

10/12/2020



Dear Club Members,

In true Time Travelling fashion this months parcel is one of past, present and future, all bundled up and turned in to fibre form.

December 2020 is the 250th anniversary of the birth of Ludwig van Beethoven. A hugely prolific composer, he wrote 722 pieces of music over the course of 45 years. In the later part of his life he became deaf, but still continued to compose, and produced some of his most famous works in that time period. Symphony No. 9 was his last symphony, and part of that work is the piece entitled Ode to Joy.

I learned to play this piece on the recorder aged around 8... it was performed as part of a mass recorder piece with local schools at a music festival. I can only imagine how dreadful it must have sounded with 300 school children squeaking away. However, it's a sign of the power of this piece that I can still hum it perfectly. In 1972 it was adopted as the anthem of the Council of Europe, and in 1885 became the anthem of the European Commission, and then the European Union. I've spent much of the past few days emailing customers, making alternations, and trying to get ready for the end of the transition period. The UK has left the European Union, something that makes me incredibly heart broken. On a business front it's something of a nightmare, but on a personal front I feel European... many of my opportunities have now been taken away from me, and those in power in this country are making decisions that will make me poorer, both financially and culturally.

It therefore seems appropriate that Ode to Joy has also frequently been used as a song of protest. The song has been used to symbolise a desire for peace, unity and a bond of fellowship for over 200 years. It's been sung in Chile by protestors against the Pinochet dictatorship, it was broadcast by Chinese students at Tiananmen Square, it was also performed in Berlin at Christmas after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In 2019 it was sung in Arabic by Lebanese protestors. On 31st January 2020, the day when the UK formally left the EU it reached number 1 in the music charts, beating all the current chart music being played on the radio.

However the power of this song has also been used by forces for evil. Hitler used the song in his birthday celebrations, and it featured heavily in Nazi propaganda films. The Japanese government also used it in World War II to raise morale, and for a while it was the tune used for the anthem of Rhodesia, at the end of the racist administration of Ian Smith.

Wales also plays a part in the social and political history of the song. Welsh Eisteddfods are a festival of the Welsh arts, in 1957 South Wales miners invited black American socialist singer Paul Robeson to come and perform. He wasn't allowed to leave the country by the US Government, so instead he performed Ode to Joy down the phone, which was broadcast at the Eisteddfod. He was the first person to be permitted to speak English on the stage (Welsh is the language of the Eisteddfod). In 1958 that ban was lifted, and he performed on the stage in Ebbw Vale. In 2010 his granddaughter was welcomed back to Ebbw Vale for that years Eisteddfod.

For your fibre composition I've gone as European as I can manage. I've included some Welsh Radnor, this sheep comes from the hills to the south of me. I've also included Zwartbles, a beautiful Dutch breed with black fleece, Eider from Germany from a sheep also known as German Whiteheaded Mutton sheep (Deutsches Weisskoeppiges Fleischschaf), and Shetland from Scotland. I could have added in wonderful breeds from all over Europe, but together these create a beautiful sturdy wool texture. One with the strength to endure whatever the world throws at it.

Happy Spinning

Katie

Further Reading-

Live streaming of a concert to celebrate Beethovens birth on 16th December-

<https://www.bthvn2020.de/en/program/beethoven-night-powered-by-telekom>

Ode to Joy-

<https://mycountryeurope.com/culture/ode-to-joy-five-key-facts/>

As a protest song-

<https://www.thewanderlustherald.com/art/ode-to-joy-an-anthem-of-protest-and-peace/>

<https://www.classicfm.com/composers/beethoven/lebanese-protestors-sing-arabic-ode-to-joy/>

Paul Robeson sings Ode to Joy-

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3DYdSOzw0U

Welsh Miners and Paul Robeson-

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-10853209>

<https://open.spotify.com/album/6MUJZi84QG2K9v8KAaFeUH> (Tracks 12 onwards)

2020 Group Online performances-

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3eXT60rbBVk&feature=emb_logo

Following the Ninth- A documentary about the way Ode to Joy has been used as a song to inspire those overcoming oppression-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2pKvykQZCk>

Fibre Content- In case your parcel is missing the label

12.5 % Sari Silk,

12.5% Finnish Wool,

12.5% Eider Wool,

12.5% Zwartbles Wool,

12.5% Radnor Wool,

37.5% Shetland Wool