

**The Critical Reception  
of Beethoven's Compositions  
by His German Contemporaries,  
Op. 126 to WoO 140**

*Translated and edited by Robin Wallace*

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## FOREWORD

The reviews published here are a continuation of *The Critical Reception of Beethoven's Compositions by His German Contemporaries*. They constitute the remainder of the originally planned fourth volume of the series, the first two volumes of which were published by the University of Nebraska Press in 1999 and 2001.

Whereas the previous installment focused on a single work—the 9th symphony—the reviews collected here cover a much broader range of music, from the epochal late quartets to minor works like the song “Der Kuß,” published as Op. 128 but drafted in the 1790s. It also includes reviews of a small number of Werke ohne Opuszahl (“works without opus number,” listed as WoO in the Kinsky-Halm Beethoven catalogue). The reviews of the quartets include one of the longest and most profound essays in this entire collection: Friedrich Rochlitz’s essay “on the occasion of” the publication of the quartet in C# minor, Op. 131, authored for the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* by its former editor in 1828. Finally, there is an exchange between the Berlin critic Ernst Woldemar and the Leipzig organist C. F. Becker on the merits of Beethoven’s late works, which ranks as the nastiest contribution to the series, particularly on Woldemar’s part.

The collection concludes with a paper I read at the Crosscurrents conference at Yale University in December 2005. This conference was held to honor the retirements of Robert Morgan and Leon Plantinga, the latter of whom served as my dissertation advisor and initially steered me toward studying music criticism. The paper complements the introductory essays to volumes 1 and 2 of the print version of *Critical Reception*, but I also offer it as a historical document in its own right. It appears here exactly as I read it in 2005, reflecting the state of musicology at that point.

Once again I would like to thank Wayne Senner and William Meredith for their central role in initiating this project, and to acknowledge the Retrospective Index to Music Periodicals (RIPM) for permission to copy the music examples as they appeared in the original sources. As in the other installments of this series, information on the dates of composition and publication of Beethoven’s works is based on the new edition of the Kinsky-Halm catalogue edited by Kurt Dorfmueller, Norbert Gertsch, and Julia Ronge. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*



*and Musicians*, second edition, is the default reference source for biographical information. This installment was supported by a generous grant from the University Research Committee at Baylor University.

When this series is completed with the publication of reviews of Opp. 73–124, it will finally make the entire body of German-language Beethoven reception prior to 1830 easily accessible to English-speaking readers.

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## Op. 126. Six Bagatelles for Piano

126.I.

v.d. O . . . r.

“Review.”

*Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 2  
(7 December 1825): 417.<sup>1</sup>

Under this strange and unassuming title the master from time to time gives small keyboard pieces to his admirers that, like nearly everything that flows from his pen, sometimes have no small value. They are not always easy, indeed are sometimes even difficult to perform. A frequent hearing of these sketches is particularly necessary before the true spiritual meaning that may probably lie behind them can be discerned. If one has heard them often, they seem like buds from which sometimes a great deal could probably have been allowed to develop. They must not simply be played, but rather willingly received with true spiritual stimulation. No. I. Andante, con moto, cantabile, e compiacevole. G major. A little arietta, which awakens the emotion that may surround us in spring if we glimpse an apprehensive pair of birds in their nest!—The outing—the true cordiality of the rocking figure in the midst. Along with this, the brightness of the little high notes. No. II. G minor. Has an anxiously fluttering figure and seems to stand in a spiritual relationship with No. I. An aria-like cantabile interrupts the minor in a very lovely manner, but this soon once again flutters on, closing very satisfactorily and intimately. No. III. Andante cantabile e grazioso.—What could this be?—No. IV. is the largest and—the best? It was the most pleasing to this reviewer, at least. The emotions are so definitely and originally sketched out that one cannot mistake the personalities that take part in it. They are castle dwellers from the Scottish highlands, who, in the most powerful B minor dance, leap and stride more than they dance. The B major is an expression of their most heartfelt ease, perhaps heightened by a little glass of champagne. The bagpipe plays therein its familiar, alluring role. For our part, meanwhile, let it suffice to have pointed out how these trifles of our master must probably be taken if one wants to extract their poetic side, and we leave it to those of our readers who want to play these keyboard pieces to find the higher meaning of Nos. V. and VI., or not to find them; for not everyone likes to give pieces of music a definite interpretation. Many prefer to let the beauty

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<sup>1</sup>The bagatelles of Op. 126, in contrast to those of Op. 119, were written over a relatively short period of time, from April to June of 1824. This review and the following both refer to the first edition, which was published by Schott in April 1825.

of a piece of music influence them immediately,<sup>2</sup> without anything further, without exactly arriving at a kind of reflection about it through the imagination. There is nothing to be said against this, and furthermore, masters other than Beethoven can often not be understood in any other way.

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<sup>2</sup>Adolf Bernhard Marx, the editor of the *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, added a footnote here that reads: “When this has not happened first, the idea of the work of art stepping forth on its own freely and easily from the enjoyable effect upon the feelings, the seeking out of the same, may sooner lead to the destruction of artistic comprehension than to its spiritual intensification.”

## 126.2.

### “Brief Notices.”

*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 28  
(18 January 1826): col. 47–48.

Bagatelles? Yes, indeed! But bagatelles by the master Beethoven. They could perhaps be called significant sketches: inventions and productions of a happy hour, tossed off easily, without any more being done in the working out than was necessary to fix the ideas, to point out their potential, and to provide each piece, such as it is, with inner conformity, bearing, and thereby effectiveness. These six more or less short movements contain more that is truly new and completely original, sometimes in the melodies or harmonies themselves, sometimes in their arrangement and form, than many an act of an opera. Strange things, very strange things, suggested by the flaring up of an unusual humor, can be found in them (see, for example, the B major section in No. 4), but their spirit is completely undeniable, even here. On the other hand, we are often surprised by reminiscences of deep melancholy or gloomy seriousness, and these only fit in all the better. The greatest diversity prevails in the little pieces themselves; yet when one takes them all together, the mood is still a happy one. The friends of the master (and who does not belong among them?) will rejoice at this for his own sake, for elsewhere fate has certainly not strewn his life’s journey with roses! —The name of the little work should not lead to the assumption that it can be played at sight, if not by beginners, then by somewhat skilled keyboard players. The notes, with the exception of a few passages, can be, but not the music. Rather, every number needs to be carefully considered beforehand. Since they are all outpourings of a quite particular, if fleeting, disposition or emotion, one must first hear this in them, awaken it in oneself (ideally through playing them repeatedly), and then declaim them accordingly. The player must consequently do with these pieces what a singer does with good songs. Otherwise, in this case, as in the other, little will come across, and much not at all. —Engraving and paper are good.

## Op. 127. String Quartet in E-Flat Major

### 127.I.

“News. Vienna. Musical Diary of the Month of March.”

*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 27

(13 April 1825): col. 246.<sup>1</sup>

*M*iscellaneous. In the course of this month a new quartet in E-flat by our Amphion Beethoven was produced for the first time at Mr. Schuppanzigh’s subscription concerts. Opinions on it are divided, and perhaps the smallest number—the reviewer will not make an exception of himself—understood and completely grasped it. It is, one might say, worked out symphonically and put together in a most artful way, it needs to be heard often, and the performers as well must study it precisely together down to the smallest detail.

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<sup>1</sup>Op. 127, the first of the five epochal “late quartets,” was written in 1824–1825 and was first performed by a quartet led by Ignaz Schuppanzigh on March 6, 1825. On the circumstances surrounding this performance, and the more successful ones by Joseph Böhm and the other three members of Schuppanzigh’s quartet (Karl Holz, Franz Weiss, and Joseph Linke) that followed, see Elliot Forbes, rev. and ed., *Thayer’s Life of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), henceforth Thayer-Forbes, 937–42. See also Robert Adelson, “Beethoven’s String Quartet in E Flat Op. 127: A Study of the First Performances,” *Music and Letters* 79 (1998): 219–43, and John M. Gingerich, “Ignaz Schuppanzigh and Beethoven’s Late Quartets,” *The Musical Quarterly* 93 (2010): 450–513, esp. 468–79, which also include details of the performances that quickly followed by an ensemble led by Joseph Mayseder.

## 127.2.

### “General Musical Informer.”

*Allgemeine Theaterzeitung und Unterhaltungsblatt für Freunde der Kunst, Literatur  
und des geselligen Lebens* 18

(28 April 1825): 212.

Our ingenious Beethoven has once again bequeathed to the musical world a string quartet, which had already been long anticipated, and which was finally produced by Messrs. Schuppanzigh, Holz, Weiß, and Linke in the subscription quartet concerts by the first mentioned. This quartet is of the same type as all classical compositions in the more exalted style; they cannot be as comfortably understood as many others, which for precisely that reason find a larger public, to which the former cannot lay claim. Furthermore, Mr. Schuppanzigh had to hasten his performance if he wanted to give the delayed quartet within the time promised, and thus was not able to have as many rehearsals as were needed, and as were usually held for earlier quartets by Beethoven, as the numerous musicians and amateurs living in Vienna can attest. The result of this performance was the open acknowledgement of almost all those who heard it, professors as well as amateurs, that they had understood little or nothing at all of the course of the tone poem, and that indeed a jealous cover of mist seemed intent on obscuring the latest star of this musical creative genius. Then a steadfast friend of art arranged for a new production of the quartet by the men named above, with the first violin part given to Mr. Professor Böhm, since he had in the meantime played the new quartet for a small group of connoisseurs with particular success. This professor now played the marvelous quartet before the same quite numerous company of artists and connoisseurs twice on the same evening in such a way that nothing was left to be desired, the cover of mist disappeared, and the magnificent artistic structure shone forth in blinding glory.<sup>1</sup> Although Professor Böhm had an easier time of it, since he had heard this composition played by a master, even if imperfectly, in such a way that one must recognize the artist entrusted with Beethoven's spirit,<sup>2</sup> he nevertheless gave an extensive boost to his reputation by the thrice repeated performance of this uncommonly difficult quartet. Such artistic competitions are the greatest gain for art, especially when, as was the case this time, the loser is not defeated, since every unbiased person must acknowledge

<sup>1</sup>See Gingerich, “Ignaz Schuppanzigh and Beethoven's Late Quartets,” 471–72, for details on the chronology of these performances.

<sup>2</sup>In other words, Böhm had the advantage of having heard Schuppanzigh perform the quartet as well as that of having more rehearsal time.

that Mr. Schuppanzigh could not have played this composition better in such a short time. Whether he could and should have kept this production from being thrown together in such haste is another question, which someone better informed may answer if he is so inclined.

### 127.3.

Ludwig Rellstab.<sup>1</sup>

“Free Essays. On Beethoven’s Most Recent Quartet.”

*Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 2

(25 May 1825): 165–66.

I have often actively imagined what impression must have been made upon the contemporaries of great poets and musicians when a new work of a genius, whose right to immortality could already be confirmed in its own time, when perhaps a *Wallenstein*, a *Don Juan*, was announced, and everyone awaited the great manifestation with respectful eagerness. Now I have experienced this emotion as well. I know what it is like for us when an immortal spirit in our midst has created something that will survive for centuries, and hands it over to us as an undeserved gift, since he himself still walks in our midst as a mortal being, who has organs and needs like our own. It takes effort to persuade oneself of the truth; one scarcely believes that one is a witness, a companion of the extraordinary, at which later generations will be astonished. May those to whom the great creations of a Göthe, Schiller, Mozart, Haidn, Beethoven were more than once delivered directly from the workshop recall the impression, and then grant a friendly recognition to the enthusiasm of one born later—then others may still smile ironically. —For my part, I can often scarcely persuade myself that something great can happen so close to us, that we can be the living witnesses of deeds and works that far outlast our small existence and will be towering, glowing peaks of world history. With this doubtful astonishment I have watched the great events of the time pass by me, and thus did I consider the great productions of the geniuses in art and knowledge who came to live by our sides. Father Homer, who knew and felt everything that moves the human heart, expresses this after Hector and Ajax have fought, and sings of the Trojans as they lead their defender back to the walls of Ilium—“And they scarcely believed that he lived.”<sup>2</sup> So I scarcely believed that it was true and possible that I would be refreshed, revived, and uplifted by an inspirational draft from the divine spring directly at the source. The solemn emotion permeated everyone present. Only those who were capable of understanding immortal works of the great man with

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<sup>1</sup>This report by the well-known critic Ludwig Rellstab (1799–1860) appeared between the two sections of his “Travel Report” on a recent visit to Vienna (*Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 3:162–63 and 169, respectively), and presumably reflects his reaction to hearing Op. 127 at one of the original performances, probably one of those led by either Böhm or Mayseder.

<sup>2</sup>The original review contained this footnote. “Il., VII, 310. — — ἀελλπτεόντες σόνον είναι.”



true exaltation and devotion had come together. A deep, expectant, and pensive silence prevailed in the room, where four outstanding artists had come together to bring Beethoven's most recent work to life for us. God be thanked that that motley, thoughtless crowd that hears Beethoven and Rossini promiscuously, with equal enchantment or, even better, with equal madness, was far away. On the contrary, one was aware of being in a gathering that consisted of friends. Indeed, to me there was something deeply moving in the fact that his brother and his other close relatives were present, and felt fortunate and proud just to be able to bear the great name. It was as though they took the place of the poet himself, whom a sublimely severe injury excluded from the paradise into which he led us. Just as the garment, the sword of a great man is already a relic for us, should not those whom nature placed so near to him also stand with us in the radiance of his works? Indeed, the person of a great man is only his image—for who grasps the spirit! Is it also near to one who understands him from a distance—and what would the body be to him who does not discern the spirit?

No one probably expects me to express a judgment about the work here—or even an opinion. In any case, my impression was such that I have only emotional thanks to express, no presumptuous criticism. Just let this much be said: the entire work is the expression of the most noble soul, of the purest enthusiasm for art itself, no trace of anything being there to please anyone other than himself. Genius sought only to realize itself—anything else was indifferent, was nothing. And so we wish to accept it as well. Such works cannot and may not be otherwise. What may appear strange, dark, confused in them finds its clarity and necessity in the soul of the creator, and there we must look for instruction. Whoever is capable of entering into the soul of the man who for fourteen pain-filled years has stood alone within the world of life and joy; whoever is capable of imagining himself without that sense from which arises the most noble, purest spiritual enjoyment; whoever understands that even the most powerful genius succumbs and must succumb to finite determinations; will also wish that even for Beethoven, aural memory must become weaker, the lively colors of the tones gradually fade. Much in his heavenly imagination is thus probably otherwise than in our earthly ear that hears only with difficulty. And without presuming a right, a voice for ourselves, we may step back in humility and say that a genius who has suffered an essential change and disturbance of his organization must conceive and create differently than he who still stands and walks powerfully and unimpaired in the fresh, lively world of the senses. And because of this, we do not wish to lay hands with undue haste on whatever appears strange and incomprehensible to us, but rather to acknowledge that, where there is no exact common measure, no accurate evaluation can take place. —No one should believe from what has been said, though, that for this reason perhaps the most recent work of Beethoven was not commensurable with our understanding. No, thank heaven, there is still enough of a connection between him and us that we have a common language for our emotions, even if they are not always comprehensible in their last and finest interrelationships—and where, strictly speaking, is that ever the case with even two people? —And in this language Beethoven has spoken to us in an astonishing and deeply gripping way. These are serious words that he has to say to us; they are the calm expressions of the pain against which a deeply wounded, but just as powerfully hopeful

soul has struggled. It is the manly grief of a Laokoon that winds throughout the whole work with a secret thread, even when, in a deep Scherzo, it seems to mock itself, and for that very reason grips our breast all the more deeply and convulsively. —You, lofty genius, who has given us something so divinely blessed, should you alone be the one who suffers? No, from such a spring flows eternal strengthening and elevation, and you will sustain, comfort, and elevate yourself, even if the ray of light of the sweet sounds that you marvelously create will never again penetrate the mute, soundless night of your earthly life.

**127.4**

**“Announcement.”**

***Caecilia 2 (Intelligence-page no. 11)***

**(August 1825): 31.**

(Also in various arrangements)

A part from the aforementioned three grand works of our immortal Beethoven,<sup>1</sup> the undersigned firm also has, fortunately for all friends of music, yet a fourth grand work of his muse to report as appearing at our firm. It is the most recent quartet of the always incomprehensible master of our time, praised everywhere as the highest pinnacle of instrumental music. Full of the most elevated enchantment, of powerful and difficult passages, of the most overpowering flight of melody, the most magical harmonic shifts, it flows unceasingly on. Suddenly the impulse seems to be restrained in its progress by insurmountable obstacles; it meanders like a forest stream raging in the depths of a ravine, until a bright side quickly arises and it now resumes its virile pace through a quick, bold ending, and carries all listeners away with it. It is that work about which we read in print that the most splendid quartet players in Vienna were frightened by its difficulties, set it aside for a while, but later, after many rehearsals, acknowledged and praised it publicly as Beethoven's best work.

We are releasing it in the following forms:

- In full score,
- In individual parts,
- In keyboard reduction for 4 hands,
- In keyboard reduction for 2 hands,

and also in various other forms.

All of this will be released before the end of this year. We will make it our highest duty to publish such unsurpassable work in correct and brilliant engravings.

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<sup>1</sup>Opp. 123, 124, and 125.

## 127.5.

J. Adrien-Lafasge.

*Caecilia* 5  
(August 1826): 145–46.<sup>1</sup>

Accustomed to not speaking about something until I am precisely familiar with it, I often find myself hesitating to call attention to pieces of music that have been transmitted to me, preferring to allow the announcement of a work to be delayed, rather than to pronounce a premature judgment that would mislead those who wished to rely on it, and could either provide the composer and publisher an undeserved advantage or give them undeserved blame.

This was particularly the case for me in considering the present quartet. Since it is not written in score,<sup>2</sup> it was necessary for me to hear it declaimed in order to be able to take account of it. At the first performance, due to mistakes on the part of the players, everything, I admit, emerged so confusedly that no one was able to discover even one of the beauties that we are accustomed to finding so abundantly in Beethoven's other works. The parts abound in difficulties that at first glance seem insurmountable; the violoncello part embarrassed one of the foremost players in the capital. —Once these difficulties are surmounted, though, one also finds in this quartet everything that distinguishes the best pieces in this genre. Even more than in his other works, Beethoven has summoned up richness of modulation, the most beautiful forms of accompaniment—in short, all the depths of harmony. Nothing is ordinary in this work, so rich in harmonic surprises, where the composer seems to invent new tonalities with the voice leading.

We must therefore warn amateurs who want to practice this quartet (and everyone who wants to lay claim to being educated musically should acquire it) not to be frightened off by the effect, which at first is odd, but in fact is only original. A work like this can only be

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<sup>1</sup>This report is dated Paris, June 1826, and refers to Parisian edition of Op. 127, issued by Schott simultaneously with the one issued at Mainz in June 1826. In the title for the article it is incorrectly listed as “Oeuvre 129.” The author is Juste-Adrien Lenoir de Lafage (1805–1862), who at this time was a teacher of solfège and singing in Paris. He later wrote extensively on theoretical topics and contributed articles to *Revue musicale*, *Tablettes universelles*, *Gazetta musicale di Milano*, and many other journals. With A. E. Choron, he published an encyclopedia of music. His compositions include both instrumental and vocal works, the latter primarily sacred. See F. J. Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de la musique*, 2nd ed., vol. 5 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1863), 160–62.

<sup>2</sup>The original review contained this footnote: “The score is also now in press. The Editor.”

grasped, by players and listeners alike, after several repetitions. I know a piece by Feska that I have already heard repeatedly but have not yet fathomed, and yet I am almost certain that it is good.

In Vienna, very accomplished quartet players are supposed to have abandoned this quartet as all too difficult. Later, however, after they took it up again and studied it, they declared it the most perfect work of this great composer. —True artists will no more acknowledge pieces as unperformable than our gallants acknowledge unclimbable fortifications or unbeatable enemies.

Perhaps I will yet return to Beethoven in a proper article, in order to characterize the uniqueness of this magnificent talent in particular, to which purpose his *Missa Solemnis* for double choir will serve me as text.

Paris, June 1826.

## 127.6.

Gottfried Weber.

*Caecilia* 5

(November 1826): 239–43.<sup>1</sup>

(With arrangement for piano four-hands)

In accordance with the value of the work and its master, public voices both native and foreign have already expressed themselves sufficiently concerning the worth and unique qualities of the present composition in itself, including recently in this journal (p. 145 above).<sup>2</sup> All judgments about it are in agreement that this, like all more recent compositions of Beethoven, goes far beyond what is customary, while in general, often and with sufficient praise, the fantasy that blows through this tone poet's more recent works is called colossal, gigantic, sometimes also eccentric and so forth.

As much as our feelings, as well as our conviction, may far prefer Beethoven's earlier muse to his present one, in both a technical and an aesthetic sense, we are not therefore so one-sided as not to recognize and to honor the grandiose ardor of this last one, and the mastery that still always gleams through the often singular breadth and abundance.

For not every crossing is a real step forward. Thus, in any event, it is most interesting to see a great master testing the boundaries of what is possible and admissible in the realm of art,

<sup>1</sup>This review refers primarily to the Mainz editions of Op. 127 and references the score edition and the piano four-hand arrangement advertised in review 127.3, above.

<sup>2</sup>See review 127.4, above.

<sup>3</sup>The original review contained this footnote: "If we say too much here, whether further steps forward would truly constitute desirable progress, or whether steps backward from here would constitute genuine progress in the right direction—this may be answered by the following examples:"



FIGURE 1. *Op. 127, 1st movement, mm. 107–117*

to see him extending his flight close to these and even perhaps beyond them,<sup>3</sup> as though to test what our ear can ultimately bear, what sharply corrosive clashes the musical ear can ultimately accustom itself to understanding and enduring, through what involved tonal mazes it learns to find its way to the end and then even to take pleasure. In the process, he also shames narrow-minded pedants and champions of theoretical rules, whose miserable trading in laws and prohibitions is in reality refuted and rendered invalid by the actions of highly accredited masters.

Now it is unnecessary, considering the aforementioned general recognition already publicly accorded to the work in question, to say even more about it here, or perhaps to enumerate details from it, which can always give only a completely inadequate idea of the whole, whose value in just this instance lies primarily in the totality of the outpouring, —or perhaps to give a dry anatomical description of the framework of the whole, and, according to customary review procedure, to enumerate fully that it modulates into X major for so and so many measures, going from there by means of the Y chord into Z minor, in 4/4 meter, here *pianissimo*, there *forte*, etc. etc.—from all of which nobody can form a conception of the essence of the



FIGURE 1. (cont'd.)



FIGURE 2. *Op. 127, 4th movement, mm. 5–13, 90–97, and 248–53, reduction to two staves*

work; —or perhaps to paraphrase what we felt during our consideration of the work in a poetic image—all of which is in any case not our style and manner. If everything of this kind is not at least exhausting in itself, particularly here, and also superfluous, due to the recognition already publicly accorded; —there remains for us only to say a few words about the style and manner of the edition of the work.

In this regard it is first and foremost gratifying that it is also given to us in score, in which form it is both accessible for study and also a most rewarding aid and facilitation for performance, particularly in view of the significant difficulty of execution (which we nevertheless would not want to call as completely superhumanly difficult as other public reports have described it). In any case, examination of the score will serve to reassure many players in many cases, and to remove occasional doubts as to whether this or that passage was incorrectly written or incorrectly understood: doubts which, for example, may easily arise from passages of the kind illustrated earlier and from many similar ones. — —

The large octavo format of the score is pleasant and comfortable; engraving, printing, and paper praiseworthy.

The quartet was engraved twice in individual parts: once at the principal firm in Mainz, once expressly for the branch in Paris. It goes without saying that both editions are fully identical, except that for Paris it was found necessary to add the epithet *Grand* to the title.

The arrangement for pianoforte four hands was prepared by the estimable arranger with insight and taste, and is as a whole less difficult to perform than the work in its original form, so that many passages that are not easy as a violin quartet, and that in any case will seldom be heard with full clarity and unambiguously, emerged for us much more decisively and clearly on the pianoforte, which has fixed pitches and is in many regards easier to handle.



## 127.7.

**Ignaz Xaver von Seyfried.**

**“Vienna in the Year 1825,”**

*Caecilia* 3

**(October 1825): 241–47.**

(Mentioned: Op. 123, *Missa Solemnis*; Op. 124, Overture “The Consecration of the House”; Op. 125, Symphony no. 9)

The impulse given to musical art in this capital city by the spectacle-loving emperors, by the first Leopold, the first Joseph, Karl VI, and the great regent Maria Theresia, long ago raised it to be the musical center of Germany, and later as well, with diminished support and participation of the court, the place where Haydn, Mozart lived, Beethoven, despite unfavorable circumstances, still prefers to stay, maintained the place of honor in German art.

The fact that music can rejoice in general interest in Vienna, that one nowhere finds united so many significant artists and amateurs, and, finally, that composers and virtuosos are not, as in England, simply tolerated as artisans for the better classes, or, as in other countries, seen as brilliant producers of an agreeable nothing, of less value than every pen-biting little writer in a chancellery or a bureau, but rather are truly treasured, well received and valued as men of talent and special gifts, indisputably contributed greatly to this. Therefore, Vienna is the principal gathering place for composers. They can find a larger field of activity, and in any case greater pecuniary advantages, elsewhere, but the comfortable life, as free as the wind, binds them with secret ties. Nowhere is to be found such stimulus, such competition, nowhere are the delicate blossoms of taste so much on display, and nearly all composers who leave Vienna long to return, for many must recognize that their art as well has become remote.

However, a disadvantage certainly arises from this generalized musical impulse. I mean musical fashion, and this prevails in Vienna, every day expanding its domain. Thus Ries, even Hummel, have almost faded away, Cramer, Leidesdorf,<sup>1</sup> et al. completely, and for more than a year Carl Czerny’s works have been bought almost exclusively. Many others certainly sprouted and put forth sound branches, Spohr, Maria Weber as keyboard composer, et al., but they never became the going thing, though treasured and valued by the true connoisseurs as they deserved to be. Beethoven’s magnificent keyboard compositions are known by only a

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<sup>1</sup>Johann Baptist Cramer (1771–1858) was one of the most prominent pianists of his day, and a prolific composer of keyboard works. Maximilian Josef (also referred to as M. F.) Leidesdorf (ca. 1780–1840) was a Viennese piano virtuoso, composer, and publisher who wrote music in many different genres. A biographical sketch appears in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 42: 895. As Seyfried notes, even in 1825 these two men had faded into obscurity compared to the others he mentions.

few of our younger keyboard virtuosos, for whom regulated leaps of the fingers count for more than genius, mechanical brilliance for more than melody and depth of feeling, and fashionable ornamentations and theatrical effects for more than artistic bearing and harmonic soundness. —I have mentioned pianoforte players here exclusively, for the corruption of this instrument, promoted in Vienna to the point of excess and loathing, exceeds that of the others, and everything strives for effect, must so strive, as long as the hands of the surfeited listeners are set in motion, their applause loud.

So we have now reached that point where, in the domain of higher musical art, in oratorios and symphonies, the highest scarcely pleases any more, and that only when it is performed most precisely and powerfully. Thus court counselor Mosel capably put together the oratorio Jephtha from various works of Händel, artfully augmenting the instrumental accompaniment and producing a pleasing whole, wherein only the absence of capable voices not trained in Rossinian coloratura was felt.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Mozart's symphonies in E-flat, in G minor, in C major with the fugue,<sup>3</sup> particularly, however, Beethoven's inspired creations, excited loud enthusiasm; on the whole, however, interest in compositions of this kind decreased significantly, and the disciple of art who treads this path, unrewarded for his efforts, without profit, often without applause, has to struggle with unspeakable difficulties just in order to bring his work to performance.

A demonstration of what has been said, and a lamentable one, is provided by the results of the performances given by Beethoven in the previous year, in which his new magnificent symphony, an overture and a part of his second mass were given. At the first performance in the Kärntnerthor theater, the income was 2250 fl. 57 kr. W. W. (250 Gulden make 100 silver Gulden). The expenses were nearly 1900 fl.; thus, less than 400 fl. W. W. remained. The ingenious master was overwhelmed with applause and testimonials of honor, but *molto onore, poco contante*.<sup>4</sup>

On the whole, the upper nobility (there are honorable exceptions) is more inclined toward the foreign, and more indifferent to the local, than ever before; why does not concern us here. Thus many called Der Freischütz tasteless trash with unmelodic, Germanic music, while they adored Rossini's Zelmira.<sup>5</sup> Thus it happened that a flat French parody of Göthe's Werther, performed by dilettantes in the highest circles, made a *furore*. Thus does it finally

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<sup>2</sup>Performances of Handel's *Jephtha*, translated and reorchestrated by Ignaz Franz von Mosel (1772–1844), who would later be one of the three chief mourners at Beethoven's funeral, were given at the Burgtheater in Vienna on 22 and 23 December 1824. A very favorable report on this performance appears in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 27, col. 45; it also mentions the inadequacy of voices trained to sing Rossini. Further performances on 27 and 28 March are noted in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 27: 246, and the work was frequently performed throughout Germany over the next two decades.

<sup>3</sup>This presumably refers to Mozart's last three symphonies, K. 543, 550, and 551. The final movement of the "Jupiter" symphony, while not a fugue in the strict sense, uses fugal procedures extensively.

<sup>4</sup>Italian for "much honor, little cash."

<sup>5</sup>Weber's *Der Freischütz* received its Viennese premiere at the Hofoper in November 1821 (*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 24:12). Rossini's *Zelmira* premiered on 13 April 1822 (*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 24: 349). The reports on these performances in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* do not necessarily support Seyfried's claim that the Viennese preferred the Rossini.

come about that German opera is undone, and the foreigner in Vienna in general has no opportunity to hear any opera worthy of mention.

This is not the place to speak of Barbaja's undertaking, which has now gone to its grave.<sup>6</sup> On the whole it deserves more praise than blame; Duport's direction, in particular, was energetic, active, consequential. But the appearance of the first Italian singers upon our stage naturally had to pamper the public through its high excellence. After Fodor,<sup>7</sup> a Grünbaum, a Waldmüller disappeared as though into darkness, even while gathering foreign laurels; after Lablache,<sup>8</sup> nobody wanted to hear Forti<sup>9</sup> sing. Thus, most sought out employment on foreign stages, and the Viennese, like bad landlords surfeited with expensive delicacies, now have only potatoes to eat.

In general, it can now hardly be imagined how a new German opera can come together anymore. The negotiations with Barbaja, who sticks with his high demands, have broken off; Franz von Holbein<sup>10</sup> will take no caution; singers,<sup>11</sup> orchestra, and in particular the splendid choir have scattered to all four corners of the world; and thus the theaters at the Kärntner gate and on the Vienna<sup>12</sup> have been closed for a long time, to the great sorrow of all friends of music, but perhaps also to the good of art, which after long privation will find easy admittance. —This, however, lies in the character of our Viennese. Already the best operas, the best Italian singers no longer pleased. The splendid Barber, the grandiose Othello<sup>13</sup> left people cold and no longer filled the house. Already the public was beginning to look at the inner content of operas, a deathblow for them; —and now they no longer hear anything, even if they clap ever so patiently at the jokes of Mr. Hepp, the singing of Dlle. Heckermann,<sup>14</sup> both members of the suburban theater, who desecrate the boards that Fodor, Lablache, Donzelli<sup>15</sup> have just relinquished.

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<sup>6</sup>The Italian impresario Domenico Barbaia (ca. 1778–1841) managed both the Kärntnertortheater and the Theater an der Wien from 1821 to 1828. He appears to have been one of the primary forces behind the Viennese enthusiasm for Rossini in the 1820s.

<sup>7</sup>The French soprano Joséphine Fodor-Mainvielle (1789–1879) introduced to Vienna the role of Semiramide in Rossini's opera of that name.

<sup>8</sup>The Italian bass Luigi Lablache (1794–1858) performed the role of Assur in *Semiramide* at the Kärntnertortheater.

<sup>9</sup>Anton Forti (1750–1859), despite his Italian surname, was a native of Vienna who had been a familiar presence on operatic stages there for a decade and a half.

<sup>10</sup>Franz von Holbein was an opera director and prominent librettist; he wrote texts for E. T. A. Hoffmann, Adalbert Gyrowetz, and several other composers.

<sup>11</sup>The German reads "Sänger, Sängerinnen," indicating singers of both sexes.

<sup>12</sup>That is, the Kärntnertortheater and the Theater an der Wien.

<sup>13</sup>That is, Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (1816, originally titled *Almaviva, ossia l'inutile precauzione*) and *Otello, ossia il moro di Venezia* (1816).

<sup>14</sup>Heckermann (first name unknown) is cited repeatedly in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* correspondence reports over a four-year period, from late 1823 to early 1827, in connection with her performances primarily at the Josephstädter Theater. Her roles included Agathe in *Der Freischütz* and Emmeline in Weigl's *Die Schweizerfamilie*.

<sup>15</sup>Domenico Donzelli (1790–1873) was a prominent Italian tenor. Rossini composed the male title role in *Torvaldo e Dorliska* for him, as did Mercadante in *Elisa e Claudio*, whose premiere in 1821 was one of Donzelli's greatest successes. He also sang Pollione at the first performance of Bellini's *Norma* in 1831. See K. J. Kutsch and Leo Riemens, *Großes Sängerlexikon* (Bern: A. Francke, 1987), 770–71.

No one should be surprised that church music cannot exactly blossom in such circumstances. However, talents who bestowed great works on the public are also missing. A mass set with harmonic correctness, where at the appropriate point a contrapuntally well-conducted fugue, let alone several, establish themselves, where the *Gloria* sounds noisy, the *Benedictus* gentle, the *Qui tollis* and *Agnus* sad, is often nothing other than a factory product according to an established model, and we probably get to hear enough of this kind of thing. But the truly churchly is disappearing more and more, and where should the disposition originate that brings to light the simply moving, the solemnly festive, the grandly exalted? — Our worthy Capellmeister Weigl<sup>16</sup> is now writing a mass, for which we are the more eager, since he is at least thinking correctly about it in theory.

The grand musical institution, the so-called grand musical union, vegetates on with its conservatory, only the apathy of the public has seized it as well, anarchy and inactivity crippled it. A pair of professors have produced useful students, but the whole needs a rebirth and better statutes, administered with strength rather than with indifference. In general, capable singing teachers are lacking. The Italian singer Ciccimarra,<sup>17</sup> who in a short time prepared several singers, both male and female,<sup>18</sup> who were at least methodologically well trained, demonstrates what a single one is capable of doing to satisfy the public. Such a teacher is completely lacking at the conservatory.

What must nevertheless comfort the Viennese, despite all the complaints this reporter has expressed about the decay of art, is the fact that even now all of our musical talents, even the least of them, have pleased extraordinarily in other countries, whereby our relative worth is at least established beyond doubt; as to our absolute worth, we are allowed modest doubts.

The greatest concern is instilled by the fact that, in general, the quiet, tranquil enjoyment of art, of the frequent coming together of artists and significant dilettantes in order to make music, where there is less concern for the production itself than for what is produced, is falling ever more into decline and decay. Quartet entertainments have almost entirely ceased. Even those given by Schuppanzigh leave us cold in the end, part of the blame for which can be ascribed to the fact that newly learned works went rather poorly due to insufficient rehearsals, while older ones, despite the admirable ensemble playing, lost more than they won through great arbitrariness and the frequent use of tempo rubato. For this reason the artist Joseph Böhm, supported by Schuppanzigh's associates, gave a good performance of the new, masterly quartet of Beethoven, a work written entirely in the spirit of his new symphony and written after it, to a select audience at the request of the author, who was rightfully displeased with the earlier performance, and gained a new advantage for art.<sup>19</sup>

I am all the more glad to be silent about the remaining concerts, since I do not wish to supply a diary and thus have neither the obligation to dispose tediously of what is tedious nor,

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<sup>16</sup>Joseph Weigl (1766–1846) composed a large number of operas and a smaller but significant amount of sacred music.

<sup>17</sup>Giuseppe Ciccimarra (1790–1836) was an Italian tenor closely associated with Rossini's operas.

<sup>18</sup>The German again specifies "Sänger und Sängerinnen."

<sup>19</sup>See review 27.1, above, note 1.

what is even less agreeable, to attend the abundant productions of this sort. Style of these concerts, listenership, invitations by the concert givers to the paying public, distribution of the free tickets to the friends of music who do not pay, all of this moves in such cases, with mediocre talents, in eternal uniformity, to speak with Schiller, and never has anything to offer. Whoever wants to make a good concert in Vienna without great personal exertion must have a very celebrated name. Unanimous applause is easier to win.

I have probably said enough already, but does not one cause of this ruin lie in the very fact that nowadays everything is discussed so broadly and extensively? Whoever loves the truth keeps his precious secret and reveals it to his best friend only with great embarrassment; only the dandy or the fool bestows his confidence on all his acquaintances, and thereby annihilates step by step the fleeting fire in his breast. Thus I wish humbly to beg Polihymnia's forgiveness for having chattered so much about her; may she grant me her best gift, receptivity for the beautiful, understanding, and heartfelt love of the works of her chosen ones, so that I may not forsake the true path.

127.8.

v.d. O...r.

“Review.”

*Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 4

(24 January 1827): 25–27.

One must become accustomed, with the most recent works of this great musical artist, to reserving one’s judgment after the first three to six hearings; not, perhaps, because it is Beethoven, the celebrated one, from whom the work comes, and as such he already evokes a good opinion by himself, or because other celebrated men will publicly judge his work favorably and laudatorily, —but rather because one customarily will find it no small problem to grasp the work’s spirit when it begins if one was ready at the beginning to decide against it, even believing that one held the proof in one’s hands, daring to explain individual passages as harmonic nonsense or as outbreaks of a strange mood that aims to do forbidden things just for the sake of novelty, or deliberately to make an impression or to be disconcerting. —For all that, just such works by Beethoven are difficult going. As soon as one just knows that a new Beethoven has approached the simple hearth of the house, one pushes back all one’s favorite inclinations, probably indeed all one’s professional transactions, in order at first to hear only whether the wind that wishes to blow upon the willing ship of the soul, and on its sail, the emotions, blows northeast or southwest. —And behold, after the first playthrough, one rises unwillingly, has heard nothing, though having seen everything; has felt nothing, though elasticity of feeling was not lacking—I would rather go walking high up on the lakeside; at least there I know what I’m seeing, and if I feel, I know that I feel, and I hear that I am hearing something. Of what use to me is the



FIGURE 3. *Op. 127, 2nd movement, mm. 39–41, slightly inaccurate combination of the first and second violin parts*

that certainly resounds up on the mountain, and however it goes after that? It would not have occurred to me again, if the uppermost branches of the beech tree did not continually rock so companionably and affably in the evening breeze and in freedom. —And from my two hours of effort, I have nothing further to enjoy! —Does this reward our effort; is this the thanks that Beethoven gives his performers for their exertions? Why does the man only write this way, and not otherwise! How many ugly passages I had to assimilate, contrary to the ear and to all beauty! The man takes useless trouble, he is finished and no longer knows anything. —He is deaf and can no longer hear; can he play the violin? I can scarcely believe; how ponderously high everything lies, how clumsy it sounds; he should learn to play the violin, etc.

One returns home. —For all that, the passage is beautiful, that must be true, and one knows from this that He wrote it, something like this by somebody else —

How did that cadence go, quite unusually animated. —So gigantic. —And an unusual finale theme:



FIGURE 4. *Op. 127, 4th movement, mm. 5–12, reduction to two staves with added double bar at the end*

and it seems to be capably worked out, how inevitably do the voices flow, as though it were nothing, and yet there they are. And the knocking countersubject:

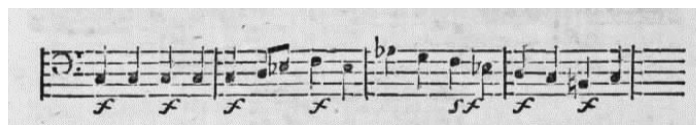


FIGURE 5. *Op. 127, 4th movement, mm 111–14, slightly inaccurate transcription of the cello part*

The thing does seem worth the effort. —One must hear it more often. Once again, then. —One must go through it à quatre mains<sup>1</sup> as well, one movement a week quite regularly. —

Thus, one unintentionally falls into the master's sphere of influence, where one continually notices more lines and figurations that take hold of the soul, so that one cannot let go of

<sup>1</sup>French for “with four hands”—that is, at the piano with two players.

them. The uncomfortable harmonies are then the white streaks of the milky way, known only by telescope, or rather not known, which is all the same. It is enough that stars of all magnitudes celebrate their quiet, solemn progress through the expansive, magical horizon, and one joyfully recognizes the creative genius in darkness and light.

The pompous little *Maestoso* at the beginning, which from time to time strikes again into the sensible, quiet round dance of the first movement, is like a promise of the sweetness and novelty that the first movement will bestow. The theme:



FIGURE 6. *Op. 127, 1st movement, mm. 7-10, first violin part*

is a blessed embrace full of youth and grace, a sound of nature, which does not die out and which brings forth significant things, and still moves scarcely perceptibly through the most heterogeneous ideas that follow. The restful *Adagio* lies nearly still, like a lake that has life within it. Upon it moves that lovely *Andante* already mentioned, as rich and fresh as clusters on the shore. Another side of the region is traveled through (return of the *Adagio*) and even more worked-out pictures of this motion swim up and down in the longer *Andante*, which concludes the second part. A baroque scherzo at least entertains the players, just as in general such pieces of music by this composer can very often be called the most entertaining, which correspond least to the everyday demands of what one calls stereotypically beautiful. It is well known, however, that these so-called beauties of music not infrequently awaken satiety and boredom, those two principal enemies of pieces of music, which Beethoven quite particularly flees and avoids. Where he is not beautiful, at least he is interesting. A *Presto* in E flat minor interrupts the antique scherzo with an overpowering, strange melody that one fears almost as much as one loves it. —

This much is certain: that Beethoven, in this piece of music, has given something even grander than in his four last grand quartets, which is saying a lot. The voice-leading is admirably self-sufficient in each of the four voices. To be sure, harsh and striking conflicts with the harmony arise at several passages from this almost single-minded voice-leading, which raise doubts particularly “when seen.” Often the passages and ideas of the movements are tightened up to the point that we perceive them as unlovely, and one nevertheless cannot get free from them, and would not want to miss these either. What power does this spirit exercise upon others! How similar are his works in this regard to those of a celebrated German poet. But where will that lead? Many of these and similar reflections, however, must fade when one imagines oneself within the individual life and tone poetry of this spirit, who in any case does not have the intention of composing in this manner, but whose spirit and inspiration bring him upon paths that can be compared to those of John in the Apocalypse. This musical language was certainly most naturally suited to his subjectivity; he is certainly surprised when even his admirers begin to call out: “non plus ultra!”<sup>2</sup> —For him this piece of music is certainly more charming and more valuable than his loveliest youthful perceptions. He may himself

<sup>2</sup>Late classical Latin: “a point beyond which it is impossible to go; a peak of artistic achievement.”



be surprised if in critical journals isolated passages are displayed that by themselves look like monsters, as if one were cut out the head of the seated boy from Raphael's *Transfiguration*, and say: this head is not beautiful. —Herein one must cede the field to Beethoven, as a great tone poet, simply because he considers it good to color his bright points thus, and not otherwise. What else can we do? —Cease to enjoy his creations? —Who, indeed, could do that! He has gained too much access to the souls of his contemporaries, and will gain even more in later generations. What good are our words, if he is working magic? He does not let himself be disturbed; he does not once write a counter-critique, in which he could demonstrate ad oculos<sup>3</sup> that a marshy region that engenders foggy forms is also a landscape, that the creaking of a primeval tree tossed by a storm is also a music, that the useless, perhaps evil plans of a brooding night conversation between two robbers in a decayed stone fortress, their desolate laughing and bellowing, is also the material for a scherzo etc. etc. Stop playing Beethoven; this advice must be given to everyone who is dissatisfied with his unloveliness, even if satisfied with his beauties.

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<sup>3</sup>Latin: “by or to the eye.”

## 127.9

S.

### “Brief Evaluations.”

*Allgemeine Musikzeitung zur Beförderung der theoretischen und praktischen Tonkunst  
für Musiker und für Freunde der Musik überhaupt* 1

(10 November 1827): col. 303–4.

This quartet is one of the last works of the now deceased celebrated master of notes van Beethoven, and for this reason alone a noteworthy appearance. But it may be significant in another regard as well. The judgments about the last works of this master are, in general, very diverse, indeed often self-contradictory. Some say that one can find nothing more beautiful and magnificent than precisely the quartet mentioned here; it is the most elevated thing that musical art can produce. Others, on the other hand, say no, everything here is unclear, everything chaotic; there is not even any clear idea to bring out; indeed, the generally accepted rules are sinned against in every measure; the composer, who is, after all, deaf, must indeed have been mad when he called this piece of music to life. One must not offer something like this to ignorant people; they certainly do not know what to make of it. It is certainly also tied up with so endlessly many difficulties that it can hardly be accurately performed, etc. Now, when one hears these judgments that are so diverse and so contradictory, hears them often even from acknowledged artists, how should one respond? In our opinion, it follows quite naturally from this that something quite out of the ordinary is to be sought here, but that it is worth the effort once again to inquire, to search and to examine how the matter actually stands. This much is certain when it is said that something is by Beethoven: people come from all over to hear something, to be able to pass judgment on it. Indeed, even those very people who would be glad to find fault always come back again and again to hear what they have already heard, in order to be sure of themselves. Many, however, are brought by repeated hearing to the point where they judge more leniently; indeed, many are even completely converted by it, and from being fault-finders they become passionate adherents.

Whoever is even somewhat familiar with the musical impulse that has taken shape in bigger and smaller cities in Germany will certainly have had such and similar experiences with pieces by Beethoven. What necessarily follows, however, from such experiences? Incontestably, that a certain something is to be found there that is of significance. Where there is nothing, one seeks nothing. But this is also certain: Beethoven's music, particularly the most recent, is not easy to understand. Whoever hears it for the first time usually does not know

how to find one's way around, does not yet know how to pass judgment. Therefore, one must necessarily hear it several times and examine it precisely. However, it strongly invites one to do this, and one gladly returns to it on one's own. For this purpose, however, it is also good to hear it in various forms, since in this way much becomes clear for the first time.

Everything said here applies completely to the work by Beethoven announced here. We strongly wish that no-one may allow himself to judge hastily either for or against it without examination. Let him study it with all the diligence that opportunity allows him. If it is played as a quartet, he can follow the very appropriately arranged score. The arrangement for keyboard four-hands is also very well done.

The publishers have fitted out the work magnificently, as it deserves. It will bring everyone joy to possess it in his music collection.

127.10

“Brief Notices.”

*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 30

(23 April 1828): col. 284.<sup>1</sup>

(Arrangement for keyboard and soprano voice)

Beethoven's remarks in a letter from Baden near Vienna on 17 September 1824, which will certainly be interesting to many, have already been printed in the 24th book of *Cäcilia*, p. 311.<sup>2</sup> Worthy of note is the artist's expression: “It seems to me as if I had scarcely written a few notes.” —The song is taken from his quartet-Adagio, No. 127, in A-flat major,<sup>3</sup> and a passable text has been underlaid to it. If the strange blending together of the notes can be brought off far more delicately and fluently on string instruments than is possible on the fortepiano, with good declamation, elevated by the charm of the voice, it will nevertheless bring about a distinctive effect in this form and in such a combination.

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<sup>1</sup>This and the following review, 127.11, refer to an anonymous arrangement of the theme of the second movement of Op. 127 for soprano with piano accompaniment, published by Schott in June 1827 with the title “Beethovens Heimgang.” The text is by Fr. Schmidt. Page 1 of the edition featured a lithographic reproduction of the conclusion of a letter written by Beethoven to the publisher, dated 17 September 1824 (Sieghard Brandenburg, ed., *Ludwig van Beethoven: Briefwechsel Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 5 [Munich: G. Henle, 1996], 368 [No. 1881]), in which Beethoven promises to send the manuscript of the quartet and states movingly that he is not yet ready to die, despite recent ill health, because a great deal of creative work remains for him to do.

<sup>2</sup>The letter had also been printed in *Caecilia* after the notice of Beethoven's death and a description by Anton Schindler of his final hours (*Caecilia* 6 [1827], 309–11).

<sup>3</sup>Although the quartet as a whole is in E-flat major, the second movement, marked Adagio, *ma non troppo e molto cantabile*, is in the key of the subdominant, A-flat.

**127.II**

**Ignaz Xaver von Seyfried.**

**“Beethoven’s Return Home.”**

*Caecilia* 10

(1829): 189.

(Arrangement for keyboard and soprano voice)

**B**eethoven’s return home is a delicate little flower strewn on the transfigured singer’s grave, since it is based on one of his own melodies, or rather sprung from it. The theme from the Adagio of the violin quartet Op. 127, transposed from A-flat to E-flat due to the more suitable range, is underlaid with the following, thoughtfully chosen, unrhymed stanza: “His spirit turned away from the bonds of dust and rose up to the light, to the breast of God the father; there is granted what faith and presentiment promised him, high above the stars’ utmost power, and all his painful longing—there it is stilled. He shares with God the eternal joy of creating! And rich as nature his world animates him from the breath of sound, an eternal spring invites form to form from the earthly bud, purest beauty delights the spirit kingdom!” —And even if the pianoforte accompaniment—dispensing with passionate expression—cannot realize what the feeling tone poet set down in his melancholy string quartet that speaks to the heart, this trifle, declaimed by a feeling soprano with emotion and warmth, remains an elegy for the unforgettable one, a friendly, welcome gift. —

The memorable letter, from Baden near Vienna, from 17 September 1824, so beautifully characteristic of the departed one, printed before the work, and also contained in the sixth volume of *Caecilia*, can hardly be read without great emotion.

# Op. 128. Arietta, “The Kiss,” with Piano or Guitar Accompaniment

128.1.

“Announcement.”

*Caecilia* 3

(Intelligence Report 11, 1825): 35.<sup>1</sup>

Arion was the master of notes,  
The cithera lives in his hand;  
With it he delights all spirits,  
And every land gladly receives him.<sup>2</sup>

Who would not think of the above verse by Schlegel, as though written about Beethoven, with the present gift. Eternally inexhaustible, he lives only for himself. —The nice, easy little song that he sings here for amateurs of both sexes<sup>3</sup> already deserves the greatest applause on the basis of the treatment of the music, even apart from the attractive and charming text, and will not fail to find it everywhere.

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<sup>1</sup>Beethoven had drafted “Der Kuß” for voice and piano, labeled an arietta, in 1798; set it aside; and completed it in 1822. It was first published in early 1825 by Schott in Mainz as Op. 128, and it is this edition that is being announced here in *Caecilia*’s “Intelligenzblatt,” which often served to call attention to new offerings by the journal’s parent company.

<sup>2</sup>These are the opening lines of Friedrich Schlegel’s Romance titled “Arion.”

<sup>3</sup>The German reads “Liebhabern und Liebhaberinnen.”

## 128.2.

Ignaz Xaver von Seyfried.

*Caecilia* 5  
(1826): 250–51.

A little song in the truest sense, and on a text that is certainly antiquated into the bargain, which only becomes even more enjoyable with such a crafty—one might say roguish, treatment. Everything here revolves around the point: “and did she not cry out? indeed: she cried out; —but long afterwards!” and this is then spiced, indeed, capably peppered, *cum grano salis*.<sup>1</sup> The well-motivated change of meter, the precocious pathos that shines through, the cackling repetition: “she cried out, she cried out, —but, —but, —but, —long, long, long, long, long, long, long, long afterwards!” are so genuinely comic, that one would scarcely have held the serious master capable of such sarcasms; moreover, one must wish that he will yet quite often have such satirical moments.

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<sup>1</sup>Latin: “with a grain of salt.”

128.3

v.d. O...r.

“Reviews.”

*Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 3  
(4 January 1826): 1.

An antiquated text in narrative form, of little lyrical significance and, taken strictly, not suited for composition at all. The melody is not new, but rather fitted to the text. The treatment of the individual phrases is, however, sketched out with spirit and also comically, so that often one must laugh out loud instead of singing. This includes the passage: “I dared it still” — “resistance.”<sup>1</sup> — The conclusion is too long, and the poem, at the concluding point, entirely too trivial. Interdum dormitat bonus Homerus.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The text in its entirety reads:

“Ich war bei Chloen ganz allein,  
Und küssen wollt’ ich sie.  
Jedoch sie sprach, sie würde schrein,  
Es sei vergebne Müh!

Ich wagt’ es doch und küßte sie,  
Trotz ihrer Gegenwehr.  
Und schrie sie nicht? Jawohl, sie schrie—  
Doch lange hinterher.”

I was all alone with Chloe,  
And wanted to kiss her.  
However, she said she would cry out,  
It would be useless effort!

I dared it still and kissed her,  
Despite her resistance.  
And did she not cry out? Yes, she did—  
But long afterward.

<sup>2</sup>Latin: “Sometimes even the good Homer sleeps.”



## Op. 130. String Quartet in B-Flat Major

### 130.I.

“News. Vienna.”

*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 28

(10 May 1826): col. 310–11.<sup>1</sup>

(Mentioned: Op. 46, Song “Adelaide,” and Op. 97, Trio for Piano, Violin, and Violoncello)

On the 21st, in the association hall, an evening entertainment arranged by Mr. Schuppanzigh at the conclusion of this year’s subscription quartets, wherein appeared: 1. From Haydn’s quartets, the variations on the folksong.<sup>2</sup> 2. *Marie*, poem by Castelli, set to music by Weiss,<sup>3</sup> sung by Mr. Hoffmann. Not significant. Grand trio by Beethoven (in B-flat), declaimed by Mssrs. Halm,<sup>4</sup> Schuppanzigh, and Linke. The pianoforte player would have done better to let his virtuosity sparkle less, and to remain truer to his task. 4. Beethoven’s *Adelaide*, sung by Mr. Hoffmann. 5. The most recent quartet by Beethoven in B-flat (the third among the last ones), consisting of the following movements: *a*. Allegro moderato;<sup>5</sup> *b*. Presto; *c*. Scherzo Andantino;<sup>6</sup> *d*. Alla danza tedesca; *e*. Cavatina; *f*. Fuga. The first, third, and fifth movements are serious, gloomy, mystical, but also at times bizarre, rough, and capricious; the second and fourth full of mischief, good cheer, and roguishness. Here the great composer, who, particularly in his most recent works, has seldom known how to find appropriate limits, has expressed himself unusually briefly and convincingly. The repetition of both movements was demanded with stormy applause. But the reviewer does not dare to interpret the sense of the fugal finale; for him it was incomprehensible, like Chinese. If the instruments in the regions of the south and north poles have to struggle with gigantic difficulties; if each of them is differently figured and they cross over each other per transitum irregularem amid countless dissonances; if the players, not trusting themselves, probably also do not play completely accurately, then the

<sup>1</sup>This is a description of the first performance of Op. 130, which took place on 21 March 1826. Written in 1825–1826, this was the third of the late quartets in order of composition. The current finale had not yet been written at the time of this performance, and the Grosse Fuge, now known as Op. 133, was performed instead. For further details, see Thayer-Forbes, 974–75.

<sup>2</sup>In other words, the second movement of the “Emperor” quartet, Op. 76, no. 3, which consists of variations on the tune “Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser.” This was actually not a folk song, but a melody composed by Haydn.

<sup>3</sup>Franz Weiss (1778–1830) was at that time violist of the Schuppanzigh quartet.

<sup>4</sup>Anton Halm (1789–1872) later arranged the Grosse Fuge for piano four-hands. On Beethoven’s dissatisfaction with this arrangement, see Thayer-Forbes, 975.

<sup>5</sup>Actually Adagio ma non troppo—Allegro.

<sup>6</sup>Actually Andante con moto ma non troppo.

Babylonian confusion is certainly complete. There then exists a concert at which Moroccans might possibly enjoy themselves—those who, during their presence at the Italian opera here, found nothing pleasing but the instruments harmonizing in empty fifths, and the customary preluding by all the instruments at once.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps so much would not have been written down if the master were also able to hear his own creations. But we do not wish thereby to pronounce a negative judgment prematurely; perhaps the time is yet to come when that which at first glance appeared to us dismal and confused will be recognized as clear and pleasing in form.

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<sup>7</sup>This is apparently an early version of the often-told anecdote about an Eastern sage who attends a Western orchestra concert and finds nothing as pleasing as the tuning up of the orchestra before the program begins. It is intriguing to find that the story goes back at least to Beethoven's time.

## Op. 131. String Quartet in C-Sharp Minor

### 131.I.

#### “Brief Evaluation.”

*Allgemeine Musikzeitung zur Beförderung der theoretischen und praktischen Tonkunst  
für Musiker und für Freunde der Musik überhaupt 2*

(20 February 1828): col. 119.<sup>1</sup>

We must be aware of great gratitude toward the Schott music firm for making the works of our Beethoven available to us in score, for such works must be studied most urgently by prospective artists. But such a score is likewise very welcome for works that present such great difficulties in performance.

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<sup>1</sup>Op. 131, written in 1825–1826, was the fourth of the five late quartets. The first edition, to which this notice refers, was published in parts by Schott in May–June 1827, first in Paris and then in Mainz. The full score was published in Mainz in February 1828.

## 131.2

v. Weiler.

### “On the Spirit and Interpretation of Beethoven’s Music. On the Occasion of the Advertisement of His Posthumous Quartets.”

*Caecilia* 9

(1828): 45–50.<sup>1</sup>

(With Op. 132, String Quartet in A Minor, and Op. 135, String Quartet in F Major; mentioned: Op. 36, Symphony no. 2; Op. 68, “Pastoral” Symphony; Op. 18, no. 6, String Quartet in B-Flat Major; Op. 29, String Quintet in C Major)

With the tiresome superficiality that, as in the domain of art generally, ever more determines the judgment of the great majority in music as well, one believes oneself to be giving Beethoven his due if one grants that his first quartets are a completely good work that, played with a sober sensibility, can be declaimed with pleasure. One believes oneself to be judging the later ones most indulgently if one regards them with consternation, putting off a definite judgment to future times. Those who are most comfortable with this explain candidly, with a fair degree of compassion, that one can see from these later works that the composer, sick in spirit, was incapable of giving the appropriate direction to his ideas. One also sees from them that the composer could no longer consult his own hearing, but rather had to rely too much on his not completely reliable calculation; —and things of this kind that appear compassionate amount more to concealed or loveless judgments.

We have nothing to do with this class of compassionate judges, —we advise them, rather, to set aside tranquilly the three quartets advertised here. —

We wish to take this opportunity, though, to speak a word on the spirit and sensibility of Beethoven’s music, and this may then also be the criterion for what we believe to be a correct judgment of the present works. All of Beethoven’s tone poems are the product of an excited imagination. To them belong all degrees and shadings that spread through this immense domain. Memories of happiness, of composure, of the most tender, delicate emotion, alternate with the expression of firm seriousness, of deep melancholy, of impetuously excited passion. How the true genius brings all of this to living representation constitutes the incomprehensible, has its foundation in the endlessness of poetic genius, —and this it is that, in narrow-minded judgments, is called incomprehensible, extravagant. Among the means of which Beethoven makes use, this much is unmistakable: that his melodies grip us with an individual charm, which often makes one unsure whether their magic lies in the individual

<sup>1</sup>This review refers to the first editions of these three quartets. The author wrote signed articles in both *Caecilia* and the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, including once for the latter as the correspondent from Mannheim (*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 16: 373–77). His signature sometimes includes the first initial G. It is possible that he is Johann Georg Vollweiler (1770–1847), cellist in the Mannheim orchestra and a noted composer and teacher.

construction of the phrases, or in the glaze of the exchange of harmonies. —It is certain, however, that both are at his unlimited command. —It is further unmistakable that all ideas are individual to him, and in the highest degree original. —The greatest masters do not stand above him in novelty and inexhaustibility. —One can maintain reliably that, in every one of his musical phrases, one hears something not yet heard, and with no master will one have less success in the game, often taken too far, of straining after reminiscences of foreign ideas or repetitions of his own.

Just as the character of Beethoven's tone poems is represented in these general outlines, there are also genuine individualities that distinguish their details. The beautiful exchange of the fundamental idea with the transitional melody should be considered here (Beethoven is pre-eminently rich in the latter; among a hundred examples, the symphony in D may be cited)—these long-sustained phrases, which can be compared to a breath arising deep within the breast and swelling (particularly in the long middle movements, for example the theme of the Adagio in the quintet in C)—this increase of power and concentration of the themes toward the end of the movement (a noteworthy illustration of this is provided by the first and last movement of the second of the quartets advertised here)—this perfect working out of the fundamental idea, without the exchange of harmonies being affected or excessively repetitious.

At those times when Beethoven leaves the domain of unspecified emotions and loses himself in that of painting specific subjects, he can most easily be misunderstood. I point here to all the movements of the Pastoral symphony, to the movement under the inscription *la malinconia* in one of the first six quartets,<sup>2</sup> to the middle movement in the second of the quartets advertised here, designated as the thanks of one healed from an illness. I am completely unable to comprehend why the expression of a named emotion should excite aesthetic annoyance; it is only to be seen thereby that the play does not degenerate into frivolity, the painting into distortion. One must, however, acknowledge the painting as successful when it portrays a subject worthy of artistic portrayal, and when the means do not lead to vulgarity. Thus, the murmuring of the brook in the accompaniment figure, as it is brought about in the Andante of the Pastoral symphony, is very effective at portraying the total impression of a happy mood in God's free nature, —even if the figure, treated in isolation, has no aesthetic value. It is the same with the expression of natural sounds in general. Beethoven's description of the melancholic is aesthetically true, and thus masterly—how, sunk in gloomy melancholy, scarcely capable of coherent ideas, he boils up to momentary happiness, soon sinking back, though, into the previous dullness. Every time I am gripped with compassion for the states of mind being described, as often as the image is brought before my soul by Beethoven's tone poem. The expression of the thanks offered to the godhead, and of the reviving happiness of the convalescent, is just as worthy. —The significance of the concluding movement of the third of

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<sup>2</sup>This refers to the fourth movement of Op. 18, no. 6, in B-flat major. Technically the designation "La Malinconia" refers only to the Adagio introduction, which returns later in the movement. For more on this unusual movement, see Carl Dahlhaus, "La malinconia," in *Ludwig van Beethoven*, ed. Ludwig Finscher (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), 200–11.

the advertised quartets is less clear, even though the inscription designates doubt and the resolution that follows from it. In general, I am least able to convince myself of the value of this movement (but only of this one).

With this fundamental view of Beethoven's music, I find great pleasure in the present three quartets, and no less than in the earlier and earliest works of this master—since the memory of deep feeling and the excitement of a living imagination proceed from them. That which lies on a deep foundation, however, needs to be created deeply as well. Thus, it is less easy to fathom classic works than their undoubted excellence suggests. How often did the Mozart quartets have to be heard and practiced before their value was generally acknowledged? And—is it not perhaps this longer and more frequent practice that gives Beethoven's older music the allegedly decisive preference over the more recent? . . . This much is certain: that for Beethoven's music, at least his recent music, complete success cannot be expected at the first delivery. The best virtuosos will not understand at once how to come to terms with them as a whole, even if each one has mastered his own part. Nowhere is it less permissible than in Beethoven's music to neglect the expression of the whole and to be satisfied if the details are successful. For it is precisely that expression of the whole that is the means whereby the one idea lying within the poet is reproduced as a whole. Thus the noteworthy observation that many virtuosos who are significant solo players are incapable of declaiming a quartet with the appropriate sensibility. This will be done successfully, on the other hand, by a union that, with no individual presumption, aims to realize the pure reproduction of an ingenious fantasy as it appeared to the soul of the tone poet. Such a union will not regret treating the first delivery as a fleeting preparation, using the second and following ones as the means to a proper understanding, thus looking forward, after an effort carried on *con amore*, to that success that will reward them with frequent and easily repeatable enjoyment.

Only in this manner is it possible to establish what one might be tempted to regard as a deficiency of the work of art, —the close connection of the individual parts, in which one only misses the context now and then because an individual middle voice fails to make clear the context that would ideally be present by bringing out a connecting phrase, emphasizing an accent. In this manner, hasty judgments will be corrected. In any case, the classical times will confer that justice that Mozart first found after his death, and which Durante<sup>3</sup> and Händel have found again after a century.

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<sup>3</sup>Francesco Durante (1684–1755) was an important Neapolitan composer of church music whose works continued to be studied and performed well into the 19th century.

### 131.3.

Friedrich Rochlitz.

“On the occasion of:”<sup>1</sup>

*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 30  
(23 and 30 July 1828): col. 485–95 and 501–9.<sup>2</sup>

(Mentioned: Op. 125, Symphony no. 9)

It is difficult and risky to write now about the last grand works of Beethoven. The difficulty and the risk lie partly in the circumstances, partly in the works themselves. We explain ourselves in regard to them, even though this does not constitute a review of this quartet (rather one of the reviewer). It appears to us, namely, that such explanation is not of no consequence—in consideration of more readers, where unnecessary, at least useful—and even, in light of the newest known circumstances that we will not further describe here, advisable and well accomplished.

The difficulty and risk in writing about the last grand works of Beethoven lies, we said, partly in the circumstances. B. is decidedly the hero of the musical world in its present period; as such he is acknowledged and proclaimed, and quite rightly so, by all legitimate electors and even by those who might themselves come into consideration. He is even so acknowledged unanimously (or so it is said), if not in all directions of his artistic activity, then certainly in that of instrumental composition. For the acknowledged hero of any time, enthusiasm breaks out by virtue of his being so; through this he himself is at first even brought to perfection, not just outwardly, in his influences, but rather inwardly as well, in his prerogatives. This is as it

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<sup>1</sup>The heading for this article continues, as was traditional with reviews in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, by citing the publication information for Op. 131 in both formats, parts (no. 1) and score (no. 2). The former was published by Schott in Mainz in May–June 1827, and the latter did not appear until February 1828. Rochlitz did not cite the Parisian edition (parts only) that came out simultaneously with no. 1.

<sup>2</sup>This essay on Op. 131 is the longest commentary on a work by Beethoven to be written by former *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* editor Rochlitz. As editor from the journal's inception in 1798 until 1818, Rochlitz had been responsible for the appearance in Europe's leading music journal of the critical writings of E. T. A. Hoffmann and Amadeus Wendt, as well as of countless anonymous critiques of new works by Beethoven. After Rochlitz's retirement, though, most of the composer's important new works were ignored by the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung's* reviewers, perhaps because of the controversial qualities alluded to in some of the other reviews in this collection, though they continued to be discussed in concert reports. With the exception, therefore, of the reviews of Op. 101 and Opp. 109–111, this was the first extended article on a major new work by Beethoven to appear in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in a decade. For more on this article and its context, see Robin Wallace, *Beethoven's Critics: Aesthetic Dilemmas and Resolutions during the Composer's Lifetime* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986), 35–43.

should be. Something shall indeed come about through every hero of the time in that time—and something, to be sure, that is great and far-reaching within his sphere; what would be great and far-reaching in the world as a whole in the absence of enthusiasm? Something new, completely unusual should come into being; this unavoidably finds hindrances, which are now removed, difficulties that want to be defeated—hindrances, difficulties, not only in the circumstances until now, but also in every individual's own inner self, in the habits and predispositions he has had until now, often in his powers of comprehension as well: how would this be attained, however, in the absence of enthusiasm? For our Beethoven just this enthusiasm is now heightened even further (first, to be sure, through the ultimate success of his most splendid works themselves; we will not speak about this here, however, but rather about the circumstances) through his death and the lively feeling for the gap that this has created which none is present to fill; through the sympathy, newly and vigorously aroused on this occasion, for the great sorrow which was unceasingly laid upon him with excessive severity, under whose burden he nevertheless worked his way powerfully forth into freedom, bringing forth things so splendid, and also so abundant, and in part even so happy; through the sympathy, newly and vigorously aroused on the same occasion, for the miserable situation to which he was for the most part removed by this suffering, without even being able to be compensated and refreshed by sharing the enjoyment of his own works, and so forth. Now, if whoever were to write now about B.'s most recent works, next to that which is to be praised, were also to take exception to much that was nearly exhausted, that could no longer be presented very effectively (the hero remained, after all, like everyone, a human being!), if indeed he were even to censure rashly, though not the spirit in general, nevertheless its application in detail and for definite, determined purposes, or if he were perhaps to find that the ingenious hero had (as many already have, including the greatest of all, even if not in music), at the end of his life, overreached himself, attempted too much: how would . . . “that be admitted?” No, we do not ask this, but rather: how, thereby, would the enthusiasm, already beautiful in itself—and here, directed at such a worthy object, all the more beautiful—be damaged, and, accordingly as it was combined with these or those other qualities of spirit or soul, be perverted into mistrust and coldness toward the master and his works in general, or stirred up into animosity, or finally blown up into blind fanaticism; of which each is progressively worse than the others, not just for the participants and their better interests, but even for the general good of musical art in our time? “What then! Whoever offers himself as a reviewer does not need to trouble himself about all of that, but rather about the work alone. If that shows inconveniences or misconceptions, he needs to say so frankly, to demonstrate it, or at least provide evidence for it, as far as possible, and that is all. Let what can succeed, and what can't, let it go under!” This leads us to the second point that we want to discuss, and which may serve as a partial answer, although just here we have not offered ourselves as a reviewer, and have by no means declared whether or not we find these deficiencies or errors in the above-named works and in the others of B.'s final years.

We began: It is difficult and risky to write about these works now, for their own sake as well. First in general! The ingenious hero of any time, by virtue of his being so: whereby does he become such, and whereby does he dominate the times, other than by standing above



them; above, according to the greater sum, strength, and excitability of the natural powers for their purpose, according to the more perfect, higher development, the tighter coherence, the more powerful energy, and the immovable steadfastness in their employment for that purpose; according to the further recognition and more acute engagement, whether by instinct or insight, of this very purpose itself, as being the most urgent among the abundant needs of the moment for the majority; and finally—what admittedly, here as everywhere, must consequently follow—according to the success of the effort, the “momentary advantage,” that all-imposing divine sanction. If, however, he stands above his time, then this can certainly mistreat him, becoming obdurate and embittered toward his works. If, however, his time wants to concern itself with his works, then it must first learn—learn it at them, from them—to look through them, making itself clear and familiar with them, entering into their spirit and so becoming worthy to evaluate them. The stranger they may be, the further they depart from what has until now been customary: the less quickly is that accomplished, can that be accomplished. With B.’s most recent works, however, this is manifestly the case, as it will also have to be the case with this one. And—they have not yet been before the public for a year, and only one or the other of them has been heard here or there! To be sure, every human work, even those of a hero of his time, is subject to the unchangeable laws of nature and of its genre; it must also, rightly acknowledged and precisely tested, already be judged according to these. Everyone knows, however, or discovers daily,<sup>3</sup> that in art this is as little sufficient as it is usually productive of satisfaction. Everyone likewise knows that B., judged according to those

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<sup>3</sup>A footnote in the original review reads: “May a glance backward relative to this at least be allowed in an annotation. When Beethoven had published his first three trios for pianoforte, violin, and violoncello, and not long thereafter his first symphony in C major, a reviewer found it well and good to treat the first-mentioned almost in jest, as rather confused explosions of the bold high spirits of a young man of talent, while designating the second seriously and menacingly as Haydn pushed almost to the point of caricature through bizarrerie. And the man was truly a capable musician, well versed in and firmly supported by his time and its theory. He had also produced many rightly treasured works himself, and B. was even somewhat fond of him! If the man had identified himself, or were discretion not owed also to the dead, every reader would grant this, and more, if we named him. Then, when B. had finished his second symphony, in D major, and Prince Lichnowsky brought it to us in manuscript at Leipzig, shortly after the performance, Spazier, in his newly founded *Zeitung für die elegante Welt*, wrote about it after the performance (he identified himself) as being a crass monster, a wounded, intractably writhing dragon that did not want to die, and even while bleeding to death (in the Finale), beat about vainly raging with tail erect, etc. And Spazier was a good head, a diversely educated, not inexperienced, skillful man. In music, he knew everything that in his time counted as pre-eminent. A friend and loyal assistant of Reichardt, he was, as a music critic, not a little valued and even feared! Since then about twenty-five years have passed, and what does the whole world now think of these works? Shall experiences like this, which have been repeated anew, not perhaps only, or indeed even mostly, in music, but with nearly everything that, offered from one spirit to another, departs from the track of what at every time is common and at a certain time is customary: shall they always be repeated anew? Shall the process always begin anew? It seems better to this writer, on the other hand, not to begrudge time and space at first to any work in which one senses spirit at least in general, or even in which one just can probably not fail to assume that there is spirit on the basis of what the man has already done elsewhere—and to oneself as well. Due to special qualities these may not immediately taste good and agree with one, may perhaps not even be completely intelligible or taken to heart even after some effort is devoted to them, may not transplant the entire inner person right into the free, harmonic, benevolent disposition of real artistic enjoyment. It is better first to grant any such work time and space, and oneself as well; to try the work on others and others on the work repeatedly—

rules, is worthy of admiration in his instrumental music, even if, for example, one should have to declare his “Joy, beautiful divine spark” to be an inadmissible misconception according to those laws, and find that while what a man of spirit (Mr. Marx in Berlin)<sup>4</sup> has said in its defense may perhaps agree with B.’s view and declare the thing good, it does not, however, defend its conception, but rather first places its inadmissibility in the correct light. —What follows now from this treatment of the generalities of our subject for present-day reviewers: this lies too near to us for us to be able to point it out first with words.

Now to particulars! About these, however, only a little out of much! Beethoven spared nothing; he spared nothing at all, and in no regard. In his last works, however—as can easily be explained by the path according to which human individuality develops, by the well-known, completely distinctive situation in which he was placed, and by the unavoidable influence this had on his humor, or rather ill humor—in his last works, he spared least of all, and was sometimes so seductive as to make people feel: you must come along! As is well known, this is already the case as regards the performability of these works of his. Meanwhile, since human singing (in the very organ of its performance) has its limitations, while instrumental music has none, and since this, mainly through B. himself, has been raised in performance to a height and degree of perfection which only fifty years earlier would have been considered purely impossible to attain, this would not be of great significance in itself, but becomes so in regard to us at this time and to the fate (including also their evaluation) of the works themselves within it. As high as today’s orchestras stand in comparison with earlier ones, not only in skill, but also in sensibility for what they are performing, consequently in expression, how many are there that, for example, can perform B.’s last symphony as it should be performed? Or would be able to do so with all the preparations that are absolutely necessary? Exactly the same can be said about our quartet societies with regard to the quartet cited here: and all the more so with exactly this one. Now music—say what you will—above all music in a manner that deviates from everything that has until now been customary, needs not only to be read or even studied, but also to be heard. The deeper it is in spirit and the richer in artistry, the more perfectly it needs to be heard, both for itself and for its manner. Thus even the greatest and most experienced connoisseur, even the artist who is perhaps capable of writing something similar, only in a different manner, can in many cases, and not infrequently with precisely the most crucial ones, never be completely secure in his judgment after a mere overview or experimental run-through! This seems obvious and self-evident, but it must not be so, since the

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and also on oneself, and oneself on it—before one rushes out with gruff, chilling, if not disparaging censure; or with unconditional, idolizing jubilation in the opposite case, namely if a work immediately appeals completely, is intelligible, excites us vigorously, affecting everyone thus, or even precisely us or precisely now. Finally, turning back to the first case—finally, one should at the very least entertain the idea: if the work does not agree with you, it is at least possible that the reason lies in you rather than in it; or, as Lichtenberg more rudely expresses it: when a book and a head bang together with a hollow sound, must it always be because of the book?

*The Editor*”

<sup>4</sup>See Robin Wallace, trans. and ed., *The Critical Reception of Beethoven’s Compositions by His German Contemporaries, Op. 125*, Center for Beethoven Research, Boston University, 2017, <http://www.bu.edu/beethovencenter/files/2017/06/robinwallace-publication.pdf>, 31–39.

contrary is so often asserted, and attempts are made to give learned demonstrations of such assertions. Discussion of this subject would require going back and then slowly forward; since that cannot occur here, let space be granted in advance for a few examples. (Stories are in any case more popular than discussions!) When, some forty years ago, Adam Hiller considered letting Händel's oratorios, beginning with *Messiah*, be heard in Germany<sup>5</sup>—in Germany, where this had not yet been tried anywhere, where only individual, preeminent masters knew these works from the printed scores—nearly everyone advised utterly against the undertaking, in part because of many difficulties that at that time were certainly considerable, but primarily because of the nature of the works themselves. Grand, magnificent, at times deeply moving, but in a style that can no longer please, no longer be effective, except in England, where it and it alone (at that time) had been preserved: these were the judgments, even that of the worthy, greatly honored Naumann.<sup>6</sup> Hiller was undaunted, and organized the grand, solemn performance in the Leipzig university church. Connoisseurs and masters hastened to it from a wide area: even Naumann. The performance was successful; how its three hours transformed the judgment that everyone had sustained throughout the year! That evening Naumann was seen entering Hiller's house, truly transfigured by the most noble, heartfelt enthusiasm, and holding father Hiller for a long time in a firm embrace, unable to find words. The first, however, were: Oh, how truly did you write to me: Hear! and don't just look!—Reichardt—however one judges his compositions (we believe that what he did that was good was also splendid), everyone will acknowledge him to be a man of spirit, talent, many-sided knowledge and education. Until the last, brief period of his life he knew Mozart's operas almost entirely from the scores. He had only heard—had only been able to hear—a few performed, and not at all well, for he considered them—with the possible exception of *Idomeneo*, the earliest one in Germany<sup>7</sup>—to be documents of a completely perverse and truly destructive use of great talent, great artistry. Since he could not hinder their powerful infringement in general, their overturning of things that were likewise good, but formed according to opposing viewpoints, he hated them. Finally (in Cassel, at the French-Westphalian court of that time), he heard them well, indeed splendidly, done. To say openly, like Naumann, how they affected him; how through them he began to understand things differently for the first time; went against his nature. He had also previously opposed them all too loudly and decisively, with or without signing his name. It was self-evident, though; he became confused, insecure, in all his judgments; he became unsure of himself, and could no longer produce anything of any significance. —Finally, our man himself! When Weber's *Freischütz* was beginning to

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<sup>5</sup>Johann Adam Hiller (1728–1804) was an important German composer and music journalist. He edited the *Wöchentliche Nachrichten und Anmerkungen die Musik betreffend* of 1766–1770, the first weekly music journal and the historical ancestor of the periodicals excerpted in this volume. Hiller also directed the Gewandhaus concerts at Leipzig, a position that would later be held by Felix Mendelssohn.

<sup>6</sup>Johann Gottlieb Naumann (1741–1801) was also a well-known composer and conductor.

<sup>7</sup>It is hard to know what is meant by the description of Mozart's *Idomeneo, re di Creta*, first performed at Munich in 1781 as “die früheste in Deutschland.” It was neither the first Mozart opera written in Germany nor the first performed there.

create a stir in Germany, Beethoven studied it diligently and then, as he was entitled to do, he expressed himself firmly and decisively about it. First he praised Weber in general with great vigor: “That otherwise mild little man—I would never have thought it of him,” etc. “Now Weber must write operas; just operas; one after the other, quickly, without nibbling much on them,” etc. Then the opera in particular: “Kaspar, the brute, stands out like a house.” “Everywhere the devil extends his claws, you can feel them,” etc. Someone reminded him of the second finale. Yes, he said; I grant that it is so: but—but it rubs me the wrong way. I do see what Weber wants: but he has also made a devil of a thing of it. When I read it—as here, with the wild hunt—I must laugh; even though it may be the right thing. Something like this must be heard—only heard: but then—I . . .<sup>8</sup>

Let us return! Much in the way of opinion must truly be brought together that is very rarely brought together in order to make possible a secure, rightfully decisive judgment about works that depart completely from the beaten path—also, therefore, those of Beethoven; it must be brought together even before those and in those who otherwise would even have been capable of judging such a work; those capable of making such judgments can at first be few, and yet precisely for these few it must be brought together!

Beethoven also spares nothing in regard to his ideas. He has been called the inventor of his time in regard to music, and so he is. When scarcely more than a youth, he gave only new things, belonging only to him, unique to him. This was not at all to be denied and was denied by no one. It was, however, also ceaselessly praised, worshipfully and exclusively, and not by a few, while other excellent features of his works found considerably less approval and not infrequently sharp censure. He was accused of also always wanting to be new above all else, everywhere new, even as conspicuously new as possible. Since he wrote about a hundred and fifty works that are for the most part extensive, how would it be conceivable for him always to avoid taking the nearby side path from novelty to singularity, from singularity to strangeness, or also sometimes letting the willfulness of this endeavor of his shine through? What had to be far more important, at least for effect and judgment almost on the spot: to this was added, chiefly because of his well-known, great misfortune, the fact that for a long succession of years he lived to some degree apart from the world, even the musical one. No one who lives in and with the world will live without any regard to it, even if he protested against it, like J. J. Rousseau. Even such protest is a kind of regard, just of a peculiar kind. Now, if he is an inventor through and through, like B., and at the same time a firm, self-sufficient character, likewise like B., he will not deny his originality, novelty, and uniqueness in regard to the world, perhaps not recast it either. He will, however, even if only by chance, join it to what the world has that is good in his time, to what is preeminently counted good in the world during his time. Thus, as pertains

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<sup>8</sup>These comments are also reported in Max Maria von Weber’s biography of his father, which Thayer-Forbes, 872, cites as the source for them. Since Weber was born in 1822 and his biography was not published until 1864, this account by Rochlitz may well have been their original source. Rochlitz’s questionable reliability as a historical witness is discussed at length in Maynard Solomon, “On Beethoven’s Creative Process: A Two-Part Invention,” *Music and Letters* 61 (1980), 272–83. All of the information given in this article should be considered in light of Rochlitz’s well-documented tendency to invent and embellish.

to music, Durante in the 17th,<sup>9</sup> thus Joseph Haydn in the 18th century, and both splendidly, without detriment to the works, to the great advantage of those who judged and enjoyed them. Thus also Beethoven himself, until he was robbed of that outer sense that is most necessary to us in order to live in and with the world. From then on he fled it ever more—that is to say, already soon after the genesis of the *Sinfonia eroica*, and in most of his later years he fled it, to the extent that this was at all obtainable, completely. Indeed, perhaps the (at least local) idolatry for a man whose standpoint with regard to his works was as glaringly opposite to that of B. with regard to his as could ever be conceived; for a man who wanted nothing, thought of nothing, other than the world, the moment, the world in this moment: the idolatry for Rossini—perhaps, I say, this drove him at last to maintain his sharp, worthy opposition all the more decisively, in powerful defiance and coarse obstinacy, or at least to go even further with it than would have happened otherwise. Thus the last of his works, specifically the grand ones—the mass, the symphony, the quartets—among all else that this time has brought us, stand out as completely separate in conception, foreign and isolated. What follows from this for the evaluation and the enjoyment of them during this same time is again so obvious that it does not need to be pointed out.

Finally, B. also spared nothing regarding the working out of his last works. We only want to point out a few moments briefly. The richness of his harmony, as it appears here, cannot be taken in at a glance, much less at a quick hearing, by us who are not accustomed to it. The strangeness of his combinations often becomes brooding, so that it appears unclear, if not incoherent, to present-day listeners. The way his worked-through melodies are overlaid with ever more varied instruments, and with figurations that join in in continually new ways, makes it scarcely possible, even with effort, to pick these melodies out by ear and hold onto them without interruption next to the fullness of their embellishment, let alone enjoy them. All of this is true now, when we are not yet accustomed to it. This now, and much more that we are passing over that, should it be grasped and taken up at once as a whole and in its details as it deserves, be enjoyed according to its content, demands the full powers of those with the most experience and zeal. We still find it, moreover, to be, for the most part, spun out with a kind of perseverance, perhaps even with a kind of obstinacy, to a length that goes considerably beyond everything that we are accustomed to in music. Until we have readjusted ourselves, this must, this music being the way it is, tire the less capable player, driving him to mere endurance, but also drive the most capable one, who still wants to give up, at times almost to a kind of despair or unwilling outburst.

After all of this: what is now, just now, to be done with these works? We allow ourselves to express our opinion, modestly, as is appropriate, thereby addressing it toward the public, toward directors, toward performing artists or amateurs, and toward reviewers—holding ourselves thereby to what is most general, however, passing over every secondary consideration—

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<sup>9</sup>Rochlitz is perhaps referring to the eminent Neapolitan composer Francesco Durante (1684–1755), who, though his career unfolded in the early eighteenth century (not the seventeenth), would have been seen as belonging to an earlier stylistic period than Haydn, who was born in 1732 and continued to compose into the early nineteenth century.

for example, how exactly these works are to be studied, how their performance is to be arranged, how listening to them is to be prepared for, and suchlike.

We must consider the public as belonging to two most different classes, according to sensibility and inclination, and likewise to number, in regard to music—approximately as in regard to reading matter and to many other things as well. The first only wants to amuse itself with music, whether hearing or practicing it—to create an agreeable pastime. The second wants to excite, occupy, reanimate, uplift, strengthen, advance its whole inner person, according to all its powers, and as consistently as possible.<sup>10</sup> To this belongs even, when opportunity presents itself, extending it by learning new things. The first class, in our opinion, will do well to renounce these most recent works of B. It is to be hoped that they will be honorable enough to make no demands of them, but rather to let them alone with the perfectly reasonable words to which they are completely entitled: they are not for me; I am not for them. If they are performed somewhere and, out of curiosity, they still want to attend, it is all the better if they only do so under this assumption. Perhaps this and that in them, or one or other of the performers, nevertheless pleases them; and they help thereby, through their admission price, to create the means for public production—which is even worthy of thanks. Let the second class come with composure and good will, as far as possible without prejudice for or against, with significant expectations, but not false ones, which do not extend all too far into the general and unspecified (into the blue, as they say). (Most of the preceding was written, on our part, if not to hinder the latter, at least to reduce it.) Just here they will need to bring their All to bear. It should thus be assumed that they will maintain all their powers as far as possible during the performance, and likewise completely surrender themselves to what affects them and in this manner occupies them. But not everything will, or can, affect them and occupy them thus: not, at least, at the first hearing, even with ever so heightened attentiveness. Then let them take pleasure in the fact that for now almost nothing is set in motion but their thoughts, almost nothing but their feelings, their imagination moved only toward unspecified play. Let them take pleasure in this at first, until they are more closely acquainted with the work. It is not possible for everything to have the right effect immediately on everyone who—wherever it be—receives all too much, which is at the same time so odd, in relation to what he is accustomed to receiving. According to his own nature, he will, like a child at an all too rich distribution of Christmas presents, be enchanted at first either only by the whole or by some individual part. Afterward, things work out. If they do not, however, then he may take it up with the benefactor. To be sure, there is yet another possibility: but at least one should not blame anyone if he then takes it up with that person.

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<sup>10</sup>Especially in view of the lengthy editorial footnote (no. 3, above), it is interesting to note that this distinction also parallels one that was often made two decades earlier, when Beethoven's music was not nearly as well known or as generally accepted. Compare for example, the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* reviewer's comments on the "Eroica": "this Allegro, as likewise the entire work, certainly presupposes an audience that does not prefer a string of conventional little variations to everything else, because they hurry by nicely and one is over every few moments, but rather an audience that at least pays serious attention and can maintain its serious attentiveness" (Wayne Senner, Robin Wallace, and William Meredith, eds., *The Critical Reception of Beethoven's Compositions by His German Contemporaries*, Vol. 2 [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001], 24).

We may direct only a brief word to directors and performing artists: the former would rather convey it themselves, the latter do not readily let themselves be conveyed by it. Our brief word to both is: Give the works to us and yourselves to hear; give them whenever circumstances permit, repeatedly, for the above reasons; and, what is even more necessary: give them with the greatest possible perfection—for which, admittedly, be you ever so capable and ever so experienced, quite a few rehearsals will unavoidably be necessary. Without such perfection, the listeners will certainly not understand these works; without such rehearsals, you will certainly not understand them yourselves. And without understanding—how could you declaim them even adequately? How could we or you have true enjoyment from them? You might give the notes correctly, but the notes are only the syllables of the poem.

Finally, we can only make a plea to reviewers, since, as is well-known, they know everything and more. We also have to behave most politely, since they will review our plea in return, and us along with it, who make the plea, and the journal that records us and them, and so forth. Our plea, however, takes the following point of departure. See fit, with these (and other) manifestly significant works, which are, however, difficult to evaluate and otherwise risky, whose effect and reception are still dubious—see fit to reject the methods that are not uncommonly employed on such products of the spirit: the methods, to say nothing about them. For—not to mention anything else here—good works, or ones that are in any case not bad, in a currently customary, indeed even popular, manner, come through these easily: works like these, however, do so with difficulty, and take a while to do so. This is all the more so because a very large part of the public, used to awaiting your judgment before it can resolve to see and hear for itself, is hardly informed about whatever you fail to discuss, or even grows suspicious about it. Speak accordingly, honored sirs, we beg you; and with what you speak about, do not be overly hasty: this is the second plea. You would, however, it seems to us, be overly hasty with mere jubilation, as with mere censure. For apart from the fact that, in the nature of things, both amount to approximately nothing, their effect will also be more harmful than useful, both to the works themselves and to your readers. Mere jubilation and mere censure—both provoke opposition every time. And—as is the way of the world—opponents of jubilation always turn out in greater numbers, and speak more coarsely, than those of censure. The worst of it is that practically no one from the public at large, and even few enough of those who stand higher, will, according to their own nature, show a lively, loving interest in just these works (and all those that deviate from the popular manner). Therefore: nothing proceeding from one or the other extreme in general, but rather—this is the third plea—something that enters as far as possible into the spirit and sensibility of the work, also into the author's manner of representation, even into his choice and employment of means, into his technique, into the particular vocation of the work, if it has one—in short, into exactly that which makes it into a work of art, and into just such a one! Something like this excites first of all, and at bottom, a truly serious and respectful attentiveness to the works (to you as well); and as little as this is in itself, for the works and their introduction—if they have real substance, that is—it is much (for you as well). After all, it brings to the fore the desire to get to know the works and to take advantage of opportunities to fulfill that desire, whereby the number of such opportunities will also be increased. Even if all this set in motion were curiosity to find out

whether there is anything to them, or the attempt to find out for oneself whether you were right or not—even if it were only this, be things as they may, with the works themselves and with their performance—with this attentiveness and disposition that you have excited, everyone will almost infallibly surmise the whole according to its essence and purpose, even if only darkly, and find pleasure in such details as are not inaccessible to them. These two things, though, always come first with products of the spirit, and they are always the most necessary if anything is to come of them. The rest will gradually fall into place; and even if it does not do so, we will not go away empty-handed. We may hope, however, that it will gradually fall into place, and for all the more people, the more calm, composed, tranquil you remain, and, in what follows, the more definite, comprehensible, and persuasive—also, if possible, the more happy and agreeable—you make your statements. Thus our fourth plea! It should be clear that your purport is not to censure, so we will add nothing—not even that you should not scold the public, much less insult them, if they are not immediately at home in such works; you cannot at first, as we have said, assimilate them further—for with this composure you will in any case not allow yourselves to do this. By heeding all these pleas you will help to dispel what always stands in the way of such works, and where people seek to pave the way for their introduction, you will certainly help them. This is a true reward, though, and no small one. In any event, it is enough, even granting the validity of what your fashionable, doubting colleague cried out above: Let what can succeed, and what can't, let it go under! Beethoven, though, we believe, will probably succeed. If you want to do more, and what to do, must be left so entirely up to you that it would be indiscreet to insist on anything. Therefore, we conclude with a fifth plea of another kind, with the smallest of all, the only selfish one: Forgive us for having discussed such commonplace things on the occasion of such an uncommon work, indeed for having directed them in part toward you. Just believe: one of the main reasons for the unmistakably most limited influence of by far the greatest part of even the very best of German literature on the nation—one might perhaps say: of its infertility for it—is the fact that on significant matters its most gifted, capable heroes, with only a few exceptions, only write, or have written, things that are suited, and in a manner suited, to their peers. — —

Notwithstanding the fact that right at the beginning, and already with the heading, we have taken precautions against this essay being seen as a review of the work named, we nevertheless consider ourselves bound at least to add something that can characterize it a bit more closely. We believe we can achieve this, and along with it something else that, according to what we have said, everyone may gather for himself by simply but accurately describing how things went with this peculiar quartet with a certain friend who is very well known to us.

He had first received it engraved in parts, as advertised above under no. 1. Not unaccustomed to occupying himself with music in this genre, preliminarily, if need be, in such pieces, he spread the parts out next to one another, certainly not hoping thereby to become exactly familiar with the work—to master it—but rather to instruct himself about its essence, its purpose, its construction, and its manner, and thereby to enjoy an agreeable first course. He had expected something unusual, indeed strange, but what he now found appeared so motley and irregular, at times so highly singular and arbitrary, that he often did not know what to make of it. The melodies—what could be discerned of them in such isolation—for the most part



completely odd, but deeply gripping, even, perhaps, incisive; for the most part no continuation or working out of them to be perceived, much less followed, and yet it always seemed to be obscurely present, occasionally breaking out in wonderful ways. The modulations not infrequently pushed to the point of being bizarre—indeed, grating. And so, in every aspect, including outward arrangement (like an overly large fantasy, ever changing and transforming anew), the key (C-sharp minor, predominantly, but in its course pretty much all keys in the chromatic scale more or less touched upon) and the time signatures (in the most singular succession, always interrupting one another, from the simplest to the most artificial—for example, nine-four meter), almost everything, as has been said, everything appeared to him motley and irregular, much most singular, much entirely arbitrary. Out of all of it, what became truly clear to him and spoke to his heart was so little that he could not put it into words. He believed only that he could surmise more than he understood, that the deep shaft, so troublesome to traverse, was as rich in veins of gold as any that Beethoven had discovered and excavated. Now, in order to receive help through his ears, he invited a quartet society with whom he was friendly to his house: thoroughly capable musicians who were also admirably practiced together and were all fervent admirers of Beethoven. They did not yet know the work, which had arrived a few days before, and were eager to get to make its acquaintance. The friend communicated to them what seemed necessary or useful to them by way of preparation. This only made them more eager, since that had been their intention, and they began with the greatest excitement, with the greatest precision. The first movement, which is not short (*Adagio molto espressivo*), with its gripping melody that says so much—which is first declaimed by the first violin alone, and then, with apparent simplicity, declaimed with the utmost thematic artistry, in clear combinations and almost entirely in quarter notes—was successful. It gripped the soul as well, even though it was impossible to follow it in all of its convolutions and many-faceted transformations. It even heightened the enchantment to the point that individual players cried out, particularly at certain entrances of the bass that do not need to be stated more precisely for them to strike everyone who hears the work by themselves, and almost sinisterly so. Thus they arrived at the attached *Allegro*. In and through the work, things became happier, but the happiness in it was often shot through as though by jagged, blinding lightning. The difficulties of a consummate performance increased; they no longer knew for sure what they were hearing, but they did not desist, hoping that it would reveal itself. And it did, particularly as, after the two short transitional movements, *Allegro moderato* and *Adagio* (like all of the movements, these lead into one another), the simple, lovely *Andante cantabile* entered, and breaths of refreshment were drawn. But not much time or opportunity is allowed for this; soon uneasiness—growing, at times truly frightening uneasiness—enters. The exchange of figurations, of harmonies, of tempos, of meters becomes more frequent, everything more passionate, everything more difficult to perform more precisely, without which chaos arises. Things were no longer together, and they had to break off. They recovered, they conferred; they began again from the beginning. What had previously been clear now became agreeable as well; what had gripped the heart now moved it more uniformly. Much that nobody had been able to boast about now opened up, though not yet everything; they also pushed further forward, and particularly enjoyed that peculiarly pleasing *Adagio* in nine-four meter and what follows directly

after it; then, however, in the first Presto, things became dark again, both inwardly and, afterward, to the eyes as well. They resolved to leave off for the day, and everyone wanted to practice his part at home before any repetition, so as not to be hindered any longer, or restrained in sensibility and expression, by the enormous mechanical difficulties. They did so, sparing neither effort nor diligence. The players even met so as to agree concerning the often changing tempos and meters, and likewise the rather numerous passages whose declamation was either arbitrary or of a nature that, although prescribed, was highly unusual. They did not desist; the vexation was even helpful. Finally they brought out the whole correctly, purely, confidently; they had managed to learn it, and now it was possible to practice it. The friend learned this and invited them to his house for this purpose, and since the score, advertised above under no. 2, had now arrived as well, whereby such practice could be uncommonly facilitated, he imparted it to the honored guests to use in preparation. He also did not fail to draw their attention to the third thing about it, which, lying between the mechanical difficulties and the essentially spiritual ones, make consummate declamation so difficult even when the former have been mastered. The first and second are those about which, as I have said, they had already agreed; the third is that the master has not infrequently made the basic melodic ideas much more difficult—which, moreover, are all characteristic of him and in part very strange in nature, not easy to remember, while the whole only acquires order, context, and clarity through them and through their being brought into prominence. B. has, I say, made them much more difficult—for the player, to give them sufficient weight; for the listener, to pick them out and follow their succession—through artificial treatment, now by humorously chopping them up or playing hide and seek, now by an abundance of countersubjects, transitional subjects, and postscripts that are in themselves also attractive, piquant, and only all too engaging, so that one is distracted by them. They looked into this; they agreed with their friend; they promised to give this special consideration. Now he was first truly able to rejoice at the performance, and they promised to arrange one as soon as possible. But they had salvaged their professional honor on their own, since they knew that they could bring out this most difficult work; they also realized that at a public declamation before a mixed quartet-public, the work, and consequently the players would almost certainly not be loudly applauded. What is more, along with the score, spring had come as well; thus, the man, despite his many reminders, was not yet able to attain the sought-after repetition. He now counted this music, along with the other most recent, peculiar, and at times also singular music of Beethoven, entirely among that which one must have not only read but also heard—and well, and repeatedly—before one can allow a final judgment to be made about it. (And I find that he is right about this.) Nevertheless, he believes, repeated attention must be directed at these works, and hence they must be discussed repeatedly, whatever may be the case, only with consideration, with good will, and in such a way that one may hope that people will read it. (And I find that he is right about this as well.) Our essay originated accordingly; as St. Augustine put it: *Non ut aliquid dicatur, sed ne taceatur.*<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Latin: “I do not say that something is, but I do not keep silent.”

## Op. 132. String Quartet in A Minor

**132.I.**

**B.**

“Brief Evaluations.”

*Allgemeine Musikzeitung zur Beförderung der theoretischen und praktischen Tonkunst  
für Musiker und für Freunde der Musik überhaupt 2*

(19 January 1828): col. 47–48.<sup>1</sup>

(With Op. 135, String Quartet in F Major)

The friends of the deceased Beethoven receive here two quartets that will be welcome to them. One finds here the same difficult harmonies, the same singular leaps and the same attractive passages as in the other last works of this master. We do not need to point out these features more closely; whoever is not a stranger in the musical world recognizes them and knows what he has to expect here. It is to be hoped that a time will one day come when judgments about Beethoven are more secure and more settled. We do not want to repeat here what has already very often been said, particularly recently, for and against his works. One may judge as one wants; it is always an established truth that Beethoven is a great star in the musical heaven, whose works we must study with all diligence.

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<sup>1</sup>The quartet that was published as Op. 132 was the third of the late quartets, having been written in 1825, prior to Op. 131. The work was published, in score and parts, by Maurice Schlesinger in Paris and Adolph Martin Schlesinger in Berlin in late 1827. Op. 135, the last of the late quartets, was written in late 1826 and was also published by the Schlesinger firms in August 1827 in Paris (parts only), and in Berlin (score and parts) in the fall of the same year.

## 132.2.

Adolf Bernhard Marx.

“Evaluations.”

*Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 5

(3 December 1828): 467–68.<sup>1</sup>

(With Op. 135, String Quartet in F Major)

Beethoven's most recent quartets reach so far above the sphere of his and all other compositions in this genre, and also, until now, so rarely find players who are perfectly prepared for them, that it seems more advisable to prepare the way for them with individual reflections, rather than a genuine evaluation. It is to be hoped that time and space will be found to follow these with a more penetrating assessment of these noteworthy phenomena in the succession from the earlier quartets of Haydn on. —There are two points, in particular, that will help us to achieve our purpose.

The first glance through the scores shows, in all four voices, such free, always self-sufficient treatment, almost always self-contained and beautiful in itself, as has not prevailed in instrumental compositions with any tone poet since Sebastian Bach. They are no longer four happy brothers in art who make music for us for their, and our, enjoyment; they are four deeply affected creative spirits who soar up into magnificent freedom and wondrous sympathy in a brotherly embrace intertwined fourfold.

If the performers do not constitute an equal union of noble, equal, free, brotherly spirits, no perfect manifestation of the work of art is conceivable, nor is full satisfaction for the players to be hoped for. No small amount of training is required of every player in order to master his part technically and give it suitable tone, power, delicacy, and facility. In addition to these outward conditions, a deep sensibility is required to grasp it inwardly, with deepest soul in their own innermost soul. True artistic training, and long practice for the most highly trained and gifted, are all required before one voice accommodates itself freely and flexibly to the others, and does not appear to give up anything of its own content if it risks everything so as never to disturb the free progress of the others. —Heightened artistic training will make the conditions of such playing easy, as the conditions for declaiming Haydn's quartets no longer strike our generation as difficult. May whoever now employs greater care, effort, and time on the new works of Beethoven know them to be repaid in advance by the conviction that he is

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<sup>1</sup>This review refers to the Schlesinger editions of Opp. 132 and 135, both of which were released in September 1827. The latter is incorrectly listed here as Beethoven's 235th work.

one of the first to join himself to a step forward in art in which all artists and the public must follow him.

Now, this freest unfolding, most delicate design of all four voices discharges a sea of emotions, full of the play of the most variegated, delicate forms, an outpouring rising up from the heart of the singer long alone—separated from humanity in bleak deafness—easily upsetting and confusing the hearer's most receptive, open soul. A similar effect is often brought about by the pictures of Rubens. Confronted by his Lion Hunt or his Sanherib,<sup>2</sup> the more practiced eye needs a while to begin to analyze the abundance of figures and then grasp all the details and the way they are all united in a richly abundant, always consummate whole. Among our poets, it is probably only Heinr. v. Kleist who perhaps gives us a similar image of overflowing emotion, for which no word, no trait, no flood is sufficient. One will find a very wholesome emotional preparation for Beethoven's last works in this most lovely, great-hearted singer—for example, in a monologue that, while it has absolutely no object in common with this music, nevertheless proclaims the most heartfelt subjective kinship. It is the outpouring of love of the Count von Strahl, after he has harshly tormented Kätchen von Heilbronn for the sake of his and her honor.<sup>3</sup>

How much more favorable, to be sure, is the position of the richly abundant painter and poet compared to that of the musician! The one moment retained by the former rests before us unchanged, waiting quietly until our helplessness and weakness have come to terms with the artist. The language of the poet is also so familiar to the most preoccupied reader that he can pick up the thread again at any moment; that the coldest, most superficial reader, to whom the full life of the poet can never be disclosed, must nevertheless find points of contact in a hundred individual traits. Thanks be to the blind leaders of the musical public in our journals of entertainment, and to the lazy musicians who leave the musical direction of the public to them, for the fact that the tone poet must first await a new strengthening of the devotion of the people to artists in order to find spirits and hearts open to new ideas. —It is not for Beethoven's sake, however, but rather for their own sake, that players and listeners may go to meet these works with the quiet, humble knowledge that they will not, for now, understand them completely, that only their ineptitude is to blame for every passage that they do not understand, and that Beethoven could not have arrived at it without sacrifice. Whoever approaches the last disclosures of Beethoven with this sensibility is worthy and able to hear them, and sooner or later to understand them.

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<sup>2</sup>A footnote in the original reads: "Released in splendid lithographs by the Schleissheimer Gallery."

<sup>3</sup>The play *Das Kätchen von Heilbronn*, by Heinrich von Kleist (1771–1811), presents a sentimental idealization of womanhood so extreme that it has sometimes been taken for a parody, but it was his most popular play during his lifetime. (See Seán Allan, *The Plays of Heinrich von Kleist: Ideals and illusions* [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 178–96.) The speech by the Count von Strahl to which Marx alludes occurs at the beginning of the second act.

# Op. 135. String Quartet in F Major

## 135.I.

Adolf Bernhard Marx.

“Evaluations.”

*Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 6

(30 May 1829): 169–70.

(Mentioned: Op. 29, String Quintet in C Major; Op. 59, no. 3, String Quartet in C Major)

The most recent quartets of Beethoven, and specifically that named here, are currently the weightiest, but at the same time most difficult, task for all good quartet associations. The deep sighs and grumbling of those few who do not even want to understand Beethoven are becoming ever fainter amid the cries of general admiration, and it is interesting to perceive how even the Parisian public is turning to the thoughtful German composer with respect and admiring interest<sup>1</sup>—naturally proclaiming its interest with incomparably more emphasis and éclat<sup>2</sup> than the more introverted German one. The latter never likes to acquiesce in outward, indeterminate admiration, and if so many friends of art and artists among us still seem to bristle at Beethoven’s most recent works, this arises precisely from the dissatisfaction, in itself noble, with any interpretation that does not penetrate to the depths.

With a spirit so completely distinctively consummate there in fact also exists, in between perfect comprehension and superficial scanning, the possibility of perfect misunderstanding. The present work can illustrate this. When, for example, in the Vivace from p. 16 on, the figure



FIGURE 7. *Op. 135, 2nd movement, repeated figure in the second violin part beginning at mm. 143–44*

<sup>1</sup>Marx was probably aware of the founding, in 1828, of the Société des Concerts des Conservatoire, which, under the direction of Antoine Habeneck, played a crucial role in popularizing Beethoven’s symphonies in Paris. In the course of the nineteenth century, it is likely that these works were more frequently and better performed in Paris than in any other city. The reception of Beethoven in France is treated exhaustively in Beate Angelika Kraus, *Beethoven-Rezeption in Frankreich: Von ihren Anfängen bis zum Untergang des Second Empire* (Bonn: Verlag Beethoven-Haus, 2001). Kraus provides tables showing the exact frequency of these performances (110–11, 126–27). In light of Marx’s comments on the infrequency with which Beethoven’s orchestral works were performed in Berlin, it is particularly interesting to see that between 1828 and 1848 the 5th symphony was performed in Paris forty times, the 6th thirty-five times, and the 7th thirty-three times. See also Sanna Pederson, “A. B. Marx, Berlin Concert Life, and German National Identity,” *19th-Century Music* 18 (1994): 87–107.

<sup>2</sup>*Eclat* is a French term literally meaning “fragment.” When used in English or German, it implies a brilliant impression and success.

is repeated in thrice-doubled octaves by the second violin, viola, and violoncello more than fifty times in succession as accompaniment to an upper melody that is just as striking, this must appear baroque, indeed repugnant, if one fails to recognize a higher idea, which imparts meaning and context to all the strange, often apparently contradictory traits. Beethoven himself, in his last period, himself admitted (as was maintained in this journal more than five years ago) that he could not easily compose a piece without a specific representation, without a clearly thought-out fundamental idea.<sup>3</sup> As soon as one has recognized this, it spreads a bright light over the whole, and one perceives the consistency, the unity, the harmony of those traits that had previously appeared inharmonious. The content of the last works appears to be most intimately connected with Beethoven's subjectivity and his peculiar situation. One understands how this sequence of ideas can appear confused and insane to a coldly unreceptive spectator who stays only on the outside—while in the breast of a sympathetic, compassionate friend, the deepest, innermost soul of the tone poet flows forth in the full abundance of its emotions, recollections, and sufferings.

Accordingly, the present quartet appears to us to be a melancholy recollection of a past, happier time. In the disconnected melismas from which the first movement is woven, one believes that one is perceiving now sighs for that past time, now a flattering retreat into self-deception, now a true "täium vitä,"<sup>4</sup> the disgruntled sloughing off of life, of life's burden. Who does not feel, after understanding this movement, that the gaiety of the second is forced: "let us be young again, and stroll on in unencumbered happiness and foolishness!" This gaiety presses toward wildness, toward the edge of ruin, not toward pleasure, toward the natural, unforced pleasure of youth. It leads only to irresistible recollection, to the unrestrained, most melancholy and delicate lament of the third part. The fourth then expresses renunciation, "self surrender," with its mixture of deepest pain and seemingly apathetic passing, which can even take on the countenance of happiness—and thereby, while never overcoming the harsh question: —surmounts it.



FIGURE 8. *Op. 135, beginning of an introductory inscription by Beethoven that precedes the 4th movement. The text translates "Must it be?"*

Perhaps this interpretation will be further strengthened if the reader pursues the individual traits on his own, rather than by our developing them to that point.

Mr. Schlesinger would win himself many thanks if he were to continue with score editions. Among older works, he has first released the C major quintet. The grand C major quartet would certainly be one of the most welcome gifts.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Thayer-Forbes, 620, records the recollection by Beethoven's friend Charles Neate that the composer once told him, "I always have a picture in mind, when I am composing, and work up to it."

<sup>4</sup>This Latin phrase is presumably a misprint for "taedium vitae": weariness of life.

<sup>5</sup>This presumably refers to Op. 59, no. 3, the last of the "Razumovsky" quartets.

## Op. 136. Cantata for Solo Voices, Choir, and Orchestra “Der Glorreiche Augenblick”

### 136.I.

“News. Vienna. 10 Dec. Overview of the Month of November.”

*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 16  
(21 December 1814): col. 867–68.<sup>1</sup>

(Mentioned: Op. 92, Symphony no. 7, and Op. 91, Wellington’s Victory)

After repeated requests Mr. Louis van Beethoven gave a concert for his benefit in the grand Redoutensaal on the 29th. It consisted of the following pieces of music: new, grand symphony (in A major); new cantata: *The Glorious Moment*, with text by Dr. Aloys Weissenbach; and in conclusion: *Wellington’s Victory at the Battle of Victoria*. Since we already spoke extensively about both of the grand instrumental compositions of the ingenious composer at the first appearance,<sup>2</sup> and only confirmed our judgment at this repetition, we want to mention only the cantata, as the most recent product of Mr. van B. The poem has many successful moments, and deserved to be set to music by an outstanding composer. The chorus: Who must the exalted one be, was grand and affecting—and also, soon thereafter, the chorus: Health and good fortune to thee, Vienna—with intermittent solo singing by Vienna. A quartet also stood out, and preeminently the choir of women at the conclusion of the whole, the choir of children, and the choir of men, each alone, and then all three fugued together, with the words: Vindobona, to you, and good fortune! World! your great moment—had a grand, imposing effect. The composer seemed less successful in the recitatives, whose declamation is not always correct, and which are also less pleasing to the listener. The applause that the composer reaped in rich measure was general and lively. Apart from the highest court, and all the monarchs who honored the concert with their presence, the hall was stifflingly full. The solo parts were declaimed by Mrs. Milder-Hauptmann, Miss Bondra, and Messrs. Wild and Forti.<sup>3</sup> On 2 December this concert was repeated, but the cantata, due to the absence of Mrs. Milder-Hauptmann’s voice, was not performed with as much precision as it was the first time; the hall was also only half full.

<sup>1</sup>The cantata “Der glorreiche Augenblick,” to a text by Aloys Weissenbach, was written in 1814 at the time of the Congress of Vienna, although it was not published until 1835, by Haslinger in Vienna, as Op. 136.”

<sup>2</sup>See “News. Vienna. Concerts.” *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 16 (26 January 1814): 70–71, and “News. Vienna.” *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 16 (5 March 1814): 201–2.

<sup>3</sup>Anna Milder-Hauptmann (1785–1838) was one of the best known singers of her time, and an important early interpreter of Leonore in *Fidelio*. Bondra (first name unknown) had a career that lasted until ca. 1830, but this was probably one of her most important early appearances. Franz Wild (1792–1860) and Anton Forti (see 127.6 above, n. 9) were prominent Viennese singers.



## Op. 137. Fugue for String Quintet in D Major

### 137.I.

“Brief Notices.”

*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 29

(5 December 1827): col. 835.<sup>1</sup>

(Also arrangements for piano two- and four-hands)

We have nothing further to add to the title than that this fugue by the master is not long, is well worked out, and, as can almost be taken for granted, not easy to perform two-handed. Like all sound fugues, it demands study so that all voices can be brought out appropriately. The theme is short and as follows:



FIGURE 9. *Op. 137, mm. 1–5, single-staff reduction.*

<sup>1</sup>The Fugue for String Quintet in D Major was written in late 1817, but was not published until 1827, by Haslinger in Vienna, as Op. 137. It was released in both score and parts. The arrangements for piano two- and four-hands, which were not made by Beethoven, were released at the same time.

## 137.2.

H.B.

“Evaluations.”

*Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 5

(27 February 1828): 69–70.

(Also arrangements for piano two- and four-hands)<sup>1</sup>

The inspired flight of our sublime master’s genius is not to be denied in this composition, in which not only is a completely original effect brought forth from these five instruments, but a mood expressed, which a commonplace talent is incapable of imitating. When we go through the individual parts, we find that the composer has not only led the theme of this fugue through these five voices according to the rules, but has also brought good counterpoint and stretto to bear at the appropriate places. Since, though, compositions of this kind are drawn out further, and more special tricks of the composer’s art included in them, which the composer did not choose to use here, we see clearly that it was not his intention to write a complete instrumental fugue for these instruments, for which purpose the theme chosen for it would not even have been well suited, in part because of the leaps that it contains.

The four-handed keyboard reduction of it, in which the parts are reproduced almost unchanged, is very good, and the two-handed one, in which the parts sometimes had to be changed due to the difficulty of performing them, is also completely splendid. Both of these keyboard reductions, which were released by the same publisher and were made by the composer himself, may thus be recommended for practice to the keyboard player who has a genuine sensibility for tone poems of this kind. Due to the counterpoint and also the fugal style, though, the score should be recommended first to anyone who intends to learn from the way this tone poem is put together. In performance on the bowed instruments, a slow tempo can be rightly recommended for this composition, so that its phrase structure can be clearly perceived.

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<sup>1</sup>As noted in the previous item, these arrangements were released by Haslinger in Vienna simultaneously with the original edition in 1827. The author is mistaken; they are not by Beethoven, but by an anonymous arranger.

## WoO 57. Andante for Piano in F Major

“Brief Notices.”

*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 8

(16 July 1806): col. 671–72.<sup>1</sup>

A single movement, in itself already interesting, melodious, varied in a way that can be considered completely free, that may perhaps have been simply tossed off by B., or written in his earlier time (certain empty passages, like p. 5, system 3,<sup>2</sup> or certain harmonies, like p. 8, system 2, measure 5,<sup>3</sup> seem to point to both at once); which, however, is nevertheless a very valuable trifle, such as only a man of genius, and an excellent keyboard player, can write. The effect of a good instrument is also quite particularly considered. Thus, this little work is to be recommended to all who want to play compositions by this master, but are unable to understand or master his extended pieces. Engraving and paper are also good.

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<sup>1</sup>This “Andante grazioso con moto” in F major was originally written in 1803–1804 as the slow movement of the “Waldstein” piano sonata, Op. 53. Beethoven ultimately replaced it with the current slow movement of Op. 53, the “Introduzione: Adagio molto,” and it was published separately by the Bureau des Arts et d’Industrie in Vienna, probably in the fall of 1805. Due to its popularity, it soon became known as the “Andante favori,” a title that appears on the “Titelaufgabe” released by Breitkopf und Härtel, the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*’s publisher, in 1807. This review, however, refers to the original edition.

<sup>2</sup>Mm. 109–113. It is hard to know why the reviewer singled out this particular passage for “emptiness.”

<sup>3</sup>M. 178. The B-natural in the bass against a major seventh F to E in the right hand does produce a striking clash, but it is also a logical product of the voice leading in the preceding and following measures, of which it represents the dissonant climax.

## WoO 73. Variations for Piano on “La Stessa, la Stessissima” from Anton Salieri’s Opera *Falstaff*

“Brief Notices.”

*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 1  
(19 June 1799): col. 607.<sup>1</sup>

Now one cannot be completely satisfied with these. How stiff and affected they are, what disagreeable passages they contain, in which harsh runs in continuous half-steps clash hideously with the bass, and vice versa.<sup>2</sup> No, to be sure, Hr. v. B. may be able to improvise, but he does not understand how to write good variations.

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<sup>1</sup>These variations were written in January–February 1799 and published in February by Artaria in Vienna. This review is based on the original edition.

<sup>2</sup>The reviewer is presumably referring to the eighth-note runs in both the right and left hands in Variation 1, which do produce some sharp dissonances.

## WoO 76. Eight Variations for Piano on the Trio “Tändeln und Scherzen” from Franz Süssmayr’s Opera *Solimann II*

“Reviews.”

*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 2  
(12 March 1800): col. 425–26.<sup>1</sup>

Easy and agreeable, with no other outstanding characteristics. No. 8, an Allegro vivace, has an agreeably imitative setting. This much can be said about these variations, and—no more, if one wants to be impartial. A composer like Beethoven has spoiled us into demanding much.

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<sup>1</sup>These variations were written in the autumn of 1799 and published by Hoffmeister in Vienna in December of that year. This review refers to the original edition.

## WoO 80. Thirty-Two Variations for Piano on an Original Theme

“Reviews.”

*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 10  
(4 November 1807): col. 94–96.<sup>1</sup>

**B.** follows in this little work the oldest, specifically old German, manner of writing variations more than what is now customary.<sup>2</sup> Händel, in particular, worked out variations in this genre, only, to be sure, with a degree of imagination far less free and easily moved, but also less rambling. With this procedure B. knew how to give even this small product an attractive charm of the unexpected. He takes this short, most simple theme:



FIGURE 10. *WoO 80, mm. 1–8, with added double bar at the end*

<sup>1</sup>These variations were written in the autumn of 1806 and were published in April 1807 by the Bureau des Arts et d'Industrie in Vienna. This review refers to the original edition.

<sup>2</sup>The reviewer means that Beethoven adopted the old-fashioned technique of basing a series of variations on the bass line and harmonic progressions of a theme, rather than focusing on varying the melody.

varies it with a great wealth of harmonic artistry and powerful application of figures of all kinds—at times also quite singular (for example in no. 32, where the left hand has quintuplets against septuplets in the right!). As a whole, though, he remains constantly true to the serious, melancholy character of the theme, so that one can see and enjoy the alternating contrasts that for the most part shape these variations one against the other, like a long row of images of the sort that old Oriental poets set up, all of them portraying the same object, but from various and mutually contrasting sides. One assumes, if one has gotten to know B. without bias, that among these thirty-two variations not all are of equal worth, that many contain singular affectations and ineffective frivolities (apart from the above examples, compare Variation 9 and Variation 23). One also assumes, however, that others among these little pieces, and a much larger number, present genuine little masterpieces in invention and working out. One will be disappointed neither in one expectation nor in the other.

The variations demand a player who can not only overcome rather considerable difficulties, but who also brings along a serious sensibility; nevertheless, they are by far not among B.'s most difficult keyboard pieces. The engraving is good.

## WoO 129. Song with Piano Accompaniment, “Der Wachtelschlag”

“Brief Notices.”

*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 6  
(20 June 1804): col. 642–43.<sup>1</sup>

A small but splendid piece of music—whatever opponents of musical painting may say. This Gothic genre is all the more appropriate here since the poet himself has toyed so attractively with the imitation of the quail’s song (“fürchte Gott”—“liebe Gott”—“lobe Gott” and so forth). B. was able to interpret this and develop it even further. His music, without becoming the slightest bit comic or commonplace, is almost entirely built upon the figure imitating the quail’s song, as it is stated right in the short introduction:



FIGURE II. *WoO 129, mm. 1–3.*

But even if one were headstrong enough to wish to ignore this special design, the music remains very interesting. Details cannot be singled out, since the whole is so closely held together. One can certainly make fun of the poet’s, and the composer’s, principal idea—what could one not do this with!—but one cannot get to know it, as it is worked out here, without lively joy.

<sup>1</sup>This song, based on a poem by Samuel Friedrich Sauter, was written in 1803 and published early the following year by the Bureau des Arts et d’Industrie in Vienna. This review is based on the original edition.



## WoO 140. Song “An die Geliebte”

“Brief Notices.”

*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 19

(18 June 1817): col. 435–36.<sup>1</sup>

(With WoO 145, “The Secret”)

1. *The Secret*, by Wessenberg; and

2. *To the Beloved*, by Stoll:

both set to music, with pianoforte accompaniment, by Ludw. van Beethoven, and engraved by Simrock in Bonn, each individually, at a price of 75 centimes. They are two very nice little songs, of which the second is particularly distinguished, in the text and in the music, by loveliness and intimacy. One would expect, even without the reviewer’s assurance, that this master does not toss off songs in a customary manner, even with such trifles and in such a small space.

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<sup>1</sup>“An die Geliebte,” with a text by Joseph Ludwig Stoll, was written in late 1811. It exists in three manuscript versions; this review pertains to the one catalogued by Kinsky-Halm as the final one. It was first printed in an appendix to the Viennese journal *Friedensblätter* in July 1814, but was first published by itself in December 1816 by Simrock in Bonn and Cologne—the edition reviewed here. “Das Geheimnis,” with a text by Ignaz Heinrich Carl Freiherr von Wessenberg, was written in 1815 and was also published by Simrock in late 1816, after appearing earlier that year in the *Wiener Moden-Zeitung*.

# The Woldemar Exchange

## Woldemar's Challenge.

Ernst Woldemar.

“Challenge to the Editors of *Cäcilia*. Berlin 20 December 1827.”

*Caecilia* 8

(1828): 36–40.<sup>1</sup>

To be in the middle of the subject right at the beginning reveals not just the good poet, but the good writer in general. Therefore, not one syllable by way of introduction!—

It has long been raised beyond doubt, not just in Germany but, indeed, in the whole educated world, that Beethoven earlier produced works that will not allow his name to die with him, works that charm ear, heart, imagination, understanding—in short, the whole person.

This very same ingenious master, though—after Haydn and Mozart certainly the most original musical hero among us!—later wrote bigger and smaller things at which people with sensible understanding, regulated imagination, and healthy ears have quietly shaken their heads not a little.

If an everyday hero of ding-dong goes wrong on his sterile path, a pitiable versifier has sinned against healthy reason as little toward himself as on account of himself; how soon are such buzzing flies forgotten forever!

Only if a man whose imaginative powers are, like Beethoven's, as rich as they are eccentric, becomes so lost in gloomy, empty, dry, uncharted, and tasteless speculations—with the most beautiful of the arts, with music—to such an extent that one misses therein not just the rudder of healthy human sensibility in general, but even that of his own earlier understanding, it is certainly of very great significance, for it can destroy the good reputation of the German nation, of which it has until now rightfully been so proud, of being first among the entire educated world in the creations of harmony, and likewise of melody!

Beethoven, however, did not pay the slightest attention, in his last compositions, to the Horatian canon: “*sit, quodvis, simplex duntaxat et unum*” (Whatever you undertake to create, let

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<sup>1</sup>This article was one of two generalized attacks on the entire body of Beethoven's late work to appear in print shortly after the composer's death. (The first, anonymous, article appears in Wayne Senner, Robin Wallace, and William Meredith, eds., *The Critical Reception of Beethoven's Compositions by His German Contemporaries* [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999], Vol. 1, 129–32. See also the approving response to Woldemar in the same source, 97–98.) For a discussion of this article and its context, see Helmut Kirchmeyer, “Der Fall Woldemar: Materialien zur Geschichte der Beethovenpolemik seit 1827,” in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Musikanschauung im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Walter Salmen (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1965), 73–101. See also Wallace, *Beethoven's Critics*, 66–69.

it at least be simple and a whole), which applies to all the fine arts. He writes far out into the blue (with, to be sure, a level of imagination that is still gigantic, but is only to the worse without the firm hand of self-possessed criticism!), untroubled by how things turn out. —Truly, if that could make a master, how many masters would we not now have in Germany, who, in a few years, at least with clever people, would see their reputations shipwrecked?

The most recent schools of the more worldly-wise French have long surpassed us in music. Let anyone deny this who truly understands the genuine language of musical art!—Why, though, do they surpass us?—not because they possess more talent for this fine art, but rather because, more true to nature, they still follow the Horatian law, which, in the unfortunate last days of his existence, the giant Beethoven did not just exceed, but in fact—stamped underfoot!

The editors of *Cäcilia* will achieve no small gain for heavenly musical art if they finally, as behooves solid and genuine Germans, for once discuss this historical fact candidly and openly.<sup>2</sup>

While B., without hearing, sunk in gloomy brooding and melancholy, still among the living, vegetated more than truly creating, it was said that one should not injure the most worthy man with such sharp expressions. —The undersigned, though persuaded that the individual human being may never be raised above the laws of art, any more than other laws,

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<sup>2</sup>A note in the original review reads:

We have already done this several times, openly enough (compare, for example, inter alia *Cäcilia*, volume 5, book 20, p. 239, on the new Beethoven violin quartet in E-flat [see review 127.6, above], —also volume 3, book 10, p. 155, very extensive about and against his *Battle of Victoria* [see Weber's "On Tone-Painting, *Caecilia* 3, no. 10 (1825), 154–72], etc.—compare also C. M. von Weber's and Rellstab's candid expression 'on the strange mistakes' and 'unnatural abuses' of the most recent Beethovenian muse, *Cäcilia* v. 7, book 25, p. 18)—and how much irritation we also aroused from many people thereby, and how many in part genuinely villainous slanders we drew to ourselves thereby, these will just as little restrain us from speaking the truth always and continually just as often as, on the other hand, we will also continually grant space in our pages to the fieriest and even unconditional admirers of the divine things from the last epochs of the Beethovenian muse, as we have already done often enough and, cum grano salis, have ourselves agreed with them (as, for example, v. 5, book 17, p. 32 [See Georg Christoph Grossheim, "Reviews, Grand Overture in C, etc., Op. 115, *Caecilia* 5 (July 1826), 32–34], p. 34 [see Georg Christoph Grossheim, "Reviews, Overture in C, etc., Op. 124," *Caecilia* 5 (July 1826), 34–36]—v. 7, book 26, p. 123 [a commentary by G. von Weiler on some arrangements made in Seyfried in Beethoven's memory, which also briefly mentions his *Elegischer Gesang*, Op. 118]), and will also do again henceforth, specifically in the upcoming books, true to the fundamental principles expressed in the prospectus for *Cäcilia*: "Every thinker can accordingly expect to be given space by the editors, and they will be no means give it only to those who wish to speak according to their sensibilities, as sometimes tends to happen with the editors of literary journals.

"They will thus not give the signal for a little band of like-minded people to assemble under their banner, and therefore there can be no question of any partisanship with them. For they are, in agreement with Oken, of the opinion that the editors of a journal, or of any other collection, are by no means put in place to direct the course of things their way, and to raise their viewpoints to the norm, in order, as people say, to reward virtue, punish vice, and, as police constables of taste and of intelligence, to stand watch at the door so that no goods that contradict their viewpoints are brought in and accounted for, no other system preached but that of which they approve. —May any interference of this kind remain far from our *Cäcilia*."

*The editor*

nevertheless, in consideration of the delicate feelings that are credited to a good heart through such restraint, expressed his private opinion of Beethoven's last works either privately or always with the most sincere acknowledgment of his undeniable earlier merits.

After his death, however, as an honest German for whom truth and justice must come before everything else, he must no longer hold anything back, taking every opportunity to declare loudly that he, who is always moved to the most holy and fiery enchantment not just by the immortal works of Händel, Gluck, Hasse, Graun, Haydn, Mozart, etc., but just as much by Beethoven's other ingenious and well-regulated products of the spirit, cannot acquire the slightest taste for the unhappy, melancholy, gloomy, and confused broodings that hatched from this outstanding head shortly before his death. On hearing them, rather, he feels like he is in nothing other than a madhouse, and he must accordingly find them to be in fact most horrible, tasteless, and dreadful.

As much as this is to be lamented for the most beautiful of the arts, it does have its good side. Those contrapuntists and grammarians who still find such palpable musical nonsense enjoyable, since it does not offend their sterile rules, can finally for once have their noses rubbed in the truth: how, in music criticism, they have the honor to be nothing less than the last court of appeal, but that they must allow themselves for this purpose to be counted as aestheticians, who, intimately familiar with the genuine language of musical art, understand how to judge the value of every composition according to the general laws of the beautiful.

If, with creations of the spirit, everything depended merely on grammatical correctness, who, then, would not have to approve of way the following story begins: "Asia was quite suddenly fastened to America, and immediately after this transplantation, within six minutes the smallest mouse not only swallowed two dozen elk, but shortly thereafter the biggest elephant as well, so that not even the smallest part of his trunk was left?" —All as right as gold, according to the rules of grammar! but *oh!* what nonsense! —*Sapienti sat!*<sup>3</sup>

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Although Gottfried Weber, the editor of *Caecilia*, claims in this lengthy footnote to have given voice to those who opposed Beethoven's late music, this claim is misleading at best. The first two articles cited are his own, dealing, respectively, with Op. 127 and Op. 91 (*Wellington's Victory*). The first of these reads almost like an apologia for the quartet, while the second was addressed to the inadequacies only of this one particular piece, which in any case does not stem from Beethoven's last period and was in fact one of his most popular works. The other reference is to a biographical article on Carl Maria von Weber by Ludwig Rellstab in *Caecilia* 7, 1–20, which refers to some disparaging remarks allegedly made by Weber about Beethoven. There is, however, no solid documentation for Weber's having made these comments; see Wallace, *Beethoven's Critics*, 100–4.

<sup>3</sup>Latin: "A word to the wise is sufficient."

## Becker's Response.

C. F. Becker.

“Small Response to the Challenge Given in the 29th Issue of *Cäcilia*  
concerning L. van Beethoven.”

*Caecilia* 8  
(1828): 135–38.<sup>1</sup>

To me, and certainly to most connoisseurs of music, Beethoven is too precious a phenomenon for us to agree with a judgment like the one we read in the issue cited. Far be it from me to engage in a war of words on behalf of the *pro* and *contra*, but a word about the many charges cannot be impermissible.

Were things really so bad with Beethoven, and did he “write only so far out into the blue” as Mr. Ernst Woldemar believes?

To answer this question, familiarity with his later works is required, for it is just these that are the real stumbling block. Among them are to be found (not listed in order):

The ninth symphony, which, particularly at its first appearance, encountered much opposition;  
a mass; and  
a violin quartet.

These works, then, are perhaps, without citing Mr. Woldemar's other finely chosen circumlocutions, “most horrible, tasteless and *dreadful*,” for since he has not cited any work in the challenge, I assume, to Mr. Woldemar's credit, that he has included the most easily comprehensible, magnificent overtures as little as, perhaps, the artful, mischievous little song “I was with Chloe.”<sup>2</sup>

It is well known that Beethoven wrote about 130 other works. Now, is it right to pillory a man like this in such a way after his death on account of perhaps three works that he wrote in the last years of his life? —Are they really, as Mr. Woldemar and ten others who might make

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<sup>1</sup>Carl Ferdinand Becker (1804–1877) was an organist at Leipzig and, in later years, an important music historian. As a founding member of the Bach-Gesellschaft, he helped to champion the music of J. S. Bach, but his interests extended back to the 16th century. He was also the first professor of organ at the Leipzig conservatory.

<sup>2</sup>That is, “Der Kuss,” Op. 128, which Beethoven first drafted much earlier in his life.

such a challenge would be hard-put to prove, are they really fit for a madhouse?<sup>3</sup> —Should they be ever so much that way, though, they will soon be forgotten—the judgment is then pronounced and further discussion is useless. — —

Mozart was treated ungratefully by the Germans, Beethoven more ungratefully, for the former's *Titus*<sup>4</sup> and *Requiem* were held as a precious legacy, and relics still revered, but Beethoven, who like Mozart had to struggle almost continuously with the most basic requirements of life, should — — But no, not the Germans, but rather one person accuses him of “gloomy, empty, dry, uncharted, and tasteless speculations!”

Now, one person cannot desire others to inquire as to whether the symphony etc. are suited for “the madhouse,” one person cannot deprive Beethoven's last works of value, one person cannot give or take away a laurel wreath that is truly deserved. Not one more word for that person, but for others who were perhaps so weak as to pronounce a similar judgment.

Beethoven broke a new path; if he wanted to affirm it, he had to accomplish new things continually, in order for his disciples to hurry behind him. His course ended! —The disciples still did not approach, since the path that he marked out, on which he died, is steep, — — and thus his last creations are still a mystery to us. When the time comes that we hear the ninth (*d minor*) symphony with as much readiness and calm as we do the first (*C major*), then everything that is now unclear to us will certainly have disappeared from it, and just as certainly a new hero will be at hand who has advanced far beyond us.

Prof. M. E. Müller certainly does not contradict the truth about Beethoven when he says, on p. 54 of his *Journey to Italy*:

Beethoven is perhaps the greatest aesthetic artist. His deeply felt works are far ahead of his time. Just as Sebastian Bach's works are now being retrieved from obscurity after a hundred years, they will also be reawakened from the grave.

In conclusion, a few more words about the immortal master, which suit him perfectly, even though they were originally written not in regard to him, but to Mozart:

Unite deep knowledge of art with the most fortunate talent for inventing charming melodies, combine both with the greatest possible originality, and one has the most striking picture of—Beethoven's musical genius. Never can one find an idea in his works that one has heard before; even his accompaniment is always new. It is as though one were ceaselessly swept, without rest, from one idea to the next, so that admiration for the last one is constantly

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<sup>3</sup>This is perhaps the earliest documented source of the claim, later widely misattributed to Carl Maria von Weber, that Beethoven had shown himself “ripe” or “fit” for the madhouse in his later works. It is notable that Woldemar had said only that he felt like he was in a madhouse when listening to late Beethoven. Becker then asked whether these works were truly fit for a madhouse. Weber is often misquoted as having said that Beethoven himself was fit for the madhouse.

<sup>4</sup>That is, the opera *La Clemenza di Tito*, which, along with the *Requiem*, was one of Mozart's last major works.

intertwined with admiration for all the previous ones, and by straining all one's powers, one can scarcely grasp all the beauties that present themselves to the soul. Should one wish to accuse Beethoven of a failing, it would have to be this alone: that this abundance of beauties nearly exhausts the soul, and the effect of the whole is at times obscured by it. But it is well for that artist whose only failing consists of all too great perfection."<sup>5</sup>

So much for replying to the challenge.

Leipzig, April 1828

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<sup>5</sup>These words were first published in the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* 1 (1791), 30–31, in a report on a performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in Berlin in October of that year. Becker has simply substituted Beethoven's name for Mozart's.

## Woldemar's Reply to Becker.

Ernst Woldemar.

“Reply.”

*Caecilia* 9

(1828): 135–36.

Mr. Organist Becker of Leipzig has the sheer effrontery to take up my challenge concerning Beethoven without having read it. Reasonable people, therefore, will not be angry with me, but will rather laugh at him.

He is like most enthusiasts; in their zeal they can neither see nor hear. Thus he blames me for pillorying the creator of *Fidelio* and various earlier works that he rightfully admires! —*Risum teneatis Amici?*<sup>1</sup> —Is one pillorying someone by declaring him the foremost musical hero of Germany at present after Haydn and Mozart? When one admits that in his better times he produced works that charmed the whole world of music? —If ever a German has taken Schiller's holy oath: “To merit its crown,” it is certainly the undersigned. Should he then quarrel with the noblest sentiments of his heart because a Leipzig organist—who, through his place of residence, reminds us of the incomparable Sebastian Bach, not exactly to his advantage—is pleased to have no eyes?

If, however, Beethoven, toward the end of his life, became a different person than he was earlier, can this not be stated after his death for the honor of art—which always stands higher than that of the individual artist—without impinging on the reputation that he has truly won?

It has been said of the great Newton that before his death he sought to explain the Revelation of John; of Kant, that in his last moments he nearly became a Hindu; one has heard this as well, or even worse things, of the inspired Platner at Leipzig. —Have those who relate such weaknesses ever had the intention of denigrating the merits of such admirable men, or even of pillorying them thereby?

Mr. Organist on the Pleisse has further been so gracious as to extend my assertion “that Beethoven in his last works composed far out into the blue, untroubled by how things turn out” to all of his compositions. —What can one say to this? —I am too discreet to set down here the proper name for such a palpable calumny.

<sup>1</sup>Latin: “Can you keep from laughing, friends?”



We allow, moreover—for if Mr. Organist had read my essay and the remarks added to it by the honorable editor of *Cäcilia*, he would know that we are already speaking not of one but of several—I say, we very gladly allow him and a dozen more such professors as he calls to his aid in his essay to make what they want to out of the so fearful sounding and now and then truly delirious swan songs of the original composer. —“Just continue, splendid lords and experts of music,” we will say; “to set forth notes that make our hide bristle as the *Non plus ultra* of art. Make your world comprehensible whose paths the composer has broken just here, on which all must go further in the future. Persist in saying that younger musicians possess neither spirit, understanding, heart, ear, or taste as soon as they do not concur with this new, fantastic manner,” etc., etc., etc.

It is to be hoped that greater Germany will continue to call forth from the dust the truly immortal songs of Händel, Hasse, Graun, Gluck etc., while holding ever more firmly to its two last blameless geniuses, Haydn and Mozart. And you—yes, you, admirable lords, will finally stand out—like—no offense!—like the senators of L., when they wisely resolved—to let the sprinklers be tested regularly fourteen days before every fire.

# Postlude

Robin Wallace.

**“Three Decades of Beethoven Criticism.”**  
**Paper presented at Crosscurrents conference.**  
**Yale University, December 2005.**

I hope I may be excused for starting with a bit of autobiography. The title of my paper has a threefold meaning. First, it refers to a period in my life that began around 1980 and that I hope will conclude before 2010, by which time the last two volumes of *The Critical Reception of Beethoven's Compositions* should be in print. It started when I presented Leon Plantinga with an impossibly massive dissertation topic—an intellectual critique of the philosophical foundations of 19th-century music, or something like that—and he wisely steered me toward studying the critical reception of Beethoven. Little did I suspect as I turned in that initial prospectus that I would still be translating and commenting on early 19th-century Beethoven reviews a quarter of a century later.

The second meaning relates to the fact that the earliest of the reviews I have studied appeared in the very late 1790s, and that, with only a few exceptions, I have stuck with the year 1830 as the chronological end point. In other words, I have studied the critical writings that appeared during the last three decades of Beethoven's life. I wish I could say that I made this choice for some other reason than sheer practicality: stopping there brought the material down to a (somewhat) manageable volume.

As studies of Beethoven reception have proliferated, though, in ways that I could not have foreseen in 1980, my decision to stop right after the composer's death has at times made me seem somewhat perverse. The critical tradition has generally been seen as a continuum that began with those early reviews, got up steam in the writings of E. T. A. Hoffmann and Berlioz, and then kept right on going through A. B. Marx, Schumann, Wagner, Rolland and Schering, only to meet a wall of resistance in early 20th-century attempts to separate the essence of the music from the mythology. When Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht suggested in 1972 that our understanding of Beethoven's music is inseparably connected to the history of its reception, it was that earlier tradition, with its central triad of experiential music [Erlebensmusik], the necessity of suffering [Leidensnotwendigkeit], and the will to overcome that suffering [Leiden/ Wollen/ Überwinden], to which he was referring.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, *Zur Geschichte der Beethoven-Rezeption*, 2nd ed. (Regensburg: Laaber, 1994), 25, 74.

The pattern continues. Hoffmann is still the only contemporary critic cited in Richard Taruskin's *Oxford History of Western Music*, so that he appears single-handedly responsible for making Beethoven's reputation.<sup>2</sup> Scott Burnham, whose *Beethoven Hero* provides a particularly potent articulation of the Beethoven mythos and the critical problems it raises, likewise treats Marx as its first important historical source, and hence as the cornerstone on which the composer's reputation is built.<sup>3</sup> As we will see, though, even Marx had a few surprises up his sleeve.

Looking at Beethoven from a premortality perspective, I have dealt almost exclusively with documents that were written before it was possible to speak of constants in the reception of a closed body of work. It is the benefits of that perspective that I want to share today by discussing some of the *Nebenthemen* in early Beethoven reception: priorities that might have been, but that ultimately were not to be. In the process, I will be sharing some as-yet-unpublished translations of early reviews, along with a couple of new translations of ones that I have already cited in my work. If Stalin was right that quantity has a quality all its own, then there is no substitute for spending 25 years looking at and translating virtually every word that was written about Beethoven while he was still a moving target.

Lest my presentation of those sources seem uncritical, let me state explicitly that I am not aiming, in this paper, at an ideological critique. Neither, though, does my use of these sources mean that I endorse their viewpoints or take them at face value. Like Edmund Hillary, I find my point of departure in the simple fact that they are there. My tentative conclusions will have to await a partial ascent of this unfamiliar slope.

Perhaps the biggest surprise along the way—although it will be no surprise to anyone who has perused Stefan Kunze's anthology of reviews in the original languages—is the disproportionate amount of attention given throughout Beethoven's life to his vocal works. Taken together, *Fidelio*, the 9th symphony and the *Missa Solemnis* account for about a quarter of everything that was written on Beethoven by 1830. That proportion increases significantly if one adds works like the Choral Fantasy, Op. 80, which received 6 reviews and/or concert reports, *Christus am Ölberge*, Op. 85, with 18, and the Mass in C, Op. 86, with 5. (Compare this to 11 for the 7th symphony and 7 for the 8th; none of the non-symphonic instrumental works can even begin to compete.)

Of course modern readers will hardly be surprised to confront large volumes of critical writing on a major work like *Fidelio*. Many would probably be stunned, though, by the critical ecstasy that greeted the publication of the 25 Scottish songs, Op. 107, which by that same standard would also have to be considered at least a minor major work. In these songs, wrote an anonymous critic in the *BamZ* in 1825, "there is no overdone, sick languishing, no deliberate painting, no untimely joking: such defects as one now so often finds in songs by well-known composers."

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<sup>2</sup>Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 647–49.

<sup>3</sup>Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 69–81.

The more one sings these songs, the deeper do they sink down into the soul. Without wanting to, one carries them with one always when walking. One may be looking at the blue sky, rejoicing at people's good fortune, or letting one's moist glance sink upon graves; everywhere the recollection of these songs excites joy or sympathy.<sup>4</sup>

Revisiting Op. 107 two years later, the same journal called it “a collection that is without peer in richness, depth and sincerity, variety of characters and charm, and offers the most abundant sources for the student artist, as well as for the elevated enjoyment of the capable friend of art.”<sup>5</sup> Writing the same year in *Caecilia*, A. B. Marx stated that “there are works toward which the public needs to grow to maturity,” and that this is the first collection of songs that can be placed in such a select group.<sup>6</sup> Even as important a writer as Marx regarded these folk-song settings as epoch-making.

What particularly attracted these early reviewers was the imaginative variety of the settings, together with their lack of distortion and exaggeration. This is a point which, in a way, mirrors Amadeus Wendt's comments about *Fidelio* in his monumental essay of 1815: the presence of a text (and in the case of Op. 107, of pre-existing melodies—none of these writers seems to have been aware that Beethoven set only the melodies) helps Beethoven to rein himself in, without in any way obstructing his genius. It is the anti-Hoffmann perspective, since it explicitly states that Beethoven is at his greatest when he is at his least obscure. Writing of *An die ferne Geliebte*, Op. 98, in 1830, an anonymous critic said in the *Allgemeiner musikalischer Anzeiger* that

it is not difficult to set a text to notes, but to take up this text in such a manner that the poet's words attain new life, new radiance, that no moment is unheeded, that the tone-poem is ever pleasing, sensible and powerful, that is the secret that only discloses itself to reflection and to great talent that is equal to its task. The superficial musician sticks with superficiality, and does not penetrate the poem's inner life.<sup>7</sup>

In reviews and on title pages of the 1820s, forms of the verb “dichten” began to be used to designate the process of musical composition, including “Ton-Dichtung” for the finished

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<sup>4</sup>V.d. O...r, “Recension: Scottische Lieder, mit englischem und deutschem Texte, für eine Singstimme und (bei vier Liedern für ein) kleinem Chor mit Begleitung des Piano-forte, einer Violine und eines Violoncello, (beide obligat) komponirt von Ludwig von [sic] Beethoven,” *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 1 (5 May 1824): 159–62.

<sup>5</sup>Bust'd'or, “Recensionen: Lieder: *Volkslieder mit neuen Weisen versehen* von Beethoven,” *Berliner allgemeine musikalischen Zeitung* 4 (28 February 1827): 65.

<sup>6</sup>A. B. Marx, “Schottische Lieder, mit englischem und deutschem Text, für eine Singstimme und kleines Chor, mit Begleitung des Pianoforte, Violine und Violoncell, von *Ludwig van Beethoven*. Op. 108,” *Caecilia* 7 (September 1827): 107.

<sup>7</sup>1. *Allgemeiner musikalischer Anzeiger* (W) 2 (1830): 126–27.

product. In this passage, “Ton-Dichtung” is used, intriguingly, to mean exactly what it sounds like: a musical setting of a poem. Beethoven is thus being given credit for possessing both literary and musical chops, and for being able to combine them in inventive ways: again, a perspective not usually associated with the reception of this composer, although it is stated here as though it were self-evident.

Lest I seem to give the wrong impression, let me confirm that E. T. A. Hoffmann was indeed the most widely read and most frequently quoted Beethoven commentator of his generation. Some important provisos, though, need to accompany this assertion. Many, if not most, of the references to Hoffmann’s writings on Beethoven by his contemporaries are unacknowledged plagiarisms, consisting of anywhere from a few sentences to considerably longer passages, often stolen word for word. Given the chronology of these borrowings, which began in 1814 and really picked up steam in the 1820s, it is likely that the source for most, if not all, of them was not Hoffmann’s *AmZ* writings but the famous essay from the *Fantasiestücke in Callot’s Manier*, whose first two editions came out in 1814 and 1819, respectively. In that essay, based on the *AmZ* reviews of the 5th symphony and of the piano trios, Op. 70, the lengthy analytical passages from the original reviews were dropped. Thus, Hoffmann from the beginning was known as a polemicist, rather than as the careful and detailed analytical writer evident in his music criticism.

This is significant because it means that even in his own time Hoffmann’s reputation among those in the know was not necessarily that of a clear-headed thinker. An amusing anecdote from the *Musikalische Eilpost* of 1826, which was included in volume 2 of *Critical Reception*, makes this clear. In an obviously fictional account, the author describes how he was accosted during a performance of the 5th symphony by an enthusiastic amateur who recited Hoffmann to him at great length.

And so it went on! the entire essay from Hoffmann’s *Fantasiestücke*; everything that has ever been written or said about Beethoven’s compositions he stuffed in front of me, without letting anything disturb him—not even the symphony, which meanwhile resounded through the hall with fresh, magical life.<sup>8</sup>

It seems this writer assumed that, for at least some readers, Hoffmann already had the reputation of being the man to quote if you wanted to sound like an expert on Beethoven without having the faintest idea what you were talking about. Thus, there might actually have been considerable intellectual cachet in disagreeing with the positions he was thought to represent.

The reviewer of the 7th symphony in the *AmZ*, in fact, began with a gambit that almost reads like a direct refutation of Hoffmann’s claim that Beethoven’s instrumental music is incomprehensible to the masses.

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<sup>8</sup>“Unsere Konzerte,” *Musikalische Eilpost* 4 (March 1826); Senner, Wallace, and Meredith, *Critical Reception of Beethoven’s Compositions*, 2: 122.

This symphony, upon whose appearance we happily congratulate the entire musical public, provides new proof of Beethoven's inexhaustible talent. It is the same one whose brilliant performance in Vienna, repeated with distinguished success, was reported by the correspondent last year.

If there could be any doubt about his point, the reviewer later adds that:

Soon all of Germany, France and England will second our judgment, and reproach us with nothing more than having quoted far too little of what is good, and not having said at all enough about it.<sup>9</sup>

What we think of as the more respectable side of Hoffmann—the side that emphasized *Besonnenheit* and stressed motivic unity—played no role in this early reception of his writing. In fact, given the widespread awareness of Hoffmann's other ideas—the supremacy of Beethoven's instrumental works, his evocation of fear, horror and dread, the esoteric appeal of his music—it is remarkable how little impression Hoffmann made among his contemporaries as a proponent of technical coherence. To put it bluntly, it is hard to think of another writer before 1830 for whom this aspect of Beethoven was much more than a blip on the radar screen. When a reviewer states that a particular movement “consists of only a pair of principal ideas, but these are used completely exhaustively,” one should not be surprised to read on and find that the material is “thoroughly and strictly worked out with a certainty that vouches for study of the old classicists,” by whom this *AmZ* reviewer of Op. 101 means J. S. Bach.<sup>10</sup> It is an old-fashioned, not a forward-looking, trait. Admittedly, the movement in question is a fugue, so the Bach comparison was a natural one. If there is something on which practically all of Beethoven's contemporaries seem to have agreed, though, it is that concern for technical unity was not usually his strong point. When they did seek unity, it was despite the music's manifest incoherence.

This point is probably made most effectively in an article on Op. 111 that I have already cited more than once in my work. Its author, most likely A. B. Marx, assumes the persona of a hardheaded critic who has found himself unable to review the work. “These strokes in the introductory movement,” he asks rhetorically, “this desolate, unrestrained storming and raging in the Allegro: is this music, is this, indeed, an aesthetic enjoyment, to be swept away by the stormwind?” He is then introduced to a young man named Edward, who is deeply moved by the music and spins an elaborate story about its meaning. To the objection that the composer may not have had exactly the same thing in mind, Edward replies indignantly:

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<sup>9</sup>“Recension: *Siebente grosse Symphonie, in A dur, von Ludwig van Beethoven. 92stes Werk. Vollständige Partitur.*” *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 18 (27 November 1816): 817–22.

<sup>10</sup>—d—, “Recensionen: *Musée musical des Clavicimistes. Museum für Claviermusik, erstes Heft; enthält: Sonate (in A dur) für das Pianoforte (Hammerclavier) von Ludwig van Beethoven. 101stes Werk.*” *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 19 (1 October 1817): 687–89.

What purpose does it serve to ask the composer? If the artwork itself does not itself speak, if it is necessary for him first to tell us what it is supposed to mean, then it is too bad for his effort and our time. If, however, the work of art is worthy of the name, and if we are really capable of understanding it, I cannot grasp how it is possible to find in it anything other than what lies within it. Is something that a genuine stimulus makes us feel a product of our caprice? Just try to have happy, cheerful emotions with this sonata!<sup>11</sup>

The expressive meaning of the work is its objective content, and the music literally cannot be understood in any other terms.

Similarly, in one of the longest and most thoughtful Beethoven reviews ever published, Joseph Fröhlich, writing in *Caecilia* in 1828, described his initial bafflement with the 9th symphony and the laborious process by which he had discovered the work's secret. "Familiar with *Beethoven's* individual manner of composing," he wrote (the German, by the way, is "Ton-Dichtungsweise"),

how he has found stimulus and momentum for his magnificent productions in outer nature and its grand manifestations, and likewise in the world of ideas, indeed even in great political events; how—as a biographer says of him—he could be inspired now by a brilliant action, now by a poem that he read; considering the text of the poem "To Joy," which is pronounced by the choir, giving a clearer indication of the meaning of the whole, and which, with its grand ideas, must have particularly appealed to the master; the author finally arrived at the idea which he most likely had in mind when he made this symphony, as the following precise development will show. He now compared this with the working out of the whole and of the details, down to the smallest components—and the *most ingenious* work of *this kind* ever written lay before him.<sup>12</sup>

When Fröhlich speaks of the working out of the whole and of the details, he is not referring to motivic unity. The unity of the work, he goes on to suggest, comes from Beethoven's own life, whose course it charts. Here, then, is the *fons et origo* of the autobiographical myth. No earlier writer—and certainly not Hoffmann—had ever suggested such a thing. Perhaps Fröhlich's autobiographical view of Beethoven's music and the Hoffmann-based concept of motivic unity would later merge, "to the degree that," as Scott Burnham has written, "what we

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<sup>11</sup>Adolf Bernhard Marx [?], "Recensionen: Als Recension der Sonate Op. 111 von L. v. Beethoven...Brief eines Rezensenten an den Redakteur," *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 1 (17 March 1824): 95–99.

<sup>12</sup>Joseph Fröhlich, "Sinfonie, mit Schlusschor über Schillers Ode: 'An die Freude,' für grosses Orchester, 4 Solo- und 4 Chor-Stimmen, componirt von *Ludwig van Beethoven*. 125stes Werk....Erste Recension. Von Professor *Fröhlich*," *Caecilia* 8 (1828): 231–56, 256–60; Wallace, *Critical Reception of Beethoven's Compositions by His German Contemporaries*, Op. 125, 59.

call musical syntax is impossible to separate from musical meaning.”<sup>13</sup> By 1830, though, this identification had yet to occur. In fact, Burnham’s next statement, that musical syntax “arguably creates the possibility of such meaning,”<sup>14</sup> would have seemed precisely backwards to Beethoven’s contemporaries.

A different view of the history of the ideational impulse in Beethoven’s music was given by Marx in a *BamZ* review of Alexander Brand’s chamber music arrangement of the *Egmont* music.

For the observer of the development of art, this composition will be all the more interesting for being the first in which instrumental music was consciously and intentionally used for the self-sufficient representation of an idea and of actions in progress, even though Beethoven has directed his flight even higher and represented his ideas even more perfectly in the Farewell sonata, in the sonatas ops. 54, 111 and 110, in the E-flat major, C minor, A major, Pastoral and Choral symphonies and other later works.

For, when we look over all of his works, this is the innovation which he has bequeathed to the world: the conscious and intentional use of instrumental music for the expression and representation of a specific thought. Naturally, those innumerable artists and dilettantes for whom music remains in the ear, and who hear only sounds, have not been able to accompany him in this direction. This is the reason for the broader approval granted to his earlier works, in which his unique idea had not yet worked its way to the fore.

Among all artists, however, only Felix Mendelsohn Bartholdy has become his follower on this path (if we may overlook trifles and inadequate attempts): in his sonata in E major .... and his overture to—or rather, translation of—*Shakespeare’s Midsummer Night’s Dream*.<sup>15</sup>

Writing in 1827, just a few months after Beethoven’s death, Marx deftly traced what he considered to be the composer’s most significant contribution through a dozen or so of his most important works and then made the connection to the first of Mendelssohn’s characteristic overtures, and hence to the beginning of what would later become the single-movement symphonic poem. Beethoven, according to Marx, was the first to do what Liszt would later do: to make each work the unique and specific locus of a particular idea—and I need to emphasize that by idea Marx emphatically meant an intellectual idea, not a thematic one.

Furthermore—and this is significant—there is no indication in all of this that the ideas thus represented need be anything special, let alone transcendent. In fact, a report in the Berlin *AmZ* on the 1828 Elbe music festival, where *Christus am Ölberge* was performed, criticizes the

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<sup>13</sup>Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 166.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Adolf Bernhard Marx, “Recensionen: L. v. Beethoven Ouverture et Entr’actes de la Tragédie Egmont arr. p. 2 Vlons, Alto et Vcelle. 3 Fl. 30 Kr. pour Piano et Violin par Alex. Brand 3 Fl. 12 Kr.,” *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 4 (20 June, 1827): 194.



work precisely because it is not transcendent, unlike more Protestant works such as Handel's *Messiah* and Spohr's *Die letzten Dinge*.

Everything in Beethoven's music lives from the dramatic, sensuous perspective, and is caught up in it. We feel Christ's anxiety on the Mount of Olives along with him in the first recitative and aria, which he sings; [in the chorus that follows] we believe that we are seeing and hearing the rough yet somewhat frightened soldiers who are supposed to arrest him, and the anxious disciples. . . .

All of these pieces of music, however, . . . only paint earthly, material circumstances dramatically; nothing in them reminds us of higher things, which would also run counter to the essence of such a drama, which is oriented solely toward the sensuous perspective and sensuous impressions; which personifies Christ and the angel in as human a way as it does the human beings Peter, the soldiers, and the disciples; which must and can only portray only the bodily, mental anguish of the man Christ, but not the struggle of the God-man.<sup>16</sup>

This extreme viewpoint may be only an interesting footnote in the history of Beethoven reception. The worldliness of Beethoven's music, though, was also a favorite topic of A. B. Marx, and many of his contemporaries agreed. Their interpretations of Beethoven are likewise difficult to connect with a musical experience to which, as Burnham says, "we return because we hear nearly the same thing each time."<sup>17</sup> Writing in *Caecilia* in 1825, for example, the Berlin composer Carl Friedrich Ebers gave the following commentary on the 7th symphony:

A wedding is being celebrated in the most brilliant way. In the *Poco sostenuto* the double doors of the great hall are opened; the climbing basses and violins, from the 10th measure on, are old, stiff men and women of the family, who walk about in the hall and arrange things in various ways. At the *Vivace*, the guests now gradually appear. Various characters, steady, lightfooted, comical and sentimental figures are united in the formation of a whole, which, however, stands forth only as a bright mix of colors.

In the second movement (*Allegretto*) the ceremony begins. The entrance of the violoncello is the moving address to the bridal pair; later, when the theme is taken up now by strings and now by wind instruments, the ceremony is over, the congratulations begin, and they are continued up to the conclusion.

<sup>16</sup>A. Kretschmer, "Berichte: Drittes Musikfest an der Elbe, gefeiert in Halberstadt (Schluß)," *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 5 (23 July 1828): 239–240.

<sup>17</sup>Burnham, *Beethoven Hero*, 164.

In the third movement (Presto), we fly dancing through the ranks, carousing heartily. Venus and Bacchus seem to celebrate their triumph here.

In the last Allegro con brio the wedding guests now appear illuminated. The theme is the melody of a commonplace dance. Propriety is no longer heeded, the spirit of wine shows itself everywhere. As often happens at weddings, baptisms and balls of this kind, bickering arises; the wild dance is interrupted. The excited tempers are calmed, and one part strikes up a distinctive melody in tutti, but everything is wild, as, for example, right at the beginning after the second reprise, where up to the 5th measure it degenerates into a hurrah. This does not last long, however, before things break out again. People become wanton, destroying tables, mirrors, chandeliers; the inevitable consequences of overindulgence show themselves, which the basses seem to indicate clearly. In short, the whole ends with a general confusion, where only a few triumphantly hold their ground.<sup>18</sup>

Ebers admits that this sounds facetious, but claims that the work undoubtedly contains something of this sort, and calls on Beethoven to explain his meaning more clearly through “analysis” [zergliedern] of it.

Writing of the 8th symphony shortly after its premiere, a critic in the Viennese *AmZ* had this description of the second movement:

Let one imagine a band of mischievous but not bad-mannered boys of various ages who, on a cheerful spring day under God’s blue canopy, upon a newly rejuvenated green meadow, give themselves up to all the harmless joys of most blessed childhood, and one will have, at least *in nuce*, a not entirely inaccurate picture of this characteristic tone-painting.<sup>19</sup> (And here the word is “Tongemählde” [sic].)

Meanwhile, a commentary in the *BamZ* on the bagatelle in G minor, Op. 119, no. 4, explains it as follows:

Who does not recognize therein the first awakening of the sweet feeling of love in the breast of a fifteen year-old maiden? We hear her ask with childlike innocence what it is, what strange emotions have embarrassed the innocent heart. She does not succeed in recalling the earlier mischievous mood, is almost

<sup>18</sup>Carl Friedrich Ebers, “Reflexionen,” *Caecilia* 2 (May 1825): 271–72.

<sup>19</sup>D. [Anton Diabelli?], “Recension. Achte grosse Sinfonie (in F-Dur). Für 2 Violinen, 2 Violen, 2 Flöten, 2 Hoboen, 2 Clarinetten, 2 Fagott, 2 Hörner, 2 Trompeten, Pauken, Violoncell und Bass, von Ludwig van Beethoven (93stes Werk),” *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung für den österreichischen Kaiserstaat* 2 (17 January 1818): 7–23.

reduced to tears (beginning of the 2nd part), and all the emotions are involuntarily united in unsatisfied longing.

Who would not love the little innocent girl?<sup>20</sup>

In all of this, there is a distinct lack not only of transcendence, but also of serious suffering. Certainly the association of Beethoven's music with painful emotions was an important part of the heritage that Hoffmann bequeathed in his review of the 5th symphony and in his famous essay. It is a concept, though, that relatively few writers picked up on at first, and if we overlook Amadeus Wendt's huge 1815 essay on *Fidelio*, the complementary notion that suffering was overcome in the course of the music only emerged in the late 1820s, and then with a tentativeness that showed just how new this concept really was. The nexus for this latter transformation was the 9th symphony, not the 3rd, 5th, or any of the obvious earlier candidates. Thus, it is hard to escape the conclusion that people had to be "gagged and bound and flogged with chords of Joy," in Adrienne Rich's immortal words, before they could conceive of the idea that this flogging was salutary. It was an idea, in short, that seemed totally foreign to the experience of music, and could only be clarified through words. As Georg Christian Grossheim put it in his review of the 9th symphony in *Caecilia*:

Will we, to whom the representations of Sophocles and Euripides seem too cruel, not shrink back from the dreadfulness of the first image? —An Iphigenia, an Idamant, who, in a triumph of childlike love, proffered her bare breast to the murderous steel that the angry deity put in her father's hand. An Alceste, who staggers to Erebus on the glowing ground in order to sacrifice herself for her husband. These images have been almost banished from our gallery of tone-paintings, and jokes have taken the stage, which all too easily verge into foolishness, indeed into insanity. Will we not therefore flee if the curtain now falls on this image of mourning?<sup>21</sup>

Like many other commentaries on Beethoven's later works, this review was addressed to people who admired the composer's earlier music, especially that of what we now call the middle period, but who were baffled by the turn he had taken at the end of his life. For Grossheim and others, the clue to the riddle came not from the music but from the words of the 9th symphony. After further elaborating his description of the opening of that work, which apparently takes in the third movement, he states:

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<sup>20</sup>N. G., "Recensionen: Nouvelles Bagatelles, ou Collection de morceaux faciles et agréables pour le Piano-Forte, par L. van Beethoven. OEuvre 112," *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 1 (7 April 1824): 128–129.

<sup>21</sup>Christian Grosheim, "Sinfonie, mit Schlusschor über Schillers Ode: 'An die Freude,' für grosses Orchester, 4 Solo- und 4 Chor- Stimmen, componirt von *Ludwig van Beethoven*. 125stes Werk....Zweite Recension. Von Dr. Grossheim," *Caecilia* 8 (1828): 231–56, 256–60; Wallace, *Critical Reception of Beethoven's Compositions by His German Contemporaries*, Op. 125, 74–75.

This is the tone-painting that Beethoven first sets up, but, moved by a voice that calls out to him “Away with this!” he now takes it down from the easel, so that he may, at Schiller’s side, set up the picture of joy that is sublime beyond all description.<sup>22</sup>

If there could be any doubt about Grossheim’s point, he continues: “If poetry and music step forth together, the first is mistress, the second servant.”<sup>23</sup>

Grossheim then describes how Beethoven, led by Schiller, paints a powerful picture of a celebration of joy, in which a war hero is honored. Going full circle, we find once again that the key to Beethoven’s secrets lies in his vocal music. It took words and not music—the 9th symphony and not the “Eroica”—to bring this idea of musical heroism to the fore.

To summarize: There is really little trace in the writings of Beethoven’s contemporaries of the self-possessed, compulsively autobiographical, irredeemably masculine figure that we read about in more recent commentaries: a man at home with instruments but not with the voice, for whom a text was an impediment and a questionable sense of closure the ultimate goal. This is *our* Beethoven, but it is not the Beethoven of the first three decades.

I do not wish to claim too much. The relative scarcity, in the earliest Beethoven literature, of themes that would later come to define the composer’s significance does not invalidate those themes or even lessen their importance. It should, though, I think, give us pause, and allow us to realize that the perception of Beethoven’s greatness as a composer is bigger than the critical tradition that contains it.

And that brings us to the third meaning of my title. Like all of you who are my age or older, I have seen dramatic changes in the field of musicology during the 80s, 90s, and 00s. While there remain significant pockets of resistance, it is probably fair to say that Joseph Kerman’s old vision of musicology as criticism has come to define the field in ways that would have been inconceivable when I first came to Yale in 1977. All of this critical activity, furthermore—what has come to be known as the “new musicology”—has defined itself largely in reaction to the dominant trends in Beethoven reception, which in turn helped to define the old musicology. These have truly been three decades of Beethoven criticism, even when Beethoven himself was not the (explicit) subject.

So, going back to that earlier three decades, it is worth remembering that very few, if any, of Beethoven’s contemporaries—not even, I suspect, E. T. A. Hoffmann—would have recognized or cared much for the Beethoven who has become the new musicology’s favorite whipping boy. A composer of unprecedented greatness, yes: on that they all agreed. A composer whose imagination was constrained by technical procedures, harmonic necessities and self-referential narrative agendas: no.

Has the later critical reception of Beethoven kept the bathwater and thrown out the baby? Again, I don’t want to claim too much. I will repeat unequivocally, though, that before

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 75.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

the heroic, personally transcendent view of Beethoven was established, there nevertheless existed a fully formed and self-sufficient awareness of his greatness. As central as the later Beethoven mythos has become to the entire discourse about Western music, I think it is a mistake to assume that it fully encompasses the meaning and significance of the composer and his work.

Neither do I want to go to the other extreme and suggest that Beethoven's music has no inherent meaning; as Eggebrecht has demonstrated, this would in any case be just another way of reacting to the critical tradition.<sup>24</sup> I do want to make a suggestion, though, that for any other composer might seem self-evident in the context of today's scholarship: that the meaning of Beethoven's music is too big to be encompassed by a set of verbal interpretations, and that this is why it had to be expressed in music in the first place. I have already written elsewhere about how that meaning can be re-examined and re-mythologized 200 years down the road, and I provide a few references in the handout.<sup>25</sup> For today, let me just point out that musical mythmaking has a way of surprising us by reinventing old reputations and casting them in new molds. That is why Josquin, Palestrina, and Bach are still with us. A straw man, though, cannot be reinvented, at least not without giving the lie to the rhetorical strategy that created him in the first place.

So I am modestly proposing that we give Beethoven a break and let him continue to be reinvented. Either he is big enough to take it or he isn't, but it will probably take at least another three decades to find out.

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<sup>24</sup>Eggebrecht, *Zur Geschichte der Beethoven-Rezeption*, 26–28.

<sup>25</sup>Robin Wallace, "Background and Expression in the First Movement of Beethoven's Op. 132," *The Journal of Musicology* 7 (Winter, 1989): 3–20, and "Myth, Gender, and Musical Meaning: *The Magic Flute*, Beethoven, and 19th-Century Sonata Form Revisited," *The Journal of Musicological Research* 19 (1999): 1–25.