Tanner Day

Intro to Music: T 10:00-11:20

12/1/13

Listening Guide: Beethoven’s 9th symphony 2nd movement

0:00 The second movement of Ludwig Van Beethoven’s ninth symphony begins immediately with an intense violin synchronization and a drum to add bass to the sound. Then, the violins play acapella while alternating notes at an allegro tempo. This progression has a deep sound created by the oboes and drums while the violins and woodwinds generate an electric vibe.

0:40 The music slows down and begins to have a differing sound between major and minor notes. To me, this sound replicates a clash between good and evil and displays the true talent behind Beethoven’s composing abilities. As the strings continue to play the lead rhythm, the woodwinds pick up on the melody. The bass drum is still in the background adding low pitch sounds that keep the pulse alive.

1:00 At this time, the volume shows resemblance to a rollercoaster. Every sound drops off except the violins, which play at a joyful pitch with a floating melody. All of a sudden, all the sounds come back in and it is back to the clashing of ups and downs. Following that is a rather frantic melody continued at an allegro pace. The violins lead the melody and remain at a mezzo-piano timbre.

1:49 After going back and forth between a high and low timbre, all the instruments join together to create one massive beat. I feel as though the purpose of this was to rejuvenate the rhythm and keep the pulse going so that the woodwinds could enter with flow and create a brief calming harmony. This harmony eventually transcends softer and softer to a point where the sound is playing in intervals. The aural canvas has now begun to surface and the music almost seems to be lost. When the music picks back up, the bass drums begin a new rapid beat that sounds similar to a snare drum. The drums fade out and the woodwinds pick back up where they left off, alternating an allegro tempo with the strings at a mezzo-forte volume.

3:31 Here the music becomes very forte and upbeat. The drums play a loud timbre along with the brass and woodwinds. The strings (mainly violins) continue at a high-pitched sound although it now has a stressful vibe to it being played in D minor. Once again, the loud sounds are cut off and the woodwinds play the melody accompanied by the violins playing the rhythm. The music has started to sound mystical and somewhat confusing.

4:39 The strings and woodwinds are left along again, this time playing at the same timbre. It sounds like something that has been lost is being searched for but cannot be found. Or, it is as if the music is asking a question repeatedly that cannot be answered. When the base drum enters and continues playing the snare-like pulse from earlier in the movement, it feels like the solution is coming closer and closer. The tempo at which the lead instruments are playing creates anxiousness in sound throughout the listeners mind. When all the instruments in the symphony make their return playing the same transitions as before it feels like the climax of the song. The way I interpreted this sequence was a pirate searching for gold and finally finding the hidden treasure.

7:01 After a drop off at 6:42, the brass instruments come in with a bouncing tone while the woodwinds combine with the strings, playing a smooth mezzo rhythm. When this ends, the violins take over and play a progression with a very major tone. The strings make you feel as if you are in a swiftly floating over everything. Following this, the strings play the softest tone and highest pitch of the movement. The music sounds quiet and less busy than before. The oboe comes in playing the melody, which is still soft and ‘floaty’. When the orchestra kicks back in the only constant sound happens to be the violins playing a melody from high to low then back up to high again. The note is rather neutral, but the pitch symbolizes the differences in sound between all the different instruments.

9:06 By this time, the movement has evolved from a frantic sound at an allegro tempo to a rather breezy melody with a mezzo-allegro tempo. The organ enhances the sounds of the notes being played on the woodwinds and strings. The orchestra transgresses into another synchronized pulse in a duple meter. The movement seems to alternate between duple, triple, and quadruple meters often. The major tone is usually heard when the orchestra plays in a triple meter and sometimes a duple meter. However, duple and quadruple meters produce a rather daunting sound at times.

9:58 The daunting/frantic sounds return here and the instruments repeat a progression from earlier in the movement. The difference is, this time, when the minor tone descends it never fully disappears. There is a slight minor tone being played by the violins with an up and down timbre. At this point the sequences become a little bit repetitive, but the sound is still intriguing.

11:09 This moment is the beginning of a build up with many pauses and intervals in between sound and silence. The woodwinds, once again, take over the melody with a stuttering flow. Violins accompany this sound with a smooth high pitch tone that compliments the occasional bass drum in the background. Once the bass drum begins playing its most common rhythm the other instruments sound almost intimidated by the drum. The woodwinds enter a high pitch stuttering rhythm that matches their previous rhythm, just with more of a minor tone.

12:07 The volume at this time progressively gets louder and the instruments are again in synchronization. With the strings and woodwinds matching the volume of the bass drum, it sounds like the battle between two sides is reaching its final destination. The weaker instruments are not backing down as the bass drum thumps with everything it has.

12:24 Although the intensity has peaked, gracefulness resumes to glorify the professionalism of this composition. The brass and bass drums disappear once more, leaving the higher pitched instruments stranded.

13:15 Gracefulness, intensity, and electrifying elements all surround each other at the end of this movement. These forces dance back and forth in battle as a horn blows signaling the last moment of the composition. The pace and volume increase one last time, magnifying the ending of this musical sequence. The loud and daunting sounds from the brass instruments and drums seem to take over when, at the last second, the strings, woodwinds, and other high-pitch instruments play a short melody with a major tone. In my eyes, the elimination of the minor tone portrays that good always overcomes evil in the end.