Stephen Hinton, Editor-in-Chief

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José Bowen & Richard Will, Reviews Editors

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Contents

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

"Beethoven and Freedom"—the suggestive conjunction served as the title of a session at the 2002 meeting of the American Musicological Society in Columbus, Ohio, the occasion that included the first three articles published here. Because of freedom's continuing relevance, however, not only to historical but also to contemporary Beethoven reception, the title applies in various ways to almost the entire contents of this issue and to some of the next one, too.

The relevance is double-edged, both a virtue and a problem. The idea of freedom is a prime example—arguably *the* prime example—of what W. B. Gallie called an "essentially contested concept," that is, a concept with "no one clearly definable general use." Disputes about meaning should be considered genuine, even though they are unlikely to be resolved by argument; moreover, as Gallie remarked, it is "perfectly respectable arguments and evidence" that sustain them. No one connotation can be "set up as the correct or standard usage."[1] It is the historian's task to recognize and analyze the plurality of contested meanings, as our authors do here. The discussion of freedom, to quote the historian Eric Foner, "must transcend boundaries rather than reinforce or reproduce them."[2]

The boundaries are cultural as well as historical. Take, for example, the American as opposed to the German uses of freedom. A brief review reveals notable and telling differences, with each country boasting its own distinctive version of exceptionalism. Recent politics in the United States have resuscitated the country's mid-century image as the sole embodiment and defender of universal freedom, defined in 1941 by President Roosevelt as "four essential human freedoms": freedom of speech and expression; freedom of worship; freedom from want; and freedom from fear. Yet the ongoing process of globalization, in which the United States has such a huge stake—most recently entailing a preemptive war waged with the rallying cry: "Freedom is on the March!"—has brought about a shift in the definition of those freedoms.[3] The 2002 National Security Strategy champions a "single

1. W. B. Gallie, "Essentially Contested Concepts," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 66 (1956), 167–98; here 168. Gallie draws his three "live examples" from art, political science, and religion. Writing in the mid-1950s, he asserts that "the concept of liberty . . . appears steadily to have lost ground" to democracy, "*the* appraisive political concept *par excellence*" (p.184). That recent developments in the United States contradict this trend only confirms Gallie's basic argument about contested meanings.

2. Eric Foner, "The Idea of Freedom in American History," *German Historical Institute Bulletin* 43 (2004), 25–39; http://www.ghi-dc.org/bulletinS04/34.25.pdf.

3. The distinguished historian Fritz Stern has remarked, à propos the marching metaphor: "Now 'freedom' is being emptied of meaning and reduced to a slogan. But one doesn't demean the concept without injuring the substance." Letter to *New York Times,* 24 October 2004.

sustainable model for national success" whose principal ingredients are "freedom, democracy, and free enterprise." "People everywhere," the White House document claims, "want to be able to speak freely; choose who will govern them; worship as they please; educate their children—male and female; own property; and enjoy the benefits of their labor. These values of freedom are right and true for every person, in every society."[4] In the last half century the emphasis has shifted from "freedom from want" to "free enterprise" and property ownership. Whether these particular freedoms can be considered universally compatible with one another is perhaps the most hotly contested aspect of the "essentially contested concept" in current debates, not least in the U.S. political arena. As Sanna Pederson writes in her contribution to this issue: "The importance of economic freedom has overwhelmed traditional political definitions of freedom. . . . The way in which individual interests are satisfied today moves in the opposite direction of traditional collective political movements." Collective movements are more prominently the stuff of German debates about freedom, beginning with the post-revolutionary era that gave birth to Schiller's and Beethoven's "Alle Menschen werden Brüder!" and continuing on through the nineteenth century, via the failed attempt in 1848 to achieve liberty and national unity, a failure that wrought the direst consequences in the twentieth century.

Against the background of such shifts, historical discussions of the kind presented here can seem at once highly pertinent and strangely irrelevant. The current U.S. President's notion of freedom is assuredly not Beethoven's, or even that of those Beethovenians who have invoked the concept in the composer's name over the last two centuries. How far we are today from the Schillerian conception of freedom, predicated as it was on aesthetic education, is made forcefully apparent in the essays by Alexander Rehding and Daniel Chua. Invoking Adorno, Rehding identifies the tension between individual and community as inherent in the text of the "Ode to Joy." "Schiller's joyous Utopian community," he writes, "thrives precisely on the exclusion of the individual who does not fit in." The author thereby raises a legitimate concern about recent political appropriations of Beethoven's Ninth. Also drawing on Adorno, this time on his reading of Beethoven's late style, Chua wonders whether Beethoven's aesthetic freedom, one that he associates with an improvisatory quality in the late works, isn't wholly at odds with political cooption: "This may not be a freedom fit for the slogans of a political rally," Chua concludes, "but if the alliance between Beethoven and freedom is to continue in the twenty-

4. http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf.

first century, perhaps we need to fold up that blank flag and its 'empty' declaration of power, for a freedom that is less ambitious and more compassionate."

Lawrence Kramer similarly focuses on the relationship between aesthetics and politics in his article on the "Ghost" Trio. The slow movement, Kramer observes, "is so very extraordinary, so deliberately out of the ordinary, that it seems to be challenging the very conception of ordinary life." (One of the titles he cites—that by Zizek—is provocatively called *The Abyss of Freedom*.) Freedom's boundaries will also be explored in the next issue of *Beethoven Forum* with Richard Leppert's review of the book *Listening to Reason*. Leppert's piece takes issue with what the author Michael Steinberg calls "music's capacity to think, to argue, and to develop the position of a thinking, feeling subject in juxtaposition with a multiple and challenging cultural and political world." Art's autonomy and hence freedom, Leppert argues, reside in "its engagement with history, which at the same time reaches beyond history—at best toward some semblance of hope and Utopia." It is such engagement, perhaps more than anything, that has linked and will continue to link Beethoven and the idea of freedom.

Special thanks are due to Don Anthony at the Center for Computer Assisted Research in the Humanities (CCARH) at Stanford University for setting the music examples.

Stephen Hinton

Abbreviations

Literature

Anderson	Emily Anderson, ed., *The Letters of Beethoven,* 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1961; rpt. New York: Norton, 1985).
Brandenburg	Sieghard Brandenburg, ed., *Ludwig van Beethoven: Briefwechsel: Gesamtausgabe,* Beethovenhaus edn., 8 vols. (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1996–)
BS I, BS II, BS III	*Beethoven Studies,* 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., *Ludwig van Beethovens Konversationshefte* [= 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, *The Beethoven Sketchbooks: History, Reconstruction, Inventory,* ed. Douglas Johnson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985)
Kerman, *Quartets*	Joseph Kerman, *The Beethoven Quartets* (New York: Norton, 1967)
Kinsky-Halm	Georg Kinsky, *Das Werk Beethovens: Thematisch-bibliographisches Verzeichnis seiner sämtlichen vollendeten Kompositionen,* completed and ed. Hans Halm (Munich and Duisburg: G. Henle, 1955)
MGG	*Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik,* ed. Friedrich Blume, 17 vols. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1949–86; rev. 2nd edn. Ludwig Finscher, 1994–2000)
N I	Gustav Nottebohm, *Beethoveniana* (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

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

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

Beethoven and Freedom: Historicizing the Political Connection

How many are the ideas of which we can say that we understand them conceptually, without remembering in any original sense what they mean!
—Frederic Jameson

Sanna Pederson

Performances of Beethoven commemorating September 11 demonstrate that, to concert givers and audiences at least, the connection between freedom and Beethoven is self-evident. For instance, at each of the Berlin Philharmonic's three appearances at New York's Carnegie Hall in 2001, the program was changed to include a Beethoven symphony. A statement from the orchestra explained that the management "felt that the works of Beethoven, a composer who was motivated by great ideals and believed strongly in liberty and freedom, are an appropriate musical statement in light of the tragic events of Sept. 11."[1] For the opening concert of the New York Philharmonic's season a year later, John Adams's "On the Transmigration of Souls," commissioned by the Philharmonic to mark the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks, was scheduled to be paired with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. At the last minute, however, the *Leonore* Overture No. 3 was substituted, making it an all-Beethoven concert.[2]

These performances, only two of many I could mention, beg the question: what is this freedom that Beethoven has come to stand for? This is a difficult question to answer, because it depends on being able to define freedom. The current discourse on freedom is, and perhaps always has been, incoherent. The historian Eric Foner,

1. Anthony Tommasini, "As Ever in a Crisis, Beethoven Reigns," *New York Times,* 5 October 2001, online edition.

2. Lack of rehearsal time was the reason given for not performing the Adams work on the opening concert. This decision was generally judged to be a mistake; see Anthony Tommasini, "Maazel Shows His Firm Hand from the Start," *New York Times* 20 September 2002, online edition.

author of *The Story of American Freedom,* has stated: "Rather than seeing freedom as a fixed category or predetermined concept, I view it as what philosophers call an 'essentially contested idea,' one that by its very nature is the subject of disagreement."[3] Yet, such is the powerfully magical quality of the word that politicians and other public speakers can invoke it without having to use it in a logical way. For example, U.S. Congressman J. C. Watts from Oklahoma declared in his "Constituent Update" at the end of 2001: "We regard freedom as precious and absolute in this country. It cannot be bought, bartered or borrowed. It must be vigorously defended. Under this administration, it will."[4] Coming from the other end of the ideological spectrum, the American Civil Liberties Union has tried to refute the government's argument that individuals need to give up some of their civil liberties in order to preserve the nation's safety with the slogan "We can be both safe and free."[5]

Although the word has been used in a whole range of responses to the terrorist attacks, there does seem to be a basic agreement that, as a terrorist act, September 11 made us aware of freedom by taking it away. Frederic Jameson expresses this aspect well (if abstrusely) when he describes freedom as taking the form of "a sudden perception of an intolerable present which is at the same time, but implicitly and however dimly articulated, the glimpse of another state in the name of which the first is judged."[6] The intolerable present of a terrorized world, tensed for catastrophe, gives us a glimpse of a state of freedom where there is no fear.

So, even as freedom is currently being used as a powerful and effective rallying cry that we all can respond to in some way, the term itself is underdefined and ambiguous. This quality of freedom can be greatly intensified with music. As Beethoven is played at these commemorative concerts, freedom does not need to be defined in order to be experienced. A musical performance lets the definition of freedom float away from the particular instance into a nether region of abstract universals. Who is to know what freedom means for any given individual who experiences it in Beethoven's music? Even someone who tries to articulate it can only speak for him- or herself. Subjectivity is given free range within not one but

3. Eric Foner, "The Idea of Freedom in American History," *German Historical Institute Bulletin* 43 (2004), 27. See also Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998).

4. Congressman J. C. Watts, Jr., "2001 End of the Year Constituent Update."

5. "Civil Liberties After 9–11: The ACLU Defends Freedom," www.aclu.org (accessed 2 Feb. 2003).

6. Frederic Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971), p.85. (The epigraph on the opening page is from this source, p.83.)

two abstract categories: Beethoven's music and the idea of freedom. The conceptual space where the two can converge is too enormous to try to define. Instead, I would like to begin to gather the historical materials that form the basis for this connection. I would like to investigate the question: to what degree historically has Beethoven been associated with the political concept of freedom?

Beethoven was born into the age in which the idea of freedom was most profoundly articulated. But it is significant that actual revolution occurred in America and France, not in Germany. Germany had to take on freedom primarily through philosophy and art. Immanuel Kant's thought as a whole can be characterized as revolving around the question of freedom, as can that of Hegel. Friedrich Schiller is often known as the "poet of freedom"; political freedom is a central theme of his dramas. He is also an important figure for the idea of aesthetic freedom. His *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* makes the famous declaration: "It is only through beauty that man makes his way to freedom."[7] While perhaps less associated with freedom than Schiller, Goethe contributed to the idea in his political dramas.

We know that Beethoven read and admired Kant, Schiller, and Goethe. It is unclear, however, to what extent Beethoven understood and endorsed the various and complex uses of freedom in their work. Maynard Solomon acknowledges the "striking convergence between Schiller's and Beethoven's ideas," but is unwilling to claim that Beethoven was directly influenced by specific works by Schiller.[8] Even so, Lewis Lockwood has recently stated that

> it seems beyond doubt that Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* informed Beethoven's view of the potential power of art (and music) to enlighten individuals and society in a new way and to bring them to higher levels of understanding and behavior. If Schiller as innovative playwright had been a potential model for him in the 1780s, Schiller the philosopher-artist of the 1790s became an even more potent influence on Beethoven's moral and political outlook.[9]

The contrasting views of these two eminent Beethoven scholars show that the relationship between Schiller and Beethoven is subject to dispute. And this is our strongest case: there is far less evidence for a specific influence on Beethoven from Goethe, Kant, or Hegel. The effect of these thinkers on Beethoven can only be broadly assumed, not specifically determined.

7. For an examination of Schiller's idea of freedom, see Alexander Rehding's essay in this issue.
8. Solomon, "Beethoven and Schiller," *Essays,* p.211.
9. Lewis Lockwood, *Beethoven: The Music and the Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), p.72.

It does seem that we can generalize that Beethoven garnered ethical messages from these writings: lessons on how to live and behave. Rudolph Bockholdt has speculated that if there is an aspect of Kant's idea of freedom that Beethoven understood and endorsed, it would be the freedom that comes from acting according to the moral law, of fulfilling one's duty to follow the categorical imperative without regard for one's natural desires.[10]

It is harder to make the claim that Beethoven was influenced by the aesthetic theories of any of these writers. Kant and Schiller were crucial for developing the notion that, for the artwork, a precondition for freedom is autonomy. The work must be created under conditions that allow it to be independent of these very conditions. Although Beethoven's works are usually considered this way, there does not seem to be any evidence that, after reading Kant and Schiller, Beethoven consciously endorsed the notion that only the autonomous artwork could have something to do with freedom.

If relating Beethoven's music to contemporary aesthetic and philosophical ideas of freedom is a delicate operation, situating Beethoven's music within the political theories of freedom of the time is no less complicated. Beethoven lived through the French Revolution and the Wars of Liberation, a time that encompasses the whole spectrum of political possibilities from revolutionary anarchy to reactionary repression. During such unstable times, the understanding of freedom could undergo drastic changes. For instance, Schiller's aesthetic theory changed significantly as he responded to political events in France. Similarly, Beethoven's music and politics cannot be reduced to the spirit of the French Revolution, but must include the Napoleonic Wars and their aftermath as well. In his recent book, *Beethoven after Napoleon: Political Romanticism in the Late Works,* Stephen Rumph has argued for a major revision in our understanding of Beethoven's stylistic development and political outlook after 1809: "From this point on he begins his metamorphosis from a cosmopolitan composer writing heroic works with a distinctly French flavor to a patriotic German writing propaganda pieces against Napoleon."[11]

The reception of Beethoven's works after his lifetime has also affected our understanding of their relation to freedom. For instance, the story of changing the dedication on the title page of the *Eroica* was made known only after Beethoven's

10. Rudolf Bockholdt, "Freiheit und Brüderlichkeit in der Musik Ludwig van Beethovens," *Beethoven zwischen Revolution und Restauration,* ed. Helga Lühning and Sieghard Brandenburg (Bonn: BH, 1989), pp.85–90.

11. Stephen Rumph, *Beethoven after Napoleon: Political Romanticism in the Late Works* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U California P, 2004), p.96.

death. The notion that Schiller originally composed an "Ode to Freedom" that he changed to the "Ode to Joy" did not appear in print until 1849. Although Beethoven's music gives the impression of immediacy, that it bypasses history, it is also increasingly acknowledged that his works and image have taken on lives of their own, gathering meanings and associations over the years that were never there in the first place.

It seems that, in the reception history of Beethoven and his works, freedom does not appear as a widespread association until the twentieth century. There have always been political connections, above all with the texted Ninth Symphony and the opera *Fidelio*. But freedom has not predominated over other political concepts until relatively recently. Although the idea of freedom reached its peak in both its political and aesthetic senses in the late eighteenth century, it dropped out of the political vocabulary during the repressive period afterward. One main reason for the break in continuity of the idea of freedom from Beethoven's lifetime into the next generations is censorship.

There is the oddity of Wolfgang Robert Griepenkerl's novella *Das Musikfest oder die Beethovener,* published in 1838. This book refers obliquely in a footnote to the "real" meaning of the finale of the Ninth Symphony as being freedom instead of joy. Whether Griepenkerl had any basis for making this assertion is open to question; he was writing ten years before Friedrich Ludwig Jahn published his account of hearing, from a man who claimed to have been Schiller's copyist, that "An die Freude" had originally been "An die Freiheit," and was changed after being rejected by the censor. Although discredited by most Schiller scholars today, the story contributed greatly to the image of Schiller as the "poet of freedom" in the second half of the nineteenth century and, by extension, gradually strengthened the Ninth Symphony's connection to freedom as well.[12] However Griepenkerl hit upon the story, his linking of the Ninth with freedom did not generate a strong response, not even over the next ten years as interest and desire to participate in political matters grew and culminated in the revolutions of 1848.[13]

The year 1848 was a time when the German philosophical and political concepts of freedom seemed poised to come together. The Young Hegelians, particularly Arnold Ruge and his followers, interpreted Hegel's writings as a blueprint for concrete political reform. A member of the national assembly that met in Frankfurt

12. Uwe Martin seems to be on a one-man crusade to authenticate Jahn's story. See, for instance, Uwe Martin, "In Zweifel für die Freiheit: Zu Schillers Lied *An die Freude,*" *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 48/1 (1998), 47–59.

13. See Rehding's essay for a different opinion on Griepenkerl's influence.

in 1848, Ruge called for democratic elections, freedom of the press, jury trials, a public educational system and European disarmament. This was also the period in which ideas for politicizing music were presented systematically for the first time.[14] Hegelian writers on music including Franz Brendel were looking to the future for a new kind of music. Beethoven was held up as a democrat and as exemplar of the politically committed composer. Brendel insisted that music embodied the spirit of its age, and that the spirit of the nineteenth century, "which filled Beethoven," was "the striving for freedom, for the realization of this highest goal of humanity."[15]

Although Brendel's magnum opus, his *History of Music in Italy, Germany and France,* went through eight editions (four during his lifetime), his Hegelian approach was met with strong opposition from other writers on music. Around the time of the 1848 revolutions, this opposition took the form of a debate on what music could or should represent. Hanslick's anti-Hegelian *On the Musically Beautiful* from 1854 objected, for instance, to the idea that Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture could have anything to do with the ideas or political sentiments of Goethe's play. The overture could not be anything other than "sequences of tones which the composer has created entirely spontaneously, according to logical musical principles."[16] Discussions of the Ninth Symphony at this time centered not around the message of freedom, but rather around the significance of adding words and voices to the symphony, and whether or not this was an acknowledgment of the limitations of instrumental music. For instance, there is no mention of freedom in A. B. Marx's section on the Ninth in his Beethoven book from 1859; instead, he describes "the basic idea" as lying in "the passing over from instrumental music and the symphonic into human music, song."[17] Marx also spends far more time on the *Leonore* Overtures as "symphonic poems" than on *Fidelio* itself, which is discussed

14. See chap. 5 of my *Enlightened and Romantic German Music Criticism, 1800–1850* (Ph.D diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1995).

15. Franz Brendel, *Geschichte der Musik in Italien, Deutschland und Frankreich: Von den ersten christlichen Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart: Zweiundzwanzig Vorlesungen gehalten zu Leipzig im Jahre 1850* (Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Sändig Reprint, 1985), p. 340.

16. Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful,* trans. Geoffrey Payzant (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986), p. 74. Not all of Hanslick's admirers agreed with him on this particular point, however. David Friedrich Strauss protested that in the *Egmont* Overture "the drive for freedom is unmistakably expressed." (Letter to Hanslick, 31 May 1855, printed in Eduard Hanslick, "Begegnungen mit Friedrich Theodor Vischer," in *Musikalisches und Litterarisches (Der "Modernen Opera" V. Theil.)* [Berlin: Allgemeiner Verein für Deutsche Litteratur, 1889], p. 287). I am grateful to Rose Mauro for this reference.

17. Adolf Bernhard Marx, *Ludwig van Beethoven: Leben und Schaffen* (Berlin: Verlag von Otto Janke, 1859; rpt. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1979), II, 288.

mainly to show that Beethoven was not suited to writing operas.[18] According to Paul Robinson, the reverent reception of *Fidelio* as a profound political allegory did not begin until the 1904 Vienna production under the supervision of Gustav Mahler and Alfred Roller.[19]

Apparently freedom was not a major component of the German reception of Beethoven in the nineteenth century. Part of the reason seems to be that freedom does not serve German nationalism well, certainly not as well as French or American nationalism. The German historian Jürgen Kocka has observed that, in contrast to the United States, "the concept of *Freiheit*—freedom or liberty—did not play such a fundamental and central role in modern Germany's self-understanding, politics, and symbolism. Other concepts were stronger: *Volk, Nation, Staat,* for a long time 'class,' for a short while 'race,' and perhaps most recently 'peace'."[20]

For France, in contrast, freedom has been crucial for constructing a non-German Beethoven who embraced French ideals. Leo Schrade concluded his book *Beethoven in France* with the comment, "France once carried Beethoven upon the wings of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. If these wings break, France is to lose her own image of Beethoven."[21] In fact, a performance of the Ninth Symphony in Paris in 1882 featured the substitution of "Freiheit" for "Freude," over a century before Leonard Bernstein's famous performances commemorating the fall of the Berlin Wall.[22]

I would designate 1927, with its many events that marked the hundredth anniversary of Beethoven's death, as the point at which freedom started becoming a familiar trope. Surely one of the most interesting periods of Beethoven reception, this was a time of anti-nationalism and Pan-European movements; aesthetically, it was characterized by anti-Romanticism and even anti-art sentiment. For the first time, Beethoven seemed vulnerable to attack or at least neglect by composers and custodians of high art. But politicians who adapted Beethoven to their causes came to the rescue and revitalized Beethoven's image. At a centenary Beethoven congress in Vienna, thirty-six countries sent representatives, many of them prominent

18. Marx, *Ludwig van Beethoven,* I, 354–79.

19. See chap. 8, "An Interpretive History," in Paul Robinson, *Ludwig van Beethoven:* Fidelio (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), pp. 145–64.

20. Jürgen Kocka, "The Idea of Freedom in German History," *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 34 (2004), 41.

21. Leo Schrade, *Beethoven in France: The Growth of an Idea* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1942), p. 251.

22. Esteban Buch, *Beethoven's Ninth: A Political History,* trans. Richard Miller (Chicago: U Chicago P, 2003), p. 166.

statesmen. Politicians like Eduard Herriot, who was to author both a biography of Beethoven and a plan for "The United States of Europe," gave speeches emphasizing the traditionally French interpretation of Beethoven's political commitment. The Americans also chimed in: Ambassador Albert Washburn eulogized Beethoven as "an apostle of liberty"—although he qualified this phrase with "in the best philosophical meaning of the term."[23]

A few important musicians also reinterpreted Beethoven politically in 1927, although with the Soviet Union more in mind than a united Europe. Hanns Eisler made the case for the contemporary relevance of the Ninth Symphony, commenting that "in reactionary times we must say *Freude* when we want to say *Freiheit*."[24] This was also the year that the politically and artistically progressive production of *Fidelio* premiered at the Berlin Kroll Opera, conducted by Otto Klemperer, with an essay for the program booklet by Ernst Bloch.[25] Bloch's writing on *Fidelio* proved tremendously influential for understanding this opera as transcending its historical situation to communicate freedom and hope across the ages: "Every future storming of the Bastille is implicitly expressed in *Fidelio*."[26]

Musicology did not play a direct role in connecting Beethoven to an idea of freedom at this time, although we do have Robert Haven Schauffler's popularizing biography, *Beethoven: The Man Who Freed Music,* from 1929, which is probably more influential than musicologists would care to admit. In his chapter, "How Beethoven Freed Music," Schauffler does not scruple to list the ways: "He freed music from that cloistered outlook which ignored the march of events in the outside world"; "he emancipated personality in music, detonating in his scores such a profound charge of thought and passionate emotion that the world still vibrates with the shock"; he freed music "from the shackles of literature"; "he freed modulation," "he liberated form"; and finally: "by sheer personal magnetism, force of will, and

23. Cited in Buch, *Beethoven's Ninth,* p.190.

24. "Freude mußte man im Zeitalter der Reaktion sagen, wenn man Freiheit meinte." Hanns Eisler, "Ludwig van Beethoven: Zu seinem 100. Todestage am 26. März," *Die Rote Fahne,* Berlin, 22 March 1927 (cited in Buch, *Beethoven's Ninth,* p.184).

25. See Robinson, *Fidelio,* pp.155–58; and David Drew's intro. to Ernst Bloch, *Essays on the Philosophy of Music,* trans. Peter Palmer (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), pp.xxvii–xxviii.

26. Bloch, *Essays,* p.243; cf. Robinson, *Fidelio,* p.75: "At the ideological centre of *Fidelio* stands the abstract idea of freedom. It is not expressly connected with any particular political movement or social group, nor is it elaborated into particular freedoms such as freedom of speech, religion or the press. Rather it is freedom *tout court*."

intensity of genius, [he] liberate[d] the art of music from the long-standing indignity of being carried on by lackeys."[27]

Beethoven's music was used extensively as propaganda during World War II, both for and against Germany.[28] After the war, the taint of the Third Reich's appropriation of the Ninth Symphony and *Fidelio* lingered long enough for Thomas Mann to express his consternation. He asked how anyone could have listened to *Fidelio* in Germany during the Nazi era "without covering one's face and rushing out of the hall."[29] Yet the symbolic power of Beethoven was so strong that it quickly bounced back to serve both parts of the newly divided Germany. East Germany drew on a tradition of linking his music to Communist workers' movements that went back to the beginning of the twentieth century. West Germany concentrated on anything but politics, from the "music itself" to Beethoven's nephew, very possibly because "freedom" had already been appropriated by the other side.[30] It was only with the fall of Communism that the "Ode to Freedom" could be proclaimed in a united Germany.

It is in Theodor Adorno's writings on Beethoven, which date from the 1930s to the 1960s, that the concepts of autonomy, individuality, and freedom become the central philosophical and political categories for understanding the composer's significance.[31] In his *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (1962), Adorno declares that "the central categories of artistic construction can be translated into social ones": there is a relationship between bourgeois society made up of free individuals and Beethoven's autonomous artworks. The relationship is complicated; for instance, Adorno refers to Beethoven's "greatest symphonic movements" as "the most sublime music ever to mean freedom by continued unfreedom."[32] Adorno

27. Robert Haven Schauffler, *Beethoven: The Man Who Freed Music* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1929), pp. 493, 490, 494, 492, 492, 489.

28. See David B. Dennis, *Beethoven in German Politics, 1870–1989* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996), pp. 142–74.

29. Cited in Dennis, *Beethoven in German Politics,* p. 175.

30. See Dennis, *Beethoven in German Politics,* chap. 5, "Germany Divided, and Reunified," pp. 175–203.

31. For a discussion of freedom in music after Beethoven, see Rose Rosengard Subotnik, "The Historical Structure: Adorno's 'French' Model for the Criticism of Nineteenth-Century Music," in *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1991), pp. 206–38.

32. Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music,* trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), pp. 209, 210.

refers here to "the force of crushing repression, of an authoritarian 'That's how it is'," that can be found even in those works of the middle period that come closest to meaning freedom.

I would characterize Adorno as a very "strong reader" of Beethoven, which means that his analysis of autonomy, individuality, and freedom in Beethoven says more about Adorno himself and about his concerns than anything else. Because Adorno's philosophy is heavily invested in the tradition of German idealism and concerned with the centrality of Beethoven, it may seem that it is our best guide to this topic. Yet Adorno is not the whole story. Many see Adorno's writing on freedom, hope, and utopia as a direct response to Ernst Bloch, who was able to hear at the end of *Fidelio* "the dawning of a new day so audible that it seems more than simply a hope."[33] David Drew suggests that Adorno's comments on art and utopia are "inverted and retrograded forms" of themes that "are unmistakably Bloch's."[34] Jost Hermand's recent book on Beethoven recommends reading Adorno and Bloch together for an indispensable perspective on *Fidelio.*[35]

More recent approaches to freedom share Adorno's linking of the idea of freedom with the emergence of the individual, as well as his emphasis on economic conditions. One such approach can be found in the writings of the Polish-born sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, whose best-known book is *Modernity and the Holocaust,* which appeared in 1989.[36] Unlike Adorno, who saw freedom as a lost opportunity becoming ever more remote, Bauman tries to describe freedom more neutrally as a condition continuously re-created by the way society is integrated.

Bauman's sweeping thesis is that modern (as opposed to ancient and medieval) Western freedom is distinctive from a sociological point of view for its "intimate link with individualism and its genetic and cultural connection with the market economy and capitalism." Historically, the location of that connection has shifted away from the area of power and production in Beethoven's time to the area of consumption in ours. Today's society is made up of individuals who need to have a developed sense of self in order to function in a highly differentiated, complex society. In earlier stages of capitalism, only a few were able to realize their identity as free individuals; these were the "self-made men," who "mastered their own fate" and left their mark on the world through production, whether through building a

33. Bloch, *Essays,* p.243.

34. Drew, intro. to Bloch, *Essays,* p.xli.

35. Jost Hermand, *Beethoven: Werk und Wirkung* (Köln: Böhlau, 2003), pp.91–92.

36. Zygmunt Bauman, *Freedom,* Concepts in Social Thought Series (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1988).

business empire or composing masterpieces. But today, individuality is commonplace, and it is asserted and confirmed above all by what can be purchased. "The individual's drive to self-assertion has been squeezed out from the area of material production. Instead, a wider than ever space has been opened for it at the new 'pioneer frontier,' the rapidly expanding, seemingly limitless, world of consumption." In Bauman's account, the consumer market has proved to be a much more viable solution to the individual's need to assert his freedom, because "for virtually every projected self, there are purchasable signs to express it. . . . The freedom to choose one's identity therefore becomes a realistic proposition. There is a range of options to choose from, and once the choice has been made, the selected identity can be made real . . . by making the necessary purchases."[37]

The importance of economic freedom has overwhelmed traditional political definitions of freedom, Bauman claims.[38] The way in which individual interests are satisfied today moves in the opposite direction of traditional collective political movements; therefore, Bauman does not think that there is much of a future for political freedom in the sense of coming together and making communal decisions.

Eric Foner has reached a similar conclusion in his history of the idea of freedom in the United States. Freedom, which he calls the single most important idea for Americans' sense of themselves as individuals and as a nation, has become economic freedom:

> A series of presidential administrations, aided and abetted by most of the mass media, have redefined both American freedom and America's historical mission to promote it for all mankind to mean the creation of a single global free market in which capital, natural resources, and human labor are nothing more than factors of production in an endless quest for greater productivity and profit. The prevailing ideology of the global free market assumes that the economic life of all countries can and should be refashioned in the image of the United States—the latest version of the nation's self-definition of model of freedom for the entire world.[39]

Indeed, a striking recent example of the economic definition of freedom can be found in "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," a document defining America's relation to the rest of the world. Issued on 17 Sep-

37. Ibid., pp.36, 57, 63.

38. "The consumer market as a whole may be seen as an institutionalized exit from politics" (Bauman, *Freedom,* p.82).

39. Foner, "The Idea of Freedom," p.45.

tember 2002, it states that the aim of the United States as the most powerful nation on earth is to "extend the benefits of freedom across the globe." After extolling the virtues of freedom of speech and religion, the document declares: "If you can make something that others value, you should be able to sell it to them. If others make something that you value, you should be able to buy it. This is real freedom, the freedom for a person—or a nation to make a living."[40]

Although the current path to freedom might lead away from politics, that does not mean that Beethoven has also lost all political associations. Esteban Buch's recent reception history of the Ninth Symphony tells a convincing story of how Beethoven has now become part of Europe's post–Cold War image of itself.[41] A two-minute arrangement of the Ode to Joy theme by Herbert von Karajan currently serves as the anthem of the European Union, the European Council, and is also played at NATO headquarters in Brussels. Besides standing for Europe, Buch observes that Beethoven is also called upon to serve as the guarantor for all of Western civilization's humanity, especially on occasions acknowledging the existence of inhumanity, such as the performance of the Ninth at Mauthausen, the Austrian concentration camp, in 2000. With regard to the 9/11 memorial concerts, Peter Treagar has commented: "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."[42]

This quotation brings me back to the beginning, and to the problem of what to think about those concerts. Beethoven apparently continues to perform a powerful function in our society, often in the name of freedom. As we hear his music being played, intimations of freedom are said to be experienced. Neither dismissing this assertion as ideological delusion nor celebrating it as proof of the universal values in Beethoven's music gets us very far. A historical perspective lets us observe that the nature of freedom has changed in fundamental ways with the development of modern capitalistic society, currently configured in an unprecedented way as being dominated by one superpower nation bent on extending the benefits of freedom across the globe. Additionally, the reception history of Beethoven and his music indicates a much more discontinuous relationship to freedom than might be assumed. Beethoven's freedom may very well not be our freedom at all, no matter how clearly we hear it in the music.

40. "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nssall.html, dated 17 September 2002.

41. See Buch, *Beethoven's Ninth,* chap. 12 and conclusion, pp. 243–67.

42. Peter Tregear, "The Ninth after 9/11," *Beethoven Forum* 10 (2003), 223.

The Promise of Nothing: The Dialectic of Freedom in Adorno's Beethoven

Daniel K. L. Chua

"Beethoven and freedom" is a cultural trope that has dominated the reception history of Beethoven's music. We need only recall the numerous occasions on which the Ninth Symphony has been used to mark moments when human freedom has been threatened, anticipated, or celebrated—from Wagner's performances in Dresden prior to the 1848 revolutions to the atrocities of September 11, when the finale was performed in a hastily reprogrammed "Last Night of the Proms" in London under Leonard Slatkin.[1] Yet the nature of this freedom has been ambiguous, with opposing political and philosophical ideologies adopting Beethoven's music as their mouthpiece. In the early nineteenth century, for example, the Parisian audiences heard the victorious finale of the Fifth Symphony as their revolution, whereas a hundred years later the National Socialists in Germany heard it as their Führer.[2] How can this be? On the face of it, the answer seems relatively simple; as David Dennis points out, it was "Beethoven the *man,* not his

1. Wagner's performances of the Ninth Symphony so inspired the audience with political fervor that when revolutionary fires broke out in Dresden, a guard shouted to Wagner from the barricades: "schöner Götterfunken." See Richard Wagner, *Braunes Buch,* 8 May 1849, cited in Klaus Kropfinger, *Wagner and Beethoven: Richard Wagner's Reception of Beethoven,* trans. Peter Palmer (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), p.44. On Slatkin's performance of the Ninth Symphony at the Proms, see Peter Tregear, "The Ninth after 9/11," *Beethoven Forum* 10 (2003), 223.

2. Beate Angelika Kraus, "Beethoven and the Revolution: The View of the French Musical Press," in *Music and the French Revolution,* ed. Malcolm Boyd (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992); and David B. Dennis, *Beethoven in German Politics, 1870–1989* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996), p.151.

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music, [that] is the focus" of the propaganda in German politics.[3] The volatile nature of Beethoven's political identity—as "a supporter of enlightened despotism . . . a revolutionary idealist . . . an admirer of Napoleon . . . [and] an enemy of Napoleon . . ."—enabled political commentators of all persuasions to indulge in a form of "selective scavenging and reinterpretation," writes Dennis, in order to produce the Beethoven they wanted to hear.[4] The idea of freedom, then, is a matter of discourse and biography. It has nothing to do with the *music*. Indeed, music's only contribution, according to Dennis, is its *inability* to specify freedom. It is conceptually mute; the "abstract nature" of its empty signs allows the politicians to fill the void with their ideological rhetoric.[5] So the Ninth Symphony, for example, which does not explicitly speak of freedom in its choral finale, has freedom imposed upon it from the outside; hence Leonard Bernstein could replace "Freude" with "Freiheit" in his 1989 performance of the Ninth at the Schauspielhaus to celebrate the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany.[6] Beethoven's music, it appears, is merely an arbitrary vessel in the discourses of history, or to adopt Scott Burnham's phrase, a tune "wav[ing] in the winds of the Western world as a blank flag awaiting the colors of a cause."[7]

The blank flag is a familiar strategy of absolute music. Dennis, by unfurling its abstract surface, rehearses Eduard Hanslick's political withdrawal after the failures of the 1848 revolutions; his book *The Beautiful in Music* (1854) steers music away from the political sphere into the abstractions of the absolute where it can remain pure and untainted by the fluctuations of material reality.[8] Music as pure sign and meaning as pure discourse collude to render the essence of music entirely empty. But drawing a blank is not an answer to the question of freedom; it is a strategic evasion that must come under critical scrutiny if Beethoven's music is not to be robbed of its sensuous meaning. Does the *music itself* speak of liberty? According to Theodor W. Adorno, yes. In fact, he attaches to music's abstraction the freedom that Dennis attributes to the discourses of the politicians. Adorno contends that the musical processes of Beethoven's heroic works articulate the very structures

3. Dennis, *Beethoven in German Politics,* p.19 (my italics).

4. Ibid., pp.31 and 22.

5. Ibid., p.19.

6. For a brief reception history of the Ninth Symphony, see Nicholas Cook, *Beethoven Symphony No.9* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993). On Bernstein's performance of the Ninth, see Alexander Rehding's essay in this volume.

7. Scott Burnham, "Our Sublime Ninth," *Beethoven Forum* 5 (1996), 158.

8. Eduard Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music* (1854), trans. Gustav Cohen (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957).

of freedom,[9] but this is not a *particular* freedom that fills in the blank as a partisan slogan. For Adorno, it is something more fundamental than mere politics; freedom is an *abstract force* that animates the internal motions of the musical form.[10] Abstraction—the means by which music purifies itself of meaning—is the condition of a freedom that preens itself from the empirical world. This is a freedom abstracted from the ideals of the French Revolution and enshrined by Kant as an idea of reason; it is a freedom of a mind unimpeded by the friction of matter, a formal freedom, a transcendental freedom, an absolute freedom.[11] So it is not that music is too abstract to specify freedom, as Dennis claims, rather, freedom's abstraction demands an abstract music.

But why freedom? Why liberty rather than equality or fraternity? Because freedom, in the words of the theologian Christoph Schwöbel, is the "modern universal"; it is "the fundamental principle for what it means to be human in the modern . . . era."[12] Or as Hegel puts it, "freedom is the highest destiny of spirit," the absolute that governs the ethical, political, and economic values of our times.[13] However, such a totalizing concept of freedom can easily slip into a totalitarian one. Like the French Revolution, absolute freedom, warns Hegel, can slide ineluctably into Terror.[14] And this is precisely the issue for Adorno; the negation of freedom by terror is the very dialectic of modernity itself. For him, Beethoven's heroic music pin-points a historical hour where a *specific* idea of freedom born

9. Adorno's terminology for the heroic works is the "intensive type."

10. Theodor W. Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music: Fragments and Texts,* ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p.43.

11. This freedom, claims Adorno, has been philosophy's most pressing concern since the seventeenth century; see Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1973), p.214; see pp.211–99 for Adorno's full critique of freedom. On the abstraction of Kantian freedom in Adorno's thought, see Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp.185–88.

12. Christoph Schwöbel, "Imago Libertatis: Human and Divine Freedom," in *God and Freedom: Essays in Historical and Systematic Theology,* ed. Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1995), p.57.

13. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art,* trans. T. M. Knox (New York: Hacker, 1975), I, 97.

14. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp.355–63, where Hegel subjects the idea of absolute freedom to critique, describing it as "a death . . . which has no inner significance or filling," and as "the empty point of the absolutely free self" (p.360). See also Nigel Gibson, "Rethinking an Old Saw: Dialectical Negativity, Utopia, and Negative Dialectic in Adorno's Hegelian Marxism," in *Adorno: A Critical Reader,* ed. Nigel Gibson and Andrew Rubin (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp.268–70.

under the Enlightenment comes to dominate modern society as its *universal* definition.[15] Adorno perceives in this process a movement that carries the seeds of its own negation, embracing the entire political spectrum from the libertarian to the authoritarian.[16] From this perspective, the political discourses that seem to pull Beethoven's music in opposing directions are merely the overtones, as it were, of this fundamental freedom. Or in Ernesto Laclau's terms, the universal is always symbolized by an empty signifier—in this instance, freedom—in which the political particulars struggle for hegemony; politics is merely a particular cause standing-in for an absent absolute that can never be filled.[17] Thus the empty sign of music is not an excuse for politicians to impose their ideas of freedom on Beethoven; it is the prerequisite. Absolute freedom and absolute music are in a dangerous alliance.

I

What I want to explore is the *nothingness* that lies at the heart of this alliance; there is an elective affinity between the empty sign of music and what the theologian Colin Gunton calls the freedom of "the void."[18] Both start from zero, which is aptly Friedrich Schlegel's shorthand for the absolute; zero is the precarious ground of modern freedom.[19] Nowhere is this more passionately articulated than in *The So Called "Oldest System Programme of German Idealism"* of 1796, a manifesto inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution and the philosophy of Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Written in the hand of the young Hegel but probably composed by Schelling under the influence of Hölderlin, the *Programme* states: "The first Idea is naturally the notion of *my self* as an absolutely free being. With the free self-conscious being a whole *world* emerges at the same time—out of nothing—the only true and thinkable *creation from nothing*."[20] The plenitude of zero is clearly the origin of the ego's unfettered freedom. Its liberty resembles that of absolute music where sign and referent cancel each other out to create a frictionless economy that simulta-

15. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* p.218.

16. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* trans. John Cumming (London: Verso, 1979).

17. Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 1996), p. 72.

18. Colin E. Gunton, "God, Grace and Freedom," in *God and Freedom,* p.119.

19. Friedrich Schlegel, *Literary Notebooks, 1797–1801,* ed. Hans Eichner (London: Athlone Press, 1957).

20. This incomplete text was found in a bundle of Hegel's papers in 1917; the translation is from Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1990), p.265.

neously signifies "everything and nothing," as Wilhelm Wackenroder puts it.[21] As a self "absolutely identical with itself," writes Fichte, the ego is also "everything and nothing."[22] But whereas for Fichte the ego posits itself as a revolutionary *act* of freedom within the world, the writers of the *System Programme* transfigured this act into an artistic sign that circulates within a world of its own. The revolutionary poetics of the early Romantics was not a real freedom but an *aesthetic* one.[23] Hence the *System Programme* continues: "The philosophy of the Spirit is an aesthetic philosophy." What this registers is the failure of the French Revolution to procure the liberty it promised; an aesthetic freedom recognizes the reality of the Terror by withdrawing freedom from practice, as if the revolutionary ideals could hibernate within the theory of art. So it is the "modern artist," according to Schlegel, and not the revolutionary hero that must "work out from the inside" to produce "a new creation from nothing."[24]

In fact, Friedrich Schiller's reaction to the Terror was to write the *Aesthetic Education of Man* (1793–94); "if man is ever to solve the problem of politics," he writes, "he will have to approach it through the problem of the aesthetic."[25] Schiller's solution to the failure of freedom was to reduce humanity to zero, to find the point of adequation where equal and opposite forces cancel each other out. In Kantian philosophy, this point is a moment of truth.[26] For Schiller, it is a moment of freedom. He pits what he calls the "form-drive" [*Formtrieb*] of reason against the "sense-drive" [*sinnlicher Trieb*] of physical necessity, to locate a point where the ideals of the Revolution and the savagery of the Terror can "cancel each other out as determining forces," as it were; the resultant zero, which Schiller calls the "play-drive" [*Spieltrieb*], is the frictionless vacuum of aesthetic truth. "Truth," declares Schiller, "lives on in the illusion of art," for in this moment of adequation art configures the semblance of freedom; it is from this "after image," continues

21. Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, *Werke und Briefe von Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder* (Berlin: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1938), p.190.

22. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge,* ed. and trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982), p.233.

23. Schlegel, *Literary Notebooks, 1797–1801,* no.1416.

24. Friedrich Schlegel, *Gespräche über die Poesie* (1799–1800), in *Kritische Schriften und Fragmente,* ed. E. Behler and Hans Eichner (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1988), II, 201.

25. Friedrich von Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters,* trans. E. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967; rpt. 1985), p.9.

26. On the notion of adequation and its various forms in German philosophy, see Marc Shell, *Money, Language and Thought: Literary and Philosophic Economies from the Medieval to the Modern Era* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1982), pp.131–55.

Schiller, "that the original image will once again be restored." Aesthetic freedom is therefore a balancing act, where the mutual suppression of debt and credit liberates man from all determination, freeing him to create the future as he wills it. So it is where "man is naught" that he is free. As Schiller explains: "The scales of the balance stand level when they are empty, but they also stand level when they contain equal weights."[27] Aesthetic freedom is founded upon the plenitude of emptiness.

Thus, in German Idealist thought, the zero equation between the subject and its actions enabled humanity to articulate freedom in two ways. First, zero, as the origin of human self-creation, generates everything from nothing; this is an ontological freedom that derives from the desire of "the individual to be his own master" and so discover his true being. Second, nothing is the frictionless condition where the will is free from all determination; this is a "negative concept" of freedom that eliminates all external interference in order for the will to "do what it wants." Armed with these "two concepts of liberty," as Isaiah Berlin calls them, the modern subject believes itself to be both self-generating and self-determined.[28] Humanity is no longer a creaturely *being* who exists within a created order, but a human *becoming,* who makes that order possible, an agent that shapes and seizes history as its own narrative of progress and power in the name of liberty. As Novalis says: "The world ought to be as I will it."[29] But the "ought" in the statement already indicates the suspension of the "will" as a Romantic wish; in reality, the freedom of the void is only imaginable in the fiction of the aesthetic. Novalis calls this "Fichtecising artistically": "When one finally begins to practice Fichtecising artistically," he writes, "*wonderful works of art* could arise."[30] And he was right.

Scott Burnham claims that the "apotheosis of Self" and its "heroic quest for freedom" in German Idealism is given "unimpeachable expression" in Beethoven's heroic style.[31] If this is so, then "nothing" ought to reside at its center; and, indeed, for Adorno, "nothing" does. In his critique of freedom, zero is the eerie sound that rings in his ears. For the philosopher, it is not simply the empty sign of music that

27. Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man,* pp. 146, 141, 146, 141.

28. Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered before the University of Oxford on 31 October 1958* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), pp. 7 and 11.

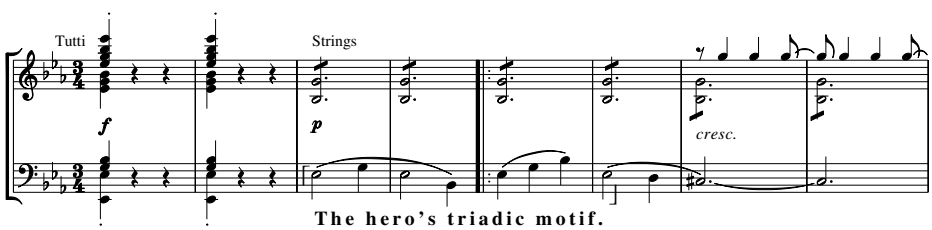
29. Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg), *Das philosophische Werk I,* ed. Richard Samuel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1983), p. 554.

30. Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenburg), *Schriften,* ed. Richard Samuel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1983), II, 524, translation taken from Wm. Arctander O'Brien, *Novalis: Signs of Revolution* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995), p. 139.

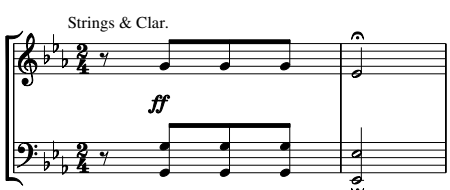
31. Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995), pp. 112, 114, 113.

articulates the freedom of the void—otherwise any instrumental piece by Dittersdorf or Hummel would do. No, what Beethoven does is to turn the empty sign into a symphonic procedure, as if the music were signifying its own emptiness as form; absolute nothing is the programmatic element of these works; they are absolute precisely because they signify nothing. Thus the heroic symphonies of Beethoven are in a dynamic state of negation, creating what Adorno calls a "continuum of nothing" where "the totality of nothing determines itself as a totality of being."[32]

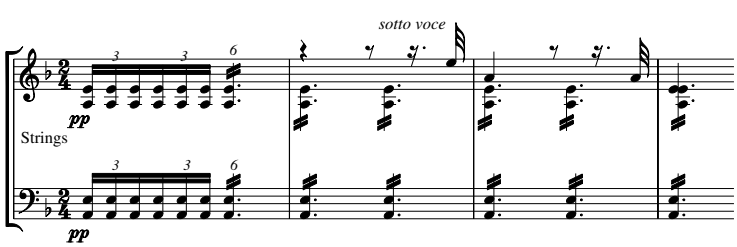
So what does "nothing" sound like to Adorno's ears? As with the "absolutely free being" of the *System Programme,* nothing is found at the origin of the creative act. It can be heard in the initial measures of the heroic works. Take the opening of Beethoven's Third, Fifth, and Ninth Symphonies (see ex. 1). These symphonic openings for Adorno articulate various states of nothingness: they narrate a creation from nothing, they consist of nothing, they become nothing and they are redeemed by the "totality of nothing."



Example 1a: Beethoven, Symphony No. 3 in E♭ Major, op. 55, movt. I, mm. 1–8.



Example 1b: Beethoven, Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, op. 67, movt. I, mm. 1–2.



Example 1c: Beethoven, Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, op. 125, movt. I, mm. 1–4.

32. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1997), p. 185.

First, their narration. These symphonies give rise to "the idealized image of creation out of nothing," writes Adorno.[33] Their elemental beginnings suggest narratives of self-generation. The Ninth Symphony, for example, with its primordial fifths hovering over the initial measures, functions as a "creation myth," says Maynard Solomon, fashioning a Utopian society of joy out of the formlessness of its opening.[34] In *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning,* I describe the first two chords of the *Eroica* as the birth pangs of the hero's auto-genesis from which his triadic theme emerges.[35] And Adorno himself regards the initial motto of the Fifth Symphony as the zero-origin from which everything in the movement proceeds. He writes: "The first bars of the Fifth Symphony, properly performed, must be rendered with the character of a thesis, as if they were a *free* act over which no material has precedence. . . . Unless the *nothing* of the first bars is realized at once as the everything of the whole movement, the music has bypassed the movement's idea before it has properly started."[36]

Second, not only do these gestures narrate a creation from nothing, they actually consist of nothing—hence Adorno's reference to the opening motif of the Fifth Symphony as the "nothing of the first bars" (ex. 1b). The individual elements that make up the symphonic process are entirely empty; the primordial fifths of the Ninth Symphony (ex. 1c), the basic cells of the Fifth Symphony, the initial hammerstrokes of the *Eroica,* and the hero's triadic motif that follows are all "nichtig" for Adorno: they are insignificant elements that should amount to nothing. The triadic motif of the *Eroica,* for example, is merely an unprocessed formula of tonality—hardly the stuff of heroes (ex. 1a). Yet, it is precisely what Adorno calls the "nullity of the particular" that allows the symphonic will to determine the material in any way it chooses; the will is poised at the point of adequation, totally indifferent to the empty plenitude of the material; the elements merely form a vacuum for the frictionless activity of freedom. "In Beethoven everything can become anything," says Adorno, "because it 'is' nothing."[37]

Third, not only does the material consist of nothing, it becomes nothing. The music is caught in a process of continual development where the atomistic cells are never allowed to establish their substantiality as an independent theme. Instead, the elements are thrown together in chaotic ways that "contradict and cancel

33. Adorno *Beethoven*, p. 121.

34. Solomon, "Beethoven's Ninth: A Search for Order," *Essays,* pp. 11–13.

35. Daniel K. L. Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), pp. 150–61.

36. Adorno, *Beethoven,* p. 121 (my italics).

37. Ibid., pp. 22, 26.

each other" out by constantly diverting thematic closure, creating a continuum of self-consuming adequations that mediate the music moment by moment. It is as if the motivic development of the hero's motif in the *Eroica* is perpetually repositioning itself at the zero point of Schiller's play-drive. Motivic development is therefore a force of negation that impels Beethoven's music from within, so that the entire work is in a perpetual state of transition.[38] "Beethoven," states Adorno, "developed a musical essence out of nothingness in order to be able to redefine it as a process of becoming."[39] This process of becoming is the movement of freedom itself, the spirit that animates the heterogeneous particulars into a dynamic whole: "the whole" says Adorno, "emerges solely from its movement, or, rather, is this movement." Thus the *whole is freedom*. It is not a static form or an identifiable theme but an invisible will that "sets form in motion" as a process of mediation between the individual elements and the final structure of the work; "the mediation" explains Adorno, "is the whole as form."[40] This means that Beethoven's forms are not radical in themselves; in fact, they are pregiven structures—sonata forms inherited from the eighteenth century. What is revolutionary is the dynamic force that *reproduces* these structures "out of freedom," injecting them with a "compact, concise, palpable urgency." In this way, even tonality—the very law that governs musical form for Adorno—"appears to emerge 'freely,' as if from the musical meaning of the composition itself." What is external (tonality) is internalized as the subject's self-created foundation (form), turning the *Urstoff* of the particular into the *Ursatz* of the whole; thus in "the attempt to derive music's content from itself" the individual appears to be freely reconciled to the universal. That unprocessed triadic formula of the *Eroica,* for example, is affirmed as the tonal structure of the symphony, so that the work is not merely a symphony in E♭ major but the symphony *of* E♭ major. "Beethoven," writes Adorno, "reproduced the meaning of tonality out of subjective freedom."[41]

Lastly, the insignificant elements of these symphonic openings are redeemed by nothing. Not only is the whole the sum of all the individual negations, it is also an adequation between form and content; they appear so perfectly aligned that they cancel each other out. Hence, for Adorno, the whole is the "totality of noth-

38. Adorno, *Beethoven,* p. 13; also see pp. 19 and 24.

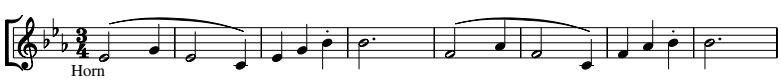
39. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music,* trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p. 77.

40. Adorno, *Beethoven,* pp. 10, 12, 24. The invisible will is analogous to what Gunton calls the "rootless will"; see Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), pp. 101–25.

41. Adorno, *Beethoven,* pp. 34, 119, 17, 50; Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music,* p. 69.

ing determining itself as a totality of being"[42]—it is simultaneously "nothing and everything." He hears in this negation the moment in Hegelian philosophy where "necessity becomes freedom." Or as Hegel puts it: "When the universal is defined, it is the particular." Thus "without the universal," explains Adorno, "the particular is nothing."[43] Like the hero's motif in the *Eroica,* what saves the material from its nullity is its negation by the movement of the whole. In fact, such is the process of perpetual negation that the hero's motif does not reach thematic selfhood until the very end of the movement, after 630 measures, where the "insignificant" elements actually form themselves into a theme; but even here, with the hero's apotheosis in the coda, his victorious theme sounds almost *Nichtig*. On its own, the theme is trivial, despite being trumpeted on the horns like a fanfare (ex.2); these are "conventionally unpromising gestures made monumental," writes Burnham; as a theme, it would "appear impossibly banal if heard at the outset of the movement."[44] But this is precisely the point: the meaning of the particular, explains Adorno, "is rescued through its nothingness"; the theme does not close but is woven into the totality. It is for this reason that the banal "never happens in Beethoven," states Adorno, for the banal "is bound up with the illusion of importance," the puffing up of the insignificant particular. "The whole in which it is absorbed realizes the precise meaning which the particular wrongly claims. . . . The whole redeems the false promise of the individual detail." In other words, the "nullity of the particular" is redeemed by the "totality of nothing." This is what Adorno calls "positive negation," the moment in Hegel's philosophy that "takes minus times minus for a plus."[45]

So how do you grasp the "totality of nothing" as the "totality of being"? According to Adorno, you have to hear the music forward and backward at the same time; "the nothing of the first bars [must be] realized at once as the everything of the whole movement," and the last measures must be heard as that "which redeems the former's pledge." "Teleology in Beethoven," writes Adorno, is "a force retroacting in time."[46] It is as though the first and last two chords of the *Eroica* are so tightly

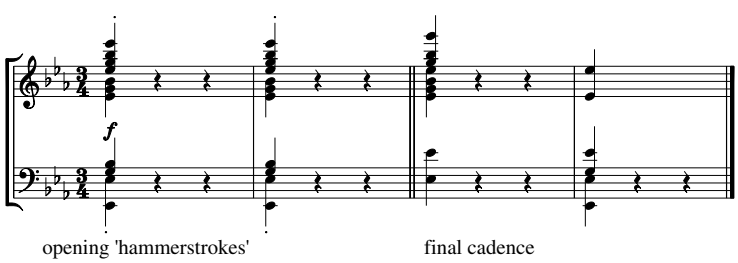


Example 2: Beethoven, Symphony No.3, movt.I, mm.631–38: the *Eroica* "theme."

42. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* p.185.
43. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* p.327.
44. Burnham, *Beethoven Hero,* p.141; see also p.24.
45. Adorno, *Beethoven,* pp.242, 22; Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* p.158.
46. Adorno, *Beethoven,* pp.121, 119, 73.

controlled by the force of freedom that the material contracts, collapsing the final punctuations with the opening hammerstrokes; they are, after all, so similar that they seem to encapsulate the pulsations of the movement into a single, dynamic instant (ex. 3).[47]

And in a sense this is how Adorno wants you to hear it. The movement, "when properly performed," he says, "seem[s] to last not . . . fifteen minutes, but only a moment [*Augenblick*]." For Adorno, the *Augenblick* is not just any moment; it is a structural category that lies at "the very core of [his] theory of the symphony." The *Augenblick* is the technical means through which the music manufactures its transcendence.[48] Adorno defines it as "the point where the individual in Beethoven becomes aware of itself as a whole, as more than itself," that is, "as more than nature"; in heroic terms, it is a *super*human act that seemingly overcomes the material limitations of space and time by making the particular universal and the ephemeral eternal. This is achieved through the total "mastery of time," a formal control of such harmonic and thematic integration that the sequential processes of the ear vanish to become the instant vision of the eye—the *Augen*-blick. It is the temporal equivalent of the "totality of nothing" as the "totality of being"; symphonic time becomes simultaneously "everything and nothing." In its absolute freedom, the Beethovenian hero appears to seize its own history as a necessary moment; past, present, and future crystallize in an immortal act of "structural hearing" as the temporal process of the whole renders time itself timeless.[49] All those chaotic,



Example 3: Beethoven, Symphony No. 3, movt. I, mm. 1–2 and 690–91.

47. For a more detailed analysis of the first movement of the *Eroica* and its gestures of autonomy, see Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning,* pp. 150–61.

48. Adorno, *Beethoven,* p. 119. On Adorno's notion of *Augenblick,* see Berthold Hoeckner, *Programming the Absolute: Nineteenth-Century Music and the Hermeneutics of the Moment* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002).

49. Adorno, *Beethoven,* pp. 166, 91. The ideal listener, writes Adorno, "hears past, present, and future moments so that they crystallize into a meaningful context"; like the hero in his moment of totality, the listener perceives what is spontaneous "as necessary" (Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music,* trans. E. B. Ashton [New York: Continuum, 1976], pp. 4–5).

ephemeral particulars that jostle within the music are abstracted out of time in the same way that Hegel, says Adorno, equates "the absolute idea of totality with the passing of everything finite."[50] The whole, as the formal illusion of absolute music and the philosophical abstraction of absolute freedom, signifies the eternal in the act of vanishing into nothing. Utopia flares up, and freedom as "the highest destiny of spirit" is momentarily made absolute.[51]

"Freedom is a moment."[52]

II

But the freedom of the void has long been diagnosed by philosophers, feminists, and theologians as a delusion,[53] and a dangerous one at that in as much as its declaration of freedom hides an inherent unfreedom. The abstraction required by the totality to create itself *ex nihilo* has to annihilate the particular as the nothing from which it arises. In its absorption into the whole, the individual is robbed of its freedom as its identity is erased. Adorno writes: "However devoid of qualities 'something' may be, this is no reason yet to call it 'nothing'."[54] So nothing as the origin of freedom also turns out to be a means of oppression. But it is not merely the particular that is damaged. In becoming whole the heroic subject turns itself into an impersonal force, a monistic will whose claim to transcendence is so im-

50. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* p.331. On the philosophy of time in Adorno and its relation to music, including Hegel's notion of the "passing of the passing," see Nikolaus Bacht, *Music and Time in Theodor W. Adorno* (Ph.D diss.: King's College London, 2002).

51. The symphonic instant is not merely a musical moment that flashes between past, present, and future but a historical one—"a precise historical hour," as Adorno puts it—where the "seemingly paradoxical interchange between absolutism [totality] and liberality [individual] is perceptible." Beethoven captures the transition from the binding metaphysical and social forms of the past increasingly divested of authority under the demythologizing process of the Enlightenment, and the emergent dynamism of the free subject that would soon bind itself to self-inflicted forms of unfreedom. Thus the social structures of the past, ossifying as conventions, are animated by the individual in a reconciliation between the general and the particular; see *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life,* trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: New Left Books, 1974), pp.35–37.

52. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* p.219; see n.54 for the dialectical negation intended in this statement.

53. See, for example, Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit,* pp.355–63; Gunton, "God, Grace and Freedom"; Schwöbel, "Imago Libertatis: Human and Divine Freedom"; John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp.1–25; Christine Di Stefano, *Configurations of Masculinity: A Feminist Perspective on Modern Political Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991).

54. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* p.173.

manent that it merely estranges itself from the world it devours. Freedom may be a moment for Adorno in that it transcends time as an absolute, but freedom is also a moment in that it self-destructs, leaving the absolute as an ephemeral illusion.[55] Hence Hegel's definition of the truth as the whole ("Das Wahre ist das Ganze") is simultaneously the vanishing point of truth for Adorno.[56] It is true in as much as society has become totalitarian (the whole), and false in that a totalitarian condition cannot be free.

"Freedom and domination commingle inseparably in art," writes Adorno; "the command to kill" can even be heard in Beethoven's humane music. Freedom might be the ideal, but the means by which it is achieved is troubling; Adorno calls this the "Fichtean element in [Beethoven]."[57] "My system," writes Fichte, "is the first system of freedom. As [France] releases man from his external chains, so my system releases him from the shackles of the thing in itself . . . and presents him . . . as an independent being."[58] But as Schelling was to point out to Fichte, the freedom of a self-positing ego can only exist by dominating nature as merely something to be used.[59] And similarly Adorno hears within the self-positing structures of Beethoven's symphonic form a Fichtean element of "untruth: the manipulation of transcendence, the *coercion,* the violence" (78). "Moral self-determination," writes Adorno, "is ascribed to human beings as an absolute advantage . . . while being covertly used to legitimize *dominance*—dominance over nature. . . . Humanity threatens incessantly to revert to the inhumane . . . And to this the sombre aspects of Beethoven are precisely related." This regression of freedom into barbarity is what Adorno and Max Horkheimer famously call the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.[60]

If, according to this dialectic, the subject in dominating the world becomes the object of its own oppression, then its freedom to conjure the totality from nothing would ultimately collapse into nothing. The empty sign as ideal becomes

55. "Freedom is a moment . . . in a twofold sense: it is entwined, not to be isolated; and for the time being it is never more than an instant of spontaneity, a historical node, the road to which is blocked under present conditions" (ibid., p.219); hence concerning the aesthetic realm Adorno writes: "Movement at a standstill is eternalized in the instant, and what has been made eternal is annihilated by its reduction to the instant" (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* p.85).

56. Adorno, *Beethoven,* p.13. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit,* p.11.

57. Adorno, *Quasi Una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music,* trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 1992), p.34; idem, *Beethoven*, p.78.

58. From a letter of 1795, quoted in Dieter Henrich, *Aesthetic Judgement and the Moral Image of the World* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1992), p.86.

59. Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity,* pp.81–82.

60. Adorno, *Beethoven*, pp.78,80. See Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

all too real. Absolute freedom, observes Hegel, in "annihilating every difference" regresses into "the sheer terror of the negative."[61] Or as the theologian Edward Craig writes: "The image of the void from being a symbol of the limitless liberty of the agent, becomes a menacing abyss waiting to engulf all his purposes and reduce him to a nullity."[62] Adorno hears this dialectic of nothing in Beethoven's late works; in the late style, the adequation of subject and object no longer adds up to "the totality of nothing" but forms "a menacing abyss." What was formerly the point of balance on which the modern subject determined its freedom turns into an impasse. "The subject in its finitude is still exiled," laments Adorno concerning the *Missa solemnis,* "while the objective cosmos can no longer be imagined as a binding authority; thus the *Missa* is balanced on an indifference point which approaches nothingness." The dynamic process of mediation from which forms are reproduced out of subjective freedom has simply vanished. "At the very place once occupied by dynamic totality," writes Adorno on Beethoven's last quartet, "there is now fragmentation." In this way, Beethoven's music is not merely the embodiment of freedom in Adorno's thought, it is also its immanent critique.[63] He becomes "fractured . . . where Hegel becomes ideological," pursuing the dialectical movement to "contradict the traditional norm of adequation."[64] "The whole as truth is always a lie," states Adorno. What late Beethoven reveals is the truth of this lie: "The whole is the untrue."[65]

This logic of disintegration, however, already begins in the heroic works; it inheres within the totality, just as oppression resides within freedom. Within the symphonic moment where time contracts to an instant, there are *anti-moments* that expand organically from within the totality, detaching themselves as something alien to the subject's dynamic of freedom. You can recognize these countermoments, says Adorno, by watching the conductors' gestures; they become still, almost suspended in mid-air, as if the conductor had become the structure and the music were dangling from the raised hands.[66] Adorno locates such a moment in the new theme of the *Eroica*'s first movement (ex.4).

61. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit,* p.362 (trans. modified).

62. Edward Craig, *The Mind of God and the Works of Man* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p.271.

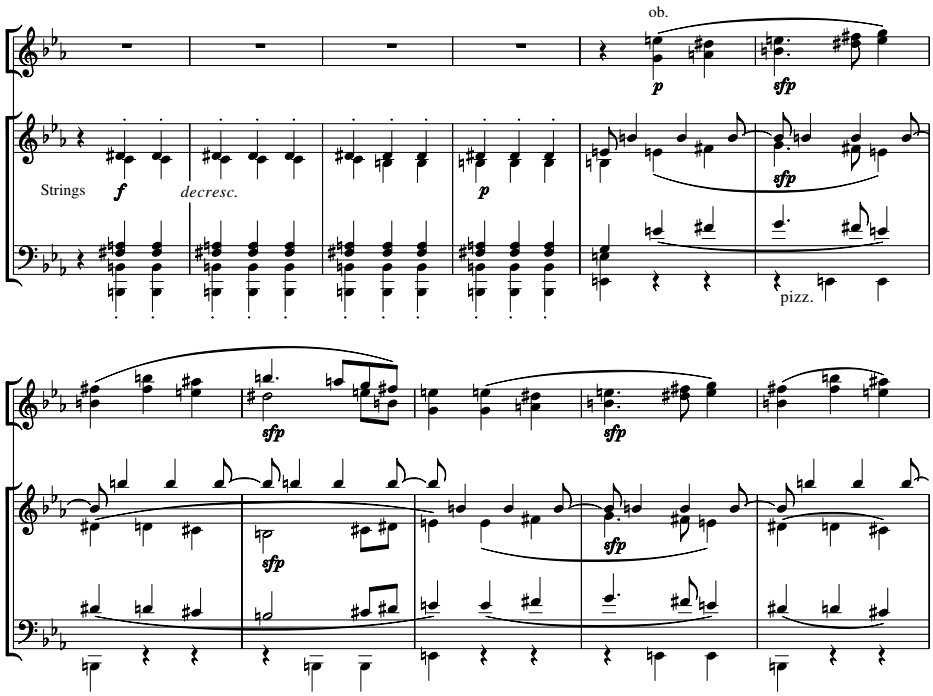
63. Adorno, *Beethoven,* pp.149, 137.

64. Adorno, *Beethoven,* p.161. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* p.5 (trans. slightly modified).

65. Adorno, *Beethoven*, p.79. Adorno, *Minima Moralia,* p.50 (trans. modified). For many scholars of Hegel, Adorno's reading of Hegel is problematic in that it wrongly equates the Hegelian totality with an "absolute identity" that denies particulars their specificity; see Gibson, "Rethinking an Old Saw," pp.264–65.

66. Adorno, *Beethoven,* p.99.

Example 4: The *Eroica's* "new theme"—movt.I, mm.280–90.



At this extraordinary point in the development section, Beethoven suddenly suspends the heroic momentum—hence the conductor's hands become almost motionless. Beethoven seems to be pursuing the Hegelian dialectic beyond Hegel's totality, so that the particular "breaks loose from the abstract universality that has grown extraneous to it."[67] The new theme by its very newness shatters the falseness of the whole; it is barely attached to the totality. Indeed, it is its surplus, the supplementary logic that haunts all attempts at pure autonomy. So in contrast to the developmental motif of the hero, the new material is actually a real *theme* that resists the animation of the will, preferring to circle statically around its tonic in playful acts of closure, as if it were conscious of the manipulative "Fichtean" fingers from which it dangles.

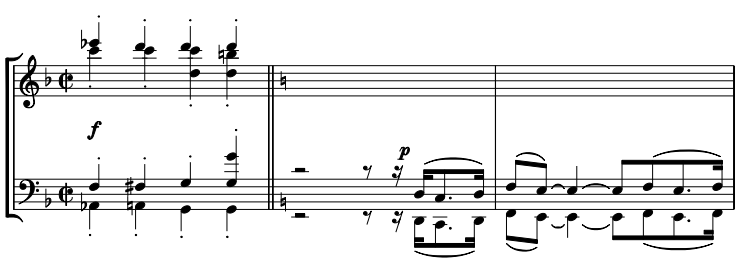
Within the form, the theme functions as a kind of anti-Hegelian *Aufhebung* (sublation), a negation that simultaneously fulfills and abolishes the law of total synthesis. Adorno writes: "The principle [of freedom] is raised to a self-conscious level in the new theme of the *Eroica,* which fulfils the form just as it bursts it asunder (being, in this, both a completion and a critique of the bourgeois totality)." There is an internal *ex*plosion within the symphonic *im*plosion, leaving a hole at

67. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* pp.330–31.

the heart of the *Eroica* where time "stands still"; instead of transcending time, the new theme swings objectively beneath the structure as "the pendulum of time itself." Time as the objective structure of reality suddenly appears as a product within the time that Kant locates within the operation of the human mind. In this symphonic time warp, the subject hovers ironically "below" the structure, out of time with itself, to confront the disintegration of its own totality in its quest for freedom. "Here lies the secret of the decomposition of [Beethoven's] late style," claims Adorno.[68]

The secret Adorno attempts to unravel is akin to a "Big Bang" theory of music: time explodes under the pressure of the "symphonic contraction," shattering the totality of freedom, so that truth falls apart under its own entropy to leave the debris of history as bits of freedom strewn over some inhuman landscape.[69] These broken pieces are a memorial of the subject's attempt to create its totality out of nothing, in the knowledge that nothing has amounted to absolutely nothing; or to return to the words of Edward Craig: "The image of the void . . . becomes a menacing abyss." So what does *this* "nothing" sound like to Adorno? Measure 92 in the first movement of the A-Minor Quartet, op. 132, contains the answer (ex. 5).

Nothing finally sounds like nothing. The initial climax of the development section in the A-Minor Quartet is a moment of structural negation; the music gestures toward an ineluctable, emphatic cadential closure. In Schenkerian terms: $\frac{\hat{2}-\hat{1}}{V-I}$. What should seize the moment as a heroic act of tonal affirmation is replaced by a rupture that severs the cadential gesture, leaving nothing but silence.[70] There is no mediation, but only the sound of absence to separate the divergent materials that lie either side of the gap. No synthesis is possible, for the "antagonistic forces" of the work can no longer be held in "equilibrium"; instead of creating an adequa-



Example 5: Beethoven, String Quartet in A Minor, op. 132, movt. I, mm. 91–93.

68. Adorno, *Beethoven,* pp. 66, 99, 66.

69. Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 89. "What appears in the artwork is its own inner time; the explosion of appearance blasts open the continuity of this inner temporality" (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* p. 85).

70. For a more detailed analysis, see Daniel K. L. Chua, *The "Galitzin" Quartets of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995), pp. 88–90.

tion, these forces crack open the husk of the whole. The materiality of nothing breaks through the organic surface to shatter the metaphysics of nothing. In the late works, nothing is real, not ideal. So it is in the gaps and fissures of the late style, in those textural, tonal, and harmonic slippages that do not quite connect that Adorno locates the abyss. "The music has . . . holes," he says.[71]

But what's in a hole? For Adorno, the hole is full of meaning because the content of the late works is the "leave-taking" of the subject; it is its farewell to freedom. In the face of a reality where freedom is no longer possible, the subject makes its escape. Adorno writes: the subject "leaves only fragments behind, communicating itself . . . only through the spaces it has violently vacated . . . the work falls silent as it is deserted, turning its hollowness outwards." These inverted holes are all that is left of the subject. And strewn around these empty spaces are the clichés that had once been redeemed by a dynamic of freedom, but are now left to speak on their own "as if [they had] not been composed" writes Adorno. These expressionless fragments—the sounds of a lost totality frozen as formulaic trills and arpeggios—are the inorganic remains of a subject that has exhausted its historical momentum; they do not express death, but testify in their expressionless gestures to the death of subjectivity. The significance of the individual elements that was made alive by their sublation into the totality is now revealed as the meaningless figure that it has always been. "In other words," writes Adorno, "the late style is the self-awareness of the insignificance of the individual, existent. Herein lies the relationship of the late style to *death*."[72]

It would be a mistake, however, to make death the absolute in Adorno's reading of the late works. Death cannot be immortalized as the "highest destiny of Spirit," for that would reduce the late style to a nihilistic void that merely inverts the abstraction of absolute freedom for an abstraction no less totalizing, but far more meaningless—eternal nothingness.[73] "Nothingness," writes Adorno concerning nihilism, "is the acme of abstraction, and the abstract is the abominable." Death might be the ineluctable logic of the philosophy of nothing, but for Adorno absolute negativity must be resisted and not embraced. "Something" must be teased out from the nullity of the particular in the gap between "being and nothingness." So what Adorno hears in late Beethoven, as he does in the poetry of Beckett, is the idea of "nothingness as something"; the abyss, he states, is "full of inaudible cries

71. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* pp.85; *Beethoven,* p.191.

72. Adorno, *Beethoven,* pp.174–75, 125–26, 154, 161.

73. See J. M. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), pp.425–26.

that things should be different."[74] After all, these inverted holes are full of vanishing sounds; they resonate, they echo; something ghostly stirs in their silence. Nothing is somehow made concrete by Beethoven; hence the hollowness for Adorno is turned *outward* to accentuate the background hiss of the subject as it passes mysteriously through the gaps. Freedom's farewell is not signified by nothing, but is perceived "as something vanishing from sight. As Eurydice was seen." These holes are not empty; they are "ruptures" (*Durchbrüche*) caused by the "instant of *apparition*."[75]

So it is in the hollows of death that Adorno catches the final glimmer of freedom. Freedom is now an after-image, an auratic "glare" that leaves us with the faint outline of Eurydice as she fades away in that fatal *Augenblick* of Orpheus. This apparition is Adorno's "power of the alternative" that counteracts the emptiness that remains. "In the incineration of appearance," writes Adorno, "artworks break away in a glare from the empirical world and become the counterfigure of what lives there."[76] This act of arson—"the incineration of appearance"—is an inversion of Schiller's aesthetic, negating the illusion (*Schein*) of art to invoke a flash of hope in the reality of the abyss. This is why in late Beethoven the subject, as it passes through the fragments, sets the work alight. Beethoven, writes Adorno, "illuminates [the deserted landscape] with the fire ignited by subjectivity as it strikes the walls of the work in breaking free." This fiery release is another highly charged Adornian *Augenblick,* neither the moment of the immortal instant nor its antithesis in those suspended passages where time is objectified, but the moment of their dialectical negation—the moment of the *ephemeral*.[77] This collision of time and eternity results in what Adorno calls "absolute transience" or "the persistence of the transient."[78] It is as if Orpheus's *Augenblick* is transfixed in time, and, like a photograph, his musical retina captures the vanishing image of Eurydice forever. Adorno illuminates this final figure of death by recalling the Jewish myth of the "grass angels, who are created [by God] for an instant only to perish in the sacred fire. . . . Their very transience," he writes, "their ephemerality, is glorification . . . Beethoven raised this figure to musical self-consciousness. His truth is the destruction of the particular. He composed to its end the *absolute transience* of music."[79]

Absolute transience—the *Augenblick* of the "other"—is the counterforce of

74. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* pp.380, 381.

75. Adorno, *Beethoven,* p.6; *Aesthetic Theory,* p.88; *Durchbruch* is better translated as "breakthrough."

76. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* p.85.

77. Adorno, *Beethoven,* p.126. In all three cases, time stands still for an instant, but differently—as an heroic act, an ironic realization, and as death.

78. Adorno, *Beethoven,* p.177; Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* p.84.

79. Adorno, *Beethoven,* pp.176–77 (my italics).

absolute freedom—the *Augenblick* of the whole. The insignificance of grass as mere nature becomes the fodder of an ephemeral metaphysics. These grass angels are metaphysical for Adorno precisely because their transience gestures beyond the permanent state of unfreedom imposed by a totalitarian world. Their fire "opposes the world" by incinerating its immortal pose as a mere illusion that will one day pass away. Since "evil," as John Milbank writes, "is only manifest in the finite . . . it can indeed absolutely fall away, because finitude in its own right is nothing whatsoever."[80] And so in their "incessant destruction," these angels continually bear witness to an alterior freedom yet to be articulated. In Beethoven, writes Adorno, "the eternal attaches itself precisely to [the] most transient moment." Those spectral spaces, filled with the aroma of incinerated angels, are the moments where "eternity appears" for the philosopher, "not as such, but defracted through the most perishable" as a passing epiphany.[81] So it is at the point where the metaphysics of the empty sign signals its own demise on the pyre of Adorno's negative dialectics that freedom is rekindled. It is only when the "totality of nothing" is revealed as the reality of nothing that the promise of something emerges by vanishing away.

Thus Adorno preserves something of the metaphysics of death in the death of metaphysics. For him, Beethoven does not merely demythologize the absolute, but conjures within the *temporal* and the *finite* world an experience that is still metaphysical in as much as it points beyond the current state of unfreedom; "in the breaks that belie identity," writes Adorno, "what exists is still interspersed by the ever-broken promise of . . . otherness."[82] Death, in the counterfigure of Eurydice, testifies that there is hope in the hopeless just as the eternal attaches itself to the transient. So in death, freedom is awakened for the last time. This is the freedom to die, the freedom to let go, the freedom to hope in something better "without the lie of religion": "The dying hand," writes Adorno on the late works, "releases what it had previously clutched fast, shaped, controlled, so that what is released becomes its higher truth."[83]

In this Adorno indicates another way of conceiving freedom in Beethoven—a *non*-heroic freedom—but since death is the result of this logic of disintegration, freedom is expressed in a mysterious silence that still leaves "nothing" as the aftertaste of hope.[84]

80. Milbank, *Being Reconciled,* pp. 53–54.

81. Adorno, *Beethoven,* pp. 177, 174; Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* p. 360.

82. *Aesthetic Theory,* p. 404.

83. *Beethoven,* pp. 174, 193.

84. Or as Adorno puts it: "Hope is always *secret,* because it is not 'there'" (*Beethoven,* p. 174); a hole.

III

In Adorno's philosophy of Beethoven, absolute freedom becomes absolute transience, the whole becomes the hole, and Hegel's "passing of everything finite" simply passes (away) as the finite. To conclude, I want to sketch an alternative that does not so much cancel but resonate with some of Adorno's insights on the late style. The problem with absolute freedom is that it determines how freedom ought to go. The same has been said of Beethoven's heroic works; they assume "the role of a Kantian transcendental category," suggests Burnham, "an a priori condition of hearing music." So it is hardly surprising that the moment of freedom and the moment of music should coalesce for Adorno in the heroic style. To be sure, Adorno negates this moment in his search for an alternative. But even in negation, absolute freedom and absolute music, to borrow a phrase from Burnham, "dictate the shape of alterity."[85] Their alliance either exalts the heroic Beethoven as a symbol of freedom or negates it as a cipher of unfreedom. But, of course, absolute freedom and absolute music are merely historical particulars posturing as absolutes. Neither freedom nor music need to be controlled by them. It is simply a matter of freeing freedom from "Freedom" and music from "Music." And if an alterior freedom is to be found in Beethoven, then it will have to be located primarily *outside* the dictates of the heroic style. Instead of enthroning the *Eroica* as "*the* Beethovenian piece" through which the late works and, indeed, the epic type is interpreted,[86] the different styles can be held in equal tension, so that the search for freedom can start from any point. This is not difficult in that much (if not most) of Beethoven's music is not purely in the heroic style—even in the middle period, as Adorno's "epic type" already indicates. The heroic Beethoven, as Carl Dahlhaus point outs, is merely a myth that thrives on a narrow selection works: "*Fidelio* and the music to *Egmont;* the Third, Fifth, and Ninth Symphonies; and the *Pathétique* and *Appassionata* Sonatas."[87] The difficulty lies in obviating the myth. Is it possible to conceive of a non-heroic freedom in Beethoven? For a "non-heroic" freedom, as the term indicates, is already determined by the myth, turning freedom into a negative image of the hero. So the task is not the heroic act of eradicating the hero, but the more difficult task of teasing out something between the alternatives in Beethoven's music.

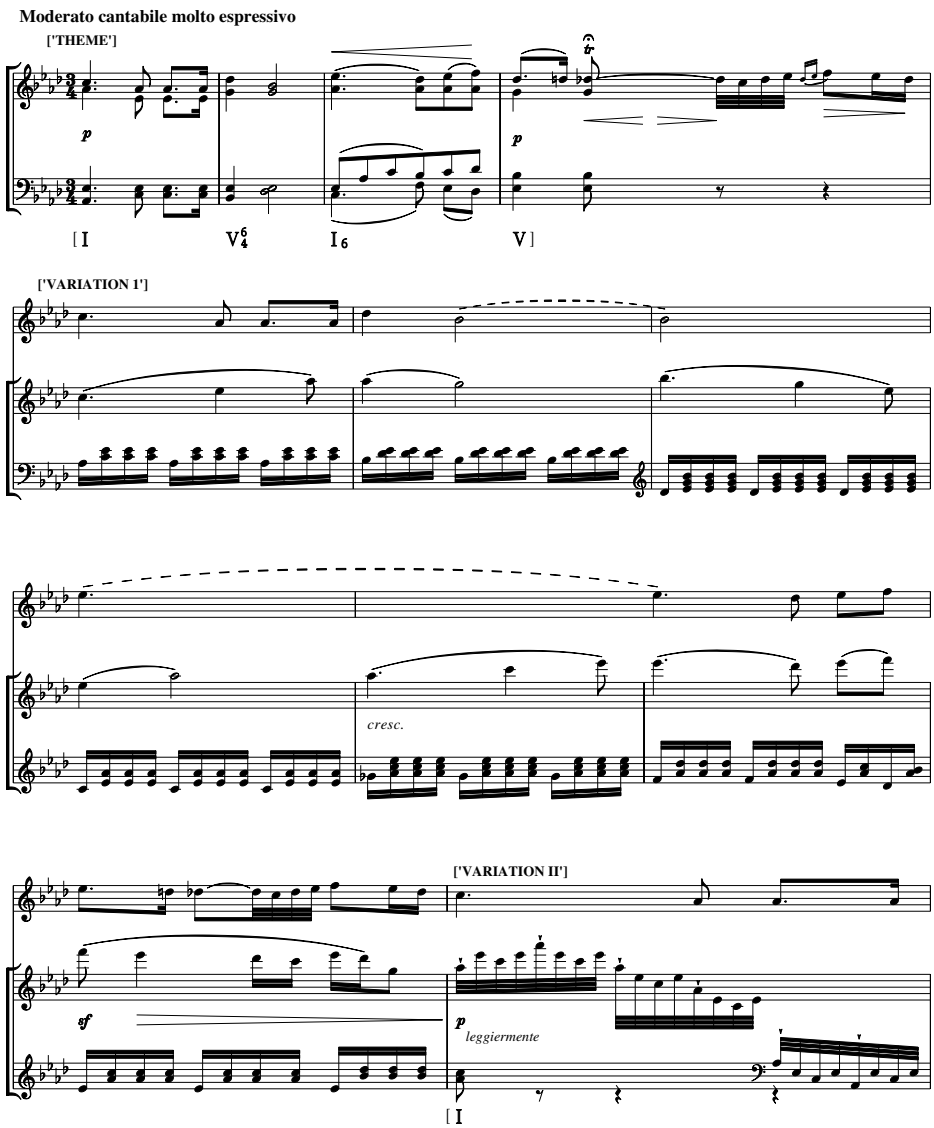
85. Burnham, *Beethoven Hero,* pp.161, 155.

86. Adorno, *Beethoven,* p.66.

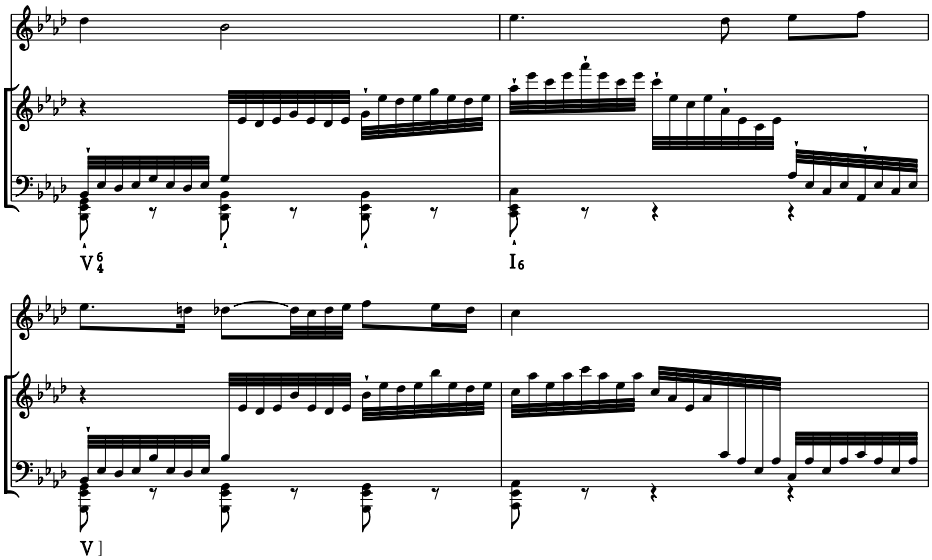
87. Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music,* trans. J. B. Robinson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U California P, 1989), p.76. Dahlhaus's list is representative rather than exhaustive; one could add the "Waldstein" Sonata and the "Emperor" Concerto, for example.

The opening passage from the first movement of the Piano Sonata, op. 110, suggests such an alternative (see ex. 6). It is, as Adorno might point out, a nondevelopmental structure, with closed themes that do not impel the music forward through a process of negation; rather they create fissures where the contrasting materials are aligned. There are three distinct textures of seemingly unrelated material: a chordal opening, a lyrical melody, and then a flurry of piano figurations. Technically, it is a strophic structure—a kind of "theme" (mm. 1–4) with two "variations" (mm. 5–11

Example 6: Beethoven, Piano Sonata in A♭ Major, op. 110, movt. I, mm. 1–16.



Example 6: Continued.



and 12–16). However, the connection is so oblique that Adorno hears the variations as "conventional formulae . . . inserted" into the form; they are not organic to the structure of the opening; they are merely loose debris. The first variation is a melodic paraphrase of the theme (see ex.6, mm.5–12), with an accompaniment figure so "unconcealed [and] untransformed" in its conventionality that it would "hardly have [been] tolerated" in the middle period, comments Adorno. But if that sounds clichéd, consider the "variation" that follows; it is merely an *accompaniment* without a melody, consisting of formulaic arpeggios that oscillate between tonic and dominant harmonies (see ex.6, mm.12–16). But these harmonies are precisely those of the "theme" (I–V^{6}_{4}–I^{6}–V);[88] the opening has been reduced to a stock harmonic progression with the thematic features erased from the surface.

So what do you hear in this paratactic structure? Do you, like Adorno, hear a subject unable to formulate the whole, surrendering its freedom to escape through the fragments? And what of the formulaic arpeggios that seem to accompany an inaudible melody? Is this the dying hand of someone releasing the clichés it had clutched as petrified funereal objects? Is the missing melody the space where the heroic self has taken leave of a world in ruins? Or is the ego finally liberated

88. Adorno, *Beethoven,* p.124. The relationship between the "theme" and "variation" is clarified in the recapitulation where the arpeggio figuration returns as the accompaniment of the theme; see mm.56–59.

from the chains of its autonomy, admittedly as one who is broken and vulnerable and yet, in its humility, discovers the freedom that the heroic subject failed to purchase? These formulaic arpeggios need not be the debris of a lost freedom, but an expression of freedom where freedom is found in the "interplay between what is given and what is made," a freedom that is *given* to the objects rather than taken as the subject's possession.[89] Similarly the gaps need not be the articulation of an alienated landscape, but the moment where what is nonidentical is given the space (the freedom) to be as they are. And the sense of harmonic stasis here need not be the failure of the subject to grasp the momentum of its history, but an accommodation with time, where time can take its time to unfold without coercion. This is not the absolute but the *relative* freedom of the subject as a *particular* working in relation with other particulars, in an environment that it neither precedes nor creates. It is not founded on nothing; rather it improvises around the constraints of a given order. Indeed its very process—variation—is improvisatory, as the arpeggio figurations indicate; Beethoven redeems the formulaic through a topos of spontaneity. Perhaps this freedom is not too far removed from Adorno's Utopian vision of peace that he refuses to hear lest he were to endorse a premature ending in his catastrophic worldview: "Peace," he writes, "is a state of distinctness without domination, with the distinct participating in each other."[90] The world has yet to see such peace as its universal condition, but freedom need not be restricted to the realm of Utopian hope; it can be found in the surprise of everyday relationships, in transformative moments of meekness, humility, and patience for example. This may not be a freedom fit for the slogans of a political rally, but if the alliance between Beethoven and freedom is to continue in the twenty-first century, perhaps we need to fold up that blank flag and its "empty" declaration of power for a freedom that is less ambitious and more compassionate.

89. Jeremy S. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), p.240.

90. Adorno, "Subject-Object," in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader,* ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Continuum, 1982), p.500.

"Ode to Freedom": Bernstein's Ninth at the Berlin Wall

Alexander Rehding

The Cold War ended on 9 November 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall.[1] What better opportunity to celebrate this historical event, and to capture the solemn joy of the moment, than with a performance of the most sublime of musical works—Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. What better work of art to celebrate the "Peaceful Revolution" of East Germany, which over the previous six months had effected change without bloodshed, for instance, in the weekly Monday demonstrations in Leipzig, which reminded the autocratic Socialist Party of the simple and powerful message, *Wir sind das Volk*—"We are the people." The world press agreed that the Germans were the happiest nation in the world. And the central statement of the Ninth Symphony, "Alle Menschen werden Brüder," reflected precisely the sentiment of those days. Over the Christmas holidays of the same year, the symphony was performed in both parts of the formerly divided city of Berlin under the baton of the media star Leonard Bernstein.[2]

Bernstein felt that the unique momentous event demanded that the symphony be changed. He explained, "This is a heaven-sent moment to sing '*Freiheit*' wherever

1. It is an irony of history that what was perhaps the blackest day in the German past, the *Reichskristallnacht* of 1938, also occurred on 9 November. It is for this reason that the national holiday is the more neutral 3 October, the day on which the constitution was passed by the new East German states.

2. For critical engagements with this performance, see David B. Dennis, *Beethoven in German Politics 1870–1989* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996), pp. 200–03; Esteban Buch, *Beethovens Neunte: Eine Biographie,* trans. Silke Hass (Berlin: Propyläen, 2000), pp. 333–37; and Richard Taruskin, "A Beethoven Season? Like Last Season, the One Before . . . ," *New York Times,* 10 September 1995.

the score indicates the word '*Freude*',"[3] replacing joy with freedom. The change was academically unsound, he warned, because there is no documentary evidence of Beethoven's intentions. Yet Bernstein also mentioned the unproven theory, apparently going back to Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, that Schiller originally wrote a version of the poem entitled "An die Freiheit." Jahn published an article in 1849 in which he claimed, apparently based on an account of Schiller's secretary, that a planned paean to freedom by Schiller fell prey to the censor and had to be turned into "An die Freude" to avoid recriminations.[4] This historical reference, albeit now considered spurious, makes Bernstein's decision curiously pertinent because Jahn—whose name is commonly prefaced with the epithet *Turnvater* (the father figure of the gymnasts' movement)—was an early-nineteenth-century advocate for German unification.

Jahn's 1849 article was only one instance in a historical trajectory that spanned much of the nineteenth century, and in which Bernstein's statement forms the most recent installment. The association of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with freedom has been traced back to Wolfgang Griepenkerl's 1838 novella, *Das Musikfest oder die Beethovener*.[5] By 1845 this association had become accepted as self-evident fact, so much so that the correspondent of the *London Illustrated News* could report from the Bonn Beethoven Festival that "Schiller's 'Song to Joy' [was] originally intended, by the way, to 'liberty,' but German despotism was in the way."[6] Around the time of the first German reunification of 1871, this association had become so entrenched as to be a founding component of national consciousness.[7] In 1927, on the occasion of the Beethoven centenary, Hanns Eisler finally dismissed the association as a "legend."[8] (Unsurprisingly, given the political implications, Bern-

3. Leonard Bernstein, "Aesthetic News Bulletin," *Ode an die Freiheit: Bernstein in Berlin,* CD booklet (Hamburg: Deutsche Grammophon, 1990), p.2.

4. See Uwe Martin, "Freude, Freiheit, Brüderlichkeit: Über Schillers Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben von Freiheit," *Cahiers d'études germaniques* 8 (1990), 9–10.

5. Nicholas Cook, *Beethoven: Symphony No.9* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), p.94; Andreas Eichhorn, *Beethovens Neunte Symphonie: Die Geschichte ihrer Aufführung und Rezeption* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1993), pp.302–06; and David Benjamin Levy, *Beethoven: The Ninth Symphony* (New York: Schirmer, 1995), pp.162–64.

6. *Illustrated London News,* 16 August 1845, p.102.

7. Jacob Venedey, *Die deutschen Republikaner unter der französischen Republik* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1870), p.1; and Ludwig Nohl, *Beethovens Leben* (2nd edn. Berlin: Schlesische Verlagsanstalt, 1913), vol.3/1, p.188.

8. Hanns Eisler, *Musik und Politik: Schriften 1924–1948,* ed. Günther Mayer, in *Hanns Eisler: Gesammelte Werke,* ed. Stephanie Eisler and Manfred Grabs (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1973), p.31, n. 8. Though not explicitly concerned with freedom, one might further add Otto Baensch's extraordinary analytical interpretation of the symphony as a world-historical allegory, *Aufbau und Sinn des Chorfinales von Beethovens Neunter Symphonie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1930).

stein did not cite the communist Eisler as an authoritative source here, but rather referred to unspecified musicological sources.)

In the context of this historical trajectory, Bernstein's performance amounts to a restaging of a nineteenth-century myth that had passed gradually from the realm of fiction to that of rumor and finally to culturally sanctioned truth. Accordingly, Bernstein proposed his theory in a curiously contorted argument, basing it on a historical precedent in nineteenth-century thought, which, however, he knew to be a sham. In the end, he dismissed any potential criticism of this change by asserting that any such quibbles were merely of theoretical interest and lacked the spirit of human joy that the situation demanded. He concluded: "I am sure we have Beethoven's blessing."[9]

Given the tendency prevalent among musicians and musicologists to credit a texted piece of music solely to the composer, it is perhaps understandable that Bernstein would ultimately have sought legitimization from Beethoven. He would have been more successful had he also asked for Schiller's blessing: Schiller's original poem "An die Freude" of 1785 shows his close allegiance to pre-revolutionary French ideas, particularly in the verses "beggars become the brothers of princes" (*Bettler werden Fürstenbrüder*) in the first stanza, and the demand for "rescue from tyrants' chains" (*Rettung von Tyrannenketten*) in the final stanza.[10] The triad of the French Revolution, *liberté—égalité—fraternité,* is clearly discernible in these lines. In this sense, it is very well possible to talk of the expression of a political concept of freedom in Schiller's poem, which is closely wedded to the central theme of joy.

Although the poem became one of Schiller's most popular creations and was set to music well over forty times,[11] Schiller was evidently unhappy with it: when editing an anthology of his poetry in 1803, he was reluctant to include "An die Freude," and eventually decided to revise it.[12] In this new version, perplexingly, Schiller removed all obvious references to the ideals of the French Revolution. It was precisely the lines cited above that fell prey to his revision: "beggars become the brothers of princes" became the much less radical—though more universal—"all humans become brothers," while the last stanza promoting freedom from tyranny

9. Bernstein, "Aesthetic News Bulletin," p.2.

10. For a full comparison of both versions with an English translation, see Levy, *Beethoven: The Ninth Symphony,* pp.9–12, or Appendix D (pp.50–53) of James Parsons, "'Deine Zauber binden wieder': Beethoven, Schiller, and the Joyous Reconciliation of Opposites," *Beethoven Forum* 9 (2002), 1–54.

11. See Appendix A of Parsons, "'Deine Zauber binden wieder'," pp.43–46.

12. Solomon, "Beethoven and Schiller," p.209.

was simply deleted altogether. In his correspondence Schiller expressed unhappiness with the sentiments of the poem because he had become disillusioned with the consequences of the French Revolution.[13]

In Schiller's view, the Revolution had produced on the one hand lawless savages, driven by external forces and internal urges alone while lacking any reason, and on the other merciless barbarians whose actions were solely dictated by a radical rationality devoid of any humane emotions. What the Revolution had comprehensively failed to produce were real humans in the sense of *Aufklärung,* with reason and emotions in balance.[14]

Although we know that Beethoven was familiar with both versions, it is this revised version of the poem that he used for his "Ode an die Freude."[15] But what do Schiller's changes imply? Can we still think of *Freude* as a code word for *Freiheit,* even though all references to it had been carefully removed in the 1803 version?[16]

I

Bernstein's proposal holds that we can. Between the 1785 and the 1803 versions of "An die Freude," Schiller's understanding of freedom itself had undergone some significant revisions. These are nowhere made clearer than in his epistolary treatise *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (*Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*), published in 1795, where he sought to explain how the balance between reason and

13. This context is explored in Rudolf Dau, "Friedrich Schillers Hymne 'An die Freude': Zu einigen Problemen ihrer Interpretation und aktuellen Rezeption," *Weimarer Beiträge* 24 (1978), 38–40.

14. Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man,* trans. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p.21. On Schiller's savages and barbarians, see, for instance, Kenneth Parmelee Wilcox, *Anmut und Würde: Die Dialektik der menschlichen Vollendung bei Schiller* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1981), pp.146–70.

15. Whereas Schiller's title was simply "An die Freude," Beethoven habitually added the word "Ode," which has now become standard. Andreas Eichhorn shows in *Beethovens Neunte Symphonie,* pp.225–36, how Beethoven's cuts emphasize the Ode character of the poem.

16. I am grateful to Reinhold Brinkmann for pointing out to me that the alliterative similarity between *Freiheit* and *Freude* might constitute another point of connection. This point holds true particularly in the context of Schiller's tragedies: Johanna's dying words in *Die Jungfrau von Orleans,* "Kurz ist der Schmerz / und ewig ist die Freude," express a sense of freedom, besides joy, precisely in a sense that Schiller espoused in his writings on the sublime and on the pathetic—which amounts, broadly speaking, to the right to self-denial and self-sacrifice. (Beethoven, incidentally, set these verses as a canon in WoO 163 and 166.) One presumes, however, that this level of meaning of *Freude/Freiheit* was not on Bernstein's mind when he proposed the change to "An die Freude."

senses, which he had found wanting in the French Revolution, could be achieved.[17] Schiller found the answer in the contemplation of beautiful forms. At the outset of his letters he explains that it might seem inappropriate to talk about art and beauty in times of social turmoil, but this turn toward aesthetics was motivated precisely by political reasons. Accordingly, the central thesis of the treatise is: "If man is ever to solve that problem of politics in practice he will have to approach it through the problem of the aesthetic, because it is only through Beauty that man makes his way to Freedom."[18] Put differently, the central question Schiller sought to answer in his *Aesthetic Education* is how it is possible for imperfect humans to become free citizens; in his answer beautiful art is invested with the capacity of performing this educational task.

Schiller's leap from the political to the aesthetic was achieved through his definition of beauty as "freedom in appearance."[19] At first, this might sound circuitous: beauty will lead to freedom because beauty is itself already a kind of freedom. In this sense, one could be tempted to read Schiller's above statement as a tautology, "it is only through freedom that man makes his way to freedom." The crux is in the word *appearance:* Schiller's education is based on the idea that the appearance of freedom, in beauty, can teach us something about *actual* freedom.[20] By defining beauty in this way, he implied two things: first, freedom means autonomy, independence from external forces and the self-imposition of laws.[21] The autonomous status of the artwork is complicated by the circumstance that, strictly speaking, it is subject to rules imposed on it by the artist, but it possesses the appearance of autonomy. And second, whereas for Schiller's teacher Kant, freedom was a purely rational affair, the freedom displayed in the beauty of a work of art appeals to the senses.[22] Consequently, beauty is the analogue of freedom in the world of appearances.

17. As a central philosophical document, the *Aesthetic Education* has been subject to countless interpretations, and its exegesis is far from self-evident. See Lesley Sharpe's detailed biographical essay, *Schiller's Aesthetic Essays: Two Centuries of Criticism* (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1995) for the main lines of argument.

18. Schiller, *Aesthetic Education,* p.9.

19. Ibid., p.167n. He first introduced this notion in his *Kallias* letters.

20. This is not to downplay the considerable body of critical debate that has amassed around these central concepts, whose relationship is anything but settled. Schiller's position toward freedom and the significance of the aesthetic state seems to change somewhat over the course of the twenty-seven letters that make up the treatise. See Schiller, *Aesthetic Education,* pp.xlii-lx. For a thoughtful consideration of the structure of Schiller's treatise in the context of Beethoven, see also Karol Berger, "Beethoven and the Aesthetic State," *Beethoven Forum* 7 (1999), 41–44.

21. See R. D. Miller, *Schiller and the Ideal of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp.89–91.

22. The difference between Kant's and Schiller's approaches is perhaps best expressed by Kant's maxim *sapere aude,* which he translates as the encouragement "to use your own reason." Schiller, by

It is this second point that is of crucial importance. The idea behind the aesthetic education is that mankind must be, as Schiller puts it, awakened from its pre-Enlightened slumber and taught to use its faculty of reason through the contemplation of beautiful works of art, and in this way stimulate a sense of the possibility of actualizing freedom in the human.[23] Or, in Schiller's more poetic terms: "The way to the head," he explains, "must be opened through the heart."[24]

To explain the work of art, Schiller draws on the well-known idealist categories of form and content or matter (*Stoff*). Like reason and the senses in the enlightened human, form and matter must be kept in balance in the artwork, and each aspect of the artwork is supposed to engage its correlate in the human. We can best approach these categories from the vantage point of the universal and particular. In the case of music, Schiller not only refers to the sonic material as its content, but also to the emotive response that this material evokes in the listener. That is to say, the perception of a work of art with reference to its content—by means of our senses—means that we tarry over the particular, we focus on moments and details. In extreme cases, we "live" in the piece of music, we submit to it and are enveloped by it. Schiller maintains—rightly or not—that music contains a surplus of content; it stimulates us emotionally, but it does not tend to encourage us to engage in abstract and rational thought.[25]

If we attend to form, on the other hand, we try to take in the work of art as a totality. This is done on the level of the rational reconstruction of the whole in our mind—a mode of reception requiring that we get as little involved with the sensuous stimuli of the work of art as possible. We need to hold the material at bay, because, insofar as content represents the particular, any attention to detail would necessarily interfere with our impression of the whole. In other words, the aspect of form necessitates that we distance ourselves from the work of art, that we subjugate it by means of our rational faculty and thus objectify it.[26]

In many ways, this aesthetic contemplation is best understood as a power struggle: either we submit to the work of art, or we force it to submit to us. The power within the human that comes about when he manages to objectify a work of art through its form is a manifestation of his rational autonomy, that is to say his

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contrast, renders this as "dare to be wise" (*Aesthetic Education,* p.51). Nicholas Till draws attention to this difference in *Mozart and the Enlightenment: Truth, Virtue and Beauty in Mozart's Operas* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), p.283.

23. Schiller, *Aesthetic Education,* p.205.

24. Ibid., p.53.

25. Ibid., pp.153–55.

26. Ibid., p.185.

freedom. In practice, Schiller reminds us, it is never possible to separate form from matter completely, but it is obvious that the formal part of a work of art is of greater significance in his conception of aesthetic freedom, because as the rational and nonsensuous element it is ultimately form that makes freedom possible:

> In a truly successful work of art the contents should effect nothing, the form everything; for only through the form is the whole man affected, through the subject-matter only one or other of his functions. Subject-matter, then, however, sublime and all-embracing it may be, always has a limiting effect on the spirit, and it is only from form that true aesthetic freedom can be looked for. Herein, then, lies the real secret of the master in any art: that he can make his form consume his material.[27]

This final point is crucial: some critics of Schiller's aesthetics have detected a tension between his position on the one hand that form and content must be in balance, and on the other hand the postulate that freedom emerges from form—and that form is, by implication, more relevant than content. But in fact, there is no contradiction here: the aesthetic freedom that form suggests can only be *experienced* through the content. The contemplating subject cannot simply skip that part—after all, all that the subject has at the beginning of the aesthetic education are sensations and experiences. These must therefore form the starting point for an appreciation of form, and hence freedom. In this sense, Schiller calls for music to shed its abundant materiality: "Music must become form," he urges, for it is only form that affects the universal.[28]

II

With all this in mind, we can return to Bernstein's Ninth. Even without a thorough investigation of Schiller's own views of musical form (which in any case are few in number),[29] the problem is obvious: on the one hand, it is apparently the last movement of the symphony that articulates the freedom of man, but on the other, the single most important factor of this movement has been its formlessness. From the very first review onward, which was otherwise positively brimming with praise, the inscrutable form of the last movement has been a point of criticism: "Even

27. Ibid., pp. 155–57.

28. Ibid., p. 155 (trans. modified).

29. Schiller comments explicitly on music in letters to his friend Theodor Körner. See R. M. Longyear, *Schiller and Music* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: U North Carolina P, 1966).

the work's most glowing worshippers and most inspired admirers are convinced that this truly unique finale would become even more incomparably imposing in a more concentrated shape, and the composer himself would agree, had cruel fate not robbed him of the ability to hear his creation."[30] To this day, analysts disagree about the correct formal analysis of the movement, which is variously presented as a sonata form, concerto form, variation form, rondo form, a Lisztian four-movements-in-one form, or a mixture of all the above.[31]

We could turn this argument on its head and claim that the apparent formlessness of the movement is actually a sign of the sublime. This is, of course, another trope that pervades the entire reception of Beethoven's Ninth.[32] But the sublime is not the beautiful,[33] at least not in this case. In fact, it is noticeable how much reluctance Schiller shows in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*—in contrast to his other aesthetic writings—to engage the sublime here.[34] While for Schiller the essence of beauty resides in harmony, in the equilibrium between form and content, the sublime is quite a different aesthetic experience, namely one that "exceeds our empirical concept of the subject." That is to say, the human recognizes that he cannot win the power struggle against the art object, as his sensuous capacity is overwhelmed. Consequently, as Schiller explains later, the sublime effect resides in our marveling "at the victory which the object achieves over man."[35]

To illustrate this point, consider the Poco adagio passage near the end where the vocal solo quartet suddenly interrupts the chorus in the middle of their final stretti. The soloists seem to step out of time and lead the "Alle Menschen werden

30. *Ludwig van Beethoven: Die Werke im Spiegel der Zeit,* ed. Stefan Kunze (Laaber: Laaber, 1989), p.473 (my trans.).

31. For discussions of different approaches to the form of the movement, see James Webster, "The Form of the Finale in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony," *Beethoven Forum* 1 (1992), 25–62; and Michael Tusa, "*Noch einmal:* Form and Content in the Finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony," *Beethoven Forum* 7 (1999), 113–37.

32. In fact, this began even before the Ninth Symphony was written, when Schiller's friend Theodor Körner recommended Beethoven to the poet as a man who is "interested in the great and the sublime." See Solomon, "Beethoven and Schiller," *Essays,* p.206. Eichhorn lists particular instances of the sublime in Beethoven's Ninth in *Beethovens Neunte Symphonie,* pp.191–288.

33. See Philip J. Kain, *Schiller, Hegel and Marx: State, Society, and the Aesthetic Ideal of Ancient Greece* (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's UP, 1982), pp.15–19.

34. There is considerable debate about the legitimacy of interpreting Schiller's concepts of "melting" and "energizing beauty," which he introduces in letter no.16, in terms equivalent to the beautiful and the sublime.

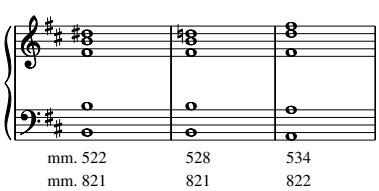
35. Schiller, *Aesthetic Education,* p.166.

Brüder" theme into new and undreamed-of regions, winding their way somewhat self-indulgently toward B major, before the final march returns them to the universal brotherhood in the final Prestissimo.

These moments of B major form a fixed reference point that spans the whole symphony and can in fact be found in each movement.[36] In all occurrences, these B-major moments open up an immeasurable tonal space. From the home key of D minor—seven accidentals and a change of mode away—this would present an impossibly remote tonal relation. The only way to make sense of it is if we follow its path step by step. What Leo Treitler says about the last movement on the whole rings particularly true in these passages: "We can glimpse through that the Romantic idea of music as an expression of the infinite."[37]

The fugal passage following the Alla marcia section makes this particularly evident. The fugue takes us in a variety of confusing harmonic maneuvers gradually from B♭ major to the inconceivably remote regions of G♭ major and finally to our B major for a brief touchdown. The fugue is really a centrifuge, and it appears to catapult us into the outer orbits of the tonal universe.

In my descriptions of these musical passages I have been consciously using the communal form "us," and thereby implying an agency of the matter of the music—"we" are irresistibly drawn into the music; "it" draws us in. In its overwhelming formlessness, the movement simply does not allow us to capture its form intellectually. It remains impossible for us to distance ourselves from the content of the music, and to pin down its form; we cannot objectify it and remain in turn arrested by it and in it.



Example 1: Harmonic reductions of end of the final solo insertion and of the end of the fugue. (The measure numbers follow the Eulenburg edition.) Despite their differences, both return from "impossibly" remote B-major regions by means of simple harmonic progressions.

36. These occur in the first movement at mm. 108–15, in the second at m. 177, and in the third at mm. 91–98. Robert Fink has shown, in *"Arrows of Desire": Long-range Linear Structure and the Transformation of Musical Energy* (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1994), pp. 202–04, how the final solo quartet, discussed above, is motivically related to the B-major moment in the first movement.

37. Leo Treitler, "'To Worship that Celestial Sound': Motives for Music Analysis," in *Music and the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1989), p. 61.

Or is the problem rather that we simply cannot conceptualize the form? After all, there is always form, even in the infinite. And, as ex. 1 indicates, in both passages the return to the more familiar D major is achieved by the same baffling, almost mockingly simple strategy.[38] This fact would suggest that the formlessness of the movement is indeed carefully controlled. Either way, however, the problem remains the same: what matters to Schiller is the relation between the work of art and the contemplating subject.[39] Even if the fault does not lie with the art object but rather with the human's incapability of recognizing its form, the aesthetic experience will not be a manifestation of his freedom and an affirmation of the autonomy of his rational faculty, but is rather doomed to failure.

The consequences that Schiller envisages could be dire. He presents this case as a kind of short-circuited enlightenment: whereas the form of an artwork is supposed to stimulate our rational capacity so that we might appreciate universality and acquire an awareness of the world around us, here, in the formless work of art, only contingent matter can be engaged.[40] In other words, where the aesthetic experience should have led to freedom, it now leads only to an awareness of the contingency of human existence, set as an absolute. As Schiller predicts, man will find himself alone in the world, without so much as a concept of humanity: "The first fruits which he reaps in the realm of spirit are, therefore, Sorrow and Fear; both of them products of reason, not of sense, but a reason which mistakes its object and applies its imperative directly to matter."[41] What the human is faced with in this short-circuited enlightenment, which reflects the particular and temporal rather than the universal and transcendent, then, is the overpowering force of nature, the terror of the empirical world.

This is particularly problematic with regard to the sublime: like Kant before him, Schiller considers the effect of the sublime to be a triumphant affirmation of the ability of reason to withstand the overwhelming force of nature. However, this only works if reason is fully functional in humans that have already attained fully aesthetic maturity, which is evidently not the case here.[42] Where reason has just awoken the human from his pre-Enlightened slumber, and the human is, in

38. Stephen Hinton makes a related observation in "Not *Which* Tones? The Crux of Beethoven's Ninth," 19CM 22 (1998), 62–64. His analytical framework makes it clear that an alternative interpretation of the move to the "impossibly remote" region of B major might be motivically motivated.

39. Schiller, *Aesthetic Education,* p. 157.

40. Ibid., p. 175.

41. Ibid., pp. 175–77 (trans. modified).

42. See Schiller's very different assessment of the sublime in his other aesthetic writings, above all *Über das Pathetische, Vom Erhabenen,* and the later *Über das Erhabene*.

Kant's famous dictum, freshly emerging from his self-imposed immaturity, it would seem difficult to take this last crucial step and turn the overwhelming power of nature into an affirmation of reason. Instead, the human simply stands frightened in the face of the horrors of the material world's forces.

In other words, we are worlds apart from the joyous brotherhood of humanity of which Schiller's Ode sings. Almost inevitably, the inscrutable form of the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth brings about "sorrow or fear" in the human, who was supposed to be educated toward freedom. Is this all a mistake?

III

The social dangers of freedom that Schiller envisages can be seen to be played out in Beethoven's symphony. Freedom is for Schiller not limited to the individual; rather, it is inseparable from the idea of a society embracing all of humanity—and Beethoven gives expression to this conceit in his unending repetitions of "Alle Menschen, alle Menschen," which saturate the entire last movement. In this context, one could even go further and suggest that these exclamations be heard as an imperative, as something not yet achieved or at stake. If we read Schiller's poem closely, we find that this "Alle Menschen" is not something we can take for granted. Particularly the second stanza, which supposedly sings the praise of the community of humanity, ends on a rather chilling note: "And he who could never achieve this, in tears let him steal away from this community."

One critic who was troubled by these verses was Theodor W. Adorno, who was on the whole suspicious of Schiller's aesthetic-political project.[43] For him, the whole coercive gregariousness of the Enlightenment was summarized in these verses. He observed: "The passage from Schiller's 'Ode to Joy,' in which those who are not accorded all-embracing love are banished from it, involuntarily betrays the truth about the idea of humanity, which 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."[44] If we follow Adorno's line of this critique of Schiller, then man, captivated by fear and sorrow after mistakenly contemplating the matter of

43. See Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p.296, and *Aesthetic Theory,* trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1997), p.62.

44. Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), vol.10/2, p.620. Translation from Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music,* ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), p.212. For a related, but more detailed statement, see his *Beethoven,* pp.32–33.

the work of art, is an essential part of the joyous community of brothers, precisely in his rejection from society.

Beethoven, too, took note of this particular verse. As Nottebohm reports, he scribbled in one of his sketches, slightly misquoting Schiller: "Turkish Music in 'Wer das nie gekonnt stehle'."[45] In the final version, of course, this verse is not set to Turkish music. Instead, it makes its first appearance a little later, in the Alla marcia passage in B♭ major. However, it is in turn possible to interpret this "Turkish March" topic in light of the verse in question and the sentiment of exclusion it may express. For Adorno, a march represents the collective figure of walking, which suggests "an idiosyncratic irreversible movement toward a goal. Withdrawal, return and repetition are unknown to it."[46]

In this situation, then, the march becomes the exact opposite, an inseparable counterpart, of the fugue discussed above, which immediately supersedes the march. Where the march stands for order, collectivity, and goal-directed motion, the fugue negates every single point: there is disorder and individuality in the polyphonic texture, and as we saw earlier on, there is no sense of any tonal direction. The fugue disperses the community; the music simply spirals out of control and into the sublime chaos of the B-major moment we encountered above.[47] And, in light of this interpretation, it is hardly surprising that over the course of the fugue the theme derived from the preceding "Turkish music" passage is gradually submerged by the "Freude" theme and all but disappears.[48]

From this angle, then, we can begin to reconstruct the insoluble "problem of the Ninth" of which Adorno spoke in the Beethoven fragment and bring it to bear on Bernstein's idea of freedom in Beethoven's Ninth. Adorno's problem would look something like this: for Schiller, freedom is grounded in the aesthetic experience of beauty, but he has some reservations about the sublime, which harbors certain dangers, since it is based on the opposition, not the harmony, of reason and the

45. N II, p.186.

46. Adorno, "Wiener Rede," in *Gustav Mahler* (Tübingen: Rainer Wunderlich, 1966), p.218; cited in Eichhorn, *Beethovens Neunte Symphonie,* p.232.

47. Bernstein's musical interpretation recognizes the close relationship between these two radically diverse topics, but clings to a sense of precise rhythmic control throughout the fugue, thus effectively carrying over the march into the next section.

48. It is difficult not to think here of August Halm's interpretation of fugue and sonata in light of the individual and the state, respectively. For discussions of this topic, see Lee Rothfarb, "Music Analysis, Cultural Ethics, and Sociology in the Writings of August Halm," *Indiana Theory Review* 16 (1995), 171–96; and Alexander Rehding, "August Halm's Two Cultures as Nature," in *Music Theory and Natural Order from the Renaissance to the Early Twentieth Century,* ed. Suzannah Clark and Alexander Rehding (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), pp.142–60.

senses. The danger Schiller envisages in the sublime, in the context of an aesthetic education, is the misshapen relation between the individual and society. Rather than producing individuals who are conscious of their membership in the human species, it produces fearful individuals who cannot conceive of anything outside their individuality. Beethoven's formless last movement, which apparently holds the key to freedom, will almost certainly result in this failed relation. At the same time, however, Adorno observes that Schiller's joyous Utopian community thrives precisely on the exclusion of the individual who does not fit in. With Bernstein's change from "joy" to "freedom," he effectively turned the conundrum into a vicious circle, which had lain dormant as long as Beethoven's Ninth did not make any overt claims to freedom: inevitability and necessity for the aesthetic education to fail now coincide. And both sides of the coin—the necessity and the inevitability of failure—can be traced back to the formlessness of Beethoven's composition.

IV

With this sobering thought, we can finally return from the French Revolution to the bloodless German Revolution, from the aftermath of 1789 to that of 1989. It would surely be churlish to doubt the sincere spirit in which Bernstein made the change to the symphony, as a symbolic token, a musical fanfare to herald the new age of freedom and democracy, as indeed many of the press reviews at the time acknowledged. And yet, it was much more than simply a euphoric response to the historical moment: Bernstein's change was more prescient perhaps than he would have himself imagined at the time.

For, in a way, the years following the reunification were marked on the one hand by a sense of "sorrow and fear," and on the other by the social exclusion of the individuals who would not fit. This can emblematically be seen, as Jürgen Habermas and others have pointed out, in the transformation that the popular movement underwent shortly after the Wall came down: their slogan changed subtly but unmistakably from "We are the people" to "We are *one* nation" (*Wir sind ein Volk*).[49] At that stage the new slogan was merely a plea for a spiritual unification alongside the economic and political unification, not dissimilar from the way I

49. On this much-discussed point see, for instance, Jürgen Habermas, *Die nachholende Revolution* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), p. 181. On Habermas's position, see also Jan Müller, *Another Country: German Intellectuals, Unification and National Identity* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2000), pp. 90–119. The slogan *Wir sind ein Volk* is reminiscent, consciously or not, of another famous line by Schiller: "Wir wollen sein ein einig Volk von Brüdern" (*Wilhelm Tell*).

have read Beethoven's incessant plea "Alle Menschen" in the Ninth Symphony. But even this innocuous slogan already resonates with the policy of exclusion that nationalism tends to be based on, as Adorno saw in Beethoven's Ninth on the artistic level, and as was borne out politically in the 1990s, most dramatically in the rise of neo-Nazism in certain quarters.

It is probably worth remembering Chou En-Lai in this context, who, when asked whether he considered the French Revolution a success, allegedly replied: "It is too early to say."[50] Nevertheless, more than a decade on, many historians have come to consider the German reunification soberly as a "business transaction turned sour," resulting in little more than increases in both tax bills and unemployment figures.[51] From the viewpoint of the aesthetic education, it would seem that the peaceful revolution of 1989, like its predecessor two hundred years earlier, produced once again some groups of lawless savages and heartless barbarians. The problem was that the people were rushed into "freedom" without, as Schiller would have said, first being educated toward it through the contemplation of beautiful works of art. The outcome was the result of an eagerness, recognized by Adorno, to exchange Utopian "joy" for economic "freedom." And Beethoven's music may help us understand how and why.

50. I thank Tracy Strong for the correct attribution of this legend.

51. *When the Wall Came Down: Reactions to German Unification,* ed. Harold James and Maria Stone (London: Routledge, 1992), p.70.

Saving the Ordinary: Beethoven's "Ghost" Trio and the Wheel of History

Perhaps we need to expend so much energy and effort on the common and ordinary because for the true human self there is nothing more uncommon, nothing more out of the ordinary, than the commonplace everyday?
—Novalis (1797)

Lawrence Kramer

1. Allegro vivace con brio

It is one of the paradoxes of music history that European instrumental music in the first half of the nineteenth century developed a strong tendency to affiliate itself with literary forms, especially narrative, at the same time that its apparent autonomy was aggressively being celebrated and theorized, eventually to the point of being appointed the model for art in general. The reasons for this situation have never been satisfactorily explained. One possibility is that music was simply recovering the narrative connections it had lost as a result of the progressive "emancipation" from language that had consolidated around the turn of the century and was enshrined in the reception of Beethoven. Another, perhaps more revealing, possibility is that the narrative turn provided a means of limiting a transcendental power that had come to be ascribed to instrumental music and that was felt to be both magnificent and dangerous.

Initially associated with a natural or religious sublimity, this power assumed its nineteenth-century (and more broadly its modern) form as a mental energy that could manifest itself equally in artistic creativity, psychological extremity, and social upheaval. To exercise this energy was to suspend or surpass the experience of ordinary life, and this to such a degree that the value, even the possibility, of the ordinary was put in question. The rule of this subjective sublime produced a perpetual crisis of the ordinary. For figures such as E. T. A. Hoffmann, Hegel, and Kierkegaard, among others, instrumental music continually danced on the knife-edge of this crisis by virtue of its removal from concrete narrative or expressive

content. With music, the ordinary was always already at one remove. Wagner famously inferred from this the necessity of a music drama that would reunite the humanizing content of the word with the sensuous and emotional powers of tone. A more moderate, more broadly practiced, but less explicit inference seems to have been that music could be sufficiently humanized by being invested with narrative qualities. If one follows Peter Brooks's model of narrative as a structuring process that seeks to assimilate an untamed energy to manageable paradigms of desire and the hope of satisfaction,[1] then the assimilation of narrative by nineteenth-century music may appear to have been a means of reconciling the ordinary with the subjective sublime in its most alluring and compelling, which is to say, its musical form.

These issues find a timely and revealing articulation in Beethoven's so-called "Ghost" Trio (Piano Trio in D Major, op.70, no.1), composed in 1808 with suggestive affinities to several contemporary narratives for which the same issues are paramount. A reading of the trio in conjunction with these narratives can help write a significant chapter in the history of the ordinary, which is also the history of the crisis of the ordinary. For it is precisely through the model exemplified by the "Ghost" Trio, the model of musical works that court description by baffling it, that the historical amalgamation of instrumental music and narrative in and after the nineteenth century is produced. And that amalgamation, especially as it underwrites the coalescence of music and narrative in drama, film, video, TV news, and so on, is a key cultural device for maintaining the ordinary in the modern world—an ordinary that, as Novalis observes, is not really ordinary at all.

2. Largo assai ed espressivo

In 1808 Austria was licking its wounds after a string of three major military defeats by Napoléon in as many years. The country had become little more than a French fiefdom; a year later, and Napoléon's armies would occupy Vienna. Cultural life, though, was thriving amid the political rubble, especially in the capital. At the university, August Wilhelm Schlegel delivered a widely noticed series of lectures on dramatic art and literature that became one of the key texts of Romantic criti-

A shorter version of this essay appears in *Phrase and Subject: Studies in Music and Literature,* ed. Robert Samuels and Delia DaSousa-Correa (Oxford: Legenda, 2005). I am grateful to the publisher for permission to reprint the relevant portions here.

1. Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (1984; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992).

cism. And then there was Beethoven, who in this year finished his Fifth Symphony, composed his Sixth, and also produced the two Piano Trios of op.70, works as extraordinary in their own genre as the symphonies are.

The first trio, the "Ghost," is particularly extraordinary. Or rather, one movement of it is, and famously so. This slow movement is so very extraordinary, so deliberately out of the ordinary, that it seems to be challenging the very conception of ordinary life. August Strindberg named his 1907 "chamber play" *The Ghost Sonata* partly after this music. The play is set in a new house filled with old secrets, not to mention vampires and mummies; the dramatic action peels away the veneer of the ordinary to reveal it as sheer illusion. Strindberg explained that with this play "one enters a world of intimations where one expresses oneself in halftones and with a soft pedal, since one is ashamed to be a human being."[2] Clearly the sound of Beethoven's slow movement was echoing, ghostlike, in his ears, and it is still possible, another century later, to hear it on the same spectral terms. When we speak of music as extraordinary we usually have something like excellence or originality or expressive power in mind. But this slow movement, this Largo assai ed espressivo, treats these qualities, or for that matter any positive qualities or values, with indifference, even hostility. It seems to take them up only to discard them for something else. To form a sense of why, and what that something might be, it's necessary to hear the movement, and the trio, as part of the historical and cultural ferment of 1808.

We can begin with a simple description—the simpler the better: an ordinary thing. This is from Maynard Solomon's well-known biography of Beethoven: "[This trio] has two unproblematic and relaxed movements flanking a powerful pre-Romantic Largo, whose atmospheric tremolo effects and sudden dynamic contrasts give rise to the work's nickname."[3] Any hearing of the trio will bear out this statement, which is both representative and authoritative. It would be easy to take at face value, which is exactly what I don't want to do. What happens when we press it a little?

The terms "unproblematic" and "relaxed" connote something normal, sociable, congenial, something that needs no further description; the phrase "a powerful pre-Romantic Largo" implies something strange and singular, something that does need further description—the references to atmospheric tremolo effects and sudden dynamic contrasts. The same distinction applies to Solomon's own statement,

2. August Strindberg, *The Chamber Plays,* trans. Evert Spinchorn and Seabury Quinn, Jr. (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1962), p.xix.

3. Solomon, *Beethoven,* p.208.

which also casts itself as unproblematic and relaxed. The statement implies, as if it goes without saying, that the whole arrangement of ordinary and extraordinary movements makes sense. But does it? Or if it does, what kind of sense does it make? Why choose this particular layout? And why choose to give musical expression to the ideas of the ordinary and the extraordinary? Is that something easy or natural to express? What does this "ordinary" or "extraordinary" consist of, anyway? And would this question always have the same answer, or is the ordinary, and therefore the extraordinary, a historical phenomenon, rather than what it seems to be, a universal one?

That I can't promise to answer all these questions is part of my point. We should not fool ourselves into understanding this music too well. Its power to raise so many questions, and to raise them in just this way, is not just a property to be taken for granted, a phantom of clichéd profundity. It is a cultural event. When we listen to the "Ghost" Trio, we can hear the turning of a page in the modern history of the ordinary.[4]

That history begins in the mid-eighteenth century as an increasing fascination with everyday things, at least by people comfortable enough to take a plenitude of everyday things for granted. By fits and starts, still-life painting detaches itself from its original purpose of symbolizing sin and mortality and begins to contemplate objects for their own sake.[5] Literary sentimentalism attaches powerful feelings to

4. Recent cultural scholarship, some of it cited below, has taken a considerable interest in the ordinary. Of particular relevance here is Maynard Solomon's argument that the ordinariness of the waltz by Anton Diabelli on which Beethoven based his magisterial set of Variations, op.121, is a complex quality that Beethoven presents with respect rather than with disdain, as tradition has it. Solomon, however, though his sources are historical, treats the ordinary per se as a universal. See Maynard Solomon, "Beethoven's 'Diabelli' Variations: The End of a Beginning," *Beethoven Forum* 7 (1999), 139–53. Also pertinent is Stanley Cavell's analysis of idealist philosophy's rejection of the ordinary and of subsequent attempts—from Emerson to Wittgenstein—to retrieve it. See Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1994). Part of the thesis of this book is that the ordinary includes the skepticism commonly taken to alienate it. Part of my thesis in this essay might be construed as a complement of this: that the ordinary has historically been vulnerable, not only to too much skepticism, but also to too little. Similarly, Charles Taylor in his *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1989), pp.211–47, traces a modernizing shift in the ethical center of life from the arenas of contemplation and citizenship to the "ordinary" sphere of "production and reproduction" (that is, work and family). This shift is part of the context for the trend I sample in this paper, which forms part of the history of subjectivity; I would not want to assign any of the terms involved priority over the others.

5. Jonathan Lamb, "Modern Metamorphoses and Disgraceful Tales," *Critical Inquiry* 28 (2001), 133–66, at 139–42.

trivial objects; the hero of Goethe's landmark novel of 1774, *The Sufferings of Young Werther,* notoriously meets the woman who inspires his transcendental passion as she slices a loaf of bread. An entire literary genre of "autobiographies" as told by objects or pets—coins, dogs, coaches, and hairpins—flares into popularity.[6]

These trends develop amid a consumer revolution already in full swing, a "buying spree," as Michael Kwass puts it, "of historic dimensions . . . that fundamentally changed the relationship between people and things."[7] New modes of manufacture mass-produce objects that seem to transcend themselves, the precursors of Marx's commodity fetishes and the dream-laden goods in Walter Benjamin's Paris arcades. In this context Novalis can celebrate Goethe as "a practical poet through and through . . . [who] did for German literature what Wedgwood did for English art."[8] At the turn of the nineteenth century, as Benjamin famously observed, the invention of lithography "enabled graphic art to illustrate everyday life" on a daily basis, a role that would eventually be taken over by photography.[9] More than mere illustration, this new proximity of art to the everyday was a redefinition and a transvaluation: it established the ordinary as something to be remarked rather than taken for granted, something to be preserved, resignified, commemorated.

The effects of this development on the culture of modernity would be hard to overstate. One of the consequences of the European Enlightenment, something insufficiently recognized, perhaps, because it is so familiar, is the eternal question of the value of the ordinary. It almost seems as if ordinary life were something the Enlightenment had invented.

In what sense could this be true? One famous consequence of the Enlightenment was what Max Weber called "the disenchantment of the world." By elevating the status of human reason and attacking the credibility of "superstition," Enlightenment thinking promoted not only a new way of understanding the world but also a new way of experiencing it. A daily life that was once touched everywhere by magical, numinous, divine, and demonic forces, by ghosts and spirits and omens, was now denuded of all these and left to its own devices. So at least it seemed

6. On some of the consequences of sentimentalism for subjectivity, especially musical subjectivity, see my "'Little Pearl Teardrops': Schubert, Schumann, and the Tremulous Body of Romantic Song," in *Music, Sensation, and Sensuality,* ed. Linda Austern (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 57–74. On the autobiographies of objects, see Lamb, "Modern Metamorphoses," pp. 147–66.

7. Michael Kwass, "Ordering the World of Goods: Consumer Revolution and the Classification of Objects in Eighteenth-Century France," *Representations* 82 (2003), 87–116, at 87.

8. From "On Goethe," in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: The Romantic Ironists and Goethe,* ed. Kathleen Wheeler (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984), p. 105.

9. From "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations,* trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 219.

in retrospect. In 1819 John Keats wrote of his keen regret at having been born "too, too late for the fond believing lyre, / When holy were the haunted forest boughs, / Holy the air, the water, and the fire." Friedrich Hölderlin felt the same way; "But friend," he wrote, "we come too late. The gods indeed still live, / But over our heads, up there in another world."[10] The present world, for many people, had become inert, inanimate; banality was born.

But it is not so easy to disenchant the world. The very concept of a world seems to carry a connotation of mystery in totality that cannot be suppressed for long. As both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty suggested in their different ways, the experience of inhabiting a world, "the" world, is preconceptual.[11] No subject can contain the world within reason; its totality is lived rather than grasped. So, virtually as soon as the old forms of enchantment were stripped away, new ones arose to take their place. The glamour that began to attach to everyday things in the eighteenth century was a start; the nineteenth century would add the full-blown romance of commodities, the marvels of technology, and the transformation of sexuality into both an ideal and a pathology. A step higher on the cultural ladder were the so-called fine arts. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the arts were enjoying unparalleled prestige, partly on the basis of the recent conceptualization of them as the objects of a unique type of pleasurable contemplation. It's well known that instrumental music seemed especially right for this role. One element in its cultural ascendancy may have been its assimilation to the model of the self-transcending object; the play of spirit once localized in the voice now took up residence in voiceless artifacts of sound.[12] Here is another famous consequence of the Enlightenment: the discovery of the aesthetic—the cultivated reenchantment of the world.

As Romantic writers were quick to point out, though, the revival of enchant-

10. Keats's "Ode to Psyche" (1819), ll. 37–39, from John Keats, *Selected Poems and Letters,* ed. Douglas Bush (Boston: Riverside, n.d.), p. 204; Hölderlin, "Brot und Wein" [Bread and Wine], vii. 1–2 (my trans.), from Friedrich Hölderlin, Eduard Mörike, *Selected Poems,* ed. and trans. Christopher Middleton (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1972), p. 43. On the trope of the returning gods in these and other Romantic texts, see my "The Return of the Gods: Keats to Rilke," *Studies in Romanticism* 17 (1978), 483–500.

11. See "The Origins of the Work of Art," in Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought,* trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper, 1975), pp. 44–55; and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "What Is Phenomenology," in *Phenomenology of Perception,* trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. vii-xxi.

12. This change in aesthetic status also goes together with changes in the profession of music; on this process, see David Gramit, *Cultivating Music: The Aspirations, Interests, and Limits of German Musical Culture, 1770–1848* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U California P, 2002). The present essay on the "Ghost Trio" seeks to examine the ways in which a particular work (or "work") of music could reflect, reflect on, and contribute to these broader transformations.

ment had a dark side. August Schlegel made this point in his Vienna lecture on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. He begins as the play does, with the abrupt introduction of the witches. And he interprets these extraordinary creatures against the horizon of 1808: "No superstition can be widely diffused without having a foundation in human nature: on this the poet builds; he calls up from their hidden abysses that dread of the unknown, that presage of a dark side of nature, and a world of spirits, which philosophy now imagines it has altogether exploded."[13] For Schlegel, the endurance of Shakespeare is a foolproof argument against the excesses of Enlightenment. And not just for Schlegel: this line of thinking is far from exhausted. Here is the anthropologist Michael Taussig, writing in 2001: "So we find ourselves back with spells and magic. . . making amends for the world that we have lost. . . . [A]ll these images and stories lie like ghosts in our modern world. There they sit in libraries and more often than you think in living speech. Here they are today with us heavy . . . with truth, waiting to be metamorphosized so as to energize our speech. And for this we are grateful . . . because poetry is what after the death of God. . . can invoke the spirits of the dead."[14]

Like Taussig, Schlegel is grateful for the abysses of reason. His Shakespeare is a kind of Faust, the artist-magician who calls up spirits from those abysses, and who therefore reinstates as experience the world of spirit that reason has repudiated as truth. But there is danger in this calling. The abyss may make amends for the world we have lost, but it is no haven—anything but. Those who experience its extraordinary powers may never find their way back to the ordinary. They may become mad, tormented, alienated, or simply apathetic, unable to connect with ordinary life. As long as art was simply concerned with the beautiful—the original, primary object of aesthetics—the ordinary would be both enhanced and protected. Although it seems natural now to think of beauty as something exceptional, beauty as the object of aesthetics was originally a defense of the ordinary. For Kant, whose account has been more influential than any other, that is the whole point of beauty: it is the means of reconciling our immersion in the physical world with the freedom of thought. But when art concerns itself with awe, terror, and the unknown, the effects of the abyss that the eighteenth century designated as sublime, all bets are off. The vertigo that can result is illustrated in just the right place by the anecdote of an early French listener to the most sublime musical work of 1808. "When I tried to put on my hat," wrote Jean-François Lesueur after listening to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, "I could not find my head!"

13. August Schlegel, *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature,* trans. John Blacking (1811), rpt. in *Four Centuries of Shakespeare Criticism,* ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Avon, 1965), p.494.

14. Michael Taussig, "'Dying is an Art, Like Everything Else'," *Critical Inquiry* 28 (2001), 316.

The danger of the sublime is a recurrent theme in the fantastic tales of E. T. A. Hoffmann, who in 1810 and 1813, respectively, would also publish seminal reviews of the Fifth Symphony and the op.70 Trios. In 1808 Hoffmann was working as the director of a provincial theater in Germany, staging Shakespeare and composing incidental music and ballets for the theater's productions. In 1818 and 1819 he wrote "The Mines of Falun," a tale that can stand with the "Ghost" Trio as a study of how the ordinary can be lost. The tale is based on a popular true story that was also fictionalized by Johann Peter Hebel and almost became the basis of a Romantic opera by Wagner.

In Hoffmann's version, a melancholy young man, Elis Fröbom, meets a mysterious stranger who urges him to seek his fortune as a miner in the town of Falun. That night, Elis has a dream of the world underground. Several of its key features, sexual desire and music among them, reprise ambivalent moments from Elis's recent past in uncanny form. Both sounds and images literally belong to an abyss:

> There arose . . . strange flowers and plants of flashing metal whose blossoms and leaves climbed upwards from the profoundest depths. . . . [A]t the very bottom countless lovely maidens [were] embracing one another with white shining arms; it was from their hearts that the roots, the flowers, and the plants shot up; and whenever the maidens smiled, a sweet, melodious sound echoed through the vault. . . . An indescribable feeling of pain and pleasure seized the youth, a world of love, yearning, and passionate desire rose up in his soul. . . . As the youth then looked down again . . . he felt his being dissolve into the shining rock. He screamed out in unspeakable terror and awoke from the dream, its joy and horror still echoing deep within his soul.[15]

Elis's dream systematically destroys the ordinary to the sound of enchanting music. Opposites fuse together in strange shapes that also fuse opposite feelings: flowers become metallic, the music echoes a silent smile, the maidens who arouse Elis's longing only long for each other, and Elis's living being dissolves into solid rock. What the story goes on to show is that there can be no real awakening from this dream; its sublime joy and horror never do stop echoing. When Elis arrives at Falun he has every possible success and becomes engaged to the mine-owner's

15. *Tales of Hoffmann,* trans. R. J. Hollindale, with the assistance of Stella and Vernon Humphries, and Sally Hayward (London: Penguin, 1982), pp.317–19. The reprise of earlier events, complete with ambivalence, is characteristic of a cultural trope of the Romantic era for which I've proposed the term "expressive doubling"; see my *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800–1900* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U California P, 1990), pp.21–71. For another reading of the depths in both the quoted passage and the story as a whole, with related commentary on Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, see Holly Watkins, "From the Mine to the Shrine: The Critical Origins of Musical Depth," 19CM 27 (2004), 179–207.

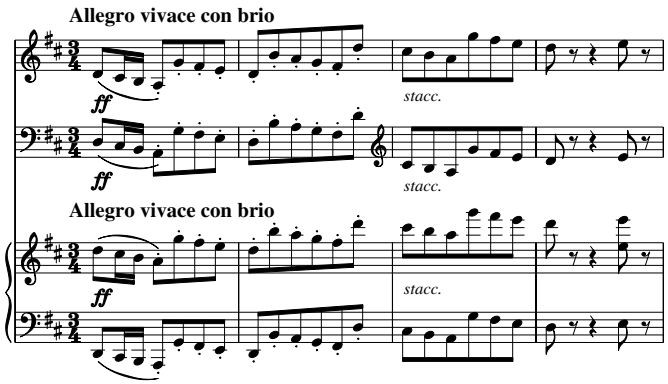
beautiful daughter. But on his wedding night he follows the call of his dream and disappears into the mines. He is simply incapable of living in the ordinary world, even at its best. Fifty years later, his petrified body is discovered; when his now-aged beloved passes by, she identifies the body and dies while embracing it in grief and rapture. The imagery of the dream thus comes true: Elis's organic desires are "fulfilled" in the form of metallic rock. From the standpoint of ordinary life, this is irony piled upon tragedy. But from the standpoint of the extraordinary, it is a true fulfillment, as the Wagnerian "love-death" of the aged woman testifies.

I like to imagine that the music of Elis's dream sounds something like the Largo of Beethoven's "Ghost" Trio. The two, at least, share the same "structure of feeling"; they inhabit a common world of images, inflections, ways of meaning, habits of thought. What would the trio sound like if we heard it with that world in mind? What would we hear as the effect of passing through a sublime, tortuous, uncanny slow movement between two "unproblematic and relaxed" companions?

This way of putting the question begins to highlight a factor I left unspoken earlier. The two outer movements of the trio are not unproblematic and relaxed in the same way. The opening Allegro vivace con brio is just what its redundant tempo marking announces: a doubling of liveliness by vigor, a raising of the ordinary to a higher power—liveliness squared. But the Presto finale, though it runs even faster, has less to do. Apparently by design, it risks being ordinary in the sense of banal, a perfunctory conclusion to a remarkable journey. Taken by itself, the movement is a charming combination of ebullience and delicacy, with touches of whimsy. But like the famous second finale to the String Quartet, op. 130, which replaced the *Grosse Fuge,* the "Ghost" finale risks sounding too lightweight for its place. Did Beethoven just fall down on the job here, or is there something else at stake?[16]

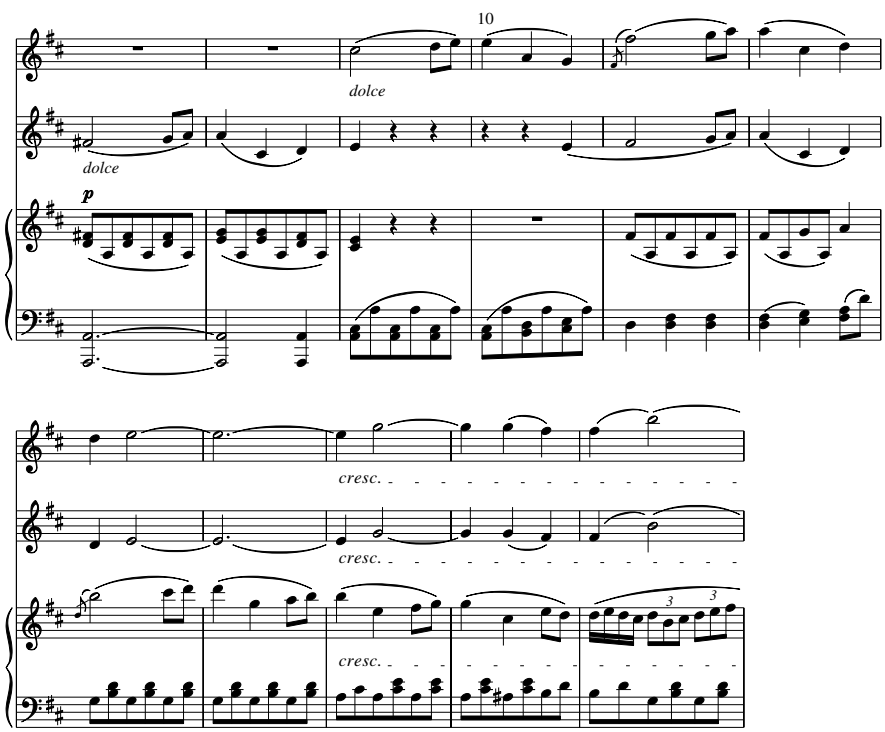
But we need to begin at the beginning. The "Ghost" Trio begins by establishing a complementarity between energy and lyricism. First there's a vigorous flourish (ex. 1); then the music relaxes into something warm and singing (ex. 2). There are no

16. The critical tradition tends to register this disparity between the movements by sidestepping the finale or damning it with faint praise. Nigel Fortune's comment in *The Beethoven Reader,* ed. Fortune, with Denis Arnold (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1971), pp. 222–23, is representative: "The first two of the three movements" (described in some detail) "are astonishing" while the third (described not at all) "is less arresting." In the Beethoven volume of the old *Modern Masters* series (London: Dent, 1934), p. 247, Marion Scott dwells on the Largo, praises the "bright, tremendously decisive opening allegro with themes so noble in their sweep that even to look at them enlarges the heart," but of the finale says only that it "restore[s] the normal world after the supernatural experience of the largo." Indeed it does: which leaves us to pose the questions of what this restoration entails, and in what historical "lifeworld."



Example 1: Beethoven, "Ghost" Trio, movt. I: opening octaves.

expressive surprises here. This trio, in short, begins by doing something altogether ordinary. But it does so reflectively, so that the listener is invited not just to hear the content of its ordinary expressive gestures, but to hear their ordinariness itself as part of what is being expressed. Both the energy and the lyricism belong to the "first subject" of the sonata exposition rather than being divided between the first subject and the second, the tonic and the dominant. The qualities meet in a lyric juxtaposition, not a dramatic opposition. Their alliance continues in the second



Example 2: First movement: lyrical continuation of opening octaves.

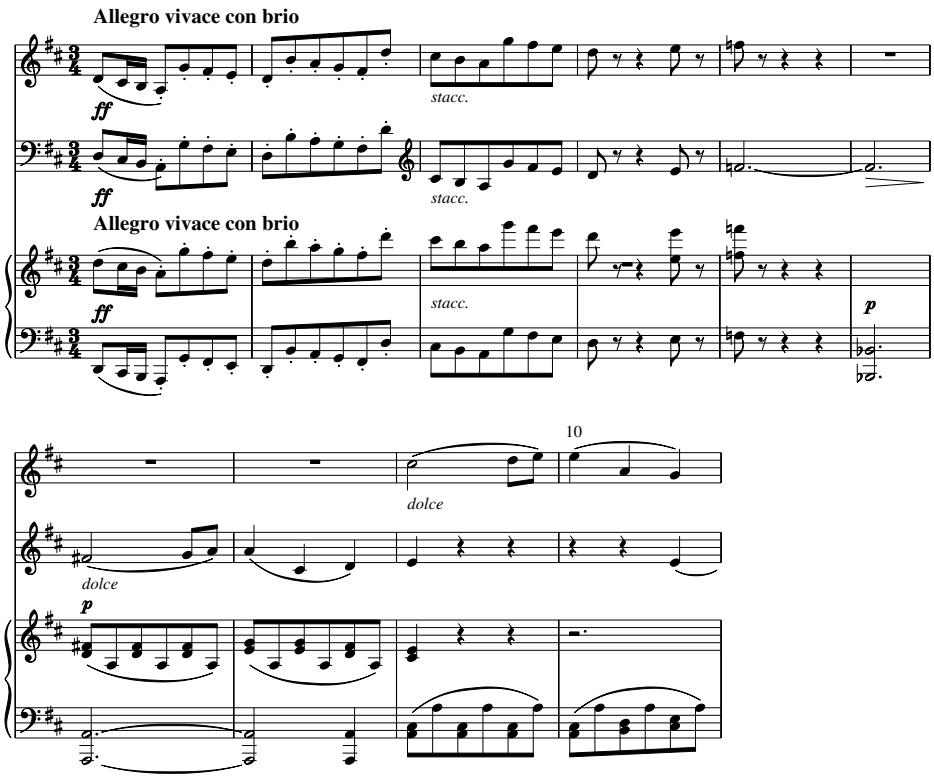
subject, a placid theme enveloped by vigorous "walking" eighth notes, heard twice as the piano and strings trade roles. The potential for conflict, and with it the lure or danger of the sublime, is unceremoniously brushed aside; the whole exposition, the whole movement, concentrates on the pleasures of combining energy and lyricism in the absence of antagonism, excess, or disruption. The partnership of the qualities makes apparent the value of the stable, ordinary world that is its condition of possibility. More than that, this partnership and its pleasures make it possible to interpret the value of the ordinary in historically resonant ways.

The kernel of this possibility is a small detail unmentioned so far and omitted from the quoted examples. This is a detail that, once heard, changes everything.

The opening flourish of the trio is a rough outburst in bare octaves with the strings sandwiched between the right- and left-hand piano parts. The singing melody that follows is the product of a smooth running dialogue. Three pairs of voices exchange and vary a single phrase over an oscillating accompaniment: cello and violin (mm. 7–8, 9–10), mixed strings and right-hand piano (mm. 11–12, 13–17), and again cello and violin (mm. 21–22, 23–26). On the second exchange, the piano extends the phrase in counterpoint with the strings; on the third, the violin extends the phrase while the oscillations of the accompaniment double their earlier speed over a pulsating bass. Where the opening flourish is concentrated, the melody is expansive. What links these complementary figures and enlarges their meaning is the cello's decision not to stop playing when the opening flourish is done. As if on a sudden whim or inspiration, the cello holds onto a high note that sounds alone, quite beautifully, for a full measure; continues over a soft, sustained octave in the bass of the piano; and finally raises itself by a semitone to become the headnote of the lyrical melody (ex. 3).

Heard in relation to the cello's singing note, the opening flourish becomes an outburst of sheer potential energy waiting to be shaped into melody, harmony, and rhythm. The sustained note turns the flourish into a generative force or a preformation, something from which something else, something higher, will come. When it arrives, just a moment later, this new formation follows a basic scheme of Romantic thought. It comes as a result of the intervention of mind or spirit on the matter at hand; the lyrical blossoming is the product of reflective awareness. The music conveys this understanding by its dialogical treatment of the lyrical melody, in contrast to the monolithic flourish; the dialogue form implies the idea of voice, which in turn implies the idea of person, personality, subjectivity. The first few moments of the "Ghost" Trio thus pass from the impersonal force of nature to its elaboration in the sphere of human enterprise: all in a few seconds, with a mere handful of notes.

I would like to call the result, which occupies the whole rest of the movement, the ordinary at its best. This is not just an agreeable combination of energy and



Example 3: First movement: octaves and continuation with cello's singing note.

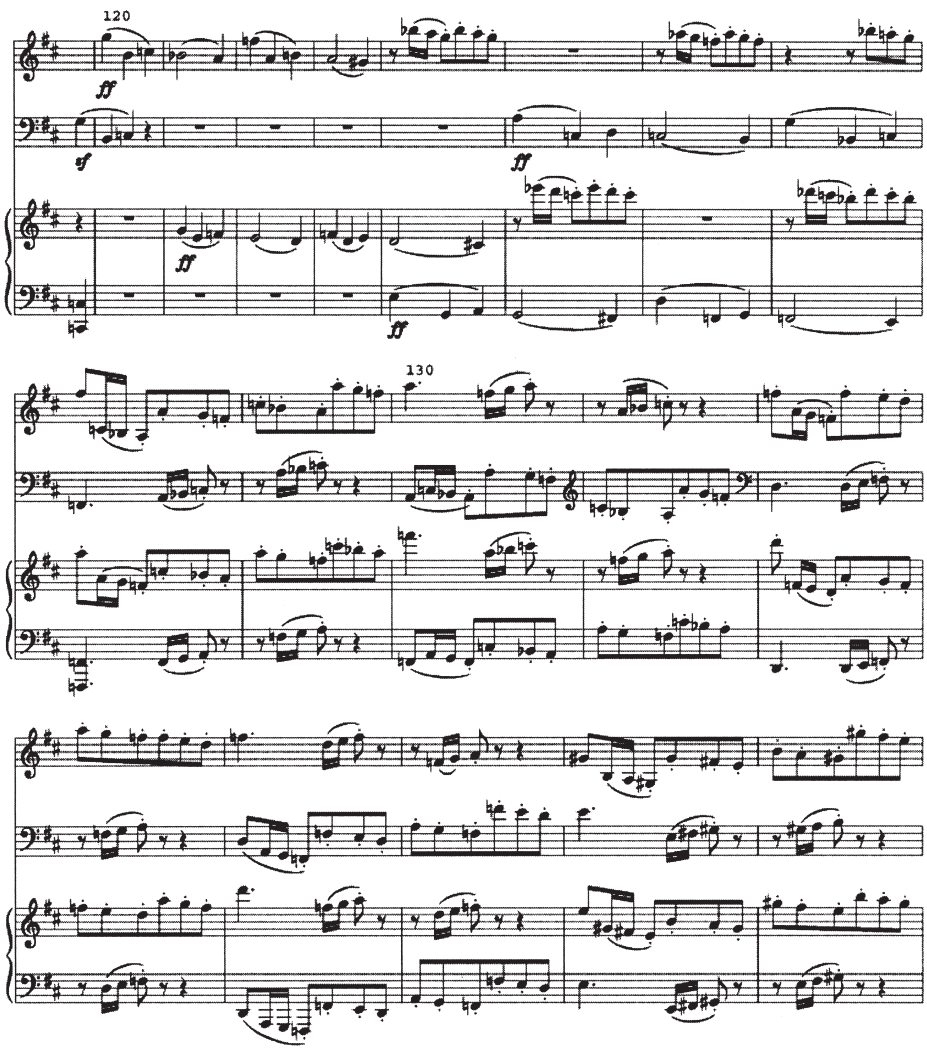
lyricism but a projection of their interrelationship as a vital, productive force. As the cello, violin, and piano all take turns stating the theme and making it their own, they establish energy and lyricism as the creative poles between which the ordinary unfolds as the sphere of what is viable and what is feasible. This is the ordinary as the very opposite of the banal: as, rather, the helpfully at-hand, the valuably familiar, something with significant potential for growth, variation, and proliferation. The movement inhabits this ordinariness with pleasure and meaning. It contains no high drama, no heaven-storming gestures, no Fifth Symphony stuff. What it offers instead is plenteous variety and adventure. Its ordinariness can rival the sublime without needing or wanting to become sublime.

The formal layout of the movement is designed to show off these qualities. The development is expansive, the recapitulation is full of telling changes, and the whole sequence of development and recapitulation is marked for repetition: abundance rules. The development sets the agenda, turning the exposition's preference for mercurial juxtaposition over dramatic antagonism into a generative principle. With the cello again in the lead, it begins by quietly transforming the opening flourish into a lyrical gesture from which others proliferate. It culminates in an exuberant contrapuntal episode combining rugged and ardent phrases in an intricate,

rapidly changing, yet transparent texture: an acoustic kaleidoscope. And it ends by transforming the fadeout of this episode into the act of recollection and self-renewal—an energetic outburst in octaves—that will become the recapitulation.

The contrapuntal wheel starts turning as the cello strikes up again to begin an impassioned two-part canon lit up by interjections from a brisk little figure like a curlicue (mm. 119–27, ex. 4). The curlicue figure has a familiar ring: it is essentially m. 1 of the opening flourish minus its downbeat, first introduced as a counterpoint to the cello's earlier lyrical transformation. This figure soon takes charge with more two-part counterpoint between contracted and expanded versions of itself (mm. 128 et seq., ex. 4), one part sounding in flashes (a snappy slide), the other in

Example 4: First movement: climax of development (the kaleidoscope).

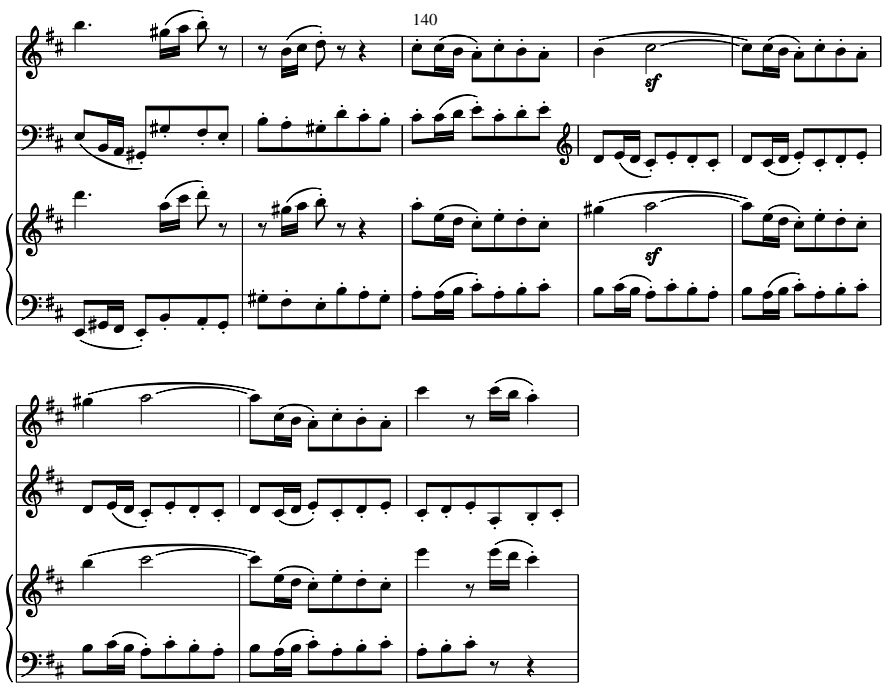


continuous motion (streams of walking eighth notes set loose by the slide). As the two alter egos pass mercurially from instrument to instrument, register to register, they produce a combination of simplicity in gesture and complexity in texture that transforms the "learned" style of canonic imitation into a material, even a bodily vibrancy, the overflow of the abundant everyday.

Meanwhile the lyric impulse withdraws into long notes that now and again preface the slide. These turn out to foreshadow a pair of singing two-note phrases, rhythmically out of synch, that emerge at the climax of the episode in lyric sixths and thirds between the violin and the piano's upper voice (ex. 5). The phrases transform what seems like a running unison on the curlicue figure, now with its downbeat restored, into yet more two-part counterpoint—and a breathless alternation of energy and lyricism that momentarily vaporizes the difference between them.

The counterpoint breaks up after this, fading and thinning until the texture suddenly shifts to the resurgent octaves, a voicing that recalls the opening flourish. And sure enough, after a rather grand statement of the dominant in the rhythm of the curlicue figure, probably tongue-in-cheek, the flourish returns to begin the recapitulation and renew its umbilical tie to the lyrical melody. Everywhere one turns an ear, the dynamism of energy and lyricism makes the ordinary come alive.

The movement concludes in the same spirit, suggesting the irrepressibility of



Example 5: First movement: singing two-note phrases in kaleidoscope passage.

this dynamism by ending with the beginning. The coda reverses the first few moments of the piece. It begins with the lyrical melody, which now passes from piano to strings, the first time as the violin simply answers the piano's statement of the core two-measure phrase, the second time as the violin and cello together give the phrase a broad, singing expansion after the piano has done so twice. The piece closes, not by relinquishing the pleasure offered by these materials, but by finding new ways to relish them the more. Thereafter all the instruments combine for a final exuberant statement of the first measure of the opening flourish. Set off by pregnant pauses, this gesture interrupts what sounds like the buildup to the final cadence, which it defers with its own statement of pure potentiality. The message is loud and clear: more to come.

But more does not come. It seems fair to say that the dynamism of the first movement is exactly what is lacking in the third. The finale shows us what the ordinary is like after the extraordinary excursion of the Largo. This is an ordinary that is chastened, perhaps even timid: the ordinary as a refuge from the sublime. Here there is plenty of vitality but little variety or adventure. Most of the melodic material is cut—ingeniously—from the same cloth, and there are few departures from its rigid patterns; the movement is notably repetitive, both locally and sectionally. The formal layout virtually retracts that of the first movement. The development is modest in both scale and ambition; it consists of three heavily reiterative passages that trace a retrograde path through the melodies of the exposition. The impulse is to return to the point of origin by the shortest route. Unlike its first-movement counterpart, this development could not bear repeating, being itself little more than a mode of repetition. The same spirit carries over into the recapitulation, which is largely unvaried. Only the coda strikes out in a new direction, as if it had belatedly realized that one was needed.

Between the first movement and this finale, then, a change overtakes the character of the ordinary. What change, exactly? One answer may be culled from a comparison between Novalis's thesis that the ordinary is really out of the ordinary and a later version of the same idea. Perhaps with Novalis at the back of his mind, Martin Heidegger writes that "we believe we are at home in the immediate circle of beings. That which is, is familiar, reliable, ordinary. . . . [Yet] at bottom, the ordinary is not ordinary; it is extra-ordinary, uncanny." The reason we cannot be truly at home in the unhomely, that is, uncanny, *unheimlich,* circle of the ordinary is that familiar things withhold themselves from us "in the double form of refusal and dissembling."[17] We have to win our way to the truth of the ordinary through

17. Martin Heidegger, "The Origins of the Work of Art," p. 54.

and against this withholding. Novalis would not agree. Not sharing Heidegger's ideological burden of a demand for authenticity, Novalis treats the ordinary as a sheer coming out of itself, a gift of itself in return for our energy and effort. The ordinary, he says, is indispensable; higher things become incomprehensible to us only when we lose touch with it.[18]

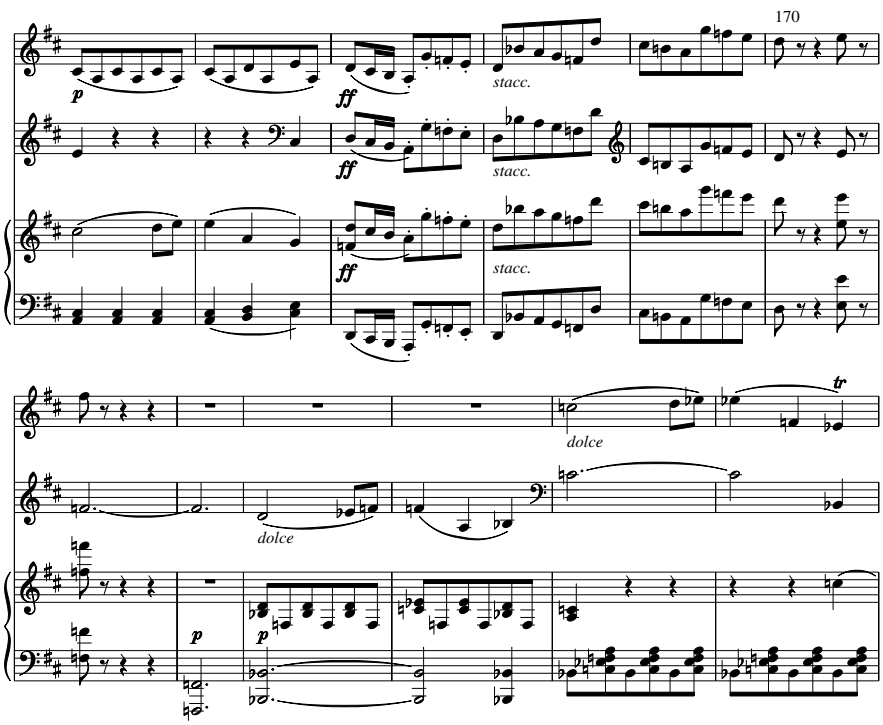
The first movement of the "Ghost" Trio would seem to prove Novalis's point against Heidegger's. In its melodic fertility and contrapuntal vitality, the music gives of itself without reserve. Notable as to melody are the three instrumental dialogues of the first subject, which pass their turns of phrase from one voice to another not just to form symmetrical periods or support a sense of ensemble but to engage in a constantly expanding process of growth and change. More is involved in this description than a texture of unsurprising organicism. The dialogues move steadily from concentration to expansion: the first terse against the breadth of the second two, and each of the latter built internally around a terse statement and broader response. This juxtaposition, echoed elsewhere, highlighted by its double recapitulation, and reenacted in the coda, conveys the extrovert attitude in the form of an impulse. As to counterpoint, the rich transparency of the development section's canonic episodes and climactic "kaleidoscope" suggests the very reverse of dissembling. So does the music's eagerness to turn the wheel twice, marked by a first ending for the recapitulation that will, it seems, do whatever it takes to keep things going: in this case turn abruptly to V^{6}_{5}/V from a unison D, rumpling the bass in the process as D skips a tritone to $G^{\sharp}_{\sharp}$. The net effect is to realize the ordinary as an energetic combination of the music's own forthcomingness and transparency.

Like so much else in the movement, this realization depends on an ordinary little thing of heightened value: the cello's singing note, another feature that is, of course, recapitulated twice. Repeating just this an extra time may in a sense be the main reason for the double recapitulation. The note's generative power, or rather the power of mind embodied by it, cannot be exhausted by just one recapitulation, or so we might be invited to imagine. As we'll see in a moment, the note returns more than once in *each* of its recapitulations. Part of the reason why it can be asked to carry so much hermeneutic weight, aside from the methodologically important principle that simple details often do, is that in doing so it embodies the very process of revaluing the ordinary that it sets in motion.

18. His actual wording is a bit tortuous: "The highest is the most comprehensible—the nearest the most indispensable. Only if we have no acquaintance with ourselves, if we have lost the custom and habit of ourselves, something beyond comprehension will emerge which is itself incomprehensible." (Novalis, *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism,* p.85).

The cello, as my earlier wording suggested, does not just happen to start singing with this note; it decides to sing. In so doing, it also decides a great deal more. The note is an F♮, the mark of the minor mode of D and thus a note potentially laden with pathos, drama, conflict, and turmoil. But the cello simply savors the F and resolves it to F♯, the mark of the major mode and the note that begins the lyrical phrase, marked "dolce," that establishes the alliance of energy and lyricism within the first subject. The music has the chance to venture out toward the sublime; instead it chooses the pleasures of ordinary life.

Its choice has a long echo. The recapitulation confirms it on a broader canvas by breaking off the lyrical dialogue spun out from the cello's F–F♯ resolution in favor of a D-minor restatement of the opening flourish. The possibility left unrealized before now seems to bestir itself, and to stir itself up. But the cello restores the lyrical balance immediately (ex.6). Unruffled by the darker feeling offered to its F♮, to which it again returns, the cello moves from F to D rather than to F♯ while the key changes to B♭ major. Still in charge, the instrument then begins a new lyrical dialogue, an extended passage in which the F♮ is as serene as the F♯ had been earlier. The cello is imperturbable, the lyric voice of an urbane charm that turns the sublime away with exquisite courtesy, here gently suggesting to D minor that its own sixth degree is a better place than its first on which to dwell.



Example 6: First movement: recapitulation of cello's singing note after D-minor octaves.

Such urbanity is foreign to the finale, the spirit of which is contrary to the first movement's even if its mood is superficially similar. The finale's ordinariness is Heideggerian. The movement upholds the thesis that headlong high spirits can exert themselves without loss within narrow boundaries. But the more exuberant the music becomes, the more it turns its own exuberance into a signifier of restraint, a form of subtle dissembling. And most of the dialogical passages—there are a lot of them—consist in literal or near-literal repetition; they refuse the dynamism of their counterparts in the first movement. Even the principal means of melodic articulation, the abrupt curtailment of running passagework, is a form of withholding.

Standard modes of description and judgment cannot do justice to this situation. The point is not that there is something "wrong" with the finale—hardly a burning question—but that the finale is symptomatic of something. The movement follows a cultural mandate, a narrative mandate, that, as in Hoffmann's story, manifests itself as a psychological truth. Part of the same mandate is to prefer psychological truth over a conventional artistic formula. Hoffmann does so by ending with an apparently supplemental narrative that actually contains the story's most important event. Beethoven follows suit, only more so: he tells the truth of banality. This is where you go, he says, this is how it sounds, when you have lost the ordinary and have to find it again and cling to it for dear life. This is what it sounds like when you have to take what you can get. The first movement inhabits a culture of feeling in which the ordinary can be remarkable; that's why a reading of it as an exaltation of the ordinary is consistent with its musically remarkable features. The finale has become estranged from that culture, and shows it.

But what has intervened, then? What is there about the Largo that casts such a pall over the ordinary?

Slow movements in the Classical era aspire to the beautiful far more often than to the sublime, especially in chamber music. The exceptions tend to be either laments or hymns.[19] The "Ghost" Largo is neither. It seems to have no topical character at

19. Examples of the sublime lament include the second of two consecutive Adagios in Mozart's String Quintet in G Minor, K. 516, and the Adagio of Haydn's String Quartet in C, op. 54, no. 2, both of them brief open-ended movements that dissolve into sequels, as if to deny their expressive excess the authority of a closed, extended form. An example from the younger Beethoven, the Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato of the String Quartet in F, op. 18, no. 1, tacitly modeled on the tomb scene of *Romeo and Juliet,* is a full-length independent movement, but the even longer Adagio molto e mesto of the first "Razumovsky" Quartet, op. 59, no. 1 (briefly discussed below) is not. Sublime hymns, meaning quasi-devotional meditations, include the Largo assai of Haydn's "Rider" Quartet in G Minor, op. 74, no. 3 (adapted for use in a memorial cantata after the composer's death) and the Lento, cantabile e mesto of his Quartet in D Major, op. 76, no. 5.

all. It cannot even be said to be deeply felt in the sense of inviting the sympathetic absorption widely regarded at the time as the effect of the beautiful. It breaks with the aesthetic of the beautiful slow movement without explaining itself. So the first thing to say about this music is that its sublimity feels out of place, would probably feel out of place anywhere, for lack of a topical rationale. And that brings us back for a moment to Schlegel's comments on *Macbeth,* and also to a curious legend surrounding this Largo. The legend requires a short digression.

Beethoven's sketchbook for the "Pastoral" Symphony and the op.70 Trios contains a brief entry for a projected opera on *Macbeth;* the entry falls on the same page as some sketches for the "Ghost" Largo.[20] This conjunction has fueled speculation about a link between the Largo and *Macbeth* ever since the nineteenth century. In 2001 the National Symphony even gave the "world premiere" of a *Macbeth* Overture based on the sketches; it begins with the opening of the Largo.[21] But the facts don't quite fit the surmises. Although Beethoven began mulling over the *Macbeth* project in 1808, there is no musical relationship between the "Ghost" sketches and the *Macbeth* sketch plopped in their midst. Beethoven was probably just making handy use of available white space. So there is no specific connection between the "Ghost" Largo and *Macbeth,* let alone Schlegel's reading of *Macbeth,* any more than to Hoffmann's "The Mines of Falun." It can't be stressed too much that the Largo and these literary works do not resemble each other in any explicit way. What links them is their historical relationship to a particular way of inhabiting the world as the place of the ordinary. They meet via the partly shared body of mediations that constitutes an epistéme, the overlapping forms of rendering the lived present that constitute a structure of feeling, the repertoire of problem-solving techniques that compose a habitus.[22]

20. JTW, p.213.

21. September 20, 2001, conducted by Leonard Slatkin; the "reconstruction" is by Willem Holsbergen.

22. The terms "epistéme," "structure of feeling," and "habitus" are drawn, respectively, from Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things,* trans. unattrib. (New York: Pantheon, 1970); Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977); and Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Praxis,* trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977). Another location of *Macbeth* within these networks, brought to my attention by Stephen Hinton, is Ludwig Tieck's essay "Symphonien" of 1799, which finds the play itself too ordinary in comparison with an overture composed for it by J. F. Reichardt. Tieck accordingly proposes following rather than preceding the drama with the music, thus forming a curve of elevation rather than decline. See "Symphonien," in Heinrich von Wackenroder and Ludwig Tieck, *Phantasien über die Kunst* [Fantasies on Art] (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun. GmbH, 1983).

What is really pertinent to the "Ghost" Largo is Beethoven's remark in a different sketchbook that the *Macbeth* Overture should start right up with the witches ("fällt gleich in den Chor der Hexen ein"). For Beethoven, as for Schlegel, the most striking thing about *Macbeth* was apparently the *way* it breaks with ordinary: without compromise, without delay, without reason, the last perhaps above all. The opera, like the trio and the play, was supposed to perform that break in the act of representing it, to intrude it *just like that* where it simply should not be. Such a misplaced sublime seems to have felt especially intractable in 1808. It seems to have been regarded as dredged up arbitrarily from the dark realms mistaken by philosophy for exploded fictions and installed where it could confront the wayfaring subject with a frightening autonomy.

The "Ghost" Largo can be said to crown a tendency toward such autonomy that Beethoven had begun to follow with the three "Razumovsky" String Quartets, op. 59, in 1806. Each of the three has a sublime slow movement, and taken in sequence the movements suggest a progressive withdrawal from the topical identity that rationalizes the sublime. The first is a protracted lament, more interiorized and more relentless than its antecedents in Haydn and Mozart, a kind of private complement to the sublime expression of public mourning in the funeral march of the *Eroica* Symphony. The second instance is an extended, quasi-devotional contemplation with a climactic eruption of elevated dissonance, the prototype of the "Beethoven Adagio" that later generations would idealize. Part of the point of these movements is to question whether their topical identities can contain the expressive forces they unleash. The slow movement of the third quartet, however, seems to shuck off the familiar modes of lament and hymn to enter on more shadowy ground. It anticipates the "Ghost" Largo in a number of ways: a brooding-hypnotic use of the minor mode, reliance on unusual sonorities (here a prominent cello pizzicato), and baffling harmony (a movement in A minor with a climax in E♭ major, the remotest key possible).[23] What this movement retains from the sphere of the beautiful slow movement is a commitment to lyrical melody, which reaches its height at the movement's most alienated moment (the E♭ climax). The "Ghost" Largo crosses the threshold of the autonomous sublime by stripping away

23. For more detailed accounts of the slow movement of the third "Razumovsky" Quartet, see Kerman, *Quartets,* pp. 145–50; and my *Music and Poetry: The Nineteenth Century and After* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U California P, 1984), pp. 68–70. A somewhat earlier venture in the autonomous sublime occurs in the "Tempest" Sonata (Piano Sonata in D, op. 31, no. 2; 1802), where mysterious Largo recitatives intrude on the course of the agitated opening Allegro. For more on this topic, see my "Primitive Encounters: Beethoven's 'Tempest' Sonata, Musical Meaning, and Enlightenment Anthropology," *Beethoven Forum* 6 (1998), 31–66.

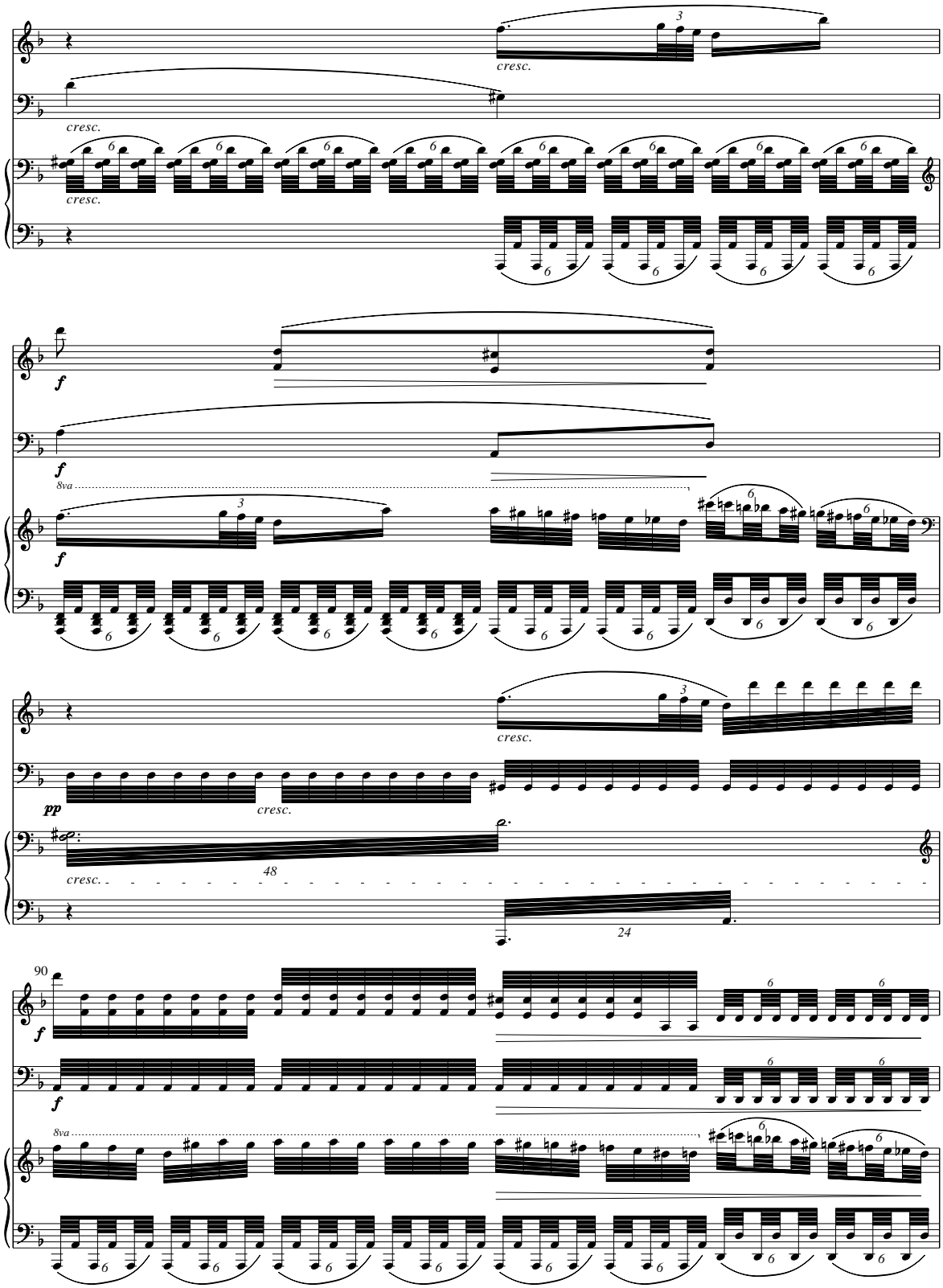
the lyricism of the earlier movement and replacing it with an alienating chill. A movement like the Largo cannot be rationalized, not even vestigially. No higher unity can assimilate it. It sticks in the craw of Enlightenment—and is meant to.

Perhaps the most immediately striking features of the Largo are its pervasive oscillating figures, especially tremolos, and its obsessive harping on a single little melodic phrase. In the context of the key, D minor, the melodic concentration produces a mood of intense, dissatisfied brooding; the tremolos suggest an abnormal vibration of the nerves, the shuddering or "thrilling" that the early nineteenth century regularly associated with sublime or uncanny states.

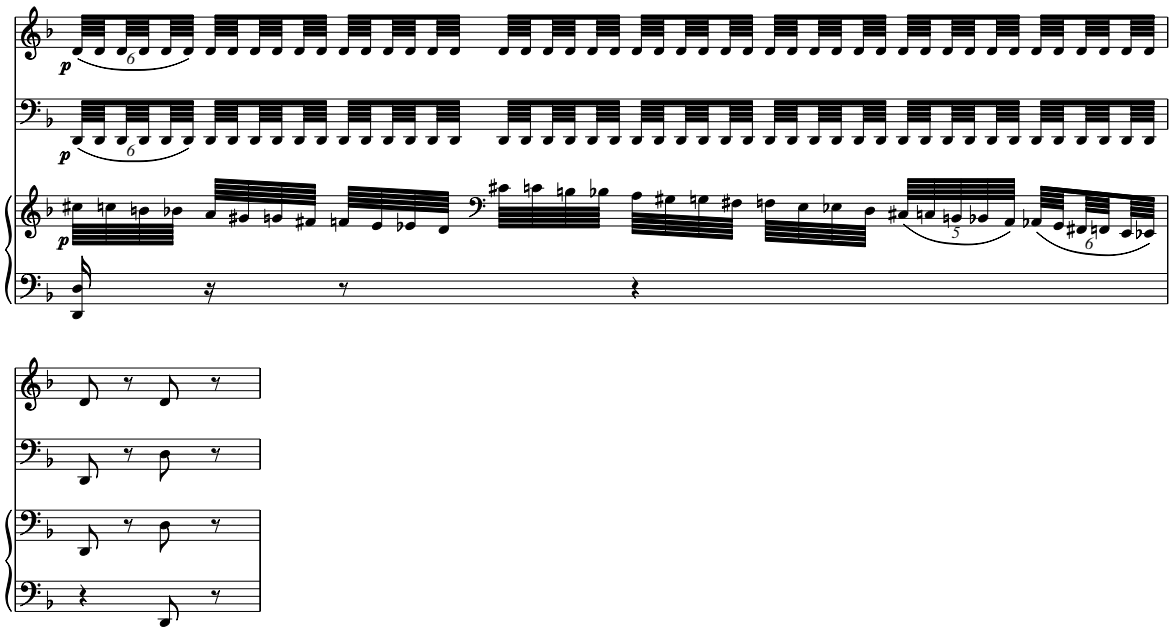
Between them, these two features act out a drama of ever-increasing mutual bafflement. The movement begins with a dialogue in which the piano answers a questioning figure on the strings with the little melodic phrase. For the rest of the movement, this phrase will belong almost exclusively to the strings, which often exchange it in a dialogue of their own; the piano devotes itself above all to the oscillations and tremolos, which the strings do not share. As the movement proceeds, the strings seem to be trying to sustain a feeling of individuality and articulation against the stammering of the piano. The little phrase is their sole meager resource for doing so; it forms their sole link to the ordinary. And in the long run the link snaps.

Just before the end, the movement rises to a terrifying climax when the tremolos come back after seemingly being laid to rest (ex. 7). The violin interjects the little phrase only to be answered by the piano, not the cello. The piano reclaims the phrase in the keyboard's highest octave and melts it away in a descending blur of semitones. (Something of the kind has been threatened during the development, the only other place the piano has the phrase outside the opening dialogue.) Then, in quick succession, the cello begins to pulsate and the violin tries and fails to rearticulate the little phrase one last time. With its failure both violin and cello are sucked into the all-pervasive stammering and tumble down to silence in a prolonged shudder. The passage is like the voracious dark side of the opening flourish in the first movement. That, and more: for the tremolos and collapse have been present in the first movement, too, and at a very vulnerable, very exposed place: the close of the exposition (ex. 8). The loss of the ordinary has not only come from the outside, but also, far more disturbingly, from a kernel of the sublime lodged within the ordinary itself. The problem is not just Napoléon's armies. It's the witches.

If that is what the music claims, though, we need not respond with the trope of celebrating its insight that is the aesthetic equivalent of credulity. It may be that the impression of an intrinsic sublime helps defend against the impact of an extrinsic sublime that is less glamorous and more destructive. Schlegel's dark side trumps Napoléon's; the fiction of a tragic necessity becomes a means of accommodating

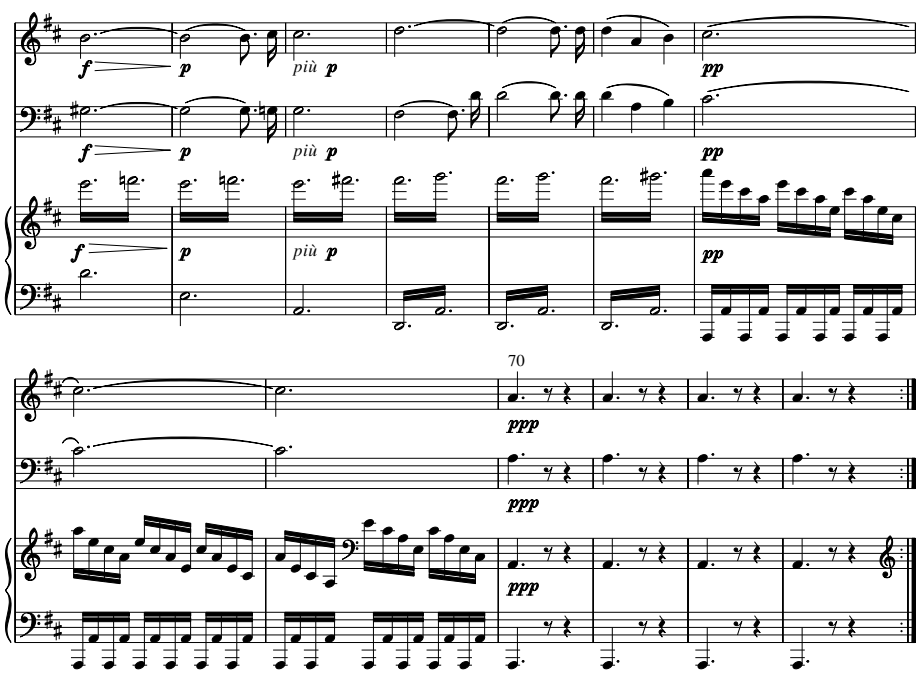


Example 7: Largo: climax on D-minor cadence of coda.



Example 7b

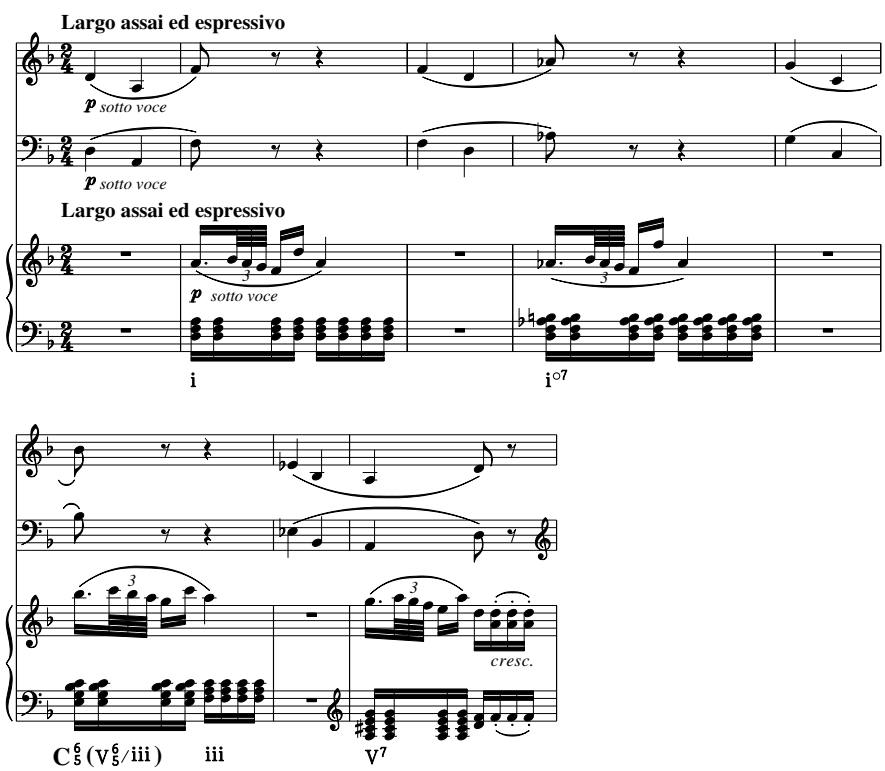
Example 8: First movement: close of exposition.



the fact of a terrible contingency. The insight that the sublime is immanent within the ordinary is thus—thus also—a gesture of idealization. It is perhaps no accident, after all, that the Fifth Symphony and the "Ghost" Trio inhabit the same year that is an interregnum between military and political disasters. If the Fifth Symphony can be thought of as fantasizing the triumph of, and over, an external militancy, the "Ghost" Trio, or its Largo, can be thought of as devising a second fantasy that envisions a means of surviving the death of the first.

Nor do we need to stop with a single recognition. Another one, deliberately esoteric and perhaps still more disturbing, is also invited by this movement. Throughout much of the Largo, the harmony feels wrong. Like the Largo itself, the harmony seems to come in the wrong place, at the wrong time; it is permeated with an uneasy sense that things are not as they should be. The feeling is already advanced in the opening dialogue, each phase of which takes a further step out of kilter (ex.9). The first exchange is tentative; the second lapses into vague dissonance; the third veers off in a new harmonic direction; the last stabilizes the situation, but only faintheartedly, and not for long. The insubstantial harmonies of this opening help feed the sense of alienation that it conveys, and that spills over from it to

Example 9: Largo: opening.



envelop the whole movement. The faltering dialogue has no remedy. The strings and piano will increasingly seem to be addressing each other across some vast gulf that nothing can bridge.

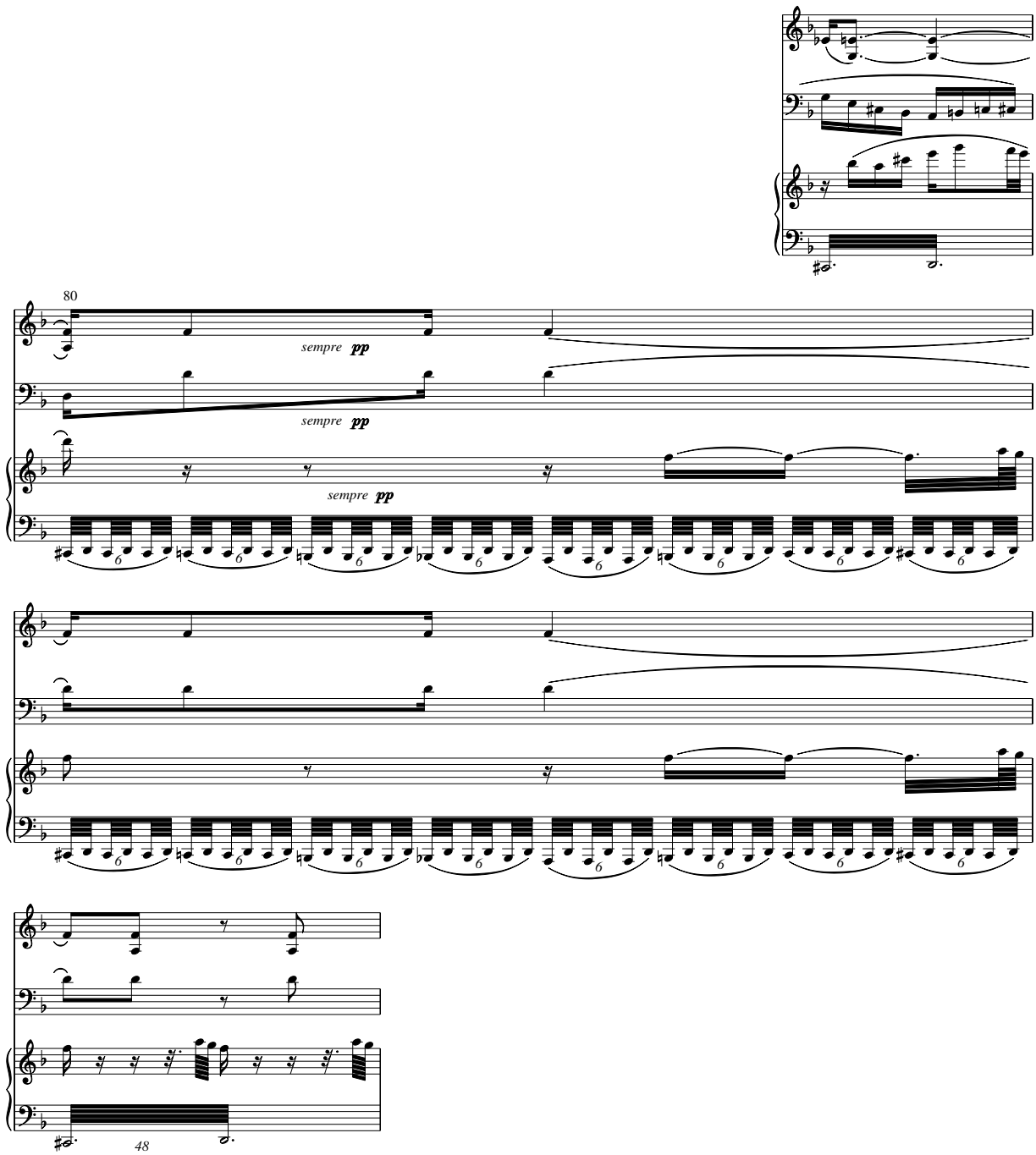
One name for that gulf is C major. Much of the first half of the movement is dominated by C major, a key adumbrated in the third exchange of the opening dialogue, and quite an extraordinary choice in relation to D minor.[24] The two keys form a puzzling intimacy with each other during the exposition. They are linked by a kind of mirror reversal as plagal movement from D to G becomes dominant-tonic movement from G to C. They share an exclusive concern with the same melodic material. And they behave in the same way, each establishing itself early as a point of reference but deferring a full-bodied cadence to the last minute—and beyond.[25] Despite their conventional remoteness from each other, these two keys cannot quite keep their identities from blending. C major comes to appear as an out-of-focus image of D minor, which it renders less gloomy but more enigmatic.

When D minor returns in the recapitulation its key-feeling remains out of focus, as if the C-major veil had been parted but not fully lifted. Odd streaks of C-major sonority (mm.67, 72)—nominally the dominant of the relative major, but none the less unsettling for that—twice blur the tonal outline following the completion of the first large D-minor arc (mm.47–63), here, as in the exposition, obscured by the insertion of a long descending streamer of oscillating notes between the dominant and tonic chords. The whole subsequent passage (mm.63–72) has a harmonic nebulousness lacking in the parallel passage of the exposition, against which its melodic insistence sounds more involuted and irrational than ever.

This passage debouches onto the long-deferred full cadences that should at last let D minor come clear—and instead only make the blurring worse. These cadences form a pair. In the first (mm.75–76), the piano's oscillations slur C♯ and D together in a long, slow trill deep in the bass, producing an ominous rumble in

24. The third exchange begins with $C^{\flat 6}_{5}$ (ex.9), a "remote" move but, with C as an applied dominant, an easily rationalized one. What the Largo will go on to show is the vulnerability, even the absurdity, of this rationalization and others like it. On the analytic issues involved, together with more on the cultural issues surrounding the harmony of the Largo, see my "Analysis Worldly and Unworldly," 87 (2004, 1–21) in MQ.

25. The first D-minor cadence occurs in the middle of m.8 with virtually no bass support; the tonic triad does not appear on the downbeat until m.10, where the articulation is not cadential. The decisive cadence must wait until m.18, and even there its articulation is slack; the wait for something genuinely decisive will be far longer. C major is established by V–I movement onto the downbeat at m.27, but the articulation is not cadential; the decisive cadence must wait until m.31, or even until the latter's reaffirmation at m.35.



Example 10: Largo: recapitulation, second D-minor cadence.

place of a clear keynote. In the second (mm.79–82, ex.10), the same rumble emits a descending chromatic bass line that reascends to merge with it again: a muffled, enigmatic, oracular utterance. Confirmation is replaced by mystification. And this, too, is an echo of C major: at the corresponding points in the exposition, C major has enveloped its own twin cadences with the same dissonant rumble of leading tone and keynote, the same enigmatic basso profundo utterance, only a little less ominous because of the difference in mode (mm.30–31, 34–37). Not until the coda does the texture clarify to reveal D minor whole—but the revelation coincides with the shuddering implosion of the strings.

This process of veiling and unveiling is reminiscent of an esoteric trope known to have interested Beethoven. He and his contemporaries found great symbolic value in the veil of Isis, the Egyptian goddess whose temple stood in the ancient city of Sais. For Beethoven, Novalis, Hoffmann and others, the veiled goddess represented (among other things) the continued possibility of numinous mystery in a too-Enlightened world. On his work desk, under glass, Beethoven kept the mystical verse supposedly inscribed above Isis's temple: "I am everything that is, that was, that will be. No mortal man has lifted my veil." Kant had called this very inscription the most sublime thing ever written; he also identified the veiled goddess with "the moral law in us, in its inviolable majesty."[26] In Novalis's fragmentary novel *The Apprentices of Sais,* the mystery of Isis holds out the hope of a regenerated world. In Hoffmann's review of Beethoven's op.70, the style of the "Ghost" Trio in particular is said to imply that "the deeper mysteries can never be spoken of in ordinary words. . . but only in expressions of sublime splendor. The dance of the High Priests of Isis can only be a hymn of exultation."[27] But as Beethoven knew well from *The Magic Flute,* the realm of Isis could also be dark and intimidating.

3. Presto

Within earshot of another contemporary trope, that realm could be heard—literally heard—as an indefinite liminal space between spirit and matter, what Fried-

26. On Beethoven, the inscription, and the veil, with further references, see Maynard Solomon, *Late Beethoven* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U California P, 2002), pp.67–70, 145–50. For Kant's remarks, see his *Critique of Judgment* (1790), trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), p.185, and "On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy" (1796), in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida,* ed. Peter Fenves (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1993), p.71.

27. Hoffmann, "Beethoven's Piano Trios, Op.70," AmZ 15, 3 March 1813; in *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings:* Kreisleriana, The Poet and the Composer, *Music Criticism,* ed. David Charlton, trans. Martyn Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), p.312.

rich Schelling identified as "the spiritual-corporeal essence" of the world. This primordial essence manifests itself as a kind of fluid substance that emanates from solids and clings about them like a glimmer: "In even the most corporeal of things there lies a point of transfiguration that is almost sensibly perceptible. . . . There is always an overflow, as it were, playing and streaming around them, an essence that, though indeed ungraspable [*ungreifliches*], is not for that [reason] indiscernible [*unbemerkliches*]."[28] Schelling tends to favor visual tropes for this "lyric substance," as Daniel Tiffany has called it,[29] but it was more often located in the sounds made by phenomena that seem to be at once embodied and disembodied, especially wind and water. These semimusical, semivocal sounds had an affinity for sublime surroundings and often seemed to carry across great distances of time and space. William Wordsworth heard them via tropes made popular by the Ossianic poems: "I would stand, / Beneath some rock, listening to sounds that are / The ghostly language of the ancient earth, / Or make their dim abode in distant winds." Goethe heard them in the fall of water, which he treats as the tangible semblance of the soul: "Delightfully [the jet] breaks into mist, / A cloudwave, / On the smooth rock, / And lightly gathered / Wells up veilingly, / Whooshing lightly / To the depths below."[30] Both images capture the ambivalence of lyric substance, which secures the survival of spirit in the enlightened world by staging spirit at the level of matter itself, but that can do so only in the veiled neighborhood of ghosts and the abyss.

Like Goethe's rushing water, long stretches of the piano part in Beethoven's Largo break into a cloudwave, their continuous tremolos forming the acoustic equivalent of a veil of mist. Hoffmann recalls playing them *una corda* and with dampers raised to produce "a susurration . . . that recalls the aeolian harp and glass harmonica. . . . float[ing] sounds that surrounded the soul like hazy figures in a

28. Slavoj Zizek, *The Abyss of Freedom,* with F.W. Schelling, *Ages of the World,* the latter trans. Judith Norman (Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 1997), pp.148–61; quotation, p.151.

29. Daniel Tiffany, "Lyric Substance: On Riddles, Materialism, and Poetic Obscurity," *Critical Inquiry* 28 (2001), 72–99. For more on the same general phenomenon in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with special emphasis on the Ossianic legacy, see Ted Underwood, "Romantic Historicism and the Afterlife," *Publications of the Modern Language Society* 117 (2002), 252–64.

30. Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805), II, 226–29, in *The Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth,* ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984), p.400; Goethe, "Gesang der Geister über den Wassern" [Song of the Spirits over the Waters] (1779), ll.11–17 (my trans.); text from J.W. von Goethe, *Selected Poems,* ed. Christopher Middleton, trans. Michael Hamburger et al. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994), p.70: "staübt er [der Strahl] lieblich / In Wolkenwellen / Zum glatten Fels, / Und leicht empfangen / Wallt er verschleiernd / Leisrauschend / Zur Tiefe nieder." Schubert composed a setting of this poem for men's chorus and strings in 1817.

dream, enticing it into a world of curious presentiments."[31] Crucial to this impression is the enigmatic harmony, which steeps the movement in the uncanny and, at the cadences closing both the exposition and the recapitulation, sends the lyric substance of the music plunging into the depths below. The space held open within both D minor and C major between key as a referential envelope and key as cadential substance becomes the space in which the extraordinary appears, the space that it fills up and overflows. And the same relationship—it is really a classic condition of Derridean *différance*—draws the darkening play of lyric substance across the whole movement, from one veiled D-minor or C-major cadence to the next, to the long shudder of dissolution in the extraordinary D-minor cadence of the coda.

That cadence is something like the lifting of the veil. Its effect, though, is as much an admonition as a revelation, as if the last clause of the temple inscription—"no mortal man has lifted my veil"—were really a veiled warning. A sonnet by Shelley written a few years after the trio (1817) makes the point evocatively:

> Lift not the painted veil which those who live
> Call life. . . –behind, lurk Fear
> And Hope, twin Destinies, who ever weave
> Their shadows o'er the chasm, sightless and drear.[32]

Far from the tone of Hoffmann's "hymn of exultation," the cadence seems to come face to face with a dark truth that forbids anything like the edifying "intimate familiarity" in which Hoffmann grounds his image. This truth does not edify, and it will not set you free. But the cadence does seem to exult in the uncompromising force with which it realizes an unfamiliar intimacy with D minor. What it unveils is a travesty of the kind of ultimate meaning that Roland Barthes, in a now classic text—"The Death of the Author"—rejects in the name of pure writing: "By refusing to assign a 'secret' ultimate meaning to the text (and to the world as text) [writing] liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity. . . since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases—reason, science, law."[33] Beethoven's D minor, though it does form a kind of fixed secret, neither is nor has an ultimate meaning. Its occult tie to C major remains opaque, as does the strange harmonic logic whereby the faint hint of C major slipped into the disintegrating D minor of the opening expands to become the prevailing sonority

31. Hoffmann, *Musical Writings,* pp. 309–10.

32. Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Sonnet," from *Shelley's Poetry and Prose,* ed. Donald Reiman and Sharon Powers (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 312.

33. Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text,* ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 147.

that produces D minor as something veiled, secreted away, ungraspable but not indiscernible. Such as it is, this is a "meaning" accountable neither to reason nor science nor law. It denies the very things that secret ultimate meanings are supposed to give. It is meaning rendered as a mode of sublimity, meaning as sheer force.

This recognition might also be said to anticipate Nietzsche's treatment of the veil of Isis in the preface to the second edition of *The Gay Science*: "One will hardly find us again on the path of those Egyptian youths who . . . want by all means to unveil, uncover, and put into a bright light whatever is kept concealed for good reasons. . . . We no longer believe that truth remains truth when the veils are withdrawn; we have lived too much to believe this." The difference, too, is suggestive. Nietzsche wants to pretend that hope and fear—Shelley's "twin Destinies"—are not lurking behind the veil. The subject of the "Ghost" Largo, not yet having lived too much, swallows hard and makes no such pretense.[34]

But if the Largo presents its D minor as a surrogate mystery of Isis, a darkness unveiled at the last moment to reveal a greater darkness, and for a moment only ("human kind / Cannot bear very much reality"[35]), then we are taught by this to hear the D major of the outer movements as itself a kind of veil, a veil of illusion. This D major is too easy; it is complacent in its ordinariness; it cannot be trusted. The conclusion of the Largo says so plainly. Just before the end, a bare block-chord progression appears out of nowhere—it is like nothing else in the movement—and softly offers up a luminous D-major triad. But the offering is promptly and loudly rejected, leaving the way clear for the whispery final cadence in D minor. D major is thus revealed as a kind of false consciousness of pleasure and practicality that can neither be rejected nor accepted, at least not at face value.

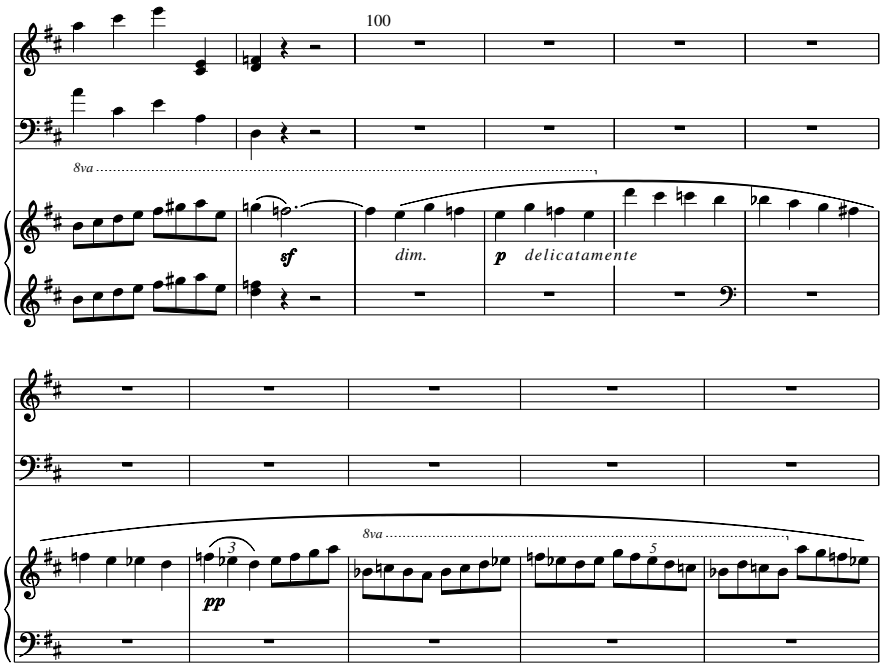
But D major is, of course, the key of the finale, which is thus lamed from the start. With its studied good cheer, with its lack of generative contrast and its restriction on development, with its celebration of the ordinary as stability rather than as potentiality, the finale, despite its overt good spirits, is tinged with nostalgia and regret. It is almost an unhappy ending. Such pleasure as it gives is that of Hegel's unhappy consciousness, the pleasure achieved by forgetting—trying to forget—one's "historical position as 'the consciousness of self as a dual-natured and merely contradictory being'."[36]

34. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (2nd edn. 1887), trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), p.38.

35. T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," ll.42–43, *Collected Poems, 1909–1962* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), p.176.

36. G.W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit,* trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977), sec.206, p.126.

Example 11: Finale: exposition, right-hand cadenza for piano.



This futility does rise to the surface at occasional moments, usually *pianissimo,* and especially in a strange little cadenza for the pianist's right hand, near the end of the exposition: solitary notes traipsing along, going nowhere, for over nine measures (ex. 11; in the exposition the cadenza begins on a sustained high F, suggesting a parody of the cello's singing note in the first movement). At moments like this, music becomes too objectlike in the sense of seeming lifeless, forgetting that its allure ultimately depends on its affinity for lyric substance—or so Ludwig Tieck suggested in 1799 when he described music as often resembling a "fine, flowing element, a clear, mirror-bright brook" in the glimmer of which "charming, ethereal, and sublime shapes" can be discerned.[37] But even this cadenza is normalized by repetition and recapitulation, as the sonata form demands. Its dawdling becomes amiable, or so it tells us. Like the leopards in Kafka's parable that cannot be kept from breaking into the temple, the cadenza becomes part of the ritual. The cost of living in the ordinary world after visitation by the sublime is just this restrictive-

37. "Die Musiktöne gleichen oft einem feinen flüssigen Elemente, einem klaren, spiegelhellen Bache, wo das Auge sogar oft in den schimmernden Tönen wahrzunehmen glaubt, wie sich reizende, ätherische und erhabene Gestalten eben zusammenfügen wollen." (from Tieck's "Die Töne," in Wackenroder and Tieck, *Phantasien über die Kunst,* p. 103).

ness, this fixed will, not to real pleasure, far less to "enjoyment," bliss, rapture, but to having a good time.

Not that we don't have a good time. We do. But the paradox of the ordinary in the post-Enlightenment era, and perhaps in our own as well, is that the ordinary was supposed to give us more than that. And so it does, says the "Ghost" Trio; so it does. But then . . .

REVIEWS

To Edit a Sketchbook

Richard Kramer

Artaria 195: Beethoven's Sketchbook for the Missa solemnis *and the Piano Sonata in E Major, Opus 109.* Volume I: Commentary. Volume II: Facsimile. Volume III: Transcription. Transcribed, edited, and with a Commentary by William Kinderman. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003. vol. I: xx, 114pp.; vol. II: viii [unpaginated]; vol. III: xii, 120pp.

To edit a sketchbook! Implicit in this daunting challenge are the thorny work-a-day issues with which every editor must contend: how to transcribe a sketch, and what to say about it beyond the mere identification of the thing. But if this were to suggest that identity means simply the naming of what is known, the sketches are here to bedevil us. The identifying and the transcribing feed on one another in a circularity difficult to breach. A sketchbook, common sense tells us, will always remain inscrutable in its deeper reaches. When we tease the sketch from the shadow of oblivion onto the well-lit stage of identity, there is a danger that this confident step from the obscure, the arcane, the unknown to that which we know all too well is mapped onto a "creative process" about which we can know only too little. We impute to this process an intentionality, an underlying set of motives, of reasons and arguments, a causality that is our own invention. The inclination to solve these mysteries begins with the fallacy that there is something mysterious to solve, that music unheard in the silences between sketches will reveal itself in response to reason and wit. Often enough, Beethoven in the sketchbooks is a man in search of his own mysteries.

These abstract thoughts may seem beside the point, mooted in a real world in which the practical realization of the project has long teetered at the edge. Clearly

the highest priority of the Beethoven-Archiv as it sought to reestablish itself from the rubble of 1945, this "erste wissenschaftliche Gesamtausgabe der Skizzen Beethovens" (first complete critical edition of Beethoven's sketches), as it was solemnly entitled in the first issue of the *Beethoven-Jahrbuch* (Jahrgang 1953/54), has now virtually disappeared.[1] There is not even a passing reference to it in the progress reports ("Mitteilungen aus dem Beethoven-Haus und Beethoven-Archiv Bonn") in the three published issues of the new *Bonner Beethoven-Studien* (1999–2003). The old Beethoven-Haus, of monastic austerity and somber scholarly *Pflicht,* has retooled. An institute for the New Age, it expends much of its energies on what we call Outreach—on meticulously mounted exhibitions, on "populärwissenschaftliche Publikationen"—in its stylish fusion of quaint birthplace and state-of-the-art facilities where an image of Beethoven is enshrined, a cultural icon created to justify the considerable investment in this institution that means to honor him. Exacting its extreme demands on a team of scholars dedicated to other tasks and on a budget pressed from other directions, the sketch edition seems to have written itself out of this new scenario.

Sizing up the grim realities of the situation, the indefatigable William Kinderman has mounted single-handedly an impressive new series, of which this edition of Artaria 195 is the auspicious pilot project. Entries in Artaria 195, a book whose contents can be dated entirely within 1820, are often fiendishly difficult to decipher. Written in both ink and pencil, the book records voluminous sketches for the *Missa solemnis,* for the second and third movements of the Piano Sonata in E Major, op. 109, for the Bagatelles, op. 119, nos. 7–11, and for a number of works that were abandoned in the sketchbook. Further, the edition "represents the first time that a large-format desk sketchbook from Beethoven's later years has been made available in reconstructed form, with extended commentary" (I, 5)—though it must be added that the basis of the reconstruction was established some twenty years earlier by Robert Winter.[2] In the sketch canon, Artaria 195 follows upon another "large-format desk sketchbook," used by Beethoven during the years 1818–20: the Wittgenstein Sketchbook, so-called "because it was for a time in the possession of the famous Viennese Jewish family to which the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein belonged" (I, 5, n. 12), a characterization that would not have pleased the family.[3]

1. BJ (1953/54), 249.

2. JTW, pp. 260–64.

3. "Ludwig's paternal grandparents converted to Protestantism. The Jewish side of his mother's family had long been converted to Christianity and had heavily intermarried with Christian families." His mother "was a Roman Catholic." See David Edmonds and John Eidinow, *Wittgenstein's Poker* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 113.

This earlier sketchbook was published by the Beethoven-Haus in facsimile (1968) and in Joseph Schmidt-Görg's much maligned (and unreconstructed) transcription (1972) as *Ein Skizzenbuch zu den Diabelli-Variationen und zur Missa solemnis*.[4] Together with the three "pocket" sketchbooks, the *Drei Skizzenbücher zur Missa solemnis,* again edited by Schmidt-Görg for the Beethoven-Haus, and a new score of the work in Norbert Gertsch's painstaking edition for the *Gesamtausgabe,* students of Beethoven's famously impenetrable work, this "verfremdetes Hauptwerk," in Adorno's provocative phrase, now have much to keep them busy.[5]

What should a commentary tell us? A model of a certain kind was established in the dour "Richtlinien" that regulate the earliest volumes from the Beethoven-Haus. True to the severe tone of *Wissenschaft* as it was commonly practiced at midcentury, editorial commentary is limited to that which might illuminate the documentary context of the manuscript at hand, and to an identification, where that is tenable, of the relationship of the sketch to some known work. Kinderman sees his role differently. No longer merely an editor, he assumes authorship as well, writing about these sketches (and much else) in a style now familiar from his other notable publications on Beethoven. Tellingly, the Commentary assumes pride of place as volume I—a lapse of decorum, one might think, even if (as the author no doubt intends) we are meant to study his prose before embarking on the perilous voyage that the sketches themselves, unmediated, would invite us to chart.

This, however, is no ordinary Commentary. Kinderman has a tale to tell, and in two parts. Part 1 ("Content and Chronology of the Artaria 195 Sketchbook") opens with a chapter called "Approaching Beethoven's Sketches." A brief meditation on Creativity begins at the beginning. Prometheus, as "fire thief," as the

4. *Beethoven: Ein Skizzenbuch zu den Diabelli-Variationen und zur Missa solemnis,* ed. Joseph Schmidt-Görg, 2 vols.: facsimile (1968); transcription (1972) (Bonn: BH, 1968–72). For a review, see Robert Winter, JAMS 28 (1975), 135–38.

5. Under the rubric *Beethoven: Drei Skizzenbücher zur Missa solemnis,* ed. Joseph Schmidt-Görg, the three sketchbooks were published as *I: Ein Skizzenbuch aus den Jahren 1819/20,* 2 vols. (Bonn: BH, 1952–68); *II: Ein Skizzenbuch zum Credo,* 2 vols. (Bonn: BH, 1968–70); *III: Ein Skizzenbuch zum Benedictus und zum Agnus Dei,* 2 vols. (Bonn: BH, 1968–70). *Ludwig van Beethoven: Missa solemnis,* ed. Norbert Gertsch (Werke, ser. 8, vol. 3) (Munich: G. Henle, 2000). Adorno's "Verfremdetes Hauptwerk: Zur *Missa Solemnis*" is in Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften,* vol. 17, Musikalische Schriften IV (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), pp. 145–61, rpt. in Theodor W. Adorno, *Beethoven: Philosophie der Musik,* ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), pp. 204–22; in English as "The Alienated *Magnum Opus:* On the *Missa Solemnis,*" in Theodor W. Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music,* ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), pp. 141–53; and as "Alienated Masterpiece: The *Missa Solemnis,*" in Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music,* ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U California P, 2002), pp. 569–83.

"mythic embodiment of the creative principle" leads eventually to Beethoven's "first major piece for the stage": "*The Creatures of Prometheus* . . . became the stepping stone to a pivotal masterpiece of fiery daring: the 'Eroica' Symphony" (p.3). The grand figures are invoked: Michelangelo, Rodin, Leonardo, Goethe, and Jean Paul are woven rather too neatly into a tapestry that means to explain the mythic phenomenon of Beethoven at work. (Why, one wonders, wasn't all this set forth somewhere in Part 2, whose half-title page reads "*Arts* [*sic*] *longa, vita brevis:* On Beethoven's Creative Process"?) There follows the obligatory walk through a history of the Beethoven sketchbooks, with Artaria 195 now set in a broader context. If much of this might be appropriate to a prolegomenon meant to launch the series as a whole, these grand overarching themes seem out of place in the account of the single sketchbook. For while the flyleaf of volume I identifies a "Beethoven Sketchbook Series" and names its editorial board, nowhere in the text is there the slightest acknowledgment that we are here witness to its launching.

Chapter 1 closes with three illustrative figures: (1) a diagram of the "Paper structure of A 195," reprinted from Douglas Johnson, Alan Tyson, and Robert Winter, *The Beethoven Sketchbooks: History, Reconstruction, Inventory* [JTW]; (2) depictions of the "Watermarks of A 195," again reprinted from JTW; and (3) a list of "Contents of A 195." The appropriation from JTW as figure 1 is a bit cumbersome. JTW positions four missing leaves, labeled A, B, C, and D, between pp.80 and 81. To this, Kinderman inserts "Malerich Ms.?" adjacent to the long horizontal line that separates the hypothetical leaf D from p.81, but it is not until chapter 8 ("A New Source for the Sanctus: The Malerich Manuscript") that we hear the argument, altogether convincing, for the placement of this leaf, whose existence was brought to light only at its auction in 1996: its watermark is a match for none of the leaves hypothesized by JTW as A, B, C, and D. The installation of the Malerich leaf between D and p.81 in turn makes manifest the interpolation of three additional "missing" leaves, together forming a complete sheet of four leaves: two will be intercalated between pp.32 and 33, its two cognates between D verso and p.81, for the sketchbook was constructed not of consecutive gatherings of separately folded sheets, but as a single massive gathering of some sixteen sheets, or 128 pages, when Kinderman's Malerich leaf and its missing cohort are counted. My modest point is that Kinderman's elaborate argument for the interpolation of the Malerich leaf might have profited from a reworking of the illustration that means to show how the manuscript was configured.

Figure 3 is something of a frustration. Even the most seasoned adept of Beethoven's workshop papers will welcome a carefully cross-indexed locator to the contents of the sketchbook. The reader seeking guidance to the contents of

Artaria 195—there is, alas, no inventory[6]—must first locate this figure 3 at the end of chapter 1. Contained as an illustration in the chapter, it escapes entry in the table of contents at the front of the Commentary. And then, the layout of this figure 3 is not always intelligible: an entry called "Interconnected piano pieces in G major and C major" (p.74, staves 1–7) is followed by "Piano piece in E minor" (p.37, staves 1–5). At the bottom of the list are found some entries for piano pieces whose pages are given as "Paris 101r, Paris 59r, and Paris 58Cr," and this means doing a bit of leg work—consulting figure 1—to determine where, in the sketchbook, these "Paris" pages actually occur. That's easy enough in the transcription, which is paginated and clearly labeled. But it's not so easy in the facsimile, which is not. Surely, it makes sense to dignify the entire reconstructed book with a single pagination that accords with what we take to be its original structure, even if some of its leaves are today housed separately. It is the integrity of the book that matters to us now.

But it is in its substance that this Commentary sets itself apart. Each of its eighteen brief chapters engages some topic, some problem that the sketches stimulate, ranging now and then beyond the peripheries of the sketchbook itself, and generous in its depiction of pages from related sources.[7] "Continuities and Discontinuities in the Sketching Process" is the title of chapter 4, and from it we learn something worth knowing: that Beethoven, having begun a draft for the complete Credo on p.6 of the sketchbook, was then forced to skip some twenty-seven pages to find space adequate for its continuation. The intervening pages were already filled, notably and exclusively with intensive entries for the colossal fugue at "et vitam venturi saeculi, amen" with which the Credo closes. Kinderman, evidently the first to have recognized that Beethoven actually folded over pp.7 through 32 so as to enable the continuity of this draft, holds this up as evidence against the "common assumption . . . that Beethoven generally filled the pages of his sketchbooks in order, from the beginning to the end." Beethoven, he contends, "worked in larger divisions or compartments of the book," a practice which "became inconvenient for Beethoven when he ran out of room while sketching these pre-allocated por-

6. A more than adequate one for the main corpus of the manuscript will be found in *Ludwig van Beethoven. Autographe und Abschriften: Katalog,* ed. Hans-Günter Klein (Berlin: Merseburger, 1975), pp.180–89.

7. In addition to illustrations from sketch gatherings including Landsberg 10, Artaria 180/200, and Artaria 197, it is good to have facsimiles of pages from the autograph of the Credo and the Benedictus of the *Missa solemnis,* and even a page from the *Arbeitskopie* (working manuscript), as though in answer to my lament in a review of Gertsch's otherwise fine edition for the *Werke;* see *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association,* 59/3 (2003), 743–46.

tions of the document" p.21). Makes sense. And yet it is unclear why we mustn't assume that Beethoven, wishing to get on with the draft at p.33, simply returned for the moment to p.6, where it all started: that the folding over of those intervening pages is merely evidence that the great fugue weighed heavily on Beethoven's mind before much else of the movement had been fully conceived.

The draft deteriorates on p.35, hovering over the mystical *kairos* at the center of the Missa: the transfiguration that stages the moment of incarnation. These phrases had been sketched earlier (or collaterally) in two of those "pocket" sketchbooks edited by Schmidt-Görg, and at five distinct locations in the Wittgenstein sketchbook. Written in pencil, the entries at the top of p.35 seem in quest of that spare, direct sequence of harmonies that will clothe the scriptural significance of the event. In the final score, the third degree of the pure triad on F, tremolo and *fortissimo,* sounds in three registers at the top of the orchestra. The tripled A unseats F, forcing itself as the root of a new dominant in first inversion. The winds now sound the A in five octave registers. The motion from the close on F to the new harmony with C♯ in the bass puts us fleetingly in mind of recitative, the briefest of allusions to the mundane theater into which Christ is now born.[8] The music that follows is pointedly antitheatrical, evocative rather of some motet in the style of an imagined Palestrina.[9]

What do we learn from these barely legible entries at the top of p.35? An adept guide through the minefields of Beethoven's sketch hand, Kinderman here has his work cut out for him. Transcription has always been at the center of the debate about the editing of the sketchbook. A reckoning of the matter at a defining moment was put by Lewis Lockwood in his review of the *Skizzenbuch zur Pastoralsymphonie* in the BH edition. Arguing that even the most expert, most exhaustively

8. William Drabkin (*Beethoven: Missa solemnis* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991]) observes of m.124 that "the opening chord, in first inversion, has a certain 'theatrical' value, derived from eighteenth-century dramatic music" (p.58). He might have noted that it is this very inflection at m.134 in the opening scene of *Don Giovanni,* the violins attacking a double-stopped octave D, *fortissimo,* forcing the music from B♭ major to a dominant in first inversion in G minor, that incites the entrance of the Commendatore as it drives Donna Anna away ("lascia D. giovanni ed entra in casa," Mozart writes, precisely at m.134). For Drabkin (ibid., p.111), it is the longer-range key relations across the opening scenes of *Don Giovanni* that offer a "precedent" for a similar tonal strategy in the central portion of the Credo.

9. Further evidence toward this imagining and its construction is explored in my "In Search of Palestrina: Beethoven in the Archives," in *Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven: Studies in the Music of the Classical Period* (Essays in Honour of Alan Tyson), ed. Sieghard Brandenburg (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), pp.283–300.

documented transcriptions are inherently "limited" without immediate access to facsimiles of Beethoven's notation, Lockwood concludes that interpretation begins with transcription, that "the two necessary phases—decipherment and interpretation—are not fully separable."[10] In a shrewdly reasoned critique, Nicholas Marston has recently suggested that the differences in how two readers might render the sketch in transcription are to be understood as precisely that: as two readings, each with its own claim to authority. "Anyone," he writes, "undertaking a Beethoven sketch study cannot responsibly avoid at least some involvement in transcription . . . and transcription in this context unavoidably implies subjective interpretation of Beethoven's notation." A belief in the subjectivity of transcription leads inevitably to the extreme view of a "viable complete edition *in facsimile only*" (Marston's emphasis), for only an edition of this type "could claim an objective, authoritative status."[11] To wake up one morning to a complete edition of the sketchbooks in facsimile, in the "higher quality of reproduction" demanded of Marston's scenario, might seem everyone's Utopian dream. (The full-color facsimile of Artaria 195 delivers something pretty close, if only we could lose the glare of its high-gloss paper.) But if you want to gauge what it would take to understand—to read, to hear—the sweep of any coherent run of sketches, sit down with p.35 in Artaria 195 and work your way toward a transcription.

There are two lessons to be gleaned from this little exercise. The first is that the labor is glacial for those practiced in the vexing idiosyncrasies of Beethoven's hand, and unimaginable for everyone else. The second is that the act of transcription is not fundamentally a matter of interpretation, as in the translation from one language, with all its idiomatic cultural apparatus, to another. There is nothing "subjective" in a transcription that purports to do its simple job. That any two of us might disagree as to the notation on Beethoven's page is merely to say that our disagreements are in the pursuit of an elusive truth. If the truth lies within and behind the illegible hand, masking an idea not quite clear in the mind, not quite "heard," so much the worse for us. The transcription that pretends to something coherent clarifies too much. This is the hard dilemma of sketch transcription—the pull toward a coherence not demonstrably there.

That Kinderman manages to transfigure these hieroglyphs on p.35 into legible notation is something of a marvel, even if the transcription seems now and then to miss a step. Toward the end of the draft, at staves 6 and 7, Beethoven writes a

10. Lockwood, review in MQ 53 (1967), 128–36, esp.136.

11. Nicholas Marston, "Landsberg 5 and Future Prospects for the *Skizzenausgabe,*" *Beethoven Forum* 6 (1998), 207–33, esp.230–32.

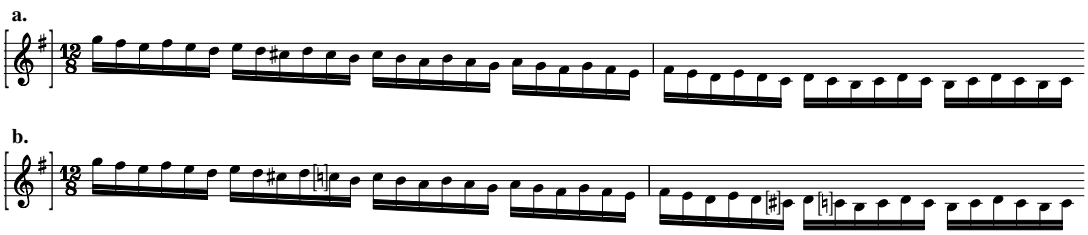
conventional cadence over a dominant pedal, adagio, resolving at the first phrase of the "et incarnatus." The figures $\frac{6}{4}$ scrawled appropriately before the resolution in the upper voice, are set in the transcription to signal an implausible change of meter where in fact Beethoven is figuring intervals. And this seems the case at the very top of the page: the figures $\frac{5}{4}$ are scribbled above the stave, but do not find their way into the transcription. At staves 3 and 4, the coordination of the voice parts makes more sense when what appears to be a number "10" in the lower stave (but transcribed as a quarter note) is read as a tenor clef (examples of this sketchy form of the clef are to be found even in the workshop papers from the 1790s). And surely the B♮ in the opening phrase of the "et incarnatus" at the beginning of stave 4 must be read as a quarter note if the declamation is to work. Finally, a plainly written "etc" at the end of stave 4 is simply omitted in the transcription. These are trivia, easily corrected in the reading.[12] But at the end of the day, we struggle to make better sense of those not quite coherent notes at the top of the page. Can we reconstruct a meaningful context in which they will sound? What *was* Beethoven hearing? The chaos on the page, eloquently caught in facsimile, is an important part of the message.

As though to clear the mind and exercise the hand, Beethoven brushstrokes a passage evidently for keyboard at stave 8 (see ex. 1a). Kinderman wants us to understand this as a first sketch for the second movement of the Piano Sonata in E, op. 109. Indeed, its appearance on the page is announced under the rubric "Sketches for Piano Sonata in E, op. 109, second movement," printed just above stave 8. This brings into view one aspect of the transcription that to my mind does more harm than good. The business of planting in the midst of the music a title that attributes identity to a whole body of sketches is bound to lead to misunderstandings. In the case of the music at stave 8, the rubric claims to identify a sketch whose credentials as an idea for the second movement of op. 109 are open to dispute. Kinderman's argument is circumstantial: the entry comes just before a longer draft, beginning on staves 10–11, for a piece that perhaps edges closer to the substance of that movement. Clearly, the entering of captions directly within the

12. At p. 15, an entry for a stretto in the great fugue at "Et vitam venturi" is garbled. A bass clef at the outset of the entry at stave 8 is clearly visible, to be answered logically by treble clef (not, as proposed in the transcription, treble clef answered by soprano clef), a response to the pairing of alto and tenor at the end of staves 4 and 5: the continuation sustains the D♭ begun in the alto. At stave 1, the second eighth in m. 2 of the subject is clearly B♭ and not D. And while we're about it, a bass clef is wanted at the beginning of stave 11 on p. 35. In sketchbook redaction too many eyes (and ears) are never enough!

sketch page is meant to compensate for the missing inventory. It doesn't work very well, cluttering a page already dense with information and forcing identifications that are over-determined and occasionally contentious.[13]

The argument for the identity of the entry on stave 8 is laid out in a chapter called "An E-Minor Presto for Piano," a title that would more judiciously have described the music at just this place in the transcription.[14] A "breathtaking example of the master improviser at the piano," writes Kinderman, rather inflating the case for this modest passage, suggesting further that this is "the kind of sketch that Beethoven might not have written down in his earlier years" (I, 73). Why not? The Kafka Miscellany, that portfolio of work from Beethoven's earliest years up until roughly 1798, is especially rich in what have been understood as writ-



Example 1.

13. Readers will be puzzled to find some unexplained entries on p.1 of the transcription. A faint penciled inscription at the bottom of the page is rendered as "Skizzenbuch E." This is of course not Beethoven's work—it has no place on a page that purports to deliver Beethoven's text, nor is there a note anywhere on the page to say what it signifies. Only the reader who happens to have stumbled upon the explanation in chapter 2 of the Commentary (I, 10) will see that it refers to neither of the two documented orderings of the Beethoven sketchbooks acquired by Domenico Artaria at the auction of Beethoven's *Nachlass* in November 1827: "Notirungsbuch H," in the first of them, ca. 1844; and "Skizzenbuch C," in the second classification, prepared by Gustav Nottebohm for Artaria probably in 1868. On these dates and the circumstances, see Sieghard Brandenburg, "Die Beethoven-Autographen Johann Nepomuk Kafkas: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Sammelns von Musikhandschriften," in *Divertimento für Hermann J. Abs: Beethoven-Studien,* ed. Martin Staehelin (Bonn: BH, 1981), pp. 89–133, esp. 121–23; and Douglas Johnson, "The Artaria Collection of Beethoven Manuscripts: A New Source," in BS I, 174–236. Readers will have to decide whether the barely legible pencil at the bottom of the page is better read as C or E.

14. Nicholas Marston, also struck by the placement of this entry on stave 8, is more circumspect. "This could hardly be called a 'sketch' for Op. 109 in any strict sense; yet the implicit key and explicit time signature call to mind the second movement of the sonata. [The entry] is perhaps best regarded as a kind of route marker indicating a change of direction, a turning aside from sacred music on the grandest scale to the more intimate world of the piano." See his *Beethoven's Piano Sonata in E, Op. 109* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995), p. 81. To my ear, the passage cadences in G major.

ten-out improvisations: of figuration, of modulation patterns and finger exercises, of cadenza entries, and much else.[15] In one celebrated case, Erich Hertzmann brilliantly read the autograph of op. 129 (the "Leichte Kaprice," as Beethoven inscribed it years later) as a written-out skeleton for an improvisation from roughly 1798, kept from publication precisely because it would have blown Beethoven's cover.[16] In later Beethoven, the notion of the improvisatory becomes increasingly complex, calling up a distinction between music composed mimetically, in the image of the improvisatory, and the act of improvisation itself: the real thing, evasive and ephemeral, unwritten. The casting of the idea in writing, one might think, dispels the spontaneity with which it comes into the mind. What, precisely, occurs between the flash of unmediated conception, of music heard, and the reflective act of writing? This we cannot know.

For Kinderman, the entry has a yet more powerful mission. "It will be seen," he writes:

> that Beethoven notates C♯ in the higher octave but not in the lower octave, where the triplet sixteenth pattern ceases to descend and instead circles around middle C. A tension between C♯ and C in the context of E major/minor is highly characteristic of both the first two finished movements of op. 109 and the sketches for them. There is reason to believe that the notation [at stave 8] is precise and that this initial sketch already displays the tensional relationship between the major and minor sixth degrees that is so typical of the completed movement (I, 74).

The argument is circular. The alternation of C♯ and C♮ at stave 8 is not quite as it appears in Beethoven's swift notation. Surely we are meant to hear a sharp before the C in the lower octave where the figure again ascends to D, just as we are meant to hear a natural before each C where the figure descends to B (as shown in ex. 1b). One senses a tension here between an editorial burden to furnish essential but unspecified accidentals, a frequent casualty of the sketch act, and the appeal of an analytical construct.

15. The landmark publication is *Ludwig van Beethoven: Autograph Miscellany from circa 1786 to 1799: British Museum Additional Manuscript 29801, ff. 39–162 (The "Kafka Sketchbook"),* ed. Joseph Kerman, 2 vols. (London: British Museum, 1970). Kerman distinguishes in these early sketches between brief notations that "may have been designed as memoranda for improvisations" and "random ideas about figurative or modulatory patterns," which are more appropriately called "improvisations on paper." See his "Beethoven's Early Sketches," MQ 56 (1970), 515–38, esp. 525.

16. Erich Hertzmann, "The Newly Discovered Autograph of Beethoven's *Rondo à Capriccio,* Op. 129," MQ 32 (1946), 171–95, esp. 191–94.

The appeal is strongly felt in a discussion of another entry in E minor. From the second of those "pocket" sketchbooks for the *Missa solemnis* (*Ein Skizzenbuch zum Credo,* p.58) Kinderman reproduces two entries, each marked "presto," for something that Beethoven labels "Sonate in E moll" (I, 31). By his own convincing chronology, these entries (which date from around the second week in June 1820) would appear to have been written shortly before the serious work undertaken in Artaria 195 on the second and third movements of op.109. The thesis, advanced in the midst of chapter 5 ("The Compositional Origins of the Final Sonata Trilogy"), arises from a putative motivic similarity to the fugal theme of the first movement of op.111: "promising candidates for what eventually became the first movement of the final Sonata in C minor," it is claimed (p.31), and then amplified in three columns of argument in support of Beethoven's assurances to Schlesinger on 31 May 1820 that (quoting Kinderman) "he had begun to work on three sonatas" (p.32). What seems not quite right in all this is the assumption that Beethoven, presumably having a Sonata in E Major pretty clearly in mind, would have conceived a companion for it in E minor. More plausibly, we might take this "Sonate in E moll" to signify considerable ambivalence as to the substance of the three sonatas promised to Schlesinger, and to wonder further whether the provocation of E *minor* might have prompted the formulation finally of a Sonata in E *Major.*[17]

While only the second and third movements of op.109 are sketched in Artaria 195, the evolution of the entire work, and indeed its place among the three final sonatas, is a story that Kinderman needs to tell. It begins in the study on the "Final Sonata Trilogy" and continues in chapters 6 ("The Genesis of Opus 109: Issues of Reconstruction and Interpretation"), 14 ("An E-Minor Presto for Piano"), and 15 ("Variations on the *Gesang*: The Finale of Opus 109"). Bits and pieces of the narrative crop up in unexpected places. In chapter 17 ("Five Bagatelles: Opus 119, Numbers 7–11") there is an oblique reference to the beginnings of op.109: "As we have seen, what became the first movement of op.109 was also apparently originally devised as a bagatelle, or 'new little piece,' for Starke" (I, 96). Where, I wondered, had we seen it? On the previous page, we read: "As we have seen, the

17. In a similar case, writing of an entry in Artaria 197, a wisp of a phrase in C♯ minor inscribed "nächste Sonate ad[a]gio molto sentime[n]to moltissimo espressione" evidently (though not indisputably) giving way to an "all[e]g[ro]" in D♭ major, Kinderman alleges that it "actually belongs to the first surviving sketches for . . . op.110" (I, 27). To note its proximity to the first sketches for what we know as op.110 may be perfectly in order. To claim that its elements "outline the basic concept of the new sonata even before the thematic material and keys have been established" (I, 27) is to create a map of subliminal relationships not given to the kinds of verification that might support such a claim.

bagatelles drafted on pp.76–80 of A 195 were written for the third part of the *Wiener Pianoforteschule* edited by Friedrich Starke." But what of the first movement of op.109? We leaf back to p.74: "The Vivace movement in E major (which, as we have seen, seems to have been the 'new little piece,' or bagatelle, composed for Friedrich Starke) was not yet regarded as part of a sonata." On p.26 we learn that "work on the first movement of op.109 is contained on leaves removed from the end of Witt[genstein], as we have seen." On p.22, in the midst of a discussion of the Credo sketches, Kinderman notes that work is interrupted for the second and third movements of op.109. In that letter to Schlesinger of 31 May 1820, Beethoven offered to send "the one sonata which is ready." There is then reference to an entry in a conversation book, where Franz Oliva refers (around 9 June) to "the little *sonata*" (p.22, Kinderman's emphasis). On p.16, Kinderman refers to "the 'new little piece' for piano that was to become the first movement of his Piano Sonata in E Major, Op.109."

Where does this come from, this continued reference to a "new little piece"? In a conversation book in use between 18 and 28 April 1820, Oliva wrote: "Schenken Sie das dem *Starke* als enzelnes Stück?" [20^{v}] and, a few days later, "Sie haben ja den Fond dafür, und die Sicherheit in sich, die Beträge zahlen zu können [48^{v}] und benutzen Sie das kleine neue Stück zu einer Sonate für den Schlesinger etwa[.]" [49^{r}][18] These provocative entries, critical ones for Kinderman's claim, somehow escape his net. The inference that Oliva is here talking about the first movement of what was to become the Piano Sonata, op.109, will be found elsewhere: "Oliva's words strongly suggest that the work sketched at the end of Wittgenstein and BH 107 was originally intended not as part of one of Beethoven's last three piano sonatas but as an independent composition," writes Nicholas Marston.[19] Years earlier, Sieghard Brandenburg came to the same conclusion.[20] Kinderman knows this because he himself referred to Brandenburg's note in a subsequent piece of his own.[21]

More is at stake here than bibliographic protocol. The first movement of op.109, even if by some measure it can be said to be "klein," is among the most boldly

18. "Will you send it to Starke as a separate piece?"; "You have the funds for it, and the assurances to be able to pay these amounts . . . and you might use the little new piece for a sonata for Schlesinger" (CB, II, 87). The translations are mine.

19. Marston, *Beethoven's Piano Sonata in E, Op.109,* p.31.

20. Sieghard Brandenburg, "Die Skizzen zur Neunten Symphonie," in *Zu Beethoven 2: Aufsätze und Dokumente,* ed. Harry Goldschmidt (Berlin: Verlag Neue Musik, 1984), pp.88–129, esp. 105.

21. William Kinderman, "Thematic Contrast and Parenthetical Enclosure in the Piano Sonatas, Opp.109 and 111," in *Zu Beethoven 3: Aufsätze und Dokumente,* ed. Harry Goldschmidt (Berlin: Verlag Neue Musik, 1988), pp.43–59, esp. 46.

radical of Beethoven's conceptions, challenging conventions of tempo, syntax, voice, and diction, and contesting the hierarchies that govern how sonata expositions go. The earliest known sketch for the movement seems to anticipate this intention in a riddling note scribbled between its lines: "fällt ein cis moll u[nd] in eine[r] Fantasie schließt darin"[22]—an inscription that begins to conjure the fantasy-like Adagio espressivo that interrupts the Vivace at m.9, veering at once toward a transient C♯ minor and in effect seizing control of the exposition. If Kinderman is right to suspect that, at least for a brief interval in April 1820, the movement was contemplated as one of a group of bagatelles for Starke, this "kleine neue Stück" then assumes a yet more radical role, poised between the increasingly complex rhetoric of sonata as fantasy, on the one hand, and a new aesthetic in which the fragmentary, aphoristic, distracted utterance is much prized. Such ambivalence might then help to explain the placement, coeval with it, of those otherwise puzzling entries for a "Sonate in E moll."

The transcription volume offers direct translations into English of nearly every word originally in German (though "po[saunen]" on p.1 is somehow missed), and of certain locutions in Italian. If the intention is worthy, the result is more clutter on the page. Of greater concern are the deeper linguistic pitfalls that translation always sets for us. To an early sketch (III, 36) for the theme of the third movement, Beethoven writes (in Kinderman's transcription) "2ter theil rechte Hand den Bass linke H[and] den gesang." Kinderman translates: "2nd part the right hand [has] the bass, the left hand the song." Is this what Beethoven means by *Gesang?* Koch's *Musikalisches Lexikon* (1802) is instructive: "One often uses the word *Gesang* in the figurative [*uneigentlichen*] sense, and understands by it the principal voice of an instrumental piece. In this case, the words *Gesang* and *Melodie* are almost completely synonymous, except in the distinction that *Gesang* signifies only the *Hauptmelodie,* whereas *Melodie* indicates the sequence of tones in any voice without exception."[23] It is precisely this figurative sense that Beethoven summons a few years later in

22. Roughly, "interrupted in C♯ minor and, in a fantasy, [it] closes there." The entry is transcribed and discussed in Marston, *Beethoven's Piano Sonata in E, Op.109,* pp.47–48; and in William Kinderman, "Thematic Contrast and Parenthetical Enclosure," pp.46–47, ex.5 and plate 1.

23. "Oft braucht man das Wort Gesang auch im uneigentlichen Sinne, und verstehet darunter die Tonfolge der Hauptstimme eines Tonstückes, welches für Instrumente gesetzt ist. In diesem Falle sind die Wörter Gesang und Melodie beynahe völlig gleichbedeutend; der Unterschied zwischen beyden gestehet nemlich darinne, daß man mit dem Worte Gesang bloß die Hauptmelodie, mit dem Worte Melodie aber die Tonfolge einer jeden Stimme ohne Ausnahme bezeichnet" (Heinrich Christoph Koch, *Musikalisches Lexikon* [Frankfurt am Main: August Hermann dem Jüngern, 1802], p.662).

his spirited defense of a puzzling note in the second movement of op. 127: "des gesanges wegen, welcher allzeit verdient allem übrigen vorgezogen zu werden," he writes of the passage, and "so wäre der Gesang zerrißen worden" of a proposed alternative.[24] The title of chapter 15 in Kinderman's Commentary, "Variations on the *Gesang*: The Finale of Opus 109," only exacerbates the problem, for we are now led to wonder whether the theme of the finale is meant to be understood as song in the generic sense or whether the invocation of *Gesang* is of a piece with Beethoven's inscription on p. 36—variations, that is, on a *Hauptmelodie*. It is this latter meaning that insinuates itself when *Gesang* is rendered as "lyrical theme" (I, 84) in the midst of a discussion of this very matter, but not, evidently, when reference is made to an entry in Wittgenstein for "a theme akin to the *Gesang* (song) used in op. 109 a whole year earlier [*recte*: later]" (I, 26).[25]

It was Adorno who warned us away from the privileging of those documents—"recorded conversation," he specified, but of course the sketchbooks are implicated as well—that too easily replace "an attention focused on the works themselves" with a study of their "psychological origins." "The late work," he worried, "is thereby relegated to the margins of art and brought closer to documentation."[26] Indisputably, there is much to be learned from these sketches in Artaria 195 and its companions, even if it is not always clear precisely how to adjust the balances between "documentation" and "work," how the two, participants in a single dis-

24. "On account of the principal voice, which always deserves to be brought forward above all else" and "in this way, the principal voice would be torn apart" (my trans.). See Brandenburg, VI, item 2003, p. 96. For another translation, see Anderson, III, item 1405, p. 1224. The letter—a draft, actually—was the topic of a searching study by Oswald Jonas, "A Lesson with Beethoven by Correspondence," MQ 38 (1952), 215–21. I am grateful to Lewis Lockwood for reminding me of Beethoven's language here.

25. On the topic of translation, it is odd that a reference to Schenker's "Vom Organischen der Sonatenform" refers us (I, 87, n. 19) to Orin Grossman's seriously flawed translation—even the title engages in distortion: "Organic Structure in Sonata Form" (*Journal of Music Theory* 12 [1968], 164–83; rpt. in *Readings in Schenker Analysis and Other Approaches,* ed. Maury Yeston [New Haven: Yale UP, 1977], pp. 38–53)—and not to the new translation by William Drabkin, as "On Organicism in Sonata Form," in Heinrich Schenker, *The Masterwork in Music,* ed. William Drabkin, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), pp. 23–30.

26. "Beethoven's Late Style," in Theodor W. Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music,* ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), pp. 123–26, esp. p. 123. The original text is "Spätstil Beethovens," in Theodor W. Adorno, *Beethoven: Philosophie der Musik,* pp. 180–84. For another translation, see "Late Style in Beethoven," in Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music,* pp. 564–67.

cursive history, can be understood to inhabit the same world, each with its own inviolable code of evidence, its rituals of meaning. If his extravagant Commentary appears now and then inattentive to those balances, Kinderman yet gives us plenty to work with. Going it alone, he has moreover put this monumental project back on our screens.[27] Kinderman's passionate articulation of its goals, his imaginative and bold invitation to a new generation of scholars on its behalf, and finally the deed itself, the actuality of this formidable first issue, represent our current best hope for its eventual realization.

27. Literally so, for Kinderman and his colleagues at the University of Illinois have even managed to digitalize the sketches for the second movement of op. 109, a sonic realization synchronized to the transcription. The link is readily accessible with inquiry to the publisher.

Interpretive Questions in the "Diabelli" Variations

Matthew Bengtson

If there were music to satisfy Schnabel's dictum that it should be "greater than any performance of it could possibly be," Beethoven's "Diabelli" Variations, op. 120, would surely qualify. Their interpretive possibilities, determined by a performer's creative temperament and historical-cultural frame of reference, are practically inexhaustible. Drawing on the recorded performance tradition, I would like to characterize and evaluate some of the solutions to the most complex questions of interpretation confronting a pianist in this work.

The sample of eleven recordings emphasizes newer releases (see discography). Space forbids a close reading of all the Variations; however, because an overall survey without some close readings is superficial, I have decided to focus on several Variations that prove to be the most problematic for the performer. Some of these passages, among the most rarefied in the work, yield the greatest range of interpretation and thus serve as a reliable barometer of performer's overall attitudes. I shall begin with the theme.

Cobbler's Patch

Although the theme seems straightforward enough to play, its distinctly awkward position—a preface to fifty minutes of inspired music by a mature Beethoven—is enough to complicate the issue. While this "waltz" (really, a minuet) is not profound or sublime music, it is a respectable piece of craftsmanship, even if a bit simple-minded. Beethoven, who referred to the sequences in the theme as a "cobbler's patch," provided enough Variations to point out its shortcomings. Thus, I suspect

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that a respectful interpretation, without exaggerating its flaws, might do it the most justice, as if one were about to commence the performance of Diabelli's intended collection. This attitude seems to characterize Claudio Arrau's reading of the theme, which possesses a natural grace and charm throughout, as do the performances of Anton Kuerti and Miecyslaw Horszowski.

Since in many Variations Beethoven mocks certain features of the theme, it is tempting to begin mischief right here in performance, by highlighting the theme's more humorous aspects, for example, the "cute" opening turn, the slightly crude repeated chords, the simple sequences, and the somewhat artificial dynamic indications. The question of attitude to this material is a fundamental place where the recordings diverge: the decisions made by the performers tend to have profound repercussions throughout all the Variations to follow. In this collection of recordings, the "class clowns" are undoubtedly Olli Mustonen and Alexandre Rabinovitch. In the theme, Mustonen finds effective agogic rubato and idiomatic pushes in *gruppetti* that contribute to the light-hearted atmosphere, whereas Rabinovitch is clearly determined to make light of the theme to the fullest extent. His decision to insert a long pause before a cute final V–I cadence might bring to the listener either a smile for the performer's wit, or perhaps a scowl for his bad taste, but this kind of interpretive decision is consistent throughout his performance. The same might be said of Mustonen's determinedly percussive staccatissimo (regardless of the articulation indicated in the score), although this mannerism probably serves him better in the theme itself than in many of the Variations that follow.

The performance of the theme is a good indication of an interpreter's conception of the whole work; it will pinpoint a light-hearted character, such as that of Mustonen and Rabinovitch, or an earnest and philosophical pianist, as in recordings by Anton Kuerti, Konstantin Scherbakov, and William Kinderman. These two parties represent the opposite extremes of interpretation, throughout all of the Variations. Both visions of the work are possible—the playful diversion by Beethoven to put an upstart composer in his proper place, as a publisher of other people's music, or the very serious work, the pinnacle, the creative summation of the piano output of a creative genius. Ideally, of course, a pianist should be both a stand-up comic and a philosopher in this work, and there are opportunities for both. A performance lacking one of these elements would have to be regarded as limited.

Although the theme is a good litmus test of a performer's attitude to these Variations, I don't find it to be the best one, because of the simplicity of its material; Beethoven's sublimation of the waltz in the final Variation turns out to be the most revealing of all (see the comments below). Among the more "faithful" performances

of the theme, there are many performers who exhibit very different styles throughout the Variations. For example, whereas both Alfred Brendel and Claudio Arrau find lightness and charm in their performances of the theme, these qualities stand out positively throughout Brendel's recording of the Variations, while I find them curiously absent in much of Arrau's. Miecyslaw Horszowski's performance of the theme does not differ markedly from these others, but later on we find him taking consistently faster tempi and a more detached, Classical perspective that shuns exaggerations of any sort. And Rudolf Serkin's oddly heavy-handed rendition of the repeated chords in the theme does not presage the marvels to come in that performance.

Overwhelming Grandeur

The first truly problematic Variation from the performer's standpoint is no. 14, marked *Grave e maestoso*. Rarely must one sustain for so long such a single-minded idea with little rhythmic or harmonic variety. The basic idea, responsible for the Variation's expressive power, is a double-dotted rhythmic motive, which seems to relate to the French overture. The fast notes are traditionally performed quickly, in a sweeping gesture before the downbeat. Although here the slurs end before the downbeats, suggesting a fresh articulation, it seems that the fast notes are not meant to be played too slowly or heavily. The result of the whole gesture is an added weight and significance to each beat, creating an impression of grandeur and solemnity.

It was surprising to hear how many performers—Rabinovitch, Kinderman, and Yudina—opted to exaggerate the weight and often the duration of the small notes. Is this a sign of a reverence for the mystique of late Beethoven? Beethoven's late music dispensed with many conventions of Classical music,[1] but does this mean that a venerable performance tradition like the French overture is no longer applicable? This Variation is already peculiar enough, but when the fast notes are played too heavily, the music is so static as to be virtually incomprehensible. Yudina's performance is especially culpable in this respect. Her distorted rhythmic reading makes the final thirty-second notes significantly longer than their partners! This is one of many rhythmic idiosyncrasies of Yudina's performance; clearly she has a reverential attitude toward the work (unlike Rabinovitch, for example), but her recording is full of peculiar choices of rhythm, articulation, and tempo.

1. A concise and informative discussion of Beethoven's stylistic transformation in his later years—certainly germane to our topic—can be found in William Kinderman, *Beethoven's Diabelli Variations,* Studies in Musical Genesis and Structure (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp.64–67.

Tempo is a difficult issue in this Variation, and it is hardly surprising that tempo choices varied significantly (see Table 1). Clearly the character must be grand and serious—even hypnotic—but just how much breadth can the work afford here? It is revealing to consider Hans von Bülow's edition of the "Diabelli" Variations, not as a mouthpiece for Beethoven himself, but rather as a particularly well-informed and tasteful nineteenth-century perspective on this work.[2] He suggested ♩ = 58 or "perhaps, still more slowly." It is striking to see just how "still more slowly" this Variation has been imagined over time. As von Bülow remarks, the tempo depends on the sonority of the piano. Some critics might attribute slower modern performances to the tyranny of perfection in the recording studio; in this case, however, where technical difficulties are scarce, we should consider the more cogent explanation that piano timbre has become increasingly heavy through the years. The majority of performances are most easily counted in eight; the slowest is Scherbakov's recording, which is dignified to the point of tedium, because of the strictness of its beat. Kinderman's recording also seems to aspire to an excess of monumentality with its slow thirty-second notes and extreme crescendos. These

Table 1: Performers and Timings

Performer	Date	Timing	Var. 14 tempo (e)	Var. 20 tempo (h.)	Transition Var.32–Var.33
edition by von Bülow	1898	N/A	58 (quarter)	60	N/A
Horszowski	1952	48:18	50 (quarter)	42	19"
Serkin	1957	50:55	48 (quarter)	40	33"
Yudina	1961	44:29	84	58	25"
Arrau	1985	55:42	76	108 (quarter)	24"
Richter	1986	52:20	69	76 (quarter)	25"
Brendel	1990	52:36	69	42–44	20"
Kuerti	1996	56:10	80	54	32"
Rabinovitch	1996	50:14	84	58?	48"
Scherbakov	1997	56:30	66	108 (quarter)	24"
Mustonen	1999	46:33	58	50	25"
Kinderman	2002	55:04	66	84–88 (quarter)	24"

2. This is available in Ludwig van Beethoven, *Variations for the Piano, Volume I,* ed. and fingered by Hans von Bülow, Sigmund Lebert, and others, trans. Dr. Theodore Baker (New York: G. Schirmer, 1898). Opus 120 is edited by von Bülow.

two pianists in this group are most inclined to heaviness and solemnity; their overall performance times illustrate this tendency as well.

On the other hand, many of the recordings of this Variation are effective rhythmically. Mustonen executes the rhythm idiomatically; if only we could ignore his staccato execution that contradicts the solemnity of the Variation. Kuerti's interpretation also makes good use of the rhythmic eccentricity, but his use of a dry pedal is difficult to understand. Sviatoslav Richter's interpretation of the rhythm is perhaps the most effective of all, for he is always outstanding at sustaining interest and concentration in slow tempi. Unfortunately, he connects directly into the following Variation without pause, as if denying the significance of what he just played—an approach he follows consistently throughout the Variations. Many of Richter's eccentricities, including his choices of tempi, can be effective under his hands, but for the pacing of Variations, I would prefer the more varied approaches of Brendel and Kinderman, both of whom emphasize the structure of the whole work in their writings as well as their performances.

Among the faster interpretations of this Variation are those of Horszowski and Serkin. Horszowski is never inclined toward turgidity in tempo, and many of his choices in the Variations are very tasteful, but here he takes the Variation at such a fast pace that he is obliged to slow the short notes proportionally so they can be clearly heard. Much of the depth implicit in the Variation is lost—a pity, since this is the one element that seems to be missing in his interpretive vision of the work. The only performer successful with four beats to a measure is Serkin. He finds grandeur in the dotted rhythms, but his rhythmic determination seems to undermine some of the mystery of the music, making it sound too immediate to the listener.

If there are not many successful recordings of this Variation, it may well be because the music is especially problematic on heavy modern concert grands. The bass chords are scored so thickly—with thirds in the lowest registers—that the pianist must always struggle for clarity; the thirty-second notes also have a strong tendency to blur. The fast chords seem to move faster than most pianos can articulate effectively, and they accumulate on the pedal; one cannot omit the pedal and hope to achieve any kind of *maestoso* here. Widely spaced chords are characteristic of Beethoven's late style, but performers reacting to the changing weight of the modern piano sound are likely to create music stranger than the composer could have imagined. In this Variation, it may have caused several of them to counteract the rhythmic liveliness of the short notes, but unfortunately this only seems to make matters worse.

Sphinx, Part One

One of the most extraordinary, visionary, and mysterious Variations is no. 20, which Liszt aptly dubbed "Sphinx." Problems of interpretation abound here, since one cannot readily compare this to other pages of the standard repertoire. Foremost among these problems is choosing the tempo for the archaic notation in broad note values. The time signature is distinctive: Beethoven wrote $\frac{6}{4}$ ¢, such an unusual notation that editors have felt the need to change it to simply $\frac{6}{4}$, or, even worse, the confusing $\frac{3}{2}$ ($\frac{6}{4}$). The ¢ notation indicates two broad beats per measure, rather than six fast ones; Beethoven probably didn't want to write $\frac{6}{8}$ because he appreciated the implied weight of the dotted-half-note notation.[3]

The tempo marking of "Andante" with its long notes is at first surprising; one might rather have expected "Adagio" or "Grave." It strikes me that this marking must be a warning against too slow an interpretation; some moderation seems indicated, but the question remains: moderation compared to what? Given these complications, it is no surprise that tempi vary wildly among the recordings (see Table 1)—from Richter's positively funereal ♩ = 76 through Yudina's poker-faced 𝅗𝅥. = 58, a ratio of 2.29![4] What other passage of mainstream Classical period music could tolerate this wide a range? A view of this cross-section of performers suggests that "moderate" may mean 𝅗𝅥. = 40, and indeed I found performances at this tempo to be the most successful.

Richter can only contemplate such a slow tempo because of his uncannily subtle freedom; put the metronome on his recording, and no two notes in a row appear to hold the same tempo. Yet the impression conveyed is one of a steadily sustained tempo—too slow to have been Beethoven's conception on his own instruments, but one that works for Richter on a modern grand in the Concertgebouw, a massive concert hall that Beethoven would never have known. Other performers counting in a steady six have difficulty sustaining interest. Kinderman finds a marvelous distant sound, scarcely audible, but few nuances within it, for example, the hairpins and the distinction between *piano* and *pianissimo*. Yet his interpretation of this Variation fits beautifully into the context. His abrupt transition to the crashing

3. Another contemporary instance of a nuanced "double time signature" is the ¢ ¢ of Schubert's Impromptu D.899, no. 3 in G♭.

4. Observing the many eccentricities of Richter and Yudina, one might have been tempted to hypothesize a sort of "Russian Diabelli" tradition, but the great discrepancy in this Variation refutes this notion and reveals these two performers not as representatives of any tradition, but strong-willed individuals. Their idiosyncratic decisions rarely coincide with one another.

fortissimo of Variation no.21—a rude early-morning wake-up call—is fantastically effective, and one of the highlights of the disc. Arrau's performance of Variation no.20 seems to drag on even longer than Kinderman's, despite his faster tempo, because he reveals no particular magical qualities in it.

On the slower end of the "moderate" spectrum is one of the best renditions of this Variation: that of Konstantin Scherbakov. Well shaped, with a beautifully sustained character, this earnest performance is the most convincing moment on this disc. The Variation is ideal for Scherbakov's temperment. But even he does not make much of the hairpins and dynamic distinctions. Horszowski, Brendel, and Serkin choose essentially the same tempo but with very different results. Horszowski's apparent use of the *una corda* pedal produces an indistinct and thus uncommunicative sound; his fairly rigid tempo doesn't help matters greatly. One isn't surprised when he plummets headlong into Variation no.21 without further ado. Brendel finds depth within his moderate tempo; he chooses to highlight the deep bass register, like bells tolling in a cathedral, or "the inner sanctum," as he describes it. He also inserts a pause after this Variation and recommends the same in his article on the "Diabelli" Variations.[5] Serkin's rendition is characterized instead by a tenderness of sound; every chord is beautifully balanced, and the important dynamic nuance of *pianissimo* is observed with real effect.

A faster tempo in this Variation strikes me as musically reasonable, in view of the Andante marking. It is noteworthy that von Bülow's suggestion of 𝅗𝅥. = 60 is faster than any of our recordings; it seems that slower tempi have once again become increasingly fashionable over time. Unfortunately, none of the performers considered here who selected faster tempi make a very convincing case for their choice. Yudina passes over this Variation in an almost perfunctory manner; for rarefied music, this approach makes an odd impression, especially for a performer with lofty ideals like Yudina. Rabinovitch uses a very direct sound and a good deal of distracting rubato that doesn't seem motivated by clear musical logic. Mustonen sticks to his more moderate tempo, but experiments with the voicing of chords, again with no obvious plan. Kuerti tries to make something out of the dynamic hairpins, but ends up treating them rather artificially as accents—worse than doing nothing at all. Much the same could be said of Arrau's recording, which may be pure enough in intention, but is unconvincing in effect. Many of these performers tend to delay the quarter notes before the following downbeat (much as in

5. Alfred Brendel, *Music Sounded Out: Essays, Lectures, Interviews, Afterthoughts* (New York: Noonday Press, 1992), p.44.

Variation no.14), rather than playing with direction into the following measure; one finds this approach in the recordings by Rabinovitch, Arrau, Kinderman, and Richter. I find this tendency to be distracting and difficult to justify.

I have already cited a central interpretive dilemma in this Variation: the meaning of dynamic hairpins over individual notes, especially in mm.9–10. An indication like this raises the question whether musical notation is literally prescriptive, or rather suggestive of gesture. In the recordings of more literal-minded interpreters like Arrau (and to a lesser extent Kuerti and Horszowski), the second chord in mm.9 and 10 is simply played louder than the first, producing so peculiar an accent it is difficult to imagine that Beethoven could have intended it. I think we must again consider the late-Beethoven mystique, by which many performers are so keen in their faithfulness to the letter of the musical text that they easily overlook its spirit. The majority of pianists in the sample chose to do little or nothing, playing the chords evenly within the context. Perhaps the hairpins are not so much dynamic indications as they are suggestive of mood, for example, an *espressivo* (as in Brahms or Schoenberg), by way of contrast to the "white" color of the mysterious *pp* section with its harmonic singularities. Many musicians accept hairpins like these as a slight broadening of the tempo and intensity of coloration, and this seems an excellent solution to the problem. It is a pity that none of the recordings offers a very convincing rendition of these details.

Hemiola

The seemingly innocent Variation no.26 conceals a wealth of interpretive challenges. With no tempo indication—only the remark *piacevole*—the tempo and mood are left entirely to the imagination. William Kinderman argues cogently in his monograph that the tempo of the eighth note should be maintained from the previous Variation, in order to reveal the rhythmic relationships in Variation nos.25–28.[6] His contention, while plausible, is not beyond dispute, because of the liberal indication *piacevole*. Tempo choices in the recordings vary wildly, as we might expect, from Kuerti's dreamy 42–44 to the measure all the way to Richter's bustling, étudelike 80, almost a factor of 2 (see Table 2).

The most significant interpretive conundrum in this Variation, however, is the hemiola. The time signature of $\frac{3}{8}$ implies a beat pattern of three groups of two sixteenths (3 x 2) in each measure. The notation of beaming notes into two groups of three (2 x 3) is required because of the hand groupings, but does not imply a

6. See Kinderman, *Beethoven's Diabelli Variations,* pp.111–13.

Table 2: Variation No. 26 Tempi

Performer	Date	tempo by measure	implied meter
edition by von Bülow	1898	72	3/8
Horszowski	1952	54	3/8
Serkin	1957	72	6/16
Yudina	1961	76	6/16
Arrau	1985	54	6/16
Richter	1986	80	3/8
Brendel	1990	63	3/8
Kuerti	1996	42	3/8
Rabinovitch	1996	69	3/8
Scherbakov	1997	60	3/8
Mustonen	1999	52	6/16
Kinderman	2002	58	3/8

pattern of accentuation. The tension between the 3 x 2 and the 2 x 3 creates the interest in the otherwise fairly plain music. Surprisingly, many of our interpreters choose to override the time signature and accent according to the beaming instead. Richter, Yudina, Mustonen, Rabinovitch, and Serkin take this path.

The solution seems dubious. As Brendel writes: "The turning of this $\frac{3}{8}$ variation into a $\frac{2}{8}$ triplet piece [i.e., $\frac{6}{16}$] I can only take as a misunderstanding."[7] Von Bülow elaborates on this point in some detail, and Kinderman, in the liner notes to his own recording, also makes a special point to insist on this interpretation. Unfortunately, his performance of this Variation is rather dry and rhythmically inflexible—not the best recipe for rather straightforward musical material.

The most successful interpretations apply an accent pattern in two groups of three, taking advantage of the ambiguity of the hemiola to vary the shape throughout. In a Variation opening with apparently simplistic arpeggios, variety is most welcome. This consideration also casts doubt on excessively slow tempi like Kuerti's; the Variation doesn't contain material of a profundity that inspires deep philosophical ruminations. I found Horszowski's interpretation the most appealing one to follow an accent pattern of two groups of three; his quiet grace and gently rolling beautiful sound match this Variation's character, and his accentuation is so

7. Brendel, *Music Sounded Out,* p.48.

subtle that the distinctions almost melt away. This performance exemplifies the strongest characteristics of his recording.

Sphinx, Part Two

If there is a single passage in the Variations that harbors the late-Beethoven mystique, it is undoubtedly the transition from E♭ major back to C major at the end of Variation no. 32. While conventional modulating strategies between these two keys exist in abundance, Beethoven opts instead for a very abstract enharmonic reinterpretation of a single augmented chord in a high register. This visionary use of the augmented chord belongs alongside the daring late piano music of Liszt. The psychological effect of this passage—its dramatic change of scenery in a few irrational measures—possesses all the magic of a Schumannesque dream-world.

The passage confronts the interpreter with a wealth of dilemmas. How loud should the first resolution be? How much diminuendo is being required and over what duration? If the augmented chords serve different harmonic functions, is there a different coloration to suggest this change of intonation? Most importantly: How is this passage to be paced within the overall scheme? How much time and space does it require? And how strictly should its tempo be understood?

It is not surprising to find a wide variety of interpretations on these recordings (see Table 1). I have calculated the timings from the impact of the final *sfz* diminished-seventh chord after the cadenza to the first note of the final minuet. The faster recordings—Horszowski, Brendel, and Arrau—tend to maintain a louder dynamic for a longer period of time and avoid the psychological discomfort of the stillness. Brendel's recording seems to me the best paced of these three from the standpoint of dynamics. Like many other performers, he does not give a real *pp* on the D♯-augmented chord, but saves the softest sound for the final E-minor chord. The slowest recording of this transition is the extraordinary forty-eight seconds of Alexandre Rabinovitch—a forty-eight seconds that seem proportionally even longer after his outrageous whirlwind tempo in the fugue of Variation no. 32. Nevertheless, it is a creative vision and a successful one, because he finds communicative power in the very awkwardness of the stillness.

This passage manages to provoke some highly unnatural moments in a few performances, as one comes to expect in Beethoven's more visionary passages. One example is an especially strong *ff* on the first E♭ chord, as in Serkin and Arrau. Although playing this way allows for a larger decrescendo, I cannot imagine that this resolution should be played louder than the shrieking dissonance of the diminished seventh. It sounds rather like a bad edit; after the great pianistic difficulties of the end of the fugue, it might well be just that (though this seems highly

unlikely in the case of musicians of these impeccable ideals). On the other hand, many performers play the entire passage extremely quietly, even though there is no *p* marked until the E♭-augmented chord. This effect is distant and mysterious. Although it appears to contradict the letter of the text, there is reason to believe that it follows its own dramatic logic. One finds this reading in the recordings of Richter, Kuerti, Kinderman, Mustonen, and Yudina. I find the first two of these to be particularly effective renditions.

Concluding with Grace and Sentiment

The concluding Variation may well be the greatest of the entire set, because of its variety and depth of experience, and especially because of its allusion to Beethoven's own Arietta from the Sonata op. 111. With its weighty responsibility of ending this massive work, it is probably the most difficult to interpret. The apparently Mozartean grace of the minuet is already deceptive. One cannot link it very easily to the tradition of minuets from the Classical repertoire. Since these are counted either in a light one to a measure or in a stately, aristocratic three, Beethoven's indication *Tempo di Menuetto moderato* would seem to refer to the latter category, a genre he rarely used, even in his earliest compositions. However, this music doesn't even fit that category easily, because the unusual presence of so many sixteenth notes increases the implied weight of the quarter-note pulse (cf. op. 31, no. 3, movt. III, or op. 54, movt. I, for example, or any Mozart minuet). If, then, this Variation is yet another Beethovenian creation *sui generis,* the performer must find a tempo that is graceful but does not lag (*ma non tirarsi dietro*).

If the traditional "moderate minuet" tempo is actually intended here—a point worthy of debate—then the majority of performances are overwhelmingly too slow.[8] I find especially significant von Bülow's suggestion of ♩ = 80–88, and his

8. A detailed discussion of minuet tempo is beyond the scope of this review. For a prominent source on the topic, the reader may consult Jean-Pierre Marty, *The Tempo Indications of Mozart* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1988). Marty suggests ♩ = 96 for a typical slow minuet. Slower minuets than this are rare in Mozart; Marty indicates ♩ = 80 for "Tempo di Menuetto grazioso" and ♩ = 72 for the slowest of all: "Menuetto cantabile." A similar study was done on Beethoven: Rudolf Kolisch, *Tempo und Charackter in Beethovens Musik,* Musik Konzepte 76/77, ed. Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn (Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 1992). Unfortunately Kolisch's study did not include the "Diabelli" Variations. Kolisch suggests ♩ = 116 for the minuets of op. 22, op. 31, no. 3, and op. 54; clearly this tempo is entirely out of the question here. The closest example in his study is the minuet from the Violin Sonata, op. 30, no. 3, movt. II, "Tempo di Minuetto ma molto moderato e grazioso." Kolisch recommends ♩ = 76; this tempo is in perfect accord with Marty's findings and, in my view, is entirely appropriate here as well.

concern that this tempo might be considered too slow! We should therefore consider faster performances of this minuet with special interest (see Table 3). Unfortunately, many pianists who opted for a fast tempo have taken a rather maverick approach to the entire Variation. We find Rabinovitch utilizing an aggressive touch and self-indulgent rubato, Mustonen poking around hyperactively, and Richter single-mindedly pursuing a consistent tempo devoid of sentiment. The only "mainstream" interpretation at a faster tempo is Horszowski's—to my mind, an entirely successful account. Among the slower performers, Serkin's magisterial interpretation, combined with a tasteful reading of the hairpins, is the most effective. The performances by Brendel, Kinderman, and Arrau seem to drag practically into six beats per measure; this must surely be inimical to the character of any minuet, however stately.

Perhaps no other passage from the entire composition is more revealing of a performer's interpretive vision than the shaping of the different parts of this final Variation. A fairly objective indicator is the relationship of tempi between the sections (see Table 3). The Variation is clearly divided into three parts: the minuet (mm. 1–33), the reference to the Arietta of op. 111 (mm. 34–41), and the coda (mm. 42*ff.*).[9] The three parts contain very different styles of music. Although

Table 3: Variation No. 33 Tempi ♩

Performer	Date	Minuet	M. 34	M. 42	Approach to the ending:
von Bülow ed.	1898	80–88	N/A	N/A	"tranquillo" but discourages rit.
Horszowski	1952	76	69	56	rit. each measure
Serkin	1957	63	60	54	rit. each measure
Yudina	1961	63–66	72	69	determined, unsentimental
Arrau	1985	60	58	48	gradual rit.
Richter	1986	88	88	84	practically metronomic
Brendel	1990	58	52	46	rit. each measure
Kuerti	1996	60–63	46	34?	dreamy and free
Rabinovitch	1996	76	84	69??	lots of rubato
Scherbakov	1997	63	56	46	gradual rit.
Mustonen	1999	88	84	84	staccato
Kinderman	2002	58–60	60	44	gradual rit.

9. See Kinderman, *Beethoven's Diabelli Variations,* pp. 125–30, for a valuable analysis of this Variation.

there are no changes of tempo explicitly marked, changes are, at least, strongly implied. The minuet is marked as a moderate tempo, but concluding a lengthy set of Variations with lightness and grace—as opposed to bombast—is psychologically difficult. The emotional environment is already heightened in m. 34 by the first appearance of static harmony and by the textural reminiscence to op. 111. The apparent sentimentality of the coda comes from its repetition of the I–V bass motif in every measure. This motif acts as yet another reminiscence, for it is common to the "Diabelli" Variations and to op. 111. The majority of performers highlight this motif, quite naturally, by phrasing with a slight ritardando in each measure.

If we begin with a moderate minuet tempo, all these considerations strongly suggest a gradually slackening tempo throughout the Variation. Perhaps that is an implicit meaning behind Beethoven's warning *ma non tirarsi dietro*: "broaden or become sentimental later if you would like, but please don't drag the minuet too slow for dancing." The only performer on the list to conform to all of these ideals is Horszowski. His performance stands out among the collection for its lightness, grace, and elegant shaping, and it makes a strong case for the faster minuet tempo ♩ = 76. All of the performers choosing a slower minuet tempo opted for a slight slackening of tempo throughout the Variation. The most remarkable of the slower performances is Anton Kuerti's dreamy, deeply moving and poetic account of the entire Variation. It is the polar opposite of Richter's single-minded evenness.

A perusal of the chart of performers' choices in this final Variation reveals this Variation to be an extraordinarily accurate barometer of their interpretations of the whole work, which I will review here briefly, in conclusion. The mavericks Olli Mustonen and Alexandre Rabinovitch divert willfully from the indications in the score, the former by employing his favorite staccatissimo throughout, the latter with his extravagant rubato, down to the very last measure. It stands to reason that both of these pianists succeed better with the comical aspects of the work than with the philosophical ones. The strong-willed Russians, Sviatoslav Richter, and Maria Yudina, on the other hand, proceed with great respect for Beethoven's indications, but their respective quests result in highly unusual and divergent visions, more indicative of their own tastes than of any "Russian tradition" for this work. Richter displays impeccably controlled, if rather literal-minded, pianism, and Yudina is doggedly unsentimental throughout, but unfortunately she makes many awkward choices of tempo and articulation. Standing rather apart from the other recordings is Mieczyslaw Horszowski, who performs with elegance and understatement, though not always with great depth, at a faster tempo than today's norm. The three representatives of that norm are Claudio Arrau, William Kinderman, and Konstantin Scherbakov: their performances tend to be slow, serious, and

monumental. I would cite Kinderman's performance as the most compelling of this group; the insight and commitment one finds in his writings are strong characteristics of his recording as well. Although Kuerti's performance clocks in as the slowest of all, his inclinations tend toward the dreamy and poetic rather than the monumental. His is certainly a Romantic vision of the "Diabelli," but I wonder how appropriate this approach can be for thirty-three Variations on a light-hearted theme in C major.

The last two recordings, by Brendel and Serkin, seem to capture best the combination of wit and introspection that the work requires. Brendel's recording reveals a Classical lightness of touch, intelligent pacing, and a tasteful characterization of each Variation, as we can also perceive from his writings on this work. Serkin's Marlboro recording is characterized by a high sense of purpose and minimal tempo distinctions, combined with impressive flashes of astounding virtuosity in the étudelike parts. His final Variations are both emotionally moving and philosophical (and the cooing of birds in the background only adds to the sublimity).

Discography

Arrau, Claudio (1985): Phillips 416 295–2
Brendel, Alfred (1990): Phillips 426 232–2
Horszowski, Miecyslaw (1952): Vox Box CDX 5511
Kinderman, William (2002): Helios CDH55083
Kuerti, Anton (1996): FL 2 4010j
Mustonen, Olli (1999): RCA 74321 61448 2
Rabinovitch, Alexandre (1996): Teldec 4509–95572–2
Richter, Sviatoslav (1986): Phillips 422 416–2
Scherbakov, Konstantin (1997): Naxos 8.554372
Serkin, Rudolf (1957): Masterworks Portrait MPL 44837
Yudina, Maria (1961): Philips Classics 456 994–2

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