JOY! BEETHOVEN'S NINTH

program notes

I Was Glad **Sir Hubert Parry**

For a significant span of the late 1800s, Sir Hubert Parry was one of the most respected musicians in all of Britain. He held concurrent professorships at the Royal College of Music and at the University of Oxford. He was hailed by some as the finest British composer of the century.

Today, Parry's name is largely overshadowed by those of a younger generation, including some of his own students — who included Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Frank Bridge. None of his music is regularly performed in the concert hall. But one work keeps his name perennially familiar in Britain: I Was Glad, a setting of Psalm 122 for brass, organ, and large chorus.

Parry penned the short, celebratory work in 1902 for the coronation of King Edward VII. Settings of the same text had been sung at coronations since the 1600s; but Parry's version took an immediate place of primacy. It has been performed at every coronation since; it was also recently performed at the wedding of Prince William, Duke of Cambridge and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge as the processional music for the bride, her father, and the bridal attendants.

Serenade to Music **Ralph Vaughan Williams**

Program note by David Bowden

Vaughan Williams' composition, Serenade to Music, has a very special place in my heart. The work was the centerpiece of my first concert with the Philharmonic in 1987 (we were called the Pro Music Orchestra of Columbus then).

However, it was much more than just the centerpiece of that one concert. It was my personal musical mission statement of the purpose and place of giving concerts and of music education. Here is how I stated that mission in my spoken introduction of the work 35 years ago:

> The selection of Vaughan Williams' Serenade to Music for our opening concert is purposeful on my part.
>
> My mission, the mission of our orchestra, is to serve music. It's not to serve me; it's not to serve the orchestra or the board; it's not even to serve you.
>
> We are really here to serve MUSIC. And I thought that the best way that we could demonstrate this was to present "To Music" and share the beauty of this particular work with you. I hope you will find it meaningful."

In the program note that I wrote for that first concert about the Serenade, I said:

> The Vaughan Williams Serenade to Music demonstrates what I hope will be the chief characteristic of my work with the Pro Musica Orchestra:
>
> > Sharing the wonder and beauty of music and finding joy and fulfillment in the richness music brings to our lives...
>
> I hope you find entertainment, drama, and spiritual sustenance as we share the gift of MUSIC!

My passion for focusing our efforts on music-making (not on ourselves or on our guest artists or even on our value to and place in the community, but rather on the music itself and the making and enjoyment of music) is because I am convinced deep down in my soul that **making music changes lives.** And the music itself compels the curious among us, especially the young, to explore making music.

In 1938, Vaughan Williams was approached by Sir Henry Wood to compose a work celebrating his 50th year of conducting. Wood also suggested the text, wanting to emphasize the essential value of music to human living and our instinctive heartfelt response to it. He chose a scene close to the end Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* in which husband and wife, Lorenza and Jessica, sit by a flower bank in Portia's moonlit garden late in the evening discussing the power of music. Shakespeare's dialogue centers on the similarities of the harmonies of nature and music. The dialogue warns of people who are not touched by the power of music: "Let no such man be trusted!" Ultimately, the spiritual nature of music and its ability to touch the heart and soul "become the touches of sweet harmony."

Vaughan Williams knew just about every well-known singer at the time, and he chose 16 to serve as the chorus with each of them having an integrated solo in the work. He also authorized performing the work with 4 soloists and symphonic choir – the way we will perform it this evening.

The work opens with an extraordinarily beautiful solo violin accompanied by harp with muted strings and horns in one of the most immediately striking and evocative expressions of the beauty of music of which I am aware. The first lines of Shakespeare's dialogue are sung softly, "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank." After celebrating the power of music to "draw [one] home" – to heal and restore "with music," the Bard turns to arouse our senses in ways that engage our soul because "our spirits are attentive...to the concord of sweet sounds."

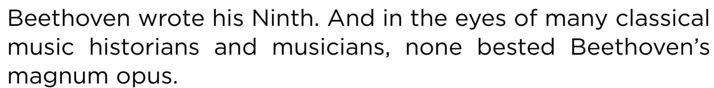
After expressing distress at one whose dull spirit is unresponsive to these sweet sounds, Vaughan Williams takes Shakespeare's evocation of music of true perfection and glories in the beauty of the return of the opening violin melody. "Soft stillness and the night become the touches of sweet harmony."

To MUSIC!

Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, op. 125, "Ode to Joy"
Ludwig Van Beethoven

There were Ninth Symphonies written by composers who came before Ludwig Van Beethoven, and Ninths that came after. But mention "the Ninth," and even most casual classical music listeners know that you mean Beethoven's last symphony.

There are longer symphonies, and more harmonically adventurous symphonies, and symphonies that require more performers. But all of those were written after Ludwig Van



Beethoven wrote his Ninth. And in the eyes of many classical music historians and musicians, none bested Beethoven's magnum opus.

The Ninth is the musical equivalent of the Mona Lisa, or of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Many of the most revered composers of the 19th Century, including Brahms, Dvorak and especially Wagner, pointed to the Ninth as a central inspiration in their own creative voices. Almost every symphony by Antonin Bruckner begins in the same quietly rumbling manner as Beethoven's Ninth. Mahler's First Symphony fits that mold as well; and his Second expands on Beethoven's inspired use of chorus and soloists in the finale.

What is easy to forget amidst all these praises is that, in its time, the Ninth represented a radical departure from almost every assumption commonly held about symphonic music. Built in the traditional four movements, the music and structure of the Ninth Symphony is otherwise almost entirely unprecedented — from its dramatic opening bars to the appearance of a chorus halfway through the final movement.

The idea of constructing a choral symphony around Friedrich von Schiller's poem first came to Beethoven in 1793 — before he wrote his First Symphony. Beethoven had long ascribed to the reason-based ideals of the Enlightenment, and especially the era's focus on tolerance and brotherhood. In Schiller's poem he found a perfect expression of his beliefs: "Joy, bright spark of divinity...Thy magic power reunites / All that custom has divided / All men become brothers / Under the sway of thy gentle wings."

To Beethoven, the Enlightenment heralded nothing less than the dawning of a new age.

You can hear that dawning in dramatic form, right at the beginning of the Ninth Symphony. The music begins with a stirring of sound, rhythmically amorphous and almost imperceptibly quiet — like the first light illuminating a new world. Violins enter, playing descending intervals of a fifth. The first melodic theme of the opening movement — a series of descending two-note patterns — employs similarly simple harmonies, creating a sense of openness and pure expansiveness. It quickly builds into a statement that is unmistakably heroic in nature, as if challenging the world. Then, after repeating that first section, Beethoven launches into a melody that is similarly simple: a lyrical tune built on single steps of the scale.

What follows is an elaborately structured, tautly dramatic movement in which simple ideas are transformed into powerful expressions that propel ever forward. The first movement of the Ninth is longer than many entire symphonies by earlier composers like Haydn and Mozart. Much of that time is spent developing the two initial melodic themes of the movement — simple as they are — through a series of key changes and contrasting forms.

And then, after 20 minutes, the movement ends...not in a neat, tidy wrap-up, but simply with a halt. Think of it as a musical cliffhanger for what comes next.

On paper, the music that opens the second movement looks so simple. The string section plays two descending octaves in unison; the timpani echoes them once; and the strings answer back once more. The statement has no real harmonic texture to it. It is rhythmically repetitive.

Yet the effect is far from ordinary. It is like a musical punch in the nose. According to legend, during the premier performance of the Ninth audience members spontaneously leapt up and cheered at this music. Even today, one can understand (but perhaps should resist) the urge.

The music carries on in this dramatic fashion, skipping along vigorously. Then, just when you think the movement is all about bombast, a liltingly beautiful reverie appears. Those elements — the sharp rhythmic themes contrasting with beautiful passages — might not seem like much to work with in a movement that lasts more than ten minutes. But Beethoven turned them into a whirlwind of excitement, and a storm of innovation.

It is worth mentioning at this point that the simple organization of movements in Beethoven's Ninth was, in itself, unprecedented outside his own compositions. Previously, following the example of Haydn (the inventor of the symphony), composers had typically placed a minuet movement — a formal dance, unparalleled in modern American culture except by country line dancing and the Macarena — in the third position of the four movements of a symphony.

Beethoven not only placed the dance movement second; but also transformed it into a scherzo (an Italian word that originally meant "joke"). One might interpret this second movement as something of a diversion; yet, if it lacks the emotional heft of the other movements, it most certainly makes up in sheer energy. True joy certainly demands some playfulness.

The slow third movement is structured as a theme and variations — a form that perfectly frames the music's sense of searching. Through each variation on the melody, the music seems to get deeper and more expansive, more probing, as if repeating an unanswerable question. The movement ends unresolved both melodically and harmonically.

Perhaps if this is your first time listening to the Ninth, there is a less cosmic question that comes to mind in the moment of silence that precedes the fourth movement. Specifically: What's up with that enormous choir sitting behind the orchestra?

It can be fun to imagine that you are there in the auditorium listening to Beethoven's Ninth during its premiere. It is a Friday, in May of 1824 — a beautiful time of year in Vienna, the cultural capital of central Europe. The most revered new music-maker of the era is onstage, conducting this Ninth Symphony of his. He has already led you through forty minutes of music — more music than was contained in almost any other symphony that he or any other composer had previously written.

And yet, there sits that massive choir, with nary a note sung. And this musical idea that seemed to be building — this Importance with a capitol "I" — hasn't resolved into anything clear.

You might suspect something is about to explode. And with

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the first notes of the fourth movement, it does: an outburst of dissonance, like an angry musical scribble. Richard Wagner called it the "terror fanfare," for good reason.

Over the next several minutes the orchestra seems to search even more fervently — starting and halting, reminiscing about music from previous movements, testing new ideas. Searching for the right voice to express this Importance.

Then, finally, it appears: sixty-one notes of simple, mostly stepwise, mostly mono-rhythmic flow. Easy enough for the tone-deaf to hum, yet cosmic in its sense of hope and beauty. This is the melody we all know, the tune we've been waiting for.

Still there is something missing. The terror fanfare briefly returns — but this time it is cut off by an exclamation by a singer: "O friends, no more of these sounds! Let us sing more cheerful songs, more full of joy!"

It is the first utterance of a human voice. It is what was missing all along: the rationality of words and the pure, primal beauty of voices — humanity in harmony. What follows is an unparalleled expression of beauty and joy as the chorus sings through Schiller's paean to the potential of humanity united, the power of peace. In the end, we are left with an echoing call to the higher purpose within each of us: "World, do you know your Creator? Seek Him in the heavens! Above the stars must He dwell."

I WAS GLAD WHEN THEY SAID UNTO ME

C. Hubert H. Parry (1841-1918)

I was glad when they said unto me: We will go into the house of the Lord.
Our feet shall stand in thy gates: O Jerusalem,
Jerusalem is builded as a city: That is at unity in itself.

O pray for the peace of Jerusalem: They shall prosper that love thee.
Peace be within thy walls: And plenteousness within thy palaces.

Psalm 122 vs 1 - 3, 6 - 7

SERENADE TO MUSIC

Vaughan Williams

Shakespeare Text from *The Merchant of Venice*

LORENZO:
How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Look, how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:
There's not the smallest orb that thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.
Come, ho! and wake Diana with a hymn:
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear,
And draw her home with music.

JESSICA:
I am never merry when I hear sweet music.

LORENZO:
The reason is, your spirits are attentive:
The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus:
Let no such man be trusted... Music! hark!

NERISSA:
It is your music of the house.

PORTIA:
Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day.

NERISSA:
Silence bestows that virtue on it.

PORTIA:
How many things by season season'd are.
To their right praise and true perfection!
Peace, ho! the moon sleeps with Endymion,
And would not be awak'd.

(Soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.)

AN DIE FREUDE (ODE TO JOY)
text translation

GERMAN ORIGINAL

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

BARITONE 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.

SOLOISTS AND CHORUS
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.

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' ihn über'm Sternenzelt!
Über Sternen muss er wohnen.

Finale repeats the words:
Seid umschlungen, Millionen!
Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!
Brüder, über'm Sternenzelt
Muss ein lieber Vater wohnen.
Seid umschlungen,
Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!
Freude, schöner Götterfunken
Tochter aus Elysium,
Freude, schöner Götterfunken

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

BARITONE
Oh friends, not these tones!
Rather let us sing more
cheerful and more joyful ones.
Joy! Joy!

BARITONE AND CHORUS
Joy, thou glorious spark of heaven,
Daughter of Elysium,
We approach fire-drunk,
Heavenly One, your shrine.
Your magic reunites
What custom sternly divides;
All people become brothers
Where your gentle wing alights.

SOLOISTS AND CHORUS
Whoever succeeds in the great attempt
To be a friend of a friend,
Whoever has won a lovely woman,
Let him add his jubilation!
Yes, whoever calls even one soul
His own on the earth's globe!
And who never has, let him steal,
Weeping, away from this group.

All creatures drink joy
At the breasts of nature;
All the good, all the evil
Follow her roses' trail.
Kisses gave she us, and wine,
A friend, proven unto death;
Pleasure was to the worm granted,
And the cherub stands before God.

TENOR AND CHORUS
Glad, as his suns fly
Through the Heavens' glorious plan,
Run, brothers, your race,
Joyful, as a hero to victory.

CHORUS
Be embraced, you millions!
This kiss for the whole world!
Brothers, beyond the star-canopy
Must a loving Father dwell.
Do you bow down, you millions?
Do you sense the Creator, world?
Seek Him beyond the star-canopy!
Beyond the stars must He dwell.

Finale repeats the words:
Be embraced, ye millions!
This kiss for the whole world!
Brothers, beyond the star-canopy
Must a loving Father dwell.
Be embraced,
This kiss for the whole world!
Joy, beautiful spark of the gods,
Daughter of Elysium,
Joy, beautiful spark of the gods

Text in italics added by Beethoven.

* In Beethoven's time language referring to men and brothers would have been understood to mean all humankind united in one fellowship.