

An incomplete summary of the Robert Greenberg analysis of Beethoven Symphony # 9 (Pulk)

3 Major key areas indicate 3 extra musical or psychological frame of mind: d minor – the key of ultimate tragedy. B-flat is the key of Hope. D Major – the key of victory. All four movements have significant areas in all 3 key areas.

Mvt 1: After the inconclusive opening based on undefined area of “A”, the main theme finally appears in d minor (tragedy). In the classic period restatement of the theme, key area shifts to B-flat Major (hope). This polarity represents the 2 protagonists in the drama: tragedy and hope. Development begins as if an exposition repeat. Recapitulation appears full force in D Major (victory), but destabilized by bass instrument avoidance of tonic pitch, locking instead on the F#. Ends in tragic d-minor with Brucknerian final coda.

Mvt 2 Again d minor with a sonata form scherzo. Timpani as interruptive force attempts to “correct” the orchestra which has shifted to an “incorrect” 3 measure phrase, and dies away in futility. Orchestra corrects itself and finally returns to the 4 measure phrase. TRIO in D Major (victory) with metric modulation to duple time. Scherzo return and ends in tragic d-minor w/ extended coda.

Mvt 3 Escapism! Fearing all is lost, the hero dreams in B-flat Major. This movement composed first and I suspect Beethoven added a four measure introduction to “unify” the symphonic structure by means of this new introduction which modulates from mvt 2 tragic d minor to new key of B-flat Major (hope). Double variation structure as hero avoids the problems of first 2 mvts. Trumpet call attempts to wake hero from the dream world but, unready to face “reality”, the hero pushes the “snooze” button on this alarm clock and stays in the dream. Trumpets again call and the hero reluctantly wakes up, realizing the escape to the dream world solves nothing – a plan must be formulated to solve tragedy of mvts 1 and 2.

Mvt 4 – a complete 4 act opera with orchestral overture and vocal prelude. **OVERTURE:** The hero is absent as orchestra “cosmic scream” superimposes a d-minor tragic chord over a B-flat chord of hope to begin the movement. Bass recitative rejects mvts 1, 2, and 3 as being unresolved tragedy or escapism to a dream world. How to proceed? Winds introduce a fragment of Ode to Joy theme and hero proclaims “wait a minute – I think we’ve got something there – a way to resolve the tragedy”. Ode to Joy begins w/ tentative low string presentation to full orchestra proclaiming a possible path to victory. **PRELUDE-** again the “cosmic scream” and the hero appears before the multitudes, disavowing mvts 1, 2, 3 with “Oh friends, no more these sounds” and presents the potential solution for their consideration in recitative. **ACT 1 The Call to Action.** Tenor soloist and choir decide to take action with this call to arms as they take over the Ode to Joy theme in D Major (victory). **ACT 2: the battle.** If humankind is to resolve the tragedy, we must be willing to fight for it. A Turkish March variation begins in B-flat (hope). (Austria Hapsburg empire had been at war, on and off for several years with Turkey). The multitudes advance but the battle is fought orchestrally in the fugue section. Initial conclusion to the battle unclear as horns “look around” the battle field. Did we win? Yes! And the Ode to Joy theme triumphant in D Major concludes the battle scene. Again a stop. **ACT 3** New material, in G Major, as the multitudes thank God for their victory. Beethoven employs the two dominant Christian church services: first a Catholic rendition where the priest intones (trombone and male choir) and the congregation responds (2 verses), then a Lutheran version of the congregational hymn in 4 part harmony (2 more verses) each thanking God. **ACT 4 Celebration!** As usual, Beethoven feels the need to balance nearly 1 hour of tragedy and escapism with a lengthy victory celebration (D Major) that refuses to end in the glorious double fugue based on Hymn to God and Ode to Joy themes.