

**Maximianno Cobra**

---

---

## About *Tempi*

*Foreword : We would like to draw the reader's attention to the fact that the following essay does not claim to be exhaustive on the subject at hand. An in-depth study is to be found in the author's doctoral thesis : The Symphonies of Ludwig van Beethoven : historical and critical analysis, in view of a new edition - Paris Sorbonne-Paris IV. For further information on the subject, visit our website : < <http://www.hodie-world.com> >*

We expect this new recording to come as something of a surprise to any listener even remotely familiar with modern-day performances of the Ninth Symphony. He will be all the more surprised to know that one of our major preoccupations was to be able to respect Beethoven's own metronomic markings to the very letter. These have often been considered eccentric, because the indicated *tempi* seem much too fast, not to say unplayable, even if some modern-day ensembles or "interpreters", who claim to reach back to original performance practice, have been trying to apply them in a way as mathematically faithful as possible.

At the risk of seeming obscure, let us now point out the essential factors which have sustained our musical reflection on Beethoven's metronomic markings :

It appears necessary to substitute a "metric" reading for the usual "mathematical" reading of Beethoven's metronomic markings. This in turn will lead to some - apparently - stunning decisions, as most of the adopted *tempi* will then end up twice as slow as they normally would through their mathematical application.

Justifying the need for this metric reading would carry us too far just now. So would a detailed explanation of the performance practice approach that led us to determine which "metric" reading to adopt for each of the metronomic markings in the Ninth Symphony.

The main thing is to understand that the problem does not lie with Beethoven's markings but with our way of reading and understanding them.

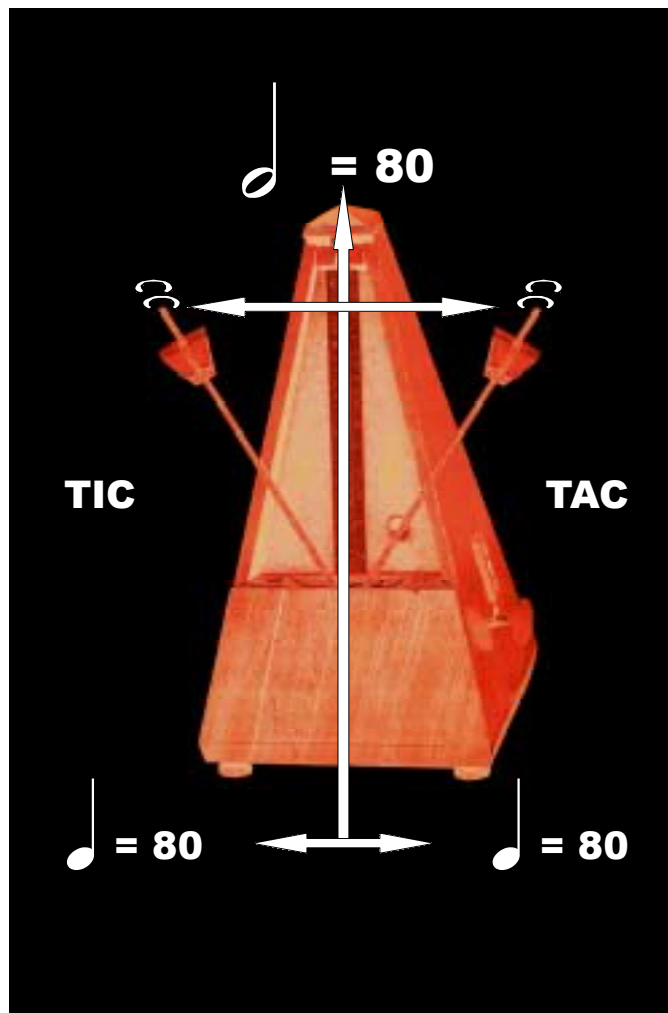
Several elements are necessary to interpret Beethoven's metronomic markings :

- First of all, we must be absolutely persuaded that Beethoven did not consider resorting to the metronome as an act of secondary importance. He viewed the final adjustment and systematic use of that instrument as a decisive step towards the emancipation of music.
- Second, we must bear in mind that the metronome was brought to perfection by Mäzel around 1815 as the result of a long researching process which originated in the Renaissance, in an attempt to meet some of the major preoccupations of the music world.
- Last, Beethoven's use of the metronome can only be understood and interpreted through a thorough study of his relationship to the very notion of rhythm. What do Beethoven's tempo markings mean, exactly ? What value, or ensemble of values, or subdivision of values does that number indicate which he finally writes down ? What is needed here is a solid knowledge of the tradition in which Beethoven is rooted, out of which he spontaneously adopts a very particular manner of using his precious metronome.

All we can do here is to present the results of this study, i.e. the connection between Beethoven's markings and the "metric" reading which seemed to impose itself, and that is in fact their translation in "modern" notation. For a thorough explanation of this problem, see our article on our website < <http://www.hodie-world.com> >. It features a quick presentation of the historical process that led to the final adjustment of the metronome, together with a few elements showcasing Beethoven's unflinching interest for the many possibilities this instrument offered, plus a comprehensive argument on the necessity to resort to metric reading and its application to the metronomic markings found in the Ninth Symphony.

*Metric Reading / Metrisches Lesen / Lecture métrique*

Thesis - Arsis  
Systole - Diastole  
TIC-TAC



**Symphony No. 9 in D minor op. 125 /  
Symphonie Nr. 9 in d-moll op. 125 /  
Symphonie N° 9 en ré mineur op. 125**

Movement / Satz / Mouvement	Mathematical Indication / Mathematische Angabe / Indication mathématique	Metric reading / Metrisches Notationsweise / Lecture métrique	Time signature / Taktarten / Signe de mesure
I <i>Allegro ma non troppo e un poco maestoso</i>	88 = ♩	♩ = 88	2/4
II ( <i>Allegro</i> ) <i>Molto vivace</i>	116 = ♩.	♩ = 176 ( ♩. = 58 )	3/4
II <i>Presto</i>	116 = ♩	♩ = 116	♩
III <i>Adagio molto e cantabile</i>	60 = ♩	♩ = 60	♩
III <i>Andante moderato</i>	63 = ♩	♩ = 63	3/4
IV <i>Finale Presto</i>	96 = ♩.	♩ = 144 ( ♩. = 96 )	3/4
IV <i>Allegro ma non troppo e un poco maestoso</i>	88 = ♩	♩ = 88	2/4
IV <i>Allegro assai</i>	80 = ♩	♩ = 80	♩
IV <i>Allegro assai vivace "Alla marcia"</i>	84 = ♩.	♩. = 84	6/8
IV <i>Andante moderato</i>	72 = ♩	♩ = 72	3/2
IV <i>Adagio divoto</i>	60 = ♩	♩ = 60	3/2
IV <i>Allegro energico e sempre ben marcato</i>	84 = ♩.	♩ = 126 ( ♩. = 84 )	6/8
IV <i>Allegro ma non tanto</i>	120 = ♩	♩ = 120	♩
IV <i>Prestissimo</i>	132 = ♩	♩ = 132	♩
IV <i>Maestoso</i>	60 = ♩	♩ = 30	3/4