Orbis, orbis, lactitia,
orbis, anima,
sonus, sonitus, paradisus,
sonus, sonitus,
sonus, sonitus,
jubilatio, jubilatio,
orbis, anima,
sol, rosa, sol, rosa, aqua,
sol, rosa, anima,
sol, rosa, anima,
sol, rosa, anima, orbis,
orbis, lactitia,
paradisus, anima,
caritas fraternitatis,
orbis, jubilatio,
mundus, victoria,
mundus, victoria, amicus,
orbis, orbis, lactitia,
orbis, anima*

Circle, circle, joy,
circle, soul,
sound, sound, paradise,
sound, sound,
sound, sound,
jubilation, jubilation,
circle, soul,
sun, rose, sun, rose, water,
sun, rose, soul,
sun, rose, soul,
sun, rose, soul, circle,
circle, joy,
paradise, soul,
brotherly love,
circle, jubilation,
world, victory,
world, victory, friend,
circle, circle, joy,
circle, soul

THE MUSIC

Symphony No. 9 (“Choral”)

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born in Bonn, December 16, 1770

Died in Vienna, March 26, 1827



Throughout his career, Beethoven was a fervent believer in Enlightenment values and sought ways to express his beliefs in many of his compositions. One of the reasons for the broad and sustained appeal of his Ninth Symphony is that people enjoying or seeking freedom see this work as exquisitely expressing a message they wish loudly to proclaim. The message is simple, one we learn as children: People should live together in joyous brotherhood.

An Enlightenment Testament As a child of the Enlightenment, Beethoven grew up during the American and French revolutions. He followed political events throughout his life and experienced war close at hand when Napoleon’s troops invaded Vienna in 1805 and again in 1809. His first large-scale composition, written at the age of 19, was an impressive cantata commemorating the death of Emperor Joseph II, who had done so much to liberalize the Austrian empire during the early 1780s. Years later Beethoven wrote his lone opera, *Fidelio*, which tells the story of a loving wife’s brave efforts to save her husband, an unjustly jailed political prisoner. Through her heroic deeds he is rescued and tyranny exposed.

For his final symphony Beethoven turned to a lengthy poem by Friedrich Schiller that he had long wanted to set to music: the “Ode to Joy” (1785). Schiller’s famous words state that in a new age the old ways will no longer divide people; “all men shall become brothers.” Since the premiere of the Ninth Symphony in Vienna in May 1824, performances of the work have become almost sacramental occasions, as musicians and audiences alike are exhorted to universal fraternity.

The Ultimate Symphony On a purely musical level, few pieces of music have exerted such an impact on later composers. How, many wondered, should one write a symphony after the Ninth? Schubert, Berlioz, Brahms, Wagner, Bruckner, Mahler—the list goes on and on—all dealt with this question in fascinating ways that fundamentally shaped 19th-century music. Schubert, who most likely attended the 1824 premiere, briefly quoted the “joy” theme in his own final symphony, written the following year. Most Bruckner symphonies begin in the manner of the Ninth. Mendelssohn, Mahler, and Shostakovich followed the model of using a chorus. Wagner was perhaps the composer most influenced by the work, arguing that in it Beethoven pointed the way to the “Music of the Future,” a universal drama uniting music and words that, in short, was realized in Wagner’s own operas.

Composers are not the only people who have become deeply engaged with the Ninth, and struggled with its import and meaning. For nearly two centuries the work has surfaced at crucial times and places, appropriated for widely diverse purposes. As the ultimate “feel-good” piece, the Ninth has been used to open the Olympic Games and bring nations together in song. Yet during the Nazi era it was often performed to celebrate Hitler’s birthday. Its melody is the official anthem of the European Union—but it was also the anthem of Ian Smith’s racist regime in Rhodesia during the 1970s. Within more recent memory, we have heard protestors playing recordings of the Ninth in Tiananmen Square in Beijing and jubilant students also chose it as their theme as the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. There were commemorative performances in the wake of 9/11, when the Ninth was once again enlisted for its hopeful message.

A Resisted Masterpiece In a penetrating essay, “Resisting the Ninth,” music historian Richard Taruskin has pointed to ways in which some musicians and listeners from the beginning have resisted the Ninth Symphony, embarrassed by what they consider its naive optimism. This Symphony, Taruskin states, “is among connoisseurs preeminently the Piece You Love to Hate, no less now than a century and a half ago. Why? Because it is at once incomprehensible and irresistible, and because it is at once awesome and naive.”

Those who revere the Ninth Symphony may be surprised to hear that some have resisted it now or at any time. Undoubtedly its message has been “neutered” as it has been trivialized in movies and TV commercials, and often treated by musicians in purely musical terms rather than in humanistic ones. For some modern listeners, Taruskin argues, its message may be difficult to take seriously anymore: “We have our problems with demagogues who preach to us about the brotherhood of man. We have been too badly burned by those who have promised Elysium and given us gulags and gas chambers.” Yet Beethoven understood that great works of art matter, in part because they constitute a threat to tyrants. Beethoven strove for ways to express a deeply felt political vision.

A Closer Look The opening of the first movement (***Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso***) grows out of a void. Against the murmurings of the low strings emerge falling fifths in the violins that build to a loud and imposing first theme. It has been likened to the creation of the world; certainly no symphony before had sounded anything like it. Beethoven switched the expected order of movements (another feature later composers would imitate) by following the allegro with the scherzo (***Molto vivace***). A favorite with audiences from the beginning (especially the prominent role given to the timpani), it projects both humor and power. The lyrical slow movement (***Adagio molto e cantabile***) seems to explore more personal, even spiritual realms.

The **Presto** finale opens with what Wagner called the “terror fanfare,” a dissonant and frantic passage that leads to a “recitative” (so marked in the score) for the cellos and basses. Fragments from the previous three movements pass in review—a few measures of the opening theme of each—but are in turn rejected by the strings. After this strange, extended instrumental recitative comes an aria-like melody: the famous “Ode to Joy” tune to which later will be added words. After some seven minutes the movement starts over again: The

“terror fanfare” returns, this time followed by a true vocal recitative, with the bass soloist singing “O friends, not these tones! But rather, let us strike up more pleasant and more joyful ones.” The chorus and four vocal soloists take up the “joy” theme, which undergoes a series of variations, including a brief section in the Turkish manner, with cymbals, triangle, drum, piccolo, and trumpets. The music reaches a climax with a new theme: “Be embraced, ye millions, ... above the starry canopy there must dwell a loving Father,” which is later combined in counterpoint with the joy theme and eventually builds to a frenzied coda.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Christopher H. Gibbs is James H. Ottaway Jr. Professor of Music at Bard College and has been the program annotator for The Philadelphia Orchestra since 2000. He is the author of several books on Schubert and Liszt, and the co-author, with Richard Taruskin, of The Oxford History of Western Music, College Edition.

Beethoven composed his Ninth Symphony from 1822 to 1824.

The Philadelphia Orchestra performed the first three movements of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in March 1902, with Fritz Scheel conducting. The Orchestra's first complete performance of the work took place in March 1903, again with Scheel. The most recent subscription performances were in May 2025, with Yannick Nézet-Séguin, soprano Leah Hawkins, mezzo-soprano Rihab Chaieb, tenor Issachah Savage, bass-baritone Ryan McKinney, and the Philadelphia Symphonic Choir.

The Orchestra has recorded the Symphony five times: in 1934 with Leopold Stokowski for RCA; in 1945, 1962, and 1964 with Eugene Ormandy for CBS; and in 1988 with Riccardo Muti for EMI. A live recording from 2006 with Christoph Eschenbach is also available as a digital download.

The work is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, triangle), strings, four vocal soloists, and a four-part chorus.

The Ninth Symphony runs approximately 70 minutes in performance.

Ode to Joy

(Friedrich Schiller)

Bass

*O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!
Sondern lasst uns angenehmere
anstimmen, und freudenvollere.*

Bass and Chorus

*Freude, schöner Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elysium,
wir betreten feuertrunken,
Himmlische, dein Heiligtum!
Deine Zauber binden wieder,
was die Mode streng geteilt;
alle Menschen werden Brüder
wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.*

Bass

O friends, not these tones!
But rather, let us strike up
more pleasant and more joyful ones.

Bass and Chorus

Joy, thou lovely spark of the gods,
daughter of Elysium;
drunk with fire, we tread
thy holy realm, O heavenly one!
Thy magic joins again
that which custom has torn apart;
all men become brothers
wherever thy gentle wings are spread.

*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 war dem Wurm gegeben,
und der Cherub steht vor Gott.*

Tenor and Chorus

*Froh, wie seine Sonnen fliegen
durch des Himmels prächt'gen Plan,
laufet, Brüder, eure Bahn,
freudig, wie ein Held zum Siegen.*

Chorus

*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' ihm über'm Sternenzelt,
über Sternen muss er wohnen.*

He who has had the great fortune
of being a friend's friend,
he who has won a gracious wife,
let him join the celebration!
Yes, even he who can call
only one soul on earth his own!
And let the one who could never do this
steal from our midst in tears!

All living beings drink joy
at Nature's breast;
all good things, all evil things
walk her rose-strewn path.
She gave us kisses, she gave us vines,
she gave us a friend true to the grave;
wantonness was given to the worm,
and the cherub stands before God.

Tenor and Chorus

Happily, as his suns fly
across heaven's magnificent expanse,
brothers, run your course
joyfully, like a hero to victory.

Chorus

Be embraced, ye millions!
This kiss goes to all the world!
Brothers, above the starry canopy
there must dwell a loving Father.

Do you fall prostrate, O millions?
Do you worship the Creator, O world?
Look for Him above the starry canopy;
He must live above the stars.

English translation by Paul J. Horsley

MUSICAL TERMS

GENERAL TERMS

Aria: An accompanied solo song (often in ternary form), usually in an opera or oratorio

Cantata: A multimovement vocal piece consisting of arias, recitatives, ensembles, and choruses and based on a continuous narrative text

Chord: The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

Chromatic: Relating to tones foreign to a given key (scale) or chord

Coda: A concluding section or passage added in order to confirm the impression of finality

Counterpoint: The combination of simultaneously sounding musical lines

Diatonic: Melody or harmony drawn primarily from the tones of the major or minor scale

Dissonance: A combination of two or more tones requiring resolution

Fifth: An interval of five diatonic degrees

Harmonic: Pertaining to chords and to the theory and practice of harmony

Harmony: The combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions

Minimalism: A style of composition characterized by an intentionally simplified rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic vocabulary

Minuet: A dance in triple time commonly used up to the beginning of the 19th century as the lightest movement of a symphony

Op.: Abbreviation for opus, a term used to indicate the chronological position of a composition within a composer's output

Oratorio: Large-scale dramatic composition originating in the 16th century with text usually based on religious subjects. Oratorios are performed by choruses and solo voices with an instrumental accompaniment, and are similar to operas but without costumes, scenery, and actions.

Recitative: Declamatory singing, free in tempo and rhythm. Recitative has also sometimes been used to refer to parts of

purely instrumental works that resemble vocal recitatives.

Scale: The series of tones which form (a) any major or minor key or (b) the chromatic scale of successive semi-tonic steps

Scherzo: Literally "a joke." Usually the third movement of symphonies and quartets that was introduced by Beethoven to replace the minuet. The scherzo is followed by a gentler section called a trio, after which the scherzo is repeated. Its characteristics are a rapid tempo, vigorous rhythm, and humorous contrasts.

Tempo: The speed of music

Ternary: A musical form in three sections, A-B-A, in which the middle section is different than the outer sections

Tonic: The keynote of a scale

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

Adagio: Leisurely, slow

Alla marcia: In march time

Allegro: Bright, fast

Andante: Walking speed

Cantabile: In a singing style, lyrical, melodious, flowing

Energico: With vigor, powerfully

Maestoso: Majestic

Moderato: A moderate tempo, neither fast nor slow

Presto: Very fast

Recitativo: In declamatory style, free in rhythm and tempo.

Strigendo: Hurrying, speeding up

Vivace: Lively

TEMPO MODIFIERS

Assai: Much

Ma non tanto: But not too much so

Molto: Very

Poco: Little, a bit

Un poco: A little

MODIFYING SUFFIXES

-issimo: Very

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Photo: Jessica Griffin

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Photo: Allie Ippolito

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