1. Allegro vivace e con brio
2. Allegretto scherzando
3. Tempo di Minuetto
4. Allegro vivace

That the Ninth Symphony is, even by comparison with such mighty works as the "Eroica" and Fifth Symphonies, on a totally different psychological plane, that it raises vaster issues than anything in Beethoven's previous symphonic writing, has generally been agreed. In this single work Beethoven takes the model of the sonata form four movement symphonic cycle and pushes it to its dynamic and expressive outer limits.

A period of twelve years had elapsed between the completion of the Eighth Symphony in 1812 and the work's first performance in Vienna on 7th May, 1824. The reception on that occasion was overwhelming, despite the fact that the symphony was seriously under-rehearsed. Beethoven, who was by then totally deaf, was present in the orchestra and the story is well known which tells how one of the soloists had to turn him round as he stood with his back to the audience so that he could see the applause which he was unable to hear.

It is clear from Beethoven's sketchbooks that the idea of incorporating a choral finale to a symphony had been in his mind from as early as 1818, and it is also known that for some years he had been contemplating setting Schiller's "Ode to Joy" to music. It is worth noting that Schiller's ode was written in 1785, on the eve of the French Revolution, and at a time when liberal ideas were beginning to make themselves felt. The ode was really addressed not "An die Freude" ("To Joy"), but "An die Freiheit" ("To Freedom"). Owing to political necessity Schiller was forced to substitute "Freude" for "Freiheit", somewhat to the detriment to the poem. It seems clear, however, that Beethoven, and probably numerous other people were perfectly aware that "Joy" was merely a thin disguise for "Freedom".

The opening of the symphony is one of sustained mystery and intensity. It begins not with the chord of D but that of A, whether major or minor is uncertain as the third is left out, from which emerges the first faint foreshadowings of a theme which, when it arrives, is hurled forth by the whole orchestra in unison. The theme is then transferred to the key of B flat and in rising sequences marches remorselessly onwards to the transition to the second subject group which has been supposed to bear some faint resemblance to the "Joy" theme of the finale. The closing section of the exposition contains several new figures and ends with an extraordinary passage in which the whole orchestra thunders out in vast unisons a tremendous affirmation. The development section then turns into a full-blown drama, where even the light-hued motifs are made more pressing and complex in character. The start of the recapitulation is signaled by a

return to the opening but now, instead of the former shadows, it is presented fortissimo in the blinding light of the tonic major. The enormous coda of 120 bars is tantamount to a whole new development section and reaches out to one of the most dramatic endings in all music.

The second movement, molto vivace, is not actually labeled a Scherzo but it is indeed the mightiest of Scherzos. It opens with a terrific octave descent over the chord of D minor with the drums, themselves tuned in octaves, having the third note of the scale. The pianissimo theme urges on to undergo a contrapuntal treatment and is then repeated fortissimo, moving towards the dominant in which key the second subject appears, but still punctuated by the opening figure. In the development section the rhythm is compressed into three-bar figures and then again expanded to four beats and finally in the briefest of codas goes into duple time. The Trio, in D major, is by contrast both graceful and flowing, and the music returns to this mode after the repeat of the Scherzo, thus neutralizing the restless insistence of the latter.

The sublime slow movement consists of two alternating themes, A and B, the first of which is treated in two variations. Two bars of introduction lead into the adagio first theme in B flat, a melody of wonderful depth and pathos. The second theme is an andante in D major. The adagio returns and is treated discursively as an interlude followed by its second variation. There is a long and beautiful coda.

Now comes the famous link in which Beethoven solved the problem of introducing voices for the first time into a symphonic finale. First the orchestra, minus the strings, breaks out into a confused clamor. This is rebuked by the string basses in a short recitative. Again the tumult breaks out and again the basses reply. Then the main themes of the preceding three movements are tried over in turn, each to be rejected by the recitative, although in the case of the Adagio with evident regret. A new theme is tentatively propounded by the woodwind and immediately greeted with acclamation, and so we hear at last the great melody which is to form the basis of the choral variations. In the rejection of the earlier themes, it is as if Beethoven is setting aside the past, with all its memories of strife, tragedy, and loss; he is not repudiating his own music, but rather the states which it symbolizes. There remains one further clamorous "rejection", this time of the new theme itself, as if to underline Beethoven's affirmation that the "Freude" melody in its merely instrumental form was not sufficient to express his all-embracing vision of the future.

"O friends, not these sounds! Rather let us begin to sing more pleasant and joyful ones!" These introductory words of the opening recitative are Beethoven's own. Thereafter he did not set the whole of Schiller's ode but chose about a third of the stanzas, arranging them in his own order.

The chorus takes up the baritone solo's exhortation and joins in the second strain of the theme, shortly after which the quartet sings the tune which then appears in one variation after another with increasing intensity.

A dramatic key shift from A major to F major takes the music to a climax on the words "und der cherub steht vor Gott' ("and the cherub stands before God") after which there is a contrasting section for tenor solo and chorus in the form of a march accompanied by bass drum, cymbals, and triangle. Next comes an orchestral interlude in the form of a mighty double fugue, at the end of which the chorus breaks out joyfully with a repetition of the opening stanza. At this point Beethoven introduces an entirely new theme, first sung by male voices and then by the full chorus to the words "Seid umschlungen, Millionen", leading to a choral fugue culminating in the notorious passage in which the sopranos are called on to sustain a high A for no fewer than twelve bars.

The final coda begins with the soloists singing antiphonally a new strain which develops as the chorus enters into a sort of musical "round". There is a magical moment when the pace halts and the soloists have eleven bars of florid polyphony before the furious prestissimo that sweeps away all obstacles in its path, setting free almighty cascades of sound and then broadening out for a moment before an ecstatic orchestral climax brings this monumental symphony to an overwhelming close.

Perhaps the last word is best left to Beethoven's biographer, Maynard Soloman. "If we lose our awareness of the transcendent realms of play, beauty, and brotherhood which are portrayed in the great affirmative works of our culture, if we lose the dream of the Ninth Symphony, there remains no counterpoise against the engulfing terrors of civilization, nothing to set against Auschwitz and Vietnam as a paradigm of humanity's potentialities".