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*Missa solemnis* (Op. 123), Overture (Op. 124), and Ninth Symphony (Op. 125)

**BIRGIT LODES**

*In memory of my revered teacher Theodor Göllner, who passed away in Santa Barbara on December 31, 2022, while I was working on the German version of this text.*

The premiere of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony at the Vienna Kärntnertortheater is widely regarded as a milestone in the history of music—and the event itself is often associated with the narrative that the deaf composer, who was present on stage, had to be turned around to face the audience by the alto Caroline Unger in order to perceive the frenetic applause. Research has brought many facts about this concert on May 7, 1824 to light, yet it is noteworthy that the premiere of the Ninth Symphony has consistently remained the central object of attention, even though three of Beethoven’s late works were performed that evening. It seems to me that this is typical of a general phenomenon: the Ninth holds a perennial fascination, not least because of its multifaceted and politically charged reception history. The *Missa solemnis*, often categorized, following Theodor W. Adorno, as an “alienated masterpiece,” is considered rather

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1 We know—especially from the conversation books—details about the organization, the copying work, the search for a suitable hall, and the recruitment of musicians; but also about the rehearsals, the placement of the singers and musicians on stage—and about the sobering financial settlement Beethoven received. See Theodore Albrecht, *Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. Rehearsing and Performing its 1824 Premiere* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2024).

cumbersome and is rarely programmed. And an overture to recycled incidental music is generally likely to be classified today as an occasional work rather than a serious composition.³ As a result, the overall program performed by Beethoven is conventionally regarded as a randomly assembled amalgam—a fact which, of course, has consequences.

There have been numerous initiatives in recent decades to revive historical programs, especially at their original venues—programs such as Beethoven’s Grand Academy of 1808 (featuring the premiere of the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, the Fourth Piano Concerto, the Concert Scene and Aria Ah! Perfido, Op. 65, the Gloria and Sanctus from the C-Major Mass, and the Choral Fantasy, Op. 80); or his very successful Academy of 1813 (featuring the premiere of the Seventh Symphony and the orchestral work Wellington’s Victory or the Battle of Vittoria, Op. 91, as well as a performance by Johann Nepomuk Mälzel’s automated trumpeter).⁴ Something comparable has hardly ever been attempted with the program from 1824:⁵ apparently, the identification of the event itself with the premiere of the Ninth Symphony is too overpowering, and has resulted in the perception that the other pieces performed—if mentioned at all—are at best considered as mere “accessories” to the symphonic magnum opus.⁶

³ Significantly, the overture is missing in Oliver Korte and Albrecht Riethmüller, eds., Beethoven’s Orchestermusik und Konzerte. Das Handbuch (Laaber: Laaber, 2013).
⁴ Some of the works performed in these academies are, despite Beethoven’s programming, not taken very seriously today. These include the Choral Fantasia which concluded the 1808 concert, and the successful sound-space composition Wellington’s Victory. The non-conformity of these works with genre conventions continues to pose an aesthetic challenge to this day.
⁵ The only exception I know of is a performance on June 17, 2007, at the Philharmonie Essen, conducted by Christoph Spering.
⁶ On the occasion of the 200th anniversary, the program of the Academy from May 7, 1824, will be performed again for the first time with historical instrumentation and spatial arrangement: Festkonzerte Resound Beethoven 9. Das Programm der Uraufführung. Historische Stadthalle Wuppertal, May 7 and 8, 2024, WDR Radio choir, Orchester Wiener Akademie. Martin Haselböck (conductor), Chen Reiss (soprano), Sara Fulgoni (alto), Michael Schade (tenor), Florian Boesch (bass); there will be a live stream of the concert. Prior to these two gala concerts, an international scholarly conference organized by Birgit Lodes and
In the following, I would like to take the choreography of this Academy from May 7, 1824, seriously and argue that Beethoven, in collaboration with friends and advisors, deliberately included these three diverse and large-scale works in the program—not out of necessity, but with a clear intention. In general, I assume that, contrary to a widespread contemporary opinion, it was a primary concern for Beethoven to structure concert programs of his own compositions carefully and meaningfully, as is exceptionally documented in preserved letters to Joseph Edler von Varena in Graz. Listening to and thinking about the works programmed consecutively in 1824—the Overture, Op. 124, the Missa solemnis, Op. 123, and the Ninth Symphony, Op. 125—opens up interesting new perspectives on the expressive potential of Beethoven's late orchestral works.

THE ACADEMY OF MAY 7, 1824, IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL INTERESTS

NATIONAL JOURNALISM: GERMAN AND IMMORTAL MASTERPIECES VERSUS ITALIAN FASHION

Beethoven's academy constituted a significant counterpoint to the “Rossini frenzy,” i.e. the growing popularity of Italian opera music in Vienna, especially since 1822. The realization of the academy was actively promoted by a group of nationally minded music enthusiasts. A crucial role was played by an address sent to Beethoven in February 1824, signed by thirty friends of the arts, urgently requesting the performance of his latest major works—the Missa solemnis and the Ninth Symphony—in Vienna in order to

Christine Siegert will take place at the Beethoven-Haus Bonn: https://www.beethoven.de/en/konferenzen/view/4740358969753600.

counter the overly prevalent “foreign art.” (This patriotic note coincides with Beethoven’s note of 1822 in which he wrote that he wanted to write a “Sinfonie allemand.”) In April 1824, when preparations for the Academy were already well advanced, this address was even printed in two Viennese newspapers “as a document on the most interesting dates in German music.” The announcements of Beethoven’s academy continued to emphasize its patriotic significance. For example, in Adolf Bäuerle’s Allgemeiner Theaterzeitung on May 1, 1824, it was stated: “This academy is one of the most beautiful celebrations for friends of German music and recognition of patriotic masters; France and England will certainly envy us for the pleasure of being able to pay personal homage to Beethoven, who is known throughout the world as the most brilliant composer.” On May 4, 1824, Joseph Karl Bernard explicitly stated that the aim of this concerted advertising campaign was to “give the Italians a blow.”

The nationally motivated “cultural-political self-assurance” is beyond question from the point of view of Beethoven’s supporters and

8 BB, no. 1784; Theodore Albrecht, Letters to Beethoven and Other Correspondence, 3 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), no. 344.
9 D-B, sketchbook Artaria 201, 119; see Nicholas Cook, Beethoven: Symphony No. 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 14–16.
11 The advertisements are reprinted in ibid., 276.
12 “Diese Akademie bietet für Freunde deutscher Musik und Anerkennung vaterländischer Meister eine der schönsten Feyerlichkeiten dar; gewiß werden uns Frankreich und England um den Genuß beneiden, dem auf der weiten Erde als genialsten Componisten bekannten Beethoven eine persönliche Huldigung darbringen zu können.” Similarly, the announcement in Wiener allgemeine musikalische Zeitung mit besonderer Rücksicht auf den österreichischen Kaiserstaat 8/28 (May 5, 1824): 112.
friends. It is important to note at this point that it was not solely the Ninth Symphony but the entire program of the evening, featuring three new orchestral works by Beethoven—Overture, Mass, and Symphony—that was promoted as a patriotic-German ideal of high art. These three genres in particular were considered the epitome of sophisticated, non-Italian music: Symphony and Overture served as the core of a “German” tradition of orchestral music, as did large-scale Mass compositions. The Wiener allgemeine musikalische Zeitung mit besonderer Rücksicht auf den österreichischen Kaiserstaat—the musical state newspaper of the 1820s—reported extensively on church music during its eight years of existence. In line with the “Pietas austriaca,” church music was central to the Habsburgs and their publicly staged ideal image of a Christian-Catholic ruling dynasty (and thus also for Archduke Rudolph, who had been placed in this service as archbishop).

Significantly, Beethoven had personally invited the imperial family to his Academy and had attempted to schedule the event before their departure for the summer retreat, but unfortunately, he did not succeed. Therefore, neither Emperor Franz I nor Archbishop Rudolph were able to attend. Nevertheless, various announcements in the Viennese music world had raised expectations that Beethoven’s Academy would be a culturally and patriotically significant event: the orchestral works to be heard were expected to reveal nothing less than the direction of a new kind of national art music.

15 See for example Georg Christoph Grosheim in Cäcilia 9 (1828): 34–36.
17 BKh 6, 158.
THE (FIRST) PERFORMANCE ON MAY 7, 1824 AT THE KÄRNTNERTORTHEATER IN VIENNA

At the “Great Musical Academy of Mr. L. van Beethoven” (“Große musikalische Akademie von Herrn L. van Beethoven”) on May 7, 1824, all the large-scale works that Beethoven had composed in the preceding years 1819–24 were performed (see Figure 1):

1.) The Overture to the festival play “The Consecration of the House” (Die Weihe des Hauses), Op. 124, which opened the evening, had been premiered very successfully on October 3, 1822, and not heard often thereafter.18

2.) Following the overture were the Kyrie, Credo, and Agnus Dei movements from the Missa solemnis, Op. 123, which for censorship reasons were announced as “Three great hymns, with solo and choral voices” (Drei große Hymnen, mit Solo- und Chor-Stimmen). This marked the first performance of parts of the Missa solemnis in Vienna after its premiere in St. Petersburg on April 7, 1824.

3.) The concert concluded with the premiere of the Ninth Symphony, Op. 125, announced as the “Great Symphony, with solo and choral voices entering in the finale, on Schiller’s Song, to Joy” (Große Symphonie, mit im Finale eintretenden Solo- und Chor-Stimmen, auf Schillers Lied, an die Freude).

Each of the works performed owes its existence to an external stimulus. Beethoven composed the Overture to “The Consecration of the House” in September 1822 for the reopening of the Theater in der Josephstadt, where

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18 It was performed twice more in October 1822, and the theater manager, Karl Friedrich Hensler, occasionally re-used it for other plays: for example, Der Feldtrompeter in February 1824; and for an intermission concert (seemingly paired with Symphony No. 2 or its first movement) around the same time. Hensler then sent the score and parts to Pressburg (where he also managed the theater), and it was performed there. Beethoven was worried that the performing materials would not be returned to Vienna in time for the rehearsals and performances in May 1824. I am grateful to Theodore Albrecht for pointing this out to me; see Albrecht, Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, 19, 42, 53, 57–88, 62.
Figure 1: Playbill for Beethoven’s Academy on May 7, 1824, at the Kärntnertortheater. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – PK, Mus.ms.autogr. Beethoven, L. v. 35,78: http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0002584B00000000.
it premiered together with the associated festival play. The composition of
the overture interrupted the final work on the *Missa solemnis* (1819–23),
which Beethoven created for the inauguration of his longtime student and
patron Archduke Rudolph as Archbishop of Olmütz (Olomouc), though
Beethoven completed it after the performance date had passed. Seamlessly
following from the finalization of the Agnus Dei, Beethoven commenced
the main work on the Ninth Symphony (1822–24), with which he fulfilled—at
least partially—a commission from the London Philharmonic Society
dating back to 1817. Despite the different occasions for their creation and
different genre conventions, Beethoven implemented similar aesthetic
ideas in these three late orchestral works, allowing the pieces to weave
together into a compelling dramaturgy in concert (more on this below).

According to reports in the press and in Beethoven’s conversation
books, the evening was a great success: the concert was not only well
attended, but also captivated the audience, which, although perplexed by
the innovative power of the works, clapped the performers out five times
at the end. *Nota bene*, the frenzy of enthusiasm was by no means limited to
the Ninth Symphony alone but extended to both the overture and the heard
parts of the *Missa solemnis*, the latter of which was as novel for Vienna as
the Ninth. For instance, an enthusiastic review of all three performed works
in the Leipzig *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* concluded: “Only one wish,
only one desire is the speedy repetition of these [three] marvels…”

The repetition of the concert on May 23, 1824, took place at a different
venue (in the Redoutensaal at the Hofburg) with a slightly modified
program: Louis-Antoine Duport, the administrator of the
Kärntnertortheater and manager of the Redoutensaal, intended to feature
Italian stars from his house as well (see also their prominent mention on the
playbill in Figure 2).

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19 On the content and structure of Beethoven’s sketchbook D-B Artaria 201 (with sketches
for all three works), see Douglas Johnson, Alan Tyson and Robert Winter, *The Beethoven
20 A summary of the reporting can be found in David B. Levy, *Beethoven: The Ninth
Symphony* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 122–44; see also Bkh 6, 60–61.
21 “Nur e i n Wunsch, nur e i n Verlangen ist die baldige Wiederholung dieser
For this reason, only one movement of the Mass (the Kyrie) was performed, along with additional Italian language vocal repertoire. Beethoven’s trio *Tremate, emi tremate*, Op. 116, had only been heard once before in Vienna, at Beethoven’s Academy on February 27, 1814.\(^{22}\) The performance of Gioachino Rossini’s highly popular entrance aria from *Tancredi*, “Di tanti
palpiti,” from the eponymous opera seria, specially transposed for the star tenor Giovanni David, was an embarrassing concession for Beethoven’s circle, although in Vienna it was not uncommon to hear works by Beethoven and Rossini together in a concert. Due to the challenging conditions, some acquaintances had advised Beethoven against a repeat of the concert altogether and recommended postponing it to the next season. Beethoven, however, eagerly desired a second performance and was therefore willing to compromise—ultimately feeling cheated in terms of time and money.

**BEETHOVEN’S CONCEPT FOR THE PROGRAM OF THE ACADEMY ON MAY 7, 1824**

What ideas guided Beethoven and his advisors when they put together the concert program?

**PROVEN PATTERN, NEW CHALLENGES**

As in his previous academies, Beethoven aimed to present as many of his recently composed works as possible that were suitable for performance in public. Naturally, this did not include the late works for solo piano; their performance venue remained the domestic salon. However, all large orchestral works were eligible, preferably interspersed with choral numbers following Viennese tradition. Press announcements, playbills and most reviews unanimously emphasize that the “latest works of Mr. Ludwig van Beethoven” were to be heard.

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23 See among others BB no. 1841; Anderson, Letters, no. 1292.
25 BKh 6, 196.
26 BB no. 1840; Anderson, Letters, no. 1294.
It is documented in conversation books and correspondence that from the earliest stages of program planning, dating to November 1823, Beethoven had intended to perform the Ninth Symphony together with the Missa solemnis at the Academy concert, giving the impression that a performance of both works in their entirety may have been Beethoven’s preferred option. However, the decision was made to opt for the previously proven approach of only performing individual movements of the Mass in the concert due to state censorship and the additional approval required from the archbishop, it was nearly impossible in Vienna in 1824 to perform a Mass composition in its entirety outside of a liturgical setting. For this reason, the C-Major Mass had also been performed in individual movements in Beethoven’s Academy of 1808 at the Theater an der Wien. And for this reason, there was anxiety until the day of the concert about whether the archbishop might still prohibit the performance. As in 1808, the movements were publicly announced as “hymns” but had not included an alternative German text.

**ON THE DRAMATURGY OF THE SEQUENCE OF THE PIECES**

The evening began with a surefire success: not only was the Overture to the festival play “The Consecration of the House,” Op. 124, much easier to perform than the Missa solemnis and the Ninth Symphony, which were much longer and featured a choir and soloists, but it was also a sought-after work following its acclaimed premiere in 1822. Furthermore, contemporary listeners must have perceived this overture as a deliberate thematic marker: the opening of the Theater an der Josephstadt on October 27.

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27 See BKh 4: 250; BB no. 1773 (esp. n. 15), no. 1774; Anderson, Letters, nos. 1260 and 1456.
28 BKh 6, 32; Norbert Bachleitner, Die literarische Zensur in Österreich von 1741 bis 1848 (Vienna: Böhlau, 2017), 108.
29 BKh 6, 161.
30 The Gloria from Beethoven’s C-Major Mass was announced as a “Hymne mit latein. Texte, im Kirchenstil geschrieben” (Hymn with Latin texts, written in church style), the Sanctus as “Heilig, mit latein. Texte, im Kirchenstile geschrieben” (Heilig, with Latin texts, written in church style”) in Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung 11 (1808–9): cols. 267–68.
31 See BKh 6, 21 for related considerations.
32 See for example the review in Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung 24 (1822): 794–5.
3, 1822, had specifically taken place on the eve of the emperor’s name day.\textsuperscript{33} Beethoven had been commissioned to compose an overture to an existing festival play from 1811 (\textit{Die Ruinen von Athen}, Op. 113), which was provided with a new text by Carl Meisl. In it, Thespis searches for a worthy place for art, which had been expelled from its Greek homeland since the arrival of the Turkish usurpers. Apollo and the Muses point the way to Vienna, to the gates of the new theater, where—according to the conclusion of the play—under the protection of the emperor, a new “altar of the arts” (Weihaltar der Künste) had been erected for the “glory of the fatherland” (Ruhm des Vaterlands).\textsuperscript{34} The incidental music therefore included both a marcia alla turca and a concluding musical homage to the emperor.\textsuperscript{35} Thus, contemporaries probably heard the overture as a symbol that Vienna, the center of the still-young Austrian Empire, would be the right place for noble and sophisticated art after the tumult of the coalition wars.\textsuperscript{36}

After this patriotic and glorious opening, three movements from the grand Mass that Beethoven had composed for the inauguration ceremony of the emperor’s youngest brother, Archduke Rudolph, as Archbishop of Olmütz (Olomouc) were played. Olmütz had only been elevated to the status of archbishopric in 1777 by Pope Pius VI, at the instigation of Maria Theresa. Rudolph, a grandson of Maria Theresa, was the third Archbishop of Olmütz. Integrating such an “imperial” mass into the academy must have been therefore perceived as a gesture of state policy.

\textsuperscript{33} See the prominent announcement on the notice: “on the eve of the glorious name day of His Majesty the Emperor” (am Vorabend des glorreichen Nahmensfestes Seiner Majestät des Kaisers); illustration in BB 4, 540.


\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 285.

The conversation books provide an insight into the decision-making process regarding which movements from the Mass should be performed. In early March 1824, the nephew reports: “The brother [Beethoven’s brother Johann] suggested, first the Overture, then the Gloria. After that an aria or 1 duet, then Dona nobis pacem [= Agnus] and Sanctus. Finally the symphony.”

Those involved were therefore considering the option of not performing the movements of the Missa solemnis in the order of the Mass liturgy: apparently, they felt that the Sanctus, which ends with the words “Osanna in excelsis” in radiant G major, was a fitting conclusion. In addition, as had been done in 1808 with the two movements of the C-Major Mass, the individual movements were to be interrupted by solo numbers.

When the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh was able (apparently for the first time) to take a look at Beethoven’s score of the Missa solemnis a few days later, he immediately inquired: “In which part does the greatest fugue occur?” (In welchen Theil die größte Fuge vorkommt). The “greatest fugue” evidently was a crucial criterion for him, as he noted: “In the Credo is the double fugue. The Kyrie is not long.” — and suggests: “We should start with the Kyrie, then the Credo, and afterwards the Sanctus.” However, after objections from Schindler, indicating that he (apparently together with Beethoven) had a completely different opinion, Schuppanzigh changed his mind: “I think we should do the Dona nobis instead of the Sanctus.”

So it happened: in Beethoven’s Academy on 7 May, 1824—now not interrupted by other works and also in liturgical order—the first movement of the Mass, the Kyrie, was heard first, followed by the longest and probably most challenging movement to perform, the Credo ending with an elaborate fugue, and the Agnus Dei, apparently favored by Beethoven, in which the plea for peace “Dona nobis pacem” is so impressively set to music that the whole movement is referred to as “Dona nobis pacem” among his friends. This movement ends quite abruptly and calls for continuation—

38 “Let me see the mass a little.” [Laß er die Messe ein bischen sehen.]
39 “Im Credo ist die Doppel Fug. 11 Das Kyrie ist nicht lang. 11 Wir sollten mit dem Kyrie anfangen, dann das Credo, und nachher Sanctus.” BKh 5, 196–97.
40 “Ich glaube, wir sollten das Dona nobis statt dem Sanctus machen.” Ibid., 197.
which is either given in the church by the liturgical conclusion or (as in Beethoven’s Academy) with another composition of similar content: the Ninth Symphony.

Just as in the 1808 concert where Beethoven had placed the Choral Fantasy, Op. 80, at the end of the program, the 1824 concert ended with the Ninth Symphony, whose choral finale provided a well-suited conclusion to a mixed program, typical for Vienna. As in the earlier concert, the choir was not only meant to conclude in isolation, but also to punctuate the course of the concert itself: in 1808, individual movements of the C-Major Mass were performed, and now, three movements from the Missa solemnis, which naturally connect with the choral finale of the Ninth. This was apparently also the experience of the audience in 1824, as the use of the choir in the finale, so intensely debated in later reception, was by no means negatively received in the initial reviews. The fact that both the Mass and the Ninth Symphony push the boundaries of their respective genre traditions supports the perception of the interconnectedness of the works on the program.

A PLEA FOR A COMMON PERCEPTION OF BEETHOVEN’S LATE ORCHESTRAL WORKS

It should be natural to consider together these three late Beethoven works composed in immediate succession. However, due to the prevalent tendency to think in terms of genres, this rarely happens. For the Missa solemnis, Theodor W. Adorno in particular has significantly promoted its isolated perception by emphasizing how it “holds a place entirely apart

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41 On the popularity of choral finales in concert programs of Beethoven’s time, see Nicholas Mathew, Political Beethoven (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 127–28.
from the rest of Beethoven’s oeuvre” (die völlige Exterritorialität der Missa in Beethovens oeuvre):

From it there are hardly any connections to his other works, even the late ones—neither formally, nor thematically, nor in the characters, nor—above all—in the treatment of the musical surfaces, in the composing itself.43

To comprehend the orchestral and choral works of late Beethoven, however, we must not isolate them from each other, viewing the Ninth only in the tradition of the symphony, the Missa only in the tradition of church music and the Overture as a mere occasional composition. Perceiving the relations between them allows numerous new listening perspectives to open up,44 of which only three are indicated here and finally discussed with a concrete example.

TEXT-GENERATED MUSIC — PARATACTIC STYLE

The music of the Missa solemnis and the Ninth Symphony—and also, to some extent, that of the Overture to the Consecration of the House—is characterized by an extensive renunciation of developmental principles, by “a mere succession of formal elements.”45 Beethoven composed predominantly text-generated larger and smaller musical tiles of great expressive power, joining them together abruptly by omitting conventional


44 Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen is one of the few scholars to consistently think about the Missa solemnis and the Ninth Symphony together; Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen, Ludwig van Beethoven. Musik für eine neue Zeit (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2019), especially the chapter “Vernunftreligion und Zweifelglaube: Chorsinfonische Schwesterwerke,” 269–94.

transitional material. Through its paratactic construction, Beethoven’s music creates the impression of genuine storytelling in tones.

This method of construction is particularly evident in the text-rich movements of the Missa solemnis (Gloria and Credo) and final movement of the Ninth Symphony. Significantly, these movements are considered particularly enigmatic in their form. The prerequisite for this mode of composition lies in an independent penetration of the spiritual content of the texts: in the Missa solemnis this is manifested in Beethoven’s individual understanding and musical interpretation of the traditional liturgical text,46 while in the Ninth Symphony it is reflected in his selection and regrouping of Friedrich Schiller’s Ode stanzas. Given that certain associative realms in Beethoven’s various works have evoked similar musical images, a network of sonic relationships emerges across his late orchestral works, becoming apparent when listening to them together (see below: “Hero of Higher Musical Art”).

FUGUES, FUGUES, FUGUES

Whether the concertgoers on May 7, 1824, had anticipated hearing so many contrapuntal passages and genuine fugues is a question worth exploring. In all three works—the Overture, the Mass, and the Symphony—Beethoven experiments with new, symbolically charged varieties of fugal technique. This deeply impressed contemporary listeners, as reported to Beethoven by Anton Schindler immediately after the performance: “It is said that you applied not double but quadruple counterpoint in these works.”47 (N.B.: again, it is worth noting that all three works, not just the Ninth Symphony, are being referred to).


47 “Man spricht, Sie hätten in diesen Werken Statt dem doppelten den 4fachen Contrapunkt angewendet.” BKh 6, 161.
The narrative that Beethoven could not compose fugues continues to circulate to this day.\(^48\) However, when listening to the full program from May 7, 1824, it becomes unmistakably clear that late Beethoven was a master of fugal composition. This holds true not only in the works intended for the salon (such as the late piano sonatas and string quartets) but also in the public orchestral and choral works. This carries significance beyond personal stylistic dimensions. Traditionally, counterpoint and fugue were regarded as erudite compositional techniques, capable of symbolizing, in a national reading, the artistic musical tradition of the young Austrian Empire, which was also to be promoted in the future. Notably, these compositional principles were not only appreciated by Beethoven’s composition student Archduke Rudolph, but also by his eldest brother, Emperor Franz I.\(^49\)

**Heroes of War— and a Hero of Higher Musical Art in Times of Peace**

In 1824, Europe had already experienced nearly a decade of peace. The resolutions of the Congress of Vienna of 1814/15 had aimed at securing lasting peace on the continent.\(^50\) The prolonged wars that had raged until 1815, devastating vast regions of Europe and leaving a lasting political and emotional impact on its inhabitants, had, however, left auditory traces of memories that Beethoven was able to trigger through his music. Strikingly, in all three late symphonic works performed in the 1824 concert, he incorporated reminiscences of war. His statement seems clear: the times of war, during which one’s own nation alongside its allies had achieved greatness, were over. Now it was time to transform the former wartime

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\(^48\) Felix Diergarten recently emphasized the complete lack of evidence for this narrative in a concert introduction at the Beethoven-Haus in Bonn (concert accompanying the special exhibition “Beethoven and the Fugue”, October 20, 2022–January 29, 2023).

\(^49\) See Moritz von Dietrichstein’s description of the Emperor’s preferences in a letter to Count Moritz von Lichnowsky: “Fugues His Majesty [Franz I] loves very much, properly performed, but not too long.” (“Fugen lieben Se. Majestät sehr, gehörig durchgeführt, doch nicht zu lang.”) (February 23, 1823; BB no. 1578; Albrecht, Letters to Beethoven, no. 311).

\(^50\) See, for example, the contributions in Mächtepolitik und Friedenssicherung. Zur Politischen Kultur Europas im Zeichen des Wiener Kongresses, ed. Reinhard A. Stauber, et al. (Berlin: LIT, 2014).
successes into enduring intangible values, into art.\textsuperscript{51} This also explains the martial language in the address to Beethoven from February 1824. In the concert reviews, Beethoven, as a “venerable musical hero” (ehrwürdiger Tonheld) who creates “higher musical art” (höhere Tonkunst), was explicitly juxtaposed with the former war heroes,\textsuperscript{52} with questions about (Christian) peace and transcendence playing a significant role. These ideas shape Beethoven’s three late orchestral works: the trombones, as symbols of divine presence, play a crucial role there—not only in the Mass, but also in the first part of the Overture\textsuperscript{53} and in the Ninth Symphony.\textsuperscript{54} In addition, as observed on several occasions, the musical symbols composed by Beethoven for the intuition of the divine, residing beyond the stars, and for the gap between human knowledge and the infinity and unattainability of God, bear a resemblance in both the \textit{Missa solemnis} and the Ninth Symphony.\textsuperscript{55}

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\textsuperscript{51} Cf. also Mathew, \textit{Political Beethoven}, 180.
\textsuperscript{52} Ignaz Seyfried(?), “Beethoven’s Concert,” in \textit{Der Sammler} 58 (May 13, 1824): 231–32.
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TWO FINAL MOVEMENTS IN COMPARISON

Much has already been written about both the finale of the Ninth Symphony (with its unusual inclusion of the choir), and the final movement of the Missa solemnis (with the two war episodes and the “plea for inner and outer peace”), but seldom are the movements compared to each other. If they were heard together, it would quickly become clear that the two concluding movements share many compositional and aesthetic elements: in both cases, the overarching plot begins in chaos, which is thematized through recitative-like passages (which in the Agnus appear only in the sketches) and other means. This is followed by the hymnic promise of a different, Elysian (peace) time, episodically contrasted with memories of wartime, but ultimately emphatically proclaimed. Also noteworthy are the motivically related themes: the gradually ascending and descending “pacem” motif of the Agnus ([quarter rest] D–E–F-sharp | G–F-sharp–E) corresponds in gesture with the gradually ascending and descending motif of joy (F-sharp–F-sharp–G–A | A–G–F-sharp–E) in the finale of the Ninth Symphony, with both motives being sequenced by one whole tone (up or down). In both works, the theme in question had been already introduced in an earlier movement: in the Missa in the Gloria fugue, and in the Ninth Symphony in the trio of the second movement. In the final movement, in turn, this theme contrasts with a theme formed by descending thirds (“Dona”, e.g. mm. 96ff., or “Seid umschlungen Millionen”, e.g. mm. 655ff.).

After lengthy negotiations with various publishers, Beethoven decided to have the grand solemn mass and the new symphony jointly printed by a new publisher, B. Schott’s Söhne in Mainz. The agreement for the publication of the Overture Op. 124 (which was in the possession of his


57 Cf. the letters to Schott and others dated March 10, 1824 (BB no. 1787; Anderson, Letters, no. 1270) and May 20, 1824 (BB nos. 1835 and 1836; Anderson, Letters, nos. 1290 and 1291).
Thus, these three late orchestral works were not only composed consecutively and (first) performed together, but they also appeared in the same publishing house with consecutive opus numbers. They could even be preordered together:

Invitation to subscribe to the three latest major works by L. van BEETHOVEN: namely: 1. Missa solemnis in D major, opus 123 2. Grand Overture in C major, Op. 124 and 3. Symphony with choruses, Op. 125. [...] The whole will be issued in the course of this year. 59

In the end, Beethoven dedicated these three works to three statesmanlike figures representing three different Christian denominations. The Missa solemnis was offered to Archduke and Archbishop Rudolph, a representative of the Roman Catholic clergy and the Roman Catholic imperial house to which Beethoven had been connected since his childhood in Bonn. The dedication of the Ninth Symphony, after prolonged alternative considerations, went to the King of Prussia, Wilhelm III, a Protestant. And Beethoven dedicated the overture to The Consecration of the House to Prince Nikolaus Galitzin, a Russian Orthodox Christian. Taken together, these dedications reflect the Holy Alliance (Heilige Allianz) formed after the Battle of Leipzig between the Austrian Emperor, the Prussian King, and the Russian Tsar Alexander I. The alliance aimed to secure the “Eternal Peace” in Europe, with these three (and subsequently many other Christian) rulers

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58 Cf. letters to Schott dated November 23, 1824 (BB no. 1901; Anderson, Letters, no. 1321) and February 4 and 5, 1825 (BB no. 1931 and no. 1932; Albrecht, Letters to Beethoven, no. 394 and Anderson, Letters, no. 1349).

committing to the consistent application of the principles of Christian charity as the foundation of their domestic and foreign policies. The media and artistic propagation of the Holy Alliance also included Aloys Weissenbach and Beethoven’s cantata Der Glorreiche Augenblick, Op. 136, from 1814, which was dedicated to the three monarchs in three individualized and hand-colored luxury editions. The idea of eternal peace on earth encompassed all Christian denominations and it is ultimately affirmed by the episodic recollections of past threats, as echoed in all three of Beethoven’s late orchestral works.

The ideas and concepts outlined here are not only encountered in the Ninth Symphony but preoccupied Beethoven—transcending genres—in all three of his late orchestral and choral works performed in his final academy. It seems timely to reconsider them collectively and to trace their common aesthetics and message—both in the patriotic discourse of that era as well as in today’s global world. This aligns with the sentiment expressed by an anonymous reviewer after the remarkable performance on May 7, 1824:

These new works of art appear to be the tremendous products of a son of the gods who has just taken the holy, revitalizing flame directly from heaven.61

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