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NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

Beethoven Forum, a journal devoted to the work, life, and milieu of Ludwig van Beethoven, is published semiannually by the University of Illinois Press.

For matters of style, contributors should refer to this volume of *Beethoven Forum*. Submissions should be double-spaced, with notes following the text, and they should incorporate the abbreviations given at the beginning of this volume. Musical examples require captions that provide titles, measure numbers (in the case of published works), and complete references to the source of sketch material; these should be included on both the examples and a separate page of example captions.

Please submit three copies of the text (no disks until requested) to Stephen Hinton, Editor-in-Chief, *Beethoven Forum*, Department of Music, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-3076.

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Editor's Note

The opening three essays, together with one of the contributions in the Open Forum section of this issue, comprise a mini-symposium on the topic of “Beethoven and Film.” As examples of film–music studies, they represent a subdiscipline within musicology that has grown significantly in recent years. That Beethoven should play a prominent role in this development is not surprising. The “iconicity” of his life and music has fascinated cinematographers and musicologists alike. Movie directors reinterpret the music through pictures, inviting moviegoers to do the same. Scholars, in turn, discover new objects of interpretation; hermeneutics shifts its medium from the verbal to the visual and back again. To study the uses of Beethoven’s music in film is to explore a particular branch of reception history, where traditional images of the composer and his compositions are transmitted and new ones created. “Meanings,” as James Wierzbicki writes, are “invoked and evoked, exploited and imparted.”

Beethoven is a composer, in the words of Robynn Stilwell, “complicated enough to encompass diametrically opposed identities.” For this reason, the four contributions are complementary in their treatment of varying aspects of Beethoven’s image and *œuvre*. Wierzbicki focuses on the Ninth, Stilwell on (among other works) the “Appassionata” Sonata, and Kristi Brown on the “Pathétique.” As part of Open Forum, Michael Beckerman joins the film–music authors to reflect on the movie *Immortal Beloved* in an East Coast–West Coast dialogue. Also in Open Forum, Peter Tregear revisits the Ninth in the context of its performance at a Promenade Concert in London after September 11.

The review by the late John Daverio was one of the last things he wrote before his tragic death last March. John was professor of musicology and chair of the department at Boston University. Renowned as a Schumann scholar, he had just published *Crossing Paths: Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms* (Oxford University Press, 2002). Readers who knew John and are familiar with his writings will appreciate here again, in his review of Klaus Kropfingher’s MGG monograph on Beethoven, his wide-ranging erudition and scholarly passion. As Simon Keefe wrote from Belfast in an email message addressed to colleagues worldwide: “John was also a wonderful man—totally without pretense or ego, completely committed to teaching and to his students (to whom two of his three books are dedicated) and generous to a fault. He will be sorely missed.”

Stephen Hinton

Abbreviations

Literature

Anderson	Emily Anderson, ed., <i>The Letters of Beethoven</i> , 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1961; rpt. New York: Norton, 1985).
Brandenburg	Sieghard Brandenburg, ed., <i>Ludwig van Beethoven: Briefwechsel: Gesamtausgabe</i> , Beethovenhaus edn., 8 vols. (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1996–)
BS I, BS II, BS III	<i>Beethoven Studies</i> , ed. Alan Tyson, vol. 1 (New York: Norton, 1973); vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982)
CB	Karl-Heinz Köhler, Grita Herre, and Dagmar Beck, eds., <i>Ludwig van Beethovens Konversationshefte</i> [= Conversation Books], vols. 1–9 (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1968–88), vols. 10–11 (1993, 2001)
JTW	Douglas Johnson, Alan Tyson, and Robert Winter, <i>The Beethoven Sketchbooks: History, Reconstruction, Inventory</i> , ed. Douglas Johnson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985)
Kerman, <i>Quartets</i>	Joseph Kerman, <i>The Beethoven Quartets</i> (New York: Norton, 1967)
Kinsky-Halm	Georg Kinsky, <i>Das Werk Beethovens: Thematisch-bibliographisches Verzeichnis seiner sämtlichen vollendeten Kompositionen</i> , completed and ed. Hans Halm (Munich and Duisburg: G. Henle, 1955)
MGG	<i>Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik</i> , ed. Friedrich Blume, 17 vols. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1949–86; rev. 2nd edn. Ludwig Finscher, 1994–2000)
N I	Gustav Nottebohm, <i>Beethoveniana</i> (Leipzig and Winterthur: J. Rieter-Biedermann, 1872)

- N II Gustav Nottebohm, *Zweite Beethoveniana: Nachgelassene Aufsätze* (Leipzig: C. F. Peters, 1887)
- N 1865 Gustav Nottebohm, *Ein Skizzenbuch von Beethoven* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1865); Eng. trans. in *Two Beethoven Sketchbooks* (London: Gollancz, 1979), pp. 3–43
- N 1880 Gustav Nottebohm, *Ein Skizzenbuch von Beethoven aus dem Jahre 1803* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1880), Eng. trans. in *Two Beethoven Sketchbooks* (London: Gollancz, 1979), pp. 47–125
- New Grove* *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 20 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1980; 2nd edn. New York: Grove, 2001)
- Schindler (1840) Anton Schindler, *Biographie von Ludwig van Beethoven* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1840); Eng. trans. as *The Life of Beethoven*, ed. I. Moscheles, 2 vols. (London: H. Colburn, 1841)
- Schindler (1860) Anton Schindler, *Biographie von Ludwig van Beethoven*, 2 vols. (3rd edn., Münster: Aschendorff, 1860)
- Schindler–MacArdle Anton Schindler, *Beethoven as I Knew Him*, ed. Donald W. MacArdle, trans. Constance S. Jolly (London: Faber; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966)
- Solomon, *Beethoven* Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven* (New York: Schirmer, 1977; 2nd edn. New York: Schirmer, 1998)
- Solomon, *Essays* Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988)
- TDR I–V Alexander Wheelock Thayer, *Ludwig van Beethovens Leben*, vol. I (rev.) continued by Hermann Deiters (Berlin: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1901); vols. IV–V completed by Hugo Riemann (Leipzig, 1907, 1908), vols. II–III rev. Riemann (Leipzig, 1910, 1911), Deiters's 1901 edn. of vol. I rev. Riemann (Leipzig, 1917); vols. II–V re-issued (Leipzig, 1922–23)
- Thayer I, II, III Alexander Wheelock Thayer, *Ludwig van Beethovens Leben*, 3 vols. (Berlin: F. Schneider, 1866, 1872, 1879)
- Thayer–Forbes *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, rev. and ed. Elliot Forbes, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964)
- Thayer, *Verzeichniss* Alexander Wheelock Thayer, *Chronologisches Verzeichniss der Werke Ludwig van Beethovens* (Berlin: F. Schneider, 1865)
- Wegeler–Ries Franz Gerhard Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries, *Biographische Notizen über Ludwig van Beethoven* (Coblenz: K. Baedeker, 1838), suppl. Wegeler (Coblenz, 1845)

Journals

<i>Acta</i>	<i>Acta Musicologica</i>
AmZ	<i>Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung</i>
BJ	<i>Beethoven-Jahrbuch</i> (1908–1909) and <i>Beethoven-Jahrbuch, Zweite Reihe</i> (1953–)
JAMS	<i>Journal of the American Musicological Society</i>
JM	<i>The Journal of Musicology</i>
ML	<i>Music & Letters</i>
MQ	<i>Musical Quarterly</i>
NBJ	<i>Neues Beethoven-Jahrbuch</i>
I9CM	<i>19th-Century Music</i>

Libraries

BL	British Library, London
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
GDM	Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Vienna
SBK	Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin

Presses and Publishers

(for citations in footnotes)

BH	Beethovenhaus
Cambridge UP	Cambridge University Press
Harvard UP	Harvard University Press
Oxford UP	Oxford University Press
Princeton UP	Princeton University Press
U Nebraska P	University of Nebraska Press
U California P	University of California Press
U Chicago P	University of Chicago Press
Yale UP	Yale University Press

Banality Triumphant: Iconographic Use of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Recent Films

The sublime and the ridiculous are often so nearly related, that it is difficult to class them separately. One step above the sublime makes the ridiculous, and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime again.

—Thomas Paine, *Age of Reason*

James Wierzbicki

Although various works by Beethoven are represented in the two principal anthologies of film-accompaniment music that have survived from the days of the “silent movie,” the Ninth Symphony is not among them.¹ This does not mean, of course, that arrangements of the Ninth Symphony were never heard by the audiences of such films. Max Winkler, the enterprising clerk at the Carl Fischer music publishing company who in 1912 conceived the idea of providing theatrical music directors with a list of suggested cues in advance of a film’s public exhibition, recalled that in order to keep up with demand he and his colleagues turned to crime. “We began to dismember the great masters. We murdered the works of Beethoven, . . . [et al.]—everything that wasn’t protected by copyright from our pilfering.”² The Ninth Symphony certainly was in the public domain, and it is hard to imagine that film accompanists, somewhere along the line, did not make use of it. But performances of public domain music in the context of “silent” film are ephemeral, and even the rare, documented usage resists analysis.³ Likewise resistant, largely because of their similarity to needles that only

1. These are Giuseppe Becce’s *Kinobibliothek*, first published in Berlin in 1919, and Erno Rapée’s *Motion Picture Moods for Pianists and Organists: A Rapid Reference Collection of Selected Pieces, Adapted to 52 Moods and Situations*, first published in New York in 1924. Other popular sources of accompaniments were *The Sam Fox Moving Picture Volumes*, begun in 1913, but these include music entirely by J. S. Zamencnik.

2. Max Winkler, *A Penny from Heaven* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951), cited in Tony Thomas, *Music for the Movies* (South Brunswick: A. S. Barnes, 1973), p. 38.

3. For a summary of the problems involved with such research, see the introductory chapters of Martin Marks, *Music and the Silent Film: Contexts and Case Studies, 1895–1924* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993).

possibly exist in a very large haystack, are references to the Ninth in any of the 6,000 or so feature films produced in Hollywood during the first decade of the “sound era”; although one supposes such references exist, they have yet to come to this writer’s attention.

In any case, it seems that the earliest film from Hollywood’s so-called classical period⁴ to appropriate the Ninth Symphony is Frank Capra’s 1941 *Meet John Doe*, a romance-flavored drama about a washed-up baseball player (played by Gary Cooper) who assumes a false identity for the sake of a newspaper’s circulation drive and in the process becomes the figurehead for a political movement based on the ideas of neighborliness and altruism. By 1941 the system of musicoemotional coding in scores for the “classical” Hollywood film had been well established,⁵ and composer Dmitri Tiomkin holds to the norm with his music for the film’s various romantic scenes and action sequences. Tiomkin’s original music is perfectly serviceable, but more interesting is his use of musical citations to make dramatic points.

Within the narrative itself, the most telling cited music is the tune from the song *Hi-Diddle-Dee-Dee* (*An Actor’s Life for Me*) from Walt Disney’s 1940 animated feature *Pinocchio*—played on an ocarina by John Doe’s hobo partner (Walter Brennan) to remind John Doe that he has engaged in a morally dangerous fiction.⁶ Citations in the nondiegetic score are frequent and for the most part not very subtle in their meaning; during a montage that includes shots of farmers, miners, urbanites, and speeding trains, for example, the audience hears—right on cue—references to *The Farmer in the Dell*, *Clementine*, *The Sidewalks of New York*, and *I’ve Been Working on the Railroad*. In contrast to these and many other instances of imagery serving as the prompt for musical borrowing in the underscore, it is a shift in the narrative flow that triggers the music of Beethoven at the very end of the film.

4. The classical era of cinema is generally defined as the period from ca. 1933 to ca. 1950, that is, from the introduction of the dramatically significant musical score to the beginnings of the dissolution of the “studio system” of production. For the French film theorist André Bazin, whose writings in the 1950s and early 60s defined the notion of classicism, “a level of classical perfection” was reached “by 1938 or 1939.” See André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, trans. Hugh Gray, vol. I (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U California P, 1967), p.30.

5. For discussions of the conventions of “classical” film scoring, see Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987), pp.70–98; and Kathryn Kalinak, *Setting the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Madison: Wisconsin UP, 1992), pp.113–34.

6. With lyrics by Ned Washington and music by Leigh Harline, the song in *Pinocchio* is introduced by the ne’er-do-well characters of the fox and the cat for the purpose of luring the naive title character into abandoning a normal life for the sake of show business. As presented in Disney’s animated feature, the otherwise innocent-sounding song fairly reeks with deception.

With John Doe's well-intended deception having been discovered, he opts for a symbolic suicide on a cold and snowy Christmas Eve; just before he can jump to his death from the observation deck of the newspaper building, the newspaper columnist who instigated the ruse (Barbara Stanwyck) declares her love for him and reminds him that his death is unnecessary. "Someone already died for this once," she says. "The first 'John Doe.' And He's kept that idea alive for nearly two thousand years." Thus wrapped warmly not just in the arms of a woman but also in Christian ideology, the redeemed title character grows teary-eyed as a jangle of distant church bells drifts into the soundtrack; as John Doe and the columnist walk away from the parapet, the underscore swells up in a wordless choral-orchestral arrangement of the second half of the "Ode to Joy" melody.⁷

Brief as it is, this quotation is potentially meaningful on a number of levels. In the first place, although the Beethoven fragment is clearly an example of musical iconography, it is capable of delivering an unambiguous emotional message even to those audience members on whom its symbolism might be completely lost. As presented here—in this quotidian musical setting and in this clichéd dramatic context—the music sounds neither monumental nor sublime. The music, in both affect and effect, is simply joyous. It signals the film's predictably happy ending,⁸ and one suspects that the semiotic task could have been accomplished just as well by almost any peppy material brightly scored and written in a major key.

Of course, this is not just *any* material. It is an obvious reference to music that in 1941 was likely to have been familiar to at least a significant percentage of the film's audience. Whether the familiarity sprang from the concert hall, radio broadcasts, or the church, savvy listeners would associate the melody with a title whose words precisely identify the emotion conveyed by the narrative at the moment the music is introduced. On this level of signification, another tune—"Joy to the World," perhaps—might have accomplished the same effect. But such a tune would lack the deep semiotic resonance of the tune that Tiomkin, with Capra's obvious ap-

7. A full cadence, rubato, accompanies the on-screen appearance of the words "The End." The quotation from the "Ode to Joy," however, is not the film's final music. For the lighthearted medley that plays during the credit roll, Tiomkin uses material from *The Beer Barrel Polka*, Stephen Foster's *Oh, Susanna*, and—presumably in a gesture that reminds the audience of John Doe's origins—Albert von Tilzer's 1908 song *Take Me Out to the Ball Game*.

8. In the film's original form, the ending—in which John Doe makes good on his suicide threat—would have been neither happy nor predictable. According to Tiomkin in his autobiography, Capra changed the ending because he did not think a pessimistic message would be appropriate for a nation that seemed on the brink of entering World War II. Dmitri Tiomkin and Prosper Buranelli, *Please Don't Hate Me* (New York: Doubleday, 1959), pp.207–08.

proval, actually did employ.⁹ Again, it is not just any up-beat material that is used here, nor is it just any well-known tune whose concomitant text makes explicit reference to joy; it is a direct quotation of the melody that Beethoven used in 1824 for his setting of Schiller's poem and that was later adapted for a Christian hymn, liturgically associated with the Easter season, titled "Joyful, Joyful."¹⁰

To be sure, in 1941 only that small minority of moviegoers who also spent time in the concert hall and carefully studied their program booklets would have associated the melody with an aged German text that addresses the concept not only of joy but also of universal brotherhood. But to Capra, sophisticates capable of articulating their thoughts in one form or another—especially those sophisticates charged with penning film reviews—formed a target audience every bit as important as the hoi polloi. Like other of Capra's better-known films from the 1930s and 40s,¹¹ *Meet John Doe* contains not just a story but also a liberal-minded social commentary.¹² Within the narrative, the "John Doe" movement that gains new life at the end of the story is originally sponsored by a Fascist newspaper mogul for

9. For the film's original ending, Tiomkin planned to have the "Ode to Joy" quotation—which for him represented "an idealist expression of hope for mankind"—preceded by a choral-symphonic arrangement of *Deep River*. After Capra changed the ending, only the "Ode to Joy" was retained. Tiomkin and Buranelli, *Please Don't Hate Me*, pp.207–08.

10. The "Joyful, Joyful" hymnic treatment of the "Ode to Joy" music is commonly attributed to the American church leader and United States Navy chaplain Henry van Dyke. Van Dyke's 1907 text (first published in 1911 in the *Presbyterian Hymnal*), however, is actually a variation on an "Ode to Joy"-based hymn devised in 1846 by the English organist and choirmaster Edward Hodges on the occasion of his appointment to the directorship of music at Trinity Church in New York City. The van Dyke/Hodges hymn begins with the lines: "Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee, God of glory, God of love; Hearts unfold like flow'rs before Thee, op'ning to the sun above." While this adaptation of the "Ode to Joy" melody remains the most familiar to American churchgoers today, other texts exist. An early treatment by William J. Irons (1812–83), for example, begins with the words "Sing with all the saints in glory, sing the resurrection song . . ."; recent treatments by Kevin Ford and Gerald E. Hoyer, both from 1997, begin with the lines: "From the realms of unseen glory, Jesus came to earth below . . ." and "God of glory, God of power, mighty and eternal One . . .," respectively.

11. These include *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), *Lost Horizon* (1938), *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), and *State of the Union* (1948).

12. The sincerity of Capra's politics has not gone unquestioned. Film critic Andrew Sarris wrote that "with *Meet John Doe*" the director "crossed the thin line between populist sentimentality and populist demagoguery. . . . [The John Doe character] embodied in Gary Cooper a barefoot Fascist, suspicious of all ideas and all doctrines, but believing in the innate conformism of the common man" (Andrew Sarris, *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions, 1929–1968* [New York: E. P. Dutton, 1968], p.87).

the purpose of political as well as commercial gain;¹³ that the movement takes hold with the public, to an extent that it seriously threatens what is depicted as a repressive status quo, is due precisely to its dedication to the idea—stated explicitly in the text for the portion of the “Ode to Joy” melody Tiomkin chose to quote—that “alle Menschen werden Brüder.”

In her illuminating essay on nineteenth-century critical readings of the Ninth Symphony, Ruth A. Solie explains that exegeses of the work fall into four basic categories—“search narratives, creation myths, accounts that interpret the piece as autobiographical . . . and those that content themselves with more general assessments of moral instruction.” But in the long run, Solie contends, virtually all of the interpretations fit into the fourth category; however different they may be in detail, they all “reflect ideological commitments of one sort or another, and these are overwhelmingly of a moral or religious nature.”¹⁴ The interpretations are especially moral and religious in English-speaking countries, where a singing translation by Natalia Macfarren downplayed the text’s arguably paganistic celebration of unbridled joy at the expense of a Christian emphasis on the concepts of brotherhood and love.¹⁵

Beethoven’s magnum opus was not without its formalistic quibblers, of course, and even among the Germans there were naysayers who called particular attention to what they heard as a “monstrous and tasteless” finale.¹⁶ But the consensus of nineteenth-century opinion, as Solie points out, had it that the Ninth was a masterpiece whose extramusical content was entirely noble. This stamp of moralistic approval—a reflection of the nineteenth century’s prevailing “religious, philosophical, and political ideologies”—played a huge role in shaping “future perceptions of the piece and its place in the canon.”¹⁷ Thanks in large part to the efforts

13. At least in his politics and methodology, the villain in *Meet John Doe* bears a resemblance to the newspaper publisher described in Orson Welles’s *Citizen Kane*. *Citizen Kane* is a thinly veiled gloss on the career of William Randolph Hearst, and perhaps it is not simply coincidence that both films date from 1941.

14. Ruth A. Solie, “Beethoven as Secular Humanist: Ideology and the Ninth Symphony in Nineteenth-Century Criticism,” in *Explorations in Music, the Arts, and Ideas: Essays in Honor of Leonard B. Meyer*, ed. Eugene Narmour and Ruth A. Solie (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1988), pp. 16–17.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 34–35.

16. The quoted words belong to Ludwig Spohr, as cited in Richard Taruskin, “Resisting the Ninth,” *19CM* 12 (1989), 246. Similarly colorful condemnations of the finale of the Ninth Symphony can be found in Robin Wallace, *Beethoven’s Critics: Aesthetic Dilemmas and Resolutions during the Composer’s Lifetime* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986).

17. Solie, “Beethoven as Secular Humanist,” p. 3.

of Arturo Toscanini, the Ninth Symphony's place in the canon was solidified in the United States in the early decades of the twentieth century,¹⁸ and American perceptions of the work's "meaning" were in keeping with the still-echoing pronouncements of the nineteenth-century European establishment. The uplifting essence of these dicta is encapsulated in the citation at the end of *Meet John Doe*. It is a fleeting reference, yet the appropriation of the Ninth Symphony at the end of the Capra film sends an irrefutably positive message.

Extended references to the same piece of music send a starkly different message in Stanley Kubrick's 1971 *A Clockwork Orange*. At least in terms of its linear flow and basic plot elements, Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* is a fairly literal treatment of the same-titled 1962 novel by Anthony Burgess, which depicts a futuristic society in which youth gangs run rampant and in which the government at least considers chemically induced mind-control to be a viable method of criminal rehabilitation. Graphic in its violence and arguably pornographic in its sex scenes, the film tells the story of a sadistic teenager named Alex (Malcolm McDowell) who gets caught in the act of rape/murder and who, after being sent to prison, volunteers for an experimental rehabilitation program in order to have his sentence cut short. The therapy apparently works, and Alex is transformed into what the officials consider to be a model citizen. Stripped of his violent tendencies, Alex on his release is unable to defend himself against physical attacks; more significant, he is vulnerable to a peculiar form of torture devised by one of his former victims. This torture drives him to attempt suicide, and during his long recuperation he gradually recovers not just from his injuries but also from the brainwashing. As the film ends, the glint in the protagonist's eye suggests the resurrection of raw evil.¹⁹

There is nothing at all joyful about *A Clockwork Orange*, yet the Ninth Symphony—and in particular the "Ode to Joy"—is the film's dominant musical icon. (My concern here is with the film, not the novel. Although Alex's passion for classical music in general is a constant theme in Burgess's novel, the Ninth Symphony

18. The Ninth was the work Toscanini chose for his first symphonic concert in New York (with the Metropolitan Opera orchestra) in 1913. In 1926 Toscanini led the Ninth on the second of the two programs that marked his debut engagements with the New York Philharmonic, and a year later the Ninth was featured on Toscanini's first broadcast for the NBC radio network. For details, see Joseph Horowitz, *Understanding Toscanini: How He Became an American Culture-God and Helped Create a New Audience for Old Music* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1987), pp. 59–60 and 102–03.

19. Kubrick based his film on the first American edition of the novel, which contained only twenty of the novel's twenty-one chapters. The concluding chapter of the original version of the novel has Alex starting to mature and contemplating the idea of marriage and fatherhood.

is privileged not nearly so much as it is in Kubrick's film. The synopsis that follows refers exclusively to the film; detailed comparisons between the film and the novel, vis-à-vis the use of music, are offered in footnotes.²⁰⁾

Beethoven's music is first heard within the narrative itself, sung without accompaniment in German by a celebrity soprano in the milk bar where Alex and his cohort seek refreshment after gang-raping a woman and beating her husband nearly to death.²¹ In a first-person, past-tense monologue superimposed over the milk bar's ambient noise, Alex identifies the excerpt as one of his favorite passages from the magnificent Ninth Symphony of his beloved "Ludwig van."²²

The next scene shows Alex returning home in the early morning.²³ Once settled in the apartment he shares with his parents, Alex places a cassette recording of the Ninth Symphony in a tape player and retreats to the bathroom.²⁴ As the second movement blares, Alex positions himself before a portrait of Beethoven and masturbates. Along with close-ups of Alex's blissful face, the visual components of the scene include a collage of violent images—in some cases edited to coincide precisely with the music's downbeats—that focus on details of a bathroom sculpture depicting multiple comically posed versions of the scourged Christ; along with the propulsive scherzo, the audio components of the masturbation scene include a monologue that seems to reference Nietzsche.²⁵ The Beethoven music continues

20. In the comparative notes that follow, page citations are to Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986).

21. The doorbell of the victims' house chimes the opening motif of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in C Minor; as the masked Alex repeatedly kicks the husband in the ribs, he sings Arthur Freed and Nacio Herb Brown's *Singin' in the Rain*, à la the version made famous by Gene Kelly as the title song for the 1952 film.

22. In the novel, the excerpt that Alex recognizes is from the fictitious "opera by Friedrich Gitterfenster called *Das Bettzeug*" (p.27).

23. The scene is accompanied by an electronic realization of the slow march from Purcell's *Funeral Music for Queen Mary*; Alex whistles the theme as he enters the elevator, but otherwise the music seems to be nondiegetic. Arrangements of the same Purcell music accompany the film's opening credits, and later the scene in which Alex's lack of response to an enticing woman demonstrates that his "cure" has been a success.

24. In the novel, Alex indulges himself first with a fictitious "new violin concerto by the American Geoffrey Plautus" (p.32), then Mozart's "Jupiter" Symphony (p.33), then finally with an unspecified Brandenburg Concerto of J. S. Bach (p.34).

25. Apparently speaking from some point in the future, Alex in the film says that the experience was "gorgeous and gorgeosity made flesh. It was like a bird of rarest spun heaven metal, or like silvery wine flowing in a spaceship, gravity all nonsense now." Nietzsche uses similar imagery in one of his homages to the Ninth Symphony: "At a certain place in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, [the listener] might feel that he is floating above the earth in a starry dome, with the dream of immortal-

as Alex goes to sleep and then feigns illness when his mother tries to awaken him for school, and it continues too as Alex hours later crawls out of bed; the music abruptly stops—on a half cadence—only when Alex unexpectedly encounters a guidance counselor who had been waiting in the apartment’s living room.

Immediately after his chat with the counselor, Alex browses in a record shop.²⁶ The fast-paced orgy in which Alex engages with two young women he meets at the record shop is accompanied nondiegetically by a high-speed electronic arrangement²⁷ of the “Lone Ranger” section from Rossini’s *Guillaume Tell* overture.²⁸ But the music that underscores Alex’s proposition to the women is clearly part of the narrative; to the detriment of the conversation between Alex and the women, it pours from loudspeakers in the record shop, and it is a treatment of the Janissary segment of the Ninth Symphony’s finale²⁹ in which not only the instrumental parts but also the vocal parts are garishly synthesized.³⁰

Over the ensuing forty minutes music by composers other than Beethoven wafts in and out of the soundtrack. The overture to Rossini’s opera *La gazza ladra*, in a conventional reading, sounds prominently as Alex bullies the members of his gang³¹

ity in his heart; all the stars seem to glimmer around him, and the earth seems to sink ever deeper downwards” (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. Marion Faber, with Stephen Lehmann [Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1984], p. 106 [orig., *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, 1876–79]).

In the novel, Alex delivers a slightly different version of the soliloquy; it is prompted not by the Ninth Symphony, but by the above-noted fictitious violin concert (p. 33).

26. In the novel, Alex listens to a fictitious “string quartet . . . by Claudius Birdman” (p. 41) before going out. At the record shop, he seeks out a new recording of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony (p. 42).

27. The electronic arrangements of standard orchestral music heard in *A Clockwork Orange*, as well as the segments of original electronic music, are the work of Walter (subsequently Wendy) Carlos.

28. In the novel, the orgy—a rape of two ten-year-old girls, actually—is accompanied by repeated playings, from Alex’s newly purchased recording, of the finale of the Ninth Symphony (pp. 46–47).

29. In the novel, it is pop music that emanates from the record shop’s loudspeakers (p. 43).

30. Carlos hit on the idea of synthesizing not just the instrumental parts but also the vocal parts of the Ninth Symphony’s fourth movement before he read the Burgess novel and before he was contracted by director Kubrick to provide the score for *A Clockwork Orange*. The results of Carlos’s experiments with voice synthesis are featured in an extended composition titled *Timesteps*, only portions of which were used in the film. See Chris Twomey, “Wendy Carlos—Still Switched On,” in *Exclaim*, Dec. 1998 / Jan. 1999; available from <http://www.wendycarlos.com/twomey.html>; Internet; accessed 10 February 2003.

31. In the novel, Alex hears a fragment of Beethoven’s Violin Concerto emanating from a car radio just before he sets on the gang members (p. 53).

and then leads them in an attack on the home of the proprietress of a health spa;³² the Rossini music continues as Alex breaks into the home and bashes in the owner's head with a phallic sculpture,³³ and it ends—in an audio cross-fade with Klaxon sirens—when the police arrive. Arrested³⁴ and then sentenced to a long prison term, Alex wangles a job as research assistant for the institutional chaplain; during a worship service Alex dutifully sings the hymn *I Was a Wandering Sheep*, but during his library work he enjoys a fantasy—propelled by Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*—about torturing Christ.³⁵ After Alex volunteers for the rehabilitation program, the first march from Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance* is heard as wardens inspect Alex's cell;³⁶ as Alex is transferred to the medical facility, the film's audience hears the fourth march from the same Elgar set.

The Ninth Symphony of Beethoven plays an accidental but nonetheless pivotal role in Alex's experience with the ironically named Ludovico treatment. Based on the idea of negative association, the psychopharmaceutical "aversion therapy" involves injecting the patient with nauseating drugs while forcing him to watch films that depict severely antisocial acts. Alex's initial round of treatment is underscored by ominous nondiegetic electronic music. The next day, Alex's second round of treatment culminates in his viewing a vintage Nazi propaganda film. Whereas the films to which Alex was previously exposed featured only the realistic noises

32. The same Rossini music is heard early in the film when Alex and company stumble across an in-progress gang rape; they put a stop to the rape, but only so they can have the opportunity to brawl with the perpetrators.

33. In the novel, Alex attacks the woman with a silver sculpture, but he notices that the sculpture collection includes a bust of Beethoven (pp.62–63). In the film, the woman tries to defend herself with the bust of Beethoven.

34. In the novel, Alex after his arrest has a dream in which he hears a version of the "Ode to Joy" in which the text is corrupted to describe his own situation (pp.73–74).

35. In the novel, Alex's fantasy about the crucifixion is accompanied by "bits of lovely Bach" (p.79). An earlier fantasy, about Hebrew men having sex with their wives' handmaidens, is accompanied by "slooshy holy music by J. S. Bach and G. F. Handel" (p.79), and, after participating in the brutal beating of another inmate, Alex has a dream in which unidentified orchestral music is conducted by a "mixture of Ludwig van and G. F. Handel" (p.89). During a chapel service the inmates sing a hymn with the words "Weak tea are we, new brewed / But stirring make all strong. / We eat no angel's food, / Our times of trial are long"; the service's exit music, chosen by Alex, is a fictitious "Symphony No.2 by Adrian Schweigselber" (p.80). Still another chapel service has Alex playing a recording of Bach's *Wachet auf* chorale prelude (p.83).

36. Although it seems not to matter to the plot, one of the wardens takes note of the portrait of Beethoven that hangs over Alex's washbasin.

of screaming victims and fists smashing on victims' faces,³⁷ the film that glorifies Nazi atrocities comes with a musical soundtrack;³⁸ Alex is horrified when he realizes that the potent chemicals are inducing a revulsive response not only to grisly scenes from concentration camps but also to music that he dearly loves. "It's a sin!" he bellows in a futile attempt to drown out the Ninth Symphony's jangly march.³⁹ To which one of the supervising psychiatrists responds: "Are you referring to the background score? You've heard Beethoven before? So you're keen on music?" Quite aware of what is transpiring, the psychiatrist who designed the experiment mutters to his colleague that it "can't be helped."⁴⁰

Unfortunately for Alex, the publicity generated by his release from prison mentions this unplanned musical side effect of the Ludovico treatment. Vengefully beaten by a pair of his former gang members who now serve as police officers, Alex seeks shelter at the very home where early in the film he led the brutal gang rape. The owner of the home, a writer, recognizes Alex;⁴¹ on questioning, the writer and some

37. The novel suggests that music is featured in virtually all the films to which Alex is exposed. Of the initial therapy session, in any case, Alex says that "all the time the music bumped out, very like sinister" (p. 102), and later he describes the accompaniment for a film in the same session as "very pathetic and tragic music" (p. 103).

38. In the novel, the music that accompanies the film of Nazi atrocities is the last movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (p. 113).

39. The music is clearly supposed to be diegetic, yet what the audience hears during this scene is probably *not* what Alex hears within the film's narrative. Instead of a scratchy orchestral-choral recording technologically consistent with the Nazi propaganda footage, the soundtrack for *A Clockwork Orange* at this point features the same synthesized arrangement that accompanied the scene in the record shop.

40. In the novel, Alex's remarks to the doctors indeed have to do solely with Beethoven. The doctors' response to Alex's protest, however, clearly indicates that they are aware that Alex has been negatively conditioned against music in general. The relevant passage is: "'Music,' said Dr. Brodsky, like music. 'So you're keen on music. I know nothing about it myself. It's a useful emotional heightener, that's all I know. Well, well. What do you think about that, eh, Branom?'" "It can't be helped," said Dr. Branom. "Each man kills the thing he loves, as the poet-prisoner said. Here's the punishment element, perhaps. The Governor ought to be pleased'" (pp. 113–14). Although Alex complains to the doctors that "it's not fair I should feel ill when I'm slooshying lovely Ludwig van and G. F. Handel and others" (p. 115), he apparently does not realize the extent to which he has been conditioned. On his release he looks forward to "a quiet think on the bed to the sound of lovely music" (p. 133). A short while later, he visits a record shop and asks to hear a recording of Mozart's Symphony No. 40; the clerk brings him the "Prague" Symphony instead, and while listening to it Alex—as he did during the therapy sessions—becomes violently ill (pp. 138–39).

41. Alex is recognized as the recipient of the Ludovico treatment because his picture has appeared in all the newspapers. He is recognized as the rapist not by his appearance but by his voice; as Alex bathes, he lapses into a vigorous rendition of *Singin' in the Rain*, the song he sang during the assault.

accomplices learn that it is not *all* music against which Alex has been conditioned but only a certain work of Beethoven.⁴² Taking his cue, the writer locks Alex in an attic room and subjects him to loudly played recordings of what Alex describes in his monologue as “the dreaded Ninth Symphony.”⁴³ When Alex can stand it no longer, he hopefully leaps out the window. To Alex’s surprise, he is not killed by his plunge to a stone-paved patio; instead, his broken body becomes the *cause célèbre* of liberals who feel the Ludovico treatment is an outrageous violation of free will. Succumbing to political pressure, the government minister who first sanctioned the brainwash fawns over the convalescing Alex and brings him—along with many other gifts—a stereo set. Alex’s body still needs mending, but by this time his mind is apparently back to normal, and Alex seems to know exactly what he is going to do as soon he gets out of the hospital; he smirks devilishly as the stereo set is wheeled into his hospital room, for playing on it is the concluding section of the Ninth Symphony.⁴⁴

The meanings that can be attached to the brief reference to the Ninth Symphony at the end of *Meet John Doe* form a paradigm of exegetical readings by nineteenth-century commentators. But how do we interpret the many and varied quotations

42. In the novel, it is clear that Alex has been conditioned by *all* classical music, not just Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. The writer is aware of this before he recognizes Alex; his knowledge comes not from a newspaper article but from Alex’s account of the therapy sessions (p.156). Beethoven’s Ninth comes into the conversation, but only in a remark that Alex makes after learning that the writer wishes to tell Alex’s story in an antigovernment tract. Alex asks: “And what do I get out of this? Do I get cured of the way I am? Do I find myself able to slooshy the old Choral Symphony without being sick once more?” (p.161).

43. It is only the scherzo—in a standard orchestral version that transitions into a macabre electronic arrangement—that is heard during the torture scene, but the audience can presume that Alex has been exposed repeatedly to the entirety of the Ninth Symphony. In the novel, the music used for the torture is not Beethoven’s Ninth but the fictitious “Symphony Number Three of the Danish veck Otto Skadelig” (p.167).

44. The music is heard in a standard orchestral-choral recording. In the novel, Alex is asked to choose the music he wishes to hear; in one of the few instances in which musical references in the film and the novel are in agreement, his choice is “the glorious Ninth of Ludwig van” (pp.178–79).

As noted above, the film is based on the first twenty of the novel’s original twenty-one chapters. In the concluding chapter of the novel’s original version, Alex develops a taste for “romantic songs, what they call *Lieder*, . . . very quiet and yearny, different from when it had been all bolsly orchestras and me lying on the bed between the violins and the trombones and the kettledrums” (p.186). Alex, by this time eighteen years old, also observes that by the same age “Wolfgang Amadeus had written concertos and symphonies and operas and oratorios” and that Mendelssohn had produced “his *Midsummer Night’s Dream Overture*” (p.189).

from the Ninth in *A Clockwork Orange*? The easily decoded symbol in the 1941 film is an orchestral-choral paraphrase that lasts but a few seconds; the problematic musical symbol in the 1971 film is found in no less than six different scenes, some of which feature unadulterated excerpts that extend for several minutes. A film about the unintended effects of mind-control experiments could efficiently use a different piece of music, or an altogether different sort of stimulus (colors, tastes, aromas), for its “accidental” element. Why, one has to wonder, does film director Kubrick, much more so than did novelist Burgess, focus so much attention on the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven?

Early in his essay on references to the Ninth in twentieth-century fiction, literary critic Jean-Pierre Barricelli writes that the use of this music in the Burgess novel (and in Alejo Carpentier’s *Los pasos perdidos*) is “outwardly imposed and arbitrary,” an example of the “modernist tendency to take bulwarks of our culture” and somehow employ them “directly to point up Western moral bankruptcy or indirectly to question Western achievement.”⁴⁵ Barricelli is discussing the novel, not the film, and thus he exaggerates when he suggests that the Ninth in particular is so utilized by Burgess; while the Ninth Symphony indeed figures into the narrative more often than any other composition,⁴⁶ surely in the novel it is the idea of a violent sociopath who loves classical music *in general* that serves as the metaphor for moral corruption. Nevertheless, the literary technique identified by Barricelli merits attention, and it can be considered as much in relation to Kubrick’s screenplay as to Burgess’s novel. It is a simple technique, Barricelli says, and he terms it “grotesque juxtaposition.”⁴⁷

If it were simply a matter of “grotesque juxtaposition,” however, other representatives of Western culture could serve the narrative needs of a story such as that of *A Clockwork Orange*. After all, neither in the film nor in the novel is the story *per se* about music. Burgess felt that the film blunted the main point of his literary effort, not because of anything having to do with Beethoven but because with its cynical ending the film ignored “the possibility of moral transformation” contained

45. Jean-Pierre Barricelli, “Beethovenian Overlays by Carpentier and Burgess: The Ninth in Grotesque Juxtapositions,” in *Melopoiesis: Approaches to the Study of Literature and Music* (New York: New York UP, 1988), p. 140.

46. As noted above, in the novel the Ninth Symphony is referenced five times: as the recording Alex has ordered at the record shop; as the accompaniment to Alex’s rape of the girls he has met at the record shop; as an element of a dream Alex has in prison; as an example that Alex cites when he asks if he will eventually be “cured”; and as the music he requests and listens to when, at the end of the novel’s penultimate chapter, his “cure” is apparently effected.

47. Barricelli, “Beethovenian Overlays,” p. 140.

in the novel's final chapter;⁴⁸ Barricelli's synopsis of the novel—as a tale “whose dystopian vision centers around politics (the authoritarian socialism of future society) . . . and morality (actually the immorality of the curtailment of freedom of choice)”⁴⁹—could apply just as well to the film. Granting that a film, with its capacity both to juxtapose and to overlay contrasting elements, might require a cultural icon that is expressed aurally, it would seem that the icon for a story of “transformation” and “dystopian vision” might just as easily be a different work of Beethoven,⁵⁰ or a revered masterpiece by any other composer, or—to move outside the musical envelope—a soliloquy from Shakespeare or a poem by Wordsworth.

Of course, even for the musically ill-educated, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony belongs to the short list of Great Works, and thus it is perfectly reasonable that both Burgess and Kubrick would choose this piece, from a multitude of possibilities, to “symbolize the values of Western culture, which [their] plot places in jeopardy.”⁵¹ But plotted in the way that it is, *A Clockwork Orange* demands a symbol that communicates something rather more specific than simply the values of Western culture, and in the case of the soundtrack-dependent film it is crucial that this richly communicative symbol be aural. Consider the canon: How many of the initiates to this pantheon not only count as popularly acknowledged masterpieces but also deal simultaneously with issues of politics, morality, joy, and—as some would argue—violent sexuality?⁵²

Maynard Solomon suggests that it is precisely its combination of masterpiece

48. Anthony Burgess, “Introduction: *A Clockwork Orange* Resucked,” preface to the above-noted edition of *A Clockwork Orange*, p.viii.

49. Barricelli, “Beethovenian Overlays,” p.149.

50. In an essay on filmic citations of Beethoven's late string quartets, Christopher Reynolds observes that “literature in the nineteenth century and film in the twentieth have frequently turned to Beethoven when the context suggests violence, or sexual aggression.” Along with the many turbulent passages from the piano sonatas included in the silent film anthologies, he notes the eponymous “Kreutzer” Sonata of the 1889 Tolstoy short story and the purely visual reference to the *Eroica* Symphony—when the camera lingers over the recording on the phonograph in the title character's room—at the end of Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 *Psycho*. Christopher Reynolds, “From Berlioz's Fugitives to Godard's Terrorists: Artistic Responses to Beethoven's Late Quartets,” *Beethoven Forum* 8 (2000), 157.

51. Bruno Nettl, “Mozart and the Ethnomusicological Study of Western Culture,” in *Disciplining Music: Musicology and Its Canons*, ed. Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1992), p.149.

52. For an analysis of the Ninth as a phallic symbol, see Susan McClary, “Getting Down Off the Beanstalk,” in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1991), pp.128–29. For support for this archly feminist point of view, see Marcia J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), pp.223–24.

status and extramusical associations that has turned the Ninth Symphony, for some, into a “model of affirmative culture, a culture that by its beauty and idealism . . . anaesthetizes the anguish and the terror of modern life, thereby standing in the way of a realistic perception of society.”⁵³ To help make his point, Solomon cites the critical theorist Herbert Marcuse, who, writing after the publication of the Burgess novel but before the release of the Kubrick film, observed: “Today’s rebels against the established culture also rebel against the beautiful in this culture, against its all too sublimated, segregated, orderly, harmonizing forms. . . . The refusal now hits the chorus which sings the ‘Ode to Joy,’ the song which is invalidated in the culture that sings it.”⁵⁴ As Burgess demonstrates, a large number of musical compositions—some real, some fictitious—can collectively represent one of the novel’s themes. But for Kubrick, only the “Ode to Joy”—and the entire symphony that encompasses it—can singularly serve a wide range of the film’s narrative needs. And surely it is not its musical content alone—“rich in dissonances that only the professional ear can detect, but filled also with as many untapped, infinite (so it seems) harmonies”⁵⁵—that makes the Ninth uniquely appropriate for the filmed version of *A Clockwork Orange*.

Anti-Fascist politics, Judeo-Christian morality, and the purest forms of joy—romantic as well as spiritual—are the triple themes of Capra’s 1941 *Meet John Doe*, and composer Dmitri Tiomkin cleverly conveyed all three ideas with his citation of the “Ode to Joy” in his underscore for the film’s final seconds. Taking his cue from the Burgess novel, Kubrick thirty years later used the “Ode to Joy” and other sections of the Ninth Symphony to subvert this symbolic triad. If associations triggered by the brief nondiegetic reference at the end of *Meet John Doe* can be said to form a paradigm for the Ninth Symphony’s traditionally positive message, it would seem that the knotty web of meaning spun out by repeated and lengthy treatments of the Ninth Symphony within the narrative of *A Clockwork Orange* represents that paradigm’s polar opposite.

Near the end of Hans-Jürgen Syberberg’s 1977 *Hitler, Ein Film aus Deutschland*, after the tale has been told, the camera’s vision settles on a young girl unrelated to the narrative; she wears a shroud of celluloid motion-picture film, and—in a filmic gesture that Caryl Flinn suggests might be interpreted as “a sign of hope for post-

53. Solomon, *Beethoven*, p.411.

54. Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp.46–47.

55. Robert K. Morris, *The Consolations of Ambiguity* (Columbia, Mo.: U Missouri P, 1971), p.69. Quoted in Barricelli, “Beethovenian Overlays,” p.149.

war German culture”⁵⁶—her appearance is accompanied nondiegetically by the choral-orchestral finale of the Ninth Symphony. In the opening scene of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 1979 *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, the titular wedding ceremony is accompanied by the sounds of screams, bombs, and—apparently emanating from a radio—the Adagio movement of the Ninth Symphony; barely audible, and “mixed with enough other sounds so as to be very nearly drowned out entirely,”⁵⁷ the Beethoven music continues into the next scene, during which a radio announcer identifies the composition and then goes on to list German soldiers who, like Maria Braun's husband, are missing in action. In Alexander Kluge's *Die Patriotin*, also from 1979, the central character is a professor of history who naively attempts to put a patriotic “spin” on the documentable facts of World War II; toward the end of the film, as the professor celebrates New Year's Eve with her female friends, the radio offers the finale of the Ninth Symphony, which inspires the guests to join in with a “thoroughly deprofessionalized” and “drunken kitchen reading of Schiller, . . . a karaoke singalong to scratchy, prerecorded accompaniment.”⁵⁸

In Ingmar Bergman's 1950 *Till glädje* (To Joy), the bitter story of the dissolving marriage of two musicians is told, largely by means of flashbacks, within the context of a rehearsal of the Ninth Symphony. In the opening segment of Polish director Wojciech J. Has's narratologically cryptic 1965 *Rekopis znaleziony w Saragossie* (The Saragossa Manuscript), composer Krzysztof Penderecki sets the Napoleonic-era scene with a pastiche whose stylistic sources range from the High Baroque to late Classicism; the only direct citation—actually, a “quasi-quotation” arranged for chamber orchestra⁵⁹—points to the “Ode to Joy.” In the final moments of Soviet director Andre Tarkovsky's grim 1979 science-fiction film *The Stalker*, after it has been clearly established that in the depicted futuristic world there

56. Caryl Flinn, “Strategies of Remembrance: Music and History in the New German Cinema,” in *Music and Cinema*, ed. James Buhler, Caryl Flinn, and David Neumeyer (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan UP, 2000), pp. 125–26.

57. Ibid., pp. 126–27. For more commentary on the use of Beethoven's music in this film, see Roger Hillman, “Narrative, Sound, and Film: Fassbinder's *The Marriage of Maria Braun*,” in *Fields of Vision: Essays in Film Studies, Visual Anthropology, and Photography*, ed. Leslie Devereaux and Roger Hillman (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U California P, 1995), pp. 181–95.

58. Flinn, “Strategies of Remembrance,” p. 123. For more commentary on use of music in the Kluge film, see Roger Hillman, “Beethoven, Mahler, and the New German Cinema,” *Musicology Australia* 20 (1997); and Martin Hufner, “Composing for the Films (1947): Adorno, Eisler, and the Sociology of Music,” in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* (Oct. 1998).

59. Ewa Siemdzaj, cited in “*The Saragossa Manuscript*” *Virtual Class: The Music* (Houston, Tx.: Rice University, 2000, accessed 24 March 2002); available from <http://www.owl.net.rice.edu/~slav412/music.htm>; Internet.

is little reason for hope of any kind, the mutant daughter of the protagonist recites a poem, exercises her telekinetic powers for a moment, and then lays her head on a table; as a train rumbles past, buried in the noise is the sound of a scratchy recording of a choral-orchestral version of the “Ode to Joy.” In the same director’s 1983 *Nostalghia* (Nostalgia), which tells the story of a Russian poet who travels to Italy to research the life of a seventeenth-century Russian composer, the “Ode to Joy” ironically underscores the scene near the end of the film during which an insane mathematician burns himself to death in front of his neighbors.⁶⁰

To be sure, these are provocative filmic uses of music from the Ninth Symphony, and their multiple layers of symbolism will doubtless sooner or later be peeled away by scholars of hermeneutic persuasion. But the concern here is not with arguably profound citations of the Ninth in relatively obscure examples of the so-called art cinema of Eastern Europe; rather, the concern is with appropriations of the Ninth Symphony in films that in recent years have flowed freely through the mainstream of contemporary American popular culture.⁶¹

All but one of the films discussed below date from the 1980s and 90s. Not all of them are in fact products of Hollywood, but all of them (including the British *Help!* and the Taiwanese *Eat, Drink, Man, Woman*) are Hollywood-like in their commercial circumstances. Unlike the German, Polish, and Soviet films mentioned above, none of them benefited from government subsidy; however artistic their content might be, they were created not so much for the sake of making an artistic statement as for the sake of making a profit. Their target audience, in other words, is not the sophisticate for whom Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony is obviously rich with meaning; rather, the target audience is the average moviegoer for whom an allusion to Beethoven might somehow—if anything—“ring a bell.”

Consider the following:

- In the Beatles’ 1965 comic film *Help!*, the rock group’s drummer—who wears on his finger a ring desperately sought by an exotic cult—finds himself trapped in the cellar of a London pub. An apparently ferocious tiger blocks the only route of escape. “Don’t worry,” says the Scotland Yard detective who observes the situation through a trapdoor. “He’s absolutely harmless. All you have to do is sing Beethoven’s ‘Ode to Joy’ from the famous Ninth Symphony in D Mi-

60. *Nostalghia* was filmed in Italy, and its dialogue is in Italian. No composer is credited, but the “music consultant” was Gino Peguri.

61. For an alphabetical but hardly exhaustive list of films that make use of works from the so-called classical music repertoire, see Benjamin Chee’s “Classics from the Silver Screen,” available at <http://home2.pacific.net.sg/~bchee/movies.html>. The same material, as it becomes updated, can also be viewed at Pierre R. Schwob’s “The Classical Music Archives,” available at <http://www.classicalarchives.com/movies/movie1.html>.

nor. Rajah is a gift from the Berlin Zoo. He was reared on the classics." Echoing the advice, John Lennon says: "Don't worry. All you have to do is whistle famous Beethoven's famous Ninth Symphony." The terrified Ringo Starr has not a clue as to what this "famous" music is. But the detective starts singing the "Ode to Joy"—in German—and the other Beatles join in, with Lennon eventually accompanying on harmonica. In an instant, everyone in the pub is singing, and in the next shot so is everyone on the street. The next several shots show increasingly large crowds at a stadium, waving banners as the originally diegetic song transforms into a full-blown choral-orchestral rendition.

- In the 1982 tragedy-romance *Sophie's Choice*, the dangerously schizophrenic yet "irresistibly glamorous" Nathan Landau (Kevin Kline)—who has a fixation on the Nazi Holocaust—grabs the manuscript of the narrator's in-progress novel and sends the novelist, with Sophie, off to the movies. On their return, the novelist and Sophie discover Nathan—apparently of the opinion that the manuscript is a work of uncommon genius—sweatily "conducting" a recording of the Ninth Symphony's finale. The music is faintly heard as the novelist and Sophie approach the house; they enter the room just in time for the Prestissimo passage that marks the movement's conclusion.
- In the 1986 espionage thriller *Half Moon Street*, the protagonist (Sigourney Weaver) is irritated by the fact that the only London apartment she can afford on her meager academic's salary has a shower that works only intermittently. Lured into taking possession of a luxurious flat, she heads for the shower where she sings a wordless and very out-of-tune version of the "Ode to Joy."
- In the pretitled sequence of the 1987 comedic action film *Raising Arizona*, the bumbling central character (Nicolas Cage) is on his way to jail for the third time after having slipped an engagement ring onto the finger of the female police officer with whom he has fallen in love. In an off-screen monologue he speaks poetically of hope for a "brighter future . . . that was only eight-to-fourteen months away," and underscoring the monologue is a folksy arrangement—featuring frailed banjo and humming voice—of the "Ode to Joy." After the characters' misadventures run their course, the banjo-voice rendition of the Beethoven tune is recapitulated during the film's end credits.
- In Michael Kamen's score for the 1988 action-adventure film *Die Hard*, references to the "Ode to Joy" are pervasive.⁶² The music is first heard diegetically, played by a string quartet at a reception hosted by the corporation whose

62. The use of the "Ode to Joy" was specified by director John McTiernan as a reference to Kubrick's film *A Clockwork Orange*. McTiernan's film features citations of the song *Singin' in the Rain*, which also figured importantly in *A Clockwork Orange*, but the idea to use the song apparently originated with Kamen. See "Kamen Hard: Interview by Will Shivers," *Film Score Monthly* 58 (1995), 13.

stocks and bonds are the target of bandits posing as political terrorists. After the attack is launched, the melody is absorbed into the underscore, where it serves as the villains' Leitmotiv. As Robynn J. Stilwell points out in her thorough analysis of the music for *Die Hard*, Kamen uses the theme "as his basic material for the score, subjecting it to Beethovenian fragmentation and motivic development."⁶³ In a climactic scene, when the German leader of the villains (Alan Rickman) finally enters the corporate vault, the visually stunning imagery is accompanied by what seems to be a full quotation of the Ninth Symphony's Janissary march; in fact, Stilwell writes, this is "an extremely sensitive example of post-scoring, with Kamen arranging Beethoven to fit the dramatic action."⁶⁴

- In the 1989 drama *Dead Poets Society*, an English literature teacher (Robin Williams) at an exclusive boys' school encourages his students to explore the creative sides of their personalities. In a moment of triumph that occurs well before the film's essentially tragic plot starts to develop, the camera shifts abruptly to an exuberant soccer practice after a classroom session during which a hitherto shy student improvises a heartfelt poem. The soccer imagery lasts only a few seconds; its diegetic noise is completely muted, and the action is underscored with the full choral-orchestral statement of the "Ode to Joy."
- In the 1993 comedy *Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit*, Whoopi Goldberg portrays a lounge singer recruited by her friends to pose as a nun and teach music at a financially and emotionally distressed inner-city Catholic school. She forms a chorus, and this instills in the students a sense of pride. Fueled by optimism, the ragtag ensemble enters the state competition, but as they wait backstage the students are dejected when they hear another group give a somewhat square yet impressively polished performance of "their" number. They give it a go anyway, and of course their rendition—an eclectic mix of gospel, hip-hop, and other vernacular styles—wins top honors. In both the briefly sampled stiff version and the lavishly produced loose version, the repertoire item is the "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" hymnic treatment of the "Ode to Joy" music.
- In the 1993 romantic tragic-comedy *Mr. Jones*, the title character (Richard Gere) suffers from a severe case of manic-depressive illness. On being released after being held for observation in a hospital, he proposes a date with the female psychiatrist (Lena Olin) who has been assigned to his case. "How do you

63. Robynn J. Stilwell, "'I just put a drone under him': Collage and Subversion in the Score of *Die Hard*," *ML* 78 (1997), 571.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 565.

feel about choral music?" he asks. "Beethoven. Ninth Symphony. Ode to Joy. You could use a little joy, couldn't you? I know I could. I got tickets. Tonight. We'll go." The psychiatrist opts not to go, and instead Mr. Jones attends the concert with a bank teller he met that afternoon. They arrive late, just as the music is building to the climactic orchestra-choral statement of the "Ode to Joy"; instead of taking his seat, Mr. Jones strides boldly down the aisle, leaps on stage, and starts conducting. Arrested, hospitalized, and again released, Mr. Jones talks the psychiatrist into driving him home via an ocean-side highway; when he suggests stopping for lunch, the psychiatrist at first demurs; when she changes her mind and veers up an exit ramp, the nondiegetic underscore loudly cites the orchestral-choral "Ode to Joy." As they stroll along the pier after an apparently pleasant lunch, Mr. Jones hums a bit of the "Ode to Joy" tune. Intrigued and charmed by her patient, the psychiatrist asks: "So, what were you doing on the stage?" "Picking up the tempo," Mr. Jones replies.

- In the 1994 comedy *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*, reference to the Ninth Symphony comes early, when the identity of the hero is still being established. With his suspicious landlord in tow, Ace Ventura (Jim Carrey) enters his allegedly "pet-free" apartment; after the landlord leaves, dozens of animals come out of hiding, and as Ventura greets them with a cry of "Come, my children!" the scene is washed with a New Age arrangement—featuring synthesized choral sounds—of the "Ode to Joy."
- In the 1994 romantic comedy *Eat, Drink, Man, Woman*, Taiwanese director Ang Lee tells the story of three young women—the daughters of a master chef—who in different ways grapple with matters of love. Verbal reference to Beethoven comes early in the film; the chef fears he is losing his sense of taste, but a friend reminds him of "that great deaf composer, Beethoven. Good sound is not in the ear, and good taste is not in the mouth." Musical reference to Beethoven occurs only during the triple dénouement. The shyest of the three daughters is a devout Christian; asked if her fiancé is also a Christian, she coyly says: "No, but he *will* be." The jump cut shows a full-immersion baptism, and when the fiancé emerges from the water the congregation erupts in a Chinese version of the hymn "Joyful, Joyful."
- In the 1997 teenage comedy *Eight Days a Week*, the plot concerns a nerdy high school student who spends an entire summer waiting outside the window of the beautiful and sophisticated girl on whom he has a crush. The eclectic score gets laughs with numerous quotations from the classical music canon: the opening of Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* is heard, for example, when the boy, to his embarrassment, becomes sexually aroused, and a burst of the "Hallelu-

jah Chorus” from Handel’s *Messiah* signals the moment when the boy, on helping the girl climb down from her balcony, gets a furtive look up the girl’s skirt. Beethoven—the full choral-orchestral statement of the “Ode to Joy”—comes at the end of the film, when the girl finally invites the boy into her bedroom.

- In the 1998 political satire *Bulworth*, a severely depressed incumbent senator from southern California (Warren Beatty) opts for suicide by assassination rather than endure the hypocrisies of yet another reelection campaign; fueled by alcohol during what he believes to be his last weekend alive, the senator returns to his district and blithely goes “honest” in his public speeches. Early in his political auto-da-fé the senator acquires a trio of African-American female admirers, and they accompany him to a service at a conservative church in Pasadena. A brief shot shows the church’s all-white congregation singing, rather stiffly, the opening phrase of “Joyful, Joyful”; after a cutaway shot that develops the senator’s romantic involvement with one of his new groupies, a jump cut back to the church shows the other two African-American women overwhelming the congregation with an ecstatic and lavishly contrapuntal pop-Gospel interpretation of the hymn.
- In the 1998 dark-hued thriller *Apt Pupil*, a sadistic high-school student discovers that a fugitive Nazi war criminal is living in his neighborhood; the student promises not to turn the old man over to the authorities, but only if the old man regales the student with detailed stories of what took place in the concentration camps. Although he bitterly resents being blackmailed, the aging Nazi is rejuvenated by the experience. During one of his sessions with the boy, he retreats to the kitchen to fetch refreshments; as he hobbles to the pantry, he sings—in a wordless croak animated by martial rhythms—the melody of the “Ode to Joy.”
- Finally (for the purposes of this essay), in the 1999 comedic theological allegory *Dogma*, the opening scene depicts an apparently homeless old man standing on the boardwalk outside the amusement arcade in Asbury Park, N.J.; just before he is viciously beaten by a gang of teenage punks, the old man smiles and quietly hums the “schöner Götterfunken” passage from the “Ode to Joy.” Not until midway through the film is it revealed that the old man in fact is God, who every few weeks takes on human form in order to indulge his appetite for skee-ball.

Recalling the diametrically opposed paradigms of signification exemplified by references to the Ninth Symphony in *Meet John Doe* and *A Clockwork Orange*—as

a wholly positive symbol for a complex of virtuous ideologies, as a negative marker for sterile high culture in a dystopian narrative—it is tempting to place these more recent appropriations on one side of the line or the other. Indeed, in some cases simple pigeonholing would seem to be all that is necessary to formulate an interpretation.

In *Half Moon Street*, for example, the central character indulges in a long-awaited hot shower; she is joyful, and thus she joyously sings a bit of the “Ode to Joy.” In *Mr. Jones*, the diegetic references to the “Ode to Joy”—both textual and depicted—are easily read signs that point to the high points of the title character’s dangerous mood swings. The folksy arrangement of the “Ode to Joy” tune that quietly underscores the opening and closing segments of *Raising Arizona* is a clever yet obvious indicator of the concepts of joy anticipated and joy attained. And in a supremely crass example of the semiotic formula that equates a small bit of music with undiluted emotion, the brief but forceful nondiegetic quotation from the orchestral-choral version of the “Ode to Joy” in *Eight Days a Week* represents nothing more than the joyous fulfillment of adolescent sexual fantasy.

The recent mainstream filmic appropriations of the Ninth that go beyond the mere expression of joy and touch on the music’s concomitant political and/or religious symbolism are only slightly more complicated. In *Dead Poets Society* and *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*, the citations from the “motto” passage of the symphony’s finale suggest not only joy but brotherhood as well; in the former, the sound bite from a standard recording is heard at the precise point at which the boys are bonded explicitly by their involvement in soccer and implicitly by their newfound love of poetry, and in the latter the synthesized allusion to the same music illustrates the protagonist’s relationship with his many pets. Of the three films that make diegetic use not of the Ninth Symphony per se but of the “Joyful, Joyful” hymn, only *Eat, Drink, Man, Woman*—in its baptism scene—limits the suggested joyfulness to Christian ideals; the ethnically diverse and socially marginalized choristers of *Sister Act 2* are surely celebrating universal brotherhood as well as love of God as they perform their extended production number at the film’s end, and in *Bulworth* the fact that a pair of African-American women smoothly wrest control of the hymn from an all-white congregation embellishes the political liberalism that is embodied in the increasingly joy-filled title character and expressed in various ways through the entire film. In the religion-saturated *Dogma*, even though the diegetic reference to the “Ode to Joy” at first seems to signify nothing more than a moment of elation on the part of an old man, as soon as the old man is identified it becomes clear (at least for those who can recall the opening scene) that the music was in effect the deity’s calling card.

Just as the positive interpretive paradigm accepts the appropriations of the Ninth Symphony just cited, so does the negative paradigm welcome the diegetic reference to the Ninth in *Apt Pupil*. The veteran Nazi bitterly hates the boy who has discovered his identity; at the same time, this well-educated war criminal genuinely takes pleasure in his reminiscences of torture and genocide. Although his joy is perverse, it is joy nonetheless, and thus it makes sense that it be expressed through an overtly joyous section of an acknowledged masterpiece by a composer who—along with Wagner and Bruckner—was idolized by the Third Reich.

In the films discussed immediately above, symbolism attached to the “Ode to Joy” is straightforward and, in all cases but one, immediately apparent. These films are of recent vintage, but at least in their appropriations of the best-known fragment of the Ninth Symphony they are throwbacks to the “excessively obvious” classical-style film in which the various elements serve to explain, rather than obscure, the narrative.⁶⁵ When the audience member hears the “Ode to Joy” simultaneous with viewing whatever situation is being depicted on-screen, the music’s meaning is unambiguous. This is not the case, however, with the darkly ironic references to the Ninth Symphony in the German, Polish, and Soviet “art films” mentioned earlier. Nor are pigeonholes easily accommodating for the music’s usage in such diverse mainstream films as *Help!*, *Sophie’s Choice*, and *Die Hard*.

As Stilwell notes in her analysis of *Die Hard*, “In the vault sequence, for example, practically any simple anthemlike tune building to a rousing ♩ march variation against those images would create an exhilarating effect, but the ‘Ode to Joy,’ of course, is not just any tune. As with all the major musical themes in *Die Hard*, it comes with considerable cultural baggage.” In *Die Hard*, Stilwell argues, the cultural baggage “rather untidily contains—or fails to contain—American anxieties about the economy, class and gender roles, and about how those have been constructed and constricted by the movies.”⁶⁶ This is an ideological point of view to which many analysts might take exception. The fact remains, though, that for any filmgoer to whom the “Ode to Joy” is even slightly familiar, the music indeed carries associations that go far beyond a film’s narrative; for some filmgoers vis-à-vis certain films, the cultural baggage can be quite heavy, and oftentimes that baggage never quite gets unpacked.

For this writer, the villains in *Die Hard* seem more obviously villainous than

65. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985), p.1. For more on the “obviousness” of so-called classical cinema, see the entry on “Classic Hollywood Cinema” in Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.64–68.

66. Stilwell, “Collage and Subversion,” p.573.

anything else, and thus their Leitmotiv—a bit of overtly joyous music from one of Western civilization's most celebrated masterpieces—goes strongly against the grain. In essence, the rub seems straightforward enough; the “bad” characters in the film are supported by “good” music. But why, one is left to wonder, are the actions of these criminals so *repeatedly* marked with music that—according to filmic convention—is so inappropriate? Why is the entry into the vault so gloriously scored as to evoke sympathy for the villains' pecuniary cause? It all boils down, of course, to a simple matter of irony. But this is a peculiarly deep irony, and one that for thoughtful audience members surely resonates long after the film has ended.

“Irony” does not describe the diegetic reference to the ending of the Ninth Symphony's fourth movement in *Sophie's Choice*. At the moment when the music is heard, the character who “conducts” the recording is clearly energized by his reading of the young novelist's manuscript. But by this time in the narrative it has been established that the character has a fixation on the Nazi Holocaust, and it has at least been suggested that the character is dangerously psychotic. Does Nathan Landau place this particular recording on his turntable because he truly feels joyous on reading the manuscript? Or is he using this recording of a familiar masterpiece to vent his hatred for German culture and—by perhaps by extrapolation—for the manuscript's gentile author? Landau is crazy, so it is difficult to interpret his apparently innocent behavior. On encountering the “performance” of this highly unstable character, Sophie and the novelist are befuddled; so too must be the sophisticated filmgoer for whom the Ninth bears an assortment of musical and extramusical meanings.

In *Help!*, the appropriation of the familiar passage perhaps at first seems nothing more than a comic non sequitur. But the precise words with which John Lennon advises his colleague are worth consideration. It is not simply the “Ode to Joy” that Ringo Starr is told to whistle in order to calm the ferocious tiger. Rather, it is “*famous* Beethoven's *famous* Ninth Symphony,” and the Liverpoolian pronunciation of the composer's name (with the first three letters delivered as a two-syllable descending melody) adds significantly to the line's impact. After its rough start the tune indeed sounds joyous, and as the scene shifts rapidly from the pub to the soccer stadium the implications of “universal brotherhood” are patent. But there is mockery here that goes beyond the music's usual associations. By referencing “famous” Beethoven, the writers of the screenplay are perhaps acknowledging the Beatles' debt to traditional Western musical culture; they are definitely celebrating that culture's perceived subservience to popular music, and the filmic gesture with which they announce the ascendancy of a new canon seems every bit as eloquent as Chuck Berry's 1956 song *Roll over Beethoven*.

Since its premiere in 1824, the Ninth Symphony has had its ups and downs. Brahms, Wagner, Schumann, Berlioz, and Felix Mendelssohn were among its strong supporters, and eventually, of course, the work gained its venerable status as a masterpiece. Yet as Robin Wallace reminds us, during Beethoven's lifetime and shortly thereafter it was easily the composer's "most notorious" work.⁶⁷ Citing the research of David Benjamin Levy,⁶⁸ Wallace notes that the "sticking point" during Beethoven's lifetime and shortly thereafter was almost always the symphony's finale, in particular the "Ode to Joy," which was very often "censured, vilified, or described as tasteless and trivial."⁶⁹ Ludwig Spohr's description of the finale as "monstrous" has already been noted, and Fanny Mendelssohn was perhaps being only slightly kinder when she wrote, after an 1836 performance, that the finale was a "burlesque."⁷⁰

Such barbs were hardly limited to the nineteenth century. In a 1953 article in the *New Yorker*, Winthrop Sargeant ranked the finale of the Ninth Symphony high among pieces with which he had grown impatient. "This movement . . .," he wrote, "has always seemed to me to consist of a lot of banging and shouting, introduced by a baritone recitative that borders on the fatuous, surrounding a text . . . that is bad poetry and adolescent philosophy, and pervaded throughout by an atmosphere of self-conscious nobility and uplift that I find highly irritating."⁷¹ Whereas Beethoven in the "Diabelli" Variations was "consciously trite" and thus "fruitfully banal," Ned Rorem observed in a 1981 essay, he was "unconsciously trite in the finale of the Ninth, thus producing junk."⁷² More recently, Richard Taruskin reports, Rorem won "smiles of mischievous complicity" from an audience at Columbia University when he labeled the music "utter trash."⁷³

How curious that this irksome music is also the section of the Ninth Symphony that has most often found its way into recent film. Allowing for a moment the naysayers their point, one has to wonder: Is it *because* the "Ode to Joy" is tasteless, etc., that it has become such a popular cinematic icon? A music = trash formula

67. Wallace, *Beethoven and His Critics*, pp.73–74.

68. David Benjamin Levy, *Early Performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: A Comparative Study of Five Major Cities* (Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 1979).

69. Wallace, *Beethoven and His Critics*, pp.73–74.

70. Cited in Taruskin, "Resisting the Ninth," p.246.

71. Winthrop Sargeant, *New Yorker*, 14 November 1953. Included in *Listening to Music* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1958), p.47.

72. Ned Rorem, "A Triptych Notebook," in *Setting the Tone: Essays and a Diary* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1983), pp.286–87 (orig. published in *Opera News*, 1981).

73. Taruskin, "Resisting the Ninth," p.247.

might perhaps explain the use of the music in, say, the bedroom scene of *Eight Days a Week*. But such a view, as pessimistic toward Beethoven as it is toward Hollywood, does not explain the many filmic instances in which the “Ode to Joy” melody is coupled with unambiguously wholesome narrative content. Nor does it explain the appropriations, in mainstream as well as “art” films, that generate irony precisely because the music resonates with noble connotations that contrast with narrative situations that are in various ways ignoble.

The “Ode to Joy” is hardly trash, not in its harmonically straightforward presentations that are the sources of the typical filmic citations, and certainly not in the intricate double fugue that precedes the glorious final statement. It must be acknowledged, however, that what Tovey called “the great theme”⁷⁴ of the Ninth Symphony ranks among the simpler of Beethoven’s melodies. It can be acknowledged also that the melody itself, quite apart from its treatment within the context of the symphony, at least gives the impression of being commonplace.⁷⁵ It makes perfect sense that for a work celebrating universal brotherhood Beethoven would choose what Nietzsche called “the innocent air of the popular song,”⁷⁶ a tune aimed at, and thus representative of, humankind’s lowest common denominator. The transformation of such humble material into something sublime is arguably the essence of the dramatic “plot” of the Ninth Symphony, and Beethoven seems to drive home the point that the material *is* banal with the Janissary march—what Stephen Hinton calls a “barbed complement” to a “song [that] expresses a willed simplicity”⁷⁷—that immediately follows the text’s reference to pleasures afforded even the lowly worm.⁷⁸

In a recent book that suggests musicology would do well to adopt an anthropological approach, Christopher Small reminds us that it is not enough simply to

74. Donald Francis Tovey, “Beethoven: Ninth Symphony in D Minor, Op. 125: Its Place in Musical Art,” in *Essays in Musical Analysis*, vol. II (London: Oxford UP, 1935), p. 37.

75. Joseph Kerman cites the “Ode to Joy” melody, along with the Presto movement of the String Quartet, op. 131, as an example of Beethoven’s “studied naïveté.” See Kerman, *Quartets*, p. 200.

76. Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Words and Music,” trans. Walter Kaufman, in Carl Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism and Modernism: Four Studies in the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U California P, 1980), p. 113.

77. Stephen Hinton, “Not Which Tones? The Crux of Beethoven’s Ninth,” *19CM* 22 (1998), 75.

78. The lines at the end of the third stanza are “Wollust war dem Wurm gegeben / Und der Cherub steht vor Gott.” The 1979 literary translation that the Boston Symphony Orchestra commissioned from Donna Hewitt (“Lust was given to the Serpent / And the Cherub stands before God”) is commendably accurate, but in American program notes this only recently replaced the quite singable nineteenth-century translation by Natalia Macfarren (“E’en the worm can feel life’s blisses / And the Seraph dwells with God”).

inquire about the “meaning” of a particular work of music. The far more interesting question, he says, is “What does it mean when this performance (of this work) takes place at this time, in this place, with these participants?”⁷⁹ Applied to appropriations of the Ninth Symphony in recent examples of mainstream cinema, the question generates a fascinating multiplicity of answers. All of them have to do not so much with the music itself as with the simple fact that the Ninth Symphony, and especially the “Ode to Joy” melody, is richly laden with what Nicholas Cook calls “an extra-musical meaning . . . capable of critical exegesis and interpretation.”⁸⁰

Leo Treitler is quite right when he argues that the Ninth Symphony, at least in part because of the “hermeneutic . . . field in which it has been transmitted to us,” “*demands* interpretation.”⁸¹ And filmmakers, in various and sometimes apparently contradictory ways, have responded to this demand. In its cinematic appropriations, clearly there is more to “famous” Beethoven’s “famous” Ninth Symphony than first meets the ear.

79. Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover: Wesleyan UP, 1998), p. 10.

80. Nicholas Cook, *Music, Imagination, and Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 168.

81. Leo Treitler, “‘To Worship That Celestial Sound’: Motives for Analysis,” in *Music and the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1989), pp. 55–56 (orig. in *JM* 1 [1982]).

Pathétique Noir: *Beethoven* and The Man Who Wasn't There

During the last months I
found that I could be moderately happy if I simultaneously
(1) drank, (2) read Raymond
Chandler, and (3) listened to
Beethoven.

—Lancelot Andrewes Lamar
in Walker Percy's *Lancelot*

Kristi A. Brown

In the spring of 2001, at the height of the *Survivor* craze, a San Francisco radio station broadcast a mock version of the reality-television hit, calling it *Classical Survivor* and inviting listeners to go online and “exile one composer from our virtual desert island every day.” The promotional gimmick began with ten “contestants,” a selection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century composers, each of whom had a sport-card-style profile and a biographically derived nickname. I predicted, correctly as it turned out, that the final showdown would be between Johann Sebastian “The Outlaw” Bach and Ludwig “Grumpy” Beethoven, although I was baffled by the contest characterizations of these two composers. Bach’s profile—“stealthy, armed, ex-convict, deeply religious”—was clearly based on the incident when he is said to have threatened an incompetent musician with a sword. The contest ran with this idea, creating a *desperado* Bach who menaced his fellow islanders with the blade he had selected as his “luxury item.” Although Beethoven was also described as “prone to violence,” the rest of his fact list portrayed a pitiable, disabled nerd: “deaf, sloppy and unkempt, unlucky in love, short and thin, socially inept.” Unable to converse with his companions, this imaginary Beethoven spent much of his time alone, avoiding the harassment of the others, and longing for an elusive someone: “[Beethoven is] standing disconsolately at the water’s edge. With his viola bow he is slowly writing in the sand: *Immortal Beloved—ever mine—ever thine—ever ours*—and watching as each successive wave washes away his words.”

In the end, poor, lonely Beethoven soundly defeated bullying Bach and won the prize of one day’s air time devoted solely to his music. The outcome was hard-

ly a surprise. Beethoven has long held sway as “the greatest composer ever,” in popular if not also musicological opinion. Still, I could not help but wonder whether Beethoven’s win owed something as well to the enormously sympathetic representation of his character, which struck me as outdated and conspicuously contrived. There is certainly more than enough material available today from biographies, criticism, film, and poetry to generate a Beethoven that would send Bach scurrying up the nearest palm tree for safety. Likewise, the critical literature is full of references to the signification of violence in (and around) Beethoven’s music, especially the Fifth and Ninth symphonies, and the late quartets.

Perhaps this is why someone at KDFC tacked “prone to violence” onto Beethoven’s précis, but, for the most part, their invention reflects an obverse, though no less pervasive, image of the composer: the heroic artist who, isolated from and misunderstood by society, overcomes despair and achieves a transcendent triumph over Fate. The contest spotlighted the tragic, *innig* Beethoven, unlucky wooer of the Immortal Beloved and despondent author of the Heiligenstadt Testament. This heroic-via-suffering Beethoven has his own filmic history, perhaps most notably in two “adaptations” of the composer’s biography: Abel Gance’s unbearably melodramatic *Le grand amour de Beethoven* (1936) and Bernard Rose’s extravagant mystery-fantasy, *Immortal Beloved* (1994).¹ Both films focus on Beethoven’s double tragedy—the loss of his hearing, but, even more, his cherished “other self”—as the key to understanding him; accordingly, every raging tantrum, violent display, or insensitivity has its foundation, and therefore its excuse, in misfortune. “With my suffering, I’ll forge joy for others,” sighs Gance’s Beethoven, paraphrasing the very letter that Scott Burnham cites as one biographical support “to our continued treatment of [Beethoven] as the quintessential artist-hero.”² Rose begins his film with Beethoven’s funeral, using phrases from Franz Grillparzer’s original oration, including this weepy conclusion: “He withdrew from his fellowmen after he had given them everything and had received nothing in return. He lived alone because he found no second self. Thus he was, thus he died, thus he will live for all time.”

Both of these films subscribe to the notion that the man and his music are existentially linked, and that Beethoven, estranged from the verbal world, conveys himself through his music. In an early scene in *Un grand amour de Beethoven*, the

1. The actor Gary Oldman, who plays Beethoven in Rose’s film, presents a curious nexus between the raging and the pitiable Beethoven. Oldman also starred as the homicidal, Beethoven-loving DEA officer, Norman Stanfield in *The Professional*, as well as a host of other sadistic bad guys (i.e., Dracula in *Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, prison warden Milton Glenn in *Murder in the First*, and predator-pedophile Mason Verger in *Hannibal*). Ironically Oldman’s portrayal of punk rocker Sid Vicious in *Sid and Nancy* is more wretched loser than psychopath.

2. Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995), p.xvi.

composer passes by a house in which a woman wails uncontrollably over her dead child. Without saying a word, he enters the home, walks to the piano, and begins to play the second movement of the “Pathétique” Sonata.³ The woman quiets immediately, offering Beethoven heartfelt thanks as he leaves, still silent. Later, when Giulietta Guicciardi—the Immortal Beloved in this film—breaks his heart, he plays the “Moonlight” Sonata, both as accompaniment and response to her confession about loving another man. In his screenplay for *Immortal Beloved*, Rose takes the concept of a symbiotic connection between creator and music even further, first by means of an interpolated phrase in the eulogy—“He was an artist, and what he was he was only through music”—and more explicitly in a scene in which Beethoven explains to Schindler that “it is the power of music to carry one directly into the mental state of the composer. The listener has no choice. It is like hypnosis.” Rose also includes a grieving-mother scene reminiscent of the one in *Un grand amour*. Visiting his friend Countess Erdödy after her son has been killed during Bonaparte’s invasion, Beethoven enters the room and says, “Your son. . . .” He stops, unable to put his emotions into words, and hands her a score. “We will speak in music,” he proposes quietly, sitting at the piano to play the slow movement of the “Ghost” Trio. She in turn reads the musical notation as though it is a cherished letter. Both Gance and Rose present a Beethoven whose words and inner sentiments do not always match, who is sometimes incapable of speech at all, exhorting us instead, “Listen to my music and you will know what I feel.”

This is the very Beethoven who moves like a shadow figure through the Coen brothers’ film noir, *The Man Who Wasn't There* (2001), evoked by the relationship between the drama’s main character, barber Ed Crane, and the soundtrack’s rich sampling of Beethoven piano music. Classic film noir does not usually cozy up so readily to “real” classical music—even in exceptions like *Sunset Boulevard*, *Double Indemnity*, and *Force of Evil*, preexisting classical excerpts represent only a small, if crucial, part of the scoring.⁴ In *The Man Who Wasn't There*, however, Beethoven’s

3. Truth be told, we never hear the piano since, in an unintentionally hilarious touch, the soundtrack substitutes a string-orchestra transcription of the movement.

4. Of course, the original scores in film noir often refer to a “classical” style or a particular preexisting piece. Tobias Plebuch has pointed out to me the many references in Max Steiner’s score for *Sunset Boulevard* to the Toccata in D, which itself also appears in the movie. In one of the more outrageous fusions of classical music and noir plot, James M. Cain’s novel *Serenade* features a latently homosexual opera-baritone protagonist who, exiled in Mexico (long story), argues with an Irish sea captain as to whether Beethoven is in fact “the greatest composer that ever lived.” The captain explains that he is a “Beethoven enthusiast,” and he is initially turned off by the hero’s penchant for Rossini, but allows him on board after the singer treats him to the serenade from *Don Giovanni*. The mangled film version (1956), directed by Anthony Mann and starring Mario Lanza and Joan Fontaine, scrapped the symphony-loving captain along with much of the rest of the bizarre novel.

music makes up more than half the soundtrack, enough to earn him a special spot in the final credits. In the commentary for the DVD release, director Joel Coen comments that “it was an interesting thing trying to integrate score with what essentially is a movie . . . fundamentally underscored with Beethoven,” adding that “[original-score composer] Carter [Burwell] realized that . . . he would have to stay away from the Beethoven,” to create something that would “fold in with the other score.” The “Beethoven” that Burwell had to match, however, was not the manically raging, pin-you-to-the-floor-with-my-symphonies Beethoven, but an introspective, lyrical musician: all of the selections used in the film are slow movements from piano sonatas and the “Archduke” Trio, op.97. The combination of Beethoven’s intimate *cantabile* mode and film-noir grit produces an idiosyncratic protagonist in whom parallel popular conceptions about Beethoven and his music clash dialectically in a dynamic of suffering, silence, and longing.

Ed Crane, to quote *Los Angeles Times* reviewer Kenneth Turan, is a man “who’s seriously disconnected from his quietly desperate life.”⁵ In the course of the movie, this alienated Everyman tries to overcome his stale, withdrawn existence and participate in something, anything, more interesting and meaningful. Of course, no one familiar with the Coen brothers’ films expects a standard-issue hero (or standard film-noir antihero), but there is something subtly quixotic about Ed’s attempt to escape from his status as nonentity. He philosophizes on “the hair” and life, takes in the “peaceful” atmosphere of a church while everyone else concentrates on their Bingo cards, and opens his ears to the music of Beethoven when he has closed them to just about everything else.

In fact, Beethoven’s music serves as Ed’s musical “language” from the outset. The opening credits—superimposed over the image of an endlessly cycling barbershop pole—are accompanied by the second movement of the “Archduke” Trio, which continues to play during Ed’s first voice-over. In this introductory narration, he identifies two things that he deplors: being a barber, which he views as a sign of mediocrity, and any kind of casual chatter:

*(Tilting down from close-up of barber’s pole to barbershop door, shot of customer entering)*⁶

Yeah, I worked in a barbershop. But I never considered myself a barber. . .

5. Kenneth Turan, “‘Man Who Wasn’t There’ Has Presence,” *Los Angeles Times*, 31 October 2001.

6. The texts are taken primarily from the published screenplay: Joel and Ethan Coen, *The Man Who Wasn’t There* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), except where there are discrepancies, in which case I transcribe the film version. Throughout this essay, I supplement or replace the published screenplay descriptions of the camera shots and action, since they often do not correspond to what happens in the film.

(Inside the barbershop: *customer enters and hangs his hat*)
. . . I stumbled into it—well, married into it more precisely . . .
(*Pull back with customer; who moves past camera, and we see a man in a barber's smock, cutting a boy's hair and lecturing enthusiastically to him about French fur trappers*)
. . . It wasn't my establishment. Like the fellow says, I only work here . . .
(*Track in to medium shot of the big barber*)
. . . The dump was 200 feet square, with five chairs, or stations as we call 'em, even though there were only two of us working . . .
(*tracking in to extreme close-up of the barber's moving mouth*)
. . . Frank Raffo, my brother-in-law, was the principal barber. And man, could he talk . . .
(*Close-up of barber's feet and the falling hair caught in the light coming through the window*)
. . . Now maybe if you're eleven or twelve years old, Frank's got an interesting point of view, but sometimes it got on my nerves . . .
(*Tracking past Frank's face to close-up of a picture of a man hanging on the mirror behind him*)
. . . Not that I'd complain, mind you. Like I said, he was the principal barber. Frank's father August—they called him Guzzi—had worked the heads up in Santa Rosa for thirty-five years until his ticker stopped in the middle of a Junior Flat Top . . .
(*Semi-profile shot of Frank brushing the boy off in moderately slow motion*)
. . . He left the shop to Frankie free and clear. And that seemed to satisfy all of Frank's ambitions; cutting the hair and chewing the fat.
(*Medium close-up shot of Ed Crane in his barber's smock behind a customer, gazing toward Frank and the window, cigarette in mouth; moderately slowed motion*)
Me, I don't talk much . . .
(*Ed takes the cigarette out in moderately slow motion*)
(*Profile shot of Frank taking off the boy's smock and shaking the hair off of it in moderately slow motion*)
. . . I just cut the hair . . .

It is striking, and a little ironic, that we meet Ed “I don't talk much” Crane through his commentary. Although first-person narration is a standard feature of film noir, Ed is simply incapable of the kind of snappy retorts and cocky dialogue of his film-noir peers, even inside his head. Still, his mental narration is engaging, if economical, with a laid-back Bogart cadence: just enough words to make the

point.⁷ The very next scene, however, illustrates just how *conversationally* challenged—and resistant—Ed is. Sitting in the barbershop with motor-mouth Frank, Ed barely registers his brother-in-law's observations as they idly read magazines:

FRANK: Says here that the Russians exploded an A-bomb and there's not a damn thing we can do about it.

ED: Uh-huh.

FRANK: How d'ya like them apples?

(Ed exhales smoke and remains silent)

The film consistently points up the discrepancy between Ed's internal and external personalities, juxtaposing his physical stiffness and almost rude reticence with comparatively fluent voice-overs. In his head, observing himself and the world, Ed is relatively forthcoming, wryly humorous, and even eloquent at times. His interactions with others, on the other hand, are almost always awkward, and sometimes downright painful to watch, particularly since it becomes clear to us that behind the pasty skin, fixed expressions, and haunted, staring eyes, Ed has a lot going on. His outward appearance is so wooden, so detached, that we are surprised when he tells us that he figures his wife, Doris (played by Frances McDormand), takes care of more than the books for her boss, "Big Dave," the manager of the local department store, and, more importantly, that her infidelity "pinches a little"—a significant voicing of emotion for Ed. That same internal pinch registers fleetingly in his eyes and the set of his mouth when people consistently forget his name or when, for instance, big-shot defense lawyer, Freddy Riedenschneider, declares that "I'm an attorney, you're a barber; you don't know anything."

It is not clear whether Ed's silence and remoteness are part of his natural mode or whether inherent shyness has hardened into habitual unresponsiveness over years of being surrounded by relatives, friends, and professionals who gab away, hardly noticing the person they are talking to. In fact, even when Ed does try to say something of note to those around him, he is often misunderstood or rebuked into hushing up again. In one instance, he begins to wonder out loud about "the hair," marveling that "it's growing, it's part of us. And we cut it off. And throw it away." When his baffled brother-in-law asks, "What the hell are you talking about?", Ed

7. At the end of the film, we learn that he is not actually speaking to an absent listener (as Walter Neff does in his recorded confession in the film *Double Indemnity*), but has written down his story for the readers of a "men's magazine."

stiffens, plugging his mouth back up with a cigarette, “Skip it.” Later, in what seems to be a flashback, he tries to talk with Doris, who has stomped into the house, giving him a look of disgust. “Nah,” she counters dismissively, “Don’t say anything.” Riedenschneider orders him to “keep his trap shut,” and a drunk and blueberry-pie distended Frankie murmurs, “Don’t say those words, Ed. . .”

Unhearing and unheard, Ed is morosely resigned to being alienated until two chance encounters “catch his ear,” awakening forgotten aspiration and desire. The first is with entrepreneur Creighton Tolliver, an out-of-towner who wanders into the barbershop for a cut and tells Ed that he needs venture capital to enter the new business of dry cleaning. Ed is intrigued by the idea and secretly devises a plan to blackmail Big Dave for the money, exacting a little revenge and making an opportunity for a fresh start at the same time. This is, of course, a classic scheme for the noir protagonist, “men of small stature, who are lured out of their timid routines by dreams of wealth or romance.”⁸ Big Dave finds out the truth—having beaten Tolliver to a pulp—and tries to strangle Ed, but is killed instead by the barber in self-defense. Doris is blamed for the crime, allegedly because of her shady accounting practices (though, in reality, she had only been following Big Dave’s orders), and Frankie puts up the barbershop as collateral to pay for Reidenschneider. Needless to say, the inexorable irony of the film-noir script requires that Ed’s simple plan sets off a downward spiral of death and ruin. The essential parts of this spiral—the deadly encounter with Big Dave, signing over the family barbershop for trial expenses, finding Creighton Tolliver dead, and some courtroom action—are underscored mostly by Burwell’s music or use no musical track at all.

The second coincidental meeting introduces the “innocent” face so common to film noir and also puts Beethoven and his music in bold relief. Initially the scene seems like the typically quirky side bar that is a hallmark of the Coens’ movies—not necessarily crucial for the story, but effective in terms of characterization and mood.⁹ Dragged by his wife to the “Christmas Push” party at Nirdlinger’s department store, Ed finds an opportunity to slip away from the noisy dance floor and riotous swing music.¹⁰ As he walks the halls, he hears piano music and, drawn to the sound, finds his way to the music floor of the store. Sitting at a piano, her back

8. Roger Ebert, “The Man Who Wasn’t There,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, 2 November 2001.

9. I was surprised to see that several critics did not even mention this meeting between Ed Crane and Birdy Abundas, including the reviewers for CNN.com, the *Nation*, and the *New York Observer*.

10. The name is a nod to Cain’s original novel, *Double Indemnity*, in which the *femme fatale* is Phyllis Nirdlinger. One can only imagine that Nirdlinger did not work as well aurally as it did in print, and hence the change to Phyllis Dietrichson for the film.

to Ed, is a young woman, enveloped in an auralike light, accentuated by the black-and-white format.¹¹ She is playing the Adagio cantabile movement of the “Pathétique” Sonata. The barber “listens, his eyes narrowed against the smoke curling past his face.” Then, when the player stops, he *speaks*:

ED: That was pretty.

(The player turns, surprised.)

. . . Did you make that up?

YOUNG WOMAN: Oh, no. That was written by Mr. Ludwig van Beethoven.

ED: *(nods recognition of the name)* Well, it was really quite something.

YOUNG WOMAN: Yeah, he wrote some beautiful piano sonatas.

ED: That was *really* something. I’m Ed Crane.

YOUNG WOMAN: I know who you are, Mr. Crane.

(His look shows surprise.)

. . . My father used to take me with him when he got his haircut. Walter Abundas?

(Ed’s head tilts back in acknowledgment.)

. . . I’m Rachel Abundas. Everyone calls me Birdy.

ED: Sorry, I just didn’t remember.

The dialogue is cut short by Doris, annoyed and impatient to leave, but it is clear that Ed would have been happy to go on talking with Birdy Abundas. For the first time in the film, the barber is curious enough about someone to brave a conversation. Not surprisingly, most critical reviewers focus on sexual attraction, giving full credit to the wholesomely enticing Birdy for stimulating Ed into speech and action; when they mention the music at all, it is usually as a pleasant accessory to the girl’s charm. “He is mostly enthusiastic not about Birdy’s music, but about Birdy, but too fearful to make the slightest admission of his feelings,” writes Roger Ebert.¹² *Rolling Stone* film critic Peter Travers agrees, with a wink-wink, nudge-nudge, “Only jailbait Birdy Abundas . . . catches Ed off guard, and it’s not just her skill at playing Beethoven on a grand piano that grabs him.”¹³ Certainly Birdy, young and fresh faced, brings a guileless eroticism to the film; significantly, she is also the only character who remembers Ed without a reminder: “I know you, Mr. Crane.” It is facile, however, to think of Ed’s enthrallment primarily in terms of a Humbert Humbert-type sexual arousal. What initially draws him into that room is the *music*, not

11. The film was shot in color, but printed in black and white.

12. Roger Ebert, “The Man Who Wasn’t There,” 2 November 2001.

13. Peter Travers, “The Man Who Wasn’t There,” 22 November 2001.

the girl, although the vision of Birdy at the piano entrances him further. On the surface, the relationship between the girl and the barber resembles that between Walter Huff and Lola Nirdlinger in the novel *Double Indemnity*; calculating the differences in his and Lola's ages, Huff has a revelation: "I was in love with her." But in this case, the music acts as a crucial mediator between Ed and Birdy. Throughout the film, his attraction depends on her being someone special, someone who is capable of making such extraordinary music—"that was *really* something." Soon piano music couples regularly with his narration, inflecting his words.

In fact, with the next appearance of the Adagio cantabile—during a montage of images that begins with Ed's search for Tolliver—the filmmakers departed drastically from the published screenplay. The printed directions indicate piano music only during the shots in the Abundas living room, with Birdy playing. In the film version, the Adagio cantabile accompanies the entire montage sequence, shifting seamlessly from diegetic to nondiegetic (at least in terms of the story-world outside of Ed's mind) and back again. The piece becomes the thread that connects the chaotic and the humdrum parts of Ed's life with the serenity that he feels listening to Birdy play (Table 1).

We hear almost the entire movement—it begins at m.16, just at the point where Birdy stopped playing at Nirdlinger's—while Ed calls the action in a voice-over: looking for Tolliver in hotels and rooming houses, working at the barbershop, going to Doris's indictment, Riedenschneider living the high life on Frankie's money, trailing a private detective. The chromatic bass of mm.23–27 echoes Ed's dejection—"All gone. The money gone. Big Dave gone. Doris going. How could I have been so stupid?"—while the thematic return mirrors the unstoppable treadmill of routine. Twice, however, the camera takes us back to the Abundas's living room, where Birdy plays for Ed as he sits on the couch, reminding us of the tangible diegetic source of the music and also of how Birdy and Beethoven now infuse the rest of Ed's life. Ed looks and listens, slightly slumped, his arms at his sides, his legs falling open—the only time that Billy Bob Thornton allows his body to relax into yearning surrender:

I found myself more and more going over to the Abundas's. It was a routine we fell into, most every evening. I even went when Walter was away on his research trips. He was a genealogist, had traced back his side of the family seven generations, his late wife's, eight. It seemed like a screwy hobby. But then maybe all hobbies are. Maybe Walter found something there, in the old county courthouses, hospital file rooms, city archives, property rolls, registries, something maybe like what I found listening to Birdy play. Some kind of escape. Some kind of peace.

Table 1: Coordination of music and image in the “Pathétique” montage sequence.

Music	Shot/Action ^a	Voice-over text
Pick up to mm.17–19, beginning of “B” section: turn to F minor NONDIEGETIC	Hotel: Camera drifts in toward the reception desk. Ed talks to the clerk behind the desk, but the scene plays silently; we hear only Ed’s narration and the music.	Of course, there was one person who could confirm Doris’s story, or plenty of it: the dry-cleaning pansy. . . . But he’d left the hotel, skipped out on his bill. . .
Measures 19–22, to the ornament. (Touch on C minor) NONDIEGETIC	Rooming-house hallway: Medium shot of a stern, middle-aged woman on the hall telephone; drifting into medium shot of Ed, seated, on the other end of the line; he nods at the telephone and then cradles it. Stares at Tolliver’s business card. Close up of business card. All of this plays silently under the music and narration.	He’d also disappeared from the residence he gave me owing two months’ rent. How could I have been stupid? Handing over \$10,000. For a piece of paper.
Measures 22–26, cadenzalike flourish and chromatic descents of dominant-key transition DIEGETIC	Abundas living room: Shot of Ed seated on the couch, staring at the ground, away from the camera; his brow is slightly furrowed, hands are in his lap, his legs close together. Pulling back from him.	And the man gone. . . like a ghost . . . disappeared into thin air, vaporized like the Nips at Nagasaki. Gone now. All gone. The money gone. Big Dave gone. Doris going. How could I have been so stupid?
Measures 27–28 DIEGETIC	Continues to track back until Birdy, playing the piano, comes into view.	
Measures 29–32, return of the theme NONDIEGETIC	Medium close-up of Walter Abundas, seated and falling asleep (ice cubes of an unseen drink clink in the background; his head rolls back, clunking on the back of the chair, and he rouses again.	
Measures 32–35, theme continued NONDIEGETIC	Barbershop: Overhead shot floating in on a fat man who is laying back in the barber’s chair, his face covered with a hot towel, but this does not slow his speech, though it muffles it. His chit-chat about his wife’s dessert is heard like a dull drone under the music and narration.	
Measures 37–43, beginning of more agitated “C” section, tonic-minor passage with triplets NONDIEGETIC	Track back and tilt up to see Ed behind the client; he gives the unseeing client a subtle look of annoyance and a dismissive wave, looks toward the window as he works.	Sooner or later everyone needs a haircut. . . . We were working for the back now. We kept cutting the hair, trying to stay afloat, make the payments, tread the water, day by day, day by day, . . .
Measures 43–52; cadence and passage in E major NONDIEGETIC	Courtroom: Boom down toward the defendant’s table, the fat man’s drone is replaced by the barely audible sound of the indictment being read. Move in on Doris and Freddy Riedenschneider who are standing together in front of the judge. Settle on medium close-up of a nervously stiff Doris.	Most people think someone’s accused of a crime, they haul ’em in and bring ’em to trial, but it’s not like that, it’s not that fast. . . . The wheels of justice turn slow. . . . They have the arraignment, and then the indictment, and they entertain motions to dismiss, and postpone and change the venue, and alter this and that and the other. They empanel a jury, which brings more motions, and they set a trial date and then. . .

Music	Shot/Action ^a	Voice-over text
Measures 52–53, return of the theme NONDIEGETIC	Riedenschneider places his hand on Doris's shoulder, prompting a quick sidelong glance from her, and says "Not guilty, Your Honor."	. . . change the date, and then often as not they'll change it again.
Measures 53–55, theme continued NONDIEGETIC	Barbershop: Close-up of Ed's hands stirring shaving cream in a barber's cup; crane back and up until both Ed and Frank are in view, working on customers. The fat man is still talking.	And through it all we cut the hair.
Measures 55–57, theme continued NONDIEGETIC	Hotel bedroom: Close-up of a photograph of an opera singer in full costume. ^b Tilt down to close-up of Riedenschneider in bed, his eyes covered by a sleep mask.	Meantime, Freddy Riedenschneider slept at the Metropole. . .
Measure 57, theme continued NONDIEGETIC	Restaurant table: Tracking in toward Riedenschneider, who sits twirling spaghetti with a fork against a spoon.	. . . and shoveled it in at Da Vinci's.
Measure 58–63, theme at higher octave NONDIEGETIC	In a car: Point of view lateral track of a private investigator walking down the street. Tracking shots of the P.I. alternate with reverse shots of Ed watching him from his car, all in slightly slowed motion.	He'd brought in a private investigator from Sacramento to nose around into Big Dave's past.
Measures 63–67, theme cadence DIEGETIC	Abundas living room: Profile shot of Birdy at the piano, Ed behind her on the couch; tracking in on Ed as he watches her play. He is turned towards her now, his arms are relaxed at this side, legs slightly apart. Dissolve to next shot.	I found myself more and more going over to the Abundas's. It was a routine we fell into, most every evening. I even went when Walter was away on his research trips.
Measures 67–72 NONDIEGETIC	Library: Camera drifts and turns through the empty aisles of bookshelves at a library or archive of some sort, closing in on Walter Abundas, seated at a table and looking through documents. Dissolves back to Ed.	He was a genealogist, had traced back his side of the family seven generations, his late wife's, eight. It seemed like a screwy hobby. But then maybe all hobbies are. Maybe Walter found something there, in the old county courthouses, hospital file rooms, city archives, property roles, registries. . .
Measures 72–73, final cadence DIEGETIC	Abundas living room: Medium frontal shot of Ed, still looking at Birdy, his face placid. Fade to black.	. . . something like what I found listening to Birdy play. Some kind of escape. Some kind of peace. . .

^aThe descriptions of the action shots combine indications from the screenplay.

^bOne has to wonder if this picture is another inside joke, since the opera singer resembles a slightly older and more dyspeptic version of Ferdinand Schimon's oil portrait of Beethoven.

Inertia is clearly not the same thing as tranquility, and Ed's resigned torpor is compulsively clenched. Peacefulness is something for which he yearns. Describing how he and Doris "went to church once a week"—for bingo—Ed gazes up at the windows of the sanctuary, telling us that "I wasn't crazy about the game, but, I don't know, it made her happy, and I found the setting peaceful." With "Birdy's Pathétique"—as it is first listed on the recorded soundtrack—Ed clearly experiences a welcome sense of repose.¹⁴ Tranquil(-ized) in the Abundas's living room, Ed's relationship to the Adagio cantabile matches what Scott Burnham describes as the ability of a favorite piece of music that

brings us to the same place . . . the unveiling of a Grail whose magic is never attenuated. . . . The musical experience seems to become timeless, because it involves a repeatable sense of place, of presence. In other words, the thrill of listening to music may be more a matter of simply being in the world of the piece, being in the presence of the piece. This is comparable to the pleasure of watching a favorite movie repeatedly. It is certainly true that we might pick up new details of the unfolding plot with each viewing, but what really keeps us there is the world the movie creates: we like being there.¹⁵

Pieter van den Toorn gives "the piece" an even more specific type of "presence," one that seems apt in the case of Ed Crane: "Perhaps the transcending circumstances of the relationship between music and the listener may best be compared to those of romantic love, individual musical works to single human beings or characters."¹⁶

Ed likes being "there" so much—with both human and musical beloveds—that he formulates a new plan for happiness, one that might cancel out the dry-cleaning debacle, Big Dave's death, Doris's incarceration, the obnoxious Freddy Riedenschneider, and barbering. The idea seems to come to him as he listens once more to Birdy playing the "Pathétique" Adagio (the only piece, in fact, that we ever see her play in the film). Over the music, she explains to him, mistakenly, that Beethoven "was deaf when he wrote this," that he "created it, and yet he never actually heard it." She adds, "I suppose he heard it all in his head, somehow." The knowl-

14. Even though the actual piece is not identified in the published screenplay, it is described as "slow, sweet, almost like a lullaby."

15. Burnham, *Beethoven Hero*, p.165.

16. Pieter C. van den Toorn, *Music, Politics, and the Academy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U California P, 1995), p.6. As one extreme in the debate about the relevance of social politics and semiotics to musical analysis, van den Toorn pointedly selects the analogy of "romantic love" for its allegedly "nonexplainable," transcendent nature; as a staunch supporter of "objective" analysis, however, he does not delve too deeply into the implications of his choice.

edge of this miraculous act of internal creation seems to spark something in Ed, for he immediately wonders in a voice-over whether a miracle might be possible for him too: "So maybe Riedenschneider could get Doris off. Maybe it would all work out. And I thought—I hoped—that maybe there was a way out for me as well." When he goes to hear Birdy play at the high-school talent show, Ed devises a means of escaping to that peaceful place forever:

The girl had talent, anyone could see that. And *she* wasn't some fly-by-nighter, she was just a good clean kid. . . . If she was going to have a career she'd need a responsible adult looking out for her . . . some kind of . . . manager. She'd have contracts to look at, be going on tours, playing on the radio, maybe. I could help her sort through all of that, without charging her an arm and a leg, just enough to get by. . . . I could afford to charge less than the usual manager, not having to put up a big front like a lot of these phonies. And I could be with her, *enough to keep myself feeling OK* Why couldn't that work? Why not? . . . (latter emphasis mine).

Ed's fantasy vision is soon demolished by blunt reality, however, when a famous foreign-born pianist tells Ed that Birdy's playing "stinks," that she is a good technician ("Hit the right note, always. Very proper"), but that she has no inner feeling for the music ("I cannot teach her to have the soul . . . the music, she is inside"). Judging from Thornton's facial expressions, Ed seems to understand the "soul" thing more than he lets on, but he angrily curses the teacher on the car ride back home. Birdy is unconcerned; not only does the "good, clean" girl reveal that she would rather be a veterinarian, but she tries to "thank" Ed—orally—for the interest he has taken in her.¹⁷ Up to this point, Birdy resembles Lola Nirdlinger (or Dietrichson, in the film), another "nice kid," who "gives the impression of a pert, dutiful daughter, of someone obeying the demands of patriarchal decorum," but her hidden sexual sophistication, even aggression, complicates her status as idealized ingenue and counterbalance to transgressing, hard-boiled Doris.¹⁸ Ed simply cannot handle the moral and psychological implications of this illicit intimacy: he prefers having the music between them.

One automobile accident later, Birdy is in the hospital and out of the picture,

17. In the published screenplay, Ed suggests that he misjudged both Birdy's talent and Birdy herself, saying, "I guess I've been all wet," just before Birdy reaches for his thigh. In the film, Ed's disappointment registers in his dull-voiced echo, "Veterinarian?"

18. Peter William Evans, "Double Indemnity (or Bringing Up Baby)," in *The Book of Film Noir*, ed. Ian Cameron (New York: Continuum, 1993), p. 172.

but the “Pathétique” lingers, as much Ed’s music now as it was Birdy’s.¹⁹ When the barber himself stands in front of a judge, the chromatic passage bemoans his death sentence (“He wasn’t buying any of that Modern Man stuff, or the uncertainty stuff, or any of the mercy stuff either. No, he was going by the book. And the book said I got the chair.”), and the primary theme reappears as he awaits execution in his prison cell, still connected to Ed’s longing for deliverance and quietude:

. . . so here I am. At first I didn’t know how I got here. I knew step by step of course . . . but I couldn’t see any pattern . . .

. . . But now, all the disconnected things seem to hook up . . . That’s the funny thing about going away, knowing the date that you’re going to die.

The excerpt halts before the final cadence, but still reverberates emotionally, if not audibly, when Ed says a few lines later that seeing the whole mazelike shape of your life in those final moments “gives you some peace.”

Although the Adagio cantabile is the most prominent musical excerpt, it is still only one of several Beethoven quotations in the film, all of which come from the slow movements of chamber works for piano. All these excerpts are generally in the “easy-to-play” category, matching the level of difficulty of Birdy’s “Pathétique,” although we never see Birdy playing them. The barber responds to the “quiet” Beethoven of these slow movements; with their unfussy eloquence, they become a natural soundtrack for the *innig* Ed. Other music simply does not interest him. Radios are a ubiquitous presence at the barbershop and at home, but for one notable exception, the easy-listening sounds they broadcast are often barely audible, as though we are hearing them with Ed’s ears, which do not pick up the musical “chatter.”²⁰ The barber also implies his dislike of the noisy swing band at the Nirdlinger party. Even Carter Burwell’s most haunting, lyrical contribution—a melancholy series of chords à la Philip Glass that cycles around endlessly, like the stripes of a barber pole—serves primarily to evoke the tragic overtones of the film—

19. The track list of the recorded soundtrack supports this change in the piece’s identity, first appearing as “Birdy’s Pathétique” (track 1; mm. 1–16 only), but listed later as Adagio Cantabile from Piano Sonata No. 8 in C Minor, op. 13, “Pathétique” (track 12; entire piece). The Adagio Cantabile is heard in its entirety only during the final credits of the film.

20. Only the duet “Che suave zeffiretto” from *Le nozze di Figaro* comes up to full volume as though bidden by Ed, moving from diegetic radio broadcast in the barbershop to nondiegetic score for his description of his home and Doris. The treble power of the duet works well with ultra-feminine images of Doris sliding nylons onto her leg and spraying perfume from an atomizer. The duet also adds a little hindsight irony for those in the know, since scheming and unfaithfulness are common themes in the opera and the film.

noir plot, investing the scenes about bank loans and court proceedings with unexpected poignancy, but without one of Ed's flashes of introspection.²¹

Only when Beethoven is playing—diegetically and nondiegetically—does Ed Crane share something beyond the facts, something about himself. His story begins with the Andante cantabile of the “Archduke” Trio, which also accompanies him on his final walk to the electric chair. Other slow movements for piano underscore Ed's most poignantly philosophical voice-overs about Doris and life, investing his plain speech with a perceptible tenderness: *listen and you will know what I feel*. In one of the most riveting sequences of the film, Ed sits on the side of the bed and gazes intently at his wife as she sleeps off the effects of a wedding reception. He tells us about how they met, his voice quiet over the lulling, G-minor Andante of Sonata No. 25, op.79 (mm. 1–7). His reminiscences and the sonata are interrupted by the clang of the telephone: Big Dave wants to meet him, alone. The Beethoven scoring disappears until the ensuing fight is over. Only when Big Dave is lying dead on the ground, pierced through the neck with his own cigar knife, does the sound of the piano return. Ed looks down at his hands—hands that have now killed someone, even if it was in self-defense—and we hear, appropriately, the solemn chords of the “Appassionata” middle movement (mm. 1–16). As the music continues, he returns home, seating himself once more at Doris's side, and finishes his story about their unsentimental courtship.

The police-blotter version of this segment—man drops off wife at home, goes to kill the victim, comes back and goes to bed—would not register the inner monologues that frame the murder, or how Ed views his actions. The official verdict is premeditated murder; the simple truth is self-defense. The more complex reality, however, lies somewhere in between. The music, along with Ed's vigil over Doris before and after the fight, suggests that when Ed sticks a cigar knife into Big Dave's throat, he is for the first time in years, or perhaps ever, *appassionato*. It is not that he wants to kill his wife's lover, but, feeling the bully's hands around his throat, pressed against a glass window so hard that it cracks, the barber literally goes for the jugular. It is as close to a crime of passion as Ed is able to come. Action replaces resignation, and the music conjures another Beethovenian parallel: “I will seize Fate by the throat; it shall certainly not bend and crush me completely.”²² Of course, with Ed Crane, the sensation of “*appassionato*” is subtle, but visible enough that

21. Burwell's theme acts almost like a ground, a continuous loop of C major–E major–A minor–F major, that ties in with the Beethoven selections through its prominent piano part and string accompaniment.

22. Anderson, letter no. 54.

even Birdy notes, after her failed audition with the piano maestro, “You know what you are? You’re an enthusiast.”

The scoring also illustrates the chasm that opens for Ed after his fatal tussle with Big Dave, blocking off any thought of a return to “normal.” True, both sonata excerpts exhibit a similar stillness—an effect that is heightened by the slower-than-standard performances—but these Andantes come from different worlds. The softly rolling pastoral of op. 79, with its treble parallel thirds and sixths gives way to the ponderous, bass-clef march of the “Appassionata.” Wistful G minor makes a lurching turn to D \flat major: the devil’s interval lies between them. Moreover, for anyone familiar with the sonatas, the sounds that are *not* heard—the fast movements that surround the two Andante movements—enhance the contrast even more. The eight-measure opening A section of op. 79, which is used for the first scene at Doris’s side, introduces a moment of *Empfindsamkeit* to an “easy” sonata with a lightheartedly raucous first movement (*Presto alla tedesca*) and a closing, playful *Vivace*. Schnabel calls the work a “sonatina,” and indeed there is something “little” about it, a youthful simplicity. The “Appassionata,” on the other hand, carries a weight and darkness that is unimaginable in the world of op. 79. Although the later variations of its Andante con moto sparkle with effusive virtuosity, the opening theme is sober. Moreover this movement is hedged in by some of Beethoven’s most famous “raging” music. The ferocity of the finale (*Allegro ma non troppo*) actually ruptures the end of the Andante, which, instead of cadencing properly, freezes on arpeggiated diminished-seventh chords, preparing for the ensuing F-minor onslaught. The slow movement of the “Appassionata” is literally and violently “attacked” (*attaca l’Allegro*), as Ed is attacked.

The significance of the absent outer movements of the “Appassionata” to this scene is not a question of whether Ed or Big Dave’s feelings are represented in the unheard Allegros, but rather how a familiarity with the entire sonata might affect the viewer’s understanding of the Andante excerpt. Big Dave is absolutely *not* a classical music kind of guy—Burwell’s score leading into and accompanying the fight sounds like a low, bestial drone, the growling of a dog in a darkened, closed room—and Ed does not relate to the “raging” Beethoven, so the outer movements of the “Appassionata” offer only a possible inflection of the scene. Once he has thwarted Big Dave’s brutality, Ed, breathing heavily, turns instead to the most restrained part of the sonata, rendered more so by the deliberate performance.²³ He

23. The slower tempo might have been necessary to accommodate the duration scene, but characterization may have been a factor as well, whether to evoke Birdy’s juvenile playing skills (though she does not play this piece), or to reflect what the brothers ironically refer to as Ed’s “slow metabolism” in the DVD interview.

takes it home with him to Doris's bedside: there is no going back to the naiveté of op.79.

Days after Big Dave's death, Ed explicitly acknowledges a new perspective, as well as increased distance from those around him. The opening measures of the "Appassionata" Andante return, as he studies passers-by from his car: "There they were . . . all going about their business. It seemed like I knew a secret—a bigger one even than what had really happened to Big Dave, something none of them knew. . . . Like I had made it to the outside, somehow, and they were all still struggling, way down below." Here Ed experiences separateness as transcendence: a mysterious, secret knowledge, which he has attained through an elevated perspective. He watches "them" from inside the comfort of his car, a chain-smoking *philosophe* commenting on his neighbors, satisfied with his privileged enlightenment. Another death—Doris's pretrial suicide—not only brings him back to earth among his wandering peers, but strips him of his newly acquired sense of possibility. The first movement of the "Moonlight" Sonata carries the bad news: "She'd hanged herself. I bought her a dress to wear to court and she'd used the belt." We hear almost the entire Adagio sostenuto as Ed describes his existential metamorphoses into the titular invisible man:

When I walked home, it seemed like everyone avoided looking at me . . . as if I'd caught some disease. This thing with Doris, nobody wanted to talk about it; it was like I was a ghost walking down the street. . . . And when I got home now, the place felt empty. . . . I sat in the house, but there was nobody there. I *was* a ghost; I didn't see anyone, no one saw me. . . . I was the barber.

Both of these scenes—the barber in his car and walking home—use a speed aperture change, slowing physical movements, as if in a dream. The effect is particularly eerie in the second set of shots, as we watch Ed walk against the crowd on the streets, every eye averted from him. The unreal speed of action seems here to confirm his ghostly status. By the end of the segment, everyone else has disappeared, and he is left alone.

Watching this sequence for the first time, I felt that there was another "man who wasn't there"—namely, Beethoven. Ed Crane's voice-over description of his isolation, made absolute by mortifying "disease," calls to mind the composer's letters to Wegeler and Amenda. There is, moreover, a remarkable similarity between Ed's "ghost" scene and one in *Immortal Beloved*, where Beethoven, divided forever from his first love, Giulietta Guicciardi, strides wretchedly down the streets of Vienna. Rose uses a speed aperture change for his scene as well, exaggerating the composer's disorientation as he walks past the crowds on the street. Because of his "secret

malady,” Beethoven is cut off from society, unaware of the various salutations directed to him. We, too, merely see lips move and hats tipped, for the only audible sound is the Adagio sostenuto of the “Moonlight” Sonata and a voice-over, paraphrasing a few lines from the Heiligenstadt Testament:

They who think I am hostile, obstinate, or misanthropic, how unjust they are to me, for they do not know the secret reason I appear that way. It is not possible for me to say, “Speak louder. Shout, I am deaf.” How can I live if my enemies, who are many, believe that I no longer possess the one sense that should be perfect to a higher degree in me than in others?

Rose does not include the specific references Beethoven makes in the Heiligenstadt Testament to his forced solitude (“I must live almost alone like one who has been banished”), but instead lets the visuals convey this message.²⁴ In *Immortal Beloved*, Beethoven disappears from view, when his image dissolves into the next shot of Schindler, walking alone down the same street. Ed Crane, too, endures a separateness that threatens to remove him completely from the world. The “Moonlight” scene in *The Man Who Wasn’t There* ends with a shot of Ed, sitting on the couch in his habitual electric-chair posture, unnoticed by anyone as the screen fades to black.

By giving so much prominence to the “Pathétique” and “Moonlight” Sonatas—themselves emblematic—the Coens allow a subtext of iconicity into their film, one that corresponds to the Beethoven of the “crisis” years (1796–1802) from the first symptoms of deafness to the Heiligenstadt Testament. Both of these works date from that period and have been associated in various ways with the unhappy developments of those years, including Beethoven’s deteriorating hearing and the unfruitful romance with Giulietta Guicciardi. The “Moonlight” Sonata, which Beethoven dedicated to his young pupil, has often been interpreted to be a “sort of love-song without words,” especially after Schindler had identified the Countess Guicciardi with the Immortal Beloved.²⁵ Although Thayer’s biography debunked this myth long before 1936, the year that *Un grand amour de Beethoven* was released, it did not prevent Gance from making the alleged connection between the “Moonlight” and Guicciardi (as the alleged Immortal Beloved) a core element of the film’s plot line. In *Immortal Beloved*, both the “Moonlight” and the “Pathétique” are associated with Guicciardi, one introducing her to Beethoven, and the other signaling the end of their relationship. Listening to the Adagio cantabile of the “Pathétique,” as played by a seductively handsome pianist she believes is the maestro himself, Giulietta

24. Translation from Thayer-Forbes, p.304.

25. Thayer-Forbes, p.297.

declares in a voice-over, “That music affected me like none I had ever heard before. And as for Beethoven. . . . I was soon overcome. I felt I might faint.” In the middle of the movement, the young woman hurriedly leaves the concert salon, taking refuge in a nearby, seemingly empty room. Suddenly, from the shadows of a drape, a man appears, greeting her with one word, “Hello.” “Oh, I did not see you,” she replies. Only later will she learn that this man, whom she describes as ugly, rude, and a common oaf, is actually Beethoven.

The scene that introduces the “Pathétique” in *The Man Who Wasn't There* both mirrors and inverts the Guicciardi-Beethoven encounter in *Immortal Beloved*. While Giulietta runs *away* from the overpowering effect of the sonata, Ed Crane—trapped in a noisier, swinging world—flees *toward* the sounds of the piano. Instead of a young girl being startled by an older man appearing out of darkness, a middle-aged man discovers a hidden girl, the only thing lit in a darkened room. Identity and mistaken identity come into play in both scenes as well. Beethoven presumes correctly that he is speaking to “Julia Guicciardi,” and Birdy Abundas remembers Ed from her trips to the barbershop. Conversely, both Giulietta Guicciardi and Ed Crane are mistaken in the belief that they have been entranced physically by the *creator* of the music, with the player standing in for the composer. In both cases, Beethoven’s empty place is filled by an erotically tempting body.

The “Pathétique” highlights yet another connection between the two pictures, and also between Ed Crane and Beethoven. In *Immortal Beloved*, the Adagio cantabile returns late in the film as the music that Beethoven hears in his head as his nephew Karl, now a young man, plays for him. The film posits that Beethoven—undergoing a devastating creative slump and no longer able to play as a virtuoso himself because of his deafness—wants to make his ward a great virtuoso, although Karl has neither interest nor real talent. Likewise, Ed fixes on Birdy’s juvenile skill at the piano as the means to a new (vicarious?) life, imagining himself as her manager, guiding her through a life of concerts, radio shows, and tours.

The correspondence between *The Man Who Wasn't There* and these specific biographical events—the affair with Giulietta Guicciardi, the relationship with Karl—requires some extrapolation, but Beethoven’s deafness, the most commonly known fact about the composer, receives explicit mention in the script. “He was deaf when he wrote this,” Birdy reminds us as she plays the Andante cantabile. She gets the facts wrong, but both the “Pathétique” and the “Moonlight” Sonatas have been interpreted as communicating the composer’s despair at the *onset* of his hearing loss.²⁶ Irving Kolodin argues that Beethoven would have first recognized a serious

26. Owen Jander pursues this mode of criticism in his reading of the third movement of Symphony No. 5 in “‘Let Your Deafness No Longer Be a Secret—Even in Art’: Self-Portraiture and the Third Movement of the C-Minor Symphony,” *Beethoven Forum* 8 (2000), 25–70.

problem with his hearing in 1798 and therefore pegs the “Pathétique” as the work from that period that most “carries the heavy burden of gravity in the face of ‘a dire dilemma,’ rebellion against Fate, depression, resentment, and, finally, determination to struggle on against all odds.”²⁷ Although cagey about “apparent relationships between life and works,” Timothy Jones demonstrates how someone who “subscribe[s] to this position” might find a covert program about Beethoven’s deafness in the “Moonlight” Sonata:

Perhaps the “Moonlight” Sonata is not, after all, an expression of Beethoven’s sorrow at losing Giulietta Guicciardi: the claim, though made often enough, has absolutely nothing to recommend it from a biographical perspective. A far more precious loss to Beethoven at that time was his hearing. Why are the dynamics of the sonata’s first movement unprecedentedly suppressed to a constant *piano* or softer? Why does the melody emerge from, and resubmerge into, an under-articulated accompanimental continuum? Why is the movement centred on low sonorities, and the extreme treble reached only once, in a gesture of utmost despair? Perhaps this is a representation of Beethoven’s impaired auditory world, and—at the same time—a lament for his loss. Why does the sonata’s Presto agitato finale seem to cover the same ground as the first movement, but with a prevailing mood of manic rage, rather than of melancholy? Perhaps the contrast reflects the two significant states of mind that emerge from Beethoven’s letters at the time.²⁸

In fact, Bernard Rose’s film follows this very strategy, matching up Beethoven’s works with events from his life. *Immortal Beloved* postulates that the C#-Minor Sonata rose out of dissonance, a series of overtones hovering in the air after Beethoven has banged indiscriminately on a new piano. Placing his ear to the body of the instrument, Beethoven takes in the vibrations and faint tonal echoes; finally, he begins to finger the rolling triplets of the quasi-fantasy movement. Sound is receding for him, as is love. Ed Crane, too, experiences a double loss when Doris takes her life and, with it, the barber’s sense of self, relegating him to a near-spectral existence. To keep from disappearing completely, he runs to Birdy with his plan for her musical education: “I have to do it. I can’t stand by and watch more things go down the drain.” Both *Immortal Beloved* and *The Man Who Wasn’t There* use the “Moonlight” Sonata to underscore “precious loss” and its ensuing void.

27. Irving Kolodin, *The Interior Beethoven: A Biography of the Music* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), p.86.

28. Timothy Jones, *The “Moonlight” and Other Sonatas, Op.27 and Op.31* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), p.14.

It may seem slightly absurd to draw comparisons between the Coens' sullen, mediocre barber and a real-life musical master, but this is precisely the kind of association that the film permits, even encourages, with its subtle cross-referencing of music, composer, and film character. It would not be hard to imagine, for example, a very young Ed Crane in terms that Solomon uses to describe the boy Beethoven who "often wrapped himself up in a cloak of silence as a shield . . . against the vicissitudes of external reality," and who was known early on for his "penchant for isolation" and "monosyllabic replies to adult questioners."²⁹ Unlike Beethoven, however, Ed Crane leaves no lasting, triumphant mark on the history of his fictional world. All of Beethoven's defeats were, ultimately, turned into victories, and indeed following the crisis of 1801–02, Beethoven came to terms with his deafness, the "painful chrysalis within which his 'heroic' style came to maturity."³⁰ The catastrophic phase culminating in the Heiligenstadt Testament gave way to a decade of extraordinary creativity and innovation. In a sense, this is what Ed Crane wants, too, in the more mundane arenas of venture-capital investment, dry cleaning, and artist management, but his dreams only lead to disaster and his state-mandated termination. His tale is "the other side of the American Dream, in which death has been preceded not by success but by grim failure."³¹

Even in the real world, Ed Crane attracted relatively little popular attention, although the film received its share of enthusiastic reviews from aficionados. Coauthors Joel and Ethan Coen had envisaged a much more successful "after-life" for Ed. "America's going to love Ed," director Joel Coen remarked in an interview, adding jokingly that they had thought about creating bumper stickers with slogans like "Be like Ed," and "Ed IS."³² Despite the jokes, however, producer Ethan Coen also acknowledged that "Ed is a very strong thing, especially in Billy Bob's hands." Certainly Thornton's performance and the Coen script endow Ed with a knock-off brand of heroic dignity, particularly at the end of the film, that is surprisingly affecting:

I don't regret anything. Not a thing. I used to. I used to regret being the barber. I don't know where I'm being taken. . . . I don't know what waits for me, beyond earth and sky. But I'm not afraid to go. Maybe the things I don't understand will be clearer there, like when a fog blows away . . . Maybe Doris will be there . . . And maybe there I can tell her . . . all those things . . . they don't have words for here.

29. Solomon, *Essays*, p.93.

30. Solomon, *Beethoven*, pp.161–62.

31. Bruce Crowther, *Film Noir: Reflections in a Dark Mirror* (New York: Continuum, 1989), p.9.

32. Joel Coen in DVD interview.

It is this kind of simply spoken, candid confession, coupled with the understated tenderness of the music, that makes Ed Crane sympathetic in a way that is not possible with, for example, Walter Neff in *Double Indemnity*. There is nothing swaggering or snappy about him. Nor does his final speech exhibit the self-pitying sentimentality of Frank Chambers's final words in Cain's *Postman Always Rings Twice*: "Here they come. Father McConnell says prayers help. If you've got this far, send up one for me, and Cora, and make it that we're together, wherever it is." He is, to use Freddy Riedenschneider's words, "an ordinary man, guilty of living in a world that had no place for" him. His disappointments and resilience, the poet's sensibility hidden in cigarette smoke, make him a modern-age hero through suffering, summoning up the kind of empathy that KDFC solicited with their forlorn Beethoven. Ed Crane is purposefully "pathétique." Yet, his resignation is paradoxically hopeful and all the more striking in its context, since "more than content or appearance, it is [the] pessimistic mood which most identifies film noir."³³ It would have been reasonable for Joel and Ethan Coen to have tweaked the characterization, adding the kind of noir nihilism that makes a man kill for his own gain, his own self-making: the kind of antihero that would relate to the "prone-to-violence" Beethoven—the Beethoven Adrienne Rich imagines in her poem about the Ninth Symphony: "A man in terror of impotence/or infertility, not knowing the difference / a man trying to tell something / howling from the climacteric / music of the entirely / isolated soul."³⁴ Yet, Ed does not howl: not after a life of impotence, infertility, and isolation—certainly in a figurative, and possibly a literal sense—and not even at his own death. He would probably not understand or care for the Ninth or other Beethoven symphonic works—just another invasive din. Ed needs quiet to hear and be heard. Perhaps this is why Ed Crane adopts for his inner voice or, more precisely, his *real* voice the slow movements of the piano sonatas, "utterances in the first person directly expressive of the speaker's own feelings."³⁵

"He was a barber, and all that he was he was in the hair—until he heard Beethoven." This could be Ed Crane's epitaph. Sure, there is the subtle irony of Ed's gaze scanning the hairdos of the men who are witnessing his execution, but his words and the Andante cantabile of the "Archduke" Trio provide the more thoughtful subtext. If, like so many reviewers, we do not pay attention to the music as part of Ed's characterization we miss some of "those things they don't have words for

33. Crowther, *Film Noir*, p.8.

34. Adrienne Rich, "The Ninth Symphony of Beethoven Understood at Last as a Sexual Message," in *Diving into the Wreck: Poems 1971–1972* (New York: W.W. Norton, reissue edn., 1994), p.43.

35. Glenn Stanley, "Genre Aesthetics and Function: Beethoven's Piano Sonatas in Their Cultural Context," *Beethoven Forum* 6 (1998), 1–29; here 4.

here.”Without the music, even the Sydney Carton pathos of his final monologue would be lost. On the surface, Ed Crane is only a more intelligently drawn version of the KDFC Beethoven caricature: ironically amusing, socially inept, unlucky in love, and potentially violent. You have to *listen* to know the man who, on the surface, is not there at all.

Hysterical Beethoven

In less than two centuries,
Beethoven has been
transformed from a grief-
stricken melancholy and
slightly feminine romantic to
a masculine rugged and virile
“titan wrestling with the
gods.”

—José Bowen

Robynn J. Stilwell

From the political Left,
Beethoven is either an apt
expression of chaos or of
beauty recognized in the real
world; from the Right, he is
a means out of chaos into
order.

—Christopher Reynolds

These two recent observations of major themes in Beethoven reception paint a picture of a composer who is complicated enough to encompass diametrically opposed identities, over time and from different political positions.¹ They also begin to map out some of the myriad dualities one finds in readings of “Beethoven”—dualities and contradictions that may be part of Western culture’s obsession with either/or configurations but that powerfully impact cultural understanding of the man and his music.

These meanings are not the exclusive domain of the art-music realm that has so elevated Beethoven to his towering position as god-wrestling titan: Beethoven has also been a cranky keyboard whiz (in *Bill and Ted’s Excellent Adventure* [Stephen

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1. Epigraphs are quoted from: José Bowen, “Connecting Performance Interpretation and Meaning: When Is Beethoven’s Fifth Heroic?” (unpublished paper read at AMS national meeting, Minneapolis, Nov. 1994 and RMA Expression Day, King’s College, London, Feb. 1995); and Christopher Reynolds, “From Berlioz’s Fugitives to Godard’s Terrorists: Artistic Responses to Beethoven’s Late Quartets,” *Beethoven Forum* 8 (2000), 147–63 (p.161). Some may be reminded that in the 1984 United States presidential campaign, Bruce Springsteen’s “Born in the USA”—a scathing commentary on mid-century American society—was adopted as a campaign song by both the Republicans and Democrats, although in this case, the presence of explicit words made the opposing interpretations even more astonishing. One could, however, argue that the anthemic power of the simple chorus overwhelms nuanced listening to the verses.

Herek, 1988]), a melancholy lover (in *Immortal Beloved* [Bernard Rose, 1994]), and his music has been used for Olympic gold medal-winning figure skating routines (by the much-loved pair of Ekaterina Gordeeva and Sergei Grinkov, 1994), transformed into a hit song by Billy Joel (“This Night,” 1983), and used to score many movies, far too many to list. But while the Beethoven that appears in these popular culture guises may differ from the current mainstream musicological and art-music conception of Beethoven (it could be—and probably is—described as “debased” or “vulgar”), this is not a Beethoven that pop culture has made up of whole cloth. It is a Beethoven that Berlioz would have recognized, yet while the more emotional, irrational, and even violent elements have tended to be neaten away, out of sight, or at times even forcibly removed by musicologists, popular culture has retained, revitalized, and recirculated the more troublesome Beethoven.²

Beethoven’s music has been associated with three key action villains of the past fifteen years: Hans Gruber in *Die Hard* (John McTiernan, 1998), Emil Fouchon in *Hard Target* (John Woo, 1992), and Stansfield in *Léon, The Professional* (Luc Besson, 1994). Case studies of each of these villains will demonstrate how musical genre, placement in the soundscape, nationality (of characters and of cinema), gender perception/sexuality, and even quality of movement combine to create readings that subvert the canonical masterful, masculine genius of Beethoven while drawing on historically abjected elements of his reception that still circulate in popular culture. Although each of these villains is different, they do create a consistent image of Beethoven that operates for a wide audience while probably making many scholars nervous. But first, a look at how Beethoven came to be conceptually a split personality.

Binary codes

One of the tendencies of Western binary thinking is not to arrive at balanced dualities but unbalanced, value-laden oppositions that collapse to a basic binary that is often regarded as irreducibly biological—male/female—but is really culturally determined—masculine/feminine. Going one step further, however, we may more fundamentally describe this process not as one of generating dualities but as an exercise in abjection. Historically, traits that end up on the feminine side are

2. See, for instance, Bob Fink’s discussion of the way a certain notorious passage of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony has been forced to “make musical sense” by analysts. In “Beethoven Antihero: Sex, Violence, and the Aesthetics of Failure, or Listening to the Ninth Symphony as Postmodern Sublime,” in *Beyond Structural Listening: Postmodern Modes of Hearing*, ed. Andrew Dell’Antonio (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U California P, 2003).

those that are messy, problematic, fluid, irrational. They are “natural” (unconstructed, wild), yet somehow not “organic” (ordered, comprehensible). With these traits in mind, one can even read Reynolds’s political dichotomy as a gendered one.³

What is notably implicit in Bowen’s observation at the head of this essay, which he discusses at length, is that Beethoven’s “feminine” traits are abjected over time. As his genius (to Romantics like Berlioz, a kind of insanity⁴) is demonstrated to be a paradigm of rationality, the only trace of femaleness that remains is in the metaphor of gestation and birth, although that metaphor is doubled by that of the blacksmith at his forge, an exceedingly masculine image. It is a truism that masculinity must be *asserted* (and conversely, you never hear that anyone is “secure in her femininity”⁵); the manner in which scholars have striven to emphasize the logic, the organicism, the masculinity of Beethoven’s music, and indeed his personality, is almost hysterical in its intensity—and I use the word *hysterical* for all its cultural baggage of the excessive, chaotic, humorous, emotive, and insane. That which is being expunged in one realm often emerges elsewhere (in Freudian terms, the return of the repressed).

A binary neither Bowen nor Reynolds addresses is that between the “cultivated” realm and the “popular.” This is largely because they are concerned with the circulation of meaning within the relatively closed system of art music, musicians,

3. This is strengthened elsewhere in Reynolds’s essay on conservative David Gelerntner’s reading of Beethoven as “cool” (p.150) (i.e., rational), as opposed to more radical, passionate (i.e., emotional) readings such as Godard’s (pp.160–61).

4. Berlioz’s descriptions of Beethoven being “Lear-like” is one of a number of metaphorical indications of insanity; there are also more explicit references ranging from “nocturnal visions” to a dance being a “little mad.” His descriptions of Beethoven’s symphonies sketch a character who, in modern terms, looks positively bipolar, veering between the joyous Second and Fourth Symphonies to the deep and tragic Third, while the Fifth seems both manic *and* depressive: “It is his intimate thoughts that he means to develop, his secret sorrows, his pent-up anger, his dreams full of dejection, his nocturnal visions, and his outbursts of enthusiasm. . . . The first movement depicts the chaotic feelings that overwhelm a great soul when prey to despair. It is not the calm, concentrated despair that shows the outward appearance of resignation, nor is it Romeo’s dark and mute grief on learning of Juliet’s death, but Othello’s terrible rage on hearing of Desdemona’s guilt from Iago’s poisonous lies. At times it is a frenzy that explodes in a terrifying outcry, at times an extreme dejection that expresses itself only in regrets and takes pity on itself” (“A Critical Study of Beethoven’s Nine Symphonies,” in *The Art of Music and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Elizabeth Csicsery-Rónay [Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994], p.19).

5. Although, in certain circumstances, a woman can reclaim her femininity through a man (i.e., “He made me feel like a woman again.”)

scholars, and critics;⁶ popular culture is perceived in Marxist terms as more top-down in its production of meaning but is, in practice, much bigger and messier, less dependent on formal modes of education in its interpretive strategies and more based in individual pathways of experience. It is not difficult to see a masculine/feminine dichotomy at work here, and indeed the formalization of knowledge in art culture has historically been bolstered by its abjection of the popular.⁷

But in its multifarious modes of incorporation and excorporation of all realms of expression, popular culture freely appropriates from “high” culture (even the common binary high/low contains its connotations of abjection), but I would argue that it is rarely, if ever, with the sort of “blankness” or leveling that postmodern criticism has posited. High culture is engaged *because* it is high culture and with some knowledge of the historical and critical apparatus that surrounds it; like an organ to be transplanted, it is moved with connecting tendrils and bodily fluids still clinging to it. An abject metaphor to be sure, but one that *could* be extended to imply that the body from which the organ (say, a Beethoven symphony) has been taken is decrepit and dying and the one in which it is to be transplanted (i.e., popular culture) keeps it alive and healthy, circulating new meanings through its veins. I don’t want to push it *that* far, but one could argue that art is not separate from popular culture but a subset of it (therefore, the operation is less like a kidney transplant and more like a coronary bypass, grafting a vein from elsewhere in the body). At the very least, art and popular realms could be seen as overlapping Venn diagrams (a nice, clean, horizontal image for the squeamish).

All of this is in the way of a backdrop in an effort to explain why Beethoven should have become so striking a musical presence in modern action movies. Why the epitome of heroism in music should be so exclusively allied with the villains. Why this titan of masculinity should be attached to men portrayed as sexually ambivalent. How old musicological debates of national style from a German/French binary to old world/new world to East/West get caught up in cultural and gender politics, as well as separate but equally influential debates about national cinematic styles. The neat chain of identity equations that has been wrought through

6. Fink’s “Beethoven Antihero” (2003) is a beautifully detailed description and reclamation of the problematic, Romantic Beethoven. Although our work was conceived and pursued separately, it is remarkably complementary, with his reaching back in time and mine reaching “down” into popular culture.

7. For a concise historical and theoretical overview of this issue, see Andreas Huyssen, “Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism’s Other,” in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986), pp.44–64.

art-music culture, often covertly, as Janet Levy so cogently pointed out,⁸ gets a little tangled in the realm of popular culture.

Our heroes . . . er, villains

The multinational modes of late-twentieth-century film production have led to a complex landscape in which even a genre that seems so simple—the action blockbuster, often criticized even by popular film critics for its mindless, illogical, or even nonexistent narratives⁹—can be fragmented and politicized by nationality. The movies at issue here are excellent examples of that trend.

Hans Gruber, played by British stage actor Alan Rickman in his film debut, is the elegant West German terrorist-cum-thief in *Die Hard*, a lavish American studio offering that transformed the action genre, particularly in the portrayal of the villain. Emil Fouchon, played by veteran American character actor Lance Henriksen, is no less elegant, the cool businessman in *Hard Target* (1992) who offers bored rich men the opportunity to hunt big game—humans; Fouchon's nationality is ambiguous—either European French or New Orleans-born Creole, but in any case not normatively “American”—and the film also suffers an identity crisis in terms of nationality. It is an American independent production, distributed by a major studio, Universal, but the name above the title is that of the Belgian martial arts star Jean-Claude van Damme, and the movie was the first English-language production by legendary Hong Kong action director John Woo. The third villain is English actor Gary Oldman's psychotic, drug-popping American policeman Stansfield in *Léon, The Professional* (1994), another English-language production by a director renowned within his own national cinema, Luc Besson—a director who almost singlehandedly created the French action film in the 1980s by melding contemporary French sensibility and style (the glossy *cinéma du look*) with the pace, editing, and violence of an American studio production.¹⁰

8. Janet Levy, “Covert and Casual Values,” *JM* 5 (1987), 3–27.

9. This criticism is rooted in a tenet of film criticism that holds that cinema is a narrative medium (an equivalent to music scholarship's obsession with form), even though the critics also tend to elevate the visual elements of film over all other concerns. The increasing attention to special effects and action, often judged as “at the expense of” narrative and character development, is now being regarded by some film scholars as a return to an early mode of cinema as spectacle, or a “cinema of attractions.”

10. Indeed, the Besson film that directly preceded *Léon* was *La Femme Nikita* (1990), which was remade in both America as *Point of No Return* (John Badham, 1993) and Hong Kong as *Hei mao* (Stephen Shin, 1991), and as the Canadian syndicated television series (1997–2001).

Hans Gruber

I have elsewhere discussed in detail some of the political ramifications of Beethoven in *Die Hard*,¹¹ but some of what was peripheral to that argument assumes central importance here. Control is the overriding concern in the ensuing discussion, from the historical control over the meaning of the “Ode to Joy” to villain Hans Gruber’s intellectual and physical control of the narrative, to his control of the music in both the diegetic and nondiegetic¹² realms of the film.

The Ninth Symphony holds a towering position in the canon of Western art music; yet the “Ode to Joy” and particularly the Turkish march have had a checkered reception, at once the most excellent creation of a great genius and the undisciplined, vulgar noises of a foreign, exotic, racially ambiguous horde. Schiller’s words are lofty and aspirational, but the music has a tad too much of “the body” in it for easy acceptance into the pantheon of sublime art. The “grunts” and “farts” of the orchestra are organic in a sense not approved by the gatekeepers of that pantheon, but even the joyousness of the $\frac{6}{8}$ dance lacks decorum.¹³ The exuberant noise is a powerful call to movement over intellect, and that kind of loss of individuality and melding into a corporate being that the independent-minded West abhorred for personal reasons in the nineteenth century and political reasons in the twentieth.¹⁴ The hysteria over jazz, rock and roll, rap, and rave music are examples of this response, as certainly is the horror of Fascism and Communism. I do not for a moment want to suggest that the repulsion of the West over the political atrocities of Nazi Germany or the Stalinist Soviet Union is as trivial as the social uproar over various kinds of popular music, but the root of both lies in a fear of the surrendering of individual will to a larger entity—either the ordered, rationalized structures of a Fascist state with Five-Year Plans or visions of a glorious millennium of empire (an übermasculinity), or the fluid, irrational, non-goal-directed (feminine) rave crowd.

11. Robynn J. Stilwell, “‘I just put a drone under him’: Collage and Subversion in the Score of *Die Hard*,” *ML* 78 (1997), 551–80. This article deals with the connection of *Die Hard* with *A Clockwork Orange*, as well as the musical and political details of the deployment of the musical themes under the exclusive control of the villain.

12. The diegesis is the world of the film. Diegetic music is that which is produced from within that world and therefore can be heard by the characters; it is sometimes called “source” music, as it emanates from a source within the image. Nondiegetic music is not accessible by the characters but is heard by the audience, or what is commonly called “underscore.”

13. See Nicholas Cook, *The Cambridge Guide to Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) for an historical overview of reception.

14. In addition to Cook, see Richard Taruskin, “Resisting the Ninth,” *19CM* 12 (1989), 241–56.

This connection, as well as the more obvious Germanic one, could explain the pervasiveness of the association of the “Ode to Joy” (and particularly the Turkish march) with Nazism in films, from the grotesquerie of *A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, 1969) in which Nazi imagery is scored to the Turkish march (doubly vulgar in its synthesized version by Walter/Wendy Carlos¹⁵) to the burlesqued singing of the ode by the Nazi war criminal (Ian McKellen) when he has turned the tables on his blackmailer in *Apt Pupil* (Bryan Singer, 1998). The debasement is clearly signaled in these performances; but Hans Gruber is a more subtle beast.

Hans Gruber is, in many ways, exemplary of a kind of masculine Beethovenian genius—he is meticulous, devising an intricate plan in which every little part contributes to a breathtaking whole (there is the small matter of John McClain [Bruce Willis], but even in the context of the film he is depicted as an accidental hero). Hans has had the benefits of a classical education, and he exudes confident control down to the immaculate styling of his silky hair. The only thing that ruffles his composure is when his hostage, Holly McClain (Bonnie Bedelia), calls him a common thief; getting up in her face like a Doberman, he snarls, “I am an *exceptional* thief, Mrs. McClain.”

While this kind of controlling genius has a long history in literature and especially cinema (Dr. Frankenstein; George Harvey Bone [Laird Cregar] in *Hangover Square* [John Brahm, 1945]; Hollenius [Claude Rains] in *Deception* [Irving Rapper, 1946]), many of them tend to go up in flames—literally¹⁶ or metaphorically¹⁷—as

15. I find it intriguing that even here, in the decidedly nondiegetic presence of Carlos, we have sexual ambiguity.

16. In yet another example of gender ambiguity, in a recent article on women's roles in films, Richard Corliss makes a series of distinctions: “To generalize a bit: men's films are about triumphing over huge obstacles; women's films are about choosing to live (or die) with them. A hero does things; a heroine feels things. Men act; women talk. *Men get fired up; women go up in flames.* Men exact a righteous revenge; women explore subtleties and ambiguities—their adventure is an internal journey. Movie men live in the boyhood realm of fables, fairy tales; movie women are grown-ups who confront the real, messy world” (italics mine) (“Ladies' Night Out,” *Time* 161/6 [10 Feb. 2003], 72–76). Corliss is certainly latching onto the unitary, rational, pure (fables and fairy tales) world of movie men while highlighting the multiple, messy, emotional, abject world of movie women. Interestingly, both he and I have used the same phrase “to go up in flames” to describe the end of certain characters—his are women, mine are men who are depicted as having failed in some way in their masculinity.

17. Hollenius's shooting at the hands of a protective Christine (Bette Davis) is to prevent him humiliating her cellist husband Karel (Paul Henreid) during a performance of a concerto Hollenius wrote for him. Intriguingly, it is Hollenius watching Christine and Karel interact over her performance of the “Appassionata” Sonata that sets the disastrous triangle in motion. My thanks to Peter Franklin for *many* fruitful discussions about this film.

their genius drives them insane. Hans never succumbs to this; the film's unconvincing way of ridding him from the narrative is his overconfidence and a faulty knowledge of American movie trivia. Instead, his death is a slow-motion fall, emphasizing a Luciferian aspect to his appearance and behavior.

This intellectual control has a physical corollary, one that has profound implications for the perception of gender and sexuality, at least for a mainstream male American audience such as that targeted by a major studio action film. Gruber has enormous control of his body—he can even change his body language as well as his accent to pretend to be American—and this control manifests itself as grace.

The quality of movement is an aspect of performance hardly ever discussed, yet like the “unheard” underscore, it can have a powerful impact. It is a part of physical display, whether that of the athlete or the dancer, but the gradations of how one might describe movement are heavily laden with gender and sexuality signals. Economy of movement (like economy of materials in a musical composition) has positive connotations; it is a major component of grace. At some point, grace can become so pronounced that it is declared “effeminate,” an excess of grace that is abjected as “too feminine”—masculine grace is somehow “less graceful” than feminine grace.

But where is the boundary between grace (a powerful, positive term connoting nature and health) and “effeminacy” (a negative, weak term connoting deviance)? This distinction is clearly subjective, but is sure to be affected by how strongly one feels that “effeminacy” is a threat to masculinity. I may feel that Hans Gruber is graceful without being effeminate; the white, male, heterosexual Reaganite American audience to whom the film was primarily marketed may feel quite differently. This distinction is part of a larger cultural field in which American masculinity is “more masculine” than its effete¹⁸ European counterpart. Clearly, it is one reason for the tendency for action villains to be European—they have a great

18. In this connection, note that the dictionary definition of “effete” seems to have become progressively pejorative during the century—Webster’s 1913 edition is fairly objective (“No longer capable of producing young, as an animal, or fruit, as the earth; hence, worn out with age; exhausted of energy; incapable of efficient action; no longer productive; barren; sterile”); the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* lists it as a “disapproving literary adjective” with definite gender implications (“weak and powerless, or [of a man] behaving and appearing in a way that is similar to a woman”); but the definition from WordNet, a product of the Cognitive Science Laboratory at Princeton University, which “combines aspects of dictionaries and thesauri with current psycholinguistic theories of human lexical memory,” is even more judgmental—and more pertinent to our villains: “marked by excessive self-indulgence and moral decay; a decadent life of excessive money and no sense of responsibility” (<http://www.cogsci.princeton.edu/~wn/>; accessed 3/1/2003).

deal of style, education, intelligence, and panache, but good ol' American know-how will always be superior.

Hans Gruber's "defeat" in *Die Hard* is quite literally an abjection of his kind of masculinity. There are no overt hints that he is homosexual; indeed, his scenes with Holly McClain spark with sexual chemistry, far more than she displays with her husband. His demise is of a piece with her containment in patriarchal femininity. The watch she has been given by a flirtatious coworker, which symbolizes both her success in business and her attractiveness to other men, is stripped from her wrist by her husband; Gruber, who is clinging to her wrist as he hangs from a twenty-seventh floor window, falls with the watch.

Hans also has profound control over the music in *Die Hard*. Not only does the music thematically *belong* to him, both diegetically and nondiegetically, he seems able to conduct it: during the siege of the building, when he pauses with the electronic key over the front door, the music stops too, holding its breath until he swipes the key and turns to continue his cool, organized occupation. The first time he speaks, the music responds as he holds up his hands, one after the other—this is not a mickey-mousing but lags just that fraction of a second behind like an orchestra responding to a cue; and throughout the film, the music molds itself around his speech like accompanied recitative.¹⁹ As far as I am aware, this utter, pervasive domination of the music by a character is unmatched, and a kind of power that is not easily subdued or relinquished—the "Ode to Joy" rises over the end credits, reclaiming Hans's ownership of the score after the momentary lapse of his death.

Emil Fouchon

Director John Woo was already world-renowned for the balletic violence and quasi-poetic symbolism of his action films, blending the American cops'n'gangsters genre with the mysticism and choreographed fights of the martial arts movies that largely define Hong Kong cinema, when he took on his first English-language production, starring the Belgian martial arts star Jean-Claude van Damme. Cult American independent film producer/director Sam Raimi (*The Evil Dead* series was his most famous work until *Spiderman* in 2002) was one of the producers, although he and Woo would come into conflict over some aspects of the film's final cut.

The story was yet another adaptation of Richard Connell's well-known short story "The Most Dangerous Game" (1924), which has served as the basis for a

19. See "I just put a drone under him" for a much more thorough discussion of the responsiveness of the score to Gruber's control.

number of films as well as many episodes of adventure television. Yet few adaptations have actually been as close to the original as Chuck Pfaffer's script, which updates some of the political commentary and sets in train the sort of homoeroticism that often pervades Woo's work (and, indeed, much of the "buddy" action genre, from *Starsky and Hutch* in the 1970s to Jackie Chan and Owen Wilson in *Shanghai Noon/Knights* in the 2000s). The "buddies" in this case, however, are transposed from the hero side of the equation to the villain side; in the process, the homoeroticism is both intensified and subverted. By making it more overt, it cannot be easily subsumed into a "safe" heterosexual/male friendship mode, and it plays into the stereotyped presentation of the villains, Emil Fouchon and his associate Pik van Cleaf (Arnold Vosloo).

The nationalities of these Eurovillains are surprisingly ambiguous. The film is set in New Orleans, and Henriksen plays Fouchon with an American accent, so we could assume that he is Louisiana French; on the other hand, the pairing of a French and a Dutch name might hint at Belgian origin (although Belgium is hardly a country that conjures up images of cruelty and political power—unless one is meant to read it as a condemnation of the decadence of neutrality).²⁰ Fouchon and Pik are the cinematic counterparts to Connell's aristocratic Colonel Zaroff and his hulking Cossack giant Ivan.²¹ In the 1920s, when the story was written, these Russian characters would have been quite fresh political types: the effete European nobility dispossessed of their empire by a proletarian revolution, but still served by a slave-class of limited intelligence but great physical power. Like Hans Gruber, the character of Colonel Zaroff has an attractiveness:

Rainsford's first impression was that the man was singularly handsome; his second was that there was an original, almost bizarre quality about the general's face. He was a tall man past middle age, for his hair was a vivid white; but his thick eyebrows and pointed military mustache were as black as the night from which Rainsford had come. His eyes, too, were black and very bright. He had high cheekbones, a sharp-cut nose, a spare, dark face—the face of a man used to giving orders, the face of an aristocrat.

20. Adding to the confusion, star van Damme is Belgian, but playing Cajun French; and one wonders how many viewers would actually pick up on Vosloo's South African accent, particularly as his dark, exotic look contradicts the typical blonde image of the Afrikaner (and was instrumental in his best-known role as Imhotep in *The Mummy* and *The Mummy Returns* [Stephen Sommers, 1999 and 2001]).

21. In both duos, a kind of class hierarchy is set out in the use of their names: surnames for the aristocrats, forenames for the hired help.

Except for some minor details, this is an apt description of Fouchon (who is about forty-five, clean-shaven, and has brown hair and green eyes). But the bizarre handsomeness and even the sharp features match admirably.

Pik, however, is no Ivan. There is an animal quality to both: Ivan is strong but mute and portrayed as stupid (a Russian bear?), while Pik is more a black panther, sleek, powerful, predatory, and intelligent. He takes care of the details of their business and leads the hunts. Fouchon is the controlling genius, the idea man, the artist. Zaroff is merely bored, but Fouchon has at least the conceit of a political agenda for his money-spinning business in hunting humans: "It has always been the privilege of the few to hunt the many. Soldiers, policemen, fighter pilots—men who kill for the government—do so with impunity. Now, all we do is offer the same opportunity to private citizens such as yourself. . . . The same government that has made murder their sole preserve trains our targets." Each, in his own time, however, would be seen as dangerously decadent,²² and this would be amplified by a homosexual undercurrent in the movie so obvious it hardly even rates as subtext. Instead of the positive bonding force of "buddies," it becomes a symptom of their cultural decrepitude.

The men never overtly touch or even exchange what one might term passionate glances—though their intimacy is portrayed in the silent communication of exchanged gazes (full of both intent and humor), the comfortable warmth of their body language with each other, the constant, easy invasion of each others' personal space, the harmony of their movements. Pik moves like an athlete and would perhaps be read primarily as masculine; Fouchon's grace in his hand gestures and the way he crosses his legs—and even bends forward to put a wine glass on the floor with his legs crossed, leaning on the side of a chaise—may not quite be effeminate, but certainly rates as epicene.²³ Pik is power, Fouchon grace (a masculine/feminine configuration), but their power relationship is reversed.

The spare, elegant, white and gold decoration of their New Orleans mansion is a long-time code for homosexuality in American cinema, perhaps best exemplified by the apartment of Waldo Lydecker (Clifton Webb) in Otto Preminger's *Laura* (1944), but most revealingly, Pik and Fouchon spat. When Pik allows Boudreaux (van Damme) to get away during a chase, Fouchon chastens him, "Be more pro-

22. Ironically, while most would probably read Fouchon's elegant savagery as decadent, his argument bears ultra-conservative resentment of government power, making him even more similar to the Reaganite corporate pirate Hans Gruber.

23. Although the dictionary meaning of epicene is androgynous or pertaining to neither one sex nor the other, this ambiguity is almost always read in Western culture as a failure of masculinity, and therefore an inappropriate femininity.

fessional.” Later, as he sends Pik out on a hunt, Fouchon stops him close to his body and murmurs, “Are you still angry with me?”; Pik replies biting, and with audible quote marks, “Of course not. I’m a ‘professional’.” It is Boudreaux’s murder of Pik that causes Fouchon to lose his monumental cool and leads to the ferocious final battle.²⁴ Ironically, despite their villainous deeds, Pik and Emil represent one of the most positive, “normal” depictions of a long-standing homosexual couple in popular culture. But in the conservative political context of an action flick, their homosexuality increases the need for their extirpation.

This popular conception of the European mastermind is one in which the old-world masculinity of an earlier age becomes not just a potentially subversive referent, as in *Die Hard*, but a kind of resistance that turns old symbols of civilization (grace, musicality) into dangerous deviance, although the complexity of Beethoven reception overdetermines Fouchon’s abjection. Both masterful masculinity and classical Freudian conceptions of homosexuality are enacted in a scene in which Fouchon plays the first movement of the “Appassionata” Sonata for prospective clients.

In order to explore more fully the contradictory gender and sexuality codes flying in this sequence, I would like to draw on a distinction proposed by Heather Laing between “conventional” and “personal” depictions of diegetic performance; Laing is particularly concerned with melodramas and so-called women’s films of the 1940s in both Britain and America,²⁵ but since Fouchon is a type clearly descended from these films, such a theoretical framework would seem particularly apt. Laing is differentiating the way the musician relates emotionally to the music s/he is making, as articulated by the cinematic apparatus. Her distinction is worth quoting at length because of its attention to detail:

In a conventional performance, the active relationship of the character to the instrument is central. The instrument generally remains in the frame and there is a focus on shots demonstrating the performer’s technical musical prowess, notably through views of their hands on the keyboard or fingerboard. The performer tends to demonstrate attention to the music and their own part in it, with their gaze remaining on the instrument, the musical score or conductor if appropriate. . . .

24. The cross-currents of sexuality between Fouchon and Chance’s love interest in this final battle resonates with the relationship between Gruber and Holly in *Die Hard*, but is too complex to parse here.

25. Heather Laing, *Wandering Minds and Anchored Bodies: Music, Gender and Emotion in Melodrama and the Woman’s Film* (unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Warwick, 2000).

The personal performance, however, removes attention from potentially distracting musical technicalities. The musician is gradually isolated from the physical presence of their instrument through techniques of framing. This both represents and allows their private emotional removal from the public communication of conventional performance. The music may then appear to reflect their facial expressions or physical gestures, creating an intimate effect which suggests the more usual individual and interior potential of non-diegetic music.

A defining characteristic of the personal performance seems to be the musician's fixed, apparently unseeing stare into the middle distance. Even with the instrument still visible, this indicates a certain level of detachment from the technicalities of playing and a concentration on otherwise concealed emotions. As the performance progresses, the instrument is typically eradicated from the frame, with the camera focusing on increasingly close shots of the performer's face as their emotion reaches its greatest excess. Although at some level, therefore, we are still aware of the performance event, the source of music is obscured and the performer has apparently become oblivious to the physical task in which s/he is actually engaged.²⁶

Not surprisingly, Laing finds that while both male and female musicians' performances can be "conventional," "moments of personal performance [by male musicians] seem less common and tend to indicate an unusual and specific vulnerability which may also only be temporary" and in fact, in her two examples from *Dangerous Moonlight* (Brian Desmond Hurst, 1941) and *Hangover Square*, she specifically mentions that the "male protagonists are, in a sense, threatened with de-masculinisation through their lack of control over their own emotions or rationality."²⁷

Both types of performance can be found in Fouchon's "Appassionata" scene, although the positioning is predictably tangled. The basic performance is shot so that we first come around the white grand piano, the camera tracking around so that we see the gilt insides and finally see Fouchon's hands (or the hand double's). So far, a "conventional" performance. As the music intensifies, the camera comes around "inside" the piano, shooting Fouchon's face frontally as the piano recedes from view to just the edges of the lid and music stand—it is empty, he is playing from memory (eventually it will fade from view altogether), and his face seems intense but unreadable. This begins to look like a "personal" performance, but as yet is ambiguous.

26. Ibid., pp. 190–91.

27. Ibid., p. 192.

This scene is the most reedited and moved-around scene in the film, as we know from movie gossip surrounding the filming and Internet sources that have tracked down bootleg copies of various versions of the film, which had to be extensively recut from Woo's original version to reduce the violence (and remove a love scene between van Damme and leading lady Yancy Butler, which many reviewers found so ridiculous as to be laughable). Hamilton and Holland describe the original scene thus:

There are some interesting editing tricks present in the rough cut that were removed from the final. Our favorite occurs during the scene where we see Fouchon (Lance Henriksen) playing the piano. In the rough cut the shots of Fouchon tickling the ivory is intercut with stock footage of big game hunters and African tribesmen hunting and killing elephants and gazelle. It creates an interesting effect. Are the shots of hunters and hunted supposed to be what is going on in Fouchon's mind? Or are they presented to us as an attempt to satirize Fouchon's pretensions at being civilized? There is nothing nearly that challenging to the viewer in the final version of the film.²⁸

Because of the conventions of editing in narrative cinema, the dominant reading of this is going to be the former configuration—the safari shots will be most easily read as Fouchon's internal cinema. Thus, in the original conception, it is a “personal” performance in that the concentration is on his subjectivity, although little outward emotion is shown—it will certainly, however, provoke a response in the audience, as the reviewers note. Yet Fouchon's emotions seem detached (a mode of “conventional” performance), or at most his violently Romantic music becomes an underscore to the on-screen slaughter. Ironically, a presentation mode coded as “feminine” is used to create a reading that is heavily coded as “masculine.”

With the safari edited out, we find a different kind of intercutting. This time, it is less the subjective flashback/imagination constructed by the safari footage and more a simple case of parallel editing—cutting between two different situations happening at the same time. Yet the casting of Fouchon as ruthless predator is still

28. Scott Hamilton and Chris Holland, *Stomp Tokyo Review* (review dated 12/17/1998); <http://www.stomptokyo.com/movies/hard-target-dc.html>, accessed 1/31/2003. William S. Wilson responds similarly but more briefly: “These men are quite serious about their game. No scene proves that more than when Fouchon is playing the piano. Intercut with this scene is extremely graphic stock safari-footage of animals being hunted and killed, proving the hunters really do think of the men as just game” (“On the Celluloid Chopping Block: *Hard Target*, director's cut,” originally from *Video Junkie Magazine*, accessed at <http://www.godamongdirectors.com/woo/faq/target.html> 1/31/2003). It is worth remarking that both reviewers are at their most critical and philosophical during this scene, as almost all of the rest of the reviews are revelling in the forbidden violence.

there, just more subtle: the first part of the sonata is intercut with Fouchon's terrified toady Randall Poe negotiating with a poor, black homeless Vietnam veteran, Elijah, to become prey in the game. The emotions are heightened as Randall asks Elijah if there's anybody to worry about him; the camera closes tight on Elijah's face, tears in his eyes, as he says, "No, I got nobody." A musical flourish briefly underscores the emotion of the moment and covers over the edit returning us to the mansion. The second part of the scene cuts between Fouchon at the piano and Pik in the hallway, explaining to a customer how they will set up the hunt so that he is safe from arrest.

In both versions of the scene, Fouchon's musicality and "class" are juxtaposed against his brutal trade, but the difference in editing codes is profound. With the safari footage, the intercutting is subjective; with the negotiation footage, it is a more "objective" presentation of what is happening. The audience's connection between Fouchon's refinement and savagery happens at a different place conceptually: the first version is visceral; the second version is more intellectual, more subtle, and perhaps in the end even more horrifying—in this, I would differ from the reviewers. But the change of cutting may also deeply influence our reading of the unchanged element—Fouchon's performance at the piano.

In the original conception, Fouchon's intense gaze (a hallmark of the personal performance) could probably be interpreted as inward-directed—toward the memory/imagination of the violence. Without these subjective images to guide us, the gaze is piercingly outward, as in a conventional performance. Yet as the camera swings around behind him, we see what has been the focus of his concentration throughout—his own reflection in a full-length mirror. His masculine-coded conventional performance is suddenly revealed as a personal one, and in the psychoanalytic structures of Freud so richly incorporated and propagated by classical Hollywood cinema and film theory, this becomes a moment of exquisite narcissism, his masculine image, technological mastery of the piano, and hyper-masculine (yet highly emotive, Romantic) Beethoven reflected back on himself.²⁹ Could he *be* more (constructed as) gay?

Fouchon's mastery of this powerful piece of music puts him square in the line of the "diabolical mastermind," a polymath genius whose brutal trade in killing counterbalanced by his attachment to Beethoven. He is psychotic, but almost excessively masculine, a type that would certainly be recognized by Romantic crit-

29. As Heather Laing pointed out to me, "When he looks within himself, there is only his own image of himself—a very effective way of presenting abject evil—no relation to anything but himself." He is, then, a pure sociopath.

ics. On the other hand, his primary narcissism also makes him a textbook homosexual—if your textbook is an outdated Freudian one. As with Beethoven, old modes of reception still circulate widely in popular culture.

Stansfield

Gary Oldman's Stansfield does not dominate *Léon* the way Gruber and Fouchon dominate their respective films, but this is in part because the style and narrative structure of the film are different. The central dynamic is not between the hero and the villain, but the hero Léon (Jean Reno), a gentle-spirited, illiterate “cleaner,” and his unexpected “partner” Matilda (Natalie Portman), an intellectually and sexually precocious twelve-year-old. Here, morality and law are inverted: Léon is a professional hit man but the most innocent character in the story; Stansfield is a fairly high-ranking police officer and therefore a hideous hypocrite as a drug user and a violent, ruthless character.

It is in the midst of the most prominent display of his depravity that Stansfield's Beethovenian connection comes out. Whereas Gruber and Fouchon identify with Beethoven as genius, through the lens of their European sophistication, Stansfield's attraction to Beethoven is at a much more “popular” level—it is popular in the way it is articulated and in its embrace of the abject.

Beethoven's music is never heard in the film at all, yet it is central to the most violent scene in the film, in which Matilda's family is slaughtered. Beethoven is Stansfield's internal underscore, his inspiration and impetus to violence—to a point. The connection of Beethoven and violence is perhaps so ingrained in the popular consciousness that by this time it does not even *need* to be heard. Intriguingly, Beethoven is juxtaposed to two other, very different musical representations—another “silent” discussion of reggae (which is not even mentioned by name but alluded to by visual and verbal cues), and narrative and visual cues that reinforce the vaguely psychedelic underscore by long-time Besson collaborator Eric Serra. All three musics have their political nuances.

This scene is not a surface-gloss kind of violent scene such as we find in most American and Hong Kong action films, where the sheer kinetic, visual, and musical energies create the equivalent of a musical number—the *raison d'être* of the film for its stylistic identity and entertainment value, yet largely peripheral to the narrative thrust (if it has one). This is instead a brutal scene that sets the plot in motion, and the people we see killed are not mere cannon fodder or anonymous villainous henchmen lined up like ducks in a shooting gallery. Matilda's father is a petty criminal, and her mother and sister shallow and bitchy; we may not like them,

but they are characters we have come to know, at least a little, in their brief scenes. The inclusion of the innocent little brother in the body count makes the murders that much more horrific (as the forensic chalk outlines and bloodstains in a later scene remind us, and Matilda).

The scene is set up in the hallway outside of the family's apartment, down the hall from Léon's. Stansfield and his goons take up positions to the lounge-tango strains of a violin over a rolling *raï* rhythm.³⁰ Playing on a psychedelic cliché that goes back to the late 1960s drug culture, the exotic music is matched with a disconcerting overhead shot of Stansfield taking a lurid green and yellow capsule and reacting with exaggerated shudders and shivers.³¹ Later in the scene, as the violence escalates, the music becomes both more melodramatic and exotic, and shots through the hanging curtain of red, green, and gold beads in the apartment play on the psychedelic associations verbalized by Stansfield's first utterances, to his henchmen but as if to himself: "I like these calm little moments before the storm. It reminds me of Beethoven. Can you hear it? (*conducts vaguely*) It's like when you put your head to the grass you can hear it growin'. You can hear the insects." A number of tropes are intertwined here: the drug-heightened sensorium, Beethoven as both force of nature and representation of nature, and the physical evocation of classical music with a gesture of conducting (the art-music equivalent of air-guitar—but also truthfully, conducting *never* produces sound in and of itself).

Stansfield asks one of his men whether he likes Beethoven, and the man replies, "Couldn't really say." This separates Stansfield from his goons, making him superior in class as well as rank, although his next act plays not on the elevated Beethoven but the basest Beethoven, violent and psychotic, appealing to the pleasures of the body. He takes his gun and says, "I'm gonna play you some" before shooting the lock off the apartment door and bursting in.

As he strides deliberately down the entry hall, he is shooting with one hand and conducting with the other. The association of Beethoven with violence—indeed, Beethoven *as* violence—could not be more clear, but, for the sake of certainty, it is driven home in Stansfield's tauntingly "sane" conversation with Matil-

30. This reference to *raï* makes the film distinctly French, despite its New York setting; this popular Algerian musical style in France bears a similar historical and political position as African-American styles in America.

31. Although the association in the 1960s was largely with Indian music (where a number of elisions between drugs, Eastern philosophies, and Indian music were made via the Beatles—experimentations both pharmaceutical and musical [as in "Tomorrow Never Knows"]), Middle Eastern music is also implicated, aided by a gestural similarity in the complex rhythms, droning, and ornamented solo line.

da's father, demonstrating his erudition, his psychotic and/or drug-induced calm, and his desire to torture his victim:

We said noon. I've got one minute past. You don't like Beethoven. You don't know what you're missing. Overtures like that get my juices flowing. So powerful. But after his openings, to be honest, he does tend to get a little fucking boring. That's why I stopped! Toss the apartment. (*goons tossing the apartment, insert of Matilda getting groceries*) You're a Mozart fan. I love him, too. I loooove Mozart! He was Austrian, you know. But for this kind of work, he's a little bit light. (*mimes playing piano*) So I tend to go for the heavier guys.

These characterizations are hardly unique; it is a long-standing opposition, the light, ordered politeness of Mozart (Austria is next door to Switzerland, you know) versus the heavy, unruly—but viscerally exciting—Beethoven (who, though professionally associated with Austria was German-born—rather the opposite of Hitler). This Beethoven is the Romantic Beethoven that has been abjected by the academy but that lingers, powerfully, in popular culture. Here, the ordered, organic, formal genius is actively negated. That prized intellectual, controlling process of development out of the germinal cell is dismissed because it isn't exciting enough.

This is a complex positioning of Beethoven. He's off his pedestal, down among the people, but the people aren't dancing. Just who is at fault here? Stansfield for not understanding Beethoven's control of chaos, or Beethoven for being "fucking boring"? Is it music's responsibility to be complex and organic and knowable, or should it be wild and passionate and ineffable? In either case, Beethoven has failed at least one fan.

Stansfield's flamboyant conducting style introduces another unsettling element into the mix: it bears the indescribable but unmistakable mark of "camp"—among other things the excessive, but *theatrical* evocation of effeminacy, which is not really *femininity* but a kind of masculinity *self-consciously* manqué, a deviance that has historically been developed/invented by homosexual men as a means of negotiating their marginal position within the protocols of masculinity. The emasculating refinement of European classical culture is swept away by the obviously testosterone-driven Beethovenian violence, but creeps back in its performance. Beethoven can be masculine and intellectual, or he can be visceral, violent, but somehow effeminate?

Even the very nature of Beethoven's placement in the film's soundscape causes theoretical ructions. Is Stansfield in control of a realm even more remote than the nondiegetic—that magical place "off" that is created through sound beyond image? It doesn't seem so. Unlike Hans Gruber, Stansfield cannot conjure up Beet-

hoven aurally, for all his arm-waving and shooting; Gruber had only to flick an eyelash. Stansfield mimes playing the mantelpiece, but he is no virtuoso like Fouchon. Does Beethoven fail Stansfield, or does Stansfield fail Beethoven?

The conflation of Beethoven with psychedelia is likewise ambiguous. Both represent a loss of control, both are intoxicating. Both are associated with a venal and corrupt man. An intriguing little political twist comes in the juxtaposition of Stansfield's discussion of Beethoven with reggae, intercut as it is with an exchange between two of Stansfield's men: they are two distinct subcultural types, a hippie-type, with a woven tunic and dreadlocks (though he is white); and a grunge type. Just after the above-mentioned conversation, we cut to the two "goons" rifling the children's bedroom. The hippie type picks up a record album, Burning Spear's *Marcus' Children*,³² and remarks, "Cool."

GRUNGE GOON: Dude, what the fuck are you doing?

HIPPIE GOON: Man, keep your *bombacut* mouth shut.

(Living room)

STANSFIELD: Check out Brahms. He's good, too.

(Apartment doorway)

(*Tough-guy goon in doorway, watching both rooms*)

HIPPIE GOON: (*off*) What the fuck do you know about music?

GRUNGE GOON: (*off*) Man, knock it off!

So two discussions, explicit and implicit, about the value of music are being carried out in two different places. One could argue that the art-music conversation is being held in the adult space of the living room, whereas the popular music's place is in the children's room; but in some ways, the reggae argument is made more sophisticated (by the film, not the characters), by leaving the audience to fill in the importance of Burning Spear and Marcus Garvey. Beethoven's relevance is questioned by Stansfield, one of his men assumes a positive critical stance regarding Burning Spear; art and popular realms are leveled. Few would, or even could, question the political nature of Burning Spear, particularly on an album with a title like *Marcus' Children*. Is this an intentional recall of the "revolutionary" Beethoven of the *Eroica* and the Fifth Symphony? Has Beethoven been supplanted by the protest music of Burning Spear (it *is* another B, so in the discussion we've had Beethoven, Brahms, and Burning Spear)? Yet these musics are associated with the villains, diametrically opposed to the pop culture icons shared by Léon and Ma-

32. Burning Spear is a reggae band, and *Marcus' Children* is a rare 1980 album, one of several to be named after Marcus Garvey, the influential African-American leader, the "Black Moses" who is best remembered in association with the "Back-to-Africa" movement.

tilda—Charlie Chaplin, Madonna, and Léon’s hero Gene Kelly, who unexpectedly connects with *Die Hard*. Through the lens of Kubrick’s *Clockwork Orange*, Hans is associated with the “Ode to Joy” while his computer-hacker sidekick Theo is associated with *Singin’ in the Rain*. Is this a kind of doubling, with Stansfield/hippie goon a reflection of Hans/Theo on a high/low axis? If anything, in *Léon*, the hippie goon is a more positive portrayal than Stansfield, and Gene Kelly is firmly Léon’s aspirational figure. As is so typical of popular culture, and unlike the binary oppositions of “high” culture, there are few one-to-one correlations, but numerous resonances vibrate along the nodes and strands of the web of signification.

All three villains are different fellows, but issues of control and excess are certainly pertinent to each of them. Gruber’s excessive brilliance and flair are kept in a state of grace by his control—a control that does not seem rigid, but rather fluid and adaptable; his downfall is narratively illogical but necessary for the overriding conservative message of the film. Fouchon has a somewhat tighter rein on his emotions, sexuality, and tendency toward violence, but it tends to slip out of his grasp a little more easily; he nearly, literally, does go up in flames (Henriksen’s coat caught on fire during the shooting of the final showdown, and it was kept in the final cut), and in the end his cockiness becomes his undoing as he pauses to gloat over disarming the hand grenade dropped down the front of his trousers—an obviously castrating gesture, a punishment for his sexual deviance? Unfortunately, he gloats before he separates the elements far enough to keep the spark from bridging the connection and finally sending him up in flames on the third try. Stansfield is probably the most realistic—and least attractive—“diabolical mastermind,” chaotic and inconsistent, and in the end powerless even to conjure up the music that gives form to his delusions, let alone control them; but Beethoven does provide his model for slaughter.

The Beethoven of these action films is exuberant, frenetic, joyous, Romantic, chaotic, violent, sinister—hysterical, containing as it does all the connotations of aberrant “femininity,” sexuality that deviates from the male heterosexual “norm,” and excessiveness, irrationality.³³ This is not a Beethoven scholars today are comfortable with, but one that was there from the beginning, although it has gradually been abjected. Reynolds sums up the long strain of reception of Beethoven’s late quartets as “the disturbed and flawed products of a demented mind and sick

33. Note that Erno Rapée lists the *Coriolanus* Overture for “sinister” “situations like the presence of the captured enemy, demolishing of a hostile aëroplane or battleship, or for picturing anything unsympathetic.” I’m sure Stansfield would have approved. Erno Rapée, *Motion Picture Moods for Pianists and Organists* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1924). Quoted in Reynolds, “From Berlioz’s Fugitives to Godard’s Terrorists,” p. 158.

body, of a deaf composer who—because he was deprived of the ‘compass’ of his hearing—had lost his musical direction” and the transformation after Wagner into the works of a “suffering genius.” “An early view of this work as chaotic and incomprehensible began to give way to a view that has dominated much formalist criticism in the twentieth century—namely, that the quartets are a thoroughly integrated and unified musical whole. Today it is even possible to esteem them as ‘cool’.”³⁴

In the musicological realm, the masculinity of Beethoven seems generally secure, or is at least staunchly defended. Even in feminist criticism, his masculinity is problematic, not because of its fragility but because of its excessiveness (the tropes of violence and even rape), yet excessiveness is one of those abject traits, shading as it does over into irrationality and lack of control. Genius—long held as an exclusively male trait—treads a similar high wire. It brings chaos into control, sees order in the disorderly, but in part because of this awesome ability can tip over into insanity. While those traits can be, and are, subtly nuanced by critics, continually subjected to ever more refined binaries like a jewel being cut, in the realm of popular culture, it seems apparent that all possibilities are still propagated, encompassing the historical, conflicting perceptions of Beethoven and recombining them in ways that show *tendencies* in his popular reception but also that those perceptions are varied and contingent.

Reynolds actually adopts a position familiar to pop-culture scholars when he comments, “Whether for Berlioz and Wagner, or Kubrick and Godard, artistic reuse of canonical works takes part in defining the reception of those works, no less than more obvious forms of criticism.”³⁵ But there is the danger that if we look only at those uses that may be deemed “artistic” (Stanley Kubrick and Jean-Luc Godard, but not McTiernan, Woo, or Besson), we miss the fertile ground of the popular in which the meanings were planted, grew, hybridized, and which continually threaten to break through into the rarefied air of “high culture.”

34. Reynolds, “From Berlioz’s Fugitives to Godard’s Terrorists,” pp. 149–50. Wagner’s influence on critical thinking is traced in the work of Kristin M. Knittel, *From Chaos to History: The Reception of Beethoven’s Late Quartets* (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1992) and “Wagner, Deafness, and the Reception of Beethoven’s Late Style,” *JAMS* 51 (1998), 49–82.

35. Reynolds, “From Berlioz’s Fugitives to Godard’s Terrorists,” p. 163.

Conducting the Del Mar Edition of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony

Leigh Aspin

At a time when the classical recording market has been shrinking, and when some top maestros have been told by their record companies that they can no longer record core repertoire, new Beethoven symphony cycles continue to arrive. While this testifies to the enduring status of these works, it is also a reflection of the radical changes that performances of Beethoven's symphonies have endured during the last two decades.

In this regard, it is significant, and important to marketing departments, that the music of Beethoven has fallen into the repertoire covered by "period performance" (in a way that Brahms or Mahler hasn't). This has spawned both "period instrument" recordings in the late 80s and early 90s (e.g., Gardiner, Norrington, Goodman) and, more recently, modern instrument orchestras playing with awareness of period style (e.g., in recordings by Mackerras and Abbado, and the recently released set by Sir Simon Rattle and the Vienna Philharmonic).

There is also the research of Jonathan Del Mar, which led to the new Bärenreiter edition of the Beethoven symphonies. Del Mar's research is excellent and has been accepted by performers and their record companies; this new edition has provided another good reason for rethinking these symphonies, without the "mistakes" inherited from previous editions, and re-recording them. Indeed, record companies have used this edition as a selling point,¹ and Del Mar himself has written sleeve notes on a number of occasions.

1. See, for example, the cover of David Zinman's "world premiere recording on modern instruments according to New Bärenreiter edition," Arte Nova 65411 (1999).

From conversations I've had with conductors who have used this edition, it also emerges that Del Mar has been personally instrumental in communicating his research to performers over the last fifteen years, even before this edition was published. The mutual respect that has developed was illustrated in part by the fact that all three conductors I interviewed—Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Roy Goodman, and Sir Charles Mackerras—claim that their advocacy for Del Mar's work played some part in bringing this Bärenreiter edition to life. It is to Del Mar's credit that he has spent so much time and energy talking to performers about his findings—it is still too uncommon for musicologists and performers to get in touch with one another.

So how much of a difference has this edition made to the performance of these symphonies? I set out to answer this question through conversations with conductors about the merits of this edition as a *performing edition* and the ways in which it has affected their interpretations. I'm most grateful to these conductors for taking time from their busy schedules to add their voices to this debate. David Levy has reviewed the new edition as an *Urtext* edition in his article for this journal (see "*Urtext* or Performing Edition?" *Beethoven Forum*, 9/2, 225–32), and to facilitate some comparison, I have taken some of his examples and examined them from a performer's point of view.

Before examining specific examples, I must begin by qualifying Levy's general concern that "conductors who use this score are going to take it at face value." The conductors I spoke to were most interested to examine the research and critical commentary for themselves. That said, Del Mar's personal role in the realization of Beethoven's symphonies in performance today cannot be underestimated. His scholarship and enthusiasm have led conductors to trust him; for many of today's leading Beethoven conductors, Del Mar is a point of reference who is only a phone call or fax away. As Gardiner put it:

I would advise any young conductor who's approaching these symphonies to use Jonathan's edition as a basis, but if there's any uncertainty to challenge him and be prepared for a pretty strong comeback because he has the answers, there's no question about it . . . it's only when Jonathan—and this is why I trust him—comes up and shows you the sources and explains the problem in front of your eyes that you find out whether the work he's done really stacks up in front of the orchestra.

Levy's worry is that not all conductors will be inclined to challenge Del Mar, and even those who do might be persuaded to adopt Del Mar's point of view without fully examining particular examples of contrary evidence. From my experience these worries are unfounded. Despite his comments above, Gardiner

doesn't choose to follow every one of Del Mar's decisions to the letter, and Roy Goodman admitted that "I think he [Del Mar] has unwittingly made too many 'final' decisions which are more personal than he might think." In practice, conductors seem to treat this edition as they would any other: there are instances where the score is followed to the letter (sometimes when supporting evidence is equivocal), others where specific markings are clearly ignored and many instances where the score raises issues that are necessarily left to the conductor to resolve. In Gardiner's case, there is also a marking he discovered in the facsimile of the autograph score that Del Mar doesn't include in his edition. Gardiner nonetheless includes it in his performance.²

But overall Del Mar's edition wins plaudits from conductors, who undoubtedly regard it as far superior to any other edition of these symphonies they've worked from. Gardiner, an editor in his own right and someone with a great deal of experience of editorial differences, is quite convinced by Del Mar's approach:

The most valuable thing about Jonathan's edition is that it's conceived from the point of view of the performer. It's not simply an academic *Urtext*, it's also practical in the sense that it gives you a series of priorities in the sources where there's complexity, and reveals to you from a performance-practice point of view a whole range of expressive gestures and techniques that Beethoven considered important which have somehow been subsumed in later editions, or just ignored.

Mackerras shares a similar viewpoint and also sees an *Urtext* edition as important in terms of the conductor's general approach to realizing a composer's intentions in performance.

The thing about going back to source material for a new edition, apart from the wrong notes that are in there and various actual mistakes, is how can you tell? Why bother to do a new edition if you can't really hear the difference? But that's not really a valid argument . . . We try to get the most out of the score that we can and it's a good idea in my view to really see the score as the composer meant it as far as possible.

One point on which all three conductors formed a consensus was that "an editor's duty is to print clearly what the composer wrote, even if in practice this is disregarded."

2. Movement II, mm. 198–208: John Eliot Gardiner showed me the facsimile in which it appears that the '>' markings above the timpani part are so elongated as to suggest *diminuendi* rather than accents. This can be heard in his recording and produces a quite different effect from other performances.

ed,” to use the words of Mackerras. But if this *Urtext* edition is intended for use by performers, questions are raised as to the extent to which an editor should highlight anomalies between manuscript and practice, and the level of consistency with which Del Mar has done so in this edition. A few specific examples will help.

In my listening experience, hardly any conductors observe Beethoven’s *a tempo* marking at m.511 in the first movement. In fact, it has become an established performance tradition to continue the ritard of the previous measure through to an *a tempo* at m.513. This makes instinctive musical sense on the grounds that a coda, which introduces a new development of thematic material, begins at m.513 at the start of a long final crescendo to the end of the movement. Different conductors have different interpretations of this section, but all agreed that this marking wasn’t something they followed.³ Obviously Del Mar was right not to remove Beethoven’s marking, but should an edition for performers have highlighted this issue? Gardiner concurs with Mackerras’s comments about the editor’s duty (above) in this instance, but adds: “What he could do is put an asterisk and say ‘you may find this difficult to do, and practically no conductors do it, and there’s something slightly unnatural about it, but that’s in fact what Beethoven wrote’.” Clearly this is optional in an *Urtext* edition, but as a purpose of this edition is also to serve performers, it is perhaps significant that Del Mar does not mention a performance tradition that contradicts Beethoven’s markings. Equally pertinent is the fact that conductors don’t necessarily take any more notice of the marking just because it appears in this new *Urtext* edition. Their musical instinct continues to override this marking.

There are, however, other, more contentious points in the score where it appears that Del Mar does decide to challenge the manuscript marking on the basis of his experience of the work in performance. The issue of tempo and metronome markings in Beethoven is a notorious mine field and at a couple of key points in the symphony, Del Mar enters the debate over wide disagreements about Beethoven’s intended tempo marking.⁴ The first such instance is the trio of the second movement (m.412). Although a metronome marking exists in the sources, Del Mar leaves it blank in the score and refers to his Critical Commentary, where he states that he is not convinced that half note = 116, the only authentic figure, is correct: “Musical sense suggests that minim = 116 cannot be correct . . . because of the stringendo to Presto, the truth lying somewhere around minim = 160.” But Mack-

3. One conductor suggested that the *a tempo* marking could be seen as part of a larger ritard.

4. As Gardiner has said, “we should see the metronome mark as a by-product of the overall musical expression, not a panacea which singlehandedly corrects the readings of the past.” Anyone who has attempted tempo-mapping will know that no musician rigidly sticks to a metronome mark in any case.

erras has no problem with the autograph marking: "It seems to me to be perfectly sensible to stringendo to a slower tempo. Why not? It seems to me that the stringendo doesn't necessarily have to have anything to do with the following tempo."

Del Mar draws on stronger evidence to dismiss the theory that Beethoven might have meant the trio tempo to be whole note = 116, and this was supported by Gardiner on practical grounds—"you come to something that is far quicker than is playable." If his forces can't do it, then probably no one can.

Del Mar's suggestion that the tempo probably lies closer to half note = 160 seems convincing for many conductors on the basis of the tempo they adopt in their performances, and it must surely be based to some extent on his experience of this music in performance. While this is a more significant point of editorial debate than movt. I, mm. 511–13, his decisions could be viewed as inconsistent in these instances, or perhaps this simply illustrates the degree to which his personal view of the work is (inevitably) present in the score. Obviously his view is a valuable one, given his unparalleled experience of the music, and the performers I spoke to found it entirely appropriate that he didn't commit a single tempo marking to the score at this point, thereby flagging it up as a point of debate. Del Mar serves them well by presenting options and advice, from which they make their own decisions. And perhaps the most significant fact about this "performing edition" is that conductors do seem to make their own decisions—Mackerras is ultimately unswayed by Del Mar's arguments in this instance.

The other notorious tempo marking in this symphony is at the "Turkish March" in the fourth movement (m. 331). Here Del Mar is more assertive with his tempo recommendation, appropriately so given the stronger evidence for his decision, placing the dotted half note in square brackets (he left the MM blank in the previous instance). But interestingly, from comments made by Goodman, this is something about which Del Mar has changed his opinion during the course of his research. Goodman's Nimbus recording of 1988 takes the March at around dotted quarter note = 84. "The [slow] Turkish March tempo was insisted upon by Jonathan Del Mar at that time! We did it at the correct (and faster = double) tempo in later concerts, again on his advice. I now choose many faster tempi generally." This highlights the danger of conductors equating Del Mar's advice too closely with Beethoven's intentions. But again conductors seem to take these arguments on board and then make their own decisions. Mackerras:

I've actually tried it [the Turkish March] both ways in my time and I'm perfectly convinced now in my mind that it's fast.

And that's just musical instinct, rather than anything else?

Yes.

Looking at these examples from a performer's point of view, they reveal different degrees of editorial intervention and a full range of reactions from performers. Del Mar's inconsistencies could be problematic from an *Urtext* standpoint, but his undogmatic approach and sensitivity to each individual situation seem to give performers what they need to form their own interpretations. Other potentially contentious issues for performers meet with a similar range of responses.

Del Mar took the decision to substitute all staccato dots for *Striche* on the basis that "it is nowadays generally agreed that any distinction between the two is only identifiable so sporadically as to be impossible to reflect in a new edition with any degree of logic or consistency."⁵ Although this is perhaps an inevitable practical decision, it would seem to pose a problem for performers, given that Del Mar admits that "Beethoven was said to be punctilious about the difference between *Punkte* and *Striche*," and Gardiner asserted that "*Striche* means something different from *Punkte*, from dots. There's no doubt about it that when Beethoven writes *Striche* there's an element of an accent involved." Yet this was met with a relative indifference from these conductors. Gardiner wasn't convinced enough to speak for Del Mar on this point—"you should go back and ask him about that"—and Mackererras casts doubt over its having any significance at all. "The early publishers of Beethoven, I think I'm right in saying, did not make any difference at all. Either they write all dashes or all dots. While there is a definite perceptible difference between one and the other in Mozart, there is not usually a perceptible difference between one and the other in Beethoven." Goodman simply added that "daggers are always open to individual interpretation," and so perhaps we can accept in this area this edition isn't able to offer any reliable practical advice to performers.

The conductors were much more convinced by Del Mar's discovery at movt. IV, mm. 531–34; 537–40. Previous editions of this symphony presented uniform ties in the horn part, but Del Mar has spotted irregular ties in the autograph version, which were "corrected" to regular ties in later editions. Gardiner describes this passage as "one of the great revelations of Jonathan's edition." Mackerras was convinced enough to re-record those measures several years later for the re-release of his symphony cycle on the "Classics for Pleasure" label. Yet, playing devil's advocate here, could this have been a copyist's mistake, as with the disputed metronome marking in the second movement? Again, conductors' advocacy stems from their musical interpretation of this section. Gardiner: "The horns are getting quieter and quieter but there's a sort of undercurrent of instability which is much more palpable [with the irregular ties]."

5. Jonathan Del Mar, introduction to *Beethoven: Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1999).

Del Mar's edition is undoubtedly prized by conductors. In the overall context of his outstanding work, the inconsistencies of editorial approach discussed above do not ultimately trouble them. If anything, these inconsistencies raise pertinent issues that performers are able to consider when forming their own interpretations. Indeed, their huge respect for this *Urtext* edition, in recognizing it as closer to Beethoven's intentions than any other edition they've used, is not at the expense of their own musical instincts. They treat this edition as a superior set of guidelines rather than a new set of incontrovertible rules. In this light, the work of the editor isn't so very far removed from that of the conductor—both have to take a personal stance on Beethoven's intentions, in instances where these intentions can never actually be determined, to produce their version of the music.

Sir John Eliot Gardiner's comments form an apposite conclusion:

You have a strong, very subjective sense when you come off the podium, of whether you and the orchestra have actually engaged and tangled with the issues, or whether the journey has been a bit too smooth. That's all you can expect to do—to connect and really tussle with the dialectics of the music, because Beethoven, perhaps more than any other composer, treated his music as essentially part of his own life-struggle. In that sense, the element of trying to find a way through life's thorny dilemmas—which involves putting yourself in Beethoven's shoes to the point when you identify with his turbulent moods and express them as your own—is crucial to the success and conviction of an interpretation. If his symphonies emerge as just aesthetically beautiful, well-rounded and polished, something vital has gone missing and we've missed the plot.

Discography

Recordings of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 Using Jonathan Del Mar's Research (Compiled by José Bowen, Leigh Aspin, and Jonathan Del Mar)

Four of these recordings (Goodman, Gardiner, Mackerras, and Abbado) were recorded before the new edition appeared in December 1996; they used the Breitkopf parts and made corrections from Del Mar's correction lists. Recordings are listed chronologically by recording date. Release dates in parenthesis follow company catalogue numbers.

Goodman (1988). The Hanover Band, cond. Roy Goodman. Oslo Cathedral Choir, Terje Kvam, director. Rec. All Saints Church, Tooting, London (27, 28, 29 April,

1988). CD: NI 5134 (1989); NI 5144 (*Symphonies 1–9*, 5 CDs, 1989); NI 1760 (*Complete Symphonies/Overtures/Missa solemnis*, 7 CDs, 1998).

Mackerras (1991). Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra, cond. Sir Charles Mackerras. Rec. Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool (3, 4, 5 January 1991). CD: EMI Classics for Pleasure 2186 (1995); 5-72805 (1998).

Gardiner (1992). Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique, cond. Sir John Eliot Gardiner. Monteverdi Choir. Rec. All Saints Church, Tooting, London (October 1992). CD: Archiv 439900 (*The Nine Symphonies*, 6 CDs [5 of music plus 1 of interview], 1994); Archiv 447074 (1995).

Abbado (1996). Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. Claudio Abbado. Swedish Radio Choir and Eric Ericson Chamber Choir, Tönu Kaljuste, chorus master. Rec. Großes Festspielhaus, Salzburg (2, 4–6 April 1996). CD: Sony Classical SK 62634 (1996). Note from J. Del Mar: By 1996, the complete list of corrections was available for this recording, but Abbado made only about half of them.

Zinman (1998). Tonhalle-Orchester Zurich, cond. David Zinman. Schweizer Kammerchor, Fritz Näf, chorus master. Rec. Tonhalle, Zurich (12, 14 December 1998). CD: Arte Nova 65411 (1999); Arte Nova 65410 (*The Nine Symphonies*, 5 CDs, 1999).

Van Immerseel (1999). Anima Eterna Symphony Orchestra and Choir, cond. Jos van Immerseel. Anima Eterna Symphony Choir, Louis Devos, chorus master. Rec. St. Carolus Borromeus Church, Antwerp, May 1999. CD: Sony Classical LSP 985974 (1999).

Rattle (2002). Vienna Philharmonic, cond. Sir Simon Rattle. Rec. Musikverein, Vienna (Spring 2002). CD: EMI Classics 7243-5-57445-2-4 (2003).

Dausgaard (forthcoming). Swedish Chamber Orchestra, cond. Thomas Dausgaard. Rec. Örebro Concert Hall. CD: SIMAX Classics (Pro Musica, Oslo, Norway). Note: This cycle began with Nos. 1 and 2 in 1999, and 4 and 5 in 2000).

REVIEWS

The Dialectical Composer

John Daverio (1954–2003)

Klaus Kropfnger. *Beethoven*. Kassel and Stuttgart: Bärenreiter and Metzler, 2001. 334pp.

“**B**ecause what is difficult is also beautiful, good, grand . . .” (*denn was schwer ist, ist auch schön, gut, gross . . .*) These words, quoted from Beethoven’s letter of January 1817 to the publisher Sigmund Anton Steiner in reference to the Piano Sonata in A Major, op.101, make a fitting epigraph to Klaus Kropfnger’s *Beethoven*—and in more ways than one.¹ Quite apart from the quotation’s obvious resonance with Beethoven’s later piano music, it applies to Kropfnger’s book, which, to quote again from Beethoven’s letter, also “makes [one] sweat” (*macht schwitzen*).² Readers who are looking for a handy guide to Beethoven’s life and works are advised to go elsewhere. Kropfnger’s account is many things—a detailed report on the current status of Beethoven research, a penetrating critique of major issues in Beethoven scholarship, a sustained rumination on the possible ties between the composer’s life and his creative output—but a “narrative travelogue,” to use Kropfnger’s phrase, it is not.³

1. See Brandenburg, IV, 8 (cited in Kropfnger, p.10). The emphasis in the passage from the letter to Steiner is Beethoven’s own; translations of Kropfnger’s text in this review are the review author’s.

2. Brandenburg, IV, 8.

3. “User-friendliness” was clearly not a priority in the making of this book. The print is small, though fortunately not as minuscule as that of the MGG article on which the book is based (see n.7). Kropfnger’s (at times serpentine) sentences are frequently interrupted by bibliographic references in abbreviated form, and locating the full citations in the extensive and painstakingly subdivided bibliography near the end of the book (pp.282–320) can be a real adventure. To cite one of many

Although Kropfinger's scholarly contributions have addressed topics as diverse as the oratorios of Handel, the music of Ligeti and Berio, and parallel manifestations of modernism in music and the visual arts,⁴ Beethoven has remained at the center of his interests. The author of seminal articles on the String Quartet in B♭, op.130, and the *Grosse Fuge*, op.133,⁵ he is probably best known to English-language readers for his 1991 monograph *Wagner and Beethoven: Richard Wagner's Reception of Beethoven*, a translation, with revisions, of a study originally published in German in 1974.⁶ The book under review is a somewhat revised version of his Beethoven entry in the second edition of the venerable *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*.⁷ Although I have not made a word-for-word comparison of the two texts, the differences between them appear to be slight. Apart from repositioning the biographical synopsis and the catalogue of Beethoven's works, the book version includes a new preface (pp.10–11) and a bibliographical update (pp.312–20). As the original version, however, far exceeds a typical encyclopedia entry in both scope and depth, it is fair to say that Kropfinger's work has found its proper medium in the later, book format.

Framed by a preface and bibliography, the body of the text is divided into three main parts: A (on Beethoven's life), B (on the works), and C (on issues of reception). A catalogue of works follows as Part D. Part A opens with a chronologically organized biographical synopsis (pp.12–49), offering a rich fund of material under headings such as: family and personal matters; illnesses; dwellings; friends, acquaint-

examples: readers who are not already familiar with James Webster's 1994 article on issues of periodization in Beethoven's works—"The Concept of Beethoven's 'Early' Period in the Context of Periodizations in General," *Beethoven Forum* 3 (1994), 1–27—will probably expend considerable effort matching the short reference on p.148 of Kropfinger's book ("Webster [1994, S. 1–27]") with the full entry on p.292, where it appears together with related studies under the heading: "III. Stilperioden: 2. Frühstil."

4. For a bibliography of Kropfinger's publications through the early 1990s, see Klaus Kropfinger, *Über Musik im Bilde: Schriften zu Analyse, Ästhetik und Rezeption in Musik und Bildender Kunst*, ed. Bodo Bischoff, Andreas Eichhorn, Thomas Gerlich, and Ulrich Siegele (Köln-Rheinkassel: Christoph Dohr, 1995), II, 653–58.

5. See in particular Kropfinger, "Das gespaltene Werk—Beethovens Streichquartett Op.130/33," in *Beiträge zu Beethovens Kammermusik: Symposion Bonn 1984*, ed. Sieghard Brandenburg and Helmut Loos (Munich: G. Henle, 1987), pp.296–335. See also nos.41–43 in the "Publikationsverzeichnis" in Kropfinger, *Über Musik im Bilde*, II, 656.

6. Kropfinger, *Wagner und Beethoven: Untersuchungen zur Beethoven-Rezeption Richard Wagners*, Studien zur Musikgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts, no.29 (Regensburg: Bosse, 1975); and *Wagner and Beethoven: Richard Wagner's Reception of Beethoven*, trans. Peter Palmer (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991).

7. Kropfinger, "Beethoven," in *MGG Personenteil* 2 (1999), cols.667–943.

tances, and students; letters; journeys; compositions; sketchbooks; concerts and academies; reception; finances; and editors and editions. The remainder of Part A, together with Parts B and C, comprises the heart of the text, the structure of which sometimes calls to mind that of a set of Russian dolls, with its division into chapters, sections, subsections, and in one case from Part B (on “contrast” and “contrast differentiation”), into sub-subsections as well.

The concentration of Parts A and B on Beethoven’s life and works, respectively, reflects a long-standing tradition in biographical writing and was in any event dictated by what appears to be the new MGG’s standard format for composer biographies. Kropfinger’s treatment of the material, however, is hardly traditional. Because of the imposing dimensions of the subject, as he explains in his prefatory remarks, he opted for a discursive presentation that finds its “center of orientation and inquiry” in a “multi-layered and optimally enriched data bank” (p.10). And given the singular challenges of Beethoven biography, he felt compelled to adopt a “problem-oriented” approach, one geared toward critical engagement with the unresolved—and perhaps irresolvable—questions of Beethoven research. The traditional “travelogue” simply would not do. Accordingly, his text is “open” in some ways, embodying the principle of “*non finito*”—this despite the outwardly conventional disposition of its larger parts (p.10).

In order to do justice to Kropfinger’s work, it will not suffice merely to enumerate its contributions to Beethoven scholarship—which are considerable. In light of his methodological premises and aims, I will also give close attention to Kropfinger’s strategies for meeting the challenges of writing an artist-biography at the turn of the twenty-first century. Finally, taking my cue from the open quality of the text, I will offer a preliminary observation or two on how some of its “gaps” might be filled in.

Kropfinger’s *Beethoven* is characterized by a skillful mixture of *résumé* and original insights. Consider, for instance, the extended discussion of Beethoven’s correspondence in Part A (pp.58–76). Proceeding from the observation that, for Beethoven, “linguistic expression must have seemed insufficient” (p.58), Kropfinger uncovers a paradox: precisely because “verbal texts were not the ideal medium for what [Beethoven] wanted to express,” his letters “reveal more in the way of personal information” than the average correspondence, even though they may not meet the “average standard” in terms of “linguistic elegance of expression” (p.58). Many readers of Beethoven’s letters would agree that they often fail to meet the standard of epistolary propriety in matters of orthography, punctuation, and syntax. At the same time, Kropfinger notes that Beethoven was perfectly capable of writing

“properly” if he so chose and cites as examples the correspondence with Breitkopf and Härtel, Archduke Rudolph, and Goethe (p.67). Reminding us that in the “age of the steam engine,” letters frequently functioned like “telephone conversations”—or, we might say, like e-mail messages—Kropfinger adds that Beethoven’s apparent indifference to niceties of grammar and spelling was due in part to the extreme haste in which many of the letters were written: “They flowed over from speech into writing” (p.67). Furthermore, the apparent “lapses” in Beethoven’s correspondence may at times have been intentional, products of a “norm-breaking” style that could manifest itself in “run-on sentence[s] . . . sprinkled with verbal shards” (the letter to Franz Wegeler, ca. 1795). The “shards” to which Kropfinger refers are single words separated by a dash—a highly characteristic punctuation mark through which Beethoven filled his letters with “tension-laden pauses,” the rhetorical equivalent of rests in a musical score (pp.63–64).

Kropfinger locates another sort of complementarity between linguistic and musical expression in Beethoven’s fondness for including “tonal embeddings” (*Klangeinbettungen*) in the body of his letters. Frequently these “inlays” take the form of canons, often conveying New Year’s greetings, congratulations, or farewell wishes in a humorous vein. One of the best known of these is the three-voice canon (WoO 191) on the punning text “Kühl nicht lau” (cool not lukewarm), from a letter of 3 September 1825 to the composer Friedrich Kuhlau. According to Kropfinger, the *Briefkanons* are “communicatively multivalent,” implicitly creating through their many-voiced texture a kind of “public” or “circle of listeners” (p.70). Moreover, the “musical inlays” in Beethoven’s letters are complemented by his use of “verbal inlays” in the compositional realm, namely, in the increasingly specific expressive indications of his later works, and the verbal interpolations in his sketches (p.72).

I will revisit Kropfinger’s efforts to forge links between Beethoven’s music and lived experience at a later point. For now, I would like to comment briefly on the central concerns of Parts B and C of his book. In its broad outlines, Kropfinger’s discussion of the works (Part B) turns on familiar themes, focusing on issues of genre (pp.154–84) and formal structure (pp.196–213). For Kropfinger, Beethoven’s strategic approach to genre was fueled not only by a passion for conquest (in a letter of 1 July 1801 to Karl Amenda, Beethoven boasted of having “‘written everything from opera to church music’”), but also by a life-long quest for “the unconditionally great work, the *opus perfectum*.” The results of this attitude were twofold, leading, on the one hand, to an incredibly varied catalogue of works, and, on the other, to what Kropfinger calls the “optimization of genre.” A key idea in Kropfinger’s conceptual arsenal, this entails the “individualization” and “problematizing” of a genre’s constituent members to such a degree that generic boundaries are nearly abrogated (pp.154–55).

In a beautiful essay on Proust, Walter Benjamin wrote that all great works of art either “establish a genre or dissolve one.”⁸ I think that Kropfinger would acknowledge the resonance of this observation for the composer of the *Eroica* Symphony, the *Missa solennis*, and the *Grosse Fuge*. Yet for Kropfinger, the most telling instances of creation and dissolution (i.e., of “optimization”) in Beethoven’s *œuvre* are not to be found in the “grand” genres of symphony, Mass, or string quartet, but rather in the genres that most of his contemporaries tended to conceive along modest lines. In support of this claim, he calls attention to the broad dimensions of the String Trios (op.9), the emancipation of the melody instrument in the accompanied keyboard sonatas, the symphonic character of the “Waldstein” and “Appassionata” Sonatas (ops.53 and 57), and the integration of sonata and fugue in the “Hammerklavier” Sonata (op.106). Moreover, it follows from Beethoven’s persistent search for new means of optimization that he was never totally satisfied with the result, never completely convinced that he had achieved the *opus perfectum*—a posture that assumed extreme form in a number of his pronouncements on his piano sonatas in particular (pp.157–58).

Kropfinger also takes Beethoven’s self-critical stance into account in his discussion of issues of reception in Part C. Tracing the genuine origins of Beethoven reception to the earliest reactions of publishers, Kropfinger also observes that feedback from the members of Beethoven’s circle, as documented in the letters and conversation books, constitutes another significant, if relatively untapped, aspect of the topic. For Kropfinger, reception is not merely a matter of after-the-fact commentary; equally crucial is its potential role in the compositional process. No less than his own self-imposed standards, Beethoven’s cognizance of the opinions of others had compositional consequences, most famously perhaps in the revisions of *Fidelio*, the newly written middle movement of the “Waldstein” Sonata, and the “substitute” finale of the String Quartet in B♭, op.130 (pp.312–14). In addition, as Beethoven came increasingly to be viewed as a “talent of creative surprise,” the reception of a recently published work would often raise the “critical threshold” for those to come, thus acting as a catalyst for Beethoven’s “creative will to surpass” (*Plus-ultra-Willen*)—the imperative to blaze new trails in art, whatever the cost (pp.139, 214).

To the extent that Kropfinger’s treatment of his subject is “problem-oriented,” his rhetorical stance is less that of a narrator than of a commentator-critic. Thus, for

8. Walter Benjamin, “On the Image of Proust” (1939), trans. Harry Zohn, in *Selected Writings, Volume 2, 1927–1934*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1999), p.237.

example, in considering Beethoven's much-discussed letter to the Immortal Beloved (*unsterbliche Geliebte*), Kropfingher's principal aim is neither to determine the identity of the unnamed addressee, nor even to summarize the evidence in support of the various contenders for the role of Immortal Beloved.⁹ Rather, his commentary is largely devoted to a characterization of the positions in the debate over the most likely recipients of the celebrated missive: Antonie Brentano or Countess Josephine von Deym-Stackelberg, née Brunswick. The "Antonie" hypothesis, as articulated by Maynard Solomon,¹⁰ is said to be "criminological" due to its basis in a reconstruction of a chain of events from facts and circumstantial evidence pointing toward a meeting between Beethoven and Antonie Brentano in 1812 (p.124). On the other hand, Kropfingher designates the "Josephine" hypothesis—championed by Harry Goldschmidt and Marie-Elisabeth Tellenbach¹¹—as "(inner-) biographical-contextual," emphasizing that "the indisputable love relationship between Beethoven and Josephine Deym continued to glow on both sides, well beyond the termination of their *Briefwechsel*, as the fire of inner biography, only to flare up in Prague in 1812" (p.124). Neither position, Kropfingher maintains, definitively establishes the identity of the Immortal Beloved. This prompts him to devote considerable space to the questions left unanswered by both theories (pp.125–26), which, as regards the "Antonie" hypothesis, include: Given Beethoven's close relationship with the Brentanos, and their probable knowledge of his travel plans, how can we account for the fact that the meeting with the Immortal Beloved was a source of surprise? And in light of Beethoven's views on the inviolability of marriage, is it conceivable that he would have assumed the role of "erotic freebooter"? As for the "Josephine" theory: What were the countess's precise whereabouts during the crucial period in June/July 1812? Was it family pressure or her own personal convictions that led her to deny Beethoven entrance to her home?

9. The literature on this topic is already vast, and interest in it shows no signs of abating. Three recent important contributions to the debate appear in *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 57/6 (2002): Sieghard Brandenburg, "Auf Spuren von Beethovens 'unsterbliche Geliebten': Einige kritische Überlegungen," pp.5–8; Walther Brauneis, "'... Mache dass ich mit dir leben kann': Neue Hypothesen zur Identität der 'Unsterblichen Geliebten,'" pp.9–22; and Rita Steblin, "Josephine Gräfin Brunswick-Deyms Geheimnis enthüllt: Neue Ergebnisse zu ihrer Beziehung zu Beethoven," pp.23–31.

10. See Maynard Solomon, "New Light on Beethoven's Letter to an Unknown Woman," *MQ* 58 (1972), 572–87; "Antonie Brentano and Beethoven," *ML* 58 (1977), 153–69; and his *Beethoven*, pp.158–89; and the relevant chapters ("Recherche de Josephine Deym" and "Antonie Brentano and Beethoven") in his *Essays*, pp.157–89.

11. See Harry Goldschmidt, *Um die Unsterbliche Geliebte: Ein Bestandsaufnahme* (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1977); and Marie-Elisabeth Tellenbach, *Beethoven und seine "unsterbliche Geliebte" Josephine Brunswick: ihr Schicksal und der Einfluss auf Beethovens Werk* (Zurich: Atlantis-Musikbuch, 1983).

Kropfinger's account of the controversy surrounding Beethoven's *Immortal Beloved* exemplifies a method that treats the raw data of biography as a means toward the end of disclosing a larger truth about the nature of a highly complicated personality. For Kropfinger, the key phrase in the letter is Beethoven's assertion that: "Your love makes me at once the happiest and unhappiest [of men]" (*Deine Liebe macht mich zum glücklichsten und unglücklichsten zugleich*). In addition to offering "dramatic testimony" of the "inner contradictions" in Beethoven's character, the letter also demonstrates the composer's ability to internalize "contrast constellations" (*Kontrastkonstellationen* [p.127])—a concept that, at a later point in the book, provides Kropfinger with a crucial link between Beethoven's inner life and his artistic productivity.

Kropfinger's command of the Beethoven literature is at once broad and deep. Embedded in his book are minicritiques of a wide array of issues, ranging from Adorno's thesis on the anomalous position of the *Missa solennis* within Beethoven's output (pp.169–70) and Dahlhaus's notion of "subthematicism" (pp.206–07), to Douglas Johnson's questioning of the relevance of sketch studies (p.188) and Daniel Chua's claims regarding the lack of "psychological linear progression" in the late quartets (p.205). One of the more telling of these critical encounters occurs within the context of a discussion of alternatives to the traditional three-period grouping of Beethoven's *œuvre*, among them James Webster's consideration of his output from the perspective of a "First Viennese-European Modern Style." First proposed in his monograph on Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony, and subsequently taken up in a study devoted specifically to Beethoven's early artistic development, this slice of music-historiographical time is said to embrace the period from around 1750 to 1828, that is, from the emergence of a distinctive galant idiom to the deaths of Beethoven and Schubert.¹² According to Kropfinger, Webster "endeavors thereby to eliminate the problem of bothersome period-features and at the same time denies that the onset of Beethoven's 'heroic' phase represented a fundamental change vis-

12. See James Webster, *Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style: Through-composition and Cyclic Integration in His Instrumental Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), pp.356–57, 372–73; and "The Concept of Beethoven's 'Early' Period," pp.25–27. The latter study serves as Kropfinger's main point of reference, the following passage in particular: "During the 1790s, he gradually mastered the Viennese modern style and then, in works like the *Eroica* and Fifth Symphonies, further developed and extended it. But neither his heroic style nor his ensuing lyric phase around 1810 fundamentally altered it; nor did this music 'surpass' that of Haydn or Mozart" (p.25). Webster expands on these observations in an article published too recently for Kropfinger to consult. See his "Between Enlightenment and Romanticism in Music History: 'First Viennese Modernism' and the Delayed Nineteenth Century," *19CM* 25/2–3 (2001–02), 124–26.

à-vis the preceding period from 1790" (p.148), but in the process he merely "replaces a relatively small-scale division [Beethoven's 'early' and 'heroic' periods] with a large one," the "First Viennese-European Modern Style," which, Kropfinger says, must be accepted on faith (pp.148–49).

For our purposes, the principal issue is neither the validity of Webster's thesis nor the strength of Kropfinger's objections. At stake here is the tug-of-war between two modes of inquiry—biographical and historical—that cannot function without one another, but whose priorities are sometimes at odds. As a biographer, Kropfinger aims a priori to highlight the singularity of his subject's achievements, hence, to cite an example from his discussion of periodization, the notion that Beethoven's output after 1812 or so can be profitably viewed in terms of "temporal nodes" (*Zeitkerben*), brief time spans during which Beethoven focused on a single work (e.g., *An die ferne Geliebte*, op.98) or a group of works in the same genre (e.g., the late quartets) (p.150). In contrast, although Webster's notion of a "First Viennese-European Modern Style" has clear ramifications for our understanding of Beethoven's compositional development—shifting the "key decade" in his career from the early 1800s to the 1790s—its main purpose is to describe a music-historical period in which Beethoven's individual contributions must necessarily be subordinated to the larger picture.

Comparable differences of perspective inform Kropfinger's attitude toward Maynard Solomon's work, which he invokes more often than that of any other scholar. Indeed, Kropfinger goes head-to-head with Solomon on a wide variety of topics, including: the question of Beethoven's uncertainty of his birth year (p.56); the nature of his relationship with his parents (pp.84–86), his nephew (p.135), the Breuning family (p.87), and Josephine von Deym (pp.108–09); the supposed "compositional crisis" of the late 1780s (pp.91–92); and the interpretation of the Heiligenstadt Testament (p.105) and the letter to the Immortal Beloved (pp.123–24, 127). Although Solomon has employed diverse methodologies in his seminal contributions to Beethoven scholarship, he is probably best known for his psychoanalytical readings, and it is here that Kropfinger often parts company with his findings. Quoting Stefan Wolf's *Beethovens Neffenkonflikt: Eine psychologisch-biographische Studie* (1995), Kropfinger voices his doubts over an approach whereby "the possibility for interpretive free-play 'in the face of fragmentary biographical material unleashes various psychoanalytical hypotheses' against which 'the documents have no opportunity to dispute'" (p.135). In other words, Kropfinger's argument against psychobiography rests on the claim that it operates in a realm where empirical evidence carries less weight than the system imposed on the evidence from without (p.80).

Only the most unreflective biographer would eschew a systematic framework of some kind, and needless to say, neither Solomon nor Kropfingher falls into this category. What distinguishes them are their respective conceptual orientations. While Solomon often, though not always, draws on the principles of psychoanalysis, Kropfingher prefers the sort of “conflict biography” espoused by Harry Goldschmidt in his 1977 monograph on the Immortal Beloved. Attuned to the manifold tensions inherent in the subject’s personality, the conflict biographer will focus on Beethoven’s “oppositional stance vis-à-vis the surrounding world” and his attempts to restore equilibrium (p. 80). As a proponent of this method, Kropfingher is drawn to a dialectical model for the presentation of his material, an approach that not only accommodates but indeed requires antithetical elements to make its point.

Kropfingher’s book is brimming with binary oppositions, the most important of which, in his discussion of Beethoven’s life, is that between “outer” biography (the everyday events documented in the primary sources) and “inner” biography, defined as an “‘epicenter’ of internal tensions and emotional upheavals” (p. 57). Due to Beethoven’s self-proclaimed “autobiographical abstinence,” access to inner biography is difficult to come by, though we catch glimpses of this private realm in the surviving transcriptions of the composer’s diary of 1812–18 (“a mosaic of autobiographical fragments” [p. 131]), in the Heiligenstadt Testament (where Beethoven registers his “existential shock” in the face of impending deafness by adopting the rhetoric of Goethe’s *Werther* [pp. 104, 106]), and at various points in the correspondence. If the missive to the Immortal Beloved is the most celebrated—and controversial—of these documents, there are numerous passages in Beethoven’s letters that function, in Kropfingher’s well-chosen words, like “autobiographical ‘spotlights’ of inner biography” (p. 74). Citing Beethoven’s account of his encroaching deafness to Karl Amenda (1 July 1801) and Franz Wegeler (29 June and 16 November 1801), Kropfingher observes an uncanny mixture of hope (“‘you will find me better, more perfect as a human being’”) and despair (“‘I will become the unhappiest of God’s creatures’”) (p. 75).

The dialectical model also provides an explanatory framework for Beethoven’s much-vaunted “heroism,” which, according to Kropfingher, manifests itself not only as “conquest” but also as “perseverance.” Beethoven articulates both stances in his correspondence with Wegeler, asserting, on the one hand, that he will “grasp Fate by the throat,” and, on the other, that destiny will not “bow me down completely.” For Kropfingher, these postures can be likened to “the pendulum swings of a fundamental attitude,” distinct but related moments in an unfolding dialectic (pp. 137–38). This in turn has significant ramifications for an understanding of Beethoven’s artistic development, leading Kropfingher to designate the decade from about

1802 to 1812 as a period of “conquest” and the remainder of his career as one of “perseverance” in the face of mounting personal crises.¹³

In addition to pointing out the “zig-zag course” of Beethoven’s output during his second decade in Vienna—i.e., the tendency to compose works in contrasting pairs—Kropfinger identifies other, more subtle signs of an underlying dialectical process in Beethoven’s creativity. Most illuminating, in this context, is his discussion of the manifold relationships between and among improvisation, sketches, and finished works. Whereas Beethoven’s “free fantasizing” at the piano was remarkable for its “optimization of the musical material in the highest sense” (i.e., for its “compositional” quality), then conversely, many of his finished works display an unmistakable “fantasy-potential,” rich as they are in passages that seem improvised even though every element has been fixed in the score (pp.183–84). As a prime example of this kind of “frozen improvisation,” Kropfinger cites the opening of the “Emperor” Concerto (op.73), where the cadenza is no longer an “inserted set-piece,” but is rather integrated deftly into the compositional fabric (pp.179–80). Finally, Kropfinger situates the sketches midway between improvisation and work on the creative continuum. Described as “improvisation filtered through a force-field of resistance” (*widerstandsgefilterte Improvisation*), the sketches represented a medium through which Beethoven could not only record but also scrutinize the ideas that came to him as “sparks of inspiration.” As such, they offer traces of the process whereby his improvisational impulses were “placed under the magnifying glass of compositional self-criticism” (p.184).

Two general observations on Kropfinger’s method are in order at this point. First, his embrace of “conflict-biography,” his frequent recourse to a rhetoric of opposition, his desire to find common ground between apparently antithetical categories—in short, his entire dialectical apparatus—all of this is justified by the nature

13. Independent of Kropfinger, Lewis Lockwood has proposed an even more finely differentiated typology of Beethoven’s “heroism.” Arguing that this key facet of Beethoven’s creativity has been too narrowly defined, Lockwood identifies three discrete manifestations of the “heroic” in the composer’s works, the first centered on “the fallen hero, his death, and the solemn celebration of his life” (e.g., the “funeral march” movement of the *Eroica* Symphony), the second involving “the visionary heroism of the triumphant inner will” (the fast movements of the *Eroica* and the Fifth Symphony), and the third entailing “the quiet heroism of endurance” (e.g., the character of Florestan in *Fidelio*) (p.43). See Lewis Lockwood, “Beethoven, Florestan, and the Varieties of Heroism,” in *Beethoven and His World*, ed. Scott Burnham and Michael P. Steinberg (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000), pp.41–44. See also the discussion of the various types of heroism, as manifested in works including the *Eroica* Symphony, *Fidelio*, and the Fifth Piano Concerto, “Emperor” (op.73), in Lockwood’s recently published biography of the composer: *Beethoven: The Music and the Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), pp.209–11, 213–14, 249–50, 342.

of the subject. For if any of the great figures of Western music deserves the epithet “dialectical composer,”¹⁴ it is surely Beethoven. Second, implicit in Kropfing’s account of the dialectical properties in Beethoven’s life *and* works is an attempt to bridge the gap *between* life and works—the biographer’s perennial challenge.

One of Kropfing’s most penetrating minicritiques is directed at Dahlhaus’s doubts on the validity of the whole biographical enterprise (pp.145–47). “It remains an open question,” Dahlhaus wrote, “as to whether musical works can actually serve as documents of ‘inner biography,’ or conversely, whether the life-story can serve as the aesthetic substance of the works; the former is a harmless observation, the latter a tricky one.”¹⁵ Although Kropfing hardly thinks that musical works and inner biography stand in a clear-cut relation of mutual reflectivity, he is not quite so skeptical as Dahlhaus about the possibility of making meaningful connections between them. Indeed, much of his book can be read as a rejoinder to Dahlhaus’s categorical assertion—in the opening chapter of his 1987 monograph, *Ludwig van Beethoven und seine Zeit*—to the effect that “scholarly precision, in biography on the one hand and musical analysis on the other, leads to an almost unbridgeable separation of the two realms.”¹⁶ Beethoven’s own testimony would seem to argue against this position, which for all intents and purposes sounds the death-knell on a basic tenet of artist-biography, namely, that an understanding of the subject’s life is essential for a proper appreciation of his works, and vice versa. As he approached his final decade, Beethoven practically willed the two domains into a state of absolute unity: “Live only in your art, for you are so limited by your senses,” he confided in his diary around 1816. “This is nevertheless the *only existence* for you.”¹⁷

Kropfing’s principal means of getting at the mysterious symbiosis of life and works could be described as “leitmotivic,” as it involves a search for the motifs, or families of motifs, common to both. One such configuration is brought to bear on the song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte*, which, as Kropfing plausibly argues, can be interpreted as an artistic embodiment of three interrelated topoi, all of them fundamental to Beethoven’s lived experience: the Muse as understood in classical antiquity (a compound of “inspiration,” “private message,” and “inspiration”), dis-

14. The phrase has been invoked by Schoenberg, among others. See Kropfing, *Beethoven*, pp.149–50.

15. Quoted from *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 24 (1984).

16. Carl Dahlhaus, *Ludwig van Beethoven und seine Zeit* (Laaber: Laaber, 1987), p.29. My translation differs slightly from the rendering in *Ludwig van Beethoven: Approaches to His Music*, trans. Mary Whittall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p.1.

17. “Beethoven’s *Tagebuch*,” in Solomon, *Essays*, p.274.

tance (linked to Beethoven's fascination with the telescope), and nature (which Beethoven associated with "liberation from the confines of the city and the pressures of daily life") (pp.89–91).

The most significant of these shared topoi, however, crystallize around "contrast" and "conflict." Not surprisingly, Beethoven's tension-ridden existence constitutes a leading theme of Kropfinger's book. Repeatedly we encounter a figure who thrived on conflict, quarreling and then reconciling with his friend Stephan von Breuning over the trivial matter of rent (p.99), wavering between affection and hostility in his attitude toward his brothers (pp.100–01), and assuming the "Sisyphean task" of raising his nephew—an endeavor that transformed his household into a veritable "Allegro di Confusione" (pp.133, 136). In a subsection from Part A devoted to the inner-biographical "conflict-structures" surrounding the Immortal Beloved, Kropfinger describes Beethoven's compositions of the years 1812–20 as "sublime islands in an endless landscape of financial woes, family conflicts, domestic unpleasanties, . . . bouts of illness, [and] spiritual rejections," and then poses the question as to whether these works—including the Violin Sonata, op.96; the Cello Sonatas, op.102, nos.1 and 2; *An die ferne Geliebte*; and the Piano Sonata, op.101—might bear "structural, compositionally mediated imprints" of the contemporaneous biographical "contrast-constellations" (p.128).

Kropfinger returns to the notion of "contrast-constellations" in the most extensive subsection from Part B, entitled "Contrast—Contrast Differentiation—Contrast Mediation" (*Kontrast—Kontrastdifferenzierung—Kontrastvermittlung*) (pp.202–13). Observing that discussions of musical contrast too often suffer from imprecision, he goes on to provide a nuanced typology of what everyone would agree is a central feature of Beethoven's art. Kropfinger gives especially close attention to contrast-formations at or near the beginning of a work, which generally involve one of three types of opposition: (1) slow introduction + Allegro (this strategy, already a favored gambit in the late symphonies and chamber music of Haydn and Mozart, was subjected to numerous variations by Beethoven during every phase of his career, though the most highly experimental treatments of the pattern occur in the late string quartets); (2) "direct" contrast between slow and fast music (e.g., "Tempest" Sonata, op.31, no.2), or the reverse (Piano Sonata in E Major, op.109); and (3) parenthetical insertions (Piano Sonata in C Minor, op.111, first movement, "second" theme) (p.203). According to Kropfinger, Beethoven mediated these oppositional elements in two principal ways, either through what Arnold Schmitz called "contrasting derivation" (i.e., the latent connections between apparently dissimilar ideas), or through "tension-relationships," wherein an entire movement unfolds in bursts of "potential energy" and release (e.g., op.130, first movement) (pp.205–06).

In his consideration of the formative power of contrast at even higher levels of structure, Kropfinger notes the complementarity between multimovement designs that either fall short of or exceed the four-movement norm. If a two-movement work such as op. 111 may be viewed as a compressed variant of the traditional disposition, then conversely, the five-, six-, and seven-movement designs of ops. 132, 130, and 131, respectively, may be said to result from the “replication” of “two-movement cells” (*Zweisatz-Zelle*). *Zweisätzlichkeit* and *Vielsätzlichkeit* thus emerge as flip sides of the same coin, extreme manifestations of a dialectic of contrast that animates Beethoven’s structures from the smallest detail to the overarching whole (p. 205).

Almost one hundred pages separate the question left hanging in Part A—concerning the possibility of locating “structural imprints” of biographical “contrast-constellations” in the works—and Kropfinger’s response. Near the end of the text, he suggests in a highly qualified statement that the “musical facts” (*musikalischen Sachverhalte*) we can glean from Beethoven’s works—“a whole world of expressive qualities, of tension-resolution *valeurs*, of constellation-centers and -transmitters”—might represent “the musically and prismatically refracted reflex of his multi-layered, complex, conflict-laden and yet at the same time harmony-craving personality” (p. 224). Kropfinger’s caution is understandable, first because a direct relation between “musical facts” and a composer’s many-faceted personality cannot be established with absolute certainty, and second, because even if it could, the yield, as Dahlhaus suspected, might be “harmless”—that is, trivial.

In the spirit of filling a gap in Kropfinger’s “open” text, we might say that Beethoven’s works were the products of a sensibility that understood conflict in all its guises, though this alone does not account for their staying power. Beethoven’s music has resonated so powerfully and for so long not because it reflects the emotional world of an *individual*—the composer—but because it impinges on the affective worlds of countless *individuals*, his listeners. So, for instance, the opening “contrast-formations” of Beethoven’s works call to mind any number of paradigmatic (perhaps universal) scenarios: irreconcilable opposition (String Quartet in B \flat , op. 18, no. 6, finale), dreamy retrospection (Piano Trio in E \flat , op. 70, no. 2, first movement), tentative rapprochement (op. 130, first movement), unity amid diversity (*Grosse Fuge*, op. 133), and dialectical synthesis (String Quartet in A Minor, op. 132). Through the alchemy of the aesthetic experience, the “inner biography” of the composer, as imprinted on the work, touches on the inner life of the listener.

In Kropfinger’s discussion of “contrast-formations” in the late works, one composition is conspicuous in its (near) absence: the String Quartet in F, op. 135. The last of Beethoven’s multimovement works, it not only is a study in contrast, but

also bears examination in light of another key component of Beethoven's aesthetic: *Das Schwere*. Composed during a time of great personal duress in the late summer of 1826 (his nephew Karl's recent suicide attempt reportedly left Beethoven a broken man), op. 135 is surely one of Beethoven's quirkier compositions. Adorno and Kerman, for instance, have commented on its "very curious kind of repetition" (foreshadowing Stravinsky) and "self-conscious classicism," respectively.¹⁸ In terms of its overall design, the Quartet is constructed as a pair of "two-movement cells": a Haydnesque Allegretto plus a raucous Scherzo (Vivace), followed by a deeply expressive set of variations on a hymnic theme in D \flat (once considered as an ending for the String Quartet in C \sharp Minor, op. 131) and the finale, entitled *Der schwer gefasste Entschluss* (often translated as "The Difficult Resolve," though literally meaning "The decision (or resolution) reached with difficulty").¹⁹ The finale in turn mirrors the larger pattern, unfolding as a pair of "slow-fast" contrast-formations.

Kerman has called this movement "notorious"²⁰—and rightly so. In addition to the sphinxlike notation of its generative motivic particles (musical analogues of "Muss es sein?" and "Es muss sein!") and the anecdote(s) connected with them,²¹ the finale's peculiarity resides in its uncanny dualism. On the one hand, the elements of its opening contrast-formation (Grave ma non troppo tratto and Allegro) display absolutely antithetical relationships in the domains of tempo, meter (3/2 vs. 3/4), mode (F minor vs. F major), and character (serious vs. frivolous). On the other hand, the inversional relationship between the head-motifs of the formation's main themes (G–E–A \flat vs. A–C–G) stamps them as components of a dialectical pair. Yet in a sense, the motivic link between these elements actually widens the gulf between them. By invoking the opening gesture of the Grave, but casting it in a rad-

18. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music—Fragments and Texts*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), p. 89; and Joseph Kerman, *Quartets*, p. 354.

19. As Lockwood points out, the phrase "has a formal and legalistic ring to it," recalling the expression "Unterzeichnete den Entschluss gefasst" (the undersigned have reached a decision) from the legal document of 1809 in which Princes Lobkowitz and Kinsky agreed to pay Beethoven an annuity of 4000 florins. See Lockwood, *Beethoven: The Music and the Life*, p. 481.

20. Kerman, *Quartets*, p. 362.

21. On asking Beethoven for the parts to his op. 130 for use at a private party, the court official and amateur cellist Ignaz Dembscher (ca. 1776–1828) was ordered to pay up (he had failed to subscribe to the premiere of the work in March 1826), to which he is supposed to have exclaimed: "Wenn es sein muss!" The incident apparently provided the impetus for Beethoven to write the comical canon on the text "Es muss sein! Ja ja ja ja! Heraus mit dem Beutel!" (It must be! . . . Out with the cash!), WoO 196. The head motifs of the canon (composed in late spring or summer 1826) and the Allegro theme of the Quartet finale are identical.

ically different light, the Allegro all the more blatantly mocks the pretensions of the preceding music. It bursts the illusion of solemnity projected by the Grave, exposing its seriousness as a sham.²² And Beethoven drives home the point yet again when the elements of the contrast-formation, originally construed as slow introduction + sonata-form exposition, later function as retransition and recapitulation.

It is tempting to compare the scenario enacted in the finale of op.135 to the “transcendental buffoonery” that the early Romantic critic Friedrich Schlegel associated with “modern” art and further defined as “the mood that surveys everything and rises above its own limitations, even above its own art, virtue, or genius.”²³ Schlegel’s contemporary, Jean Paul, offered a thorough analysis of this mood in the section of his treatise on aesthetics (1804/1813) devoted to “humor” or the “romantic comic.” For Jean Paul, the essence of humorous art lay in its setting of the “small world” against the “great world” in such a way that the “infinite contrast” between them provokes a “kind of laughter . . . which contains pain and greatness.” The best humorists laugh at everything—including their own assumptions—yet oddly enough, they have a knack for making us “partly serious,” and more oddly still, they tend to be rather serious, even melancholy, themselves.²⁴ The resonance of these remarks for a work such as Beethoven’s op.135 is obvious, and I would imagine that Robert Schumann had already made the connection when he alluded to the “romantic humor” of Beethoven’s later works in an 1842 review.²⁵

It seems to me that Kropfinger might have accorded greater weight than he did to the humorous dimension of Beethoven’s art. The image of Beethoven—both in purely creative and “inner-biographical” terms—that emerges from his portrayal is almost unremittingly sober, grave, solemn—in a word, a little grim. The book’s epigraph, quoted at the beginning of this review, sets the tone: “*because what is difficult [was schwer ist] is also beautiful, good, grand. . . .*” Taken in themselves, these words conjure up visions of the scowling figure with pursed lips so well known to us from the various pictorial representations of Beethoven during the last decade or so of his life. Restored to its original context, however, the phrase possesses some-

22. Kerman makes a similar point, noting that the portions of the movement based on the “*Muss es sein?*” motif “sound more like a farcical depiction of an old miser’s discomfiture than like any deep serious speculation” (Kerman, *Quartets*, p.363).

23. Friedrich Schlegel, *Critical Fragments* (1797), no.42, in *Friedrich Schlegel’s Lucinde and the Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1971), p.42.

24. Jean Paul Richter, *The Horn of Oberon: Jean Paul Richter’s School for Aesthetics*, trans. Margaret R. Hale (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1973), pp.88–92.

25. *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 16 (1842), 143. Schumann’s view of “romantic humor” was surely conditioned by Jean Paul, who, as is well known, was among his very favorite writers.

what different connotations. Here is a longer excerpt from the January 1817 letter to Steiner:

As for the title of the new sonata [op.101], all that's needed is to transfer the title given to the Symphony in A [no.7] by the *Wiener Musikzeitung*: "Sonata in A, which is Difficult to Perform" [*Eine die Schwer zu Exequirende Sonate in A*]. To be sure, my excellent L[ieutenan]t G[enera]l will be puzzled, thinking "difficult" to be a relative concept: since what is difficult for one may be easy for another, the term conveys nothing at all. But certainly the L[ieutenan]t G[enera]l knows better than anyone that the term *says it all, because what is difficult is also beautiful, good, grand, etc.* Therefore everyone must realize that this is *the highest* praise that can be bestowed, because the *difficult makes one sweat*.²⁶

Chances are that Beethoven would not have uttered these words with a clenched fist. Yes, he meant what he said: "The difficult" (*das Schwere*) is good and grand; and no, he does not invoke *das Schwere* as lightly as he would in the *Schwer gefasste Entschluss* of op.135. At the same time, the faux-military mode of address (a standard feature of Beethoven's correspondence with Steiner's firm),²⁷ the mock formality, the buoyant, high-spirited tone—all of this reveals, if not a "transcendental buffoonery," then at least an irrepressible jocularly that the phrase about the grandeur of the difficult does not in itself convey.

In the poignant closing paragraph of his book, Kropfinger quotes one of the fragments from Adorno's projected monograph on Beethoven. One of the "fundamental motives" of the study, Adorno wrote, would be that "Beethoven, his language, his substance, in general the tonality, that is, the system of bourgeois music, is irretrievably lost to us, and the aspect that we reclaim from it is only granted as it perishes. The glance at Eurydice. *Everything* must proceed from this realization."²⁸ From statements such as this, Kropfinger writes, "the human urge . . . to understand art has always derived its best and most durable motivations" (p.226). Like Adorno, Kropfinger is deeply aware that even though Beethoven is practically synonymous with "classical music," at some level he remains an inscrutable character. Like Eurydice, he is only apprehensible as he vanishes from view. Kropfinger grants us more than a mere glimpse of Beethoven, and for this we are much in his debt.

26. Brandenburg, IV, 8.

27. Beethoven was addressed as "Generalissimo" and Steiner's assistant Haslinger as "adjutant."

28. Theodor W. Adorno, *Beethoven: Philosophie der Musik: Fragmente und Texte*, Nachgelassene Schriften, Abteilung I, Band 1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), p.25. For an alternate translation, see Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*, p.6.

Elisabeth Le Guin

Annette Richards. *The Free Fantasia and the Musical Picturesque*. New Perspectives in Music History and Criticism. Edited by Jeffrey Kallberg, Anthony Newcomb, and Ruth Solie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. xiii, 256pp.

Beyond the French doors of the manor house, a landscape beckons: down the sweep of lawn, several stands of beeches are just going golden in the early autumn light, with the fertile promise of mushrooms in the duff beneath them; behind, a certain pillowed unevenness in the land and richness in the vegetation suggest a meandering stream. On a rise beyond that, just visible, the corner of an old stone building; there is the tracery of a path leading up to it: is it one of those marvelous village churches, still used by the locals for their simple devotions? Or a mossy, romantic ruin? Impossible to tell without getting closer. With the delightful urge to do just that, to explore this agreeable wilderness with its assurances of a fruitful solitude, the visitor feels her weariness from the long, dusty coach journey fall away. She moves toward the vista.

She is detained in her progress by the sight of the music on the clavichord just inside the French doors. There are several bold opening flourishes, darting and slashing across the page, followed by the fertile promise of interestingly difficult harmonies in an abundance of flats and sharps. On the next page, a certain pillowed unevenness in the left hand and richness of ornamentation in the right suggest a meandering, *empfindsam* aria. On the page beyond that, the tentative tracery of a recitative leads up to full chords, both hands together and marked *forte*; is it a hymn, ringing forth in the fullness of simple devotion? A stern, forbidding pronounce-

ment? Impossible to tell without getting closer. With the delightful urge to do just that, to explore this agreeable wilderness with its assurances of a fruitful solitude, the visitor feels herself torn: shall she refresh herself with a stroll outside, or with this interior landscape? She turns back to the title page. Ah: it is a new Fantasy by Bach. She settles herself at the keyboard.

Annette Richards's book is built on the parallel I have sketched here, between the aesthetic of the late-eighteenth-century landscape garden, and that of the free fantasia for solo keyboard, as epitomized in the works of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. For all the lightheartedness with which I have suggested it, Richards makes it clear that this is no incidental parallel. She has amassed an impressive and fascinating body of evidence to bear it out, from nearly every walk (as it were) of late-Enlightenment English and Germanic culture. Garden- or fantasia-like, her presentation of this extended receptive analogy over six chapters becomes thoroughly rich, varied, and startling, a singularly apt demonstration of the series title—"New Perspectives"—under which the volume appears. Among the new perspectives Richards invokes we find: an introduction to the practical philosophies of late-century landscape architects; attendant period debates over Nature versus Art; Rochlitz's disturbing association of genius, excessive sentimentality, and the musical ravings of a madhouse inmate; the republican social implications of public spaces designed for individual solitude; the cult of solitary genius, as it manifested musically in the works of C. P. E. Bach and Haydn; the exactly contemporary cult of female sentimentality, as manifested musically in clavichord songs; machines designed to compose fantasies; musical and philosophical delimitations between the picturesque and the sublime; the many-breasted image of Isis as icon of the unknowable. These topics are but a sampling, deliberately incomplete, and deliberately disregarding the sequence in which they appear in the book. Part of the charm and ethos of the picturesque lay in its making plain that one could take, at will, a variety of routes—also a substantial part of the charm and ethos of Richards's book; it responds well to a readerly "dipping in."

Of course, Richards is also writing a work of scholarship, which brings with it an obligation not merely to present her material mimetically, but to analyze and theorize it. She acknowledges this obligation early on: "One of the central themes of my study is the way in which, in its picturesque dialectic between freedom and constraint, its disguised connections and hidden lines of demarcation, the musical fantastic calls attention to the act of interpretation, of reading itself, and threatens to undermine, and render impossible, the naive engagement of sensibility" (p.26). This is an engaging theme indeed, and much of my attention here will consequently focus on how she bears it out.

The dialectic Richards presents between freedom and constraint, between appearance and “disguised connections,” is of course of no small importance; it is arguably the central perceptual/philosophical matter at stake in late-Enlightenment performing arts, and in theory about them. It persists into the present day, most baldly and familiarly, as the dialectic between surface and depth—no less than the performative enactment of the Enlightened notion of selfhood, the idea that we are beings with interiors. Richards tells us that landowners sometimes bankrupted themselves in the process of reconstructing their gardens artfully to resemble unadorned Nature, giving a nice indication of the seriousness with which people of the time took these matters—and, perhaps, also a measure of the difficulty of finding the appropriate synthesis for their resolution.

C. P. E. Bach’s fantasias and the theoretical-practical treatment he gave them in his 1759 *Versuch* are the central musical documents of this dialectic for late-eighteenth-century Germany. Given the subsequent dominance of German models of music theory into the present day, it is no exaggeration to say that his works are among the central musical documents of Western music history in general, and given the subsequent psychological crises of Romanticism and modernism, no exaggeration to say that they still pertain directly to contemporary struggles over the performative nature of selfhood. In dealing with Bach’s *Versuch* and several of its fantasias in her second chapter, then, Richards inevitably sets in motion a rather lengthy and well-freighted train. It is perhaps asking a lot that she conduct it; but I believe she would agree that these high stakes are precisely what make this period of musical history so compelling.

Richards bases her analyses of the fantasias on their harmonic progressions, in order to emphasize the works’ “coherent if complex foundation for the elaborate surface disjunctions of the fantastic style” (p.46). In so doing, she is following Bach’s own lead, who tells us, “A free fantasia consists of varied harmonic progressions which can be expressed in all manner of figuration and motives,” and whose basic method of fantasia composition consists in giving the reader a variety of sample progressions—“depth” structures—to be elaborated into a sufficiently interesting or fantastical surface.¹ These progressions are, above all, logical and coherent.² They end where they began, and their returning maneuvers are very clearly signaled

1. *Versuch*, II, 326. I refer here to the redoubtable translation by William J. Mitchell, published as *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1949), p.430.

2. Schenker gave an exhaustive reading to this part of the *Versuch* that is intended to emphasize further this evident fact. See “Die Kunst der Improvisation,” trans. Richard Kramer as “The Art of Improvisation,” in *The Masterwork in Music*, vol. I (1925), Cambridge Studies in Music Theory and Analysis (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994).

through devices like dominant pedal points. On their way from and back to the tonic, the characteristically sharp turns into remote harmonic areas may sound incoherent because they are unusual, but they are consistently based on a single device—the enharmonically chameleonic diminished-seventh chord—and consistently explainable with recourse to conventional voice-leading rules.

Only very occasionally will Bach offer a more radical departure from harmonic logic, in the form of a progression involving no common tones. But even here, there is no real rupture of coherence. His theoretical justification is easy to miss: three sentences before the end of the entire treatise, he calls one such progression—a transition from a B-minor root-position harmony to a third-inversion dominant seventh over B♭—an “ellipsis” and explains what the intervening, absent, logical chords might have been, *had he included them*.³ It is a fascinating moment, not least for its offhandedness, given the airy castles that subsequent theorists were to build on its fundamental assumption. Bach is asserting the explicability of the audible by means of implicit structures, that is, sonic events that cannot actually be heard.

Richards repeatedly emphasizes the trademark, erratic disjuncture of the “surfaces” of these fantasias, but her emphasis is inevitably undercut by her use of Bach’s own analytical mode, which is obviously dedicated to explaining them. It is an impossible interpretive bind. There is no way she could have avoided it, nor should she have tried, since it is of the essence to her topic; but by the same token I wish she had theorized and historicized it more coherently for the bind that it is. Instead, at times she seems almost unaware of the contradictions in which she is enmeshed. Thus, toward the end of the chapter, she suggests that “the fantasia’s irregularity and spontaneity require a different type of listening that allows for illogical sequence, for a digressive narrative mode and one that is perceived by immersion rather than overview” (p.64). This is a natural response to the charisma of the fantasias’ abrupt gestures, but with it she operates at cross-purposes to her own sources, principally Bach and his champion Carl Friedrich Cramer, who adumbrate structural listening, a listening through or past local events, something that is quite possibly incompatible with “immersion.” Similarly, in a kind of *peroratio* for the chapter: “The landscape garden aesthetic allows for a re-evaluation of the fantasia that focusses precisely on the startling and disruptive elements which have baffled its critics” (p.72). But Bach himself focuses on these moments only in order to rationalize them!

Writing at odds with one’s sources can be an interesting critical maneuver; but for it to have worked in this chapter, I wanted Richards to model this “different

3. Mitchell, *Essay on the True Art*, p.442. Bach suggests a six-four chord over the B, and a C triad, to fill the ellipsis.

type of listening,” and I was disappointed in my desire. In particular, I found myself wondering why Richards did not essay an Allanbrookesque topical approach, something focused with deliberate exclusivity on the fragmented associations, images and memories evoked in these fantasias’ wandering courses, a mode that would seem to be a pretty close listening analog to strolling in a landscape garden. Eventually, in fact, Richards does arrive at just such an approach, but it comes much later in the book, in her final chapter’s accounts and analyses of Beethoven (pp.198ff.). Here, finally, comes topical description, genuinely picturesque, quite a wonderful torrent of it. This is part of her account of Beethoven’s Fantasy, op.77.

At bar 25, after a complete antecedent-consequent structure has been established for the first time in the fantasy, an extension of the consequent phrase trails off after three bars in a static reiteration of the dominant chord; melodic, harmonic, and then even rhythmic action grind to a halt . . . [a] chord is . . . dismantled, in a canonic bicinium. . . . In all, what had seemed a straightforward folksong drastically loses direction, coming to a standstill in twelve and a half bars of empty reverie. In the anti-resolution of shocking juxtaposition that characterises the progress of the fantasy, the static daydream is then brutally interrupted by a sudden leap directly to a fortissimo A major⁷ chord, held provocatively under a pause, before a stormy arpeggiated D minor passage drives forward in an entirely different direction (pp.193–94).

Questions of descriptive or analytical strategy inevitably raise questions of who is doing the description or the analysis, and to what end; the free fantasia was the crucible *par excellence* for the shifting roles of composer/performer and listener in the late eighteenth century. The middle chapters of Richards’s book explore these shifts and raise compelling questions. In the third chapter, she addresses Bach’s “Hamlet” Fantasia, published in 1763 with two superadded texts (one of them a version of Hamlet’s soliloquy), which had been provided by Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg in order to—well, in order to what? That, as Hamlet says, is the question. The texts are written as recitatives, but their “accompaniment”—the fantasia itself—is no accompaniment at all. They do not seem meant to be sung, but rather to emphasize, via the overt theatricality of the notation, the idea that a fantasia may be understood as a theatrical scene. Richards further invokes Carl Friedrich Cramer’s 1787 essay on this publication. Cramer asks “whether pure instrumental music in which an artist had expressed only the dark passionate conceptions that lay in his soul might also be susceptible to a clear definite analysis.” Richards goes on to say, “It perhaps seems ironical that the argument Cramer presents here for the value of ‘absolute’ music should derive from the festooning of the fantasia with two verbal texts” (p.97).

This layered discussion—Richards commenting on Cramer commenting on Gerstenberg commenting on Bach—is surely every bit as provoking as the rather polemically minded Cramer could have wished, so that one feels moved to add one’s own layer. What does Cramer mean by “pure instrumental music”? (It is unfortunate that the original texts for quotes like this are not made available within the book itself.) What, for that matter, does he mean by calling Gerstenberg’s work an “analysis”? And is Richards justified in relating this idea of “pure” instrumental music to absolute music, and in implying that Gerstenberg’s texts are thereby a form of excrescence (“festoon”)? Surely not: despite Laurence Sterne, despite Rousseau, words *were* still the central site of clarity and definiteness, to the period way of thinking. Yet “texting” à la Gerstenberg is a very different business than the explicatory maneuver that we now firmly equate with analysis. What is being set up here between words and music stays on the “surface”—it is essentially a parallel relationship, designed to put in motion a train of association to a (known, and very definite) dramatic or narrative situation that, through its independent teleology, casts a revealing sideways light onto the instrumental event. The questions raised in Richards’s discussion of the “Hamlet” Fantasy suggest that a late-Enlightenment relationship between prose and music often evaded scientific surface-to-depth explication (x means y) in favor of the dialogic and additive (y acting on/with/or even against x , and not infrequently resulting in z).

Further exploring the fascinating tangle of receptive strategies and communities for the fantasia, Richards discusses in her fifth chapter the genre of “An das Clavier” songs, which configure the clavichord, Bach’s instrument of choice for his fantasias, as receptacle and conductor for sentimental solitude: that state in which middle-class women supposedly whiled away the long, confining hours of their leisure. In contrast to fantasias, such songs are nearly always conventional to the point of banality; the trembling depths of feeling hinted at in the words are nowhere to be pinpointed in their settings. Richards explains this mimetically: “The more usual reticence of the clavichord in these songs parallels the silencing of the women who populate the ‘An das Clavier’ poems” (p. 170). This is clearly a significant and useful reading; yet I would submit that such music did not function exclusively as a mimesis of repression. Women did play and sing these songs, and that—however humble, administered, and suppressed in tone it might have been—is enoicement. A trolling of this kind of music for expressive depth will inevitably come up empty-netted, because its whole function was in its “surface” existence as sound and as the act of playing or singing. The analytical maneuvers being developed by Gerstenbergs and Cramers and Bachs simply do not apply. Later in this same paragraph Richards mentions the “polarisation . . . between the depressed

post-adolescent female (or *empfindsam* male amateur) and the professional musician or connoisseur” (p.170) as central to the clavichord cult; but she does not acknowledge the extent to which she treats the former through lenses crafted to understand the latter.

Her reflections on *Empfindsamkeit* in this chapter in general suffer from a related problem of point of view. She is not alone in this: how *is* one to write convincingly of a phenomenon predicated on the loss of emotional boundaries, while maintaining scholarly and critical distance? Can we hope to understand sentimentality without voluntarily entering into it? Perhaps so: for out of these not-entirely-satisfying engagements emerges one of the really brilliant parts of this book. Richards’s treatment of the layerings of sincerity and “sincerity” that unfold out of the famous *Bachs Empfindungen* Fantasia in F# Minor is everything that I think criticism of eighteenth-century music can and should be. The Fantasia has long been praised as a paragon of composerly authenticity in self-representation. It, however, possesses another, later accompanied-sonata version. Into this apparently consummate act of heartfelt composerly transparency is introduced—somebody else, an Other, and the most conventional possible Other at that; Bach himself decried the accompanied sonata as a site of endless banality. Together, the two execute a blithe, merry, not-very-interesting Allegro, apparently unaffected by the harrowing music that has gone before. What has happened to that priceless authenticity? Musicologists have swept this version of the Fantasia under the critical carpet as an unfortunate, venal concession to the market on Bach’s part. Richards suggests otherwise: that with this famous piece’s embarrassing twin Bach ironizes the very notion of self-revelation. Thus she does some real justice to his complexity as an artist and adroitly bears out her own thesis—that the fantastic style “threatens to undermine, and render impossible, the naive engagement of sensibility.”

All the same—or perhaps *because* Richards does such a bang-up job here—I am moved to enter the arena and ask the following: could not that final Allegro be itself heard as ironized, that is, as an unsuccessful attempt to dispel the unbearable intensity of solo *Empfindungen*? Does blitheness always and necessarily trump introspection? Does the last word always carry away all doubt, all misgiving? I think here of Mozart, above all: the “happy” endings of *Don Giovanni* or *Così*; or, closer in genre, the final Rondo of the G-Minor String Quintet (K. 516), the gaiety of which cannot really wipe away the harrowing memory of the preceding Adagio.

The “dialectic between freedom and formal coherence” (p.191) gets a fine overview in the early pages of the sixth and last chapter: Richards discusses how the “complex amalgam” of free and strict in the fantasia makes it a crucible for multiple kinds of meaning: dialectics between individual and society, feeling and seem-

ing, surface expressions and the “depth” feelings that must somehow always unite them. She is at her best and most fluent in making these kind of large-scale, evocative, free-wheeling cultural connections. She makes them here specifically in order to point out that critics as late as 1826 were still hearkening back to Bach as the model for picturesque reception when they discussed the music of Beethoven. This rather extraordinary fact licenses her, as it were, to take on the great grey eminence of all surface–depth criticism that Beethoven must inevitably represent, and to deal with him in picturesque terms. It works quite well; I thought her descriptions (like the one of the Fantasy, op.77, quoted above) a vivid and effective mode of presenting these pieces, *as receptive experience*. The by-now–classic objection to topical analysis (that it cannot account for structure or teleology) gets a run for its money here: Richards uses topical description to model that allusive, fleeting, irreproducible, experiential version of “structure” that is the peculiar province of the listener, especially the first-time listener, and she does it well enough that one realizes its corollary: the extent to which a structuralist approach cannot account for heard experience in real time.

What is curious is that Richards determinedly uses the “surface” technique of topical description for her accounts of Beethoven, but largely avoids it for Bach, to whose generation such a receptive mode was native. Her doing this signals some mixed motives, I think. There is an opportunity here: their very mixedness is some indication of the extent to which the surface–depth model persists into the present day as a charged and still-urgent dialectic. How can we best explain music, or ourselves: as deeds, or as the processes that inform those deeds? I wanted to see Richards make some attempt to position herself more explicitly within this tension; to acknowledge it as a tension; to acknowledge the losses and gains inherent in each answer, their profound incompatibilities; to interrogate why she adopted a given analytical tactic for a given piece of music; to move into a more active engagement with recent work—Wye Allanbrook, Evan Bonds, Rose Subotnik, Fred Maus, Robert Fink, and Richard Taruskin—on the musical/cultural problem of musical surface and depth. I wanted this, not because it would have consolidated her critical voice—the whole point being that it cannot be satisfactorily consolidated around an issue such as this—but because some attempt to do so, with its consequent interesting failure, would have made much clearer the really crucial importance to modern musicology of the period to which her study is devoted. Instead, she tends to shuttle to and fro, engagingly but rather unaccountably, among critical viewpoints; and as a consequence she puts her provocative theory of the musical picturesque in some danger of arbitrariness, or even of that anathema to every eighteenth-century scholar, quaintness.

Finally, in asking myself whether we as readers are likely to hear or play any differently as a result of having read Richards's book, I found myself more willing to answer Yes in regard to Beethoven than in regard to Bach—rather a strange pass. Nevertheless, with her approach Richards has done a fine job of positioning Bach's music, and the theoretical relationship to it that we owe largely to his example, in an appropriately sphinx-like manner at the center of some vitally rich and interlocking discussions.

Temperaments

David Breitman

Six Degrees of Tonality: A Well-Tempered Piano. Enid Katahn, pianist; notes by Enid Katahn and Edward Foote. Gasparo Records, 2000. (On the label: “WARNING: This CD contains pure intervals which may be habit forming!”)

Beethoven in the Temperament: Historical Tunings on the Modern Concert Grand. Enid Katahn, pianist; notes by Enid Katahn and Edward Foote. Gasparo Records, 1997. (On the label: “WARNING: This CD contains pure intervals which may be habit forming!”)

These two discs, with their accompanying text, constitute a remarkable document. Musical performance is an extremely conservative field. Many musicians operate within very narrow constraints; the boundaries marking off the acceptable from the unacceptable are very tightly drawn. The differences among individual performances are significant, to be sure, but there is a high degree of consensus around virtually every performance parameter (the exception that proves the rule: Glenn Gould, who strayed too far from the norm—he was the “eccentric Glenn Gould” and Leonard Bernstein had to issue a disclaimer before their performance of a Brahms concerto).

The glaring exception has been the Historical Performance movement, which occupies a separate space outside the mainstream. “HP” performers attempt to circumvent the conventional constraints of our time by replacing them with other constraints—those they believe were in operation when the compositions they play were written. For certain repertoires, and with certain aspects of performance, they have been astonishingly successful. “Period-instrument” recordings of the Bach

Brandenburg Concertos or of Handel's *Messiah* now outnumber, and outsell, their conventional counterparts.

Comparable attempts have been made with the classical piano repertoire. Fortepianos are to be found in more and more conservatories, and occasionally on concert stages. There are now several sets of complete Mozart piano sonatas on historical instruments, and one set of the Beethoven sonatas (truth in advertising: I am one of the seven fortepianists on that set).

But there is more to Historical Performance than old instruments. Indeed, the argument has been made that some performances with old instruments are less "historical"—i.e., true to actual historical practices—than some using modern instruments. The recordings under review present a highly unusual combination: historical tuning systems in otherwise conventional, modern-instrument performances.

Six Degrees of Tonality matches six different temperaments to a variety of repertoire, ranging from one quarter-comma meantone for Scarlatti, to a so-called Victorian, relatively equal temperament for Grieg. To accentuate the contrast, Mozart's D-Minor Fantasy is played three times in three different tunings. A listener who finds it difficult to detect any difference should go straight to track 11 and listen to the Mozart in meantone. The diminished chord just before the end of the introduction is guaranteed to curl your toes! The disc does a wonderful job of focusing one's ears on the properties of the different tunings, and many harmonic events in the pieces acquire new prominence and significance.

Beethoven is represented on *Six Degrees of Tonality* by op. 110, using Thomas Young's temperament of 1799. The same temperament is used for two sonatas on *Beethoven in the Temperaments*; that disc also contains two sonatas in the Prinz temperament of 1752. Both of these tunings are of the "well-tempered" or "circulating" type typical of the eighteenth century and are historically plausible choices for Beethoven (unlike the rather anachronistic choice of meantone for Scarlatti). Unfortunately, none of the composers represented here has left us any of his thoughts on tuning. We have precise documentation for a Prelleur tuning, a Neidhardt tuning, a Young tuning, and many others, but none for a Mozart tuning or a Beethoven tuning.

So we have little to go on but our ears. But, as Enid Katahn says right at the beginning of her "Performer's Perspective" in the Beethoven CD booklet, "most pianists learn how *not* to listen." Here I quote in full the opening paragraph of this touching note:

Most pianists learn how *not* to listen. Forced by circumstance to play on a wide range of instruments in varying sizes and stages of disrepair, pianists, if

they really listened, might cease playing altogether. Accustomed as I was, therefore, to listening inwardly for emotional inspiration, I was amazed at the excitement generated by a well-tempered tuning. I could actually hear the contrast between the serenity of the more pure, calm chords and the wavering, pulsating activity of the more tempered ones.

And there is no doubt that eighteenth-century musicians prized distinct key characteristics. Equal temperament is not a recent discovery. On the contrary, it has been known for centuries, but was always found wanting precisely because every chord, and therefore every key, sounds the same.

The “well-tempered” systems are so-called because all twelve keys are usable. Earlier systems had at least one “wolf”—an interval so out-of-tune that it rendered certain keys unusable. In practice it meant that you had to choose between sharps and flats. You could have either a D \sharp that functioned as a third in B, or an E \flat that would be consonant with G—but not both. D \sharp would produce a “wolf fifth” with B \flat ; if you tuned it as E \flat , it would howl with G \sharp . In well-tempered tunings the discrepancy is distributed so that some keys are better than others, but none is unbearable.

Young’s temperament is very systematic: C major is the purest, F and G with one accidental in the signature are slightly less pure (beat faster); D and B \flat beat a little faster still; E \flat and A have thirds that are just like equal temperament; E and A \flat beat somewhat faster than equal, B and F \sharp faster still, and F \sharp beats the fastest. This temperament has become very popular for Baroque music in the “early music” world—it’s the house temperament for the harpsichords at Oberlin, where I work.

The Prinz temperament follows a similar principle, but with a greater contrast between the keys. C major is extremely pure (the C–E third is virtually beatless; G and F are less pure but still beat slower than the slowest third in the Young temperament). But there is a price to pay: F \sharp , C \sharp , and A \flat are very “shaky” or “spicy”—all three are about as impure as F \sharp , the single worst key in Young.

Since much eighteenth-century music is written in keys with three or fewer accidentals in the signature, well-temperament produces purer triads than those we are used to in equal temperament. Chromatic passages are just that: they add color, through the piquancy of their unsteady, beating chords. The system works well as long as composers stick to the “good” keys. But Beethoven brings difficulties. Consider, for example, op. 110, the “poster child” for the Young temperament on *Six Degrees of Tonality*. In this tuning, A \flat major is noticeably less pure than in equal temperament, which gives the opening a harsh, shrill quality, in apparent contradiction to Beethoven’s marking *con amabilità* (*sanft*). But perhaps the “wa-

vering, pulsating activity” corresponds to other qualities Ms. Katahn hears in this opening (although I thought her performance expresses serenity and calm).

On the other hand, I found the slow movement of the “Pathétique,” another A \flat -major piece, revelatory. For this work she chose the Prinz temperament, in which A \flat is even more dissonant than in Young (A \flat –C is almost 8 cents wider than equal temperament). I confess that this piece, perhaps simply through over-familiarity, usually sounds saccharine to me. This performance produced a totally different effect. The opening was unstable, not dreamy. The half-cadence at m.4 with its relatively calm-sounding E \flat chord was a hard-earned accomplishment; the brief F 7 (ah, the pure F–F–A third!) in the middle of m.6 was an oasis of calm before the slide back to quivery A \flat . The sounds of the chords actually invert/subvert the literal meaning of the harmonies, and as a result the movement fits the drama of the rest of the sonata much better.

E major is another pulsating, active key in this tuning, and it suits the character of the first movement of op.14, no.1, very well. The temperament heightens the effect of the brief excursion to C major in the development, and the E minor (only one sharp—very pure chords) of the second movement and the C major of its trio provide a sharp contrast to the rest of the piece.

The “Moonlight” Sonata left me with mixed feelings. The B major triad is a harsh sonority in Young (6 cents wider than equal temperament), and its appearance in m.17 was disturbing. The unsuspecting listener would certainly think the piano was out-of-tune, but it isn’t that difficult to reinterpret the moment as a particularly painful one, with the reward being the arrival in the relatively consonant F \sharp minor of m.23.

The “Waldstein” Sonata poses a problem similar to op.110. The E-major second theme should certainly contrast with the C-major opening, yet the shrill beating of the E-major and B-major chords seems to contradict the relaxed character of the music at this point (and the *dolce* marking).

But perhaps Ms. Katahn hears sweet fluttering where I hear shrill beating—and we’ll never know what Beethoven imagined. Maybe Beethoven would have agreed with Hummel, who wrote in 1828:

Sorge, Fritz, Marpurg, Kirnberger, Vogler and others . . . proposed various [tuning] systems . . . in earlier times, when people played clavichords, harpsichords and pianos with only two thin weak strings for each note; but . . . those instruments are almost all out of use now, and pianos have been introduced in which every note has, not two, but three strings, [each] four or five times as thick and strong as then, [so] it is no longer as easy to carry out [the

old] proposals, and one must use a temperament which is . . . easier and more convenient to tune . . . [since anyway] few of the many who now occupy themselves with tuning can exercise a sharp enough ear to distinguish exactly the fine nuances among the different chords in [an] unequal temperament.¹

Indeed, as I write these words I recognize precisely the sort of arguments made about the relative merits of modern and historical pianos. And on this issue Katahn and I exchange positions 180 degrees. Her program booklet asserts that “music composed in another temperament-era needs those era-specific tonal resources to display its full character”—but that “today’s modern concert grand is a wonderful instrument for the tonal music of 1800s Vienna [and] provides a wider range of expression and power than any of its predecessors.” I prefer to argue that the modern piano is not really well suited to the *sforzando*, which is virtually Beethoven’s calling card—and totally incapable of producing anything like the *fp* effect called for at the opening of the “Pathétique” (the first track of Katahn’s Beethoven CD). And when it comes to tuning, I try to adjust the temperament so that the harshest chords are reserved for the most remote areas of the music. But, here again, Beethoven might agree with Ms. Katahn. Which, of course, is why we must all keep questioning, experimenting, and listening. Kudos to Katahn, Foote, and Gasparo for producing this valuable CD.

1. Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Pianoforte-spiel* (Vienna: Haslinger, 1828), quoted in Mark Lindley’s chapter “Tuning and Intonation,” in *Performance Practice: Music after 1600*, ed. Howard Brown and Stanley Sadie (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990).

OPEN FORUM

The Ninth after 9/11

Und wer's nie gekonnt, der
stehle weinend sich aus
diesem Bund.

(And who is never able shall
steal away from this union in
tears.)

—Friedrich Schiller, *An die
Freude* (1785/1803)

You are either with us or
against us.

—George W. Bush
(6 November 2001)

Peter Tregear (September 2002)

Setting aside Paul Bekker's idealistic vision of the post-Beethoven symphony concert as a site for *gesellschaftsbildende Kunst* (socially formative art),¹ one of the more common uses of symphonic music as an adjunct for overt social ritual would be in relation to services of remembrance. The pairing together of mainstream orchestral music and the memory of loss seems to be at such occasions both uncontrived and appropriate, reflecting as much the life-affirming capacity that we continue to bestow on this art form as it might also, perhaps, the desire to make our public rituals approach the condition of popular cinema and its ubiquitous soundtrack. Like the application of a soundtrack, this pairing is also, however, a fictionalizing one; music above all the arts is constitutionally removed from the events it might be chosen to accompany, radically distanced by layers of invention and imagination. It cannot of itself create an aesthetic simulacrum of an event, in the way that, say, monumental sculpture or painting can. Instead the function of music in such circumstances seems to lie precisely in its presumed otherworldliness, in the qualities such as nobility, or closure, or theological *gravitas* that we imagine it can bestow. Precisely because it avoids a direct relationship with a historical event, and by extension, the ever-suspicious gaze of the historical imagination, commemorative music is perhaps supremely placed to lend a sense of transcendence, of sublime consolation, to an occasion that might otherwise be thought to eschew it. Thus John Adams, for instance, in a recent interview about a work he

1. See, in particular, his monograph *Die Sinfonie von Beethoven bis Mahler* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1918).

was commissioned to produce in response to the events of September 11, 2001 in America (entitled *On the Transmigration of Souls*) spoke of his task as a composer in terms of creating “something out of time, the way great art ought to,” to invoke the “power of art to transcend the moment.”²

To wish to use art to “transcend the moment” seems an entirely understandable response to tragedy, particularly, in this instance, one of such magnitude. And yet, such a claim for the power of music at the very least sits uncomfortably with now widely accepted critical discourses emanating from the academy. Challenging the apparent bashfulness of music in the face of historical events has been a central endeavor of the now not-so-New Musicology, as it was indeed for earlier, musically minded philosophers of culture like Nietzsche and Adorno. For them, our tendency to understand music as “something out of time” is in fact delusional. Adorno in particular singled out the modern reception of Beethoven as being especially problematic if not archetypal in this regard, and he founded a life-long critical project in trying to return, as it were, the trauma of history to Beethoven’s music. Even while Beethoven was still alive his music had, it seemed, become monumentalized, but only thereby to commemorate a moment of history (the emancipation of the bourgeois) that never really occurred. Our easy consumption of Beethoven’s music (with the notable exception of the late works), masks this tragedy of unfulfilled hope, the canonical status he achieved so early being instead driven by what Lawrence Kramer has elsewhere described as our desire to seek a “centered aesthetic order as a counterweight to the increasingly decentered organization of modern life.”³ Thus, although George Steiner, for one, believes it is figures like Beethoven who, “on fragile occasion, redeem the murderous, imbecile mess which we dignify with the name of history,”⁴ it would seem more accurate to consider the extraordinary status accorded to Beethoven, namely that his music seems still to speak to us without reference to its time or regional accent, as less to do with an innate redemptive quality in his music than with the potential for us to use it as a kind of aesthetic emollient.⁵

2. Cited in John Rockwell, “Challenge of the Unthinkable: John Adams Delivers a Commissioned Work on 9/11,” *New York Times*, 17 September 2002.

3. Lawrence Kramer, “The Strange Case of Beethoven’s *Corolian*: Romantic Aesthetics, Modern Subjectivity, and the Cult of Shakespeare,” *MQ* 79 (1995), 256.

4. George Steiner, *No Passion Spent* (London: Faber, 1996), p.275.

5. Compare Carl Schmitt’s study of the *Politische Romantik* (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1925), in which he bewails what he describes as the “subjective occasionalism” of Romanticism, whose promiscuous adaptation to any practical political situation mirrors the disembodied individualism of bourgeois society.

The reach of such a skeptical critique outside the academy would seem to be, however, quite limited—this no more so evident than in the fact that music has been put to use many times after September 11, 2001 at commemorative events. We may reside in a postmodern realm of cynical detachment from the grand aesthetic narratives of old, but when we want to dignify an occasion, the old ideas about the power of music, and Beethoven's in particular, seem effortlessly to reassert themselves. One recent and striking example of this was the scheduling of a performance of the Choral Finale of the Ninth Symphony on September 15, 2001 at the last of the summer season of "Proms" concerts at the Royal Albert Hall in London, a performance that, like Adams's commission, was intended to mark the catastrophic events in America some four days previously. This was no minor program change: broadcast across the United Kingdom and relayed internationally, the "Proms" have, in the words of Michael Kennedy, something of an "air of sanctity" about them.⁶ This is especially true of the Last Night, where the traditional sequence of musical numbers that usually conclude this concert have become something of a ritual of the English concert calendar, a "musical occasion of great significance," as Nicholas Kenyon, the director of the Proms festival, declared in his press release two days earlier. This closing sequence normally includes Edward Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1*, Henry Wood's *Fantasia on British Sea-Songs*, and Malcolm Sargent's arrangement of Thomas Arne's *Rule, Britannia!*, presenting an opportunity for the audience to indulge in what many consider to be uncharacteristic (by British standards, anyway) displays of boisterous patriotism—albeit ever so slightly tongue-in-cheek. In a country generally ill at ease with notions of collective identity, such public displays of apparent national fervor have come in for growing criticism over the years; and when the Last Night came around in 2001 the attacks in Washington and in New York made the celebratory aspect of the event, the flags and funny hats, seem especially inappropriate.⁷ The world was in shock and Kenyon, announcing the program change, declared that it was "vital to respond to people's mood at this sombre and difficult time, and at the same time to show that music can affirm our shared humanity."⁸

To this end the program would climax with the Ninth's Choral Finale, there being, Kenyon continued, "no more universal expression of the power of music

6. Michael Kennedy, "Troubled by Visions of the Unattainable," *Sunday Telegraph*, 11 August 2002.

7. See, for instance, Richard Cockett, "Sounding the Wrong Note," *Spectator* 273/8670 (10 September 1994), 42–44. For Cockett, the previous concerts in the "Proms" season often demonstrate exemplary standards of programming and performing, but the "Last Night" displays mere pompous nostalgia.

8. Press Release, BBC Proms, 13 September 2001.

to draw people together.”⁹ Thus another page was added to the extensive, eclectic history of the Ninth’s reception (albeit here the Ninth reduced to its last movement only). This performance indeed took place in the shadow of a reception history stretching from the repressive climate of Metternich’s Vienna to Nazi Germany and the death camps at Auschwitz and beyond. In his recently published study of this reception history, *La Neuvième de Beethoven: Une histoire politique* (1999), Esteban Buch notes that this history is not just disquieting, but moreover after “Beethoven in Auschwitz,” it is “truly terrible.”¹⁰ Yet notwithstanding all of this, the programming decision by Kenyon seems to call for particular comment, due to not only the historical significance of the events of September 11 themselves, but also because this particular use of the Ninth has subsequently been imitated many times. Indeed, at the time of the first anniversary of the attacks, commemorative performances of the Ninth were scheduled around the world, including performances by the State Academic Symphonic Orchestra in Moscow,¹¹ and by the New York Philharmonic, the latter in a pairing with Adams’s *On the Transmigration of Souls*. Even taking into account the Ninth’s tortured reception history to date, the claims made for the significance of these performances are nothing if not remarkable. For instance, the performance in Moscow was designed, according to the organizer Eduard Dyadyure, “to draw more attention to the serious problem of world terrorism.” This was at the same time the U.S.-based National Education Association Health Information Network was recommending the symphony as an appropriately “uplifting” piece of music to play to students who might be overly concerned by precisely this threat.

All of this would seem only to confirm the validity of the observation made by Nicholas Cook ten years earlier that the Ninth Symphony has been “interpreted out of existence . . . swallowed up by ideology . . . consumed by social usage.”¹² At the same time, however, it is clear that the Ninth has anything but disappeared, remaining still one of the most potent of cultural signifiers, able to transcend even its own “terrible” reception history. Another recent striking instance of this was the fact that Simon Rattle could argue that it was “the right thing to do, rightly or wrongly” to conduct the work at the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria in May 2000, acknowledging the Auschwitz association (and, tacitly, the memory

9. The program changes also included the addition of John Adams’s fanfare *Tromba Lontana*, Samuel Barber’s *Adagio for Strings*, and four spirituals from Michael Tippett’s *A Child of Our Time*.

10. Esteban Buch, *La Neuvième de Beethoven: Une histoire politique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), p.253.

11. “Beethoven to Battle Terrorists,” *Pravda Online*, 20 August 2002.

12. Nicholas Cook, *Beethoven: Symphony No. 9* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), p.99.

of an earlier performance in Mauthausen lead by Herbert von Karajan in 1947), but at the same time asserting that the work is yet able to transcend such “mis-interpretation.”¹³ The Ninth has survived, it seems, not so much because its meaning is infinitely adaptable, but because there seems to be some kernel of meaning that remains above suspicion, or, as Scott Burnham put it—“intrinsically untouchable,” above history.¹⁴

An examination of the use of the Ninth Symphony as a political device, as traced by Buch, Brusniak, Dennis, and others, highlights this, revealing a distinct lack of interpretations in relation to the disparate uses to which the work has been put.¹⁵ The most potent source for such a kernel of stable meaning derives principally from Beethoven’s adaptation of Schiller’s ode “An die Freude,” and the vision of universal fraternity, of community reconciled with individualism that it appears to bestow on the finale. In setting several verses of the ode, Beethoven, it seems, provided the listener with what seems to be an authoritative and compelling guide to the interpretation of the music. As opposed to the musical score, we can presume to *know* definitively what the ode is about, and through that, we come to know what the whole Symphony is about. Hence a concert programmer can have fewer qualms about performing the Choral Finale as a stand-alone piece than might be the case with other canonical works because the finale is presumably thought to possess the core substance of the whole symphony, one that no longer requires the playing out of some grand, purely musical, design. But, we might counter, is not the ode, as a text, especially liable to deconstruction? In fact, it seems that the transcendental reach of its vision has resulted in a distinct lack of truly divergent interpretations. Here, both Beethoven’s avoidance of the specific political import of the ode, especially in its original version from 1785, and the peculiar quality of the music of the finale are significant. In the original version of the ode, for instance, Schiller praised the power of joy to efface class distinctions, but the version from 1803 that Beethoven adapts expresses a much more indirect, idealistic vision of joy, no doubt in part because by this time both Schiller and Beethoven had taken fright after the excesses of the French Revolution.¹⁶

13. Simon Rattle, interviewed by Martin Kettle, *Guardian*, 28 April 2000.

14. Scott Burnham, “Our Sublime Ninth,” *Beethoven Forum* 5 (1996), 155.

15. See Friedrich Brusniak, “Schiller und die Musik,” in *Schiller-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Koopmann (Alfred Kröner, 1998), pp. 179–81; and David B. Dennis, *Beethoven in German Politics 1870–1890* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996).

16. H. B. Nisbet, “Friedrich Schiller, ‘An die Freude’: A Reappraisal,” in *Landmarks in German Poetry*, ed. Peter Hutchinson (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000), p. 90.

Thus, the verse

Deine Zauber binden wieder
Was der Mode Schwert geteilt
Bettler werden Fürstenbrüder
Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt

(Your magic reunites
What the sword of custom has divided
Beggars become royal brothers
Where your gentle wings tarry.)

becomes

Deine Zauber binden wieder
Was die Mode streng geteilt
Alle Menschen werden Brüder
Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.

(Your magic reunites
What strict custom has divided
All people become brothers
Where your gentle wings tarry.)

In addition, the schema of the poem lends itself to this idealized vision of joy in that its very imagery moves from the finite to the infinite, from personal friendship to the mass of humanity, from earthly existence to the Supreme Being beyond the stars.¹⁷ Elevated from *Realpolitik* to *Idealpolitik*, the vision thus becomes open to all manner of what might otherwise be thought of as incongruous appropriations, whether that be Nazi party rallies or memorials to terrorist acts. Furthermore, the immediacy of the “Ode to Joy” theme, the “divinely sweet, pure and innocent human melody,” as Wagner described it in his famous essay on Beethoven of 1870, in its own way helps to divert our attention from the contingencies of the text insofar as the tune seems complete in itself without words—indeed it is presented in full four times before we hear a single word of Schiller’s ode.¹⁸ The text could rather be thought of as a vehicle for the music, suggesting perhaps that the meaning of the ode itself is also to be understood as approaching the condition of

17. Ibid., p.81.

18. Cited in Klaus Kropfing, *Wagner and Beethoven: Richard Wagner’s Reception of Beethoven*, trans. Peter Palmer (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1974), p.97.

the purely musical. Maybe we can also thereby better understand not only its popularity as a wordless anthem, but also such apparent inconsistencies as the decision by the programmers of the “Proms” to remove from the Last Night program both Adams’s *A Short Ride in a Fast Machine*, and the third of the five Negro spirituals (*Go Down, Moses*) from Michael Tippett’s *A Child of Our Time*, because both works were considered to be in bad taste, but to ignore the similar potential of lines like “Wir betreten Feuertrunken, / Himmlische, dein Heiligtum” (We enter drunk with fire / heavenly one, your sanctuary).¹⁹ In effect, if we set aside that they are in German, the actual words of the ode are much less significant than the sublime sentiment they are presumed to exude through Beethoven’s music. It is ironic, then, that Adorno once praised the apparent lack of themes in Beethoven’s music with the exclamation that “everywhere in his music is inscribed the injunction: ‘O Freunde, nicht diese Töne,’” for it is precisely when these words appear in the Ninth that the most self-sufficient of his themes appears. It is no wonder, for Adorno, that the Ninth was “not a late work.”²⁰

Another particular aspect of the musical setting of the ode that might have expected to bring pause for thought when appropriated for a post-September 11 commemoration concert is the presence of the *Alla marcia* (*Alla turca*) section. Are we not here explicitly drawn away from notions of universal fraternity into the infamous East/West cultural paradigm that politicians since September 11 have been at pains to avoid? It is true that Lawrence Kramer, for one, has argued that the inclusion of this passage indicates the composer’s intent of portraying brotherly love as extending even to those who represented the antithesis of European culture. His argument relies, however, on a nuanced reading of the early-nineteenth-century German reception of classical myth. The topic of the Turk as paradigmatic Other remains, however, a more convincing one if only for being more obvious.²¹ And there is some tantalizing, and to-date by and large unacknowledged, evidence to suggest that Beethoven’s own intention was indeed to make an association that was less than universal. Nottebohm notes in his transcriptions from the sketches

19. The “Ode to Joy” theme has indeed been used as an anthem by the former state of Rhodesia, and also by NATO, the European Union, and more recently by the promoters of the European Soccer Championship. It has also been set to new words and used as a church hymn.

20. Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), pp. 51, 97. Indeed, the very fact that Beethoven could, as Adorno thought, *consciously* compose in an outdated manner demonstrates the depth of the composer’s critical intention in the late style (p. 134).

21. Lawrence Kramer, “The Strange Case of Beethoven’s *Corolian*: Romantic Aesthetics, Modern Subjectivity, and the Cult of Shakespeare,” *MQ* 79 (1995), 256–80.

for the Ninth that the Turkish music was originally intended for the words that conclude verse 2 of the ode: “Und wer’s nie gekonnt, der stehle weinend sich aus diesem Bund,” that is, at the point where we are informed that those unlucky or unsociable enough not to share in the ecstatic vision of universal fraternity shall “steal weeping away.”²²

Adorno considers this point in the ode to represent the moment where the text reveals to itself an essential truth of such totalizing visions, to wit: that any vision of universality implied the violent subjugation of those unable or unwilling to share in it, or, given its historical context, that *égalité* and the Reign of Terror are dialectically dependent on each other.²³ Schiller’s vision, he concludes, is: “at once totalitarian and particular. What happens to the unloved or those incapable of love in the name of the idea in these lines unmasks that idea, as does the affirmative force with which Beethoven’s music hammers it home.”²⁴ There are also other musical cues we might use to support this reading in the finale, not least in that the original “Turkish” topic has survived as a more generic military one and thus retains the possibility of a menacing undertone.²⁵ And the remarkable fugue that follows the Alla marcia passage could perhaps be heard not so much to signify, as Leo Treitler and others have argued, that “a sonata procedure is in progress,” but rather—with reference to the literal meaning of “fugue”—that some kind of battle or conflict is underway.²⁶ This effect is heightened by the music moving suddenly from a martial-like rhythmic insistence to a passage of rhythmic flux, a technique that Beethoven incidentally also uses for similar visceral effect in *Wellingtons Sieg*.²⁷ The harmonic movement from tonal chaos to diatonic affirmation in the fugal section is also reminiscent of the overture to *Die Ruinen von Athen* where a similar move-

22. “Skizzen zur neunten Symphonie,” in N II, p.186.

23. Note the declaration by the Jacobin Committee of Public Safety at the outset of the Terror which declared “when the French people has manifested its will, everyone who is opposed to it is outside the sovereignty; everyone outside the sovereignty is an enemy. Between the people and its enemies, there is nothing in common but the sword” (quoted in Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000], p.11).

24. Adorno, “Fortschritt,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, vol. X, p.620 (quoted in Adorno, *Beethoven*, p.212).

25. See Wilhelm Seidel, “9. Symphonie d-Moll Op.125,” in *Beethoven: Interpretation seiner Werke*, ed. Albrecht Riethmüller, Carl Dahlhaus, and Alexander L. Ringer, vol. II (Laaber: Laaber, 1994), p.268.

26. Leo Treitler, “History, Criticism, and Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony,” *19CM* 3 (1980), 198. See also Ernst Saunders, “Form and Content in the Finale of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony,” *MQ* 50 (1964), 59–76.

27. See Richard Will, *The Character Symphony in the Age of Haydn and Beethoven* (Cambridge: Cambridge up, 2002), pp.194–96.

ment is used to evoke the broad theme of the play for which it was written, the triumph of Enlightenment Europe over the Infidel. When combined with the affirmative “hammering” that follows, the rush toward an ecstatic outpouring of sound makes the finale conceivably a rather uncomfortable rendering of joy indeed.

Yet, as I have already suggested, such apparent discord between the music and text and its reception is, it seems, by and large inaudible. Perhaps in better trying to understand why this might be the case we could usefully invoke Benedict Anderson’s idea of “imagined community” and the role that cultural objects like the Ninth Symphony could be thought to play in sustaining it. Anderson has argued that any sense of community that involves a population size larger than a primordial village, and thus reliant on face-to-face contact, is by necessity imagined, the scale of modern societies in particular making more immediate social bonding simply impossible.²⁸ The creation of an imagined identity must instead be promulgated through shared readings of cultural artifacts, be they of material or immaterial form. The important point here is that the particular “truth” of a reading as it might pertain to the material qualities of an original object or event is irrelevant. As John Elsner has written, what matters is simply that the reading “be convincing to the particular group of individuals . . . for whom it serves as an explanation of the world they inhabit.” In other words, in examining the role of art when used commemoratively we are not concerned with “real facts” or even a coherent methodology, but rather with exploring the “consensus of assumptions and prejudices” that it thereby sustains.²⁹ If we see the Ninth as a cultural artifact in these terms, then analyses of it might start to resemble readings more commonly associated with ethnographical studies of so-called folk music (as opposed merely to understanding the “Ode to Joy” tune in itself as a kind of folklike theme³⁰), or perhaps akin to an object in Lydia Goehr’s “imaginary museum,” that is, such analyses could concern themselves with how the work becomes something through which we allow ourselves to project an illusion of a stable, collective identity that we can return to in times of crisis.³¹

28. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 5–7.

29. John Elsner, “From the Pyramids to Pausanias and Piglet: Monuments, Travel and Writing,” in *Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture*, ed. Simon Goldhill and Richard Osborne (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), p. 226.

30. See Michael C. Tusa, “*Noch einmal*: Form and Content in the Finale of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony,” *Beethoven Forum* 7 (1999), 116.

31. Boris Groys, *Logik der Sammlung* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1997), pp. 52–54.

Here we could perhaps add that it is *Beethoven's Ninth* that allows commemorative performances of the work also to carry the mythology of Beethoven as the suffering artist who allows us both to commune with that suffering and to share in its overcoming. Webster, for instance, is able to hear in the teleological construction of the finale, and especially in the culminative changes of tempo at the end, not just its "sense of becoming," but also its "striving for deliverance."³² The subjectivity we imagine is, however, precisely that, our imagining, and, one might add, "wer's nie gekonnt, der stehle weinend sich aus diesem Bund." Beethoven's vision of Schiller's joy remains ideological even as it claims transcendence; its *joy* takes on something of the character of the politics of *enjoyment*, as an emotion in itself not neutral and benign but imposed and ordered.³³ For us, commemorating an event using the "Ode" can likewise be understood as a contingent and political act, and thus a commentary on the politics of the event itself. Catastrophes like that which occurred on September 11, 2001 can well be characterized as an all-out attack on "civilization," on "liberty," on precisely those mythic community values that have become projected through Beethoven's setting of Schiller's "Ode," but they also can, for instance, be seen as undertaken as a consequence of specific "alliances and actions" (and they can be seen this way without such an explanation inferring moral justification or excuse).³⁴ Such readings, therefore, have the potential to be explicit in their political critique. As Ruth Solie notes in her introduction to *Musicology and Difference*, calls for "unity" are "often decipherable as demands for acquiescence."³⁵ An idea as otherwise laudatory as "universal fraternity" has its dangers. Used commemoratively, the music and text of the ode can exacerbate these dangers by elevating the audience into a safely channeled realm of meaning, away from the corruption proffered by a more contingent understanding of an event.

The most famous attempt to critique the particular potential of the Ninth to project a vision of a false polity is a fictional one. In Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*, the imaginary composer Adrian Leverkühn decides that his last composition, the *Dr. Fausti Weheklag* (Lamentation of Dr. Faustus), which he composes in response to the death of a beloved child and which he completes as the Nazis seize power in Germany, will, as he evocatively puts it, "take back" the Ninth Symphony. The work, as it is meticulously described in the novel, is literally a negation of

32. James Webster, "The Form of the Finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony," *Beethoven Forum* 1 (1992), 61.

33. The best recent study of joy in such terms is Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 1991).

34. Susan Sontag, *New Yorker* 77/28 (24 September 2001), 32.

35. Ruth Solie, "Introduction: On 'Difference'," in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth Solie (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1993), p. 6.

the Ninth, ending with an “Ode to Sorrow.” For this extreme lament, nothing will do but the “speaking unspokenness given to music alone”; here, “the final despair achieves a voice,” but one that permits “no consolation, appeasement, transfiguration.”³⁶ But the work exists only in the mind of the author. We, however, seem to prefer art not to be so brazen in its attempt to reflect the inconsolability of loss. As Taruskin suggested in his defense of the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s decision to cancel scheduled performances of choruses from Adams’s *Death of Klinghoffer* shortly after September 11, “Why shouldn’t people be spared reminders of recent personal pain when they attend a concert?” Preempting the argument that Adams’s opera tries not so much to comfort as to make the audience think, Taruskin furthermore questions why we should ever seek understanding in a work of art, which by necessity fictionalizes facts, rather than “more relevant sources of information.”³⁷ But surely a kind of fictionalization is precisely what the performance of Beethoven’s Ninth for such an occasion also achieves, only here in a much less politically overt (and thus perhaps more problematic) fashion.

At the time of the London Proms performance, one English radio commentator suggested that a much better work of Beethoven for performance on the occasion would have been the *Missa solennis*. It’s a curious thought, but maybe the very aspect of the *Missa solennis* that so troubled Adorno, its retreat into an archaic religious form, would become here its critical moment— not least given some of the background to September 11. It is not just because, by and large, we no longer believe in its text, but also because of the curious shape of the music. As Adorno noted, the work lacks the developmental paradigm, the dialectical contrasts, of the symphonic works, while it also lacks truly memorable themes. Thus the conclusion of the various movements of the Mass can be seen as curiously enigmatic. “Because no path has been traveled, no resistance of the particular overcome, the trace of arbitrariness is transferred to the whole.” With all that in mind, what better way to

36. Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus* (London: Minerva, 1996), pp.490–91. Curiously, an attempt was made to “take back the Ninth” in a more literal fashion, in Magdeburg, Germany, in 1998. There the conductor of the municipal orchestra, Mathias Husmann, was removed from his position ostensibly over his refusal to continue a tradition of conducting the symphony on 16 January, the anniversary of the destruction of the city by Allied bombing in 1945. Instead, for a number of years he had replaced the symphony with other works, first with the *Missa solennis*, and subsequently with oratorios by Haydn. His reasoning? Given the terror of 1945, he was not convinced that a dignified rendition was viable. It was impossible, he thought, to perform a work that praised joy in the manner of “ein Held zum Siegen” (a hero triumphant) and at the same time construe it as a memorial for the thousands of victims of the bombing. See *Der Spiegel* 3 (1998), 144.

37. Richard Taruskin, “Music’s Dangers and the Case for Control,” *New York Times*, 9 December 2001.

end than with the cries of “Dona nobis pacem,” which, as Adorno noted, take on the burden of suffering that the “Crucifixus” has in Bach’s Mass in B Minor.³⁸

To be sure, however, there is to be found no neat solution to the problem of how art can adequately reflect the conflicting claims to truth when it is used commemoratively, unless we accept from the outset that both the artwork and historical memory are constitutionally imagined and contingent truths. As Walter Benjamin famously, and starkly, wrote, “There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.”³⁹ There is, indeed, no escaping the realization that even our most cherished ideals, our most idealized works of art, remain forever tainted, for better or worse, with involvement in that mess of contingencies and compromises we call the “real” world. Faced with this realization the musicologist’s role as critic ought to be construed at the very least in part as paying testimony to this inescapable condition of contingency, lest we forget. A recent fine example of the potential of this sort of critical project to enliven Beethoven studies is, I would suggest, Stephen Rumph’s reading of Hoffmann’s famous review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, where he demonstrates not only that Hoffmann’s interpretation helped give rise to the “cult of the autonomous genius,” but also how beneath the transcendent image “a human form comes into focus, telling of wars, nations and political associations.”⁴⁰ The music analyst too can remind us at such times that the music, even without a text, contains semiotic codes that can sound at odds with any complacent reading of its purpose or meaning. Cook, for instance, has considered a number of other ways in which the music of the Ninth might question the idea of universal fraternity.⁴¹ Above all we should avoid abandoning the field of the Ninth simply because it has already become so muddled. While the Ninth continues to have a very real presence in our modern culture, we can play our part in critiquing the discourse of universal joy that surrounds it, a task with implications that lie far beyond the realm of the purely musical. Indeed the aims of both musical and political critic seem to be the same, not the imposition or reinforcement of presumed stable narratives, but affirming that interpreting both political and musical acts alike demands an infinite task of translation, a constant renegotiation of assumptions.

38. Adorno, *Beethoven*, pp. 150, 148.

39. Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 256.

40. Stephen Rumph, “A Kingdom Not of This World: The Political Context of E. T. A. Hoffmann’s Beethoven Criticism,” *19CM* 19 (1995), 65.

41. Cook, *Beethoven Symphony No. 9*, p. 104.

A Dialogue Concerning the Pond Scene in Immortal Beloved

Michael Beckerman

I can't believe you're even going to waste time in a prestigious publication like the *Beethoven Forum* writing about a trashy movie like *Immortal Beloved*.

Not only am I going to write about it, but I am going to praise it, extravagantly, for some things!

That's ridiculous, you can't learn anything from bad movies.

Of course you can, though I'm not admitting the film is bad. You can learn an enormous amount from problematic works, and I'll admit that *Immortal Beloved* has its problems, but so does every film, musical composition, or person I've ever met, and that doesn't stop me from learning from them.

Oh, how banal and broadminded of you! Just where do you locate the importance of *Immortal Beloved*?

Well, I'd start with the pond scene.

Another travesty! Yet another flagrant abuse of the Ninth Symphony. When will it ever end?

Let's get away from that kind of talk and start with something more nuanced. Even if you didn't like the scene it would be a choice example of a *cinemoem*.

Cinemoem, what on earth could that be? Have you gone and made up some *jargon*? I thought you hated jargon!

Sometimes you have to bite the bullet. The terminology for discussing the relationship between music and image in film is not very well developed. In fact, the silly terms *diegetic* and *nondiegetic* have gained a prestige that is hardly deserved, as if the question of whether characters could hear the music or not is the only one of any importance. Besides, no one but film buffs can remember which is which. To my mind, film has many kinds of relationships worthy of note. There is *cinedrama*, when there is only speech and image; *cinemusic*, when there is only image and music; and *cinemelodrama* when speech, image, and sound all work together. Many of the greatest films are an artful blend of these three and work more like “recitative-aria” than one might think. But there’s another kind of relationship that has hardly been attended to, and it is one we find often in composer films. It’s a subset of *cinemusic* that I call *cinepoem* (a kind of “tone poem” for film) and it refers to the reversal of the normal procedure relating music to image. Most of us imagine, loosely, that after the filming is done, a composer comes along and adds music. We know there are exceptions to this, but that’s basically the way film music composition works. There are times, though, where the director begins with a precomposed piece of music to which images are later *added*. Not only does it turn the whole idea of film music on its head, but it implies an alternative aesthetic. I’ve just screened Jaromil Jireš’s wonderful *Lion with a White Mane*, the Janáček biopic. It’s filled with *cinepoems*, and whole sections of works like the *Glagolitic Mass*, and the string quartets are “set” by film images.

In *Immortal Beloved*, the director, Bernard Rose, tells us what kind of work he’s doing in the pond scene by saying that he “wanted to time the picture out to the music.” So the filmmaker is *inspired* by the music to create film images! Of course, there is a certain conflict from the very beginning because Rose also acknowledged that the Ninth Symphony is “so powerful it doesn’t need any pictures.”

That’s just the kind of evasive statement I’d expect from Hollywood. But so what? Who cares about your *cinepoem*? Isn’t film music truly a lower order of creativity? And doesn’t the Ninth simply become something lesser when it is used in the movies: isn’t it like getting buttered popcorn all over the score?

Depends who you talk to. Michael Small, one of my favorite film composers, insists that his music gets through to an audience even more directly than in a concert hall because they are “disarmed” by the visuals. Remember, in the eighteenth century opera composers often received third billing, after librettists and especially singers. Now it’s remembered as a composer’s art. Perhaps the same thing will happen with film.

Ho hum.

So you say, but the relationship between music and images is but a subset of the knotty problem of the relationship between the abstract and the concrete in the broadest possible sense. And *cinepoem* can be a wonderful thing. Think of the Requiem scene from *Amadeus* (and think also about the fact that Milos Forman, and Jaromil Jireš, who started their careers in Prague at almost the same moment, ended up making composer biopics in almost the same year!).

Another travesty. Honestly, that tired old Pushkin pastiche was at least tolerable when Peter Shaffer trotted it out as an exquisite piece of stagecraft. Of course no one thought they were seeing a portrait of Mozart, rather it was Salieri's view of him. The movie mixed that all up so it was like a hideous documentary, where Mozart's music was turned into, what did you call it? *Cinemelodrama*. Besides, they showed Mozart *conducting* a wind serenade *indoors*!

Sure, sure, loads of things wrong with it. But that penultimate scene, pitting two human beings in a conflict over a musical work, was fascinating.

More like a bad music appreciation class: oh, let's have the tenors! Here come the trombones! Listen for the timpani! And the energetically dying Mozart demanding of the sweaty Salieri "Do you have it! Let me see it!" Really!

Laugh if you will, but you'd be surprised how many great moments can be read as farce or genius. I agree that the scene tilts toward the vulgar and distasteful, but someone has noted that the most coveted food delicacies—truffles, pate, caviar—are on the verge of being disgusting. Even good chicken soup smells like urine. I think it's one of the great moments in film despite all the things that are wrong with it.

Even were I to concede your "great moment," it is only the briefest of great moments. Remember what follows? Right after the grand duo has finished composing and notating the "Confutatis" of the Requiem, Mozart says: "Give it to me," and as he reads the still-wet manuscript we realize what kind of score he's been working on.

What kind then?

A *film score*. We see a coach racing through the woods at night, and when the *Voca me* begins, there's a charming shot of Constanze and little boy Mozart in the coach.

What's wrong with that?

It's a violation! Here's the holy Requiem written by the genius in a film *about* genius, and all it ends up being is a little piece of your *cinemusic*: a visual scene with a sonic background. That's kitsch, right up there with Mona Lisa salt shakers.

Nonsense, *Amadeus* doesn't destroy the Requiem or cheapen it. The brain is sufficiently complex to deal with phenomena on many levels. I haven't met anyone who says their experience with any work was damaged by seeing it in a film. Usually it works the other way round. Remember all those people running off to get Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 3 after seeing *Shine*.

Yes, and worse, throwing good money after bad to actually hear Helfgott play a concert. He was dreadful!

It's more complicated than that. People had been moved by a personal story, they wanted to see it for themselves. You may not approve, but it's one of the ways people bond with music, and begin to hear things in it.

Right, like getting us to sympathize with Helfgott by suggesting that his father was a screwed-up sadistic concentration camp survivor, when he actually spent the war years in Australia.

That does not negate that an audience's emotional investment translates into concentrated listening. For example, in the Requiem scene that shot of Constanze and the cherubic Karl can bring out the *interiority* of the *Voca me*.

Oh no! Interiority! Sounds like special pleading to me.

Cinemusic and the *cinepoem* in particular are not only about images, they're about what happens when music and image are juxtaposed. Even a modified *cinepoem* can create powerful moments and suggest different ways of hearing a passage.

I hesitate to ask what the "modified" might mean in the case of *cinepoem*.

Well, take Polanski's *Pianist*. One could argue that the climax involves an intended *cinepoem*, even if the featured composition is cut a bit. Remember, when Szpilman, the Pianist, has just been discovered by a Nazi officer? He's in "Elephant Man" mode, seemingly crippled, somehow inhuman. The Nazi asks him what he does. When he reveals that he's a musician, he is asked to play. He sits down, after not playing in years, and starts to play the Chopin First Ballade.

Yes, I know all about it. I read the book. Did you happen to notice that in the book—the supposed "real life" on which the movie was based—Szpilman actually played the opus posthumous C#-Minor Nocturne. So it's already a crock. Films can't leave well enough alone, but have the arrogance to show you real life the way it *ought* to have been!

Look, later we'll talk about the needs of the film medium, and the needs of drama, but the Ballade actually is a better choice for a couple of reasons. The opening, with its easily playable octaves and dramatic pauses, allows our pianist to stretch his fingers, and the piece has the proper tone of drama, with overtones of great pain and catharsis.

But this is a film about horrific historical events. A *Holocaust* film. It's being marketed as real history. How can you change the record when it suits you? And it gets worse. I looked at that moment too, and to paraphrase Schoenberg: "Where are my favorite bits?" They eviscerated the entire middle section of the Ballade! The whole lyrical heart of the piece and its emotional climax disappear. Actually that's an apt metaphor for the way commercial films manipulate anything in pursuit of a few extra audience members, a few extra bucks, or a good exit poll.

That's not so. The manipulation in *The Pianist* is simply to make the thing work better in its own medium. We'll get back to this issue later, I promise you, but let's turn to the *Immortal Beloved* and the pond scene. It's a classic *cinema*, using as it does the entire Alla marcia from the last movement, starting with the "Turkish Music" and going on for the next 264 measures without a break. It tells a story, but a story set to the music, not music set to a story.

You seem to have the idea that this is something special, but what could it possibly add?

That depends on what you think a piece of music is. Does it have a specific identity, or is it a series of tendencies that can take many forms, depending on all kinds of influences, suggestions, contemplations? I believe in something like an *Equalizer principle*. You know how an equalizer works on a stereo: it's a device that allows you to adjust the frequency response of an audio signal, and certain frequencies can be amplified or damped, depending on how you pull the lever. The identity of a musical work may be something like this. It has the ingredients to make several dishes and can be understood in a variety of different ways, "adjusted," depending on how we pull our associative levers.

That's silly. I'm with Mendelssohn about a composition being *too* specific, not too vague.

I'm not talking about specifics, but let me continue with a description of the pond scene and perhaps you'll see. It begins with old Beethoven (Gary Oldman) standing on the stage during the premiere of the Ninth and appearing distracted and inward.

Yes I know. His eyes keep rolling back into his head as if he's on a particularly bad drug trip.

The sound of the "Ode to Joy" vanishes and instead we hear Beethoven's heartbeat. This becomes the bassoon, contrabassoon, and bass drum starting the *Alla marcia*. We see Beethoven's father, Johann, a drunken seducer of whores, returning from an evening's prowl while young Ludwig sits upstairs. At the entrance of the voice at m.37 he returns home—the scene shifts back and forth between Beethoven on stage and the scene from childhood.

At the first "freudig" at m.69, Beethoven senior tests his walking stick, with obvious intent to beat one of his children, and we shift to an image of the sweet, younger Beethoven brothers huddled beneath the sheets. Johann takes off his jacket, we cut to old Ludwig's eyes rolling back on the stage, and young Beethoven slips out the window. As the chorus intones "freudig, freudig" at mm.94–95 Beethoven's father screams "Ludwig!" in frustration.

So what? You're going to applaud the filmmakers for managing to coordinate "freudig" and "Ludwig?"

The next part of the scene is based on the parallel between the motion of the double fugue and the idea of frenetic physical motion. Young Ludwig, in his nightshirt, runs through the forest in both terror and liberation. And of course, the cinematic transition is somewhat artful. The running doesn't start actually until four or five measures after the fugue begins. Once it begins, though, it is incessant, with just a brief return to old Ludwig onstage. The young boy runs through the forest like a deer. . .

It's actually not the forest, it's Griffith Park in Los Angeles. If you look closely you can see the lights.

Who cares. All artists are entitled to their illusions, and there are plenty in the Ninth. But let's move onward. At mm.186 and 187 the F#s find Beethoven stopped at a pond: the full moon reflected in its depths creates an almost interplanetary scene. Through the stasis young Ludwig removes his nightshirt, and as fragments of the theme reappear at mm.200–10 he gingerly gets into the pond. At m.211 he lies down in the water, and the camera gradually pans away until the end of the scene and the end of the *Alla marcia*. But as the camera pulls away and the chorus sings the Ode, we notice the stars reflected in the pond. As we get more and more distant, Beethoven appears first as a kind of constellation, and then more

and more as the brightest star in the heavens until he disappears into the firmament.

Sounds like a desecration to me, yet another way the poor “Ode to Joy” has been palmed off. Have you seen the new book by Esteban Buch, *A Political History of Beethoven’s Ninth*?

No, I’m boycotting it because it’s already selling more copies than my book.

Oh well, Beethoven always does better than the ethnics. But really, Buch has a handle on the uses and abuses of this theme, though he doesn’t discuss this film. Probably not worth his time. The book was reviewed in a recent installment of *Beethoven Forum*.

Installment? The *Beethoven Forum* is not a *magazine*, it’s a real journal; it’s even got a soft cover now!

Whatever. But Buch’s book is quite rich in many ways. As I read it, I kept wondering what kind of statement Bernard Rose, the director of *Immortal Beloved*, had in mind, and whether it belonged in a political history of the Ninth.

Actually, Rose said that he wanted to create “some kind of non-Christian, non-denominational religious image.” Certainly the near-naked young Beethoven with his arms floating out in the pond is a powerful idea.

But kitsch really, don’t you think?

Look, the medium is film. I suppose one could argue that the entire movie is a setup for that moment, and it is an incredibly cinematic idea. It’s like *Amadeus*, especially the play. Scholars are caught up with the idea that they’re seeing lousy biography, but Shaffer’s *Amadeus* was a stagey thing featuring indelible stage images for which Mozart and Salieri were simply the pretext. Some of what you would consider the silliness of *Immortal Beloved* is simply a way to get you to a brilliant moment like this.

So *you* say. But if parts of this film only have value in getting us to other parts, the whole thing is essentially in pieces, and it must be a poorly made work.

Here’s some more bad news. Many “great works” are poorly composed.

What does that mean? Great works poorly composed? And who are you to make such judgments?

The Ninth is not a work that unfolds “just so” because Beethoven has gauged carefully all the possible effects, like some Master Builder or Svengali. It’s miraculously, brilliantly, and painfully *overpacked* with ideas, many of which are irreconcilable. If you were to use it as any example of a well-made work, it would simply collapse under its own weight. That’s what dazzles us about the symphony. It’s so *badly* composed, if by “composed” we mean artfully weighed in terms of some ideal connection of parts; even though each moment of it may seem magical and magnificent. It doesn’t hang together at all. It’s what I call the *excess baggage syndrome*.

You’ve been commuting too much, that’s for sure. But what you are talking about is simply a conceit. I don’t think you’ll be able to convince me that all great works proceed in that fashion.

Of course they don’t. Greatness is relative, and there are countless pieces that *are* made “just so”; but there’s a category of “tumultuous masterpiece,” the *Art of the Fugue* or *St. Matthew Passion*, *The Magic Flute* or *Don Giovanni*, Beethoven’s late quartets or piano sonatas—these are not model works for anyone.

What about your *equalizer* though? Are the works not only overstuffed, but intellectually amorphous? Can they be transformed by any intellectual or emotional breeze that blows in their direction?

That’s a good point, though I never used the word “amorphous.” I knew you’d ask about it though, so I performed an experiment today. It was a gorgeous morning in Riverside Park, and I took my daughter for a bike ride. We ended up at the Hippo Playground, and it seemed as if every child in New York City was there. So I decided to create a soundtrack for the “event” by playing the *Alla marcia* in my head, starting from the beginning. Well, you can’t imagine! All those foreboding moments from *Immortal Beloved*, which seemed to be “about” the terrified Beethoven running through the woods, became sweet and charming as the children flitted from the slides to the monkey bars. The running eighth notes became playful, and the “dark” moments turned into nursery room grotesque. The final vocal climax became a Pastoral symphony addendum when heard among the brightest yellow forsythia and the impossibly white apple blossoms—a moment of explosive nature worship. It was the same piece, only the *equalizer* was adjusted differently, and so different possibilities were realized.

So are you saying that the work has no identity, nothing that *is*?

Of course not. But it is an overstuffed, overrich concentration of mental power and energy that can be seen and understood from many angles.

But do you think the director really understood this? Those film types are ready to use and abuse anything that flickers into their orbit.

So do “musical types!” Composers think in sound images and will cook, distort, appropriate *anything* if it gets them what they need. Why should a film director be different? Certainly, one definition of a great director is someone who thinks in powerful film images.

But to quote a noted critic, you really haven’t “clarified how the pond scene does any more than reinforce two hoary images, the creator as abused child (cf. Solomon) and Beethoven as divine.”

Let me try. Though Rose begins his journey with a fairly hokey take on the “Beethoven story” and a piece of pre-existent music, in the end, Beethoven is a pretext for the endeavor, not its subject. The pond scene simply uses Beethoven as a means to produce a series of stunning effects.

I don’t see how you can get stunning effects when both the underlying story and the use of music are essentially kitsch.

Do you know the kreplach joke?

No, is it in *New Grove*? What is kreplach anyway?

It’s a kind of Jewish wonton. There’s this little kid who is phobic about kreplach. He can’t sleep at night, can’t eat. So his mother takes him to a shrink who specializes in such phobias. The shrink says he can handle the case, reaches into a drawer and takes out a noodle and a piece of meat. He asks the little boy what he sees and the child responds, “A noodle and a piece of meat.” So he takes the meat and puts it on the noodle and looks at the boy, who says “You just took the meat and put it on the noodle.” The shrink smiles and looks knowingly at the mother. Then he takes one half of the noodle and folds it over the meat. “What do you see now?” he asks the boy. The boy shrugs: “You just took the noodle and folded it over the meat.” They all begin to relax. The shrink takes the other half and folds it over the meat and suddenly the boy, stricken, screams “AHHH. Kreplach!!”

Nice joke, but so what?

In the end you can take a silly idea and a musical warhorse and it sounds ridiculous, but when you put them together in a special intuitive way, you get something beautiful. That’s what *cinemoems* allow you to do. Since you are starting with a snippet of music instead of a piece of film, you can really think in film images and create wonderful little mini-dramas that stand as set pieces within a larger frame.

Yes, but isn't this just your fantasy. It renders the whole process of evaluating things completely subjective.

I believe—and I believe it is a matter of belief—that the pond scene is a “beautiful thing.” It's a scene about running, freneticism, escape, and then calm, about belonging, about infinity, and also about what happens when you pull back the camera into an infinitude. But it is a thing that must be taken on its own terms and any aesthetics must begin with a single individual more or less willing to take the risk that everyone will think they're an idiot.

How brave of you . . . Didn't Derrida say something about hating discussions because of all their ratiocinations? Okay, you “believe” it's a wonderful scene, but why do these filmmakers always have to use *our* guys? Why Mozart and Beethoven? If they're just after a glorious film image, why don't they do the artistic, original thing and just make up their own story? Invent characters and get a great composer to score the film? You know, make up a composer like Thomas Mann did.

Yes, precisely. *Doctor Faustus* upholds the collaborative model of film production: Literature by Thomas Mann with Music Analysis by Theodor Adorno.

Ha! . . . Ha! I *knew* you couldn't get through one of these dialogue sessions without mentioning Adorno.

Yes, it's obligatory these days. Really though, do you object that Shakespeare and Marlowe didn't make up their own characters? Using historical figures is as old as fiction. It's completely legit.

Yes, but in Shakespeare's case the figures, whether Hamlet or King John, are the basis for a great work of art, not the lowbrow ambitions of a Hollywood film.

We could split hairs about whether *King John* is a great work, but are you seriously arguing that the “ethics” of using historical characters depends strictly on what a particular audience makes of the finished product? That there's some quality scale that determines whether the practice is justified? Next thing you'll be talking about pornography and the “artistically redeemable standard!”

But the pond scene is art without aura.

Please Mr. Benjamin. Incidentally, the hostility you show toward film and film music goes both ways. In his commentary included with the DVD, Bernard Rose expresses genuine anger at scholarly reactions to his film.

Yes, scholars tend not to go for biopics about figures in their own field.

Right, but have you thought about why that is? I think there are three reasons. First, a scholar often spends an incredible amount of time trying to untangle minute details in order to move toward some notion of greater accuracy and historical truth.

I thought the French theorists had done away with that concept.

Not really, ask them about the Holocaust and you'll see.

It always gets back to the Holocaust with you, doesn't it?

Well, we are studying the great German tradition, aren't we? And the Holocaust happened to everyone, didn't it?

(Silence.)

At any rate, years and years of research take place using accepted "scientific" methods of inquiry to achieve balance, order, and objectivity, and along comes Milos Forman or Bernard Rose and Bam!, every kid comes out of *Amadeus* thinking Salieri poisoned Mozart because he had a horrible giggle or that Beethoven loved his brother's wife. It's *galling* for most serious researchers.

Well, that's life isn't it? But your objection is another reminder of a great problem in our discipline. We might call it Postmodern Subjects, Modernist Apparatus.

Good God, what does that mean?

Well, look, everyone is tweaking what's left of the canon, decoding the day away, and employing the old Marxist doctrines of oppression, appropriation, and empowerment for issues of race, gender, and ethnicity—in short anything but class—and it all comes packaged in the same old modernist boxes. Footnotes, appeals to authority, it's all a feeble parody of the scientific method.

What do you have against footnotes?

Nothing in particular, sometimes they're the best part of an article. But what's the point if, as postmodernity suggests, all documentation can also be deconstructed? If footnotes are simply part of a story line we're weaving, what scientific value do they have? And there's a fractal wilderness of seduction, since any source you cite automatically implies another source that you either didn't know about or somehow suppressed. The more sources you invoke, the greater the smoke screen you're erecting, the more hermetic your false history becomes.

Wow, I can see you're in a *bad, bad* place with all this. Really, tell me, is it because you got it from both sides some years ago for your work on *Amadeus*.

Let's not go into that.

No, no. I heard that a noted Mozart scholar wrote you a nasty letter for even suggesting a volume of essays on the subject, and the editors of the Shaffer Casebook so worried that your essay on the film would insult the Shaffer mafia that they surreptitiously removed critical comments, forcing you to withdraw the piece!

Yes, as the *Amadeus* advertisements cunningly suggested, "everything you've heard is true." And I have the offprint as proof. What can I say? Such things happen. But that has nothing to do with my general attitude.

What, your depressed skepticism?

Nothing of the sort. It's just that the things we study are filled with illusions. And if you know too much, certain illusions simply will not work. That's true for a footnote as well as a show. A professional magician may not enjoy watching Monzo the Magnificent as much as you do, because he knows which strings are pulled, and where the smoke and mirrors lie.

Sure, but isn't the admiration for Monzo's craft an acceptable substitution?

No. Admiration for craft is fine, but it does not carry the wondrous power of a richly arranged illusion. There's an example of the blown illusion right in *Immortal Beloved*. In one scene Beethoven and Giuletta Guicciardi are strolling in Vienna to the strains of the *Eroica*. But wait! The scholar of Czech music (or any accidental tourist) can see the *Prague* castle on the horizon. Have they all suddenly gone Bohemian?

Yes, I know that scene. It actually goes well with your point about images because the "powerful" *Eroica* is not very powerful in a scene that offers an image of Beethoven as a romantic young dandy. Under the influence of these images, the *Eroica* seems positively *foppish*. I suppose you would argue that foppishness is simply one of the *Eroica*'s potentials.

I think you're getting the idea. But back to illusion. I had a friend whose sole comment about *Amadeus* was, "How can you take a film seriously if there's a 1794 portrait of Haydn in a scene taking place in 1791?" Someone who knows too much just can't enjoy illusions the same way. I haven't been able to enjoy the opening of *Shane* as much since I read somewhere that there's a car moving along in the distance of the great valley. Just a tiny dot, but annoying.

But there is another kind of tension between scholars and filmmakers involving broader categories of action and reflection: moviemakers simply have to make

choices about historical interpretation that may seem ridiculous to scholars, but without a choice there can be no performance, no history, no nothing. And in a performance, something is *always* wrong. It goes along with the excess baggage syndrome. There's never been a perfect production of an opera, let's say. There are just too many variables.

You make scholars out to be nerdy, persnickety pedants. But many scholars are themselves involved in performances, both as participants, consultants, and impresarios.

Yes, and the ones that perform usually have a great deal of sympathy for this way of looking at things. Actually, though, I'm not talking about scholars at all, but about different tendencies, different ways of seeing the world. Go to any university where there is a substantial theater program and you will find two Shakespeares. One, studied in the English department, is a literary author subject to multiple interpretations, endless problematizing, and irreconcilable tensions. But in the theater most possibilities must be sublimated. Otherwise there can be no show. Hamlet's ambivalence can only reach the stage if directors have overcome their own.

So are you implying that *any* action is worthy of our notice? Just because, say, a film director makes a choice, do we have to respect it?

Of course not. But when we think about composer films we might try to understand things in terms of the medium itself. And we might try to take pleasure in seeing into the past.

Now you've gone totally round the bend. When I want historical accuracy Hollywood is the last place I'm going to look for it.

Don't be so quick to judge. There are several kinds of "real" pasts we can inhabit. One is in our own memory, although we know how many distortions creep in. If you were asked to summarize our dialogue to this point, what would you remember? And would the way it made you feel be part of the past? And would you also remember what the air felt like as you thought about such things? We forget almost everything.

There's another kind of recall we might term "the historian's past." This is the result of careful research, a serious best guess, a convergence of evidence, and we can, to a certain extent, use our imagination to animate it. We can try to get the figures we study to move, to talk, sing, feel. But it takes a great deal of mental energy. It's a bit like juggling ten plates at once, and they can't be sustained for very long. You may laugh, but the vast resources of a commercial film bring together

researchers from an astonishing number of backgrounds and orientations. The sum total of these may produce visual illusions that, for better or for worse, are as close as we will ever get to seeing into the real past.

God help us then! If *Immortal Beloved* is as close to Beethoven's past as we can get, we are in deep doo doo, as W's pappy used to say!

I'm just suggesting that while it is easy to dismiss costume drama as hopeless history, the modern Hollywood film has the budget to do amazing things, and we can see some astonishing sights.

You know, you talk about the film, but in the end though, the best, and perhaps the only, animated record of the historical past inhabited by Beethoven is found in a peculiar document called a musical score, or even in preserved mechanical instruments such as music boxes. These contain, I would argue, more information about the past than any court record, watercolor, novel, or film and comprise a stuffed file of mental energy so powerful and evocative that unpacking it is the ultimate historical voyage. Sure, your various images alter it, bring out different tendencies, but it's also "what it is" and nothing more. And with that peroration I, for one, am ready to leave young Beethoven's feeble impersonator floating face up in a chlorinated pond in a Hollywood back lot.

Leave we shall, but I'll fall for the illusion and imagine a beautiful young man finding solace in his nocturnal bath, illuminated by the full double moons, vanishing into the starry skies and becoming a symbol at once real and abstract.

With the Ninth of course.

Of course.

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