



Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December 16, 1770,
Bonn, Germany
(now Czechia)

Died: March 26, 1827,
Vienna, Austria

Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Opus 125, Choral

Premiered: May 7, 1824

Ludwig van Beethoven composed his visionary Ninth Symphony when he was in his 50s, deaf, and only three years from death. The first symphony to include the human voice, it offers a romantic vision of the shared humanity of all people, and for sheer grandeur of expression, no other symphony has ever matched it.

Beethoven had planned to set Friedrich Schiller's poem *An die Freude* (Ode to Joy) to music as early as 1792, when he was 22, but that plan had to wait 30 years. The first performance of the Ninth Symphony took place in Vienna on May 7, 1824. Though he had been deaf for years, Beethoven sat on stage with the orchestra and tried to assist in the direction of the music. This occasion produced one of the classic Beethoven anecdotes. Unaware that the piece had ended, Beethoven continued to beat time and had to be turned around to be shown the applause that he could not hear—the realization that the music they had just heard had been written by a deaf man overwhelmed the audience.