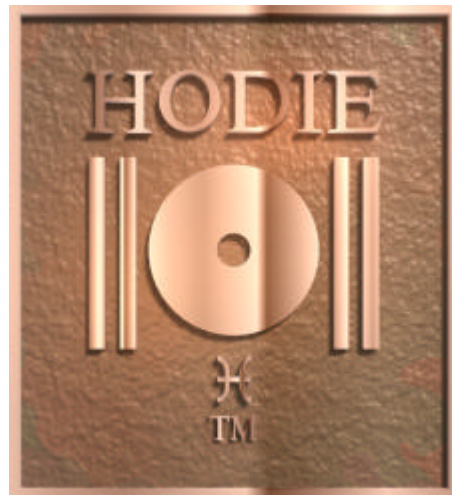


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From Ode to Hymn From Schiller to Beethoven



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From Ode to Hymn From Schiller to Beethoven

Schiller and Beethoven are kindred souls and spirits. They live in the same world, and converse across time as equals. Schiller wrote the *Ode to Joy* at 26, in 1785. It is most likely that Beethoven first came across it at 22, in 1792. At that time, the city of Bonn, where the composer was born, was one of the epicentres of the Enlightenment movement. Many books, which elsewhere were deemed “dangerous” by obscurantist *régimes*, were circulating around freely. In such a cultural environment, Beethoven had had the opportunity to read Voltaire and Rousseau, as well as Goethe, Schiller, Kant and the Greek philosophers.

Another significant fact is that the symbiotic convergence of symbols and allegories of the Age of Enlightenment at that time - the waning 18th century - is rooted in the Masonic movement. The lodges which had been in turmoil after the 1789 French Revolution were now simmering with excitement at the dawn of the new century.

In this particular context, the pronounced use of masonic elements in the Ode comes as no surprise. It is also probably a result of Schiller’s visits to Dresden or Loschwitz, where he moved in a circle of friends who belonged to the local lodges. Quite naturally, the Ode would then have been worked on and sung at masonic meetings. But even out of this specific context, we must bear in mind that the message conveyed by the Ode echoed and reflected its whole historical environment. Around 1810, in the streets of Bonn, vitalized by revolutionary echoes from across the Rhine, students sang the Ode to the music of the Marseillaise.

Let us emphasize in passing that in spite of their obvious connivance with the founding principles of freemasonry, neither Schiller nor Beethoven ever were Freemasons themselves. This was confirmed by one of the leading authorities on the subject, our late friend Philippe A. Autexier, shortly before his demise. The very principles of freemasonry are undoubtedly at the roots of several works of both artists, but even if they gave masonic theories their support, they never joined the movement.

At the outset, Schiller's poem was conceived as an Ode to Freedom. The switch from freedom to joy must be understood as widening the scope of the Ode. Freedom may represent the basic foundations of our human condition, but Joy is the very blooming of this condition. Schiller revised the Ode around 1803. It is this revised version which Beethoven used to erect the impressive musical-textual monument of the fourth movement of his last symphony. He also modified Schiller's text quite drastically in places, adding, by way of an introduction, a whole strophe of his own.

The coherence and ingenuity underlying Beethoven's work on Schiller's text are impressive. Deleting whole passages, changing the order of the strophes and selecting what was to be repeated, he never lost the clear objective he had in mind : to concentrate on essentials and develop this "working drawing" as an element of the formal structure of his score.

Thus Beethoven does away with the heavy epic allegory dearly loved by the freemasons of the time, and uses timeless universal symbols instead. Of the very few allegories he kept in their pristine sense, one : the "*Daughter of Elysium*" must be singled out. In Schiller's text, it is the poet's explicit affirmation of his belief in the human aspiration to fraternity which will lead political states to merge into a world of Harmony and Reason. The composer used the three following phrases for prosodic purposes :

“Joy, beautiful spark of the gods, Daughter of Elysium” - (*„Freude, schöner Götterfunken, Tochter aus Elysium“*)

“All men become brothers” - (*„Alle Menschen werden Brüder“*)

“Be embraced, you millions !” – (*„Seid umschlungen, Millionen“ !*)

Beethoven’s mastery should be no surprise : after all, he carried Schiller’s text with him for 29 or 30 years. From a strictly textual point of view, it is clear that the composer followed the principle of binary couplets in his adaptation, but did not take the choir’s answers into account. This drastic formal change is the result of a deliberate choice : the fourth movement will by no means follow a dialogue structure between choir and vocal soloists. The progression choir/soloists builds a non-stop line of song, both groups blending without ever falling into bipartite dialogue.

Beethoven’s oratory skills were too great for him to be satisfied with using Schiller’s text without taking preparatory steps. While working on the vocal-instrumental variations of the fourth movement, he felt it necessary to write an introduction to Schiller’s poem himself, something that would usher in word and song. After jotting down a few ideas in his sketchbooks, he finally wrote a text that fitted in with his selected extracts from the Ode. Its easy, natural tone adds even more feeling and sincerity to the content of both introduction and following text.

Beethoven’s Text

*O friends, no more these sounds !
Let us sing more cheerful songs,
A song full of joy !
Joy !*

Beethovens Text

*O Freunde, nicht diese Töne !
Sondern laßt uns angenehmere anstimmen,
und freudenvollere !
Freude !*

In Beethoven's eyes, adding a few lines of his own did not mean interfering with the text but establishing a transition between worldly desire - leading to chaos, as expressed in the introductory bars of the fourth movement - and the will of Man to free himself, as evoked by the poet.

Yet even today, surprisingly enough, the fourth movement is still regarded as a separate entity, and the introduction of the voice in purely instrumental music still arouses much controversy. Upon closer examination, it is obvious that the last movement of the Ninth Symphony is the result of the previous three, as far as form and sound are concerned. Moreover, the very evolution of music bears testimony that this symphony broke fresh musical ground into the 19th century.

For a better understanding of Beethoven's attitude towards Schiller's poem and of the prosodic requirements he had to meet, both Schiller's unabridged text and Beethoven's revised version are provided hereafter.

Schillers ungekürzter Text

(1) Freude, schöner Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elysium,
Wir betreten feuertrunken,
Himmliche, dein Heiligtum !

(2) Deine Zauber binden wieder,
Was die Mode streng geteilt ;
Alle Menschen werden Brüder,
Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.

CHOR

(3) Seid umschlungen, Millionen !
Diesen Kuß der ganzen Welt !
Brüder - überm Sternenzelt
Muß ein lieber Vater wohnen.

(4) Wem der große Wurf gelungen,
Eines Freundes Freund zu sein,
Wer ein holdes Weib errungen,
Mische seinen Jubel ein !

(5) Ja - wer auch nur eine Seele
Sein nennt auf dem Erdenrund !
Und wer's nie gekonnt, der stehle
Weinend sich aus diesem Bund.

CHOR

(6) Was den großen Ring bewohnt,
Huldige der Sympathie !
Zu den Sternen leitet sie,
Wo der Unbekannte thronet.

(7) Freude trinken alle Wesen
An den Brüsten der Natur ;
Alle Guten, alle Bösen,
Folgen ihrer Rosenspur.

(8) Küsse gab sie uns und Reben,
Einen Freund, geprüft im Tod ;
Wollust ward dem Wurm gegeben,
Und der Cherub steht vor Gott.

CHOR

(9) Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen ?
Ahnest Du den Schöpfer, Welt ?
Such' ihn überm Sternenzelt !
Über Sternen muß er wohnen.

(10) Freude heißt die starke Feder
In der ewigen Natur.
Freude, Freude treibt die Räder
In der großen Weltenuhr.

(11) Blumen lockt sie aus den Keimen,
Sonnens aus dem Firmament,
Sphären rollt sie in den Räumen,
Die des Sehers Rohr nicht kennt.

CHOR

(12) Froh, wie seine Sonnen fliegen
Durch des Himmels prächt'gen Plan,
Wandelt, Brüder, eure Bahn,
Freudig, wie ein Held zum Siegen.

Beethovens Text

O Freunde, nicht diese Töne !
Sondern laßt uns angenehmere
anstimmen, und freudenvollere !
Freude !

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elysium,
Wir betreten feuertrunken,
Himmliche, dein Heiligtum !

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.

Und der Cherub steht vor Gott.

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

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elysium,
Wir betreten feuertrunken,
Himmliche, dein Heiligtum !

Deine Zauber binden wieder,
Was die Mode streng geteilt ;
Alle Menschen werden Brüder,
Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.

Seid umschlungen, Millionen !
Diesen Kuß der ganzen Welt !
Brüder - überm Sternenzelt
Muß ein lieber Vater wohnen.

Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen ?
Ahnest Du den Schöpfer, Welt ?
Such' ihn überm Sternenzelt !
Über Sternen muß er wohnen.

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Schiller's unabridged text

(1) Joy, beautiful spark of the gods,
Daughter of Elysium,
Exhilarated with your fire,
Heavenly being, we enter Thy sanctuary.

(2) Thy magic power reunites
All that was sternlydivided by custom ;
All men become brothers
Where your gentle wing rests.

Chorus

(3) Be embraced, you millions !
Here's a kiss for the whole world !
Brothers ! Above the stary vault
There must dwell a loving Father.

(4) Whoever has the great good fortune
To enjoy mutual friendship,
Whoever has taken a loving wife,
Let him join us in celebration !

(5) Yes ! Even he who has nothing in the world
To call his own but his soul !
But he who cannot rejoice,
Let him steal weeping away from our circle.

Chorus

(6) All that who in the great ring dwell,
Homage pay to sympathy !
To the stars above she leads,
Where on high the Unknown reigns.

(7) All creatures partake of joy
At Nature's breasts ;
All, just and unjust,
Follow in her rosy path.

(8) She gave us kisses and vine,
A friend tried in death.
The worm is in ecstasy,
And the Cherub stands before God.

Chorus

(9) Do you fall prostrate, you millions ?
World, do you sense your Creator ?
Seek him beyond the stars !
Above the stary vault he must dwell !

(10) Joy commands the hardy mainspring
Of Nature eternal
Joy, oh joy the wheel is driving,
Which the world's great clock doth turn.

(11) Flowers from the buds she coaxes,
Suns from the firmament,
Spheres she rotates through celestial expanses,
Which no seer can divine

Chorus

(12) Joyful as its suns as they hurtle
Through the glorious expanse of heavens,
Brothers, you should run your course,
As joyful as a hero on his way to victory.

Beethoven's Text

O friends, no more these sounds !
Let us sing more cheerful songs,
A song full of joy!
Joy !

Joy, beautiful spark of the gods,
Daughter of Elysium,
Exhilarated with your fire,
Heavenly being, we enter Thy sanctuary.

Thy magic power reunites
All that was sternlydivided by custom ;
All men become brothers
Where your gentle wing rests.

Whoever has the great good fortune
To enjoy mutual friendship,
Whoever has taken a loving wife,
Let him join us in celebration !

Yes ! Even he who has nothing in the world
To call his own but his soul !
But he who cannot rejoice,
Let him steal weeping away from our circle.

All creatures partake of joy
At Nature's breasts ;
All, just and unjust,
Follow in her rosy path.

She gave us kisses and vine,
A friend tried in death.
The worm is in ecstasy,
And the Cherub stands before God.

And the Cherub stands before God.

Joyful as its suns as they hurtle
Through the glorious expanse of heavens,
Brothers, you should run your course,
As joyful as a hero on his way to victory.

Joy, beautiful spark of the gods,
Daughter of Elysium,
Exhilarated with your fire,
Heavenly being, we enter Thy sanctuary.

Thy magic power reunites
All that was sternly divided by custom ;
All men become brothers
Where your gentle wing rests.

Be embraced, you millions !
Here's a kiss for the whole world !
Brothers ! - Above the stary vault
There must dwell a loving Father.

Do you fall prostrate, you millions ?
World, do you sense your Creator ?
Seek him beyond the stars !
Above the stary vault he must dwell !

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(13) Aus der Wahrheit Feuerspiegel
Lächelt sie den Forscher an.
Zu der Tugend steilem Hügel
Leitet sie des Dulders Bahn.

(14) Auf des Glaubens Sonnenberge
Sieht man ihre Fahnen wehn,
Durch den Riß gesprengter Särge
Sie im Chor der Engel stehn.

CHOR

(15) Duldet muthig, Millionen !
Duldet für die bessere Welt !
Droben überm Sternenzelt
Wird ein großer Gott belohnen.

(16) Göttern kann man nicht vergelten ;
Schön ist's, ihnen gleich zu sein.
Gram und Armut soll sich melden,
Mit den Frohen sich erfreuen.

(17) Groll und Rache sei vergessen,
Unserem Todfeind sei verziehn.
Keine Thräne soll ihn pressen,
Keine Reue nage ihn.

CHOR

(18) Unser Schuldbuch sei vernichtet !
Ausgesöhnt die ganze Welt !
Brüder - überm Sternenzelt
Richtet Gott, wie wir gerichtet.

(19) Freude sprudelt in Pokalen,
In der Traube goldnem Blut
Trinken Sanftmuth Kannibalen,
Die Verzweiflung Heldenmut.

(20) Brüder, fliegt von euren Sitzen,
Wenn der volle Römer kreist,
Laßt den Schaum zum Himmel spritzen :
Dieses Glas dem guten Geist !

CHOR

(21) Den der Sterne Wirbel loben,
Den des Seraphs Hymne preist,
Dieses Glas dem guten Geist,
Überm Sternenzelt dort oben !

(22) Festen Muth in schweren Leiden,
Hilfe, wo die Unschuld weint,
Ewigkeit geschwornen Eiden,
Wahrheit gegen Freund und Feind,

(23) Männerstolz vor Königsthronen,
Brüder, gält' es Gut und Blut
Dem Verdienste seine Kronen,
Untergang der Lügenbrut !

CHOR

(24) Schließt den heil'gen Zirkel dichter,
Schwört bei diesem goldnen Wein,
Dem Gelübde treu zu sein,
Schwört es bei dem Sternenrichter !

Beethoven wiederholt :

*Freude, schöner Götterfunke,
Tochter aus Elysium,
Wir betreten feuertrunken,
Himmliche, dein Heiligtum !*

*Seid umschlungen, Millionen !
Diesen Kuß der ganzen Welt !*

Freude !

*Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen ?
Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt ?
Such' ihn überm Sternenzelt
Brüder ! - überm Sternenzelt
Muß ein lieber Vater wohnen.*

Freude, Tochter aus Elysium !

*Deine Zauber binden wieder,
Was die Mode streng geteilt.
Alle Menschen werden Brüder,
Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.*

*Deine Zauber binden wieder,
Was die Mode streng geteilt
Alle Menschen werden Brüder,
Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.*

*Seid umschlungen, Millionen !
Diesen Kuß der ganzen Welt !
Brüder - überm Sternenzelt
Muß ein lieber Vater wohnen.*

*Seid umschlungen !
Diesen Kuß der ganzen Welt !*

*Freude, schöner Götterfunken !
Tochter aus Elysium !
Freude, schöner Götterfunken !*

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(13) From the truth's own fiery mirror
On the researcher doth she smile.
Up the steep incline of virtue
She guides the martyr's steps .

(14) High upon faith's sunlit mountains
One can see her banner fly,
Through the cracks, as coffins break open,
One can see her standing in the angelic choir.

Chorus

(15) Suffer on, courageous millions !
Suffer for a better world !
Up there, above the starry vault,
A powerful God will reward you.

(16) Gods can never be repaid for anything,
Beautiful 'tis , their like to be.
Grief and want should make themselves known,
And rejoice with the gaily.

(17) Hate and vengeance be forgotten,
Forgiven be our mortal foe.
Not a tear shall weigh him down,
No repentance bring him low.

Chorus

(18) Let our slate be wiped clean !
Reconcile the whole world !
Brothers - above the starry vault
God shall judge, as we have settled.

(19) Joy doth bubble from this glass,
From the golden blood of grape
Cannibals imbibe gentleness,
And despair, a heroic courage.

(20) Brothers, rise from your seats,
When the brimming cup doth pass,
Let it froth up to heaven :
To the goodly Soul this glass!

Chorus

(21) To the goodly Soul whom the crown of stars doth honour,
Whom the hymns of Seraphs bless,
To the goodly Soul this glass,
Up there, above the starry vault !

(22) Courage firm in grievous trial,
Help, where the innocent cries,
Oaths which sworn to are eternal,
Truth to friend and foe alike,

(23) Manly pride before kingly thrones,
Brothers, cost it life and blood,
Honour to whom merits honour,
Ruin to the lying brood !

Chorus

(24) Closer draw the holy circle,
By this golden wine, swear
Faith to the vow divine,
Swear it by the Judge celestial !

Beethoven repeat :

*Joy, beautiful spark of the gods,
Daughter of Elysium,
Exhilarated with your fire,
Heavenly being, we enter Thy sanctuary.*

*Be embraced, you millions !
Here's a kiss for the whole world !*

Joy !

*Do you fall prostrate, you millions ?
World, do you sense your Creator ?
Seek him beyond the stars !
Brothers ! - Above the starry vault
There must dwell a loving Father.*

Joy, Daughter of Elysium !

*Thy magic power reunites,
All that was strictly divided by custom ;
All men become brothers,
Where your gentle wing rests.*

*Thy magic power reunites,
All that was strictly divided by custom ;
All men become brothers,
Where your gentle wing rests.*

*Be embraced, you millions !
Here's a kiss for the whole world !
Brothers ! Above the starry vault
There must dwell a loving Father.*

*Be embraced, you millions !
Here's a kiss for the whole world !*

*Joy, beautiful spark of the gods !
Daughter of Elysium !
Joy, beautiful spark of the gods !*

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