

Beethoven Studies 4

Did you know that Beethoven contemplated, however fleetingly, writing more than forty symphonies and that for the *Missa solemnis* he sought stimulus from a Latin–German dictionary? And what about the underappreciated sociable side of Beethoven’s music to set alongside the familiar one of the heroic? *Beethoven Studies 4* is a collection of ten chapters that approach the composer and his music from an appealing range of critical standpoints: aesthetic, analytical, biographical, historical and performance. Alongside essays that offer new information on Beethoven’s compositional practice and broaden understanding of the music’s contemporary and posthumous appeal, there are essays on his interaction with specific environments, Bonn and post-Napoleonic Austria, and vocal and piano performance practice. The volume will appeal to cultural historians and practitioners as well as Beethoven enthusiasts.

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Preface

This volume shares the aim of its progenitors in presenting ‘a broad selection of current work on Beethoven’ with a range of ‘biographical, critical, and analytical contributions’.¹ However, it would be to court understatement to say that much has happened in the world of scholarship in the four decades since the publication of *Beethoven Studies* (1973/1974), *Beethoven Studies 2* (1977) and *Beethoven Studies 3* (1982).² Contributors to the last volume were linked by an interest in ‘sources for Beethoven’s life and for his creative activity’,³ and such issues rightly remain central. At the same time, scholars have done much to recontextualize Beethoven, often shining a light on traditions that were important to Beethoven but to which Beethoven himself was relatively peripheral. Thus, while this volume focuses on Beethoven – as is right and proper for the series – it acknowledges that Beethoven’s position within the field has changed dramatically in the last four decades. The existence of many other composer studies volumes testifies to this fact, not to mention the wide range of literature that looks away from composition towards other aspects of musical production and reception.

The volume represents a cross-section of scholarly work on Beethoven, a vibrant field that no single volume could cover comprehensively. It includes scholars from six different countries and a variety of scholarly traditions. The ten essays are thus diverse by design. At the same time, certain themes and correspondences emerge. It is worth reviewing both this diversity and these commonalities as a way to take stock of Beethoven scholarship generally. As it does so, this preface gives a brief introduction (with the author’s name in full) to each chapter in the collection as well as noting connections (with the author’s surname alone) to the threads that weave across the volume.

¹ Alan Tyson, ‘Preface’, *Beethoven Studies 3*, ed. Alan Tyson (Cambridge, 1982), p. vii.

² Alan Tyson (ed.), *Beethoven Studies* (New York, 1973; London, 1974); Alan Tyson (ed.), *Beethoven Studies 2* (Oxford, 1977); Alan Tyson (ed.), *Beethoven Studies 3* (Cambridge, 1982).

³ Tyson, ‘Preface’, *Beethoven Studies 3*, p. vii.

The types of sources featured here indicate one way that the discipline has developed. Sketches and scores remain important. Barry Cooper, for example, offers a comprehensive survey and thematic catalogue of Beethoven's sketches for symphonies, some unfinished, others barely begun. Despite the relative lack of support for the symphony during the composer's lifetime, Beethoven made over thirty starts in the genre between ca. 1788 and 1826. Cooper's survey alerts us to nodal points in Beethoven's production of symphonies.

The prominence of scores amongst types of sources is not surprising, as it is Beethoven's music that continues to attract attention. Almost all the essays in this collection link their considerations to specific pieces, often offering new ways to hear and interpret them. It is worth noting, however, that while written or notated primary sources remain central, their spectrum is broader than ever, from partimenti (Sanguinetti) to library catalogues (Wilson), and from journals (Jones) to dictionaries and handwritten notes (Lodes), to name only some of the source types on show. Yet scholars also look beyond the written record to the material culture from the past – Beethoven's pianos and hearing aids (Beghin), for instance.

These sources are used to illuminate diverse types of contexts for Beethoven's musical production – geographical, compositional, critical, to name a few. John Wilson considers the musical library within whose compass the young Beethoven worked at the archducal court of Elector Maximilian Franz in Bonn, thereby situating his work in a particular locale with its distinctive connections to broader traditions. The library was one of the largest in Europe, and also one that saw considerable growth during the 1770s and 1780s. Some seeds of Beethoven's approaches to church, chamber and theatre music can be gleaned from a glimpse at the transformations that the library underwent, but also a vision of the high standards of the models around him.

Both Giorgio Sanguinetti and W. Dean Sutcliffe examine Beethoven's ties to eighteenth-century compositional contexts. Sanguinetti shows how Beethoven drew upon his education in partimenti at different points in his career. While Beethoven's education in these melodic-cum-harmonic (and generally contrapuntal) 'tonal prototypes' was typical of his time, he bent them variously over his career. He shaped them to the topics and the genres with which he worked, now using them with respect for tradition, now transforming them almost beyond recognition, now treating them as archaic reminders of past traditions. Sutcliffe, for his part, shows Beethoven's ties to a musical aesthetic of graciousness. Importantly, this aesthetic is a matter of musical discourse, and his analyses enumerate ripostes,

understatements, negotiations of assertive and gracious gestures, and other dialogues in which the process of discussion is often more important than firm agreement. Other scholars examine sources for the critical discourse of the time, as communicated for example by the Austrian *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (Jones).

The cumulative result of these diverse materials and matters is that this volume offers varying takes on common themes. With regard to the expressive aspect of Beethoven's music, Sutcliffe's chapter on graciousness finds an interlocutor in Michael Spitzer's on the heroic qualities of Beethoven's music. In a reading of the *Eroica* Symphony that tacks from the history of emotion to the histories of state ritual and military strategy, Spitzer notes that the histrionic heroic gestures composed into the symphony correspond to historically specific forms of the emotion of glory, as displayed in rites of mourning and fighting. Glory differs from vainglory according to the process by which it arises and is expressed, a statement as true for battles as it is for symphonies. Other expressive arenas include the pastoral (Chapin) and the jolts and jogs of the late style (Sanguinetti, Lodes, and Beghin).

Expressive gestures of music link bespeak cultural values, and many of the chapters here look carefully at the values that informed both Beethoven's creative activity and the reception of his music, from graciousness (Sutcliffe) to patriotism (Hambridge, Jones and Spitzer) to sovereignty (Chapin) to gender identity (Hambridge). The path from expressive qualities to cultural values is at times relatively direct, but at others proves exceedingly complex. As Katherine Hambridge shows, Pauline Anna Milder (1785–1838), the soprano who sang Leonore in the first three productions of Beethoven's opera, troubled eighteenth-century dualisms of style and gender. Her voice eschewed the binaries of French and Italian vocal styles and echoed her cross-dressing on the stage. At the very time that Beethoven was at work on what would become an epitome of German opera, Milder's career tracked and facilitated the emergence of a new German style of singing.

Expressive gestures may bespeak cultural values, but they are rooted in physicality. If Hambridge focuses attention on the physical characteristics of a singer, Tom Beghin turns to the physicality of Beethoven himself as a performer. Beghin examines the last three piano sonatas with consideration for the physical experience of Beethoven himself, playing particular pianos and developing a hearing machine to sense their tones. Beghin's research is communicated physically too, through videos of performances using reconstructions of Beethoven's pianos and hearing aids. Far from

being ineffable, the sonatas are alive with vibrations, physical surfaces and tactility. Keith Chapin considers Beethoven as a performer of a different type. Beethoven often thematized the nature around him so as to project the attenuation of human control over the world. This is in line with his own creative activity, which expresses not so much a controlling self (as E. T. A. Hoffmann would have it) as lack of control of his own bodily nature. In this, he resembled Schiller and other idealists. Their confident declarations of artistic prowess were in fact performative responses to their hypochondria, a condition recognized as interweaving physiology and psychology.

The late style has always seemed odd, even out of step with its time, yet its oddities are very much reflections of Beethoven's engagement with things of his time. These can range from issues of instrument construction (Beghin) to the high aims that Beethoven was never shy in proclaiming. As David Wyn Jones shows in an examination of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung mit besonderer Rücksicht auf den österreichischen Kaiserstaat*, artists of the time followed a variety of high purposes, including a patriotic museum culture, a collective public ethos and religious sensitivity. Beethoven engaged with the musical styles and genres associated with these goals: respectively, a sophisticated (and often contrapuntal) manufacture, oratorio and church music. Beethoven shared the high aims of his time, even if he developed them in his own particular way. As Birgit Lodes shows, Beethoven pursued these aims in dialogue with his time in another way too. A transcript of the text of the mass Ordinary in Beethoven's hand shows that he attended carefully to Ignatius Aurelius Feßler's translation of the mass Credo (in a book that had been proscribed in Vienna). To elucidate its meaning, Beethoven looked up its every word in a Latin-German dictionary. Beethoven's odd takes on a genre with strong traditions and conventions flow from his careful but often idiosyncratic attention to the meanings and prosody of individual words.

While surveying a variety of themes, *Beethoven Studies 4* tracks Beethoven's career along rough chronological lines. It begins with Beethoven perusing scores in the archducal library in Bonn and ends with him wrestling at the piano in the intimacy of his chambers. It stops at many places along the way. It marks a quarter-millennium since Beethoven's birth, but it reflects the interest of the present in its consideration of political, social and ecological issues, of questions of gender and national identity and of performance alongside composition. And, of course, it marks the music which continues to make its mark.

Abbreviations

- AmZ *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (Leipzig, 1798–).
- BG Sieghard Brandenburg (ed.), *Ludwig van Beethoven. Briefwechsel Gesamtausgabe*, 7 vols. (Munich, 1996–98).
- BK Karl-Heinz Köhler, Grita Herre and Dagmar Beck (eds.), *Ludwig van Beethovens Konversationshefte*, 11 vols. (Leipzig, 1972–2001).
- BTW Kurt Dorf Müller, Norbert Gertsch and Julia Ronge (eds.), *Ludwig van Beethoven. Thematisch-bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis*, 2 vols. (Munich, 2014).

Library Sigla

- A-Wgm Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Vienna, Austria
- A-Whh Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Austria
- A-Wn Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Austria
- A-Wst Stadt- und Landesbibliothek (Wien Bibliothek), Vienna, Austria
- D-B Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Germany
- D-BNba Beethoven Archiv, Beethoven Haus, Bonn, Germany
- D-DGla Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen – Abteilung Rheinland, Duisburg, Germany
- D-Hs Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Carl von Ossietzky, Hamburg, Germany
- D-LEu ‘Bibliotheca Albertina’, Universitätsbibliothek, Leipzig, Germany
- F-Pn Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, France
- F-Po Bibliothèque-Musée de l’Opéra, Paris, France
- GB-Lbl British Library, London, Great Britain

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