

Introduction: political collaborations

The collaborator suffers from that intellectual illness that may be called historicism.

Jean-Paul Sartre, 'What is a Collaborator?'¹

Beethoven the collaborator

In 1815, Beethoven composed the song for bass and chorus 'Es ist vollbracht' ('It Is Accomplished') as the closing number of the drama *Die Ehrenpforten* (*The Triumphal Arches*) by Friedrich Treitschke – the poet who had revised the libretto of *Fidelio* in its 1814 version. *Die Ehrenpforten* was the later of two singspiels by Treitschke celebrating Napoleon's defeat; several Viennese musicians contributed arias and ensembles to these dramas, with Beethoven providing the musical culmination of both.²

'Es ist vollbracht' is, by today's standards, curiously un-Beethovenian. Its formal scheme and musical language work against any strong sense of a distinctive authorial voice, insistently restating generic musical features: a strophic form, within which solo and chorus alternate, organizes a declarative tune, simple, direct harmonies, and festive dotted rhythms. In the short coda, moreover, the composer's voice is almost submerged altogether (see Example I.1). An orchestral interlude following the last strophe unexpectedly moves to a pause on the dominant (b. 130) and, breaking a pregnant silence, a delicate woodwind passage introduces a melodic quotation from Haydn's 1797 song of Habsburg loyalty, 'Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser' ('God Save Kaiser Franz'). The bass soloist soon joins them, singing the entire last eight-bar period of Haydn's melody on the words 'Gott sei Dank und unserm Kaiser' ('Thanks be to God and to our Kaiser'). Finally, the chorus adds its voice in a series of overlapping entries, proceeding via a portentous subdominant chord (b. 143) to an urgent concluding Presto. The quotation – in part a rather obvious musical gimmick, in part a citation that makes the message of the piece unmistakable – breaks the already tenuous impression of authorial presence. It is as though the composer yields to existing orthodoxies in the recognition that he has little to say that someone else could not say for him.

Example I.1 Beethoven, ‘Es ist vollbracht’ WoO 97, bb. 130–45.

Melodic quotations, especially of well-known patriotic songs, were common in celebratory music from this period (indeed, Johann Nepomuk Hummel managed to cram the entire tune of Haydn's 'Gott erhalte' into the middle of his overture to *Die Ehrenpforten*). Yet hearing Beethoven capitulate so openly to the voice of another in the midst of a composition may come as a surprise to listeners today, many of whom are accustomed to a Beethoven who resists rather than relents – to a Beethovenian voice that is resistance itself, even.³ In 'Es ist vollbracht', Beethoven is all too clearly a collaborator, both artistic and political – one who shares, even relinquishes, his authorial control.

To revisit any composition by Beethoven as obscure as this short chorus is to draw attention to one of the main historical mechanisms that has produced and sustained Beethoven's unmistakable musical voice: the subtraction or suppression of whatever has counted as un-Beethovenian.⁴ Over the years critics have treated many works and even whole genres as incidental to their conception of Beethoven's voice: the even-numbered symphonies,⁵ the more lyrical compositions (particularly those in the period from around 1809 to 1816),⁶ the songs (with the possible exception of the cycle *An die ferne Geliebte*), choral compositions such as the cantatas, the Mass in C, and the oratorio *Christus am Ölberg* (*Christ on the Mount of Olives*). Even Beethoven's only opera has had an uncertain status as an authentically Beethovenian work, frequently portrayed since the mid nineteenth century as the imperfect product of a man who was in essence a composer of instrumental music, and an unhappy collaborator into the bargain.

Works with an obviously political message or purpose have tended to count among the least Beethovenian. His topical pieces from the end of the Napoleonic Wars 'should be set aside as negligible by-products, not as works in the main line', advises Lewis Lockwood in his 2003 study of the composer.⁷ Yet Beethoven produced compositions of this sort throughout his career. Most, though not all, were associated with the unfolding events of the wars with France: the early Bonn cantatas mourning Joseph II and celebrating Leopold II, the anti-French volunteer songs from the 1790s, marches and choruses from the first decade of the nineteenth century, and a distinct corpus of music composed in the years of the *Befreiungskriege* (the German 'wars of liberation' from Napoleon) and the Congress of Vienna. In 1811 to 1812, the incidental music to a pair of patriotic dramas by August von Kotzebue, *Die Ruinen von Athen* (The Ruins of Athens) and *König Stephan* (King Stephen), which were part of the ceremonial opening of Pest's Imperial Theatre on Kaiser Franz's birthday (12 February 1812). In 1813, the battle piece *Wellingtons Sieg; oder, Die Schlacht bei Vittoria* (Wellington's Victory; or, The Battle of Vittoria), initially intended for the panharmonicon,

a mechanical ‘orchestra’ of winds and percussion built by the court inventor Johann Nepomuk Mälzel.⁸ In 1814, the closing chorus ‘Germania’ for the topical singspiel *Die gute Nachricht* (*The Happy Message*) by Treitschke, a chorus to mark the entry of the allied princes into Vienna – ‘Ihr weisen Gründer glücklicher Staaten’ (‘Ye Wise Founders of Happy States’)⁹ – and the grand cantata honouring the monarchs assembled at the Congress of Vienna, *Der glorreiche Augenblick* (*The Glorious Moment*). And, in 1815, ‘Es ist vollbracht’ for Treitschke’s *Die Ehrenpforten*.¹⁰

Several compositions by Beethoven, nowadays equally marginal, hover on the fringes of this festive and bellicose group, sharing something of their tone and function: dating from 1813, a triumphal march for Christoph Kuffner’s *Tarpeja* and introductory music to the play’s second act; and, from 1815, incidental music to Johann Friedrich Leopold Duncker’s *Leonore Prohaska* (which was never performed with the drama), the Overture in C Major Op. 115 known as ‘Zur Namensfeier’ (‘Name Day’) which was performed on Kaiser Franz’s name day (4 October), and the cantata *Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt* (*Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*) – a choral setting of two poems by Goethe.

While the closing years of the Napoleonic Wars, and *Wellingtons Sieg* in particular, brought Beethoven to the peak of his living fame, later generations of music historians have habitually described this period in terms of deterioration and aridity – a weakening or exhaustion of Beethoven’s voice itself as much as a quantitative decline in productivity.¹¹ In 1829, a reviewer from Vienna’s *Allgemeiner musikalischer Anzeiger* formulated a dismissal of the music for *Die Ruinen von Athen* that has since become commonplace in connection with all of Beethoven’s topical music: the piece is worthless because it did not arise from the composer’s ‘inner urge’ (‘aus innerem Drang’).¹² That is, Beethoven could not be his true self in these political collaborations.

Granted, as in the coda of ‘Es ist vollbracht’, there are musical materials in these collaborations that derive from elsewhere – most pervasively in *Wellingtons Sieg*. Beethoven’s battle piece begins with French and English marches and ends with variations on ‘God Save the King’ – the kind of musical borrowing that has traditionally been understood to erode the very authority that defines an author, the most noticeable symptom of the composer’s subordination to political exigencies. Musicians and critics have consequently seized on any indication that these pieces might literally have been composed by people other than Beethoven, blaming the rings of collaborators that surrounded him. Ignaz Moscheles’s recollection that *Wellingtons Sieg* was conceived and even in large part composed by Mälzel has since been reiterated by scholars from Alexander Thayer to Charles Rosen,¹³ even

though it has been shown that Mälzel's musical input was most probably limited to the more generic fanfares and trumpet signals.¹⁴

Granted, the critical construction of Beethoven's voice as inevitably opposed to outside interference – whether artistic or ideological – has taken its lead in part from Beethoven himself. From his earliest years in Vienna, the composer and his supporters were busily promoting him as an original, resisting the sway of precursors and contemporaries.¹⁵ And Beethoven's correspondence is riddled with rhetorical assertions of his creative independence: 'I refuse to allow another, whoever he may be, to alter my compositions', he warned Treitschke in 1814 – ironically, in a letter that concerned one of their collaborations from the Congress period.¹⁶ Nowadays it is a cliché of biographical writing that the maturing artist gradually learns to discount voices that are alien to his nature, and to supersede those – the voices of models or mentors – that would drown out his own.¹⁷ Yet, in writing about Beethoven, it appears that, even when the composer has 'found his voice', he must work to keep hold of it; Beethoven's voice becomes his own through the unceasing performance of reclaiming it: 'I don't write for the galleries!', said the composer as he withdrew the revised 1806 *Leonore*, 'I want my score back' (at least, these were the words that the singer Joseph August Röckel claimed to recall).¹⁸

For many scholars and musicians, this dynamic of perpetual resistance is inscribed even on the page. Beethoven's copious sketches and revisions are its traces: the composer rewrites and rejects and resists until the perfected work emerges, wholly his own. Leonard Bernstein, analysing the sketches of the Fifth Symphony, thus portrayed Beethoven as a kind of sublime editor: 'Imagine a whole lifetime of this struggle, movement after movement, symphony after symphony, sonata after quartet after concerto. Always probing and rejecting in his dedication to perfection.'¹⁹ It is this authorial voice, largely constituted by the act of rejection itself, that Beethoven's canonical works have so often been heard to dramatize in their musical rhetoric – not least the finale of the Fifth, with its vast C major purification after the reprise of the scherzo. Beethoven's most distinctive rhetorical move is, as Rudolf Bockholdt has put it, 'nicht so, sondern so' ('not like that – like this') – a nearly content-less gesture of resistance to whatever it is not.²⁰ Beethoven's voice is most palpable, it would seem, when it rejects unwanted voices.

Analogously, one might argue that, on the level of his whole oeuvre, Beethoven led the way in suppressing his collaborative endeavours by denying them opus numbers, as if to acknowledge that they did not represent his authentic musical voice. The concluding choruses of Treitschke's Congress dramas have none, though they were published in separate performing

editions, and even the cantata *Der glorreiche Augenblick* became Op. 136 only posthumously.

There are notable exceptions, however. It has long been a cause of consternation that Beethoven granted *Wellingtons Sieg* an opus number. Just as critics have regularly insinuated that this composition was not wholly Beethoven's work, so they have also implied that he considered it a worthless piece of ephemera – an idea that originated in the unreliable testimonies of Anton Schindler and Moscheles, and found its way into the scholarship of the twentieth century via Thayer. In fact, Beethoven's view of *Wellingtons Sieg* is by no means so easily established; his correspondence – as well as other surviving documents, such as his public notice of thanks to the performers after the 1813 premiere – certainly does not indicate that the composer disdained his own work.²¹ In the absence of any substantial evidence that Beethoven thought badly of *Wellingtons Sieg*, music historians and biographers have nonetheless speculated that he was temporarily incapable of judging the value of his own compositions, having been swayed by collaborators – not just his colleagues but also the clamorous and fickle public, unprecedentedly enthused by wartime patriotism.²²

Behind all such assessments is the belief, common to much Modernist thought, that resistance is the only authentic aesthetic and political stance. To refuse to collaborate, as Sartre once argued, is to reject the specious 'realism' that leads others to acquiesce meekly to historical trends: 'the role of human beings is to know how to say "no" to the facts.'²³ According to many thinkers in the Modernist tradition – from Theodor Adorno to Alain Badiou – this is also what art does.²⁴ Within this conceptual framework, music by Beethoven that praises dynastic rulers or expresses animus towards the French – whether early war songs or later Congress compositions – is inartistic to precisely the extent that it is implicated in outmoded and unpalatable political orthodoxies. Moreover, in the context of scholarship that continues to promote an image of Beethoven as a lifelong Enlightenment radical (despite much evidence to the contrary), these wartime compositions appear to be uncomfortable or perhaps merely judicious ideological compromises – examples of an artist allowing himself to be swept along by history.²⁵

Without question, there is an implicit contradiction between Beethoven's desire to name a symphony after Napoleon in 1804 and his musical celebrations of the French leader's defeat only a decade or so later – a contradiction that has prompted Stephen Rumph's revisionist argument that Beethoven was formulating a newly conservative musical-political programme from around the time of the French occupation of 1809.²⁶ Yet Beethoven's Viennese contemporaries were accustomed to rapid changes of allegiance during the Napoleonic Wars. Hummel, for example, who composed a great quantity of

music in celebration of Bonaparte's defeat – choruses, overtures, and even an opera – had produced a cantata on 1 April 1810 for the wedding of Napoleon and Marie Louise. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the citizens of Vienna had witnessed peace treaties, renewed fighting, and the hardship of occupation – all within a public sphere closely policed by the state. Music echoed this complex and mutable political culture.²⁷ For all that, most of Beethoven's biographers have sought a single political ideal to match a single authorial voice. When they have failed to find one, they have tended to project the ambiguous reality of Viennese political culture onto Beethoven's personality, concluding that he was politically ambivalent, or that he consciously divided his oeuvre into pragmatic and idealistic works.²⁸ But the evidence indicates simply that Beethoven's voice is plural. He adapted it to changing circumstances and musical genres, and, even within single works, echoed the many voices of those around him.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the most vigorous defence of Beethoven's collaborative political pieces should have borrowed its terms from Mikhail Bakhtin. Nicholas Cook contrasts the monological or single-voiced discourse of Beethoven's canonical works with the dialogical or many-voiced collaborative compositions.²⁹ The dialogical principle of musical rhetoric, argues Cook – the exhortations and solicitations of the music's surface, which were the primary focus of eighteenth-century music theory – may be more relevant to the cacophonous collage of *Wellingtons Sieg* than the monological traditions of musical form, largely mid-nineteenth-century in origin.³⁰

By and large Beethoven's political collaborations accommodate formal analysis with almost excessive ease. One can elucidate the tonal plan of *Wellingtons Sieg* – the opening clash of the French and English armies' marches in E flat major and C major, say, which much of the ensuing *Schlacht* appears to negotiate through the mediating key of C minor – but, as Cook observes, it is harder to make this plan the basis of any 'convincing reading' of the work.³¹ The point becomes clearer still when one focuses on shorter compositions – the Friedelberg songs from the 1790s, Beethoven's contributions to Kotzebue's patriotic dramas of 1812, or the strophic choruses from Treitschke's Congress dramas of 1814 and 1815.³² Conventional methods of formal analysis tend to be unkind to these concise vocal genres, of course – not because they show them to be poorly constructed or incoherent, but because it is unclear what this sort of close reading might even seek to explain. Paradoxically, it seems that analysis that proceeds by subtraction – by focusing on underlying formal or syntactical schemes, for example – is an appropriate means of engaging only those compositions formally complex enough to mount a resistance; one might even say that this resistance itself has often come to symbolize Beethoven's musical voice. By contrast, music

whose form yields easily to analysis provides no secure interpretative footholds. Formal analysis generally operates by excising or ignoring those historical voices that impinged upon Beethoven's music, and, in the case of his political collaborations, were responsible for much of its power. The formal residue is rarely more than a generic shell – the absence of any voice at all. Not even the empty dynamic of Beethovenian resistance remains.

Consider 'Es ist vollbracht' again: this simple number clearly embraced the voices of Beethoven, Treitschke, and Haydn – and perhaps even the voice of political orthodoxy itself. But one can also identify many other proximate voices that shaped its production and reception: the chorus was but one part of *Die Ehrenpforten*, a drama with an overture by Hummel and a mixture of choruses, ensembles, and arias by Bernhard Anselm Weber, Joseph Weigl, Ignaz von Seyfried, Adalbert Gyrowetz, and even Handel – not to mention numbers adapted from popular tunes of the day. Many voices likewise mingled in Treitschke's earlier drama, *Die gute Nachricht*: after Hummel's overture (actually the same as the overture to the later *Die Ehrenpforten*) came numbers by Mozart, Gyrowetz, Weigl, Hummel again, and Friedrich August Kanne (Table I.1 gives a complete account of the numbers and their composers in both of Treitschke's dramas).³³

Granted, Beethoven's were the culminating numbers, implying that his reputation set him apart to some degree; yet his contributions jostled with a chorus of admired contemporaries and canonical historical figures – musicians who occupy the periphery of Beethoven studies, and will crop up regularly throughout this study.³⁴ One could add to this composerly list the real voices of performers. The popular bass Carl Weinmüller, for example, who took the leading role in *Die gute Nachricht*, had previously created roles in operas by Weigl and Gyrowetz, and played Rocco in Beethoven's 1814 *Fidelio*.³⁵ A character such as Weinmüller leads us from one collaborator to the next, peopling the generic and institutional background that Beethoven apparently did not resist.

Voices in the background

Many-authored theatrical quodlibets – pasticcios that presented a patchwork of well-known tunes (and comic characters) in new dramatic contexts – were enormously popular both at court and in Vienna's suburban theatres in the early nineteenth century. Beethoven's colleague Ignaz von Seyfried, who contributed two numbers to *Die Ehrenpforten*, had previously collaborated on what was without doubt the most successful quodlibet of the entire nineteenth century, *Rochus Pumpernickel*, premiered at the Theater an der

Table I.1

Friedrich Treitschke's *Die gute Nachricht* – first performance in the Kärntnertortheater on 11 April 1814

- Overture by Johann Nepomuk Hummel
1. Aria (Hannchen): 'Ach, wie schleichen Tag und Stunden', adapted from Mozart's song 'An Chloe', K. 524
 2. Aria (Bruno): 'Ich schlich den Neuigkeiten nach', by Adalbert Gyrowetz
 3. Trio (Bruno, Robert, Hannchen): 'Eile, dich ruft die Ehre', by Joseph Weigl
 4. Quartet (Süßlich, Bruno, Hannchen, Stürmer): 'Ein Jüngling in den Besten Jahren', by Hummel
 5. Duetto (Hannchen, Stürmer): 'Kehre wieder, holde Taube', by Hummel
 6. Aria (Ruthe, Bruno): 'Heut sah man Fahnen sonder Zahl', by Kanne
 7. Trio and chorus (Bruno, Stürmer, Hannchen): 'Kommt, Freunde, blicket all hinauf', by Hummel
 8. Chorus: 'Germania', by Beethoven

Friedrich Treitschke's *Die Ehrenpforten* – first performance in the Kärntnertortheater on 15 July 1815

- Overture by Hummel (same as overture to *Die gute Nachricht*)
1. Chorus: 'Ihr Brüder, ihr Schwestern', by Bernhard Anselm Weber
 2. Aria (Horst): 'Unaufhaltsam schnell wie Wogen', based on a Hungarian national song
 3. Jägerlied (Horst, Walter): 'Auf Eichen schwebt des Adlers Tron', by Weigl
 4. Sextet (Rosalie, Mathilde, Sophie, Walter, Horst, Fröhlich): 'O wie schnell ist sie verschwunden', by Ignaz von Seyfried
 5. Aria (Teutschmann): 'Ich zog mich aus der Stadt zurück', by Gyrowetz
 6. Duet (Walter, Horst): 'Was wir fröhlich angefangen', based on the 'Alexander' March
 7. Chorus: 'Auf, ziehet her mit Freudenliedern', by Ignaz von Seyfried
 8. Chorus: 'Fall ward sein Loos', based on 'Fall'n is the foe' from Act II of Handel's *Judas Maccabeus*
 9. Chorus: 'Es ist vollbracht', by Beethoven

Performances on 3 and 4 October 1815

5. Duet (Walter, Horst): 'Was wir fröhlich angefangen', based on the 'Alexander' March.

Table I.1 (cont.)

Friedrich Treitschke's <i>Die Ehrenpforten</i> – first performance in the Kärntnertortheater on 15 July 1815
6. Chorus: 'Auf, ziehet her mit Freudenliedern', by Ignaz von Seyfried
7. Chorus: 'Allmächtiger Gott', by Hummel, based on 'Kommt, Freunde, blicket all hinauf' from <i>Die gute Nachricht</i>
8. Chorus: 'Germania', by Beethoven

Wien in 1809 (also starring Weinmüller).³⁶ One could even understand the many-voiced musical discourse of *Wellingtons Sieg* as an orchestral instance of the quodlibet aesthetic – a musical patchwork that played on the audience's recognition of particular tunes and topoi (a constructive principle that doubtless contributed to its success).³⁷

Indeed, the quodlibet could serve as a symbol of the methods and sympathies of this book, which listens out for the collaborative networks extending from Beethoven's music through the contemporary Viennese social world: the musicians, institutions, rituals, patrons, genres, performances, music publishers, and consumer practices that shaped the politics of Beethoven's work. A body of largely unknown political compositions by Beethoven and his contemporaries echoes in the background of this study, therefore – a diverse selection of genres, representing varying methods of musical distribution and consumption in early-nineteenth-century Vienna, each one the product of distinct political pressures and expectations, formal and informal. (The print and manuscript sources of these pieces are listed by genre and archive in the Appendix of this book.)

Much of this early-nineteenth-century political music had its roots in ancient traditions of court ceremony and spectacle – partly because it was designed to be performed in the presence of monarchs and nobles, partly because it owed its very existence to long-standing systems of aristocratic patronage. Allegorical cantatas and eulogistic serenatas, songs of thanks and settings of the *Te Deum*, and choruses of farewell and welcome were produced in great quantities throughout the Napoleonic Wars. Yet the rapid expansion of the Viennese public sphere in this period subtly changed these court genres, since they frequently came to serve a more modern purpose – that of constructing and appealing to popular or civic identity, usually as part of patriotic commemorations or celebrations of peace and victory. By the time of the Congress of Vienna, the court-sponsored theatres – the Burgtheater