



0. ACHIEVING GREATNESS - Story Preface

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This image, of a 19th-century print by an unknown artist, illustrates the artist's interpretation of the first performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony. In addition to Beethoven, who stands in the middle of the orchestra, we see his very good friend, Johann Sedlatzek, the principal flautist. The performance took place at Vienna's Kärntnertortheater on the 7th of May, 1824 with Michael Umlauf conducting. Beethoven, according to eyewitnesses, stood beside him to indicate the proper tempos.

When Beethoven's royal patron, Archduke Rudolph, was appointed Archbishop, the maestro was given a unique opportunity. Thinking he would create something profound to commemorate the inauguration, Beethoven composed the *Missa Solemnis* (the Solemn Mass).

As he worked on his composition, Beethoven examined ancient music. He wanted to produce a major work that was different and memorable. To achieve that objective, he used an aspect of ancient music - known as the Dorian mode - in his *Missa Solemnis*.

Virtually unknown in Beethoven's day, except to scholars, the Dorian mode was oft-used by ancient monks. Beethoven's study of their compositional techniques helped him greatly as he worked hard to bring something different to his new mass. (This video clip explains the Dorian mode and applies it to the piano in both a jazz and a blues setting.)

Once again, however, Beethoven created a work which was nearly unsingable. Pushing both choir and soloists, he had also pushed himself. In a way, given the scope of *Missa Solemnis* (which the maestro considered his greatest work), Beethoven had risen above the physical limitations of his life to transcend even his own musical and compositional ability.

Despite health problems, Beethoven continued to compose. Because he was deaf, Ludwig spoke loudly in restaurants and other public places. People in Vienna gave the eccentric composer wide latitude. Some people thought him mad. Once he was nearly arrested for being a tramp.

In 1822, the London (now the Royal) Philharmonic Society commissioned Beethoven to compose a new symphony. It had been a decade since the last one - the Eighth. Ludwig had in mind two symphonies, not just one. The tenth, however, was never finished.

As the 9th Symphony took shape in Beethoven's head, the composer had another idea. He would premiere the work at a public concert. The metronome would help the musicians to play the work at exactly the speed required by its deaf creator.

And ... this time ... a symphony would include human voices - something which had never been done before. Beethoven decided to use the words of Frederick Schiller's poem, *An Freude* (commonly translated "Ode to Joy").

Beethoven, however, encountered a major problem getting his new work ready for the musicians who would perform it.

In 1824, everything had to be prepared by hand. Beethoven wrote by hand. His "copyists" meticulously copied every single thing by hand. The 9th Symphony is a really long score - and - Beethoven didn't have the clearest handwriting. These issues were never problems ... until ... Beethoven's favorite copyist died.

Furiously trying to get everything ready for the 9th's premiere, Beethoven needed two new copyists, neither of whom were satisfactory for the maestro. The final copies, which were ultimately prepared for the orchestra members, are loaded with Beethoven's corrections and comments. One of the comments is pointed: "*Du verfluchter Ker!*" ("you ___ fool!").

In 2009, Agnieszka Holland imagined what it must have been like for copyists to work with Beethoven. Her film, "Copying Beethoven," takes liberty with some facts (for example, Beethoven's helpers were male, not female), but we can get a sense of what it must have been like to get the sheet music ready in time for the performance.

Although he attended the premiere of his 9th Symphony - on May 7, 1824 - Beethoven heard not a note. On a stage for the first time in twelve years - with his back to the audience - his gaze was on the orchestra, choir and soloists.

Participants, at the time and later, had varying things to say about Beethoven's involvement on stage. One of the violinists told this story:

*Beethoven himself conducted, that is, he stood in front of a conductor's stand and threw himself back and forth like a madman. At one moment he stretched to his full height, at the next he crouched down to the floor, he flailed about with his hands and feet as though he wanted to play all the instruments and sing all the chorus parts. - The actual direction was in [Umlauf's] hands; we musicians followed his baton only. (Nicholas Cook, quoting violinist Joseph Böhm, in *Beethoven: Symphony No. 9*, at page 22.)*

History tells us that Beethoven, who was beating time to the conductor's movements, did not know how the people responded to his Ninth Symphony. Taking his arm, the contralto soloist (Caroline Unger) turned him round to face the crowd.

Although he could not hear their roaring approval, Beethoven saw their clapping hands and smiling faces. Bowing deeply to the premiere's concert-goers, it is said, he began to cry.

This concert closed a chapter in Beethoven's life. Most of the people who first heard one of the world's greatest symphonies performed - at Vienna's Kärntnertortheater - would not see Beethoven alive again. The concert was his last public appearance in Vienna.

Reviews for the Ninth were spectacular, but the concert didn't make Beethoven much money. Foul-tempered because of it, Beethoven was annoyed with his secretary, Anton Schindler, and dismissed him for a time. He thought - without evidence - that his assistant had swindled him.

Karl, Ludwig's nephew, attempted to take Schindler's place for a time. That arrangement, however, did not always work out well for Karl. The young man had to endure emotional tirades ... and worse ... from an uncle who, despite not always showing it, loved him deeply.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ACHIEVING-GREATNESS-Beethoven>

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Media Stream



Beethoven - In 1820

Stieler's 1820 portrait of Beethoven, now maintained at the Archiv für Kunst und Geschichte, Berlin. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beethoven-In-1820>



Caroline Unger

Image of Caroline Unger online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Premiere of 9th Symphony - Theater

Lithograph of the Theater am Kärntnertor, published c. 1830. Online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Premiere-of-9th-Symphony-Theater>



Anton Schindler

Image of Anton Schindler, online courtesy Mad About Beethoven.

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Beethoven - in 1824

Chalk drawing of Beethoven, in 1824, by Stephan Decker. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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ACHIEVING GREATNESS

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Composing the Missa Solemnis

Clip from "Beethoven," a 2005 [BBC television](#) production, featuring [Charles Hazlewood](#) and starring Paul Rhys as Beethoven.

Online, courtesy [BBC Worldwide](#) Channel at YouTube.

Director:

Ursula Macfarlane

Key Cast Members:

Paul Rhys

Ludwig van Beethoven

Jack Shepherd

Joseph Haydn

David Bamber

Prince Lichnowsky

Alice Eve

Countess Giulietta Guicciardi

Nicholas Farrell

Stephan von Breuning

Tom Goodman-Hill

Anton Schindler

Gareth David-Lloyd

Older Karl

Casper Harvey

Young Karl

Sarah Hadland

Johanna van Beethoven

Christian Coulson

Archduke Rudolph

Charles Hazlewood

Himself - Presenter

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Composing-the-Missa-Solemnis>



Birth of the Ninth Symphony

Clip from "Beethoven," a 2005 [BBC television](#) production, featuring [Charles Hazlewood](#) and starring Paul Rhys as Beethoven.

Online, courtesy [BBC Worldwide](#) Channel at YouTube.

Director:

Ursula Macfarlane

Key Cast Members:

Paul Rhys

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Jack Shepherd

Joseph Haydn

David Bamber

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Nicholas Farrell

Stephan von Breuning

Tom Goodman-Hill

Anton Schindler

Gareth David-Lloyd

Older Karl

Casper Harvey

Young Karl

Sarah Hadland

Johanna van Beethoven

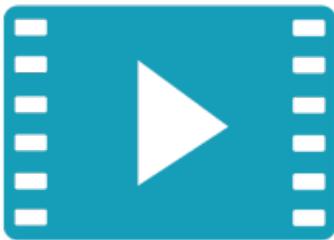
Christian Coulson

Archduke Rudolph

Charles Hazlewood

Himself - Presenter

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Birth-of-the-Ninth-Symphony>



Premiere of the Ninth Symphony - Beethoven Cries

Clip from "Beethoven," a 2005 [BBC television](#) production, featuring [Charles Hazlewood](#) and starring Paul Rhys as Beethoven.

Online, via [BBC Worldwide](#) Channel at YouTube. Copyright, BBC, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new viewers with the program.

Director:

Ursula Macfarlane

Key Cast Members:

Paul Rhys

Ludwig van Beethoven

Jack Shepherd

Joseph Haydn

David Bamber

Prince Lichnowsky

Alice Eve

Countess Giulietta Guicciardi

Nicholas Farrell

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Tom Goodman-Hill

Anton Schindler

Gareth David-Lloyd

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Christian Coulson

Archduke Rudolph

Charles Hazlewood

Himself - Presenter

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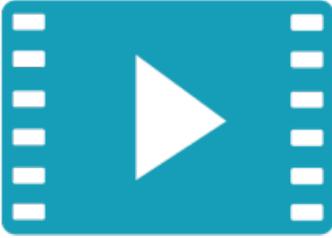
Beethoven's Missa Solemnis - Benedictus

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Beethoven's Missa Solemnis - Kyrie

Kyrie, from the *Missa Solemnis*, performed by the Concertgebouw Orchestra, under the direction of Leonard Bernstein. Online, via YouTube.

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Beethoven's Missa Solemnis - Sanctus

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