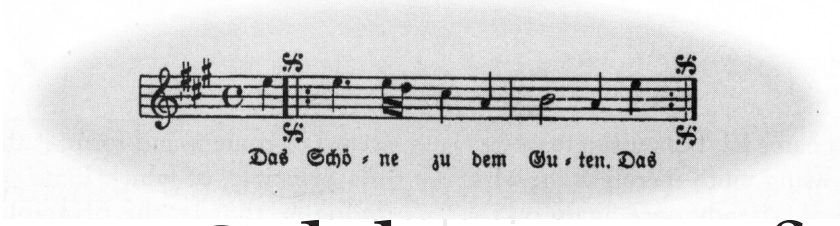


In Celebration of Ludwig van Beethoven's 225th Birthday

by Anno Hellenbroich

A number of studies have been published recently on Beethoven's late works, taking up Beethoven's creative thought process in a radically new way, with the aid of examples from his late quartets. These include: Bruce Director, "What Mathematics Can Learn from Classical Music" (1994)[1]; Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., "On the Subject of Metaphor" (1992)[2] and "Mozart's 1782-86 Revolution in Music" (1992)[3]; Jelena Wjaskowa, "The Initial Stage of the Creative Process in Beethoven: A Study, with Sketches of the First Movement of the Quartet Op. 130" (1988)[4]; Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., "Beethoven as a Physical Scientist" (1989)[5]; and others.[6]

If, today, 170 years after the debut performance of the Quartet in A minor, Op. 132, one listens to the legendary Amadeus Quartet's recording of this work, and if one goes over it repeatedly in one's mind, it cannot fail to grow into an ever greater whole—a whole which, to one's astonishment, lays bare to one's reflecting consciousness, the work's internal coherence.

All attempts to mystify this artistic actuality of the creative process in Beethoven—attempts such as those of the Romantics up through Wagner; or, on the other hand, to formalize his work, such as has been done by the Frankfurt School and its epigones (e.g., "The Formal Strategies of the Late Quartets"); or, finally, to simply deny the existence of Beethoven's unique creative accomplishment—all these attempts, when judged against the sheer greatness of his compositions, as anyone can confirm for himself, remain just what they are: a waste of time.

The Principle of *Motivführung*

The Classical Ideal of Beauty

In the midst of creating his A minor Quartet, Beethoven wrote a letter to the Berlin lyricist and critic Ludwig Rellstab, dated May 3, 1825, asking Rellstab to convey a greeting to Carl Friedrich Zelter, "the staunch defender of true art," and ended with this postscript: "I remain extremely weak during my convalescence; please accept this small token to remind you of your friend Beethoven—'Das Schöne zu dem Guten' ('The Beautiful Added to the Good') [SEE facsimile above].

Anyone today who wants to properly understand Beethoven's powerful creative accomplishment in the latter years of his life, must always keep in mind this theme of "the Beautiful added to the Good," a theme that repeatedly crops up in Beethoven's thinking. This is because, for Beethoven, "progress" in art is "science," but a kind of science that is inextricably bound to the ultimate aim of perfecting the individual human being. Beethoven was brimming with the aspirations of great Classical humanism, among which was to "ennoble" individual human beings and mankind as a whole. Representatives of the "Vienna Circle" and the Frankfurt School, on the other hand—with Theodor Adorno in the forefront—have attempted to treat Beethoven's artistic accomplishments as something completely separate from this moral and scientific orientation toward the goal of musical lawfulness. But

The Bettmann Archive

Ludwig van Beethoven (center) and the Razumovsky quartet. To the left are Joseph Haydn (seated), Beethoven's student Carl Czerny (standing), Princess Lichnowsky (standing) and the Baroness Dorothea of Erdmannsdorf (at piano). The violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh is standing to the right of Beethoven.

to deny the connection between these fundamental convictions and the ideal of Beauty in the late quartets, means not to understand Beethoven at all.

Evidence of How Beethoven Worked

The celebration of Beethoven's 225th birthday is a good occasion to gain a new grip on what "creative thought processes" actually are. Amid the currently prevailing ideology of "information theory," Beethoven's work shines out like a solitary beacon of creative Reason. And more than with any other artist, there exists a wealth of written evidence of his compositional working methods. Beethoven's correspondence with his publishers, for example, provides us with a good insight into his precise, indeed excruciatingly meticulous, examination of works being prepared for publication. The more than seven thousand sheets of sketches which have been found so far, some of them from pocket notebooks he used while taking walks, and some used as household sketchbooks for initial drafts, provide invaluable insight into how compositions grew under the composer's hands. So far, only a small portion of these sketches has been made available to the broader public through transcriptions and commentaries; unfortunately, the Beethoven Archive in Bonn continues to open up this treasure-chest much too slowly. On top of this, Beethoven's conversation notebooks, dating from the time of his increasing deafness, contain entries by his countless visitors, as well as occasional entries by Beethoven himself. Almost all of these have now been published, and are an invaluable source. And if one also takes into account the countless reports written by contemporaries, it is truly possible to gain precise historical insight into how Beethoven thought and worked.

The sheer quantity of Beethoven's output during the years of the late quartets, was monumental. After receiving a commission in 1822 from Prince Galitzin for three quartets, Beethoven worked between 1822 and 1825 on the E-flat Major Quartet Op. 127, which was first performed on March 6, 1825. In 1824 and 1825 he composed the Quartet Op. 132 (first performed in September 1825). The Quartet Op. 130 was composed between May and November, 1825, the Op. 131 over the course of 1825-26, and the Quartet Op. 135, as well as the final version of Op. 130, were completed during the last two years of his life. For the Quartet Op. 131 in C minor alone, there are over six hundred sheets of sketches, which give us a peek inside the workshop of this "constructively" creative artist. And, as is perhaps more well known, during the same period, the Ninth Symphony (1822-24) and the monumental *Missa Solemnis* (1819-23) were also composed. Much of the labor of correcting, checking, and copying other works, such as the "Consecration of the House" Overture Op. 155, and the Bagatelles Op. 126, also falls into this same 1824-25 period.

The Late Works and the Musical Unit-Idea

Jelena Wjaskowa writes in her paper on the sketches for the first movement of the Quartet Op. 130, that "Beethoven belongs to that relatively rare type of composer, who 'record their own process of composition,' i.e., they set down on paper every thought which has occurred to them, every doubt, every variant—the entire course of the 'thought process' necessary for the realization of their intent." Concerning this creative process, Lyndon LaRouche wrote in his pioneering essay "Beethoven as a Physical Scientist": "It ought to be obvious that Beethoven's last quartets, beginning with the Op. 127, and including the Große Fuge Op. 133, must be treated as a unit-series of exposition of the same species of musical idea, in the same sense that the Op. 106, 109, 110, and 111, must be viewed as a unit-idea series. This sequence of unit-idea series, in Beethoven's last period of composition, begs comparison with a succession of stages of valid scientific revolutions. Each unit-series of compositions is much more than a specific musical composition; it is a musical scientific revolution, from which music must not turn backwards. Hence, the occurrence of these so emphatically in clusters of closely related compositions, even much more so than in Beethoven's earlier publishing practice."

This question of the "sequence of unit-idea series," ruled by the Classical ideal of Beauty, as the central theme of any work of Classical art, and of its aesthetic effect, was addressed by Friedrich Schiller in his philosophical essays. Schiller introduced a concept of "bounding," which later came to have an increasingly important influence in the development of geometry, and especially in the mathematics of Georg Cantor. Cantor defined "generative principles," as well as a "principle of bounding or constraint," in the determination of infinite manifolds of increasing power ("cardinality").[7]

Since Beethoven's later works increasingly show "new musical solutions" as "successive discoveries" of new connections, we must seek, from our present-day standpoint, to replicate this conception of "higher Types of musical manifolds" in our understanding of Beethoven's compositional method—without, however, raising any claim that Beethoven explicitly thought in those terms. Yet, that is, in fact, the way he composed. For example, the central importance of the development of the C-minor figure—the "Royal Theme" from J.S. Bach's *Musical Offering*—in giving generations of Classical composers, especially Mozart and Beethoven, the challenge to offer ever bolder "solutions" and extended "thought-objects" of great, musical "metaphors," has been shown.[8]

In this connection, Schiller's notion of the "overcoming of constraints," or, in musical terms, of the creation of new orders of lawfulness within the well-tempered system, is of crucial importance for understanding the laws of construction of Beethoven's late works. In a much too little noticed essay against Kant, "On the Estimation of Aesthetic Magnitude," Schiller writes:

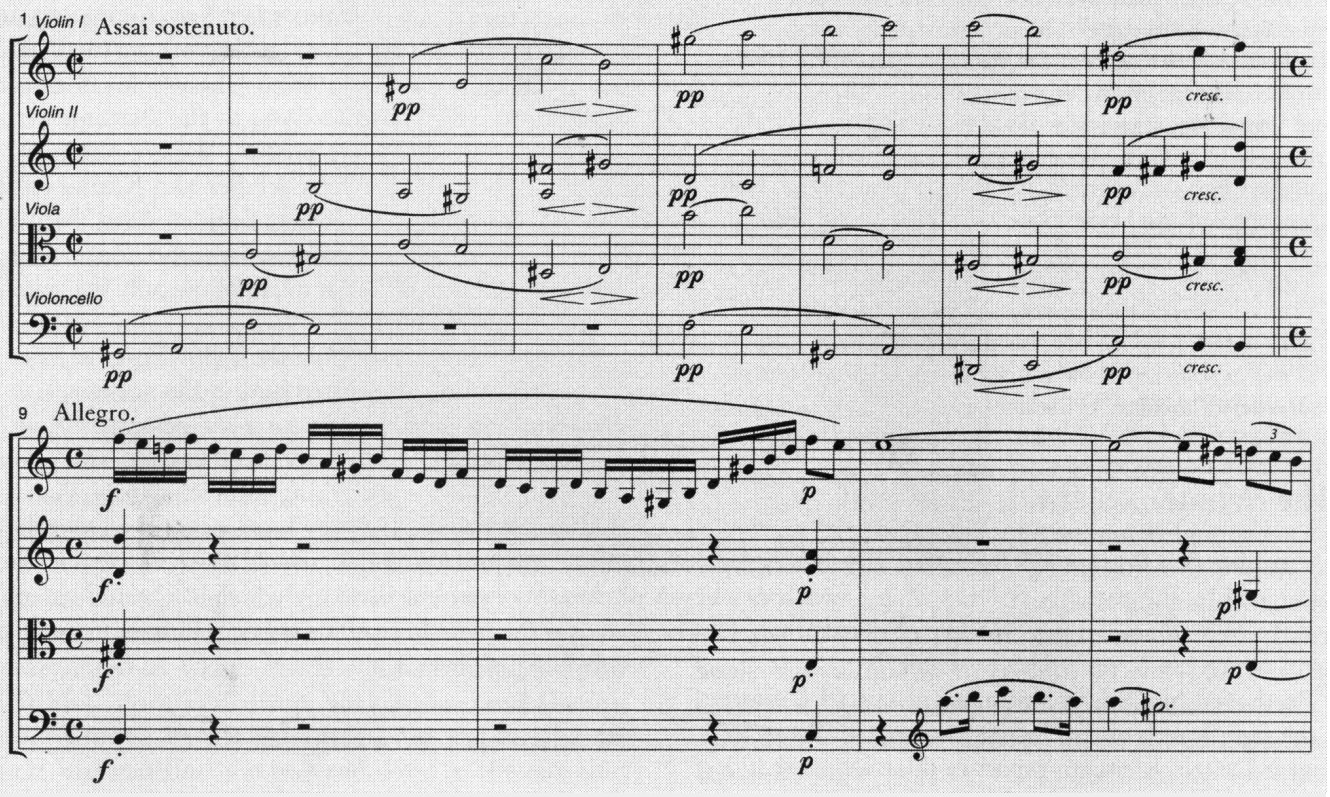
> A certain maximum magnitude is prescribed to every thing, either through its *species* (if it is a work of nature), or (if it is a work of freedom) through the *constraints* arising from its underlying cause and purpose. We employ this measure of magnitude, more or less consciously, in every observation of objects; but our perceptions are very different, depending upon whether the measure we apply is more fortuitous or more necessary. If an object exceeds the idea of its species-magnitude, it will, to a certain degree, put us into a state of *bewilderment.* We will be surprised, and our experience expands, but insofar as we take no interest in the object itself, what remains is simply a feeling, that the magnitude which we expected has been exceeded. We have derived this measure merely from a series of empirical experiences, and there is no necessity whatever at hand that it must always fit. If, on the other hand, a product of freedom exceeds the idea which we established for ourselves about the constraints of its cause, we will no doubt feel a certain sense of *admiration.* What startles us in such an experience is not merely the exceeded expectation, it is at the same time that the constraints have been cast off. There, in the earlier case, our attention simply remained on the *product,* which was of indifferent concern in itself; here, our attention is drawn toward the *generative force,* which is moral, or is at least associated with a moral being, and as such it must necessarily interest us. This interest will increase just to that degree, that the force constituting the active principle is the more noble or more weighty, and the constraint which we find exceeded is the more difficult to overcome.[9]

Schiller's observation here, that in the case of compositions ("works of freedom"), the creative output ("generative force") in the overcoming of the bounds of given musical rules—such as the use of the "Lydian" to replace the major-minor system (the "casting off of constraints")—produces amazed admiration, quite precisely describes Beethoven's own working principles in his later works.

Opus 132 and the Lydian

Let us use a concrete example to explicate the foregoing point. Numerous attempts have been made to explain the A minor Quartet, especially its third movement, which bears the inscription: "Heiliger Dankegesang eines Genesenden an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart" ("A convalescent's holy song of thanks to the Deity, in the Lydian mode"). Many descriptive musical commentators of the

FIGURE 1. *Ludwig van Beethoven, String Quartet Op. 132 in A minor, measures 1-12.*



"old school" have ascribed this work, "programmatically," to Beethoven's successful recovery from a serious illness on April 25. A more serious approach, however, is offered in a study by the head of the Beethoven Archive, Sieghard Brandenburg. With the help of sketches, and also from verifiable information about the state of historical knowledge in Beethoven's musical tradition, Brandenburg has been able to present some of the background to the question of the "chorale" and of Beethoven's dealings with the "Lydian."[10]

But it was the work of Bruce Director *et al.,* that first pointed out an aspect of the "Lydian musical interval" (meaning, narrowly defined, the interval between F and B-natural), which yields a much more far-reaching understanding of the internal composition the entire quartet, as well as of Beethoven's much more complex conception in the opening bars of the first movement. The construction of the entire quartet has been shaped, of course, in a "vocal-recitative" manner, and connections to the Ninth Symphony are quite apparent. But from a compositional standpoint, here in this quartet Beethoven has created a "unit-idea" of the "Lydian interval," whose far-reaching significance has not been adequately recognized heretofore. Already in the eight-measure exposition of this "multiply intertwining manifold" (*Assai sostenuto*), Beethoven, in his juxtaposition of the four instrumental voices, which are united by the 'cello's playing of the basic interval-idea—a fifth A-E "constrained" by half-steps on either side (the "leading tone" G♯ upwards, or, in inversion, F downwards)—produces, on every beat beginning with measure 3, an ever denser number of "Lydian intervals"—if we consider merely the "vertical" juxtaposition of the voices. If one then considers the further unfolding of the first movement has a "succession of increasing manifolds" of musical unit-ideas, we see that Beethoven has created a "generative," but at the same time "constraining" principle (in the form of the Lydian interval). Thus, as is demonstrated in "What Mathematics Can Learn from Classical Music," the sequence A-B-C-B-A-A-G♯, which is actually presented in the 'cello's upper register, can be "replicated" in the mind as the first "derivative" of the preceding "work" of the first ten measures [SEE Figure 1]. This tone-sequence has much the appearance of a "motive" or "theme" developed earlier by Haydn and Mozart for thorough-composition; but Beethoven composed it on a new "plane" of manifold lawfulnesses, creating thereby a "new metaphor." This creative process in Beethoven can be better understood today from the standpoint of our knowledge of the development of the Cantor and Riemann's "theory of manifolds." To put it in the words of Georg Cantor (whose 150th birthday was celebrated this

year in his hometown of Halle, Germany):

> Theory of manifolds: With this term I describe a very comprehensive pedagogical concept which, up to now, I have only attempted to elaborate in the special form of a theory arithmetic or geometric aggregates. Namely, by "manifold" or "aggregate" I generally mean that Many which can be thought of as One—i.e., that totality of determinate elements which can be united into a whole by means of some law; and with this I believe I am defining something related to the Platonic *eidos* or *idea,* and to what Plato, in his dialogue *Philebos, or, The Highest Good,* calls *mikton.* To this, Plato counterposes the *apeiron,* i.e., the Unlimited, Indefinite—which I, for my part, call the non-genuine infinite—as well as *peras,* i.e., boundary, and declares the former to be an ordered "mixture" of the latter two.

'The Whole . . . Inside My Head'

It is striking that Beethoven's later works are increasingly dominated by the paradox of "that Many, which can be thought of as One," as the "totality of determinate elements which can be united into a whole."

Beethoven himself, in a number of remarks, referred to the significance of the "whole" in the creative process. Thayer-Deiters-Riemann report in the celebrated *Life of Beethoven,*[11] that among the sketches for the Quartet Op. 95 (circa 1810) one finds the following entry in Beethoven's handwriting: "Sich zu gewöhnen gleich das ganze—alle Stimmen wie es sich zeigt im Kopfe, zu entwerfen" ("Get accustomed right away [to] the whole—sketch out all voices, as it appears in my head.") Thayer (Riemann, Deiters) comments on this: "This surely means (the comma after "Kopfe" is missing in the original) that in the future, Beethoven wanted to accustom himself to jotting down not only the melody lines in his sketchbooks, but also the harmony or contrary voices—the whole, as it sounded within his own imagination. Apparently, he occasionally had the experience that when the same idea re-emerged in his imagination, certain things no longer appeared along with it, and that loss was bothersome to him."[12] It is certainly indisputable that memory is essential in the creation of new works. Yet this commentary fails to acknowledge Beethoven's crucial conviction—that of the Platonic *eidos* or *idea*—which Beethoven expressed in this note to himself.

Thayer also mentioned a recollection of Charles Neate (an English pianist and promulgator of Beethoven's works in England) of a conversation he had in 1815 with Beethoven while on a walk near Baden. Neate was attempting to impose an interpretation of the "Pastoral" Symphony (No. 6) by insisting that Beethoven had a great "gift" for "drawing musical pictures." Beethoven, however (according to Neate) answered by giving an entirely different meaning to the word "picture"—namely, in the sense of the *eidos,* the thought-object: "I always have a picture in my thoughts when I am composing, and I work toward it."[13] Here, as in his work on the Quartet Op. 95, Beethoven had in mind "the whole" in the creative sense, and thus the One, in the Platonic sense, which guides the creative process. We are reminded of the correspondence between Schiller and Körner on the musical setting of poems, where Schiller insists that "The music must never just paint words and concern itself with petty games; rather, it must follow only the spirit of the poetry as a whole."

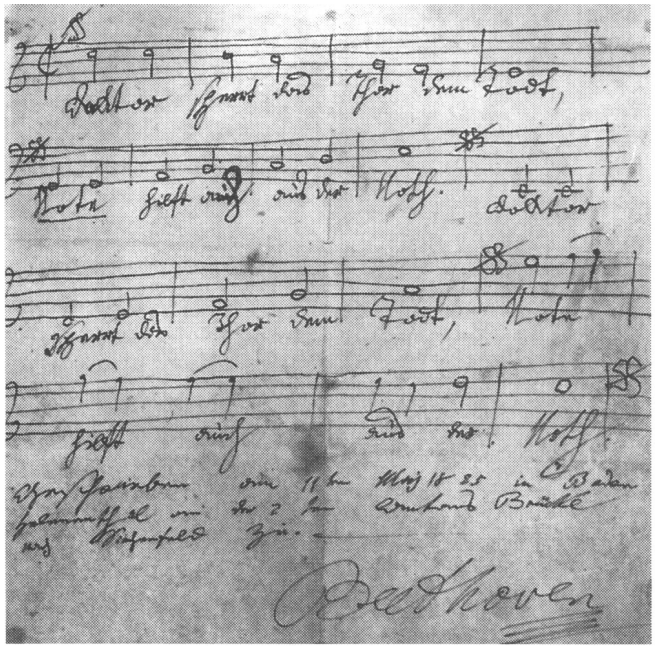
In 1814, Beethoven wrote the following in a letter to Treitschke, who had assisted him in the arduous task of reworking his opera *Fidelio* for a second time: "Now, of course, everything has to happen all at once, and I could more quickly write something completely new, than add the new to the old. The way I am accustomed to write—in my instrumental music, too—I always have the whole before my eyes; but here, my whole has been divided up all over the place in a certain way, and I have to think my way into it all over again."[14]

Beethoven's Working Methods

Too little emphasis is generally given to the carefulness and constant scientific curiosity which characterized Beethoven's way of working. Even a superficial survey of the subjects and themes which Beethoven jotted down in his sketches (according to Hans Schmidt), gives some reflection of this. Entries include: exercise studies from C.P.E. Bach's *Essay on the True Art of Playing the Clavier,* figured-bass exercises, counterpoint studies and finger études, experiments in the old church modes, liturgical sequences in F major, *Metrics of the German Language* by Voss, etc. Of the numerous works of others which Beethoven copied out by hand, the following are most notable: Handel's *Messiah,* sonnets by Petrarch, J.S. Bach's "Chromatic Fantasy," Mozart's G minor Symphony No. 40, parts of the B-flat minor and B-flat major fugues from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier,* Bach's *Art of the Fugue,* the vocal quintet from the first act of Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute,* and Handel's Fugue in G minor.

In his sketchbook entries from the period when he was working on the A minor Quartet in 1825, one finds, alongside everyday matters such as his worries about his nephew and thoughts on current political events, that Beethoven had very special reading interests as well. For example, the pages of his conversation book covering the months of April and May 1825 also contain initial sketches for the A minor Quartet. One particular entry there reveals that Beethoven was also experimenting with tone-sequences above which he wrote the word "Dor," i.e., the

Dorian mode. The same page also contains an entry about books for sale: "I.H.F. Meincke's *Handwörterbuch der Metrik* etc. [*Pocket Dictionary of Metrics*] Leipzig 1825." His nephew mentions the price of a book *Schiller's Life*. Following this are further sketches on the quartet's "chorale" section. Below this is a copy of an advertisement from the *Wiener Zeitung* which gives prices for books, including "il parnasso italiano la divina commedia di Dante alighieri—la gerusalemme liberata di Tasso etc." These rather arbitrarily selected pages give some idea of the literary interests which Beethoven had throughout his adult life—along with Plato, Shakespeare, and Goethe. And, scattered between the lines, one can read about where one can find the best red wine in the city, and advice to Beethoven to stick to a healthy diet: "At lunchtime, instead of stewed beef, you should have steak brought to you, which greatly strengthens you." Further on, his nephew reports on the advice offered by Dr. Braunhofer, who treated Beethoven during his serious illness in April 1825: "You should eat something so that the wind gets pressed out of you," and, once again, there is an admonition to eat only "steak for lunch." On May 11, 1825, having recovered from his illness, Beethoven sent a letter to Dr. Braunhofer, containing the canon "Doktor sperrt das Tor dem Tod, Note hilft auch aus der Not" ("Doctor, bar death from my gate, notes help one out of trouble, too") [SEE facsimile above].



Beethoven's canon, "Doctor, bar death from my gate . . . ."

And again one finds notes in Beethoven's hand concerning his nephew Karl: "I see Karl has gotten very pale—the cold mountain air must be at fault for the bleeding." Then a few notes on mundane affairs: "patent pen nib by Gänsekiel etc.," another note that at "the Wallishauer High Market [one can obtain] Schiller's Life by Döring with Schiller's portrait etc. paperb."—a book which his nephew apparently did buy for him later on.

Beethoven Research in Russia

In connection with the story of how the A minor Quartet Op. 132 was composed, reference is frequently made to Beethoven's entries in the later, so-called "Moscow Sketchbook," which, like the sketchbooks and loose sheets at the Beethovenhaus in Bonn ("De Roda," etc.), contains sketches on this quartet. The entries in the Moscow Sketchbook are mostly related to the later movements of the quartet (they also contain sketches for Op. 130). As mentioned above, at present there exists no complete transcription and presentation of all the sketches for the A minor Quartet, and thus no comprehensive discussion of how this quartet came to be. (In 1988, Mrs. Wjaskowa mentioned the existence of a plan for such a study, but so far it has not appeared in print.) In 1927, this sketchbook was published in facsimile form, along with a description of its content, by Prof. M. Ivanov-Boretzky in *Musikalische Bildung* (Moscow). In his introduction, Professor Boretzky writes: "It has been known for a long time in Russian circles, that somewhere in Moscow there was a Beethoven sketchbook in private hands. In 1910, the renowned scholar of ancient Russian church music S.W. Smolensky published an article in the *Russische Musikzeitung* containing the news that he was in the possession of a remarkable original manuscript—Beethoven's sketchbook." Smolensky wanted to publish it, but he evidently did not do so. Boretzky then reports on earlier diary entries by S. Taneyev, which shed a bit more light on the history of this sketchbook, which is now kept at the Glinka Museum in Moscow.

This little story throws a spotlight on a Beethoven tradition in certain Russian circles, which has a very special significance from our 1995 perspective, now that Leningrad has once again become St. Petersburg.

The late Beethoven scholar Nathan Fischman reports on how the son of Prince Galitzin took the autograph manuscripts of the A minor Quartet and of the Op. 130 quartet from his estate and presented them to the great violinist Joseph Joachim. It is known that Prince Nicolai Borissovitch Galitzin (1794-1866), who was a gifted 'cellist, came into contact with Beethoven in 1822, and in a letter to him, offered him 150 ducats to compose three string quartets—an offer which Beethoven accepted. Beethoven dedicated the three quartets Op. 127, 130, and 132, as well as his Overture to "The Consecration of the House" Op. 124, to Galitzin. It was also this same Prince Galitzin, who interceded with Tsar Alexander I to obtain

Violinist Joseph Böhm

The Granger Collection, NY

Beethoven's patron, Prince Nikolai Galitzin.

The Granger Collection, NY

Violinist Joseph Joachim

The Bettmann Archive

prepayment to Beethoven for a fair-copy of the score of the *Missa Solemnis,* and the prince himself also subscribed for an additional copy, which he received in late 1823. It was also he who set into motion preparations for the first full performance of the mass, which occurred on April 7 (March 26 old calendar), 1824 in Petersburg.

As Fischman reports it, the autograph copies of these quartets were not the only items sent to Russia, but also a copy of Beethoven's very first string quartet. This score apparently reached Russia *via* a friend of Beethoven, the violinist Karl Amenda, who traveled to Courland (now western Latvia) in the summer of 1799 on family matters, and later settled in the Latvian city of Talsen. Fischman comments that these quartets "were there [in Russia] long before they had ever appeared in print. This sheds light on a characteristic feature of the Beethoven tradition in Russia at the beginning of the last century: The earliest ones to partake of Beethoven's creativity, were amateur players of string quartets." (For example, in 1804, the String Quartets Op. 18 were played by a family ensemble of J.M. Wielhorsky [1753-1807], one of the founders of the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Society. Seven years later, the Op. 59 quartets, dedicated to Prince A.K. Razumovsky, were performed in Moscow.)

Galitzin and Joseph Joachim

On June 21, 1825, Galitzin wrote from Petersburg to Beethoven in Vienna (in French): "Yesterday I received your last letter of June 4, just as we were playing your new quartet, and I can say: with perfection, since Mr. Lipinsky was playing first violin." Galitzin was speaking of the Quartet Op. 127 in E-flat major. He had received the manuscript of this work from Beethoven in March 1825, and one year later, the manuscripts of the other two quartets dedicated to him arrived: Op. 132 (A minor) and Op. 130 (B-flat major). These two latter autographs remained in the family's possession for 36 years. On March 16, 1882, Galitzin's son, the orchestra director Yuri Nikolayevitch, while he was in London, attended a concert performance of the quartet featuring Joseph Joachim. The following day, he wrote this letter to Joachim: "There is no other way that I can express to you the joy with which I listened to your performances yesterday of the great A minor Quartet by Beethoven, than to ask you to accept the enclosed manuscript. Since it is a double memento—of Beethoven, and also of my own father—for me this is, of course, a sacred heirloom. But that is precisely why I consider it the correct

thing to do, to place it into Joachim's hands." A postscript to this letter also indicates that along with the autograph of the Quartet Op. 132, Joachim also received from J.N. Galitzin the Quartet Op. 130. In 1889, Joachim took both manuscripts to the newly-founded Beethovenhaus and presented them as a gift. Fischman, in his review of the Beethoven autograph manuscripts in Russia, also mentions sketches for a Ukrainian song (WoO 158/1, No. 6), and sketches for the *adagio* movement of the Hammerklavier Sonata for Piano Op. 106. The second page of the latter book contains notations indicating that in 1844 it was in the possession of J.B. Streicher of Vienna, son of Johann and Nanette Streicher, who were good friends of Beethoven (and also of Schiller).

Beethoven, Joseph Böhm, and the Vienna School

Prince Galitzin's son's presentation of the autograph manuscript to Joseph Joachim is testimony to an extraordinary understanding of Beethoven's works and to a "living" Beethoven tradition, traces of which can be felt down to the present day. Consider what happened at the Austrian debut of the first quartet dedicated to Galitzin, Op. 127. Under the direction of Ignaz Schuppanzigh, the performance, on March 6, 1825 went unsatisfactorily; it was merely a "weak *succès d'estime,*" as the violinist Joseph Böhm reported later. The conversation books from that time show that Beethoven held his friend the violinist Schuppanzigh, who had led the Quartet Association for years, as chiefly responsible for the flop. Beethoven and Schuppanzigh got into a nose-to-nose argument (the following reproduces Schuppanzigh's written side of the conversation, with dashes for Beethoven's verbal interruptions; note that Schuppanzigh addresses Beethoven in the extremely formal third person, as "he," "his," and "him"):

> Schuppanzigh: His brother is a real dolt. I said that I would not present it [the quartet] before it was really perfected. — — How can he think that of me, after I have certainly acknowledged it to be the greatest quartet ever? — — It is true that we did it too early, and that it didn't come off as it should have; but that wasn't the fault of myself alone, but of all 4 of us. — — That's a despicable lie. — — That's silly babbling, I'm not capable of saying such a thing. — — I was misunderstood, I said that I didn't want to give [it] on the following Sunday, because it's still too new and too difficult for us. — — Does he, then, believe everything his brother says? I haven't seen his brother since the quartet. — — Who adores him more than I do? — Give me my part to study, and then a week from tomorrow we'll give it as well as it's in our power to do. — — Believe me, there's a whole pack of hangmen here, who don't know what to say about me when it comes to performance technique, they can't get anywhere near me, and so they come around, infected with such piggishness, it's all from the Büring Conservatorial Appendix [Schuppanzigh means Pieringer (the second violinist) and Merk, who were employed by the conservatory and who were performing quartets along with Böhm] — — Just let his brother tell me that to my face. — — Sure, I have played it often. — — It's certainly not any more difficult than the 2nd or 3rd [quartet]. Böhm isn't capable of playing his quartet right, I insist. . . . The public quartet performances go as well together that way, as they could possibly go. There aren't any mechanical difficulties in there, it's only the originality that makes it difficult, which you can't grasp at first sight. — — If Böhm gives it for his benefit, I have nothing else to add; but if nothing comes of it, just give it back to me again, and I promise it will go well. — — He mustn't imagine that it really went off all that badly; at these few rehearsals it went quite well. — — I'm absolutely not saying that it went perfectly. — — I just said that I can't be angry at him over the fact that this obscenity is just his brother's stupid babblings.[15]

But despite Schuppanzigh's pleas, Beethoven, finally fed up with Schuppanzigh's evidently slapdash playing, entrusted Joseph Böhm with the task of performing this quartet. Böhm later reports, very precisely:

> When he heard this, Beethoven flew into a rage, and both the public and the performers were taken to task with harsh words. Beethoven could not rest until vengeance had

The Böhm Family and Georg Cantor

One of the remarkable aspects of our celebration of Ludwig van Beethoven's 225th birthday, is the fact that, from our present-day vantage-point, important affinities in the domain of the history of ideas, also show amazing historical family connections. Georg Cantor's pioneering accomplishments in creating the theory of manifolds ("theory of aggregates") are rather well known. Earlier in his life, however, Cantor had great enthusiasm for pursuing an artistic career. He was born in 1845 in St. Petersburg. Since 1834-35, his father had had a successful brokerage business there. Cantor's mother, Marie Böhm, came from a very well-known family. Her father, Franz Ludwig Böhm, was director of the Imperial Opera in Petersburg. And beginning in 1819, Franz's brother Josef, born in Hungary, was professor for violin at the Vienna Conservatory—the same person whom Beethoven called upon to play his E-flat quartet. Georg Cantor's brother is said to have been a proficient pianist; Cantor's daughter Else became a well known singer and music teacher.

been exacted. He sent for me very early in the morning. In his usual brusque manner, he told me, "You must play my quartet"—and that was that. Further comments, second thoughts were of no avail: what Beethoven wanted, just had to happen. There was diligent study, and frequent rehearsals under Beethoven's own watchful eyes. And I do not say "under Beethoven's watchful eyes" lightly, since the unfortunate man was already so deaf by then, that he could no longer hear the divine sounds of his own compositions. But a rehearsal in his presence was still no easy matter. With unbroken attention, his eyes would follow the bow, from which he could discern even the slightest unsteadiness in tempo or rhythm, and could correct it immediately. It was this quartet that had a *meno vivace* at the end, which seemed to me to weaken the effect of the whole. I therefore recommended that at the rehearsal, the tempo should remain unchanged at that point, which was done, and which indeed did make a better impression. Beethoven, meanwhile, crouched in a corner, not hearing it at all, but watching with unbroken attention. Then, after the final stroke of the bow, he said laconically, "Can stay that way," went to the music stand, and crossed out the *meno vivace* in all four parts. The quartet was finally performed, and was received with a veritable storm of applause.[16]

Professor Joseph Böhm was a much sought-after violin teacher, whose "Viennese School" later produced generations of great violinists and also influenced Joseph Joachim. When one listens to a performance of Beethoven's late works by the Amadeus Quartet, one can also hear, in this ensemble's forty years of work on these late works of Beethoven, something that has been passed on directly, from person to person, from Böhm's personal work with Beethoven, *via* such teachers as Jakob Grün, Joseph Joachim, Max Rostal, Carl Flesch, to the Amadeus Quartet's first violinist Norbert Brainin.

On the debut of the Op. 127 with Böhm as first violinist, the *Theaterzeitung* wrote on April 28, 1825: "A stalwart friend of art and noble connoisseur put on a new production of this quartet by the above-mentioned gentlemen, but with the first chair occupied by Prof. Böhm, since in the meantime he had played the new quartet with great success before a smaller committee of artistic judges. This professor presented this wonderful quartet two times during the same evening, before the same quite numerous audience of artists and amateurs, in such a way that nothing more could possibly be asked for; the veil of clouds disappeared, and the magnificent work beamed forth in full glory."[17]

Rediscovering Beethoven's 'Inventions'

It is still customary in artistic professions, and also often among great physicists, to view one's own accomplishments in the light of one's own teacher—a line which often stretches back across many generations of the same "school," such as can be seen with the tradition of the Vienna School of violin-playing down to the present day. Within the historical Classical intellectual tradition, this is even more strongly anchored in people's consciousness, than it is with the "modern schools." This is yet another confirmation that "schoolbook knowledge" is merely dead knowledge—as opposed to having been educated by a teacher who assists the student in "reliving" previous discoveries. For this reason, Beethoven's late works, when they are performed in the Classical spirit, never fail to be a treasure-trove of new discoveries.

Norbert Brainin of the Amadeus Quartet described Beethoven's artistic significance for today in the following terms: "It is my view that Beethoven, during his last ten years of life, was the greatest artist who ever lived, regardless of his particular artistic field. No one has ever even come close to him. He stood completely alone. This is shown especially in his last six string quartets, which are really unique. Nothing comparable has ever been composed, written, or fashioned. And for this basic reason, people such as myself and others, have devoted their entire lives to the task of mastering the art of string quartet playing, so that we can play Beethoven's six late quartets. That's really what it's all about."

NOTES

1. *Fidelio,* Vol. III, No. 4, Winter 1994, pp. 37-56.
2. *Fidelio,* Vol. I, No. 3, Fall 1992, pp. 17-50.
3. *Fidelio,* Vol. I, No. 4, Winter 1992, pp. 4-29.
4. In Harry Goldschmidt, ed., *Zu Beethoven 3, Aufsätze und Dokumente* (Berlin: 1988).
5. *Executive Intelligence Review,* Vol. 16, No. 22, May 26, 1989, pp. 16-37.
6. I.e., *Beethoven, Interpretationen seiner Werke, Bd. II,* ed. by Albrecht Riehmüller, Carl Dahlhaus, and Alexander L. Ringer (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1994).
7. See Bruce Director, *op. cit.*
8. See Hartmut Cramer, "Mozarts Bach-Studien: Schlüssel zu Seinen Werke," *Ibykus,* Vol. 10, No. 36, 3rd Quarter, 1991.
9. In *Friedrich Schiller: Poet of Freedom, Vol. II,* ed. by William F. Wertz, Jr. (Washington, D.C.: Schiller Institute, 1988), pp. 439-40.
10. Sieghard Brandenburg, ("The Historical Background to the 'Heiliger Dankgesang' in Beethoven's A-minor Quartet Op. 132," in *Beethoven Studies 3,* ed. by Alan Tyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
11. Alexander Wheelock Thayer, *Ludwig van Beethovens Leben,* ed. by Hermann Deiters and Hugo Riemann, vol. 3 (1923) (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1971). For an abridged English-language translation, see *Thayer's Life of Beethoven,* rev. and ed. by Elliot Forbes (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964).
12. *Ibid.,* p. 246.
13. *Ibid.,* p. 506.
14. *Ibid.,* p. 423.
15. *Ludwig van Beethoven Konversationshefte,* vol. 7 (Hefte 77-90) ed. under auspices of the Deutsche Staatsbibliotek Berlin (Leipzig: Deutsche Verlag fur Musik, 1978), pp. 196-198 (Heft 86, ca. March 26-April 2, 1825).
16. Thayer, *op. cit.,* vol. 5 (1908)(Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1971), p. 181.
17. *Ibid.,* p. 180.