

Hymn to Joy: Schiller, Beethoven, & Van Dyke

John David Peterson

I

Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller wrote *An die Freude* in 1785 during his stay in Gohlis, a suburb of Leipzig, where he was living under the patronage of Christian Gottfried Körner. The poem apostrophizes joy, using Classical mythological imagery. It consists of nine eight-line verses with a rhyme scheme of ABAB CDCD and a meter of 87.87.87.87. Each verse is followed by a four-line chorus with a rhyme scheme EFFE and a meter of 87.78. The following is the first stanza with an English version from the Unitarian Universalist *Singing the Living Tradition* (1993), apparently the only hymnal that contains any of the Schiller original; the translator is not identified.

*Freude, schöner Götterfunken,
Joy, thou goddess, fair immortal,
Tochter aus Elysium,
offspring of Elysium,
wir betreten feuertrunken,
mad with rapture, to the portal
Himmliche, dein Heiligtum!
of thy holy fane we come!
Deine Zauber binden wieder,
Fashion's laws, indeed, may sever,
was die Mode streng getheilt:
but thy magic joins again;
alle Menschen werden Brüder,
humankind is one forever
wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.
'neath thy mild and gentle reign.*

Schiller became critical of the poem in later years, calling it *durchaus fehlerhaft* ("full of errors"), *ein schlechtes Gedicht [das] eine Stufe der Bildung bezeichnet, die ich durchaus hinter mir lassen musste um etwas Ordentliches hervorbringen* ("a bad poem that illustrates a stage of development which I had to leave behind me completely in order to produce something orderly")¹. Schiller made two alterations in the text before its publication in *Thalia* in 1786: *was die Mode streng getheilt* ("what custom harshly divided") had been *was der Mode Schwert getheilt* ("what the sword of custom divided"); and *alle Menschen werden Brüder* ("all people become

¹ Schillers Leben dokumentarisch, Walter Hoyer, (Köln: Keipenheuer & Witsch, 1967) p. 650.

² *Werke*, Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, Nationalausgabe, herausgegeben von Julius Petersen und Gerhard Fricke, 1er Band (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1943), p. 169; *Alle vertonten und musikalisch bearbeiteten Texte*, Ludwig van Beethoven, zusammengestellt und herausgegeben von Kurt E. Schürmann (Münster: Aschendorff, 1980) p. 239.

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The convoluted history of the well-loved Hymn to Joy contains two threads and comprises five chapters. The two threads are Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller's stirring *An die Freude* ("To Joy"), which gave rise to a number of musical settings before it inspired the second thread, which is Ludwig van Beethoven's immortal melody. The two threads are still intertwined in that the best known modern words set to Beethoven's tune, Henry van Dyke's "Joyful, joyful, we adore thee," also celebrate joy.

The first musical chapter in this history is Beethoven's original version in Symphony No. 9, with words excerpted from Schiller. The second is a short but important one: Elam Ives, Jr., published the tune in *The Mozart Collection of Sacred Music* in 1846. The third chapter has to do with Edward Hodges's *The Trinity Collection of Church Music* (1864), where the tune appears more or less in the form known in modern hymnals. The fourth begins in 1907 and belongs to Henry van Dyke, author of the text "Joyful, joyful, we adore thee," mistakenly regarded by many laypersons as a translation of the Schiller text. It is from this point that the modern history of the hymn begins. The fifth chapter takes in the rhythmic alteration to the last line found in recent hymnals.

Example 1. Christian Gottfried Körner,
An die Freude (verse only)

brothers") was originally *Bettler werden Fürstenbrüder* ("beggars become the brothers of princes").²

In spite of the poet's misgivings, the poem became quite popular. Schiller's host at Gohlis, Christian Gottfried Körner, was one of the more than 20 composers who wrote musical settings shortly after the appearance of the poem. Schiller liked this setting very much, although subsequent musical judgment has not been as kind. (Example 1)³

An anonymous setting from 1799 has achieved the status of a folksong in Germany.⁴ Its choruses contain unsymmetrical repetition of words, a characteristic which this setting shares with Beethoven's more famous version. (Example 2)⁵

In 1793 Bartholomäus Fischenich, a jurist in Bonn, wrote to Schiller's wife, Charlotte, that Beethoven had declared his intention to set all of *An die Freude* to music. This is not a surprising ambition for Beethoven, whose knowledge of German poetry and drama was wide-ranging. By the time of the writing of the Ninth Symphony, which had its first performance on May 7, 1824, Beethoven had reduced the nine strophes and nine choruses to only three of each, and not in Schiller's order. He also altered the structure of the poem, eliminating the distinctiveness of the choruses.

The net has been cast fairly far to find antecedents to the famous Ninth Symphony theme. The 1993 *Companion to the United Methodist Hymnal* states that Mozart wrote instrumental interludes based on the opening motive in his *offertorium Misericordias Domini*, K. 222.⁶ (Example 3)⁷ Mozart's use of the motive—really only the first eight notes of Beethoven's melody—is so

Example 2: An anonymous version (1799)

Example 3. Mozart,
Misericordia Domini,
K. 222

³Hoyer, p. 208.

⁴*Deutscher Liederschatz*, Ludwig Erk, I, 3 volumes (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, n.d.) 1:44.

⁵*Life of Beethoven*, Alexander Wheelock Thayer, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press) pp. 120-1.

⁶*Companion to the United Methodist Hymnal*, Carlton R. Young, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993) p. 454.

⁷Ludwig van Beethoven, *The Letters of Beethoven*, collected, translated, and edited by Emily Anderson (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1961) pp. 1113-4.

⁸Thayer, p. 448.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 451; Schürmann, p. 215.

incidental that its relationship to Beethoven's work is far less apparent than its simple derivation from the major scale. In any event, Beethoven was five years old when this little piece was written, and there is no evidence that he knew it.

Much further afield, while closer to home, is the next statement in the same *Companion*, which professes to find the melody of *An die Freude* in Beethoven's "early work" *Fantasia for piano, orchestra, and chorus*, Op. 80. This is an odd statement. The style of the *Fantasia* theme certainly forecasts the style of the theme from the Ninth Symphony, as does its treatment—indeed, Beethoven used the similarity between the two pieces as a selling point for the Ninth.⁷ The main theme of the *Fantasia* is actually adapted from the second of a pair of songs of Beethoven's, the *Gegenliebe* of *Seufzer eines Ungeliebten und Gegenliebe* (WoO 118, published posthumously in 1837), with poetry by Gottfried August Bürger. Beethoven modified this melody for his *Fantasia* and requested a text which would match the melody that he had already written.⁸ (The text of the *Fantasia* has been ascribed both to Christoph Kuffner and to Georg Friedrich Treitschke.)⁹ The actual pitches and the metric placement of the tune are quite different from those of the Ninth Symphony theme, even though its "feel" is similar. (Example 4) The *Fantasia* was premiered at the famous monster-

concert of December 22, 1808, which also included the first performances of both the Fifth and Sixth symphonies.

The finale of the Ninth Symphony is structured in a complex and subtle way that takes in variation principle and elaborate fugal technique. The famous melody appears as a theme (not in a development or as a fugue subject) a total of ten times. In all but one of those statements (the instrumental portion of the variation in B-flat major) the last two lines are repeated; in all but the two statements in B-flat there is an anticipation leading to the last line. The initial statement of the theme is instructive. (Example 5)

All thematic statements that contain an anticipation also include a musical event on the following downbeat. Even the unison opening shown above has a *subito piano* on the downbeat; subsequent statements have motion in the bass, motion in a countermelody, or a harmonic change on the downbeat. (Example 6) These downbeat events are important because they anchor the melody metrically after the anticipation. In Beethoven the effect of the anticipation is as exciting as it is partly because it is followed by a strong musical gesture.

Example 4. Beethoven,
Fantasia, Op. 80, main
theme

Example 5.
Beethoven, Symphony No. 9, mm. 92ff

Example 6 Other versions of the theme

The variation in B-flat—an instrumental introduction using the complete theme without the repetition of the last two lines and the tenor solo—presents the theme without the anticipation, a foreshadowing of the version used in most hymnals until recent years. (Example 7)

For those of us brought up on Beethoven's Ninth, with its poignant history of a deaf composer unable to hear the first performance, it is a shock to discover that not all of Beethoven's contemporaries shared what we presume was universal admiration for the work. Louis Spohr, a not insignificant composer of the early nineteenth century, wrote in his autobiography:

its fourth movement seems so monstrous and tasteless, and so trivial in its understanding of the Schiller Ode, that I cannot ever understand how a genius like Beethoven could have written it.¹⁰

II

The first known adaptation of Beethoven's melody as a hymn is found under the tune name BONN in *The Mozart Collection of Sacred Music* of Elam Ives, Jr., published in Louisville in 1846. Ives spent his life in the cultural centers of the East—Hartford, Philadelphia, and New York—as an editor and music educator. He had a professional association with Lowell Mason and published a number of books.¹¹

Ives used the improbable meter of 86. 86. 88. 86 and in an iambic, rather than a trochaic, form in his adaptation of *An die Freude*. This naturally required some alterations to the melody. (Example 8, page 16) There is an anacrusis to each of the four lines, but no anticipation at the beginning of the fourth—a detail inaccurately reported in the United Methodist *Companion*.¹²

III

Edward Hodges was an Englishman who came to the United States via Canada. He was an organist in New York, first at St. John's Chapel and later at Trinity Church.¹³ The version of Beethoven's melody found in his *Trinity Collection* is almost the one familiar to modern congregations—all that is lacking is the dotted figure at the end of each line. The tune is here named Joy; the meter, 76.76.77.76, is described as "peculiar." The tune is given with two slightly different harmonizations, one in A-flat major and one in A. The text of No. 255, in A major, is "Since I've known a Saviour's name." The text of No. 254, in A-flat major, "Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings" by Robert Seagrave, is the same one that would find its way into *The New Hymnal* of the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1916. (Example 9, page 16)

Other texts with which Beethoven's tune would be joined were the still familiar "Sing with all the sons of glory" by William Josiah Irons (*The Meth-*

Example 7
Beethoven, Symphony No. 9, mm. 395-399

¹⁰ *Selbstbiographie*, Louis Spohr, 2 vols. (Kassel und Göttingen: Georg H. Wigand, 1860; reprint ed.: Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1954) 1:202. (...deren vierter Satz mir aber so monströs und geschmacklos und in seiner Auffassung der Schiller'schen Ode so trivial erscheint, dass ich immer noch nicht begreifen kann, wie ihn ein Genius wie der Beethoven'sche niederschreiben konnte.) Translation by the author.

¹¹ *Hymnal Companion to the Lutheran Book of Worship*, Marilyn Kay Stulken, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) p. 556.

¹² Young, p. 454.

¹³ *The Presbyterian Hymnal Companion*, Linda Jo H. McKim, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993) pp. 320-1.

68 Moravian Coll. (No. II) BONN. D. M. From Beethoven's Choral Symphony, (No. 9.) Adapted by E. I.

Soprano.
Alto.
 1. Sing hal - le - lu - jah! praise the Lord! Sing with a cheer - ful voice; Ex - alt our God with one ac - cord, And in his name re - joice: . . .
 2. There we to all e - ter - ni - ty Shall join th' an - gel - ic lays, And sing in per - fect har - mo - ny To God our Sa - viour's praise; . . .

Tenore.
Bass.

Ne'er cease to sing, ye ran - som'd host, To Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost, Till in the realms of end - less light, Your praises shall u - nite,
 He hath re - deem'd us by his blood, And made us kings and priests to God; For us, for us the Lamb was slain: Praise ye the Lord! A - men.

Example 9. From Trinity Church Collection by Edward Hodges

180 255. JOY, 7, 6 7, 6, 7, 8, 7, 6. "TRINITY CHURCH COLLECTION."

Treble.
 Since I've known a Sa - viour's name, And sin's strong fet - ters broke, Caro - ful with - out care I am, Nor feel my ea - sy yoke,
Alto.
 Since I've known a Sa - viour's name, And sin's strong fet - ters broke, Caro - ful with - out care I am, Nor feel my ea - sy yoke,
Tenore.
 Since I've known a Sa - viour's name, And sin's strong fet - ters broke, Caro - ful with - out care I am, Nor feel my ea - sy yoke,
Bass.

Joy - ful now my faith to show, I find his ser - vice my re - ward, All the work I do be - low, Is light, for such a Lord.
 Joy - ful now my faith to show, I find his ser - vice my re - ward, All the work I do be - low, Is light, for such a Lord.

odist Hymnal, 1905—its “sons” have now become “saints”); “Let us, brothers, let us gladly give to God of all” by Henry Bateman (*Hymns of the United Church; The Disciples Hymnal*, 1916); and E. Grubb’s “Comrades we, whom love is leading,” included in the 1910 *Supplement of The Primitive Methodist Hymnal* with the tune name altered to the fancifully Gallic ODE À LA JOIE. The 1895 hymnal of the Presbyterian Church gave Rev. Ray Palmer’s text, “Take me, O my Father, take me,” to the Beethoven melody. The 1911 revision of the Presbyterian hymnal became the first to join Henry van Dyke’s now famous words to the tune for which they were intended; Rev. Palmer’s text was retained but was given the tune VESPER HYMN.

IV

Henry van Dyke (1852-1933) was a writer, minister, and professor of English whose stories—among them the well-known “The Other Wise Man”—were very popular earlier in this century. His appointments at Brick Church in New York and as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church put him in the forefront of religious thinkers of his time. He was a man who found solace and inspiration in nature, and enjoyed fishing and wilderness camping trips with his family. It is no surprise that an English author with whom he felt a great affinity was Alfred, Lord Tennyson, whose devotion to the sense of divinity found in nature is well-known. The first sermon of van Dyke’s which is preserved (given at Bryn Mawr on October 21, 1875) touches this same chord.

Vague and delicate as strains of half-forgotten music, dim as the first monitions of a former life, are the emotions stirred by the voice of ocean, the sublime silence of the mountains, the circling of the stars...And surest of all our blessed Master heard and knew the voice of Nature. How beautifully has he caught its meaning and put it into human words. His teaching is full of poetry gathered from the mountain sides and lake shores of the Holy Land. He touched the lily of the valley and left it clothed in new grace and purity. The fruitful vine, the trees, the lambs, the swift winged birds, the waving grain fields mean to us something more and higher since Jesus has walked among them.¹⁴

Nature images also suffuse van Dyke’s “A Hymn of Joy,” dated November 27, 1907, in a handwritten autograph.

Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee,
God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee,
Opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;

Drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness,
Fill us with the light of day!

All Thy works with joy surround Thee,
Earth and heaven reflect Thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around Thee,
Centre of unbroken praise:
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
Flowering meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain,
Call us to rejoice in Thee.

Thou art giving and forgiving,
Ever blessing, thou art blest,
Well-spring of the joy of living,
Ocean-depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our Brother,—
All who live in love are Thine;
Teach us how to love each other,
Lift us to the Joy Divine.

Blend your voices in the chorus,
Millions of the mortal clan;
Father-love is reigning o’er us,
Brother-love binds man to man.
Ever singing march we onward,
Out of darkness, out of strife;
Joyful music lifts us sunward
In the triumph song of life.¹⁵

The fourth stanza was altered to its now familiar form for inclusion in the 1911 hymnal and was published in van Dyke’s collection “Songs of Hearth and Altar” (1911) as “A Hymn of Joy”; the date given is 1908.

Mortals join the mighty chorus
Which the morning stars began;
Father-love is reigning o’er us,
Brother-love binds man to man.
Ever singing march we onward,
Victors in the midst of strife;
Joyful music lifts us sunward
In the triumph song of life.¹⁶

Tertius van Dyke, Henry’s son and biographer, related the recollections of Harry Augustus Garfield, president of Williams College, in an essay published in 1932. This is apparently the source of the story of the origin of “Hymn to Joy” which has become familiar—and distorted—through retellings in a number of hymnal companions and other sources.

Just before a service in the Williams College Chapel President Garfield told me how the hymn came to be written. My father was staying in the Garfields’ home. One morning when he came down to breakfast he put the manuscript of the hymn on the table, saying: “Here is a hymn for you. Your mountains were my inspiration. It must be sung to the music of Beethoven’s ‘Hymn to Joy.’”¹⁷

¹⁴Henry van Dyke: A Biography by his Son, Tertius van Dyke, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1935) p. 55.

¹⁵Autograph in the Benson Papers, Speer Library Archives, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N.J.

¹⁶“Hymn of Joy,” in *The Poems of Henry van Dyke*, Henry van Dyke, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1912) pp. 332-3.

¹⁷“Joyful, joyful, we adore thee,” Tertius van Dyke, in *Music of the Gospel*, ed. Stanley Armstrong Hunter (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1932) p. 25.

Later versions of this story have rechristened "President Garfield" as "James," inviting confusion with the former President of the United States. There is actually a connection: Harry Augustus Garfield, Williams College President from 1908 to 1934, was a son of former United States President James Garfield, who was assassinated in 1881. Both men were alumni of Williams College.

Another later embroidery connects the incident to a supposed preaching visit that van Dyke made at Williams. The *Gulielmians* of those years list guest preachers, but van Dyke's name is not given. In fact, in mentioning the revitalization of the chapel program as an accomplishment of the early years of Garfield's presidency, E. Herbert Botsford names Henry van Dyke not among those who had already spoken, but as a distinguished preacher who would appear in later years.¹⁸ Garfield's reminiscences are instructive here: they simply mention a house visit, not a preaching visit.

Even without the confusion in names and circumstances, the chronology of the story is still difficult. The autograph is dated November 27, 1907, and this date is supported by correspondence between van Dyke and Louis Benson later that year.¹⁹ Harry Garfield was elected to the presidency of Williams College on June 25, 1907, but he did not assume that office until October 7, 1908.²⁰ Garfield did serve as acting president during the summer of 1908, following the retirement of his predecessor, Henry Hopkins, in June, but in the previous November he was not yet president of the college.²¹ Since his reminiscences do not jibe with the date of van Dyke's autograph, it seems unwise to accept the popular story of the hymn's origins uncritically.

Van Dyke's text was first combined with Beethoven's melody in the Presbyterian hymnal in 1911, in the redoubtable key of A major. Its history since then has not been predictable. The Episcopalians, who used the Beethoven tune in *The New Hymnal* (1916) with Robert Seagrave's "Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings," omitted the Beethoven entirely from *The Hymnal 1940*. That book does contain van Dyke's text, but paired with Samuel S. Wesley's ALLELUIA. The 1932 hymnal of the Methodist Church contains both, as do both subsequent revisions. Lutheran hymnals have been slow to pick up either tune or text: only the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978) has both.

V

In 1976 the Episcopal Church produced a second supplement to *The Hymnal 1940*, including, apparently for the first time in a hymnal, Hymn to Joy with the anticipation to the fourth line. Arranged by Alastair Cassels-Brown, it is true to Beethoven in that it includes not only the anticipation but also a musical event on the following downbeat—the only modern American hymnal to do so. (Example 10) Subsequent adaptations containing the anticipation, hailed by many musicians as Beethoven getting his day in the sun, do not have a musical event on the next beat. Instead, they tie the anticipation over the bar, producing enervation where Beethoven produced energy. (Example 11) This is even true in *The Hymnal 1982* of the Episcopal Church, which did not follow its own lead from *Hymnal Supplement II*.

The absurdity here is that the "old" hymnal version, without the anticipation, replicates the rhythmic/harmonic pattern of Beethoven's variation in B-flat major, while the "new" hymnal version—with the anticipation but without the downbeat—cannot be found anywhere in Beethoven. What has been hailed as true Beethoven is, in fact, an impostor, while what was rejected as non-Beethoven can actually be found in his score. Recent hymnals which have not used the anticipation include the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, *The Baptist Hymnal*, *Hymns for the Living Church*, *Worship*, and *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*.

VI

The final chapter may never be written. Were I the author instead of the reteller, I would have hymnals include both the anticipation and the musical event on the downbeat or neither. I'm not sure that congregations have assimilated what they may regard as "fooling around" with the rhythm of this familiar hymn, and they may have been subjected to the anticipation without the clear downbeat. That downbeat not only preserves more of Beethoven but also makes the tune easier to sing.

It is easy for the organist to change the har-

¹⁸ *Fifty Years at Williams*, E. Herbert Botsford, Book IV: *The Garfield Administration* (Williamstown, Mass.: The McClelland Press, 1940), p. 22.

¹⁹ Quoted in J. Michael Walker, "Louis FitzGerald Benson: The Union of Praise and Prayer," *American Presbyterians* 71:3 (Fall 1993) 177.

²⁰ *A History of Williams College*, Leverett Wilson Spring, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1917), p. 258.

²¹ Letter to the author from Sylvia Kennick Brown, Archivist of Williams College.

Example 10. Harmonized by Alastair Cassels-Brown

From *Hymnal Supplement II* (also found in *The Hymnal 1982*), © Church Pension Fund, used by permission.

Example 11. From Rejoice in the Lord

Example 12

A suggestion for improving the last line (arr. by John David Peterson)

Example 13. An arrangement by John David Peterson

mony or move the bass voice on the downbeat, bringing the hymnal harmonization closer to the original. (Example 12)

I have always had the idea that one could go further and harmonize Hymn to Joy with some of the original trappings from Beethoven's symphony—the bassoon obbligato, the long pedalpoints, the military rhythms under horn fifths. The following is an organ adaptation of mm. 116-187 of the last movement of the Ninth, which takes in three variations on the theme. Like Beethoven's original, it moves directly from one verse to the next in a manner too abrupt, perhaps, for a congregation on Sunday morning. Still, I include it here in hope that an organist may wish to harmonize some of this hymn according to Beethoven's own lead. One could use an individual verse of this arrangement or rewrite the transition measures to provide amateur singers a moment for a healthy breath. ■