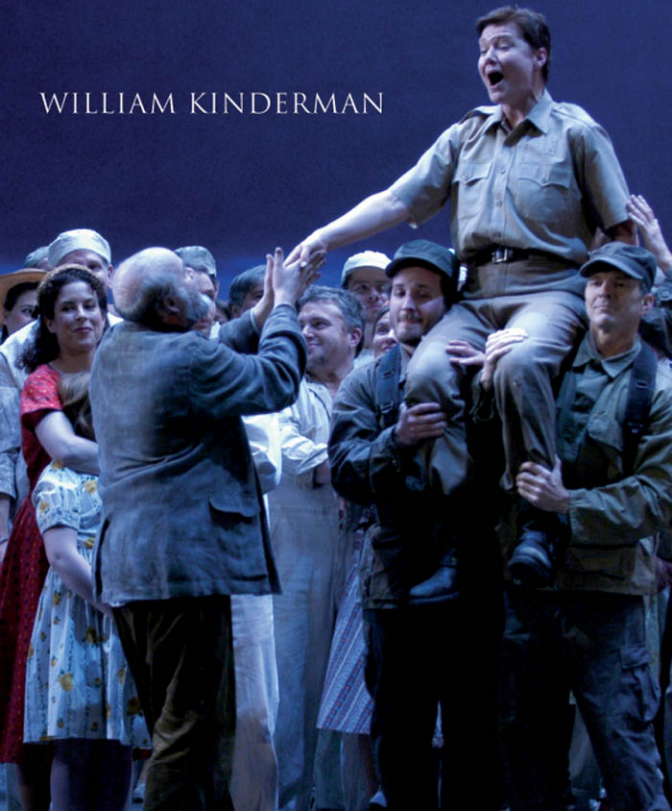
BEETHOVEN

SECOND EDITION

WILLIAM KINDERMAN



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William Kinderman

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
2009

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Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.
198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

www.oup.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Kinderman, William.
Beethoven / William Kinderman. — 2nd ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978–0–19–532825–7; 978–0–19–532836–3 (pbk.)
1. Beethoven, Ludwig van, 1770–1827—Criticism and interpretation. I. Title.
ML410.B4K56 2008
780.92—dc22
[B]
2007038279

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

Preface

This book examines the main lines of Beethoven's creative development, from his formative years at Bonn to the last string quartets written near the end of his life. The investigation is set in the context of Beethoven's biography, but gives priority to representative musical works in the major genres: the piano sonata and variation set; the duo sonata, trio, string quartet, and other types of chamber music; the concerto, overture, and symphony; and the forms of vocal music such as the art song, opera, cantata, and sacred mass. Not to be overlooked is his contribution to patriotic program music, of which the "Battle Symphony," *Wellingtons Sieg,* is the best-known example.

The introductory chapter, "Overture," sets out the main philosophical and aesthetic argument. Like Beethoven's second and third *Leonore* overtures, this one presents important themes that are later exemplified in detail. Since the primary focus is aesthetic rather than biographical, some familiarity with the musical works is presupposed; the discussions of pieces aim toward an integrated approach that avoids sacrificing artistic sensibility to systematic method. Analysis at its best is not an end in itself but a means to an end: it enables us to hear more in the music. In this sense, an analysis resembles an inward performance. It depends vitally on our imagination of the sound, and it needs to be verified by the reader: how does it feel?

The book was first published in 1995, and the chance to expand it for this new edition is a precious opportunity. I have used the available space to extend the discussions of several subjects and works: Beethoven's "first love," Jeannette d'Honrath; his response to Mozart as revealed through their quintets for piano and winds; the *Eroica* Symphony and its mythic background; the cultural and political importance of *Fidelio;* a new source for the *Hammerklavier* Sonata; transfiguration of the Arietta in the last sonata, op. 111; and structure and expression in the Quartet in A minor op. 132. The discussions of op. 16 and op. 111 overlap with my contributions to *Variations on the Canon,* edited by Robert Curry, David Gable, and Robert L. Marshall, and *Verwandlungsmusik: Studien zur Wertungsforschung* 48, edited by Andreas Dorschel, respectively; the discus-

sion of op. 132 intersects with my contribution to *The String Quartets of Beethoven* (University of Illinois Press, 2006). Many other additions have been made, and the bibliographical sections updated to include recent studies and interpretations.

During the last decade, the many debts I have incurred and acknowledged in earlier editions of this book have continued to grow. I hope that my own development in recent years will have a positive impact on this new edition. To my research assistant during the final stages of preparation, Joseph Jones, I am most grateful. From the large field of Beethoven literature, I am indebted both to works with which I agree and to those with which I do not. I have tried to take account of sources and scholarship on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and express particular thanks to the several institutions that have supported my extended periods of research in Europe: the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Killam Foundation, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

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Overture

No composer occupies a more central position in musical life than Beethoven. Changes in taste and in the role of art in society have in no way blunted the appeal of his music on many levels—from ubiquitous popularization in television advertising to the most exemplary professional performances. If the fascination Beethoven exerted in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was tied to his heroic, revolutionary image, the last half century has increasingly demonstrated the universal scope of his legacy. Beethoven's deep roots in the Enlightenment lent qualities to his art that cannot be adequately understood in terms of a merely personal or national style. His restless, open vision of the work of art reflects a modern and essentially cosmopolitan aesthetic attitude. Flexible principles and not fixed preconceptions guided Beethoven's artistic process, as is minutely documented in the thousands of pages of his surviving musical sketches.

There is no shortcut to discerning these principles: only detailed critical engagement with the music offers a tenable basis for interpretation. Still, it is helpful to recall Beethoven's own professed convictions about his general artistic aims. In a letter of 29 July 1819 to his patron and student the Archduke Rudolph, he wrote characteristically about the need for "freedom and progress . . . in the world of art as in the whole of creation."[1] To refer to his own artistic goal in this context Beethoven coined the term *Kunstvereinigung,* or "artistic unification," a notion that is connected to the aging composer's intense assimilation of Handel and Bach during his last decade. A striving toward *Kunstvereinigung* is in no way confined to his later years, however, and Beethoven's entire career may be viewed as embodying just such a progressive unification of artistic means.

The central task of the present study is to trace the formation and evolution of this process through analysis of works from all periods of Beethoven's life. A necessary prerequisite of any such undertaking is the examination of the historical, aesthetic, and biographical context of Beethoven's style. Great works of art may seem to transcend their historical setting, absorbing its conventions into an aesthetic object in which, in Friedrich Schiller's words, "the idea of self-determination shines back to us." But it would be a serious error to confuse the apparent auton-

[1] My translation. For a translation of the entire letter and a brief commentary, see Thayer-Forbes, pp. 741–42.

omy of the "absolute music" of the Viennese Classics with modern notions of a merely abstract structural matrix, lifted out of history. For Beethoven, as for Schiller, the idea of artistic self-determination meant something quite different, whereby the autonomy manifested in the work by no means insulates it from the world according to the ideal of *l'art pour l'art,* but, on the contrary, enables the work to display a "representation of freedom" as a goal for human striving.[2] A proper consideration of Beethoven's musical legacy thus entails not only an assessment of his impact on the musical traditions and characteristic styles of his day, but also an evaluation of the latent symbolism investing so many of his works.

Susanne Langer once described the successful artwork as presenting "an unconsummated symbol" through a "process of articulation."[3] Crucial to her formulation is the word "unconsummated", which points to the capability of the work to transcend the bounds of direct representation, so encasing the symbol within the artistic medium that its full meaning cannot be unpacked or reduced through analysis. It is revealing in this respect that many works of a superficial, conventional cast are all too explicit or unmediated in their symbolic content. In Beethoven's music, this principle is illustrated by the series of patriotic compositions written around 1813–14, the Congress of Vienna period. Beethoven's "Battle Symphony," *Wellingtons Sieg* (*Wellington's Victory*), and his cantata *Der glorreiche Augenblick* (*The Glorious Moment*) marked a summit of his outward, public acclaim but a nadir of his artistic achievement.

What the bundle of processional anthems and cannonades in *Wellington's Victory* lacks is a compelling internal artistic context. In this work a literal, external programme assumes priority, whereas in the *Eroica* Symphony or the *Lebewohl* Sonata, by contrast, symbolic elements are absorbed into new and original musical designs, creating a whole greater than the sum of the parts. To express the same point differently, we could say that in *Wellington's Victory* Langer's requirement of a "process of articulation" is inadequately developed; as in most popular and commercial music, the symbolic content is not truly integrated into an artistic structure. This touches in turn on the problem of "absolute music" that has been so much debated in connection with Beethoven's works since the nineteenth century.

As some insightful earlier critics from E. T. A. Hoffmann to Walter Riezler have argued, Beethoven's music represents a supreme embodiment of an art that had finally emancipated itself, through a long historical process, from its traditional dependence on words, dance, or ritual. Its status as "absolute music" was thus bound up with a sense of autonomy whereby the work seemed to follow not convention or external models but its own inner laws, achieving a qualitatively new realization of the tonal language in works of highly individualized character. Beethoven increasingly transformed the rhetorical models and conventional formal gestures of the music of his day. He was prepared thereby to strain the expectations of the aristocratic patrons who nourished his career but toward whom he

[2] This and the preceding quotation are from Schiller's correspondence with Körner, cited in Chytry, *The Aesthetic State,* pp. 81, 82.

[3] *Philosophy in a New Key,* p. 204.

showed a fierce independence. More than any previous composer Beethoven contributed to a reversal of the perceived relation between artist and society: instead of supplying commodities for use, like a skilled tradesman, the successful artist could now be regarded as an original genius in the Kantian sense, revealing an unsuspected higher order in nature, and giving voice thereby to the unconditioned, or even paradoxically to the infinite or the inexpressible.

This idealistic outlook, which reinforced the myth of Beethoven as revolutionary prophet or "deaf seer," in Wagner's words, risks obscuring some essential aspects of the music and must be complemented by a dose of empirical realism. We are now more aware of the problematic character of evolutionary historicism, as well as the pitfalls of overemphasizing the allegedly unconditioned nature of the aesthetic object. In fact, a popularized version of the new aesthetic of expression, together with the cult of genius and a strong appetite for programmatic interpretations and titles, were all associated with a change in taste that was already becoming evident in Vienna during Beethoven's lifetime, a change that in some important respects must be reckoned a decline. The palaces where Beethoven established himself in the 1790s and Mozart worked just a few years earlier supported a more refined audience than the general concert public that came into existence a few decades later. Lost to the new aesthetic, for instance, was the dry, rationalistic spirit that inspired the comic instrumental works of Haydn and Beethoven—music with few parallels before the twentieth century. The Romantic composers tended to take themselves too seriously to partake in the ironic play of incongruity that remained a lifelong interest of Beethoven.

Beethoven's legacy cast a long shadow over the nineteenth century, a shadow covering both sides of the famous aesthetic controversies that raged around Liszt and Wagner on the one hand, and Brahms and Hanslick on the other. These controversies illustrate how difficult it was to maintain the Beethovenian balance between tradition and innovation. For many, it seemed unavoidable to take sides for or against the "Music of the Future" through commitment to either the expressive or the formalistic aesthetic, and the duality has continued to exert influence up to the present. Yet the choice is invidious and unnecessary, since neither perspective rules out the other.

A major challenge to criticism of Beethoven's music consists precisely in the need to sustain a balance between these dimensions, which have been described as "the two classic elements that rub against one another in every work: expressive, fallible substance on the one hand, and determined, inexorable structure on the other."[4] Critics and analysts have often emphasized one or other of these aspects without grasping the synthesis on which Beethoven's art vitally depends. The danger of a programmatic approach is that an objective, verifiable relationship with the work may be shortchanged in favor of the impressionistic response of the critic. Many such interpretations have been offered: two examples are Arnold Schering's *Beethoven und die Dichtung* and Wilfrid Mellers's *Beethoven and the Voice of God*. Schering saw the key to interpretation in dramas by Shakespeare,

[4] Richard Kramer, "Ambiguities in *La Malinconia*," p. 29.

Schiller, and Goethe, and freely underlaid themes from Beethoven's works with texts by these authors. Mellers, on the other hand, discerned in the emergent lyricism of Beethoven's music a "hidden song" with divine connotations. Despite occasional insights, the work of both authors is compromised by their tendency to oversimplify the artistic phenomenon, interpreting its symbolism in a too explicit and arbitrary fashion. Consequently, the dialogue of the critic with the artwork and its historical context often collapses into a monologue, revealing far more about the writer than about the object of discourse.

Equally serious difficulties undermine approaches based narrowly on aspects of musical structure whose aesthetic qualities are ignored. In Allen Forte's book *The Compositional Matrix,* devoted to Beethoven's Piano Sonata in E major op. 109, for instance, any reference to the aesthetic character of the music is conspicuously avoided as if unworthy of consideration. Some analyses, especially in English-speaking countries, continue to reflect inhibitions or even embarrassment about those aspects of the artistic experience that seem less accessible to systematic methodologies. Just as in Anglo-American philosophy of the postwar period, in which perennial issues of ethics and metaphysics were cast aside in favor of an intense yet often myopic probing of the logic of language, so has musical analysis too frequently limited its attention to quantifiable entities, cutting short the inquiry into artistic meaning.

How, then, can we address Beethoven's music in its proper aesthetic terms, while maintaining the necessary balance between subjectivity and objectivity? It is helpful in this connection to reassess some of the aesthetic ideas that emerged out of Enlightenment thought. To be sure, the leading thinkers of the age, such as Kant, Schiller, and Goethe, often showed insufficient awareness of the potential of musical art, and it is usually not their explicit pronouncements about music but their more comprehensive insights that most richly reward our attention. Most crucial is the concept of human experience as a synthesis of sense perception and understanding regulated by the faculty of reason (*Vernunft*). The classic statement of this argument, which has been reformulated and elaborated many times up to the present day, is the first of Kant's three great critiques, the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*Critique of Pure Reason*), first published in 1781. Beethoven's enthusiasm for one of Kant's dictums is recorded in his conversation-book notation of February 1820: "'The moral law within us, and the starry heavens above us' Kant!!!"[5] By the same token, Beethoven declined to attend lectures on Kant held at the University of Vienna, and it is unlikely that he studied many of Kant's works at first hand. Maynard Solomon has described Beethoven's position as "superficial Kantianism."[6] It is possible, however, that Beethoven's affinity with Kant lies not in any direct philosophical engagement but rather in his response, through his art, to the same underlying experiential issues.

Still more important are the ideas of another creative artist who strove to integrate Kant's theory with an elevated concept of the artwork—Schiller, whose let-

[5] *Ludwig van Beethovens Konversationshefte,* vol. 1, p. 235.

[6] *Beethoven,* p. 38.

ters *Über die aesthetische Erziehung des Menschen* (*On the Aesthetic Education of Mankind*) first appeared in 1795, to be warmly if not uncritically appreciated by the philosopher at Königsberg. Schiller's *Aesthetic Letters* are underestimated today, but the core of his argument remains viable and provocative. One difficulty lies in his reliance on the term "beauty" (*Schönheit*) instead of "work of art," since beauty is clearly not a necessary or sufficient criterion for art, as Schiller sometimes implies. His basic argument nevertheless allows for the substitution of "artwork" for "beauty," a substitution which strengthens the connection between the ontological and ethical aspects of his theory. For Schiller, the inborn faculty of the senses, comprising our perception of manifold impressions in a temporal continuity, is regarded as a "sensuous drive" (*Sinntrieb*). Our rational nature, on the other hand, which seeks to annul time by imposing categories on experience, is the "form drive" (*Formtrieb*). The profound significance accorded to art in Schiller's theory derives from its synthesis of the sensuous and rational in the "play drive" (*Spieltrieb*), which brings "life" and form (*Gestalt*) into conjunction as "living shape" (*lebende Gestalt*).[7]

This tensional synthesis of sensuous intuition and rational understanding should be distinguished from the dialectical speculations of Hegel and later idealistic thinkers. For Schiller or Kant, unlike the Romantic idealists, the recognition of limits is crucial. The limits imposed by the "critique of reason" hold ideological speculation in check, while moral and ethical issues emerge through the idea of freedom. Hegel's philosophy of spirit oversteps, but does not escape, the Kantian critique by systematically dissolving fixity of thought. The rhythm of Hegel's speculative dialectic strives to overcome the gap between subjectivity and objectivity by means of an "expressive pantheism," infusing philosophy with aesthetics, just as art in turn, in his view, can transcend its own sphere by becoming religion or *Kunstreligion*. Hegel ultimately elevates speculative thought to a kind of mysticism that supersedes religion while allegedly preserving its essential content. His closest musical counterpart is Wagner, who embraced Hegel's commitment to a sweeping, evolutionary historicism and whose final work became the most controversial modern embodiment of *Kunstreligion: Parsifal*.

If Beethoven was no Hegelian, some of his aesthetic convictions do parallel those of Friedrich Schelling, a pivotal figure in the circle at Jena in the 1790s that included both Hölderlin and Hegel. As Joseph Chytry recently observed, these three colleagues pursued a "philosophical quest for an intuition prior to the distinction between subject and object," a project with strong social, political, and religious implications, since what was sought was a unity with all being (*Vereinigung*).[8] The attempt to advance beyond Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (*Critique of Judgment*) of 1790 and Schiller's *Aesthetic Letters* was a perilous one, and Schelling ultimately succumbed to the dismal attractions of political romanticism. The Schellingian position in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* of 1800, however, deserves attention for the exalted role it grants the artwork in displaying this

[7] Cf. Chytry, *The Aesthetic State*, p. 82.
[8] *The Aesthetic State*, pp. 109–10, 135–47.

original harmony of object and subject, unconscious and conscious, nature and freedom. Schelling's concept of the natural world, like Goethe's, was organicist; for him, mind itself was seen as emanating from the unending activity of nature. We are reminded here of Beethoven's own nature worship, so richly documented in his heavily annotated copy of Christian Sturm's *Reflections on the Works of God in Nature*. That Beethoven's feelings had a philosophical core is implied as well by the inscriptions from ancient Egyptian monuments that he kept under glass on his work table. The second of these appeared as a footnote in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* together with the following commentary:

> Perhaps nothing more sublime was ever said and no sublimer thought ever expressed than on the Temple of Isis (Mother Nature): "I am all that is and that was and that shall be, and no mortal hath lifted my veil."

The dictum characterizes nature as infinite, timeless and beyond comprehension, much the same message as conveyed in the Kantian quotation about the "starry heavens above"—an image Beethoven absorbed into an entire series of musical works. Noteworthy in this connection is Schelling's argument that since philosophy is reflection, it must wait for art to produce a consciousness of the unity of nature and freedom. In effect, Schelling offered a philosophical justification for the claim, attributed apocryphally to Beethoven, that the revelation of art was "higher than all wisdom and philosophy." And it is perhaps in light of the struggle of the Jena circle to transcend the limits of Kantian and Schillerian aesthetics that we may best view the artistic enterprise that Beethoven himself provocatively dubbed *Kunstvereinigung*.

What is the character of this unity of object and subject, or nature and freedom? The subsequent history of aesthetics shows clearly the temptation to oversimplify the issue, or even whiten it into abstraction. Sensationist or formalistic theories of art, for instance, isolate one side of Schiller's triadic configuration, giving too little attention to the interaction of the sensuous and rational. Analogous problems underlie the shortcomings of many musical analyses, as we have seen. Ultimately, the meaning of a pair of concepts such as "subjective" and "objective" proves provisionary if not vague when tested against concrete experience. The polarity of nature and freedom, however, touches abiding issues that were tackled in different ways by all the thinkers we have mentioned, and have lost none of their relevance in the ongoing philosophical debate.[9] One pole centers on the "sublime" in nature, our experience of the infinite and awe-inspiring in the phenomenal world; the other revolves around the possibility of "freedom," that autonomy of the individual that is the prerequisite of moral action or creativity.

The philosophical dilemma that has often impoverished aesthetics is lodged precisely at the nexus prior to the distinction between subject and object that Schelling contemplated in 1800. Schelling posited that the artwork displays the

[9] Vilhjálmur Árnason has recently claimed, for instance, that "philosophy must recover the notion of *nature* as it enters into the history of human development" in order to provide "an adequate account of human morality" ("Morality and Humanity," p. 3).

synthesis of nature and freedom "as the most perfect unity," treating the aesthetic experience as a medium of reconciliation in a manner looking back to Kant and forward to Hegel. The problem is that it is the aesthetic of beauty, not the sublime, that offers itself as an embodiment of reconciliation. Schiller's vision of the artwork also involves a mediating synthesis, as we have seen, but the dynamic, tension-laden elements that are undervalued in too much aesthetic theory, including Kant's *Critique of Judgment,* are fully recognized by Schiller. Unlike Kant, Schiller did not embrace the somewhat abstract notion of art as a "disinterested pleasure"; he persisted, despite all obstacles, in seeking an objective definition for art that would underscore its ethical character. Furthermore, Schiller located a conflict at the heart of the artwork, since in his view the synthesis of the rational and sensuous is problematic and can never be fully achieved. In this respect, his vision of the work of art belongs to what we may broadly describe as the aesthetic of the sublime rather than the aesthetic of the beautiful. The sublime, in Schiller's formulation, fuses disparate elements, and its power is bound up with the *irreconcilability* of reason and sensibility. The ultimate aim of art, in this sense, is inevitably left unfulfilled, but the task is all the more compelling for its apparent impossibility.

The ascendancy of the aesthetic of beauty and the related decline of the aesthetic of the sublime in the nineteenth century arose from a different line of interpretation. Kant saw in beauty a harmonious relationship between the imagination and understanding; in his view, a beautiful object is brought into accordance with unknown laws that govern a higher unity in nature. The sublime, however, entails a relationship between the imagination and reason that resists the ideal of reconciliation; for Kant, as for Schiller, the structure of the sublime is characterized by an unresolvable conflict. Consequently, Kant could not clearly incorporate the sublime into the comprehensive system of his philosophy. Beauty, being unburdened by any such fundamental conflict, offered a more serene model for art seemingly grounded in universal natural phenomena. Not surprisingly, systematic thinkers such as Hegel neglected the sublime, and tended to domesticate art under the category of beauty. The influence of German neo-Classicism, as mediated by Johann Winckelmann, who discovered in the art of Greece a spirit of "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur," contributed to this trend, which was reflected for instance in the reduction of Mozart to Schumann's "floating Greek gracefulness" or Wagner's "genius of light and love." Despite some countervailing tendencies, the nervous, disturbing, conflict-ridden aspects of Mozart—not to mention his wit—were often underestimated by an age predisposed to hear in his music a tranquil beauty comparable to the works of painters such as Raphael or Watteau.

If the classicizing ideal of beauty proved too abstract to encompass the artistic reality of Mozart, its application to Beethoven seemed questionable from the beginning. For as E. T. A. Hoffmann stressed in his famous review of the Fifth Symphony, Beethoven's music is permeated by the sublime. An aesthetic of the beautiful, whereby the artwork acts as a medium of reconciliation, is exemplified far more in a composer like Johann Strauss. The *Blue Danube,* not the Ninth Symphony, has settled deeply into the general social consciousness without forfeiting

its integrity. Whereas the waltzes of Strauss invite easy assimilation, the meaning of even the popular melodic emblem of Beethoven's "Joy" theme is rendered conditional by the internal context of the symphony, placing further demands on the listener; only in relation to the earlier movements can the choral finale be fully understood.

The challenges of a work like Beethoven's Ninth conform to the aesthetic analysis by Hans-Georg Gadamer, for whom "not only the cognition of meaning is involved . . . something else is always awakened, whereby we recognize ourselves." Gadamer proposes that only when the listener "fills out" the work of art, going beyond its immediate sensuous appearance in the direction of its implied meanings, does the work really come into existence. "Only then does all conflict disappear between intention and being, and every difference vanish between that which the artist wishes to say and what the interpreter makes of it. They have become one. . . . This is the reason why works of art bring about a true self-encounter in all those who come to grips with them."[10] Like Schiller, Gadamer thus stresses both the moment of aesthetic identification and the ethical character of this process, whereby the individual is freed from a purely sensuous relationship with the work. Ultimately, of course, this process embraces much more than just the sublime: humour, defined by Jean Paul Richter as "the sublime in reverse," or gaiety, pathos or tragedy all surface in Beethoven's dramatic style, emerging out of the configuration of relationships forming the unconsummated symbol.

Beethoven's music often displays a provocatively open relationship with the world that forces us to reconsider the nature of aesthetic experience itself. In its original sense as *episteme aisthetike,* aesthetics refers not only to art or beauty but to sensible awareness more generally; the opposing complement to this concept is the anaesthetic, involving a loss or deadening of feeling.[11] One reason for the scope of Beethoven's achievement may lie in his ability to navigate between these two realms, ironically granting the anaesthetic its place beside the aesthetic. Beethoven expands the boundaries of art through his absorption of trivial, commonplace material, as in the Diabelli Variations, or through symbolic intrusions into a work from without, as in the "terror fanfare" in the finale of the Ninth Symphony or the warlike episodes in the *Missa solemnis.* His use of severe contrasts becomes a means of welding sections or movements into a larger narrative sequence with symbolic implications, as in the last piano sonatas, with their open cadences pointing into the silence beyond. In the dualistic finale of the Sonata in A♭ major op. 110, the resolution at the end of the second fugal section is affirmed yet endangered; it proves barely sufficient to outweigh the preceding *Arioso dolente.* Like the close of the *Missa solemnis,* this resolution is poised at the edge of an abyss. Walter Riezler wrote accordingly about the presence of the "world background" in Beethoven's works, the sense that despite all their density of internal unifying relations these pieces are not self-contained but strive to confront

[10] This and the preceding quotation come from "Ende der Kunst?," pp. 31–32.

[11] Cf. Welsch, *Ästhetisches Denken,* pp. 9–40.

the outer world of common existence.[12] It is precisely this quality that invites and even demands of the listener the kind of self-encounter described by Gadamer.

This need for the listener to grasp the latent artistic content—in its uneasy blending of object and subject, conscious and unconscious, nature and freedom—harbors ethical and even political implications. The work of art, in the sense described above, arises in a realm beyond the reach of political power and social conformity, and its very existence potentially confirms the democratic ideal of personal freedom. For Schiller or Beethoven, the glorification of freedom through art was coupled with discontent about actual political conditions. Schiller remained justifiably skeptical about the attainment of "freedom and progress" in the political sphere, maintaining that "art is the daughter of freedom" and that "in order to solve the political problem, one must take the route of aesthetics, since it is through beauty that the way is made to freedom."[13] Moreover, as Chytry has pointed out, Schiller explicitly distinguishes his approach from the premises motivating "the most perfect Platonic republic," exposing the fallacy behind the standard argument of German Romantics advocating subordination of the individual to the state based on the metaphor of the formal artwork.[14]

With historical hindsight we can acknowledge the continuing validity of Schiller's position: the work of art, if it is to represent the highest human potential, must embody the principle of self-determination while avoiding ideological determination from without. In this sense Schiller's revised Enlightenment perspective remains more viable than later idealistic, romantic, formalist, structuralist, or socialistic views of the relationship of art and society. The danger of political romanticism, with its impending retrogression into nationalism or fascism, arises from inadequate recognition of the individual human being as a potentially autonomous and creative agent, the grounds of whose self-determination constitute freedom. As soon as our concept of the human being is dominated or consumed by his or her relationship with state, people, class, gender, background, formative experiences, or any other contextual factors, this principle of freedom is violated by ideology, that is, by premature and illegitimate generalization about human nature. An assumption of potential autonomy on the part of other human beings, then, is an indispensable means of curbing the intrusion of a limiting ideological bias. The open universe of Beethoven's *Fidelio, Missa solemnis,* and Ninth Symphony, with its rejection of materialism, deemphasis on received doctrine, and glorification of freedom, is not merely one ideological statement in preference to others but rather an artistic embodiment of ideas intrinsically resistant to ideology.

Any such claim about specific works by Beethoven can of course be properly supported only through detailed analysis. But these preliminary observations already begin to indicate how close Beethoven's aesthetic attitudes come to the ideas articulated by Schiller. The claims of "freedom and progress," innovation and fan-

[12] *Beethoven,* pp. 108–9, 198.
[13] *Aesthetic Letters,* L. 2.
[14] *The Aesthetic State,* p. 86.

tasy, were ingrained so deeply into Beethoven's creative method that he could say about the last string quartets in 1826 that "You will find a new manner of voice treatment, and thank God there is less lack of fantasy than ever before."[15] He could have added that there is also less lack of integration and structural control than ever before. Beethoven's innovative quest is merged here with all those qualities of sovereign concentration that E. T. A. Hoffmann described as self-possession (*Besonnenheit*).

The astonishing understatement of this comment about "less lack of fantasy" is characteristic of Beethoven, and carries the same implication as Schiller's tenet about the unfulfilled nature of the artwork. Already twenty-five years earlier Beethoven had expressed dissatisfaction with his previous works, and according to Carl Czerny, stated his intention to seek a "new way," a claim borne out by the series of pathbreaking compositions from around 1802, the threshold of his so-called second period. Beethoven's conviction that in art one "cannot stand still" is best understood not merely as a personal idiosyncrasy, or as an expression of the problematic romantic notion of originality, but rather in terms of a universal experiential duality whose reconciliation is an ever-challenging task of art.

The possibility of an artistic resolution to the division in human nature between the sensuous and rational accords a special role to the productive imagination, and raises fundamental aesthetic questions. A work of musical art is not an abstract entity, but needs to be realized in sound and time. The implications of that fact were probed by Theodor W. Adorno, who, like Gadamer, viewed the work itself as "a copy of a nonexistent original"—for, paradoxically, there is no work as such—it must become.[16] At the same time, in Adorno's view, the true performance or analysis does not possess the work ontologically—in its essential being—though it must convey it. For, as with any creative act, the product cannot be predicted or fully envisaged in advance but represents rather an imaginative synthesis consisting of elements that are intimately known.

This concept of the musical work of art thus eschews relativism and structuralism by placing analytic criticism in the service of aesthetic categories in an immanent relationship with the music, which remains ever unknown in its totality, waiting for its true realization. Built into this concept is the necessary dynamic relation: "What is only and surely right," in Adorno's formulation, "isn't right." The underlying principle is thus analogous to the arguments stated above concerning the possibility of human freedom: only through an acknowledgment of limits to categorical understanding can we approach a truly integrated internal sound image of the work and a balanced appreciation of its blend of the sensuous and rational. The point needs stressing in view of the overemphasis on systematic methodology characteristic of some musical analysis, as well as recent polemical attacks on the notion of artistic unity by critics innocent of the underlying issues. If a primary condition for the appearance of a true work is its unity, this is to be understood not as an abstract, tautological concept, or even an organic whole, but

[15] Thayer-Forbes, p. 982 (translation amended).

[16] *Ästhetische Theorie,* vol. 7 of *Gesammelte Schriften,* p. 32.

rather that totality of concrete elements and relationships that demand realization in sound. What is meant is a unity that is synthetic in nature, and entirely compatible with tension, contrast, diversity, and the individuality of a work.

Ultimately, of course, an apprehension of unity or integration is wholly dependent on our internal sound image, or *Klangvorstellung,* of the music. Without this key ingredient, analysis is empty and criticism blind. It follows that analysis, properly considered, must engage the immanent temporality of the work, not merely the visual notation of the score, nor a structural matrix posited by *a priori* theoretical constructs. Unlike most earlier music, which unfolds in a successive, linear fashion, and much later music, which returns to the continuous pulse characteristic of the Baroque, the Viennese Classical style cultivates structures whose internal shapes and symmetries seem to hold back or modify the unidirectional passage of time by joining the musical events together in complex ways. This process corresponds to the annulment of time Schiller attributed to the "form drive." In recognition of this phenomenon, some scholars have distinguished between "temps espace," or measured, divisible, quantitative time, and "temps durée," a musical time concept contesting the transience of experience through anticipation of the future and memory of the past.[17] The configuration of such durational time typically involves a forward-directed tension, a field of culmination, and a resolving, past-orientated phase—all three of which taken together comprise the sense of the gesture.

Beethoven's complex use of thematic foreshadowing and reminiscence contributes a dimension to his music that transcends a linear temporal unfolding. And his special interest in techniques of parenthetical enclosure, whereby contrasting passages are heard as an interruption within the larger context, further enriches the temporality of his musical forms, helping to open up narrative possibilities rare in instrumental music. Beethoven tended increasingly to tighten the cyclic relationship between movements of his larger works, deemphasizing their genre character while enhancing the individuality of the whole. Examples of this practice stem from Haydn and Mozart, but the unification of the Classical sonata cycle reached new phases of development in Beethoven, often absorbing a symbolic component. In the Fifth Symphony, for instance, he thoroughly interweaves the formal and motivic content, compromising the autonomy of the four movements. Their individuality of character nevertheless remains more distinct than in comparable works by Berlioz, Schumann, or Bruckner, where shared thematic material is also spread across successive movements. The later practice is often more prose-like and analogous to literary practice,[18] and more diffuse in its larger rhythmic movement. These factors tend to undermine the narrative possibilities of the intrinsic musical design, by softening the hard contrasts and concentrated movement characteristic of Beethoven into a more static, less highly determined idiom.

[17] These concepts, which are indebted to the philosophy of Henri Bergson, are convincingly applied to music in Uhde and Wieland, *Denken und Spielen.*

[18] For a discussion of "musical prose" from Berlioz to Mahler and Schoenberg, see Danuser, *Musikalische Prosa.*

Of course, the programmatic designates favored in the nineteenth century often condition a more explicit narrative design than is characteristic of Beethoven (apart from aberrations such as *Wellington's Victory*). In Beethoven, we typically encounter associations that "overflow the musical scenario, lending a sense of extramusical narrativity to otherwise untranslatable events," to quote Solomon's description of the Ninth Symphony.[19] The narrative design involved is not externally imposed, and it eludes reductionistic interpretations in programmatic or structuralist terms. Far from being exhausted through analysis, these pieces seem more fully integrated than any single hearing, and better than any single performance, as Artur Schnabel liked to claim.

The discernment in Beethoven of narrative designs of symbolic import—as opposed to merely literal, programmatic narratives—requires extensive discussion of the works in question. But we should note even at this early stage that the recognition is not new but builds on older insights. In his letter of 19 July 1825 Beethoven responded enthusiastically to the critical writings about his music by Adolf Bernhard Marx, expressing his "fervent hope that Marx would continue to reveal the higher aspects of the true realm of art" as an antidote to "the mere counting of syllables"—one example among others of an abstract mode of criticism incapable of grasping the essential artistic content. Marx, by contrast, addressed Beethoven's works using the criteria of "organic wholeness and coherence" and perceived in them a "dramatic narrative" containing "deep psychological truth."[20]

Beethoven's path toward progressive integration, narrative design, and a deepened symbolic expression is perhaps encapsulated most succinctly in the following lines of the Schiller poem glorified in the choral finale of the Ninth Symphony:

> Freude, Tochter aus Elysium!
> Deine Zauber binden wieder,
> was die Mode streng geteilt.
>
> Joy, daughter from Elysium!
> join again with your magic
> what custom strictly divided.

The term "Mode" invites a broader interpretation here than "custom" or "fashion," especially when we recall Schiller's quest, begun well before the composition of the Ode in 1785, for a "transformational force" (*Mittelkraft*) to merge the rational side of the human being with the sensuous. Only years later, after Schiller's move to Weimar in 1787 and his subsequent engagement with the thought of Wilhelm von Humboldt and Kant, did this ambition receive its philosophical expression in the *Aesthetic Letters,* and its highest artistic expression in his final play, *Wilhelm Tell.* Nevertheless, a gap remained in Schiller's achievement between the ideal and the historical, as has often been observed. In the recent formulation of

[19] *Beethoven Essays,* p. 10.

[20] Beethoven's letter and Marx's reviews are cited in Burnham, "Criticism, Faith, and the *Idee,*" esp. pp. 183–84, 188, 191.

Chytry, "Ultimately, Schiller's praxis confirms the implicitly pessimistic conclusion of the *Aesthetic Letters:* the theory of the aesthetic state, at least in Schiller's version, cannot transcend an esoteric circle of initiates."[21]

In this sense Beethoven succeeded where Schiller did not. Already in 1793 Schiller's friend at Bonn, Bartholomäus Ludwig Fischenich, had written to Charlotte Schiller that Beethoven would set the *Ode to Joy* "strophe by strophe." In the end, the project waited more than three decades for its fulfillment, by which time historical events had cast new meaning on the poem. It is remarkable that the *Ode to Joy,* almost repudiated by its author in 1802, became the poem through which Schiller's "effigy of [the] ideal" has had its most profound impact, delivered through a sonorous medium more eminently suited to the blending of the sensuous and rational than spoken drama.

[21] *The Aesthetic State,* p. 101.

1

The Bonn Years

In retrospect, there is something fitting and almost inevitable about Beethoven's passage from Bonn to Vienna in 1792. The elector, or *Kurfürst,* at Bonn from 1784 was Maximilian Franz, the youngest son of Empress Maria Theresia of Austria, brother of Marie Antoinette in Paris and the Emperor Joseph II in Vienna. Max Franz's assumption of the post was the product of intrigues and negotiations, part of an effort to extend the influence of the Habsburg monarchy into the Rhineland while limiting Prussian influence. As a result of this circumstance, the most intimate connections linked the small city on the Rhine with the distant capital on the Danube, ten times its size. For the arts and sciences the appointment had a beneficent effect. Max Franz continued the reforms initiated by his predecessor, the Elector Maximilian Friedrich, reforms that paralleled those of his brother Joseph II in Vienna. The clerics and especially the Jesuits were curbed; musical, literary, and theatrical institutions were reorganized and supported. In 1785 the Bonn Academy was elevated to the rank of a university. Johannes Neeb was engaged to teach Kantian philosophy, and men like the later revolutionary Eulogius Schneider and Schiller's friend Fischenich lectured on Greek literature, ethics, and law. By the 1780s Bonn was recognized as a center of the Enlightenment, that fragile yet immensely productive movement whose liberal reforms were imposed from above, not in response to revolutionary strivings of the suppressed classes. Bonn might have become another Weimar except for the upheavals brought about through the French occupation, which was to sweep away the government of Max Franz in 1794, less than two years after Beethoven's departure. But no one could have anticipated these events a few years earlier.

Otto Jahn, in his biography of Mozart, speculated that with a slightly different turn of events Mozart might have been offered employment at Bonn. Max Franz had known Mozart for many years and evidently valued him more highly than did his brother, Joseph II ("for him there is nobody but Salieri," Mozart is supposed to have exclaimed).[1] Already in 1787 Beethoven made a brief, abortive journey to Vienna to see Mozart. And in 1792, one year after the great composer's death, Max Franz's friend Count Ferdinand Waldstein depicted Mozart as Beethoven's guardian spirit in his famous entry in the young composer's album:

[1] Cf. Thayer-Forbes, p. 77.

> You are going to Vienna in fulfillment of your long-frustrated wishes. The Genius of Mozart is mourning and weeping over the death of her pupil. She has found a refuge but no occupation with the inexhaustible Haydn; through him she wishes to form a union with another. With the help of assiduous labor you shall receive *Mozart's spirit from Haydn's hands . . .* [2]

But if the association between Bonn and Vienna was natural and expected, the presence of another key influence on the young Beethoven—his most important teacher, the composer and court organist Christian Gottlob Neefe—was a fortunate stroke of luck. Neefe was a "foreigner"—from Chemnitz in Saxony—and a Protestant as well (see Plate 3). For these reasons he was at first considered expendable when reorganization of the musical institutions at Bonn was begun under the new elector. Beethoven's first salary as organist, in fact, was taken out of Neefe's income. It was Neefe who grounded Beethoven in the musical forms of the Classical style, who presumably introduced him to the theoretical works of Marpurg and C. P. E. Bach, and who arranged for Beethoven's adolescent publications, the Dressler Variations and three *Kurfürsten* Sonatas for piano. Yet entirely apart from his competent professional guidance and early recognition of his pupil's creative potential, Neefe made further contributions that exercised fruitful influence on the young Beethoven.

One of these consisted in Neefe's knowledge of and enthusiasm for the music of J. S. Bach. Very little of the elder Bach's music had appeared in print by the 1780s, and one would not have expected *The Well-Tempered Clavier* to serve as the cornerstone of instruction, as it did in fact for Beethoven. Neefe, however, had studied in Leipzig, where his musical mentor had been Johann Adam Hiller, the director of the Gewandhaus Concerts and later Bach's successor as Kantor of the Thomaskirche. By the time he came to Bonn in 1779 to work for the Grossmann theatrical company, Neefe was an avid Bach admirer eager to pass on the legacy. He summed up the situation in his notice in Cramer's *Magazin der Musik* dated 2 March 1783, the very first printed statement about Beethoven:

> Louis van Betthoven, son of the tenor singer mentioned, a boy of eleven years and of most promising talent. He plays the clavier very skillfully and with power, reads at sight very well, and—to put it in a nutshell—he plays chiefly *The Well-Tempered Clavier* of Sebastian Bach, which Herr Neefe has put into his hands. Whoever knows this collection of preludes and fugues in all the keys—which might almost be called the *non plus ultra* of our art—will know what this means. So far as his duties permitted, Herr Neefe has also given him instruction in thorough-bass. He is now training him in composition and for his encouragement has had nine variations for the pianoforte, written by him on a march—by Ernst Christoph Dressler—engraved at Mannheim. This youthful genius is deserving of help to enable him to travel. He would surely become a second Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart were he to continue as he has begun.[3]

[2] Ibid., p. 115.

[3] Thayer-Forbes, p. 66. The spelling "Betthoven" appears in the original source; Beethoven was actually twelve years old at the time in question.

Like Haydn and Mozart before him, Beethoven was to be exposed during his first Vienna years to works of Handel and J. S. Bach at the musical gatherings of the venerable connoisseur Baron Gottfried van Swieten, who had developed his taste for Bach in Berlin before moving to the Austrian capital. Unlike his predecessors, however, Beethoven's formative musical direction was already shaped by the Leipzig master. From an early stage Bach's music counterbalanced for Beethoven the pervasive presence of the *galant,* the elegant but superficial manner that had threatened to submerge Mozart's individuality during the 1770s. So thorough was Beethoven's assimilation of Bach, in fact, that Erwin Ratz was able to base an illuminating study of musical form precisely on the comparison of Bach's inventions and preludes and fugues with Beethoven's sonatas and quartets.[4]

Neefe's own published compositions included operettas as well as songs, keyboard sonatas, and even a Piano Concerto in G major published in 1782. He also translated many opera librettos from French and Italian, including Mozart's *Don Giovanni.* Beethoven's early acquaintance with the music of C. P. E. Bach, Haydn, and especially Mozart owed much to Neefe. And although Neefe's purely musical achievement remained within the sphere of solid professional competence, his works must have posed a stimulating challenge to his young assistant. Among Neefe's larger compositions from the 1770s, for instance, were twelve settings of odes by Klopstock. In 1782, three years after his arrival at Bonn, Neefe set another such ode, *Dem Unendlichen,* for four choral voices and orchestra; it was performed at first privately and then, during Holy Week, in the Fräuleinstiftskirche. This piece forms part of the context out of which was to emerge Beethoven's most weighty single composition from his years at Bonn: the *Cantata on the Death of Joseph II* written eight years later, in 1790.

For Beethoven, Neefe presumably became an important role model, helping to fill the void opened by Beethoven's difficult relationship with his father, Johann. Neefe was a crucial figure but by no means the only source of personal support and cultural nourishment for the young musician; another musical influence was the Kapellmeister and composer Andrea Luccchesi, and especially important was Beethoven's friendship with the von Breuning family, which apparently began by 1784, having been enabled through Beethoven's friend Franz Gerhard Wegeler. Beethoven became acquainted with German literature and poetry in the cultivated domestic environment of the von Breunings, whom he served as piano instructor, giving lessons to Eleonore (who was about his age) and her brother Lenz (who was seven years younger). During the summers, he probably spent time at the von Breuning estate at Kerpen, west of Cologne. After the death of his mother in 1787, he was offered support first by the violinist Franz Ries and later by the widow Frau Maria Helena von Breuning, who assumed a protective, motherly attitude toward Beethoven. To a great extent, then, the roles of both his natural parents were taken over by others by the time of Beethoven's adolescence. Stefan von Breuning remained one of Beethoven's closest friends during later years in Vienna, although their relationship was strained by occasional quarrels and misunderstandings.

[4] *Einführung in die musikalische Formenlehre* (Vienna, 1968).

Before we consider Beethoven's intimate family constellation, it is essential to address one more aspect of Neefe's contributions to Bonn cultural life: his role in the *Orden der Illuminaten,* and later in the *Lesegesellschaft* (Literary Society), organizations closely tied to the Enlightenment and not without links to freemasonry. The Freemasons' Lodge founded at Bonn in 1776 soon disappeared in response to Maria Theresia's suppression of the order, but its role was largely filled during the 1780s by the two aforementioned societies. The Bonn chapter of the *Orden der Illuminaten,* founded in 1781, included among its members many who stood close to Beethoven, including the horn player (later a publisher) Nikolaus Simrock, and Franz Ries, father of Beethoven's student and friend Ferdinand Ries. Neefe was one of the leaders of the group. In 1784–85 the *Orden der Illuminaten* was suppressed at its headquarters in Ingolstadt, Bavaria; the Bonn circle continued their activities in following years in the *Lesegesellschaft.* Although there is no evidence that Beethoven belonged to the *Lesegesellschaft,* many of the key players surrounding him during his last years in Bonn were members, including not only Neefe and Ries but also Count Waldstein. One reflection of its importance for Beethoven is the fact that it commissioned the *Joseph* Cantata.

If some of Beethoven's loftiest ideals can be associated with the cultural milieu in Bonn during his second decade, his relationship to his family reveals the other side of the coin: it is troubled and difficult to assess. A probing evaluation of the conditioning role of Beethoven's early experiences on his personality was undertaken by Maynard Solomon in his 1977 biography. Solomon builds on documented facts of Beethoven's life to construct a suggestive psychological model that attempts to pinpoint some of the driving sources of his creativity. Unlike many earlier biographers, Solomon does not hesitate to confront the more disturbing aspects of Beethoven's character or actions, but neither does his work dwell on demythologizing critique. Deep psychological conflicts have, of course, been experienced by many persons without a trace of the miraculous artistic aftereffects these experiences helped produce in Beethoven, but this fact neither compromises Solomon's insights nor confines their relevance strictly to the biographical sphere. The link between biography and the analysis of works of art is delicate, but it can sometimes prove tangible and illuminating.

Solomon identifies a complex of conflicts and delusions in Beethoven's psychological makeup whose underlying sources relate to Beethoven's relationship to his parents, and especially to his father. Beethoven's deceased elder brother Ludwig Maria, who lived only six days, was not forgotten but lived a posthumous existence in Beethoven's psyche. What Solomon describes as Beethoven's "birth year delusion"—his lifelong tendency to deny the plain evidence that he was born in December 1770—involves much more than a simple misunderstanding based on Johann's falsification of his son's age. Psychologically, this behavior may reflect Beethoven's response to the unhappy resignation of his beloved mother, while also revealing an impulse to deny or disown his father. Within the family Beethoven's role was to parallel that of his admired grandfather and namesake, the elder Ludwig van Beethoven, successful Kapellmeister at the Bonn court from 1761 until his death in 1773. The curse of the Beethoven family, on the other hand, was al-

coholism: the Kapellmeister's wife, Maria Josepha, was removed to a cloister on account of severe drunkenness, and the steep decline of Beethoven's father into helplessness took the same form. (On hearing of Johann van Beethoven's death, the elector spoke coldly about the loss to the liquor excise.) Beethoven's ambivalence toward his father probably stemmed not only from Johann's increasing addiction to drink, however, but from the severe and arbitrary discipline he suffered as a child. Surviving reports refer to Beethoven's mother, Maria Magdalena, as a clever and resourceful, usually quiet and somewhat resigned woman. Beethoven's first preserved letter, from 15 September 1787, written soon after her death to an acquaintance in Augsburg, expresses deep affection: "She was such a good, kind mother to me and indeed my best friend. Oh! Who was happier than I, when I could still utter the sweet name of mother and it was heard and answered; and to whom can I say it now? To the dumb likenesses of her which my imagination fashions for me?"[5]

For the creative artist, nourished by dreams, fantasies, and aspirations toward a higher, more beautiful or perfectible world, a relationship with an ordinary, banal, depraved existence can become strained, even broken. Solomon argues convincingly that, in Beethoven's case, one response to this schism took the form of what Freud and Otto Rank termed the "Family Romance"—the replacement of one or both parents by suitably elevated personages. Beethoven's nobility pretence may be understood at least partly in these terms (the "van" in his name did not designate nobility). But Solomon also suggests the relevance of this constellation—involving the search for an ideal, loving father figure—to passages in the finale of the Ninth Symphony, and he identifies the mythic component of Beethoven's musical works as a possible link between the apparently discrete realms of the biographical and artistic.[6]

In some respects, the challenge to analytic criticism is greatest when we confront the immature work of an artist, in which an authentic, original voice is not yet heard, or not clearly heard. Many of the piano pieces, songs, and chamber works that Beethoven composed at Bonn show relatively little of the skill and power that distinguish his mature music. Nevertheless, this music is not without interest. A piece showing insight into the abilities of the twelve-year-old Beethoven is the aforementioned Dressler Variations from 1782, the work singled out by Neefe in his announcement from the following year. In view of his subsequent artistic development, it is remarkable that the young Beethoven wrote these variations on a funeral march in C minor—the key of the funereal fifth variation in the op. 34 set and the funeral march in the *Eroica* Symphony. The figurative elaboration in the Dressler set is mainly very straightforward, with the variations remaining closely bound to Dressler's march. Variation 1 replaces the chords in dotted rhythm in the left hand of the theme by a flowing eighth-note figuration; in Variation 2 this pattern in the bass is joined with an elaboration in sixteenth notes in the treble. In Variation 3 further rhythmic division creates a texture of

[5] Anderson, vol. 1, L. 1.

[6] Cf. "The Ninth Symphony: A Search for Order," in *Beethoven Essays,* pp. 309–26.

sixteenths in the left hand, which in Variation 4 migrates into the right hand, while the left resumes the figuration from Variations 1 and 2. At two junctures, however, the music departs from these predictable patterns. Variation 5, at the center of the set, begins with close staccato imitation between the hands and subsequently varies this texture, employing slurred two-note motives and rapid flurries of thirty-second notes. More surprisingly, the final *Allegro* variation bursts into running thirty-second notes in the major mode, leaving behind almost all traces of the march, apart from allusion to its dotted rhythm at the close of each half of the variation. Hence Beethoven's later propensity to resolve his C minor music into a lively concluding C major is also adumbrated in this piece by the budding twelve-year-old musician at Bonn.

Beethoven's most important works of the following period are his three Quartets for Piano and Strings, in E♭ major, D major, and C major, WoO 36, from 1785. A clear Mozartian influence is felt here, with Mozart's Violin Sonatas in G major K. 379, E♭ major K. 380, and C major K. 296, respectively, serving as models. Striking, however, is the expressive force of the *Allegro con spirito* in E♭ minor of WoO 36 no. 1, which opens with a rising triadic motive in the piano, reinforced by a dotted rhythm in the melody and syncopations in the accompanying strings. The *crescendo* on this gesture leads to an accented dissonance—a *fortissimo* diminished-seventh chord—and a restatement of the main motive on this harmony carries the music in turn onto a dominant-seventh sonority, while the atmosphere of stormy agitation is effectively maintained. Harmonically, this arresting opening may owe something to the prelude in this key from the first book of J. S. Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier,* yet the character of the music is completely different and highly individual. The treatment of the string parts in these piano quartets is rather undeveloped, but a much more engaging dialogue between instruments can be observed in Beethoven's Trio in G major for Flute, Bassoon, and Piano WoO 37, which he wrote a year later, in 1786, at the age of sixteen.

During his Vienna years, Beethoven sometimes returned to his portfolio of Bonn compositions to absorb preexisting material into new works or publish older pieces. Beethoven's early acquaintance with J. S. Bach's *Musical Offering* of 1747 seems to be reflected in his *2 Präludien durch die 12 Dur-Tonarten für Klavier oder Orgel,* pieces stemming from the 1780s and revised in 1789, although published only in 1803 as op. 39. Beethoven's cyclical plan of modulations rises through the circle of fifths from C major to C♯ major and then falls through the flat keys, reaching D♭ major before returning to C major. There were, to be sure, various historical models for such modulating preludes "per tonus"; the best-known was probably Bach's perpetual canon, in the *Musical Offering,* on the royal theme "Ascendente Modulatione ascendat Gloria Regis," in which continual ascent of the canon symbolizes the endlessly rising glory of the king. The modulations in Bach's canon proceed not by fifths but by rising whole steps; after six repetitions the original key is thus reattained an octave higher. The young Beethoven was not unaffected by this esoteric side of Bach's legacy, although its full impact surfaces only much later, in works of his last decade.

Beethoven wrote a number of songs at Bonn, some of which were published

only many years later. The two settings of texts by Gottfried August Bürger (1748–1794), "Mollys Abschied" (Molly's Departure") and "Das Blümchen Wunderhold" ("The Dearest Sweet Little Flower"), published as no. 5 and no. 8, respectively, of the Eight Songs op. 52, in 1805, have long been thought to date from the Bonn period. The recent discovery of an album page in Beethoven's hand from the later Bonn years supports this chronology. The newfound album inscription includes a slightly adapted version of the fourteenth strophe of another poem by Bürger, "Die beiden Liebenden" ("The Two Lovers"), followed by a short dedication:

Ein volles Herz giebt wenig Klang;
Das leere klingt aus allen Tönen.
Man fühlet dennoch seinen Drang;
Und ach! Versteht sein stummes Sehnen.
Bürger.

Zu immer grösserer Freundschaft
emphielt sich
Ludwig van Beethowen
Hofmusikus in Bonn.[7]

[A full heart makes but little sound;
An empty one sounds through all tones.
Yet one then feels its urgent pulse;
And oh! Does grasp its silent yearning.
Bürger.

To ever greater friendship
with kind regards
Ludwig van Beethowen
Court musician in Bonn.]

That Bürger was one of the most inspirational poets for the young Beethoven is confirmed as well by the composer's setting as a double song of the poet's "Seufzer eines Ungeliebten" and "Gegenliebe" ("Sighs of the Unloved") and ("Requited Love") WoO 118, in 1794 or 1795. Beethoven adapted the musical theme of "Gegenliebe" in the same key of C major as the basis for the variations in his Choral Fantasy op. 80 in 1808, a setting that in turn strongly anticipates the choral finale of the Ninth Symphony.

For whom did Beethoven write this thoughtful inscription with the quotation

[7] A facsimile, transcription, and description of this source appears in Grita Herre, "Ein frühes Stammbuchblatt Beethovens," *Bonner Beethoven-Studien* 5 (2006), pp. 115–17. As Herre observes, the source was acquired by the Preussischer Staatsbibliothek (now Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin preussischer Kulturbesitz) by 1942; nevertheless, it long remained in obscurity, and was not included, for instance, in the comprehensive *Beethoven Briefe* published in 1996. The spelling "Beethowen" is characteristic of the composer's signature in his early years.

from Bürger? As Grita Herre observes, the recipients must have been Jeannette d'Honrath and Carl Greth, as is implied from the long-term possession of the album leaf by persons associated with the family Greth; in 1941–42 the manuscript passed to the Preussischer Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, but presumably due to wartime conditions it was not catalogued at that time and remained unknown until recently.[8] Of considerable interest in this regard is an entry by Beethoven in a conversation book dating from February 1823, more than thirty years after the album inscription: "*Carl v. Greth* Feldm.[arschall-Lieutenant] | u. divi-|sionär | anjezo | + jeanette Hohen-|rath – Commandant | in Temes-|vár."[9] Carl Greth also belonged to the close circle of friends of the von Breuning family during Beethoven's last years at Bonn; his poetic New Year's greeting to Eleonore von Breuning from 1790 is preserved in the Wegeler Collection at the Bonn Beethoven-Haus. In 1802, Beethoven's friend Franz Wegeler married Eleonore von Breuning, the composer's former piano student and sister of Beethoven's lifelong friend Stephan von Breuning. Wegeler, who in 1838 published his reminiscences of Beethoven together with those of Ferdinand Ries, left a vivid account of Jeannette d'Honrath that deserves to be recounted here:

> His [Beethoven's] and Stephan von Breuning's first love was Miss Jeannette d'Honrath from Cologne . . . who often spent a few weeks with the Breuning family in Bonn. She was a beautiful, vivacious blonde, of good upbringing and friendly character, who much enjoyed music and had a pleasant voice. Thus she often teased our friend through her performance of a then-familiar song:
>
> "Mich heute noch von dir zu trennen
> Und dieses nicht verhindern können,
> Ist zu empfindlich für mein Herz!"
>
> "To leave you already today
> And not be able to delay
> Is stressful for my heart!"[10]

In 1788, Jeannette d'Honrath married Carl Greth, an Austrian captain and recruiting officer in Cologne, and it is surely in this connection that Beethoven wrote his inscription for her. She presumably sang some of Beethoven's early songs, such as the two aforementioned strophic settings in G major to texts by Bürger, "Mollys Abschied" op. 52 no. 5, and "Das Blümchen Wunderhold" op. 52 no. 8. The simplicity of the setting of "Das Blümchen Wunderhold," which is reminiscent of a folk song, is part of its charm. The unassuming style lends itself well to the poem, since the "dearest sweet flower"—in the last line of the twelfth and final stanza—is identified with the moral virtue of "Bescheidenheit" or modesty.

[8] See Herre, "Ein frühes Stammbuchblatt Beethovens," *Bonner Beethoven-Studien* 5 (2006), pp. 116–17.

[9] *Ludwig van Beethovens Konversationshefte,* vol. 3, p. 56.

[10] Franz Gerhard Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries, *Biographische Notizen über Ludwig van Beethoven* (Coblenz: Bädeher, 1838 and 1845; reprinted, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2000), pp. 42–43.

Beethoven's conversation-book entry from 1823 was likely triggered by reports in the Vienna newspapers of Carl von Greth's appointment as "Commandant" in Temesvár (now Timisoara, Romania), then a city within the Austrian Empire. Greth had held the title of Feldmarschall-Leutenant at least since the Battle of Leipzig in 1813. When Beethoven wrote down this conversation-book entry, memories from his youth must have flooded his consciousness. He probably did not know that Jeannette was then dying, and was soon to be buried at Temesvár.[11]

This vivid new glimpse of the context of Beethoven's "first love," in Wegeler's words, assumes special interest here as the first instance of a recurring pattern in the composer's life, whereby he became emotionally attached to women who were unavailable to him or who chose others as marriage partners. The artist's distance from the feminine muse is conveyed in a stylized depiction titled *Beethoven and Jeannette d'Honrath* by Wilhelm von Lindenschmit, a picture stemming from the nineteenth century that is obviously inspired by Wegeler's account (Plate 3). Continuing his remarks about Beethoven's youthful erotic inclinations, Wegeler comments that "there was never a time when Beethoven was not in love" and he leaves to the reader's judgment "whether one could compose Adelaide and Fidelio and other such works, without experiencing love in its innermost depths."[12]

When did the young composer first assemble the elements out of which his creative enterprise was to be shaped? Until 1884, almost a century after he left Bonn for Vienna, this question could not have been answered, since only then did the score of the *Joseph* Cantata come to light. Even now, few recordings are available, and the piece remains virtually unknown to the general public. It never reached performance in 1790, possibly because its technical challenges overtaxed the performers; according to Simrock, "all the figures were completely unusual, therein lay the difficulty." This was the score that Beethoven probably showed to his future teacher Haydn at their first meeting, when the latter passed through Bonn. Beethoven could have been justly proud of the piece, since it is the most prophetic single composition of his entire Bonn period. After the cantata's rediscovery, Johannes Brahms wrote enthusiastically that "Even if there were no name on the title page none other could be conjectured—it is Beethoven through and through!"[13]

A glance at the score suffices to show why Beethoven never revised or published the cantata, for two of the most memorable passages in his opera *Fidelio* were adapted from its material! The passages in question represent more than thematic borrowings, and neatly illustrate sharply contrasting aspects of Beethoven's musical symbolism. They could be described as *topoi,* or basic rhetorical arche-

[11] Information related to Jeannette von Greth is found in Internet sources related to Timisoara, but inaccuracies abound, with a connection often drawn to Johann van Beethoven instead of Ludwig van Beethoven.

[12] *Biographische Notizen,* p. 43.

[13] Thayer-Forbes, p. 120.

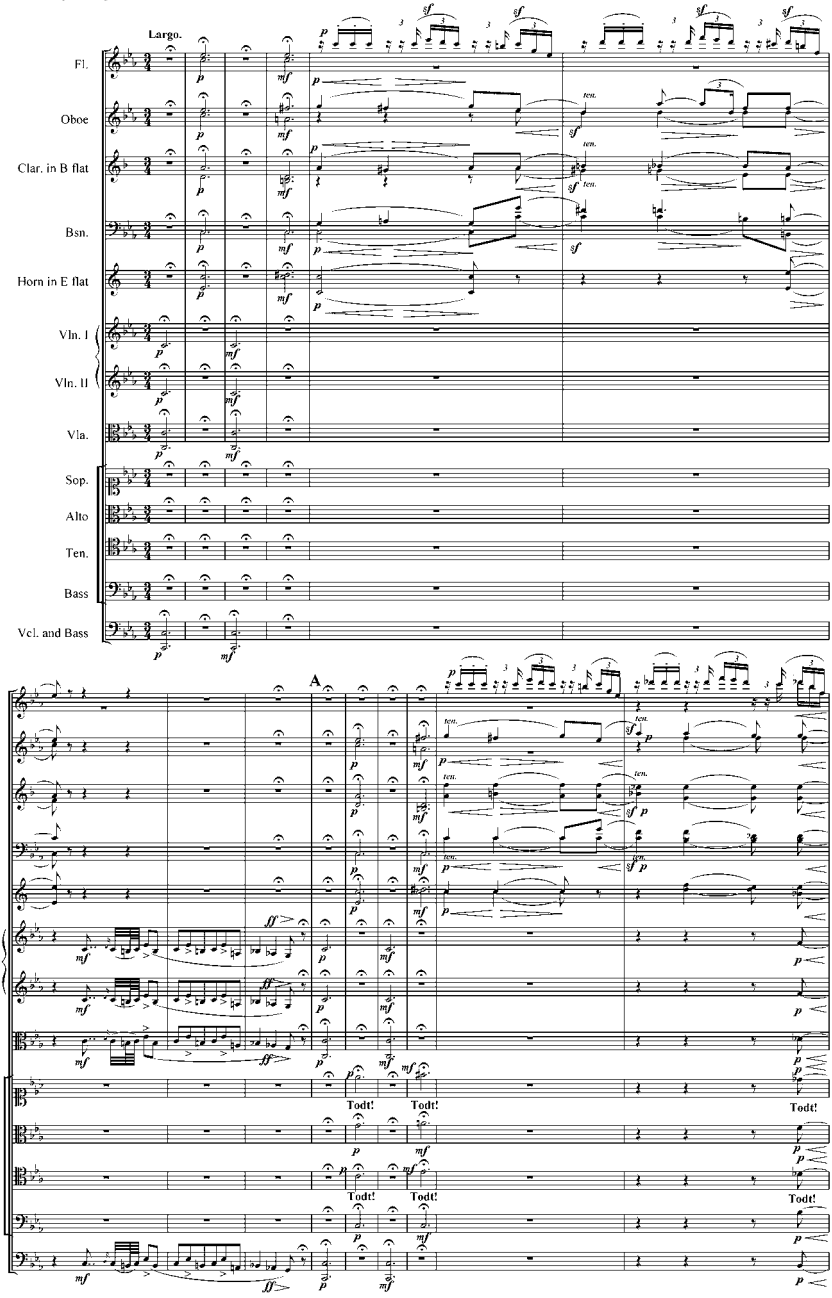
types, with their roots in the conventions of figurative musical expression of the eighteenth century. Beethoven's continuing development of these rhetorical models is by no means confined to *Fidelio;* it touches on a broader dimension of symbolic expression in his music in general. For that reason we shall examine the cantata in some detail. Our concern is not to offer exhaustive description, however, but to indicate the work's broader importance for the evolution of Beethoven's musical language.

The first of the prophetic passages begins and closes the cantata: Beethoven rounds off the design of the whole piece with a varied repetition of its opening chorus. The registral and textural dissociation of sonorities in the solemn orchestral ritornello is especially striking (see Ex. 1). A low unison C in the strings in the first bar is repeated more emphatically two bars later; pitted against these deep octave unisons are harmonized woodwind sonorities in a higher register. The first unison is answered by a C minor triad, the second by a dissonant diminished-seventh chord that is dynamically inflected, played *mezzoforte* instead of *piano*. The intensification is not merely harmonic, since the melodic implications of these paired sonorities allow us to hear the rising tenth C–E♭ as growing into a tritone with octave displacement, C–F♯, when the gesture is restated. In bar 5 the diminished-seventh chord is resolved to the C minor tonic triad that marks the beginning of a two-bar harmonized segment for the winds, featuring a prominent flute. The ritornello is completed by the return of the unharmonized strings, which assume a lamenting, declamatory character. At the repetition of the striking opening chords, the high woodwind sonorities are set to the words "Todt! Todt!" ("Dead! Dead!") in the chorus, now making explicit the music's desolate expressive connotations.

The rhetorical devices employed here were not of course invented by Beethoven, but he combined them so as to make a strongly original impression. The most revealing factor, however, is neither the genuine pathos that the twenty-year-old composer evoked here, nor the shortcomings in technique or sensibility that prevented him from sustaining the opening tension effectively. The beginning of the *Joseph* Cantata confronts us with a characteristic phenomenon in Beethoven's creative process: the deepening of musical conceptions in a seemingly continuous process which was to stretch over decades of his life. To evaluate the significance of this piece in Beethoven's artistic development we must glimpse ahead fifteen years, to around 1805, when he completed his opera in its first version, then entitled *Leonore,* soon after incorporating a startling late-minute revision into what was then the largest of all his piano sonatas, the *Waldstein* op. 53.

Most obviously related to the cantata is the orchestral ritornello marked *Grave* that opens the last act of the opera, set in Florestan's prison cell (Ex. 2). The low unison Fs in the strings are juxtaposed with penetrating woodwind chords in the high register—the gesture taken as a whole represents a direct transposition of the "death" *topos* from the cantata into the even more dismal, F minor gloom of Pizarro's dungeon. But most instructive are the changes Beethoven makes as regards the musical continuation. He now exploits a variety of means—rhythmic, harmonic, linear, and motivic—to give to this music a powerful dramatic coherence that was beyond his ability in 1790.

Ex. 1 *Joseph* Cantata WoO 87



Ex. 2 *Fidelio,* Act II, no. 11

In *Leonore* Beethoven discards the *fermate* that prolonged each sonority in the opening of the cantata. He endows the music with a new rhythmic energy bound up with his characteristic device of foreshortening: the metric emphasis on two-bar units allows us to hear the three repeated chords in bar 5 as a diminution of the rhythmic shape of the entire opening gesture, with its slow articulation of three impulses spread over five bars. This process propels the music forward, generat-

ing a gradual increase in tension. The larger harmonic progression, on the other hand, is controlled by a descending bass, reaching the first significant phrase division at bar 11 on the dominant of F minor. Here Beethoven injects declamatory motifs in the strings into the texture, motifs strongly reminiscent of the unharmonized string phrases in the *Joseph* Cantata. But unlike the cantata, this music seems constantly to be listening to itself. The expressive gesture in bar 11 highlights the semitone D♭–C, and Beethoven's rhythmic and dynamic nuances underscore the poignant tension of the dissonance. This motif, in turn, is joined to a higher, answering inflection in the winds, with both elements combined into a sequential progression building in intensity to the climactic dissonant sonority in bar 15. But that is not all: the D♭–C semitone figure is not only an expressive figure but a *structural* intensification—only in the merging of both functions does it take on its full aesthetic force. For the voice-leading of the opening woodwind chords—the gestures set ominously to "dead" in the cantata—had already exposed the interval C–D♭ in a conspicuous way. The string motif is racked with the painful dissonance already heard at the very outset of the *Grave*.

Such aesthetic relationships need to be conveyed in any adequate performance but are passed over by many. A merely literal rendering in sound of the appearance of the score is inadequate here, since an essential part of the meaning of this gesture in the strings is connected to its dramatic derivation from the opening chords in the winds. The connection can be made palpable through the combination of clarity of execution and expressive nuance, a matter to which we shall return. This example scratches only the smallest surface of the requirements of a successful performance, but it does point to the kinds of relationships that take us beyond the mere surface of the sound into the true content of the work seen as an unconsummated symbol.

Once Beethoven had seen past the merely figurative level of this *topos,* other possibilities occurred to him that lend themselves eminently well to instrumental music. Characteristic is his use of a variant of the same *topos* in the substitute slow movement of the *Waldstein* Sonata op. 53, written a year earlier, in 1804. The original slow movement was an expansive, luxurious *Andante favori* in rondo form that Beethoven is supposed to have removed for reasons of overall length. That there were other, more intrinsic reasons for the change speaks for itself. The substitute movement is an extended introduction to the finale, to which it is directly linked; at the same time it makes a much stronger effect of contrast in relation to the outer movements than did the original slow movement. At stake in Beethoven's decision to substitute the *Introduzione* were issues of balance and integration in the sonata cycle as a whole.

This substitution marked a turning point in Beethoven's practice. There are, to be sure, other slow introductions leading into finales in his earlier works—"La Malinconia" in the Quartet in B♭ major op. 18 no. 6, for instance. But after the *Waldstein,* the principle of a contrasting slow movement linked to the finale in a three-movement design becomes a mainstay of his style for about six years, until 1810. Examples include the *Appassionata* and *Lebewohl* Sonatas, the Violin Concerto, and the last two piano concertos.

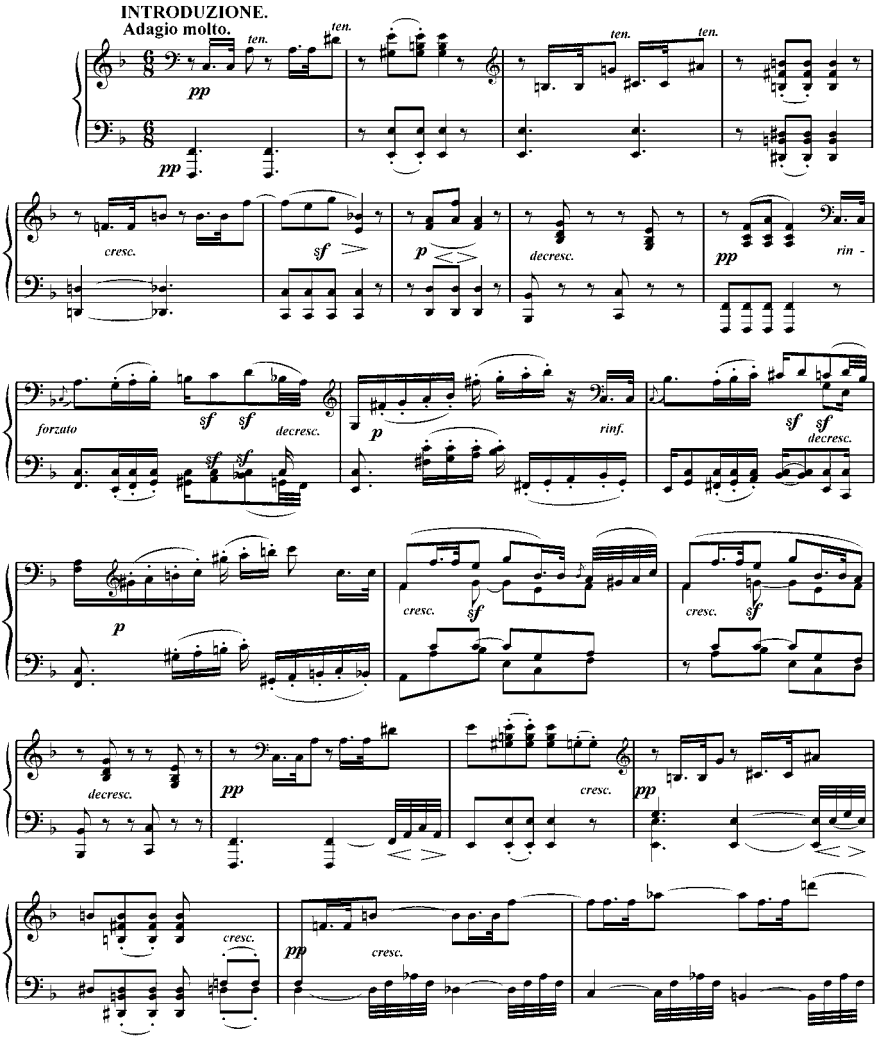
By juxtaposing the contrasting slow movement directly with the finale, Beethoven brings their moods into a closer relationship, setting the moment of transition to the finale into sharp relief. Many later masterpieces, from the *Archduke* Trio to the C♯ minor Quartet, follow this pattern. But most revealing in comparison with the *Joseph* Cantata is the way Beethoven achieves that quality of gigantic simplicity that marks the slow interlude of the *Waldstein* (Ex. 3). The *topos* from the cantata—with a low tonic pedal in unharmonized octaves answered first by tonic harmony and then by a dissonant harmony with ascending voice-leading—is replicated in the sonata. The harmonic resolution of the dissonant sonority, however, is not to the tonic, as in the cantata, but to an E major chord, which lends a more directional impetus to the phrase, bridging the evocative silence at the start of the second bar. Furthermore, the ascending seventh in the bass, from F to E, is treated by Beethoven as the starting point for a long stepwise *descending* progression, even more relentless than the one in *Fidelio*.

The form of the *Adagio molto* is based on a twofold statement of this progression drawn from the *topos* from the cantata, blended with an expressive idiom suggestive of recitative and thematic dualism. Following the opening nine-bar phrase, Beethoven restates the initial motif in the right hand which unfolds in a declamatory fashion, with rising echoes in a polyphonic texture. After only six bars, however, the passage dissipates into a hushed, enigmatic return of the beginning of the *Introduzione*. The recitative-like phrases posit an alternative to the somber, static character of the opening music that recalls the cantata. This brighter, more consoling voice cannot be sustained, however; the music settles even more deeply into the pensive mood generated by the falling-bass progression and countervailing ascent in the right hand. Only after an arresting climax on a widely spaced diminished-seventh sonority and the convergence onto the dominant seventh of C do we reach a miraculous turning point: the descending bass movement is reversed as G rises to G♯, clearing the way for a cadential progression in C major that underscores the luminescent texture and vast spacing at the beginning of the finale.

Perhaps most remarkable here is the severe economy of the thematic material and tight coherence of its development. In the *Waldstein,* the structural model of the solemn chord progression that opens this youthful work was sufficient to ground the entire structure of the slow introduction. At the same time, the dark-hued, mysterious character of this music creates an expressive polarity that places the brilliant C major world of the outer movements of the sonata in a new light.

The aspiring, affirmative side of Beethoven's symbolic art is foreshadowed just as clearly in the *Joseph* Cantata. The emblematic theme heard in the aria with chorus "Da stiegen die Menschen ans Licht" ("there the people ascended into the light") is taken into the opera without much change. Beethoven preserves in *Fidelio* the original F major tonality, the meter and basic tempo, and many features of the orchestration, including the use of pizzicato strings. This melody is not only quoted in *Fidelio* but became a prototype for other Beethovenian melodies carrying analogous expressive connotations. The melodic shape in the cantata, featuring two initial rising fourths and further upward extension in the following

Ex. 3 *Waldstein* Sonata op. 53/II



phrases, reflects the venerable practice of word-painting motivated in the text by the idea of the ascent of humanity toward illumination. In *Fidelio,* this *Humanitätsmelodie* emerges at the moment in the second-act finale when Leonore releases Florestan from his chains. Beethoven reuses the theme here to symbolize what language cannot convey. For after it is first sounded in the oboe, Florestan himself doubles the melody heard in the winds to the words "O unaussprechlich süsses Glück!" ("Oh unspeakable sweet happiness!"). And when this hymn-like theme is repeated in the chorus, it is linked to the Deity and to a higher moral au-