

Beethoven, Symphony No.9 op.125, version for piano by Franz Liszt
Re-transcription for orchestra, movements 1-3 op. 133
by Eberhard Kloke

Eleven years after the "Eighth", Beethoven completed the Ninth Symphony. The symphony is so far removed from the prevailing political conditions and musical conventions of the time. It is the consequence, not the intention, of his new conception. The dividing line of this symphony runs through the introduction to the finale. Beethoven marks the beginning with unusual, harsh dissonant insertions. He defines the boundary between the different parts of the symphony as the vanishing point of the temporal perspective.

In doing so, he points out the main ideas of the first three movements by rejecting them.

For almost thirty years the task of transcription occupied Liszt intermittently. In 1836 - in his heyday as a young virtuoso and entirely dedicated to the memory of Beethoven - Liszt had begun work on the Fifth Symphony, possibly without thinking that he would one day tackle the entire work of nine symphonies.

The impetus for completing the entire series came from the publishers Breitkopf & Härtel. Aware of what Liszt had already achieved, they urged him to tackle the other symphonies as well. Liszt agreed, on the condition that he was allowed to revise his earlier works and publish all nine symphonies at once. To make it easier for him to get started, Breitkopf sent Liszt the orchestral scores in their own "critically revised" editions.

No one understood the art of transcription better than Liszt, but even he considered these symphonies a difficult endeavour for one pair of hands. In his preface of the collection, he dedicated himself to his goals:

"I shall consider my time well spent when I have succeeded in transferring to the piano not only the broad outlines of Beethoven's compositions, but also that multitude of details and subtleties which make such a significant contribution to the perfection of the whole."

What fuelled his imagination was the challenge of reproducing these symphonies with ten fingers without violating Beethoven's ideas. The results were spectacular and exemplary.

The present re-transcription of the first three movements of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony takes up Liszt's piano version and sets it anew for orchestra. From today's perspective, this results in new and different ideas that give the work sections a new perspective - especially with regard to the re-composed 4th movement.

Re-composition of the 4th movement for orchestra op. 134 by Eberhard Kloke (2024)

Thomas Mann: Doctor Faustus page 512 (ch. XLV, S. Fischer 1960 edition)

"I have found," he said, "it shall not be."

"What, Adrian, shall not be?"

"The good and noble," he answered me, "what is called the human, though it is good and noble. That which men have fought for, for which they have stormed castles, and which the fulfilled have jubilantly proclaimed, shall not be. It will be taken back. I want to take it back."

"I don't quite understand you, Dear. What do you want to take back?"

"The ninth symphony," he replied. And then nothing more came, as I waited. The motto "It shall not be" (see Beethoven, String Quartet op. 135: "It must be!") documents the negative relationship, the sharpest conceivable contrast to the variants of jubilation in Beethoven's Ninth.

Richard Wagner wrote pointedly and polemically to Franz Liszt on 17 June 1855:

"The last movement with the choruses is decidedly the weakest part, it is only important in terms of art history because it reveals to us the embarrassment of a real tone poet who does not know how to finally depict paradise (after hell and purgatory)."

Quote from the preface to the transcription of Franz Liszt's Symphony No. IX for piano: "That was my aim with the work I am presenting to the public today. I confess that I would have to consider it a rather useless occupation of my time if I had produced just another version of the symphonies in a hitherto customary manner. But I shall consider my time well spent if I have succeeded in transferring not only the broad outlines of Beethoven's compositions to the piano, but also that multitude of details and subtleties which make such a significant contribution to the perfection of the whole."

The new symphony transcriptions were finally published with a dedication to Liszt's greatest pupil Hans von Bülow.

When Liszt accepted Breitkopf's commission, he had warned the publisher that the arrangements, however brilliant, would always remain "a very poor and distant approximation" due to the limitations of the piano.

He asked Breitkopf to consider his work on the transcription finished with the end of the third movement of the Ninth. Breitkopf refused to be sidelined, however, and Liszt reluctantly returned to his task of arranging the 4th movement entirely for piano.

Taking up the ideas of Wagner, Liszt and Thomas Mann, my present re-composition represents an attempt to reformulate the 4th movement of the Ninth at this breaking point in the introduction to the 4th movement, dispensing with solos and chorus. Quotations from parts 1, 2 and 3 of the tetralogy are used, and a number of passages are also newly composed and combined with variations.

Eberhard Kloke Status: 16.10.2024

Piano transcription of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in D minor op. 125
by Franz Liszt, movements 1-3

Re-transcription for orchestra op. 133 by Eberhard Kloke

4th movement, re-transcription op. 134 by Eberhard Kloke

Orchestration:

Flute 1, Flute 2 (also picc)

Oboe 1, Oboe 2

Clarinet 1 in Bb/C/A, Clarinet 2 in Bb/C/A/Bass clar. in Bb, Kb clar. in Bb

Bassoon 1, bassoon 2 (also contrabassoon)

3 horns in F (Mr 2 and 3 also in E in the 3rd movement)

1 trumpet in C and Bb

2 trombones

Timpani

2 perc: 4th movement

Harp

Strings (min: 10/8/6/4/3, max: 12/10/8/6/4)

Eberhard Kloke, Berlin, October 2024