

Beethoven's Millennium

Quarter-

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Why do films have such an influence on people? Because even Catholics have human nature; and human nature needs music, stories and pictures; and films combine all three. Hence when Hollywood was created in the early 20th century, the enemies of God sprang into action to make sure that they controlled it because of the huge influence which they knew – better than the friends of God seem to have known – that it would have on people's minds and hearts. One could even say that these enemies created Hollywood. In any case let at least Catholic parents realise how important it is to know and to direct what music it is that their children are listening to, and let them absolutely ban jungle music from the house.

This is a tall order, because from the moment that children set foot outside the house, they will meet an all-engulfing jungle culture, and in particular jungle peer pressure. The children must stand on their own feet. The parents must give good example, and not listen themselves to music which is sloppy, with no shape or moral value or moral values. Frequently the first door by which the devil will get into their children's souls is by bad music, and the rest of the decadence will follow. From the use that Mother Church makes of good music at Mass, cannot Catholic parents guess how much use the devil will make of bad music if only there is nobody keeping guard at the entrance to their children's souls? Music is a unique language of the soul, and has a unique influence on people's lives.

It was the 250th anniversary of the birthday on December 16th last year of Ludwig van Beethoven, which recalls the value and importance of good music. Now music-lovers will object

straight away that his music is often too stormy, and they themselves prefer earlier composers from calmer times. Fair enough. And if they really have a handle on the earlier composers, by all means let them give to their children what they themselves possess. But the great advantage of Beethoven is that he straddled in time (1770–1827) the French Revolution (1789–1794), so that he was born under the ancien régime, the old way of living, but lived his mature years in Revolutionary times and his last years after the Congress of Vienna (1815), when Europe attempted to tame the Revolutionary forces that had been let loose. But, like in Beethoven's music, those forces were barely tamed, in fact they have moulded the world more and more ever since, so that numberless youngsters today have no feeling for music earlier than Beethoven, whereas in the Master of Bonn they can clearly sense their own chaos arising.

Yet Beethoven's music is by no means only, or primarily, chaotic. The old order is still in his bones as it was in his formation, and it enables a powerful musical mind to shape and control passionate feelings, and here is why Beethoven's architectural passion, or passionate architecture, is so unique. Broadly speaking, the masterpieces of his maturity express more feeling than did any of the calmer composers who came before him, even while they express more order than did any of the wilder composers who came after him. As Shakespeare, straddling medieval and modern times, can be said to owe his stature as a world artist to his combining of medieval theology with modern psychology, so, broadly speaking, the greatness of Beethoven may be ascribed to his combining of an 18th century head with a 19th century heart.

He wrote many kinds of music, notably one opera, two Masses, five piano concertos, nine symphonies, 10 violin sonatas, 17 string quartets and 32 piano sonatas, but the most popular and best known of all are undoubtedly the nine symphonies, where the full orchestra and freedom of invention gave to his genius

fullest rein. To an unfamiliar ear the symphonies can all sound the same, but the more anyone gets to know them, the more difficult it becomes to say which two most resemble one another, so different are they. Written words cannot say what music says, they can only attempt to describe it, but in another issue of these "Comments" an attempt will be made to describe the symphonies. The unrivalled culture of white European males must not be allowed to perish! It carries God within.

Kyrie eleison.

1 A joyful spirit comes to the battlefield

With promise of weapons musical rare to wield.

2 The master is spreading his wings at greater length,

Drawing from deafness' grief yet greater strength.

3 Ready for battle, forward the hero strides,

To death, but up on high his spirit rides

4 To reign now over opening realms unknown

With passion, variety, order all his own.

5 But storms do shake the universe's frame,

And order, disorder both the victory claim.

- 6 A walk in the countryside, beside a stream,
Then peasants dance, a storm, a pastoral dream.
- 7 A majestic discourse, threnody of the soul,
Noble in every part, and in the whole.
- 8 Down from the heights, the hero comes to earth,
Remembering earlier times, with rhythmic mirth.
- 9 Doom, fate and crashing heavens open wide?
Still rhythm, beauty, men's joy will abide.