Robert Levin

Turning Point to Musical Modernity. Beethoven as Executor of the Legacy of C. P. E. Bach. Concert Lecture[1]

I start with "what motivates artists to become artists?" – because that's really a central question. What motivates a young person to seek a life in a creative discipline and how does that person see herself or himself within the larger context of his or her immediate environment, country, culture, et cetera? All of these things, I think, need very careful attention and I'm going to be circling back to this attitude both at the beginning and at the end of the lecture, so that the circle will complete itself. But the fact of the matter is that no great artwork can be understood without having the context of its culture and its costumes. And one of the most extraordinary cases of such a phenomenon is the idea that a composer could for a moment become a sociologist. Rather than someone who is just writing music to entertain or to render joy or sorrow or terror, which – of course – is a strong motivating factor. But the fact is that as we can see so well when we look at paintings, that art is layered with semiotics, with symbols, which tell us things about those people and other people. They have to do with the way people talk, the way they gesticulate, the kinds of clothing they wear, the class of society in which they function and their relationship with that and other layers of society. And a piece of sociology I have in mind, just to get us started, is the ballroom scene in Act I of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. What possibly could have motivated Mozart to spend some valuable time in his opera depicting the three basic classes of society? – the aristocrats dancing the minuet, the bourgeoisie dancing the Contredanse, and the peasants dancing the "Deutscher". And what better way to understand the volatility of the social relationships here, than to see that Don Giovanni – who is an aristocrat – seduces Zerlina, who is a peasant, insofar as he moves down one societal level to the middle and elevates her up one level to the middle. And they meet there and they dance the Contredanse. And Mozart of course composes the three dances and they all sound simultaneously, in 3/4-time, in 2/4-time, and in 3/8-time. Perhaps he thought that someday people would be interested in understanding the social relations of his time – and I could imagine that. But I can imagine much more that it reflects his fascination with the world in which he lived and an extraordinary interest in holding a mirror up to that society, confident in the fact that that mirror would reflect not only the people of that particular time and place, but would have something eternal

1 This text has been transcribed from a concert lecture, given under the title "Wende zur Moderne. Beethoven als Vollstrecker C.P.E. Bachs" in Bern, 13 September 2017. The filmed lecture may be watched on YouTube: https://youtu.be/ZhllEwvtV6I (last consulted 15 May 2019).

DOI: https://doi.org/10.26045/kp64-6178-014

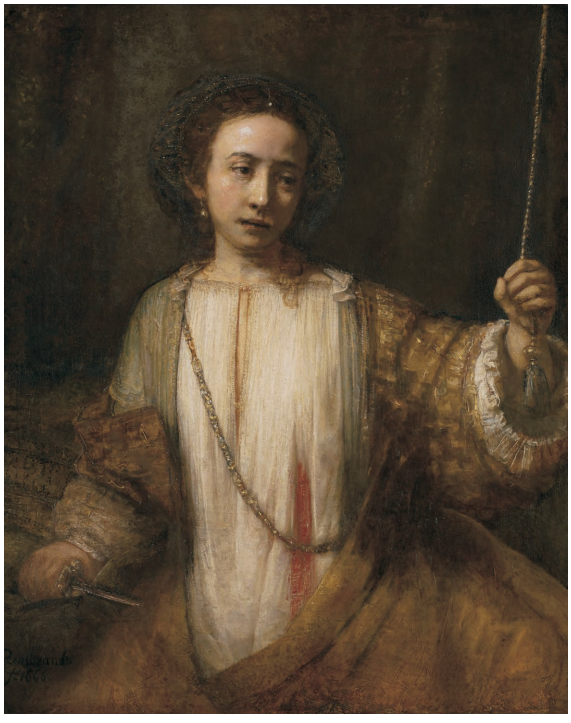

Figure 1 Rembrandt van Rijn: *Lucretia* (1666). Minneapolis Institute of Art, public domain

about it, which would tell us and warn us about certain essential information regarding who we are. And I think the only reason that art is both "of its time" and "transcends time" reflects this.

How else can I explain the fact, that one day, when I was playing with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra in Minnesota, I had a day off – so I went to the Minneapolis Institute of Art. And I walked into the museum and after visiting about three rooms, I came into a room and without focusing on it realised that there was something in the corner of the room that was pulling me over there. And I couldn't really focus on it, but I got a little bit closer and it turned out that it was a painting by Rembrandt. It was a painting, in which – it's a famous subject – Lucretia, who has been falsely accused of adultery, takes her own life to avoid disgrace to her husband (Figure 1). And the painting shows her with a tear welling up in one eye, with a knife, which has a drop of blood on it and with a white muslin blouse, which is already pink and spreading the blood's color. I stared at this painting and I started to weep. The expression of her face was paralysing, it was harrowing, and I thought, I'm making a fool of myself here – in this museum, falling apart – I have to get out of this room. So I turned and started to walk out of the room and found I couldn't. I came back and I wept all over again. It took me three attempts to get out of that room. And I started to think about this. I thought, "Well – wait a minute. This is a painting that was made some 325 years ago about something that happened 2000 years ago. What's wrong with me?" (Actually, I don't think that there is anything wrong with me in that regard. Maybe other things are wrong with me, but not that.) What it shows is

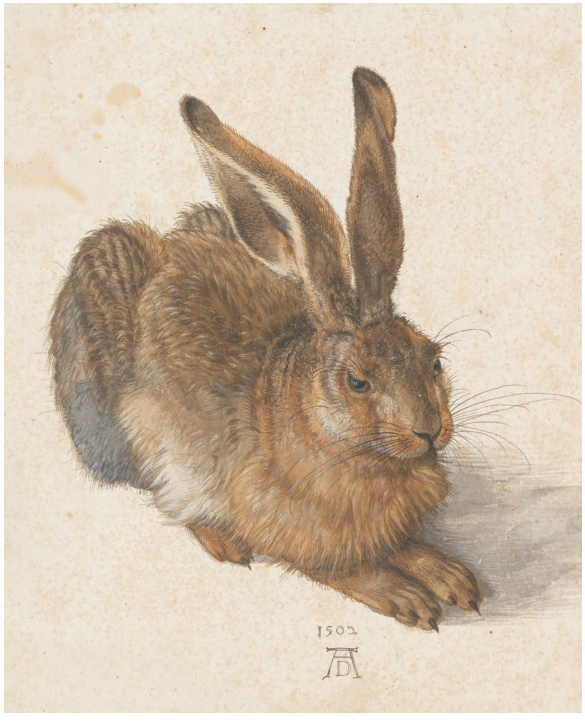

Figure 2 Albrecht Dürer: *Hare* (1502). Albertina, public domain

Figure 3 Philippe Mercier: *Pierrot catching a fly* (1740/50). Art Institute of Chicago, public domain

the hypnotic effect that art has on us. And I think all of us in this room know this. Indeed, that is surely why we are all here.

So we assume that great artists are fascinated by the world that surrounds them and have an extraordinary desire to interact with it. Most artists throughout history have made themselves chroniclers of one sort or another, whether poets or novelists or painters or sculptors or musicians or dancers. They have all looked at society and most of them – like Mozart with his ballroom scene – are depicting a world they know to tell their fellow human beings things about themselves that they as artists are probably a lot more skilled at revealing than those people could find out by themselves. And if indeed they are chroniclers not only of the superficialities of human existence but rather more chroniclers of the private lives of people, it will always be more subversive to have Rembrandt paintings rather than those of Frans Hals. Hals would in a few virtuoso strokes represent you the way a fashion photographer would: just the way you want to be – immensely successful, self-confident and completely inscrutable. With Rembrandt, there were no secrets. You look at a person in a Rembrandt painting and everything you can imagine in the private life, in the biography of that person, is implicit. This is what great artists do. They are extraordinary in delving into the interior lives, the intimacies, of their fellow human beings; and they are mostly reactive within their creativity. And that sets the scene for the subject of my talk, for in every era we encounter an artist whose inner life becomes more obsessive than the traditional artistic responsibility of looking outward and rendering people as the artist observes them.

Art always depended on patronage. For the most part, the artist would paint what people wanted him/her to paint. One served the court; one served the church. If you were Tiepolo or Tintoretto, you knew what you had to do, because that's what the patrons wanted. That was a given. But on the other hand: How do you explain Albrecht Dürer's painting of a field hare? (Figure 2) A Bunny! Yes, Albrecht Dürer painted a bunny. It's an amazing bunny, by the way! If you have seen it, you'll know what I mean. You feel as if you can stroke it. The fur is so uncanny! It is amazing. But here is the thing: why on earth would a great genius like Dürer take all of that time and effort and virtuosity and expertise to paint a bunny? Why did a French artist (the attribution is to Philippe Mercier) paint Pierrot catching a fly? (Figure 3) The fly is on his left hand and he is concentrating intensely, about to swoop over with his right hand to smash it. And it's delectable of course. But I don't really think, that the Duc de je ne sais quoi or the Baron de je ne sais qui really said to the artist, "Please paint a picture of somebody catching a fly! I'd like to put it into my living room." So you understand, that there are certain extra-curricular motivations for things. Maybe one could say that Dürer painted the hare because he thought it would be an incredible challenge and he wanted to show that he could do it.

After all, why did Mozart write the Finale of the *Jupiter Symphony*? Because he really wanted to show people that he could do it. We don't have the sketch in which he figured out the coordination of those five tunes that were going to go together. We can't believe that he wrote the whole finale and he got to the second double-bar and said "ok it's now time to fit the five ideas together – oh gosh, they don't work at all! Oh Jesus, I have to start all over again and rewrite the whole goddam movement."

No. Obviously, he started with a sketch in which all those motives were put together and then he deconstructed them and apportioned them into the appropriate places and he produced a masterpiece.

In short, the normal life of an artist is acting and reaching outward. But certain people become fascinated with their inner life and feel that the volatility, the unpredictability, the disorder, the emotional turmoil inside them is something about which they must communicate with the outer world. There are not so many people like this. One of them was Carlo Gesualdo, who wrote astounding chromatic madrigals, which is fascinating in and of itself. What it really tells about himself, the arch criminal, or his relationship to society, is to some degree inscrutable. The idea being in this case that what you prefer to do, more than painting a picture of a person, or depicting a scene or a narrative, is to read out of your diary, to reveal truth as marvelously as Rembrandt painted somebody's portrait. The truth is about you: your nightmares, your dreams. That is not the normative or majority kind of thing in history. Until Mr. Beethoven comes along.

Musical heritage He's not the first. Nor is Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach the first. But of all those people that we know the best within the tumult of history, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach stands out because he got his first-rate education from his father. And fortunately, he chronicled it in his *Essay on the True Manner of Playing the Clavier*, which everybody should read, as they should read Quantz's flute treatise, as they should read Türk's piano treatise, and Leopold Mozart's violin treatise.[2] We had an interesting talk this afternoon about some of these issues. I simply remind you that we talked about instructive editions and treatises, and I point out speaking of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach that one of the things you have to think about, when you read a treatise, is the attitude of the person who is writing it. In the case of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, the motivation is pure. Within a few years of his father's death he wishes to preserve that legacy. It is idealistic and selfless.

2 See Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach: *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* [Essay on the True Manner of Playing the Clavier], Berlin 1753/1762; Johann Joachim Quantz: *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* [On Playing the Flute], Berlin 1752; Daniel Gottlob Türk: *Klavierschule oder Anweisung zum Klavierspielen für Lehrer und Lernende* [School of Clavier Playing], Leipzig/Halle 1789; Leopold Mozart: *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule* [A Treatise on Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing], Augsburg 1756.

If you read Esteban de Arteaga's treatise on voice, that man is really angry at a lot of people, who sing the way he really hates, which is very interesting.[3] But – for instance – when you have all of these voice treatise writers who are complaining about the amount of embellishment being done by singers, you get one group of musicologists that say "See, that shows that you shouldn't do it," and the other group says "see, that shows you that *they did them*, for you don't complain about something that isn't happening."

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach was a man with an extraordinary education, who preserves a heritage, who prepared and performed the *St. Matthew Passion* five times, stealing liberally from his father's and from others, together with some music of his own. Of particular interest are his keyboard pieces and especially his *Fantasias*. The fantasies are difficult to match for their eccentricities in all of music history. For that reason alone, we should all play them, because the tension of disorder within the spirit is so vivid, that it tells us something that we need to understand about the act of performance, which is an important aspect of this conference. And we are not talking here about contrariness, because we could also talk about Frescobaldi's *Toccatas* – masterpieces of wilful arbitrariness and absolutely unsurpassed. But what is going on rhetorically in C. P. E. Bach's fantasies? Some of them incarnate a knockdown-drag-out fight between order and logic on the one hand and irrationality, volatility, and terror on the other. And that combination was enormously influential on his successors – so much so that when people talked about Bach in the second half of the 18th century, they meant C. P. E., not J. S.

Mozart said "Er ist der Vater; wir sind die Bub'n. […] Mit dem, was er macht […] kämen wir jetzt nicht mehr aus: aber *wie* er's macht – da steht ihm Keiner gleich."[4] In all this we must keep in mind that for C. P. E. Bach the soul of his expressive muse was the clavichord. And Beethoven's declining hearing notwithstanding, the clavichord was also his favourite keyboard instrument. Yes, the clavichord – the perfect travel instrument. Stick it under your arm and then go off to the coach and travel! So, C. P. E. Bach is living this extraordinary Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde double-life in his fantasies. And what I'm going to do now, is to show you the genealogy of C. P. E. Bach's rhetoric and expression by simply tracing the line, that goes from C. P. E. Bach to Mozart to Beethoven. Once we arrive at Beethoven, from that particular point of view, we can then start talking about Beethoven's individual journey, which begins – like almost everyone else's – in apprenticeship, in copying, in deriving, in looking at other music and making it his own and above all in being a kind of a chronicler of society as he is in his first piano sonatas for

3 See Esteban [Stefano] de Arteaga: *Le rivoluzioni del teatro musicale italiano*, Bologna 1783/1785/1788.

4 "He's the father, we are the kids. […] We no longer do as he does, but without him we could do nothing." For the first time given in Friedrich Rochlitz: *Für Freunde der Tonkunst*, Vol. 4, Leipzig 1832, p. 309.

instance, in Bonn. Or the next ones (Op. 2) in Vienna. But then: After a while something starts to happen. And that's the subject of this lecture.

Now it's time for some music. I chose not just any C. P. E. Bach Fantasy. All of them have the capacity to astonish. But I chose for obvious reasons the one in f sharp minor, which bears the title C. P. E. Bachs Empfindungen. I mean – imagine that! He writes a piece that says "these are my feelings, folks!", baring all. And I also chose it for another reason: because it starts and ends in f sharp minor. And he lived in a time, as Beethoven did, when – and we talked about this with the Webern Symphony[5] – when equal temperament was not the law of the land and it did not exist – don't let anyone tell you, that the Bach Well Tempered Clavier proselytises for equal temperament! It's rubbish. If in fact Bach was already tuning in equal temperament, why was Kirnberger still experimenting with compromise temperaments after Bach died? No, that just won't work.[6] Now this is a clavichord piece. Not a piano piece. So I'm not going to be using pedal.

Robert Levin plays f sharp minor Fantasy by C. P. E. Bach.

Mozart's musical tombstones That was the "father", to use Mozart's characterisation; now let's hear from the kid! This is the famous d minor Fantasy by Mozart. It bears the Köchel number 397, but this number is chronologically inaccurate. This is not a piece that he wrote in 1782, as represented in the Köchel catalogue. It is a quite late composition – probably 1788 to 1789, which makes it even more interesting for us! Because it shows that the heritage of C. P. E. Bach accompanies Mozart all the way through his life. Given the fact that C. P. E. Bach died in 1788, this fantasy might even be Mozart's way of eulogising the older composer. He did just that when Johann Christian Bach died in 1782, in Mozart's Piano Concerto in A major K 414. The principal theme of the concerto's second movement is taken from J. C. Bach's overture La calamità de' cuori. When Carl Friedrich Abel died, Mozart quoted Abel's Violin Sonata Op. 5, No. 5 (second movement) in his A major Violin Sonata K 526. So it's not impossible that K 397 might also be such an homage. You should also be aware that in the version of this Fantasy that you usually hear, with the uproarious D-major conclusion, the last ten measures are not by Mozart. They are probably by August Eberhard Müller, who was then the cantor of St. Thomas in Leipzig – one of J. S. Bach's successors. The Fantasy was first published under the title Fantaisie

5 See the paper by Lukas Näf in this volume, pp. 180–192.

6 A here omitted passage on the Vallotti tuning of the instrument in use may be found in the video recording of this concert lecture (https://youtu.be/ZhllEwvtV6I?t=1179) – the instrument itself was an original 1821 piano by Wilhelm Löschen, a Vienna instrument maker that serviced Beethoven's own pianos and had a lively relationship with the composer. This piano was very kindly supplied by Leonardo Miucci.

d'introduction – which is exactly what it is. It's a fantasy that takes you to the dominant seventh in D major after which presumably you might proceed, *attacca*, into a sonata. Which sonata? Well, it could be a Mozart sonata. It could be K 284 or 311 or 576. But it could also be Beethoven – Op. 10, No. 3 or Op. 28. I'll give you a sample, but do not worry: I am not going to play the whole Beethoven sonata!

The relationship between the rhetoric of Mozart's *d minor Fantasy* and that of C. P. E. Bach will be evident.

Robert Levin plays *d minor Fantasy* by W. A. Mozart (K 397).

So, to you pianists in the audience: Some of you should do that, because playing that silly 10-bar ending is just not what the doctor ordered. Of course there are alternatives: my distinguished colleague Mitsuko Uchida recorded the piece with a coda that goes back to d minor, recapitulating the opening material. This is a very beautiful thing to do. But I don't know a piece by Mozart that goes from d minor to D major and then goes back. Think of the *d minor Concerto*. But it still is a great idea and anyway it's a better idea than the one we all use.

Beethoven's "Phantasieren" Now we come to the Beethoven *Fantasy* Op. 77, which occupies a singular place in his œuvre. We have several fantasies of Mozart, a considerable number from C. P. E. Bach and from J. S. Bach, among others. This is a good point to recall what the word "fantasy" meant to them. "Fantasy" of course can mean something like a whim: merely something you spontaneously decide to do. But in the 18th century, the word "improvise" did not exist. They did not use the word "improvisation". They used the word "phantasieren". "Hr. Kapellmeister Mozart [wird] ein besonders grosses Forte piano Pedal beym Phantasieren gebrauchen"; thus a handbill for a concert given by Mozart in 1785.[7] So the idea of a written-down fantasy is that it could be a protocol of an actual improvisation. And it's not unreasonable to think, that in Beethoven's writing down the *Fantasy* published as his Op. 77, he might have been committing to paper the perfected protocol of an improvisation, as Chopin did with his *Ballades*, which he first improvised. In any case, at Beethoven's legendary "Academie" on 22 December 1808 in the Theater an der Wien, where the general public heard for the first time the 5th *Symphony*, the 6th *Symphony*, the 4th *Piano Concerto*, three movements from the *C major Mass*, the *Choral Fantasy* and one old piece: *Ah! Perfido* (the concert aria, published as Op. 65), Beethoven improvised a fantasy. Perhaps, then, he later decided to commit to paper something approximating what he did in that time. Now, there is an interesting sociology

7 Handbill for a concert on 10 March 1785.

to this *Fantasy* too, because the first half of it is pure C.P.E. Bach. It alternates between bolts of lightning and rumination, after which it settles into one of the favourite objects for improvisation during that time of Mozart and Beethoven, a theme with improvised variations – most commonly based on a "hit aria" from the "hit opera" of the moment. So in this case Beethoven starts his *Fantasy* in g minor and he gets to b minor and then presents us with series of variations in B major, knowing full well that the tuning gap between g minor and B major was going to be quite outlandish. Apparently, he was not one who worried about these sorts of things. I think he delighted in them. So I shall try in my performance to delight in this piece, which is no push-over, I'll tell you!

Robert Levin plays Beethoven *Fantasy* Op. 77.

Thus, I think we can all agree that C.P.E. Bach casts quite a long shadow. I would suggest that it is quite clear that neither the Mozart nor the Beethoven fantasy we have heard would have taken anything approaching the form that they did without having an antecedent like that. And it is precisely this kind of alternation back and forth between order and disorder, which is so crucial to that aesthetic.

The late Beethoven Beethoven is not alone in having his work divided into three periods. It is my belief that almost every artists' life is divided into three periods. The typical artist spends her/his youth as an apprentice. Once the fruits of apprenticeship have been achieved one functions very successfully and creates a fine body of work within an inherited language: this is the first period of creativity. But there is something restless inside that impels the searching artist to seek a bit further. As a result, one starts to become more personal. But above all one discovers that there is an extraordinary subtle balance between what it is that one has to say and how one says it. That's the middle period. With Mozart, it starts in the K 400s – starting in 1783 or 1784, I would say. We know when it starts with Beethoven, because everybody always thinks about Beethoven in that way. But what happens to Beethoven also happens to Mozart and it happens to Bach and it happens to Schubert. As one creates one's artwork, as one paints one's paintings, writes one's sonnets, or composes one's sonatas, one is continually thinking. It is analogous to rotating the barrel of a camera lens and bringing it into focus. In the middle period, the lens of the camera is in focus. An ideal has been achieved. But human beings are strange; and artists – of course – are stranger than anybody, because they're so much more aware of these kinds of volatile things. What they do is to keep on rotating the lens. They don't stop, just because it gets to that ideal equilibrium. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is when their music starts to become peculiar.

In no case in music history is it clearer than with Beethoven. We have the late piano sonatas, we have the late string quartets and so on. But if you listen to the J.S. Bach of late 1740s, you hear it too. You listen to late Haydn, you will hear it everywhere. And with Mozart, once we arrive at the K490s and into the K500s it is there to be heard: the *Quintets* with two violas, K515 and 516, and especially the later two, K593 and 614. Very strange things are going on there. So we need not single out Beethoven in this respect. What starts to happen, though, is that Beethoven looks inward. Who knows if it would have happened at the same pace or indeed at all, had he not been subjected to the ultimate calamity for a musician, the loss of his hearing. That, in 1802, precipitated a spiritual and artistic crisis. And naturally he will look inward. But an artist with this greatness would have done this sooner or later anyway. It's just a matter perhaps of the moment. But Beethoven starts to look inside himself and his music becomes increasingly idealistic, as opposed to Haydn and Mozart, who were absolute realists. They painted the world in the way it was, not as they might wish it to be – a task that fell to Beethoven.

Mozart is shocking in that unlike most other artists he doesn't make judgements about his operatic characters. Think about it: Don Giovanni raises his champagne glass, and we all want to go to his party. We know that he is a monster, but we are transfixed by his magnetism. That's because Mozart doesn't do anything to discourage you from being seduced. On the other hand, how many people belong to the "Alberich Fan Club"? How many people hear the entry of the grand inquisitor in *Don Carlos* and think "gee, that's a guy I'd like to have a beer with". The composers of operas editorialise: they tell you whom you are supposed to like and whom you are not supposed to. And Mozart does absolutely nothing in this way. Thus, nothing prevents a character in one of his opera's from seeking and getting the empathy of the audience. But again: although he doesn't judge, at the same time he doesn't show his hand, except once in a while, when some calamity happens. How many Mozart pieces, how many Bach pieces are connected with deaths in the family or of friends? Not very many. It is said that Mozart's *a minor Sonata* was prompted by the death of his mother. Its time of composition coincides with her death in Paris, the sonata is notated on Paris paper, and a minor is for Mozart the key of death. When his dearest friend Count Hatzfeld died he wrote the *a minor Rondo* K511. So there can sometimes be connections like this; but most of the time there aren't.

Beethoven, as I have said, is an idealist. He stands for liberty and dignity. He stands for the best for his fellow human beings and he is going to fight for his ideals. He will write an opera that celebrates liberty over tyranny – a subject that will not win him friends in the aristocracy. That's not something a realist would want to write about. And Beethoven does it, because he has immense courage. His personal will is overwhelming. He was not a person who just sat down and wrote a string quartet, just like that, as

Schubert could. We have these extraordinary sketchbooks, which show the torment, the suffering, the unfathomable stages that he had to go through. You look at – as I did – *Landsberg* 6, which is the sketchbook with the *Eroica Symphony*.[8] And you look at Beethoven's struggle to write the scherzo, and you think, "This poor fellow is hopeless! He should open up a dry goods store … perhaps he should become a blacksmith or something." So much of what is written down seems so clumsy. You have to pinch yourself and say "You know what happens to this?"

Robert Levin sings the beginning of *Eroica* Scherzo.

Because ultimately he was a genius, and he triumphed over all obstacles. I am reminded of a story told to me by violist Kim Kashkashian, my duo partner over many decades. She was coaching a work with the great composer György Kurtág, and he made her repeat a particular passage over and over. Her frustration at not being able to satisfy his insatiable demands grew until she involuntarily blurted out, "I feel so ungifted!" And this was Kurtág's reply: "I too am ungifted. But I torment myself until it goes." This is a thought that Beethoven would have understood. We need to imagine the mental anguish he went through. He had an extraordinary gift. But it was not made easy. And this turned him progressively more inward. And this man wanted so much decency and rectitude. He would dedicate that very *Eroica Symphony* to Bonaparte and then cross it out when Bonaparte made himself emperor. And there is a subtext to this, which is the significance of E-flat major to Beethoven, exemplified by three works composed in that key: the *Eroica Symphony*, the *Fifth Piano Concerto* ("Emperor"), and the *Piano Sonata* Op. 81a ("Les Adieux"). The composition of the sonata was prompted by the departure from Vienna of his student, patron and dear friend Archduke Rudolph, because Napoleon was besieging the town. Thus, the choice of E-flat major is deliberate. And then, at a particularly moving passage in the "Emperor" concerto Beethoven wrote in the margin of the manuscript "Östreich löhne Napoleon".[9] It's as if you are reading a newspaper report. It's current events. And all of this is causing Beethoven to turn inward. And he turns inward and he writes music which is not like music that anybody else is writing. We can tell that it has its roots in the Viennese classical style. But it is not like that. It's certainly not like Hummel, who – by the way – was much more popular than Beethoven was during their

8 Formerly Berlin, Preußische Staatsbibliothek, housed since World War II in the Biblioteka Jagielloñska, Kraków. An edition of the sketchbook (facsimile and transcription) was prepared by Lewis Lockwood and Alan Gosman, Urbana/Chicago/Springfield 2013.

9 "Austria pays Napoleon back". See Ludwig van Beethoven: *Klavierkonzert* Nr. 5 Es-Dur, opus 73, Facsimile, ed. by Hartmut Hein, Laaber [2005].

lifetimes. Hummel had an enormous influence on composers like Mendelssohn and Chopin.

But Beethoven turned inward and decided that the best thing he could do was not to characterise his fellow human beings, but to read from his diary. To tell us, what he had dreamt of the previous night. To tell us, what his lofty aims were for the future. And to say "yes, I could make a picture of you or you or you the way everybody else is, but actually I know myself better than I know you. And I can support myself, because I have these wonderful stipends from Prince Lobkowitz, from Archduke Rudolph, and from Prince Lichnowsky. And I don't have to worry about where money is coming from. So, I can afford to be a complete idealist." "If that's the case", he says: "what do I want?" – And "search" becomes a metaphor in Beethoven. Looking for something. For a secret, for an answer to a question, that he has posed.[10]

You see, this is not the kind of music that Mozart could write; but Schubert could and did, to a terrifying degree, in masterpieces such as the G-major *Quartet*, *Die Winterreise*, and the E-flat-major *Piano Trio*. Such works gestate in an extraordinary interiorised world, in which the whole sense of recollection, of the present, and of the future is all very liquid and very foggy and subject to constant shivers of pain and sudden fleeting delights that we could not have imagined before. It's music – well, let me quote my teacher Nadia Boulanger – not long before the end. In September 1979, she was 92 years old. Leonard Bernstein visited her. And he realised that she was barely conscious and so he started to take his leave and she said "No, no! stay!", and he thought, well, he needed to speak to her. What would he talk about … Then he thought, he had it. "Do you hear music?" – "Ah yes, all the time!" – "What music so you hear?" He wondered: Monteverdi? Bach? Beethoven? Stravinsky? – "A music that has neither beginning nor end."[11]

This isn't music anymore, ladies and gentlemen. This is philosophy. This is the testament of a man – Beethoven – who a few short years later was the victim of a series of horrendous diseases, each of which was vying to kill him first. Despite living in unspeakable physical pain, he succeeded through the dint of sheer willpower in writing those last quartets. He was a martyr. He gave us spiritually what no one else has given us. Those quartets remain radical, revolutionary and in some ways imponderable forever. They are beyond anything – except perhaps some of the late Bach pieces, which influenced him so much.

10 The subsequent passage of the original conference paper on Beethoven's sometimes surprising answers may be listened to in the video recording: https://youtu.be/ZhllEwvtV6I?t=3544.

11 See also Léonie Rosenstiel: *Nadia Boulanger. A Life in Music*, New York/London 1982, p. 412. The examples to follow may be found under https://youtu.be/ZhllEwvtV6I?t=4195.

Now I take a step back here. History moves ever faster. Art was based for a very long time on the notion of the *lingua franca* – a language that everybody could understand. When Mozart said "What are you doing, Haydn? You're going to London – you don't speak the language!" – Haydn replied, "My language is spoken everywhere." And in fact, from Lisbon to St. Petersburg in the 1780s people spoke and understood that language. Haydn was a little different from Mozart, but they went arm in arm to the rehearsals of *Così fan tutte*. They understood one other perfectly well. Let us go back a few eras. The international school led principally by the Flemings lasted about 250 years. The baroque era lasted about 150. The classical period lasted maybe 75 to 80. The romantic era lasted about 60. Now while that was all going on, the notion of the *lingua franca*, spoken by everybody, started to deteriorate. A greater emphasis on individualism began to grip the arts. And this is where Beethoven comes in. My teacher, Nadia Boulanger, quoted her dear friend, the philosopher and poet Paul Valéry, very often. One of the things that she quoted from Valéry, was "In the past, one imitated mastery. Now, one seeks singularity." To which Nadia Boulanger pointed out, "It's actually very cruel, what he says, because one is not singular by choice."[12] That is something that a lot of people need to hear and know. Do you think that Beethoven simply decided that he was going to write music that was different from anyone else's, because he merely sought to be different from them? Do you really think he had a choice? Did Chopin have a choice? Did Schumann have a choice? No, but we could not speak about Chopin and Schumann and Mendelssohn without Beethoven having blazed that trail. He showed that it was possible to develop an identity that was so extraordinary, that it would forever change the agenda from depictive to confessional. And by his turning himself ever more inward, he made it possible for us to do the same. Because it is up to us to take his lessons and make them ours.

(Transcription: Christian Spitzenstätter, revised by Robert Levin)

12 "Connaissez-vous le texte de Valéry: 'Jadis on imitait la maîtrise, aujourd'hui on recherche la singularité.' 'C'est cruel, car on est singulier parce qu'on ne peut pas être comme tous les autres. On n'est pas singulier par choix.'" Bruno Monsaingeon: *Mademoiselle. Entretiens avec Nadia Boulanger*, Van de Velde 1980, p. 59; the original quote by Valery says: "A partir du romantisme, l'on imite la *singularité* au lieu d'imiter, comme jadis, la *maîtrise*." Paul Valéry: Œuvres, Vol. 2, Paris 1960, p. 565.

Inhalt

Rund um Beethoven

Interpretationsforschung heute •

Herausgegeben von Thomas Gartmann und Daniel Allenbach

Musikforschung der
Hochschule der Künste Bern

Herausgegeben von Martin Skamletz
und Thomas Gartmann

Band 14

Dieses Buch ist in gedruckter Form im Dezember 2019 in erster Auflage in der Edition Argus in Schliengen/Markgräflerland erschienen. Gestaltet und gesetzt wurde es im Verlag aus der *Seria* und der *SeriaSans*, die von Martin Majoor im Jahre 2000 gezeichnet wurden. Gedruckt wurde es auf Eos, einem holzfreien, säurefreien, chlorfreien und alterungsbeständigen Werkdruckpapier der Papierfabrik Salzer im niederösterreichischen Sankt Pölten. Das Vorsatzpapier *Caribic cherry* wurde von Igepa in Hamburg geliefert. *Rives Tradition*, ein Recyclingpapier mit leichter Filznarbung, das für den Bezug des Umschlags verwendet wurde, stellt die Papierfabrik Arjo Wiggins in Issy-les-Moulineaux bei Paris her. Das Kapitalband mit rot-schwarzer Raupe lieferte die Firma Dr. Günther Kast aus Sonthofen im Oberallgäu, die auf technische Gewebe und Spezialfasererzeugnisse spezialisiert ist. Gedruckt und gebunden wurde das Buch von der Firma Bookstation im bayerischen Anzing. Im Internet finden Sie Informationen über das gesamte Verlagsprogramm unter www.editionargus.de, zum Institut Interpretation der Hochschule der Künste Bern unter www.hkb.bfh.ch/interpretation und www.hkb-interpretation.ch. Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über www.dnb.de abrufbar. DOI: https://doi.org/10.26045/kp64-6178 ISBN 978-3-931264-94-9