

A Night at the Kärntnertor: Suffering and Faith to Joy in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony
Vasili Byros (Northwestern University)

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Moments from the end, the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth culminates in a sustained funeral march. What place does death have in a symphony about joy? My talk draws on the circumstances of the Ninth's premiere at the Kärntnertortheater on 7 May 1824 and its surrounding cultural contexts, to reveal an understanding of the work (and of late Beethoven) that has been lost through the passing of time and cultural change: a meditation on and expression of joy as a corollary of death and necessary suffering, one that is deeply seated in faith. The talk stems from my book project, titled *Beethoven's Latening: Music, God, and Transcendence, from Heiligenstadt to the Große Fuge, and Beyond*. It reconstructs the phenomenon of late Beethoven as a dynamic psychological process that begins as early as 1802–4 and develops in the decades that follow in terms of metaphorical cycles of death and rebirth. There and in the talk I use microhistory, historically informed music analysis that holistically integrates schema theory, sonata theory, and topic theory, close readings of (auto)biographical documents from Beethoven's life, and interdisciplinary readings of cultural *units*. The result is an image of Beethoven that is unfamiliar to most, now in the 250th anniversary year of his birth.