

BEETHOVEN



DOCUMENTATION ON BEETHOVEN'S SINFONIA EROICA

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DOCUMENTATION ON LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN'S SINFONIA EROICA

Ludwig van Beethoven: Sinfonia Eroica

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Opinions on Beethoven and his Symphonies

Text compilation by Benjamin Gunnar Cohrs

Translations: John Alan Phillips

The Unfamiliar Familiar Composer

“If, at the turn of the twentieth century, Ludwig van Beethoven was a cult figure who, challenged only by the new ideologue Richard Wagner, dominated the artistic scene—and, as can be seen from the Klimt frieze, not only that of music—at the end of the century an ominous silence has fallen around this powerful musical thinker. It is not only a question of over-exposure; it has much more to do with the problems which underlie our modern day conception of art. We—along with most artists—prefer to work on what is marginal rather than what is essential, on the peripheral rather than the central, the distant rather than the near. The concert repertoire reflects a limited Beethoven: the symphonies (with the Ninth as New Years concert), the concertos, the great sonatas, much more seldom the string quartets, almost never his other ensemble music. And when it does, one believes one has to lie for commercial reasons and extols ‘violin sonatas’ which Beethoven neither so named nor would have so named. The choral music remains forgotten (allegedly due to deplorable texts which, however, don’t seem to bother us in Brahms’ case); the fact that alongside the one hundred and thirty opus numbers stand two hundred works without opus number (WoO) is withheld.”

Manfred Wagner

The Misunderstood Genius

“Ludwig van Beethoven. No other composer has elicited so many legends and myths, has had so many novels written about him. Nor has any other composer influenced musical history, and beyond that cultural history, aesthetics and even politics as much as Beethoven. If some major event needed (or needs) celebrating, be it the opening of a new concert hall, the fall of the Berlin Wall or the manifesto of a fascist congress, Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, or at least its fourth movement, the “Hymn to Joy”, is played, and it meanwhile has come to be seen as a hymn for Europe representing the old ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. When a ‘public person’ dies, the funeral march from the Eroica is played; no statesman’s or dictator’s funeral procession is complete without it. And even private burials are lent nobility by Beethoven’s music; there one are likely to hear an arrangement of *Die Himmel rühmen* or *Meine Lebenszeit verstrickt* for male chorus (seldom for female). Generations of singers (male and female) have bestowed the apparently requisite endorsement of Beethoven’s *Ich liebe dich* upon the bridal couple’s vows at wedding celebrations; even the otherwise unmusical comment on momentous events with an inevitable recourse to a symbolic threefold knocking of fate upon the door. And every individual who hears badly, or simply just listens badly, is at some point sure to be ‘ennobled’ with the epithet ‘Beethoven’—even if that individual is only a St Bernard.

“Beethoven remains today ‘The Titan’ (like the novel written about him), a ‘giant’ (who looms behind composers, giving them inferiority complexes), a ‘hero of German musical art’ (who in partnership, in particular, with Johann Sebastian Bach guaranteed and still guarantees its superiority over what Wagner referred to as ‘foreign illusion and foreign futility’). His music is that of a ‘genius’, it is ‘divine’, according to Thomas Mann an ‘Imitatio Dei’ and therefore ennobles everything it touches, surrounding itself with the halo of the ‘sublime’, ‘eternal’ and ‘immortal’, even ‘holy’. A list of the laudatory epithets conferred on Beethoven and his music would fill books, their sources constitute a bibliography of cultural history.

“Why is this? Naturally because, first, Beethoven’s music is simply exceptionally good, but that can be said of the music of other composers as well. Naturally also because a mysterious aura surrounds Beethoven’s biography, especially on account of the letters to the ‘Immortal Beloved’ or the ‘Heiligenstadt Testament’. Naturally also because he defied aristocracy with his hat firmly planted on his head and as a ‘brain holder’ regarded himself as superior to ‘estate holder’. Naturally also due to his audacious (‘inspired’) appearance and his defiant fits of anger (one of which can be measured today by the hole left in the title page of the *Eroica*). But all this would not be sufficient to explain the ‘Beethoven myth’ if his music did not immediately grip us, speak to us, like no other.

“And it truly does ‘speak’, as all friends, pupils and contemporaries of the composer constantly affirm; it is the last great descendant of that Baroque ‘speech in sound’ which can be so clearly differentiated from the

unending legato of the Romantic period (which, even on the verge of the 21st century, is still cultivated by conductors and musicians—cultivated unfortunately in the music of the 18th and early 19th centuries as well). But it also speaks of ‘great things’—of freedom, as well as of love or of an uncompromising humanism. And because this ‘speaking’ music of Beethoven’s arose out of rhetoric and was thought of as rhetoric it must also be interpreted as rhetorical (i.e. declaimed, ‘spoken’)—as if it possessed a text which must be declaimed prosodically (by making a distinction between verses and strophes), or recited like prose. For even Beethoven’s music consists of *Sätze*—clauses or musical periods—*Hauptsätze* (principal subjects), *Nebensätze* (subsidiary subjects)—terms repeatedly invoked but usually without proper consideration given to their origins in spoken language. And hence we often hear Beethoven’s music as if the executants were not living beings who have to breathe from time to time, as if they were not living beings who in speaking have to articulate, emphasise, express emotions etc.

“Alongside the spoken dimension of Beethoven’s music belongs an appropriate speech (or better ‘speaking’) tempo, rather than a meditative tempo. The more heroic Beethoven’s music was seen (or is seen) as being, the slower it was (and is) played. The most fatuous theories were invoked to raise doubts about, or even dismiss, Beethoven’s metronome markings, his competence called into question to the extent that it has even been assumed he actually meant eighth notes when his metronome marking referred to quarters. In the ‘endless’ interpretations of this kind which emerged his music indeed became weightier but not actually more heroic, because ‘speaking’ notes were replaced by dragging ones, desperately struggling for words. Innumerable conductors have attempted to ‘gag’ Beethoven, to make a boring composer out of him. That they have not succeeded ‘speaks’ for him; even in half-tempo his ‘speech’ still shines forth from his music.”

Hartmut Krones

On Beethoven’s Symphonies

It was *Beethoven* who opened up the boundless faculty of Instrumental Music for expressing elemental storm and stress. His power it was, that took the basic essence of the Christian’s Harmony, that bottomless sea of unhedged fullness and unceasing motion, and clove in twain the fetters of its freedom. *Harmonic Melody*—for so must we designate this melody divorced from speech, in distinction from the Rhythmic Melody of dance—was capable, though merely borne by instruments, of the most limitless expression together with the most unfettered treatment. In long, connected tracts of sound, as in larger, smaller, or even smallest fragments, it turned beneath the Master’s poet hand to vowels, syllables, and words and phrases of a speech in which a message hitherto unheard, and never spoken yet, could promulgate itself. Each letter of this speech was an infinitely soul-full element; and the measure of the joinery of these elements was utmost free commensuration, such as could be exercised by none but a tone-poet who longed for the unmeasured utterance of this unfathomed yearning.

“Glad in this unspeakably expressive language, but suffering beneath the weight of longing of his artist soul—a longing which, in its infinity, could only be an ‘object’ to itself, not satisfy itself outside—the happy-wretched, sea-glad and sea-weary mariner sought for a surer haven wherein to anchor from the blissful storms of passionate tumult. Was his faculty of speech unending—so also was the yearning which inspired that speech with its eternal breath. How then proclaim the end, the satisfaction, of this yearning, in the selfsame tongue that was naught but its expression? If the utterance of immeasurable heart-yearning be vented in this elemental speech of absolute tone, then the *endlessness* of such utterance, like that of the yearning itself, is its only true Necessity; the yearning cannot find contentment in any finite *shutting-off* of sound, —for that could only be Caprice. Now by the definite expression which it borrows from the rhythmic dance-melody, Instrumental Music may well portray and bring to close a placid and self-bounded mood; for reason that it takes its measure from an originally outward-lying object, namely the motion of the body. If a tone-piece yield itself *ab initio* to this expression, which must always be conceived as that of mirth, in greater or in less degree, —then, even mid the richest, most luxuriant unfolding of the faculty of tonal speech, it holds within itself the necessary grounds of every phase of ‘satisfaction’; while equally inevitably must this (satisfaction) be a matter of caprice, and therefore in truth unsatisfying, when that sure and sharp-cut mode of utterance endeavours merely *thus* to terminate the storms of endless yearning. The transition from the endless agitation of desire to a mood of joyous satisfaction, can necessarily take place no otherwise than by the ascension of desire into an *object*. But, in keeping with the character of infinite yearning, this ‘object’ can be none other than such an one as shows itself with finite, physical and ethical exactitude.

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Absolute Music, however, finds well-marked bounds dividing her from such an object; without indulging in the most arbitrary of assumptions, she can now and never, of her own unaided powers, bring the physical and ethical Man to distinct and plainly recognisable presentment. Even in her most infinite enhancement, she still is but *emotion*; she enters *in the train* of the ethical deed, but not as that *Deed itself*; she can set moods and feelings side by side, but not evolve one mood from out another by any dictate of her own Necessity ;—she lacks the *Moral Will*.

“What inimitable art did Beethoven employ in his C-minor Symphony, in order to steer his ship from the ocean of infinite yearning to the haven of fulfilment! He was able to raise the utterance of his music *almost* to a moral resolve, but not to speak aloud that final word; and after every onset of the Will, without a moral handhold, we feel tormented by the equal possibility of falling back again to suffering, as of being led to lasting victory. Nay, this falling-back must almost seem to us more ‘necessary’ than the morally ungrounded triumph, which therefore—not being a necessary consummation, but a mere arbitrary gift of grace—has not the power to lift us up and yield to us that *ethical* satisfaction which we demand as outcome of the yearning of the heart.

“Who felt more discontented with this victory than Beethoven himself? Was he lief to win a second of the sort? ’Twas well enough for the brainless herd of imitators, who from glorious ‘major’-jubilation, after vanquished ‘minor’-tribulation, prepared themselves unceasing triumphs,—but not for the Master, who was called to write upon his works the *world-history of Music*.

“With reverent awe, he shunned to cast himself afresh into that sea of boundless and insatiate yearning. He turned his steps towards the blithesome, life-glad Men he spied encamped on breezy meads, along the outskirts of some fragrant wood beneath the sunny heaven ; kissing, dancing, frolicking. There in shadow of the trees, amid the rustling of the leaves, beside the tender gossip of the brook, he made a happy pact with Nature; there he felt that he was Man, felt all his yearning thrust back deep into his breast before the sovereignty of sweet and blissful *manifestment*. So thankful was he toward this manifestment that, faithfully and in frank humility, he superscribed the separate portions of the tone-work, which he built from this idyllic mood, with the names of those life-pictures whose contemplation had aroused it in him:—“Reminiscences of Country Life” he called the whole. But in very deed they were only “Reminiscences”—pictures, and. not the direct and physical actuality. Towards this actuality he was impelled with all the force of the artist’s inexpugnable (“*nothwendig*”) yearning. To give his tone-shapes that same compactness, that directly cognisable and physically sure stability, which he had witnessed with such blessed solace in Nature’s own phenomena,—this was the soul of the joyous impulse which created for us that glorious work the “Symphony in A major.” All tumult, all yearning and storming of the heart become here the blissful insolence of joy, which snatches us away with bacchanalian might and bears us through the roomy space of Nature, through all the streams and seas of Life, shouting in glad self-consciousness as we tread throughout the Universe the daring measures of this human sphere-dance. This symphony is the *Apotheosis of Dance* herself: it is Dance in her highest aspect, as it were the loftiest Deed of bodily motion incorporated in an ideal mould of tone. Melody and Harmony unite around the sturdy bones of Rhythm to firm and fleshy human shapes, which now with giant limbs’ agility, and now with soft, elastic pliance, *almost before our very eyes*, close up the supple, teeming ranks; the while now gently, now with daring, now serious, now wanton, now pensive, and again exulting, the deathless strain sounds forth and forth; until, in the last whirl of delight, a kiss of triumph seals the last embrace.

“And yet these happy dancers were merely shadowed forth in tones, mere sounds that imitated men! Like a second Prometheus who fashioned men of clay (“*Thon*”) Beethoven had sought to fashion them of *tone*. Yet not from ‘*Thon*’ or Tone, but from both substances together, must Man, the image of live-giving Zeus, be made. Were Prometheus’ mouldings only offered to the *eye*, so were those of Beethoven only offered to the ear. But only *where eye and ear confirm each other’s sentience of him, is the whole artistic Man at hand*.

“But where could Beethoven find *those* men, to whom to stretch out hands across the element of his music? Those men with hearts so broad that he could pour into them the mighty torrent of his harmonic tones? With frames so stoutly fair that his melodic rhythms should *bear* them and not *crush* them?—Alas, from nowhere came to him the brotherly Prometheus who could show to him these men! He needs must gird his loins about, and start *to find out for himself the country of the Manhood of the Future*.

“From the shore of Dance he cast himself once more upon that endless sea, from which he had erstwhile found a refuge on this shore; the sea of unallayable heart-yearning. But ’twas in a stoutly-built and giant-bolted ship that he embarked upon the stormy voyage; with firm-clenched fist he grasped the mighty helm: he *knew* the journey’s goal, and was determined to attain it. No imaginary triumphs would he prepare

himself, nor after boldly overcome privations tack back once more to the lazy haven of his home; for he desired to measure out the ocean's bounds, and find the land which needs must lie beyond the waste of waters.

"Thus did the Master urge his course through unheard-of possibilities of absolute tone-speech—not by fleetly slipping past them, but by speaking out their utmost syllable from the deepest chambers of his heart—forward to where the mariner begins to sound the sea-depth with his plumb; where, above the broadly stretched-forth shingles of the new continent, he touches on the heightening crests of solid ground; where he has now to decide him whether he shall face about towards the bottomless ocean, or cast his anchor on the new-found shore. But it was no madcap love of sea-adventure, that had spurred the Master to so far a journey; with might and main he willed to land on this new world, for toward *it* alone had he set sail. Staunchly he threw his anchor out; and this anchor was *the Word*. Yet this Word was not that arbitrary and senseless cud which the modish singer chews from side to side, as the gristle of his vocal tone; but the necessary, all-powerful, and all-uniting word into which the full torrent of the heart's emotions may pour its stream; the steadfast haven for the restless wanderer; the light that lightens up the night of endless yearning: the word that the redeemed world-man cries out aloud from the fullness of the world-heart. This was the word which Beethoven set as crown upon the forehead of his tone-creation; and this word was: —"*Freude!*" ("Rejoice!") With this word he cries to men: "*Breast to breast, ye mortal millions! This one kiss to all the world!*" —And *this Word* will be the language of the *Art-work of the Future*.—

"The Last Symphony of Beethoven is the redemption of Music from out her own peculiar element into the realm of *universal Art*. It is the human Evangel of the art of the Future. Beyond it no forward step is possible; for upon it the perfect Art-work of the Future alone can follow, the *universal Drama* to which Beethoven has forged for us the key."

Richard Wagner

The *Eroica* and the un-interrogated artist

"The real truth about 'the great works of Western music' is this: one celebrates them but doesn't wish to know anything about them. Beethoven's *Eroica*, praised as a titanic masterwork, is supposed to pierce one to the core, the soul's appreciation measured by the gooseflesh it provokes. Music has always been that art form whose emotional effect invites immediate identification and avoids questions about the actual meaning of musical language. Whether the *Eroica* is about the French Revolution, Napoleon, Beethoven's deafness or even the German nation, most couldn't care less ... During Beethoven's lifetime, and far more, following his death, the *Eroica* was discussed in an astonishingly narrow-minded fashion. This chapter of German musicology and music history is a dark one, despite some important names—few glimmers of light brighten the scene ...

"Time and again symphony audiences experience the same contradiction: the musicians on the podium play the *Eroica* with an involvement the gestural and mimetic quality of which allow one to sense the 'power of feeling' that is at work here. But in the programme booklet stand clever-sounding, emotionless words about musical form: 'to the more weakly profiled second theme is added, at the end of the development section, a third...' and, when the issue arises, one reads that Beethoven wrote his Third Symphony about Bonaparte, only later to angrily tear up the dedication page. The situation is absurd: the programme booklet 'explains' music which the audience do not hear; even if they learnt about sonata form and its two themes in school, they are far more inclined to be drawn in by the gestural power of the music—and IT is not explained to them by anyone.

"IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE EXPLAINED; IT SPEAKS FOR ITSELF. In fact, the programme booklet takes into account the expectations of the public: its very seriousness makes it apparent that not just any kind of feelings are being exchanged here but only ones appropriate to the rank and title of the EROICA by BEETHOVEN.

"Why is it that one tends more to celebrate the 'great works of Western music' rather than ask questions about them? During the interval audience members attending a performance of Goethe's *Egmont* might well discuss the philosophical context of the play, its datedness or timelessness, or at least inform themselves about it via a newspaper critique; visitors to the Prado standing in front of Velasquez' painting *The Handover of Breda* would be informed about the Franco-Flemish war, iconography and composition while taking a tour of the museum. Only the concert listener seems usually completely uninterested in what Beethoven 'thought

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about' in writing his *Egmont* overture and how he worked. Beethoven's music is supposed to go straight to the heart, to grip one spiritually. Music generally is that art which most strongly encourages immediate identification with it due to its emotionally affecting gestures. That was not always as self-evident as it today appears. Once music freed itself from its ties to mathematics in the quadrivium and became increasingly 'trivial', it did everything it could to be understood, above and beyond any mere representation of affect as a 'speech in sound' or a 'musical language', precise and differentiated.

"Composers like Schütz, Bach and Mozart took this path firstly in their vocal music, the texts of which offered important aids to comprehension. But even Johann Sebastian Bach in his *Art of Fugue*, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach in his free keyboard fantasies and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in his string quartets raised the demands on themselves and their listeners to the extent that they wanted to create instrumental music that was both PURE music and AT THE SAME TIME capable of speech. Beethoven placed this dialectic at the very centre of his creative output: his genius should be proven by the fact that one understands him BECAUSE and DESPITE the fact he 'only' wrote music.

"With the passing of time this 'message' has been understood less and less; instead, Beethoven came to be disproportionately seen as an 'absolute musician'. The resentment against any form of musical interpretation which underlies this claim is the result of the bourgeois division of labour by which 'thinking' and 'feeling' fall into separate categories. Thinking must serve economic and political 'progress'; feeling remains the provenance of art, which has to make up the deficit in feeling left by the rational thinking of progress. In art the bourgeois person created fantasy worlds in which his life struggle, often experienced as meaningless, took on a higher significance. Particularly in the 19th-century symphony, this conflict was exalted to the status of an unalterable law. Through the celebratory invocation of this conflict one was thought to have overcome it.

"Here we have arrived at the *Eroica*. In it Beethoven, in the tradition of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, laid down his political-moral conception about the emergence of mankind. This was not achieved openly but in code, in the dialectic of his instrumental musical language. Admittedly, Beethoven gives many clues as to what is implied. The most important is a musical self-quotation: one of the main themes from the ballet music *The Creatures of Prometheus*. The *Eroica* is without doubt a *Prometheus Symphony*. Beethoven very likely here composed the plot of the Prometheus ballet for a second time, as a symphony—this time starting with the higher demands he was making on his instrumental music's powers of speech.

"But the *Prometheus Symphony* is also a *Bonaparte Symphony*, a *Prince Louis Ferdinand Symphony*, a *Heroic Symphony*. The different names do not mean that all of this is mere speculation which cannot be justified by the score and therefore, in view of the immediate impression upon the listener, of only marginal significance. It suggests much more that Beethoven's music encapsulated ideas of the time in a musical composition. Beethoven's biography in the *Eroica* years is breathtakingly gripping when one lifts it out of the realm of anecdote or hero-worship and sees it as documenting the life of a human being who, at a time of great upheaval and not without recourse to his own personal life-experiences, attempted to give these ideas utterance in musical form.

"At least some of his contemporaries were curious about what Beethoven was offering them as a whole new way to express oneself in and through music. But already during Beethoven's lifetime and increasingly following his death, a phase of remarkable narrow-mindedness emerged in the discussion of these ideas. Their multi-faceted, self-contradictory and vulnerable character was reduced to the three conceptual spheres of 'classic', 'heroic' and 'national'. For one and a half centuries the attempt was made to tame Beethoven the passionate, contradictory man of the Enlightenment, which he was, and pass him off solely as the bard of destiny, which he was also. This process reflects the course of German history, in which republican traditions were rejected and totalitarian and militaristic ones gained strength. The names of many individuals with status or reputation in this history are linked with interpretations of the *Eroica*: Richard Wagner, Hans von Bülow, Ferdinand Lasalle, Otto von Bismarck, Adolf Hitler, as are the dates of three wars: 1870–71, 1914–1918, 1939–1945. ...

"In the present day a work like the *Eroica* is heard by only a few; at most for certain individuals—usually experts—is it truly accessible as an object of the imagination. Nonetheless, the *Eroica* remains a piece of official culture and, as such, generally accessible to everyone; those fortunate enough become familiar with it in school music classes without having had any say in the matter. In Beethoven's time it was different. Many more than the one or two thousand subscribers who read the Leipzig *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, the *Morgenblatt*, or the *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* knew nothing of the existence of the *Eroica*, let alone

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HEARD it. It was something for a small, culturally engaged elite large enough to exist as a functioning body only in Vienna, Leipzig, Paris and Berlin, and which kept completely to itself. On the other hand, this elite existed at a time when one knew nothing of what we would now refer to as a 'pluralistic society', and had a far stronger formative influence on opinion as is nowadays the case. But one should certainly not overlook the fact that the 'humanity' to whom Beethoven so emphatically appealed did not even have the chance, initially, to hear his message."

Peter Schleuning and Martin Geck

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Beethoven's *Sinfonia Eroica* deciphered?

Original essay by Benjamin Gunnar Cohrs, Bremen

Translation: John A. Phillips, Adelaide

Historical Interpretations of the *Eroica* in the Service of Ideology and Power

The further back in the past the genesis and premiere of Ludwig van Beethoven's Third Symphony, the *Sinfonia Eroica*, lay, the more diverse the attempts which have emerged to 'decode' the work. That is not surprising, the Beethoven biographer Martin Geck claims: "On the one hand Beethoven created a composition which no longer allows itself to be enjoyed at first hearing as an elevated entertainment, but rather demands intensive investigation as an *artwork of ideas*. On the other hand, he both laid and covered up the clues to such interpretation so cleverly that the only alternative left to the listener is to either give up the traces as lost or speculate upon what their extent may have been. Considering Beethoven's personality this process was perfectly understandable: the listener should sense that important programmatic matters are involved here, should not, however, attempt to explain the message intellectually, but as it were read that message from the lips of the high priest of the musical artwork of ideas in the sense of emotional empathy. Only in this way could the lonely and misunderstood composer feel himself totally accepted." Unfortunately, this responsibility opened the door to a danger which in this respect has previously gone unrecognised—that of *ideological appropriation*. Since: "even during his lifetime a historical process began, in which the composer of the *Eroica* was seen first as a classic, then in addition as an ethically exemplary intellectual warrior and a national hero strengthening the morale of a nation at war: in this combination a nightmare!"

The founding thinkers of the Enlightenment elected Beethoven to represent the prime example of a creator of 'absolute music'—an unabashedly popular educational attitude among whose founders belongs, in particular, Adolph Bernhard Marx; the 'heroic' was a favourite subject, the *Eroica* accordingly a model which pointed the way. In contrast, Richard Wagner interpreted the *Eroica* as a humanistic creation based on a poetic subject: "As, once again, absolute music can only express feelings, passions and moods in their degrees and in opposition to one another, not, however, circumstances of any kind of social or political nature. Beethoven had a magnificent instinct for this...." he wrote in 1852 in a letter to the conductor Hans von Bülow. Despite that, in an act of unparalleled presumption, Bülow had the audacity 40 years later, following a concert on 28 March 1892 with the Berlin Philharmonic, to alter the dedication of Beethoven's *Eroica* to Otto von Bismarck, whom he passionately admired. Four days later, on April 1 at a concert in Hamburg, he even had a programme leaflet distributed with the dedication to Bonaparte struck through, replaced by the word 'Bismarck' and cited the Finale theme of the *Eroica* with the following text: "Treasure of the people, Hail to Thee, O Hero. Through your word was created the new German world. From this time on have you united us to the very core of our hearts, strongly armed against every foe." This was no April Fools joke: From then on Bülow consistently referred to the *Eroica* as the *Bismarck-Sinfonie*.

In the first half of the 20th century the musicologist Walter Vetter consistently interpreted the *Eroica* as the expression of a heroic will to conquer one's own destiny, thereby opening the door to Nazi ideology. Precisely this was taken as evidence of the 'German nature', which was to 'heal the world' and unfortunately still characterises Western societies in the 21st century: Whoever stands in the way of the individual realising his own happiness becomes an enemy and must be opposed. Correspondingly for instance some music historians attempted to separate the *Eroica* from its unquestionable connections with France and Bonaparte, whereby the dedication erased by Beethoven (cf. Illustrations 10 and 11) was considered to represent *prima facie* evidence. Opposing voices such as that of Paul Bekker (1911) with his remarkably progressive and multifaceted view of Beethoven were in a minority. In 1921 Alfred Heuss made things even clearer: for him the *Eroica* represented a synthesis of freedom and discipline; in so doing he laid the ideological foundations for the emergent Nazis. By Beethoven centenary year 1927 the Minister for Internal Affairs of the Reich, Walter von Keudell, could claim: "In Beethoven's music the German people experience the heroic form of their own being irrespective of their state boundaries, world views or social strata."

The incipient collapse of the Weimar Republic brought a whole generation of conservative popular authors onto the scene, along with Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, Richard Benz, Ernst Bertram and others, who appointed Beethoven the identifying figure of national renewal. Benz, in particular, turned Beethoven into the spiritual-intellectual redeemer of private human misery, and the four movements of the *Eroica* were accordingly once more burdened with clichés—"earthly battle, earthly death, purification and victory celebration". This was followed by Heinrich Schenker's appalling *Eroica* analysis (1930), in which he

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shackled the symphony to a music-theoretical Procrustean bed in order to demonstrate that the work was based upon so-called 'Urlinien'. Several prophets of various kinds of 'redemptive doctrines' followed (Werner F. Korte, Walter Engelsmann, Walter Riezler among others). As early as 1927 the chief Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg maintained: "We live today in the *Eroica* of the German people." This slogan persisted for over twenty years in writing about music. Given this background, that the Führer ultimately turned himself into the hero of the Beethoven symphony appears as logical as does the fact that, next to the Fifth and Ninth, scarcely any symphony was played in the Third Reich more oftenthan the *Eroica*—more often than ever in the last years of the war. That the interpreters of this music knew they had to eradicate all the more delicate and sensitive aspects from the music is self-explanatory, as music which was not interpreted in a powerful, masculine and hence heroic manner could well run the risk of demoralising military forces.

Martin Geck aptly described the perfidious chain of reasoning followed by the music critics and historians of the time: "Our own Beethoven has in times past been downtrodden and humiliated. We national socialists heroically fought for political victory over these times. We remember with thanks those 'lords of the pen' who at great personal cost prepared the way ideologically. What gave them the strength to endure? The deep presentiment that the whole of history pointed towards a Führer—to THE Führer! What gave them this deep presentiment? Beethoven, in his wordless instrumental music, marked only with the indication 'heroic'. Who raised this music back to the status it deserves? The National Socialists! To whom could they refer? To Beethoven! Who had then first ensured the proper understanding of Beethoven's music?" etc. etc."

One on hand, all these tendencies continued beyond the end of the war; like good socialists, the German Democratic Republic's ideologues of the New Germany recalled the ideals of the French Revolution and insinuated that Beethoven had "dreamed of the modern socialist state" (Geck). On the other hand, a certain helplessness became prevalent, as many authors confined themselves to attempting to explain Beethoven's music in words. As representative for this we quote Bertelsmann's concert guide, written by Hans Schoor (Gütersloh 1955), where one finds concerning the *Eroica*, for example: "... the first 13 (and with the emphatic chords, 15) measures hence form the first periodic unit of the *Eroica*, consisting of the cello line, the 'knocking' accompaniment of the viola and second cello (b flat-g') and the remarkably tension-building syncopations of the first violins, which urge and drive forward in increasing dynamic strength, surging from g' to the sforzato a flat", then immediately following, in a wonderful, singing descent, establish the expressive character of the whole passage." And so on. Such 'travel guides' through symphonic landscapes can alas be found to this day in the programme booklets for virtually every philharmonic concert.

The dictatorship of music analysis and music aesthetics from the beginning of the 20th century, with their claims to inerrancy, continues down to the present day. Alas, not entirely without justification, one can demonstrably claim that their principal writers are to some extent intellectual brothers to Hitler. Carl Dahlhaus in his "Defence of the romantic category of the artwork" (1968) appeared to attempt to establish for all time the claims made by the analysts of autonomous artworks as to the correctness of their approach: "Analysis is the never quite successful attempt to comprehend and demonstrate that all parts of a work relate meaningfully to each other and that every one of them merges into the function which it performs. The triumph of analysis [!] lies in the proof that a work, at least, a successful one, cannot be other than it is." Peter Gülke was perhaps the first to find the way back to Beethoven; his main concern since the early seventies has been to demonstrate "how Beethoven thinks". To this day he remains interested in the attempt "to fully comprehend great works", and that means for him "not comprehending the manner in which they are conceived, drafted, sensed, thought out and made but also how they are 'lived', in what are supposedly absolute structural details." Therewith Gülke took up an opposing stance to that of Carl Dahlhaus.

It is not surprising that many authors, when they did not simply escape by recounting music in prose, opted out of the problem. In his Beethoven biography, widely distributed and available until 1996 as Rororo paperback, Fritz Zobeley as early as 1965 came to the following conclusion: "No symphony of Beethoven's has evoked more sensation than this *Eroica* which so clearly leads in new directions and at no point merely 'paints' in order to give clear expression to heroism. The interpretations placed upon it provide especially good examples of the incapacity or at least the difficulty of coaxing secrets out of the language of music, or at least of translating them into words. Around no other work have so many legends grown up: according to Schindler it was Bernadotte who was supposedly responsible for the idea of writing a symphony about Napoleon; Beethoven's doctor Bertolini was of the opinion that Napoleon's march into Egypt or the rumour of Nelson's death formed the basis of the symphony. Czerny, on the other hand, cited the death of the English general Abercrombie; subsequent interpretative endeavours pointed to scenes from Homer (Schering), or attempted to turn the work into a 'heroic Achilles Symphony' (Lemke); Ambros, finally,

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found it related to the spirit of Aeschylus' tragedies. When one considers not only the character of the four movements, each so different from each other, but also their position in relation to each other and the significant and meaningful sequence whereby the funeral march is not placed at the end but in front of a Scherzo, regarded with equal justification as 'humorous', it can scarcely be disputed that the 'key' to translating from the language of feeling into that of any kind of thought process lies at the very bottom of the sea." Therewith the author made it far too easy on himself; as we shall see, the key to unlocking the *Eroica* by no means rests in the depths of the ocean—as long as one does not permit one's activities as author to be bound by the currently appallingly widespread "mental lassitude in the guise of humility" (Peter Gülke).

A fruitful counter-stance to what one might call music scholarship's idyllic retreat into petty-bourgeois garden allotments was that taken up by thinkers such as Theodor W. Adorno, who argued for a dialectic mediation of Beethoven. "It is not sufficient to pace out the exterior front and the internal rooms of the works like that of a completed house; it is much more important to reconstruct 'plans' for this 'house' which might at first appear foreign to one another—for instance the plan 'musical structure' and the plan 'society'—before it becomes clear in what manner, following the 'plans', the 'house' as it now stands could be built," explained Martin Geck. He regards as important "the manner in which we approach Beethoven generally, which should be a dialectic approach: critical questions should be asked of Beethoven which (...) are not of a music-immanent nature, but which dialectically relate assumedly heterogenous things like 'music' and 'society' to one another. Crucial for Adorno's epistemological procedure is that he harmonises NOTHING in narrative 'retellings' but remains suspicious of everything and discovers 'untruth' precisely in the dialectic interplay between music and society."

Geck summarised his involvement with the reception history of the *Eroica* in the following conclusion: "It is not important (...) to me, (...) to uncover the 'truth about the *Eroica*'—how is one supposed to prove particular associations in all their detail! Instead, it is important to me that such considerations—naturally as well-founded, factually and documentarily, as possible—take place AT ALL as an ongoing epistemological process: only thus can works remain alive and our paths to them open! Precisely the neglect of research and of speculative reflection, for which Wagner shares responsibility, has led to a division between formal-analytical and 'enthusiastic' approaches to music which can be studied particularly well in the reception of the *Eroica*: the sensible middle path of contemplating the work was lost; the extremes diverged from each other further and further."

A comparable position was first adopted by leading Beethoven researchers roughly from the 1970s onwards; these have finally—150 years after Beethoven's death—substantially expanded our knowledge of the sociocultural context of works such as the *Eroica* through careful research and by asking intelligent questions. Nonetheless, the more recent research of such truth-seekers as Maynard Solomon, Harry Goldschmidt, Constantin Floros, Hartmut Krones, Peter Schleuning, Martin Geck and Peter Gülke are far from becoming general knowledge, judging by the in part utterly ridiculous concert introductions and CD booklets. The thinking of those who do choose to look beyond their own noses is always unpopular, because it undermines the powerful walls which the small-minded so laboriously build around themselves in order to preserve a deceptive feeling of security. A similar situation applies to the findings of historically informed performance practice—which should be foundational to all professional music-making. Tied in with these processes go socio-political developments of the last 200 years, the consequences of which we still have to live with today. As early as 1978 in his essay "Why we are moved by Beethoven" Peter Schleuning referred to the bourgeois concert as "the secularised church service of the bourgeoisie". The Romantic musical experience was defined as an autonomous religious practice that was itself a part of the secularising process. In 1998 Willem Erauw very provocatively took this realisation a step further:

"The term religious practice has to be taken here in its broadest sense, as transcendental experience in general. Then, the seeming dichotomy—religion as part of a secularisation process—becomes clear. Transcendental experience will always exist, but its content changed along with the process of secularisation. With the fading of traditional religion, cultural activities took over its transcendental function.

"The most interesting views on secularisation are those which see it not merely as a type of de-christianisation but, in a far deeper sense, as a process incorporated in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In looking more closely at the conceptual imperialism which resulted from the new romantic religion of music, we can point to the Judeo-Christian roots of the 'secularised religion of music'. As is also the case with conceptual imperialism, there are two roots which still determine the world of classical music today.

“Firstly, we have the contemplative inwardness and motionlessness of the body during the musical experience. Experiencing music in a concert hall is a spiritual affair; you are not allowed to move to the music. This is a heritage of the sharp division between body and soul in the Judeo-Christian world view.

“The second root is an obsession with scripture. The fixing of music in a written form is indeed a basic condition for the emergence of the notion of a work. In classical music, almost all music-making has to do with texts. The belief that the real truth is only to be found in the score, this obsession with the musical text, means that during a classical concert, musicians are interpreting musical texts instead of playing music.

“If we consider the cult of classical music practice as being characterised by these two roots, then we can define it as being a secularised form of the religious experience traditionally felt in a church. There too one’s contact with a divine transcendent reality is firstly interiorised, secondly, the content of belief is then fixed in Holy Scripture and in the articles of faith, which in turn are watched over scrupulously.

“So, it was a secularised form of religious experience that gave birth to the phenomenon of classical music, to the musical monuments of the canon, and to conceptual imperialism. With Beethoven’s symphonies as the new Holy Scripture, the audience would never become bored of listening to the same music, in the same way people in a church would never tire of listening to the same words at Holy Mass every Sunday.

“If instrumental music had not changed its status and remained as it was experienced before 1800—i.e. interspersed with words and other activities such as dance, drama, prayers, etc.—there would probably be no such thing as musicology today. If musical experience had not become a sacred autonomous world of sounds, which has been praised and sanctified as a mirror of heaven since the late 18th century, the intellectual and spiritual discourse would probably never have developed in which music is perceived as something very serious, and thereby as the basis for a more scientific approach. In other words, whether they are happy with the notion of a musical work or not, scholars in musicology are all still heirs to romantic aesthetics, to the meaning given to music in the late 18th century and the conceptual imperialism that grew out of it. So, can we really be aware of the extent to which we are still ‘trapped in the concept’ ”?

Recent Research on the *Eroica* and the Background to its Composition

In order to grasp the full significance of the *Eroica*’s composition it is important to bear in mind the social and political constellation during Ludwig van Beethoven’s early years and those of his apprenticeship, as well as the circumstances of his life during the ‘heroic’ period from 1800 to 1806. Peter Schleuning has done so in an exemplary fashion; the results of his many years of research form the basis of the remarks here. Constantin Floros had already pointed out in 1978 that a great deal of interpretative work remained to be done in this area: “It can be paradoxically be said of Beethoven’s *Eroica* that the reported information concerning the reason for its composition, its ‘subject’ and its intention have tended more to obscure rather than illuminate the history of its composition. The paradoxical nature of this situation becomes clear when one considers three things: firstly that the *Eroica* and the *Pastorale* are the only symphonies of Beethoven which, by their own admission, can be included in the genre ‘Sinfonie caratteristiche’—symphonies, in other words, which are based on a specific subject; secondly that there is no paucity of reports concerning the compositional process; and thirdly that Beethoven himself released a kind of programme for the symphony when in October 1806 he allowed it to appear under the title *Sinfonia eroica composta per festeggiare il sovvenire di un grand Uomo* [i.e. *Heroic Symphony, composed to celebrate the memory of a great man*]. The *Eroica* gave rise to the most diverse interpretations and speculation. To call it a puzzling work is no exaggeration. The reason for this state of affairs: the surviving reports concerning the reason for its composition, and the subject of the symphony itself do not fit together in a wholly coherent manner.” Peter Schleuning reassessed the surviving information and created from it a fascinating and multifaceted picture. In so doing he managed to either overcome the contradictions posited by Floros or to convincingly integrate them into the *Eroica*’s compositional history, for ultimately inconsistencies, incongruities and inconsistencies can be found in every personality—perhaps particularly in that of a great composer.

The years up to 1806 were marked by great changes in Beethoven’s life, which apparently caused him to rapidly mature and grow older. This is clearly shown by the four selected portraits of the composer aged between 30 and 36 reproduced here (cf. Illustrations 4–7). Beethoven was raised in a broken home in Bonn: his strict father was an alcoholic and hated by him; his mother, a depressive, obsessed by religion and often drunk, died in 1787 as Beethoven was 17, and from then on he was forced to take on the responsibility of caring for his brothers. Not surprising, then, that where he was concerned the liberal thinking of adherents of

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the French Revolution fell on fertile soil, particularly the views of his musical mentor and teacher Christian Gottlob Neeffe as well as his tutor at the university, Eulogius Schneider, whose lectures on literature Beethoven attended from July 1789 onwards. Schneider belonged to the Jacobins, who worked vigorously to spread revolutionary thinking about the liberation of Europe.

Beethoven's views would probably have been much like those of the '68 student movement in the 20th century. In 1792 for instance he sang together with fellow students Schiller's "Freiheit, schöner Götterfunken" as a German text to the melody of the brand new revolutionary hymn *La Marseillaise* by Roger de Lisle. In summer, the coronation of Franz II as German Emperor brought about the threat of immediate war with France, at which time Beethoven was attempting to care for his dying father and his two brothers. Perhaps he toyed with the idea of joining the French army. In the midst of all this trouble he met Joseph Haydn in Bonn while the latter was en route to England. Haydn apparently offered him the unique opportunity of a place as his student in Vienna.

In November 1792 Beethoven moved to Vienna; following the death of his father in December he brought his brothers over. Given the unique career opportunity of concluding his studies under the unchallenged master of his field he suppressed his political opinions. For Vienna was anything but Jacobin and it was precisely Haydn who in 1797 wrote the "Austrian Anti-Marseillaise" (Schleuning), the *Emperor's Hymn*. While the Jacobins throughout middle Europe were persecuted and executed—in Vienna as well—Beethoven initially cut himself off from the movement in order not to endanger his position, and soon came to be recognised as an arrogant artist and an eccentric.

At the same time Napoleon achieved victories and successes at an unsurpassed speed. Schleuning is surely correct in his claim: "[Beethoven] saw before himself his opposite number, an alternative mode of living, unburdened by the chains of art: Napoleon Bonaparte, the Frenchman, the same age, free to move where he wanted to, who listened to everything with sharp ear, who likewise had fought his way up from lowly origins, yet who did not work in a subsidiary realm like that of music, but on the great stage of the world, where there were real things to be done. Napoleon was Beethoven's big brother, his better self, he who attained in the practical-political sphere what Beethoven was able to achieve and facilitate at a subordinate level. For this reason Beethoven looked towards this Other so very critically, unremittingly and jealously." Perhaps this tense relationship explains in part why Beethoven built his career with such admirable determination and strategic vision.

In 1795 Beethoven completed his studies with Haydn, debuted as soloist with his own and with Mozart's D minor concerto and published his piano trios Op. 1; in 1796 he went on tour in order to make his name known and to find a position somewhere. At the same time, however, he outed himself as a supporter of the Revolution, at least in certain of his works, e.g. the Variations for piano and violoncello on a theme by Handel, "See the conqu'ring hero comes" (!), and the piano sonatas Op. 10, which quote a French Revolutionary hymn—yet precisely at this time he was directing the regimental band of the Vienna Freikorps!

In the same year his incipient deafness began to make itself noticeable for the first time. The year 1797 brought great political upheaval: Napoleon seized power over the counter-revolutionaries in a coup d'état; in 1798 his general Bernadotte marched into Vienna. Legend has it that the general himself proposed to Beethoven the idea of writing a symphony about Napoleon. That, however, is relatively unlikely, as Beethoven was making great efforts, through dedications and other attempts to curry favour, to make himself popular as a patriot at the Austrian court. Intensive contact with the victorious enemy would have been counterproductive.

In 1799, the same year in which the new French Constitution announced the victory of the revolution, Beethoven finally stepped onto the world stage as symphonist with his First Symphony. "It appears as though Beethoven has made it his intention to make a new beginning in line with the beginning of the new century and Napoleon's promotion to First Consul of the Republic, to usher in a new age with a new era in music. The preparatory and promotional work for court balls and piano dilettantes, opera fans and popular concerts was to be done with: the new century would hear only 'great' music from him. At the beginning a drum roll: Beethoven's first essay in the highest instrumental form, that of the symphony. With it Beethoven would set the tone of the new age and take up a position at Napoleon's side" (Schleuning). For the first time in the history of music a symphony did not begin with the chord of its home key. Apart from that, while Haydn, in his oratorio *Die Schöpfung (The Creation)*, vehemently defended the old order, Beethoven was quoting Revolutionary hymns and for the first time took this socio-political turning-point as the theme for a

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symphony (see Schleuning's chapter, "Prozeß – Kampf – Hymne: Das Abbild der revolutionären Befreiung nach bürgerlichem Muster").

The second key work of this period was the ballet music to *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus* (*The Creatures of Prometheus*), composed in 1800 und first performed on 28 March 1801 in Vienna. "The piece deals, by way of an ancient allegory, with the theme of mankind being raised to the status of self-determining and aesthetically aware subject. The person who achieves this intent is—in mythological disguise—Napoleon Bonaparte. This was shown by Floros with reference to contemporary homages to the Corsican going back as far as the epic *Il Prometeo* of the Italian Vincenzo Monti of 1797 which is dedicated to the 'cittadino Napoleone Bonaparte'. Salvatore Viganò, the progressive Viennese ballet master, author of both libretto and choreography and himself a dancer in the piece, borrowed from Monti's epic as well as from ancient Greek models (Aeschylus)" (Schleuning).

Unquestionably Beethoven identified Napoleon as a new Prometheus, not least for the reason that Napoleon accorded music an important role as instrumental in the people's education, as shown by his numerous legal reforms to the music industry. Beethoven was grateful: "Via the light emanating from France the 'Prometheus of the age' protected Beethoven from the anger of the old German feudal gods and intellectual suppression, and opened up a new level of human existence—that of learning and culture. Precisely this is the theme of the ballet libretto" (cf. also Text 4, the plot of *Prometheus*). "*Prometheus* begins—like the First Symphony—in the middle of an ongoing process. It passes through two phases of feeling and methods of education. The first—anger and force—is unsuccessful in educating mankind, the second—gentleness and good example—successful. Prometheus himself recognises that the first achieves nothing and turns to the second, a wonderful representation of progressive thinking. This would have held true for Beethoven in his Bonn days, when one recalls the transition he made from his father to Neefe, and at the same represented a hope at the time of its composition in 1800, when Napoleon overturned the Directorate and in the second war of the Coalition took command of France's troops in Italy. (...) The musical scene shortly after the beginning of the Second Act, with Euterpe and Amphion (playing wind instruments), Arion and Orpheus accompanying with stringed instruments (harp), finally Phoebus-Apollo himself (violoncello), is in my opinion a justification of instrumental music, the new symphonic style based on the authority of ancient myth. Without the assistance of song this music releases 'reason', 'reflection', a sense for the "beauty of nature' and 'human feeling'. In associating ancient mythical divinity and instrumental art the symphony is represented as a modern extension of Greek tragedy in its function as purifying mankind. It and no other musical genre was to be Napoleon's 'moral musical piece', and only through it can the new mankind be formed, can the breakthrough of humanity take place." Schleuning proves that Beethoven here, via numerous different means, turned the ballet into an apotheosis of the symphony, particularly via the quotation of the Revolutionary hymn *Veillons au salut de l'empire*, and this—significantly—in Apollo's cello solo on Parnassus. "This is particularly significant, as Beethoven, during the so-called heroic phase around 1800 frequently allowed himself to be depicted as Apollo's representative, executing the god's will, and in 1804 was depicted by the painter Willibrord Mähler in front of an Apollonic temple" (cf. Illustration 6).

The next scene is also interesting: "The first actions of [Prometheus'] children, woken by these sounds to true life, is to take part in a war-like dance. (...) The punishment for such false initiation follows immediately in the ballet: Melpomene does not wield a cudgel, her proper attribute according to mythological tradition: that might have reminded the enlightened audience too strongly of the Middle Ages and of barbarians and detracted from the 'high' theme. Instead she takes a dagger and in fact kills the usurping mentor. This detail of the plot quotes the murder committed by Charlotte Corday on 13th July 1793 (one day before the anniversary of the Revolution!) of the people's hero Marat. (...) Melpomene's action appears like an admonition against false acts of violence in the name of the Enlightenment—a clever invention by Viganò. This dramaturgical monstrosity is based upon a monstrous truth itself: the discovery of culture and the Enlightenment through or for mankind involves also the discovery of death, murder and war. This is an indictment of war as well as an indication that war may only be a pre-requisite for peace. (...) This attainment of humanity after hard struggles and painful realisations is then celebrated with 'festive dances', among them a contradance in E flat, which in the symphony forms the basis of the final movement." A year later, during his summer holiday in Heiligenstadt (cf. Illustrations 1 & 2) Beethoven apparently formed the plan to rework the important elements of the Prometheus ballet in the form of a 'characteristic symphony'. Evidence of this can be found in annotations in a sketch which survives from the period (cf. Illustration 8). During this time he also wrote the piano variations Op. 35 on the theme of the same contradance in E flat which became the symphony's finale theme.

At the same time Beethoven's deafness became notably worse. Peter Schleuning saw no coincidence in this. For him the illness was a reaction by the body to the massive violence being done to it by the mind, in other words, Beethoven's attempt, since the middle of the 1790s, to achieve success at all costs, as indicated by an entry in Beethoven's notebook, where we read: "Courage. Despite all the weaknesses of the body my mind shall rule.— 25 years they have been there, this year the full man must decide. Nothing must remain." Schleuning pointed out: "Beethoven was here attempting to pull himself up, to push himself to success, to finally achieve maturity. But how does he intend to do so! It appears as if the task of this statement was to bring all his negative attributes together: the body with its needs must disappear, become as nothing, so that the spirit alone can rule. It is not surprising when a body which is so denied and placed under duress reacts, and does so precisely at the most sensitive point, precisely at that point where Beethoven's mind, despite all its negligence of the body, most needs it—his sense of hearing. Deafness was the psychologically inevitable result of the oppression of the body we see reflected in the notes quoted. As deafness set in Beethoven's thoughts, recorded in the Heiligenstadt Testament of 1802, once again centred in a similar way around the relationship between mind and body."

Some musicologists have viewed Beethoven's disability in a very limited way, "virtually greeting it as a driving force toward heightened production and thereby again underestimated Beethoven's intellectual continuity. (...) Any concern with Beethoven's political ideas could thereby be avoided." The Heiligenstadt Testament (cf. Illustration 3, complete transcription in Text 3) and the working through of his disability which Beethoven achieved in it was for Schleuning, however, an "intensification and heightening of the revolutionary strategy search—fight—triumph". He dissected this harrowing document into three thematic areas: his will in regard to his brothers, complaint and justification before the world, and thoughts about death. It is particularly significant for the themes he was to embody in the *Eroica* that Beethoven's complaint and justification runs through four stages, with striking parallels to the Prometheus story and thereby to the Third Symphony. In stage 1 Beethoven depicts the original state of his soul in a richly transfigured representation of his youth, with special emphasis given to his virtues and capabilities. In stage 2 he describes his deafness as a precisely that disturbance that hinders the unfolding of precisely those best qualities he has just described. Stage 3 describes Beethoven's retreat from society as a result and the consequences for his fellow men ("Oh fellow men, when at some point you read this, consider then that you have done me an injustice"); he even contemplates suicide. In the final stage Beethoven outlines his deliverance, namely, the decision not to take his own life, and drafts a new conception of himself: intentionally renouncing society, he in return gives to it everything that he can—his art ("Ah, it seemed to me impossible to leave the world until I had brought forth all that I felt was within me"). The ballet likewise presents four evolutionary stages: Prometheus breathes into the clay statues heavenly fire and thereby its best qualities. In stage 2 the creatures refuse to use the powers of reason and in stage 3 Prometheus wishes to destroy them. Finally in stage 4 Prometheus hears an inner voice and conceives "a new plan", to give his creatures "reason and self-awareness".

The musicologist Keisuke Maruyama interpreted the Beethoven portrait of Willibrord Mähler in a similar manner (Illustration 6) and construed its elements "according to Beethoven's own view of himself as the inheritor of ancient glory: lyre in the left hand, temple of Apollo in the background. These are clearly attributes which pertain to the mythological hero of art who has undergone the 'educational programme' of the *Prometheus* plot and in lonely eminence writes a new Apollonian music, namely the *Eroica*" (Schleuning). The Heiligenstadt Testament is hence an apparently carefully considered autobiographical document similar to Schubert's novella *Mein Traum (My Dream)* which Schering regards as underlying the composition of the "Unfinished" symphony. In any case, both ballet as well as Testament depict a process Beethoven probably underwent consciously and in summation worked into the composition of the *Eroica*.

"The new and surprising aspects of the Third Symphony is the result of Beethoven's double isolation," wrote Peter Schleuning. "The concentration and breadth of instruction he experienced in Bonn are absent in Vienna and are now unfolded in the act of composition. Here the soaring intellectual flight of the Bonn years is continued, the deficiencies encountered in Vienna compensated for by inner production. This tendency was strengthened by deafness. As it impeded external stimulus and hampered exchange with others, the 'message' became bound up within the music itself; the concentration of the compositional act was increased." It is hence no surprise that this author identifies ten complete innovations in the *Eroica*, "which are immediately recognisable from an 'external' view of the symphony, at first hearing, so to speak, without the need for analytical investigation. Through them, the piece immediately sets itself off from the entire history of the genre and sets up new standards, even in regard to Beethoven's own first two symphonies." First off there is its enormous length: with 2,325 measures and a duration of roughly 50 minutes the work is

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easily two-fifths longer than the longest symphony of Haydn or Mozart. Particularly extensive is the first movement with completely new proportions—among them the coda, which is more than half as long as the development; for this reason interpreters to this day continue to doubt, as they did during the composer's lifetime, whether the repeat of the exposition marked in the score can really be imposed upon the public or not—admittedly since 1806 considerably longer works than the *Eroica* have been composed. Apart from this the first movement consists less of pregnant themes than motives and ideas ordered into groups. The first 'theme' that one really hears as such is actually the new 'elegy' theme in E minor which emerges unexpectedly in the middle of the development. The character of the second and third movements is also innovatory—a movement intentionally marked as a funeral march as well as, for the first time, not a minuet but a "Scherzo" in rapid tempo and featuring completely new tempo relationships. In the Trio of the Scherzo three horns—two only were normal—come to the fore especially clearly. That the Symphony was apparently conceived beginning with its fourth movement, thereby becoming the first 'finale-symphony' in music history, is also new: "In Beethoven a developmental process pervades the symphony from beginning to end, from mere melodic shapes to fully-formed melody and symmetrical structure. This process takes hold of all the movements and binds them together with an orientation toward the Finale" (Schleuning).

It has now been established from several different points of view that the individual movements of the *Eroica* recapitulate the plot of the Prometheus ballet (cf. Text 4). "Thereby the question of sonata form and its component parts emerges, which according to widely held opinion was the centre of the compositional thinking of 'classical' composers. That sections of the musicological fraternity pay homage to the primacy of such formalism and were initially responsible for creating it, painstakingly and with political intent, is as unquestionable as the fact that no thinking composer would for his entire life submit himself to such an illusory 'problem'. Rather, he uses and alters the traditional framework according to the needs of his 'extramusical' ideas (for Wagner this process was self-understood!). The sonata movement is not a outline which is then filled in or which is handled from the standpoint of whether its proportions are balanced or not but rather, like the rules of counterpoint and figured bass, represents a variable means for the representation of idea or contentual theme" (Schleuning). Seen in this way, the formal structure and enormous expansion of the first movement of the *Eroica* is nothing unusual, considering that it contains the greater part of the story. It would therefore be more sensible to regard the sonata-form of this movement as a two-part drama, as did most of the theoreticians of the time. The English composer Robert Simpson returned to this model in the 1960s while analysing Bruckner's symphonic movements and spoke of the thematic exposition as a 'statement', the development and recapitulation as a 'counter-statement'. Again Schleuning: "Out of almost identical material at the beginning of the exposition and the recapitulation two weighty, but differently constituted conclusions are drawn. This corresponds to the two variable paths (B and D) which Prometheus takes in his attempts to educate his creatures, firstly with effort and struggle (B), then—after renewed reflection (C) of the initial situation (A)—with a peaceful method, namely recourse to higher powers and virtues (D). The parts A, B, C and D would then correspond to exposition, development, recapitulation and coda" (Schleuning).

This is matched by the nature of the motives Beethoven uses which all represent something akin to musical archetypes. They include, for example, the two opening tutti chords as well as the characteristic arpeggiated triad, the notes of which, when one connects them up with lines on the music page, produce the form of a doubled cross, or that of a sword, and which thrust heroically upward; E-flat major with its key signature of three flats is a symbol of power for Beethoven too; the triad in E-flat major potentiating trinity and divinity, so to speak. The famous chromatic deviation into the world of chromaticism at the end of the triad motive literally brings fire into the simple harmony of the world; the string accompaniment runs in eighth notes like Prometheus through the forest. Further archetypes include the descending scale in six notes as well as its opposite, a six-fold emphasis on the same note. In the development Beethoven sends these elements (triad, scale, threatening repeated notes) into battle. At the rhythmic level similar elements are to be found. Finally it is important to bear in mind that all the formulas used by Beethoven form the dense net of a rhetorically organised language which was still immediately comprehensible to Beethoven's contemporaries. These figures all had an affective meaning as did the keys, which characterised certain emotional states. An overview and introduction to this theme is given by Hartmut Krones in his book *Ludwig van Beethoven—Werk und Leben* (pp. 37ff.).

The plot of the ballet also gives meaning to the unexpected entry of the theme in E minor and repeated shortly thereafter in E-flat minor. Its motivic shape suggests a funeral lament, the theme itself and its inversion sound simultaneously, and it has constituted a puzzle for many musical analysts. In fact it is the pivot point of the whole movement, namely that "inwardly heard, higher voice" which twice soothes

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Prometheus' rising anger and ultimately holds him back from the act of destroying his progeny. His change of heart can also be explained musically. At the most significant moment of the movement (measures 366ff.) the woodwinds linger on a single remorselessly repeated note for eight measures, followed by the descending chorale which, incidentally, was quoted by Anton Bruckner at some point in every one of his symphonies. (To this day Bruckner's music has still not been investigated in regard to such connections!) Thereupon, at the beginning of the recapitulation, Prometheus "returns to his initial feelings", and naturally Beethoven writes a different continuation of the triadic motive, as, "giving the impression that a new plan has occurred to him, he picks up the two and carries them off". Likewise the expansive coda, which resorts to rhythmic jerks and war-like fanfares, can be explained by the ballet: "the children of Prometheus cannot resist the urge to seek glory and, taking up weapons, attempt to join in the dancing." How important it was to Beethoven to carry the ideas behind the music through all the movements can be seen here from a small detail: just before the end of this heroic dance the trumpets and drums play a war-like motive with a triplet of three repeated notes (measures 646ff.), with which Beethoven prepares the way for the funeral march, at the beginning of which this motive plays an important role. At the same time the four-part structure of the first movement corresponds to the four-stage recognition process we observed to operated in the Heiligenstadt Testament (see above). The four stages are then mirrored once again in the 'vertical', namely in the four-movement structure of the symphony—truly a massive conception! It may not be unimportant in this respect to note that such realisations usually take place in the fifth seven-year term of life, in other words between the 28th and 35th year of life, which marks the accession to maturity and recognition of one's own way in attaining mastery in life. Herein also lies, perhaps a reason for the extraordinarily uplifting effect of the *Eroica*, with its profound human warmth.

The *Marcia funebre* of the *Eroica* is the first Funeral march in any symphony. The remarkably extent to which Beethoven's successors responded to this daring step is shown for instance by the *March to the Scaffold* of Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique* (1830), but also by the second movement of Schubert's 'Great' C major Symphony (1825/26), Mendelssohn's *Italian* (1834), several symphonies by Anton Bruckner—particularly the Fourth (1874), Sixth (1879/80) and Seventh (1881–83)—as well as Brahms' Fourth Symphony (1884–85). It has been shown that this form of musical expression developed out of the funeral marches of the French Revolutionary period; while still in Bonn Beethoven attended funeral services for celebrated war heroes and knew the hymns and marches of this period from several sources. In the *March to the Scaffold* Berlioz points back to the Revolution in an exceptionally clear manner (incidentally, Berlioz' own programme for the symphony—his ill-fated love for Harriet Smithson—has up until now successfully deterred musicologists from looking at the question as to whether it may not have a secret political or philosophical background). Beethoven probably had a quite different association in mind in the *Eroica*: the funeral march is a 'tragic scene' in which, according to the ballet, Melpomene stabs Prometheus in order to demonstrate the effect of death to the bellicose children. It is also clearly apparent from the sketchbooks for the ballet that Beethoven drafted sections which obviously were not taken up in the ballet but found their way into the symphony. These passages are marked 'les enfants pleurent' (the children weep) and 'Promethe mort' (the death of Prometheus).

The Scherzo was styled by Constantin Floros 'Una Giocosa Scena', in other words, unquestionably the comic entry of Pan and the fauns. In fact, Prometheus is returned to life: the Scherzo theme and the famous fanfare of the three horns in the Trio are in principle nothing more than the resurrection of the funeral march theme in major. The Finale, ultimately, with its reworking of the Prometheus contradance corresponds with the 'ceremony in honour of the memory of a great man' suggested by the symphony's subtitle. Schleuning, who makes an exceptionally thorough and convincing study of the symphony in regard to the ballet's details, even allots certain passages of the first and last movement to certain specific dance forms, aside from the contradance principally the Ländler, siciliano, courante, waltz, polonaise and czardas.

As we have seen, Beethoven identified Prometheus with Napoleon as did many at the time; yet we should not exclude the composer himself in this context—cf. the Apollo portrait. The *Eroica* in any case reflects these various levels of identification (Napoleon-Prometheus-Apollo-Beethoven). But Schleuning has offered a furthered, very interesting interpretation of the symphony. On the one hand, in 1802 Beethoven developed quite concrete plans to move to Paris. Numerous features of the Symphony can be explained as intended to impress the Parisian public. Claude V. Palisca, for instance, in regard to the funeral march of the *Eroica*, revealed the existence of not less than seven revolutionary compositions, well known in Paris, which Beethoven quotes at various points, in particular by Gossec, Charpentier, Martini and Pleyel. Various aspects of the instrumentation (use of the brass, for instance) confirm this idea. Schleuning proved that the two sets of variations in the Finale reveal explicitly Hungarian and German features and even alludes to Bach's

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Cantata 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott' (A stronghold sure our God is still) at one point. He maintains: "Here the sceptre of the Holy Roman Empire of German nationhood reigns resplendent—despite the internal threat of its 'old evil' feudal fragmentation—displaying in its own defence the best that Prometheus ever achieved, namely the 'shield and spear' of its art with its exponents Bach and Beethoven (blessed by Apollo), but also with an awareness of liberty, reinforced by the spirit of that art that will break the 'old evil' chains which until now have hindered the restructuring of Germany along liberal lines. (...) It is a fact that, despite the collapse of French cosmopolitanism in the wars of the 1790s, and that since in their own lands no popular uprising could be expected, many German and Austrian republicans in 1802/03 still lived in the hope that a new France, strengthened by Napoleon, might through war liberate the oppressed, but worthy peoples of the Holy Roman Empire and of Hungary and lead them into a new phase of freedom, culture and humanity. The finale of the symphony is the formulation of this idea, a piece of libertarian aspiration in music to be declaimed before the First Consul, Bonaparte."

On the other hand, Beethoven gave up his Paris plans entirely. The move planned for March 1805 did not take place for various reasons, among them probably, because Beethoven in December 1804 had fallen deeply in love with the widowed Countess Deym, moreover because, following the first half-private performances of the *Eroica* in January, he had set the date of 7th April 1805 for the first public performances under his own direction. In or before 1807 a change of political allegiance on Beethoven's part had also taken place, for the hopes expressed in the finale in 1804 had not come to fruition. In 1805, after Napoleon had crowned himself Emperor, the intense expansionist aggression of the French continued, culminating in the victory over Austria and Russia at Austerlitz and the occupation of Vienna. On 29 March 1806 *Fidelio* was successfully performed in a reworking which was intended as anti-French and unquestionably understood that way; the version previously intended for Paris had been unsuccessful. In October Beethoven refused to play before French soldiers, and at the beginning of November the *Eroica* finally appeared in print, this time dedicated to "his most gracious highness, Prince Lobkowitz". The composer Ferdinand Ries in his *Biographischen Notizen über Ludwig van Beethoven* (*Biographical Notes concerning Ludwig van Beethoven*) reported that he had seen the now lost autograph score with the dedication to Bonaparte. Napoleon's proclamation of himself as Emperor took place on 20 May; Beethoven, when he heard this news, tore up the title page of the autograph score in a fit of anger; this was probably the beginning of June. Immediately thereafter Prince Lobkowitz's small orchestra began rehearsing the symphony; the prince had demanded pre-performance rights, probably to prevent Beethoven going over to the enemy. During a visit to Vienna in spring, Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia, who Beethoven highly esteemed, had the *Eroica* played by Prince Lobkowitz's orchestra three times over (!). As early as April 1804 the work was sufficiently ready that Beethoven had a copy commissioned, which provided the principle source for the printed versions. But this score originally carried the dedication to Bonaparte, and as late as 20 August 1804 Beethoven informed his publisher, Breitkopf and Härtel in Leipzig of the fact. On the title page of this copy also the words "intitolata Bonaparte" are as a result of a further assumed fit of anger so violently scratched out that holes were created (cf Illustrations 9 & 10). On the other hand "Geschrieben auf Bonaparte" (written for Bonaparte) remained! Schleuning here suspected a slyly calculated act of on the composer's part: "Just as rehearsals were to begin at Lobkowitz's palace and the question of pre-performance rights and therewith also the name of the symphony was becoming ever more pressing, news arrives of Napoleon's proclamation as Emperor: outburst of anger, torn-up title page! The name is erased, the way is laid open for rehearsals and presale to Lobkowitz, which in spring concludes more satisfactorily than originally planned, with a payment of 700 instead 400 gulden, although the presale period is to last for longer than the half year originally intended. All this is crowned by a 'gift' of 80 gold ducats for something that was originally intended for Bonaparte, namely the dedication. 27 days after the prince's gift lands in Beethoven's Vienna bank account the event takes place which supposedly made the payment possible in the first place: Napoleon's coronation in Paris.

"This interpretation of events may appear blasphemous. But it is in my opinion the only one which places the facts in a logical context, even the later ones. This way, if Beethoven's big scene of June 1804 was made for the reason suspected, it does not mean that he had lost his admiration for Napoleon. It can therefore be explained that in his score of August the name of the future emperor is scratched out, but not the addition 'written for Bonaparte' in pencil—one can allow this to inconspicuously disappear if necessary. (...) I believe that the proclamation of Napoleon as emperor merely occasioned a brief republican outburst of anger on Beethoven's part, one which solved a practical problem, but changed nothing of his basic attitude to his big brother." The question remains why Beethoven finally rededicated the symphony to his patron Lobkowitz (curiously, the factually incorrect dedication to Bonaparte is that which remains in the mind of posterity!). Schleuning suspected it might represent a "strengthening of the patriotic movement against the French". On 10

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October 1806 at Saalfeld in Thüringen Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia fell in battle—three weeks before the symphony appeared. “The heroic idea behind the work and its funeral march took on a new political agenda. According to this agenda the ‘grand Uomo’ was that Prussian prince who, as celebrated war hero and outstanding artist, represented the ideal image of Promethean man, and who—fully in line with the meaning of the myth—worked for the liberty of mankind—here the Germans—even to the point of giving up his life, a martyr and at the same time an example of what the German people in their fight for liberty must be: *eroico!*”

Putting all these recent findings together one can only consider it fortunate that most of these associations remained unknown to the ideologues of musical history—the results were bad enough without them. “But whoever had (and has) not concerned himself with Beethoven’s development and with his conversion from hope for the French to patriotic enthusiasm—in other words most of the public—could (and can) understand the connection between the music and the title only as a puzzle, as one of the great secrets of art, the solution to which is beyond the capacities of the simple listener,” writes Peter Schleuning in conclusion. “The history of the *Eroica* reveals that even the most simple, clear facts, when they remain unknown and (it is thought) should remain unknown, favour such ideologies, even elicit them. That is indeed a ‘new way’—a new way for the public. The unbelievable length, then the puzzling title of the symphony, both constituting a framework for stylistic upheavals and innovations—all that is in its way a new direct attack on the listener, a lack of distance which breaks with the traditional convention of a polarity existing between composer and public, and which forces the listener to decide between downright rejection and wholesale acceptance. This can only be termed ‘revolutionary’ when first a need or desire exists on the part of a large number of listeners to submit to this musical act of violence, and when man chooses to see the active realisation of such an iconoclastic symphony as the musical pendant to that independent cooperation and creative working together which is part of a revolutionary endeavour. (...)

“The *Eroica* is probably the first artwork of ideas within the realm of music. Such ideas do not change society, but constantly promote fresh thinking about its origin and future, from the philosophy of Kant and Hegel through the musical creation stories of Haydn and Beethoven—for the *Eroica* is Beethoven’s symphonic *Schöpfung*—right up to Goethe’s *Faust* (...). It appears to me, that this heroicising of constant work and progress, the restlessness and inability to find enjoyment under the regime of ‘absolute’ music is the logical result of the repression of a widespread phenomenon which musicology, for both good and bad reasons, will not work through: The most highly ranked types of music and ‘autonomous’ mode in which they are interpreted are specifically German approaches and ways of thinking. The official German view of art and its status that emerges from the middle of the 19th century onwards is something unique, and largely unknown in other lands. (...). We do not need to question, with regard to the musical artwork, whether it is important to know the historical and biographical background to the genesis of the work and to involve it in the experience of listening, but to ask who might be interested in such information and who not, and why. As in other areas, systematic approaches and ethics have no place here.” The *Eroica* is a work that, in its bringing together of creation myth, maturational process and political agenda on the intellectual plane, and dance, melos and expression on the human and physical, powerfully challenges one—as Martin Geck pointed out in conclusion—“to experience one’s own feelings with greater immediacy than is usually the case when listening to classical music.”

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Ludwig van Beethoven HEILIGENSTADT TESTAMENT

FOR MY BROTHERS CARL AND BEETHOVEN

Oh you men who think or say that I am malevolent, stubborn, or misanthropic, how greatly do you wrong me. You do not know the secret cause which makes me seem that way to you. From childhood on, my heart and soul have been full of the tender feeling of goodwill, and I was ever inclined to accomplish great things. But, think that for six years now I have been hopelessly afflicted, made worse by senseless physicians, from year to year deceived with hopes of improvement, finally compelled to face the prospect of *a lasting malady* (whose cure will take years or, perhaps, be impossible). Though born with a fiery, active temperament, even susceptible to the diversions of society, I was soon compelled to withdraw myself, to live life alone. If at times I tried to forget all this, oh how harshly was I flung back by the doubly sad experience of my bad hearing. Yet it was impossible for me to say to people, "Speak louder, shout, for I am deaf." Ah, how could I possibly admit an infirmity in the *one sense* which ought to be more perfect in me than in others, a sense which I once possessed in the highest perfection, a perfection such as few in my profession enjoy or ever have enjoyed.—Oh I cannot do it; therefore forgive me when you see me draw back when I would have gladly mingled with you. My misfortune is doubly painful to me because I am bound to be misunderstood; for me there can be no relaxation with my fellow men, no refined conversations, no mutual exchange of ideas. I must live almost alone, like one who has been banished; I can mix with society only as much as true necessity demands. If I approach near to people a hot terror seizes upon me, and I fear being exposed to the danger that my condition might be noticed. Thus it has been during the last six months which I have spent in the country. By ordering me to spare my hearing as much as possible, my intelligent doctor almost fell in with my own present frame of mind, though sometimes I ran counter to it by yielding to my desire for companionship. But what a humiliation for me when someone standing next to me heard a flute in the distance and *I heard nothing*, or someone heard a *shepherd singing* and again I heard nothing. Such incidents drove me almost to despair; a little more of that and I would have ended my life—it was only *my art* that held me back. Ah, it seemed to me impossible to leave the world until I had brought forth all that I felt was within me. So I endured this wretched existence—truly wretched for so susceptible a body, which can be thrown by a sudden change from the best condition to the very *worst*.—*Patience*, they say, is what I must now choose for my guide, and I have done so—I hope my determination will remain firm to endure until it pleases the inexorable Parcae to break the thread. Perhaps I shall get better, perhaps not; I am ready.—Forced to become a philosopher already in my twenty-eighth year,—oh it is not easy, and for the artist much more difficult than for anyone else.—Divine One, thou seest my inmost soul; thou knowest that therein dwells the love of mankind and the desire to do good.—Oh fellow men, when at some point you read this, consider then that you have done me an injustice; someone who has had misfortune may console himself to find a similar case to his, who despite all the limitations of Nature nevertheless did everything within his powers to become accepted among worthy artists and men.—You, my brothers Carl and, as soon as I am dead, if Dr. Schmidt is still alive, ask him in my name to describe my malady, and attach this written document to his account of my illness so that so far as is possible at least the world may become reconciled to me after my death.—At the same time, I declare you two to be the heirs to my small fortune (if so it can be called); divide it fairly; bear with and help each other. What injury you have done me you know was long ago forgiven. To you, brother Carl, I give special thanks for the attachment you have shown me of late. It is my wish that you may have a better and freer life than I have had. Recommend *virtue* to your children; it alone, not money, can make them happy. I speak from experience; this was what upheld me in time of misery. Thanks to it and to my art, I did not end my life by suicide—Farewell and love each other—I thank all my friends, particularly *Prince Lichnowsky* and *Professor Schmidt*—I would like the instruments from Prince L. to be preserved by one of you, but not to be the cause of strife between you, and as soon as they can serve you a better purpose, then sell them. How happy I shall be if I can still be helpful to you in my grave—so be it.—With joy I hasten to

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meet death.—If it comes before I have had the chance to develop all my artistic capacities, it will still be coming too soon despite my harsh fate, and I should probably wish it later—yet even so I should be happy, for would it not free me from a state of endless suffering?— Come *when* thou wilt, I shall meet thee bravely.—Farewell and do not wholly forget me when I am dead; I deserve this from you, for during my lifetime I was thinking of you often and of ways to make you happy—please be so—

Heiglstadt, October 6th, 1802

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

[written lengthwise on the left margin]

For my brothers Carl and to be read and executed after my death.

Heiglstadt, October 10th, 1802, thus I bid thee farewell—and indeed sadly.—Yes, that fond hope—which I brought here with me, to be cured to a degree at least—this I must now wholly abandon. As the leaves of autumn fall and are withered—so likewise has my hope been blighted—I leave here—almost as I came—even the high courage—which often inspired me in the beautiful days of summer—has disappeared—Oh Providence—grant me at last but one day *of pure joy*—it is so long since real joy echoed in my heart—Oh when—Oh when. Oh Divine One—shall I feel it again in the temple of nature and of mankind—Never?—No— Oh that would be too hard.

GLI UOMINI DI PROMETHEO ossia La forza della musica e della danza ("THE CREATURES OF PROMETHEUS or The Power of Music and of the Dance")

Ballet by Salvatore Viganò

Music by Ludwig van Beethoven (1801)

"Pursued by the thundering wrath of heaven—which provides opportunity for a resounding musical introduction—Prometheus comes running through the forest to his two statues of clay, hurriedly applying the fire brand brought from heaven to their hearts. While he sinks breathlessly upon a stone, exhausted, his labours completed, these statues attain life and movement and become in reality what they appear to be—a man and a woman. Prometheus awakes with a start, contemplates them with exultant delight, beckons them to himself with fatherly love, but is unable to awake in them any feeling which might suggest they are capable of intelligent reasoning. On the contrary, instead of turning to him, they fall to the ground near a tall tree (perhaps the oak whose fruit was the indispensable nourishment of the first humans). He again attempts with caresses and convincing words, but they—not possessing that better part of humanity, reason—do not understand his words, become annoyed by them and attempt to dissemble by wandering around aimlessly. Saddened by this, the titan makes further attempts by threatening them; and as that also has no effect he becomes angry and goes so far as to believe that he must destroy his work. But a higher voice which he hears inside him, holds him back. He returns to his initial feelings and, giving the impression that a new plan has occurred to him, picks up the two and carries them off.

The Second Act takes place on Parnassus. Apollo, the Muses, the Graces, Bacchus and Pan with following appear, Orpheus, Amphion and Arion as humans who shall be born in the future and are introduced here anachronistically. As the scene opens the court of Apollo reveals a splendid tableau of these poetic figures. (One notices that the choreographer at this point intentionally chooses not to use either music or dance, so that, when these media are later introduced as specific devices, their novelty (...) is immediately recognisable; this remark applies in all similar cases!) Prometheus comes and presents his children to the god in the hope that he might instruct them in the arts and sciences. At a gesture from Phoebus, Euterpe, accompanied by Amphion, begins to play, and through her melodies the young humans begin to reveal reason and self-awareness, to perceive the beauty of nature and experience human emotion. Arion and Orpheus strengthen the harmony with their stringed instruments, finally the god himself joins them. The humans romp all over the scene and arriving in front of Prometheus recognise in him the object of their gratitude and love. They throw themselves down in front of him and embrace him passionately. At the same time Terpsichore emerges with the Graces and Bacchus with the Bacchantes and perform a heroic dance appropriate to the retinue of Mars; the children of Prometheus cannot resist the urge to seek glory and, taking up weapons, attempt to join in the dancing.

Here, however, Melpomene intervenes and presents the astonished young humans with a tragic scene in which she shows with her dagger the way in which death ends the days of man. While the children shudder in horror, she falls upon their confused father, accusing him of creating the miserable wretches to share in such an awful fate, claiming that death would not be too great a punishment for him; unsuccessfully the children attempt to hold her back; she kills Prometheus with the dagger.

Thalia brings an end to the mourning with a jocular, playful scene, holding her masks in front of the faces of the two sorrowing humans, while Pan, at the head of his comically dancing fauns, calls the dead Titan back to life.

And so the piece ends in festive dancing."

*Quoted from the biography of Viganò by Carlo Ritorni (Milan 1838),
German translation by Constantin Floros (1978).
English translation: John A. Phillips*

Urtext Beethoven Symphonies: A New Generation of Performing Editions

A Note by Jonathan Del Mar (Editor), London

In this age of increasing specialization, musicologists and performing musicians seem to be inhabiting ever more divergent worlds. This is especially regrettable since editors and scholars are now at last turning their attention more and more to the mainstream repertoire music of the last two centuries being played daily in the concert halls of the world, so that their work should, on the contrary, be impinging even more vitally on that of the performers who are, after all, precisely the people they should be addressing. Instead, the chasm of misunderstanding and non-communication shows few signs of being bridged, the beautiful new Urtexts remaining untouched on library shelves while musicians continue to play from the old faulty editions.

To this rather depressing outlook there are happily a number of notable exceptions, chiefly in the field of instrumental and chamber music where Bärenreiter, Henle and Wiener Urtext Editions are widely accepted and used, even though it has to be said that they rarely include any critical notes to assist an evaluation of their text, which is therefore presumably taken on trust.

In the world of the symphony orchestra, however, practically the only Urtext Editions that can really be said to have completely supplanted their outdated Breitkopf equivalents are the Bärenreiter Urtexte of Bach, Händel and Mozart, and the H. C. Robbins Landon editions of Haydn; and even these, whose prevalence owes much to the exploratory climate pioneered by period-instrument orchestras, have taken some decades to establish a secure foothold.

There could be said to be two main reasons for the suspicion with which established conductors and orchestras have been inclined to view new Urtext Editions. Firstly, orchestras are extremely reluctant to pay out all over again for performing materials of works they already own, discarding the well-used, marked, and (especially) bowed copies, with which they are so familiar; and this is true to an even greater degree where, as so often, the parts are not available on sale. The orchestra, already possessing its own marked set of Breitkopf material which is used without fuss by all other international conductors, will hardly be kindly disposed towards the conductor who demands the extra expense of hiring another edition and, more importantly still, the appalling labour of bowing the parts all over again, only to see them summarily returned to the publisher after the performance.

But there is another reason which has until now tended to discourage conductors from exploring new urtext editions, despite all the valuable scholarship they contain and the discoveries they reveal. If conductors are assiduous enough to search out a new edition, the least they should expect is that differences from the text they have known and loved all their lives will be mentioned, and justified, in the Critical Commentary. Yet most new editions have hitherto seemed determined, in their exclusive reverence for authentic sources (those emanating from the composer's sphere of control) to ignore the subsequent published editions through which the work has become known, so that an error in Breitkopf that has given rise to faulty performances these last 100 years is not even mentioned in the Critical Commentary unless it stems from some question in one of the authentic sources, but is ignored as being irrelevant. Yet if this new reading is not discussed in the Critical Commentary, the conductor cannot know for certain whether the alteration in the text is a highly interesting discovery or a simple misprint. Meanwhile, compounding the gulf of non-communication twixt scholar and performer, vital points in the Critical Commentary are frequently buried among quantities of really irrelevant details such as palpable errors in secondary sources, page after page describing earlier versions of the text deleted by the composer, and even such compilations as every instance in the autograph where cellos and basses divide on two staves.

Other causes of dissatisfaction stem from perceived shortcomings in the editions themselves. Sometimes these are too 'pure', presenting the text exactly as the composer wrote it, warts and all, and thus being so full of unsatisfactory inconsistencies, and deficient in essential articulation or dynamics, as to be literally unplayable without a considerable amount of *ad hoc* editing in rehearsal. This is counter-productive. Sometimes, on the other hand, the editor is judged to have gone too far, bringing passages into line with one another in respect of details where the composer may very well have wanted, say, the *sf* he wrote only in the second phrase (as an intensification), and not the first.

There are some of the crucial issues that have been addressed in the forthcoming series of Bärenreiter Urtext Beethoven Symphonies, which has been designed to be as 'user-friendly' as possible to the performer. The parts will be on sale, and include the traditional rehearsal letters (another feature generally absent from

most Urtext Editions, and much mourned by orchestral players, especially those with rests to count). Most importantly of all, the texts can be immediately played exactly as they stand: there are no unresolved problems requiring instant decisions by the conductor, the articulation works logically as given in the Edition, and the Critical comment is designed to communicate directly with the performer, showing concisely where the new text diverges from hitherto prevalent editions, justifying editorial markings, and discussing all those places where either the autograph is ambiguous or where primary sources disagree so that the text was open to dispute or editorial decision.

At the same time, the new Editions have been compiled with scholarly rigour, in accordance with strict musicological techniques and processes. Every surviving source is thoroughly examined; apart from early manuscript and printed sources of the works themselves, valuable information is also contained in Beethoven's conversation books and letters, to which recourse is frequently made. In the copyists' scores (Abschriften), corrections are sometimes found in the composer's hand, sometimes in the copyist's; and it has been particularly fascinating to discover recurring characteristics of Beethoven's writing that enable one to identify it even in such small specimens as a single staccato stroke.

Sometimes, of course, the sources are frankly contradictory: for example, a 2-bar phrase could be judged with equal validity to be all in one slur, or slurred barwise. In such cases, knowledge of period-instrument performing practice (specific to the point of actual bowings used by actual orchestras now) has been used to select the text that works, the extent to which any sources deviate from this then being discussed in the Critical Commentary. Thus, in the above case, to print the 2-bar slur in a slow tempo, where a change of bow is in any case inevitable, might invite bow-change(s) other than at the barline, which would clearly run contrary to the evidence in the sources.

Sometimes, it is the editor's responsibility to decide, where the primary sources are equivocal, whether a slur starts from one note or another. Here again, practical considerations can be valuable: if the bowing only works in one of two cases, this can usefully be taken in account. But sometimes, of course, the sources present the editor with an unavoidable dilemma: for example, in the first movement of Symphony No.4 the sources consistently slur only the upbeat notes in bars 36–42, 190–214, etc, never to the main note, yet the latter is obviously the only practical solution. In such cases we have taken the only defensible course of action, and given the text as in the sources.

It is of course particularly gratifying and rewarding when all this wealth of new research yields real results in terms of instantly audible corrections to the hitherto received texts. In all nine Symphonies there are places where the new Editions will actually sound materially different; eyebrows will be raised, and some passages, particularly in Symphonies 3, 7 and 9, may even need to be re-evaluated by analysts for their psychological effect in the structure of the movement. This is, of course, a wholly fascinating way of attaining a closer understanding of Beethoven's creative mind, and as we enter a new millennium it is clear that his great Symphonies, arguably the core of the entire orchestral repertoire and deprived for so long of an edition adequately reflecting his intentions, now deserve nothing less.

BEETHOVEN



DOCUMENTATION ON BEETHOVEN'S SINFONIA EROICA

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ILLUSTRATIONS



1. Heiligenstadt near Vienna. Coloured engraving by Johannes Raulino



2. The Beethoven House in Heiligenstadt. Anonymous photograph



3. The Heiligenstadt Testament (1802; p. 1)



4. Beethoven in 1800. Anonymous oil painting

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5. Beethoven in 1803. Miniature by Christian Homemann



6. Beethoven in 1804. Painting by Willibrord Mähler



7. Beethoven in 1806. Painting by Isidor Neugass

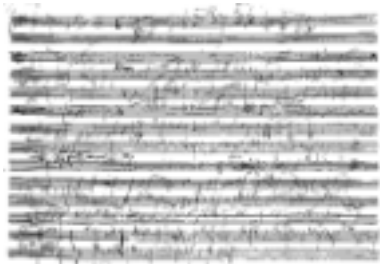
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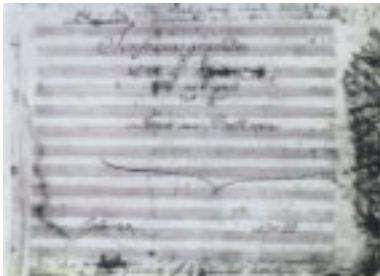
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8. Sinfonia Eroica: Earliest sketches (Sketchbook)



9. Sinfonia Eroica: View of the oldest surviving copy of the score



10. Sinfonia Eroica: Score; title page



11. Sinfonia Eroica: Copy of the score, fol. 101r, 2nd mvmt., m. 176-178, with Beethoven's corrections

Illustrations in print resolution (TIFF format) reside in the folder "EROICA_ILLUSTRATIONS" in the ROM- part of this DVD.