

Jan Swafford– *Ludwig Rules: A Guide for Studying Beethoven*

The primary elements of music are rhythm, melody, harmony, counterpoint, form, phrasing, articulation, "color," "texture," and the more elusive matters of expression and "narrative."

Most works have a fundamental generating conception or conceptions.

There may be an image or a "program" underlying a work.

Different works privilege these elements differently.

Beethoven, who was obsessed with technique, probed each of these elements deeply, systematically, often innovatively, while essentially never departing from his foundation in the Viennese Classical style of Haydn and Mozart.

PROLOGUE: THE GENERATING CONCEPTION

With Beethoven the inception of a work, as with all artists, is mysterious and unpredictable. A rough sketch may be simply an idea that struck him as interesting, or may represent a fundamental idea for a whole piece. In any case, when sketches for a work of any ambition had gotten underway, Beethoven was from an early point in the game working from an idea, a *generating conception* unique to this particular work. The generating conception of a work was not on the order of, "write another sonata in the usual forms, with a few interesting quirks and different tunes." The generating conception was an idea or a related set of ideas beyond the conventions and expectations of the genre, and beyond a simple desire to do something fresh and original. It is those generating ideas that shape every aspect of a work, that *create* the particular kinds of themes and rhythms and textures and colors, *create* the handling of form and tonality unique to the work at hand.

An example: The singular melodic, rhythmic, formal, and harmonic characteristics of the *Pastoral* Symphony come not from a desire to be fresh and novel (though those are desirable qualities), but rather come from the fact that it is *a pastoral symphony*, not a heroic one like the Third, not a comic one like the Eighth, not a dance-oriented one like the Seventh. The Sixth Symphony does what it does because of that underlying conception--in this case a programmatic conception. The purpose of the symphony is to evoke the intimations of God in nature, so its melodies, rhythms, harmonies, phrasing, orchestration, texture, and form are all shaped to convey feelings of peace, timelessness, infinity, primal fear, holiness, and so on. These elements are meanwhile mapped into the traditional forms and procedures of a symphony. Beethoven's symphonies working with other topics--military, comic, dance-oriented--have their own distinctive touches, in each case rising from the generating conceptions that gave birth to them, in each case inflecting every element of the music from the themes to the whole of

the form, from the microcosm to the macrocosm.

In other words, by the time sketches for a work were well underway, what we see in Beethoven's sketchbooks may be less the *creation* of a work than the *realization* of a generative conception already in place--not completely formed, but in some kind of outline and with a firm sense of what the whole is "about."

In analyzing the music, our understanding of Beethoven's generative conceptions will usually be limited and provisional: We often don't clearly know his generating ideas for works because he rarely talked about them. He said, for example, that he always had a scene or a story in mind when he composed and modeled the music on it, but only occasionally did he tell us what those models were, by way of a piece he named himself. In the case of the *Pastoral* and *Eroica* (originally *Bonaparte*) Symphonies, we can assume the title tells us what the "programmatic" conception was. (What we call a "program" piece, Beethoven and his time called a "character" piece.) We can analyze those works, in part, with reference to those conceptions.

But Beethoven titled few of his pieces and movements, so most of the time we can only discern some elements of what may have been his generating conceptions. In the case of the Fifth Symphony, for example, he was surely working with an idea in the direction of "darkness to light," perhaps more specifically from a sense of the relentless force of fate to a sense of triumph over it (that clearly relevant to his ordeal as a composer losing his hearing). To that end he used a handful of ideas relentlessly through the whole of the work, with the aim of drawing the movements of a symphony more tightly together than they had ever been before.

In analysis, we usually can only discern the generating conceptions toward the end of our process--which is to say, by the *end* of our analysis we may arrive at some understanding of what the composer *began* with, what a composer calls "an idea " that proceeds extensive work on the piece. (Before there is an "idea" in place, a composer may sketch away, but at that stage it tends to be floundering around in search of rhymes and reasons, a sense of *why*.) On the other hand, the "idea" of a piece is often not fully and firmly formed for the composer until the piece is well underway, and likely sometimes the conception is not complete until the last page of the last draft. I suspect that Beethoven had clearer and earlier generating conceptions than most artists do. As the same time, they remained fluid as he worked.

Below are some ideas about how Beethoven wielded the elements of music and his generating conceptions. They are intended as guidelines for musicians analyzing his work. As will be clear, I feel that the wholeness of conception in his music has not been fully appreciated and followed through, though there is a trend in that direction. I'd like to encourage that trend.

Meanwhile, traditionally a good deal of analysis has been concerned with what is normative in a work: how this sonata form, say, resembles all other sonata forms. That is a perfectly valid way to examine a work, but I would argue that at least as relevant is the issue of what makes a given work unique. As philosopher Suzanne Langer wrote, the inevitable modulation to the second section of a sonata form is not mainly "about" going from tonic to dominant; it is more about *this particular and interesting way* of going from tonic to dominant.

The generating conception(s) of a work do not have the intention of making a piece normal, but rather of making it special.

THE PRIME DIRECTIVE

The Prime Directive was articulated by Beethoven himself: "My habit, even when I am composing instrumental music, is always to keep the whole in view." Therefore in analyzing Beethoven, *always keep the whole in view*. From first note to last, a work of Beethoven is *one* unified set of ideas, one *composition* of melody, rhythm, harmony, tonality, form, narrative, and the other elements, all underlain by some generating conception(s) that lie beyond matters of theme, motifs, tonal structure, and so on.

-The First Prime Corollary: *The beginning is sacred*. Beethoven and his time called the beginning of a piece *das Thema*: *The theme*, from whose elements and character everything is derived, in the same way that the beginning of a well-made essay states a thesis, then proceeds to explore and develop it, and ties it up at the end.

Anything about the beginning of a piece, including the most minute detail, may have implications for the whole: the first melodic interval, first motif, first melodic line, compass of the first melodic line, shape of the line, first chord change, first accidental, opening rhythmic character and figure; the texture, orchestration, and expressive feel of the beginning; the articulation and phrasing of the beginning; and so on through the elements of music. Most of the time the beginning will unveil four to six central ideas (sometimes more, sometimes less) that will resonate to the end of the piece. Other important ideas may turn up during the course of the work, but generally the very first measures or phrases will lay out the *most* important elements.

Example: The most famous example is, of course, the Fifth Symphony, whose opening rhythm will turn up in every movement down to the coda of the finale, where the opening's fateful and harmonically ambiguous downward leap is turned to a cadential and triumphant upward leap. That rhythmic tattoo is present not only on the surface of the whole Fifth Symphony but often in its larger dimensions of phrasing and articulation (and in simple numbers of notes and gestures, which tend to come in threes). At the same time, the melodic shape of the symphony's opening (as distinct from its intervals), the notes G Eb F D, form a down-up-down S-curve that will be the primal melodic shape of the Fifth Symphony, imbedded in most of its themes in various intervallic configurations. As an interval, the falling thirds of the opening tattoo are also important. Meanwhile the expressive tone and narrative of the symphony is implicit in the opening bars, which at the same time unveil its spare, sinewy orchestral sound. The opening gesture also tells us this piece will be a narrative concerning something on the order of fate. As noted above, part of the *generating conception* underlying these aspects of the Fifth is that in this particular piece these few ideas will relentlessly permeate the music--an idea not different in technique from all Beethoven works, but here intensely

concentrated.

-The Second Prime Corollary: *Virtually every important event in a Beethoven work will be foreshadowed in some way or other.* An example is the Eighth Symphony, where a disruptive C# keeps turning up in the F-major main theme of the finale. That renegade C# (sometimes called a "sore note") makes its first, relatively benign appearance back in the first movement, as the surprising first note of the second theme that kicks off that theme in the "wrong" key. In turn, that idea of "wrong key" seems to be a generating conception of the Eighth Symphony. In the Fifth Symphony, the famous "fog" that joins the scherzo and finale is foreshadowed in moments of the second movement that seem to drift off into mist, and an analogous moment in the first movement, in the retransition to the recapitulation.

-The Third Prime Corollary: *Beethoven always thought in terms of the technical (call it the Apollonian) and the expressive (the Dionysian) together.* Which is to say: *He never sacrificed technique for expression, or expression for technique.* (Well, hardly ever. There are the matters of the *Grosse Fuge* and a few other examples.) Throughout his career he was obsessed with technique—going to teachers to study species counterpoint (Albrechtsberger), Italian vocal writing (Salieri), and string quartet writing (Förster). At the same time, every major piece besides its "abstract" elements also has a distinctive expressive profile, usually a "narrative" that Beethoven expected sensitive listeners to understand.

MELODY

-*Beethoven's motivic material is derived from the simplest elements of diatonic tonality and metric rhythm:* scales and scraps of scales, a triad, a turn figure, a hook shape, an S-shape, a single interval, a trill, a simple rhythmic figure, and so on. His primal motifs are most often three or four notes, but they can be two notes—even a single note, aka, a "sore note." A celebrated sore note is the first accidental of the *Eroica*, the C# in the melodic line that will have major implications for the symphony in terms of harmony, key, poignant dissonances, etc. Because Beethoven's motivic structures are so simple, he can use them constantly, permeate the texture with them. (That is the main reason his across-the-movements motivic relationships have sometimes mistakenly been dismissed as coincidental.)

-*A motif may be a pattern of intervals (say, a bit of scale or a triad), but it may also be a shape that is independent of interval.* Examples include, again, the pervading down-up-down S-curve of the Fifth Symphony's opening four notes, whose intervals mutate constantly.

Examples: The opening gesture of the Sonata in C Major Op. 2 #2 is a sort of slow trill whose implications resound to the triple trills at the end of the piece.¹ The main motivic material of the *Pathétique* Sonata is the first three melody notes, a bit of ascending scale

1 There are no apprentice works in the Beethoven opus numbers. He was a master of form and development from Op. 1 on—though he improved and deepened steadily.

outlining a minor third, and the "pathetic" falling half step that follows. Beethoven's obsessive concentration on these motifs--a fundamental conception in this piece--contributes to the expressive quality of the movement, its sense of relentlessness. The first two phrases of the *Waldstein* Sonata expose most of the main ideas of the work: the 3-note rising scale pattern in mm. 2-3, which in m. 4 will be extended, inverted, and diminished into a falling five-note scale outlining a fifth; the first melody note, E, which will become the key of the second theme; the chromatically descending bass line; the sense of surging, dynamic energy under restraint, an energy that will finally be unleashed in the ecstatic climaxes of the *Waldstein's* finale. (A generating conception in the *Waldstein* is that long-range gathering intensity, a sort of twenty-minute crescendo.) Meanwhile, the metric articulation of mm. 2-3 in the *Waldstein* foreshadows the rhythm of its second theme: Long, short-short, long, long. In the *Eroica*, the opening theme outlines a triad; all the themes of the symphony will be, in varied ways, based on a triad. At the same time, Beethoven developed the *Eroica's* opening theme from the bass line of the finale variations, which was his starting point and a generating conception for the symphony. Look around the first page of the *Eroica* and you will find subtle derivations and foreshadowings of the finale bass theme, including its three-note chromatic slide.

-Beethoven's structures and thematic materials range from the transparent and obvious to the covert and arcane. In a given work, many of the essential ideas are plainly displayed, pounded out, insisted on, like the rhythmic tattoo of the Fifth and the pathetic falling half steps of the Pathétique. Beethoven wants us to hear these motifs, not in a consciously analytical way but unconsciously, intuitively. This kind of technique creates much of the ineffable sense of organicism and "rightness" in his music. Other elements are more covert, an example being the first movement of the Sonata in E Major Op. 14 #1: the opening theme starts on the dominant; in the coda it starts on the tonic, creating a subtle long-range resolution.

We should remember, though, that a good deal of the distinctive character of a given work, its sense of rightness and inevitability, is created intuitively by the composer, and much of that quality will remain beyond analysis. Composing is not mathematics.

RHYTHM

-A Beethoven work generally has a primary rhythmic motif, whether that motif is overt (the Fifth Symphony) or covert (the constant upbeat-held-over-the-barline rhythms of the Missa Solemnis, starting with the first chord in the piece).

-Beethoven will vary the primary rhythmic motif by devices including augmentation, diminution, extension, contraction, and/or embedding it in the phrasing.

Examples: A covert one, noted above, is the implied metric articulation of bars 3-4 of the *Waldstein*, which becomes the rhythm of the second theme: long, short-short, long long. In the Fifth Symphony, the rhythm of the opening tattoo, 2 3 4 1, is augmented in the

phrasing of the lyrical second theme, which also goes 2 3 4 1. In the "military" refrain of the Fifth's second movement it becomes 123 1, a development of the rhythmic motif: the opening "upbeat" form, the other the "downbeat" form of the motif. On the last page of the Fifth, the rhythmic motif is expressed in three speeds at once.

-*There may be a pervasive phrasing motif, as in the Eighth Symphony, where the main melodies all involve an upbeat: the beginning, bar by bar, is articulated one two three four; the opening themes of the other movements start with an upbeat character, whether short or extended. In keeping with the character of the third movement, the scherzo upbeats are comically extended to whole upbeat phrases.*

-*A familiar local device of Beethoven's is the "rhythmic crescendo" increasing the activity or momentum, and thus the tension, bit by bit; see mm. 50-73 in the first movement of the Waldstein. An allied device is foreshortening, in which a figure is progressively pared down, also increasing the tension and excitement; see the first half of the development in the Pastoral Sonata. (The Waldstein also makes much use of the Beethovenian device of crescendo-to-a-subito-*p*, which tends to put the accumulated energy in a sort of savings account, to be drawn on later---in the case of the Waldstein, drawn on and paid off only in the finale.)*

HARMONY AND TONALITY

-*The first chord change in a work will tend to influence the harmonic nature of the whole. Does it go first to the dominant or the subdominant, a sixth chord, an unexpected chord? The first harmonic move in the Seventh Symphony, I to V6, will have ramifications throughout the symphony: basses moving by half step, often initiating a quick modulation. The Waldstein's celebrated opening jump from C Major to Bb Major announces not that Bb will be an important key, but rather that flat-side keys will dominate the work. Rarely does Beethoven's first harmony change involve a spicy altered chord, a familiar device with the Romantics. An exception to that rule, though, is the first harmonic move of the Eroica, an utterly ambiguous incomplete augmented-sixth (or diminished-7th) chord over an out-of-key C#.*

-*As with that "sore" C# in the Eroica's seventh bar, a sore note will be developed by placing it in various harmonic contexts, including its enharmonic equivalent. In the course of the Eroica the opening C#/Db will turn up as a tonic, a dominant, a leading tone, etc., and it foreshadows the poignant Ab's at the top of ninth chords in the funeral march (a "proxy sore note"). Most sore notes are accidentals, but they can also be diatonic, like the unsettling sixth-degree F in the A-minor main theme of the Kreuzer Sonata. In general, perhaps the best way to view a Beethovenian sore note is as a one-pitchclass motif--usually, but not always, an accidental. If the latter, it is most often the first accidental in the piece. (In general, the first accidental in a piece often has important implications--except for the altered leading tone in minor.)*

-*In keeping with the above, Beethoven's key choices are never arbitrary. Though in a given case the reason may be elusive, he has a reason for every choice of key, whether resulting from a larger structural pattern (keys involving C#/Db in both the Eroica and the Eighth Symphony,*

patterns of mediant-related keys in the Seventh), a simple conventional key choice (dominant or relative major for second themes, which became less common as he got older), or a local pattern of modulations (the descending-third modulation sequence in the development of the Ninth Symphony scherzo, which continues until all twelve chromatic notes have had a turn as root).

-Modulation in sharp directions, including mediants, can be considered dominant substitutes. Those in the flat direction are subdominant substitutes.

More Examples: In the Eighth Symphony in F Major, the disruptive C# sore note of the finale is, as noted above, foreshadowed as early as the second theme of the first movement, where a sudden appearance of C# starts off the second theme briefly in the "wrong" key of D Major. In the finale, the second theme's key also starts off wrong, in that case Ab, with its Db fourth degree.

The Seventh Symphony has a remarkable tonal structure based on patterns of mediants. In the slow introduction of the first movement, the tonic of A major is surrounded by modulations to the flat mediants F and C major. In the third movement, the tonic of F is surrounded by the flat mediants A and, in the trio, D Major. In the finale, A major is surrounded by the diatonic (thus resolving) mediants F# minor and C# minor, while F and C major turn up in the development. At the same time, the primary mediant-related keys in the Seventh--C A F D major--have a deeper relationship than a simple pattern of mediant substitutes for the subdominant. The keys C A F D have three and *only* three notes in common: A D E, which are I IV V of A (they are also the emphasized notes in the first Allegro theme). Thus Beethoven's choice of keys in the Seventh Symphony is anything but arbitrary, and goes beyond a simple pattern of third-related keys. The generating conception is this: In a profoundly subtle way, with their common tones those keys traditionally "distant" from A major end up reinforcing the tonic key of the symphony, the diatonic relationships of tonic, subdominant, and dominant.

-In keeping with the above, *there will be long-range harmonic patterns and resolutions spanning movements in a work.* The gigantic Ninth Symphony revolves around the keys D and Bb. At the end of the *Eroica* scherzo, the rising chromatic C#-D-Eb refers back to and harmonically resolves the unsettling Eb-D-C# on the first page of the symphony.

-In keeping with both the above, *Beethoven will often make similar harmonic (or melodic or rhythmic) moves at analogous places in successive movements.* Again, a fundamental idea of the Eighth Symphony is that the second themes of the outer movements will both begin in the "wrong" key before settling into the "right" one, and both wrong keys will involve a C#/Db. In the first movement coda of the Sonata Op. 2 #2 in C, there is a sudden, striking shift to the flat submediant key Ab at the beginning of the coda; to start the last segment of the sonata's E-major slow movement, Beethoven makes an identical move, to the flat submediant C Major (which is also the home key of the sonata).

-A single chord type may have motivic significance: the Neapolitans in the *Tempest* and

Appassionata Sonatas, augmented-sixth and diminished 7ths in the *Eroica* and other pieces.

-Beethoven often treats 07 chords nonfunctionally, as a moment of tonal suspension, and often slides them around freely rather than resolving them. Similarly, as in the beginning and end of the Seventh Symphony second movement, he might use a 6/4 chord nonfunctionally, as a color.

-Often Beethoven's first decision about a piece was the choice of key. In a period of well-tempered but still unequal tuning in keyboard instruments, each key retained an individual flavor, and Beethoven like his contemporaries had a sense of the innate character of a given key that were partly personal, partly traditional, and partly based on the character of the key in unequal temperament. In other words, *for Beethoven to choose a key for a piece was to a large degree to choose its expressive character*. The most famous of those characters is his "C-minor mood," seen in works including the Pathétique and the Fifth Symphony. Some of his key tendencies were typical for the time—say, C major as an expansive and often festive key (it was the most nearly perfectly in tune on his keyboards), Eb as noble and/or heroic. But Beethoven had several key associations apparently unique to himself. These included a love of Ab major, in his time often called ugly because it was the least in-tune common key on the keyboard. He also had an interest in deep-flat keys including the rare Eb minor, whose character for him was generally fraught, inward, tragic, and sometimes eerie (as in the middle of the second movement of Op. 18, No. 6). Meanwhile, like Haydn and Mozart before him, when Beethoven issued a set of pieces for the same medium under an opus number, he would make sure they were in a variety of keys and characters, usually with at least one in minor.

However: When Beethoven returned to a given key, he might give it a quite fresh character: Not all his works in Eb are "heroic," and the C major of the *Waldstein* is not broad and placid but rather driving and dynamic. A given key seems to have had a core quality for him, but he was not interested in repeating himself and therefore not interested in treating a given key the same way every time.

COUNTERPOINT

-Like Haydn and Mozart, in his youth Beethoven studied polyphony in Renaissance style through the species exercises invented by Fux. The first implication of that study, as with Haydn and Mozart, is this: Whether the texture is overtly "contrapuntal" or not, *Beethoven is always writing counterpoint*, even when the surface is a tune with Alberti-bass accompaniment.² To put it another way, Beethoven (like Bach and Haydn and Mozart) viewed harmony as something *created* by lines, by counterpoint, rather than harmony as chord-to-chord patterns.

-Again like Haydn and Mozart, *Beethoven was determined to integrate contrapuntal*

² An example from Mozart is the beginning of the G minor Symphony; note how the jittery viola accompaniment changes to maintain good counterpoint with the melody.

procedures, especially fugue and canon, into the homophonic genres of sonata, rondo, etc. At the time, counterpoint was referred to as the "learned style." In Beethoven there are too many examples of learned style to mention, but they include the fugues and fughettas in the *Eroica*, canons in the first movement of the Fourth Symphony, and so on.

-This general Classical-period yen for counterpoint reached its apotheosis in Beethoven's late music, where he steadily created contrapuntal textures and turned increasingly to contrapuntal genres, integrating the traditionally distinct and even antithetical genres of fugue and sonata form: the fugal first movement of the late C# minor String Quartet; the quasi-fugal, sonata-form finale of the late C minor Sonata. As early as the third Razumovsky quartet, we find an entirely fugal finale. The *Missa Solemnis* is steadily contrapuntal, regularly imitative, sometimes with fully developed fugues including the gigantic *Et vitam venturi*. The climax and perhaps exhaustion of this trend in his music, of course, are the *Grosse Fuge* and the finale of the *Hammerklavier*, both of which are elaborately concerned with old contrapuntal devices of inversion, augmentation, diminution, etc. Beethoven's interest in counterpoint and contrapuntal genres such as fugue and canon was steadily influenced by his youthful experience with Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, which he played from his teens.

COLOR AND TEXTURE

-Part of the striking individuality of most pieces by Beethoven is that *each has a distinctive color and texture*, in the orchestral music as well as the chamber and solo piano music. Recall the warm and expansive sound of the Fourth Symphony; compare it to the lean and sinewy sound of the Fifth, so different from the warm and lush sound of the Sixth; note the pesante and ritmico quality and high pealing A horns of the Seventh; note the massive, rich sonorities of the Ninth. From the start but even more from the middle period, each of the piano sonatas has a unique sonority, defined at the outset: It is as if each sonata takes a different approach to the instrument, and the leading idea is as much as anything a distinctive sonority. The late piano sonatas constantly experiment with sonority, including wide spaces between the hands and long-sustained trills. Some of the late string quartets look like Schoenberg on the page, each part a distinct texture, and the late quartets often have a *Klangfarbenmelodie* aspect, each phrase of a theme scored differently: see the constantly varied scorings of the main theme in the *Alla danza tedesca* of the Bb Quartet, Op. 130. His early overtures have an orchestral sound quite distinct from the symphonies, one strongly influenced by a composer whose theatrical music he admired, Cherubini. His later overtures have a sound of their own, not quite like the symphonies or like Cherubini.

-In keeping with the above, *Beethoven's instrumental color is always expressive*. A prime example comes as early as the Op. 18 #6 quartet, which has an extended introduction to the finale labeled *La malinconia*, melancholy. The racing finale that ensues seems to be of

the gay, banish-care variety--yet the ominous *malinconia* music keeps turning up as an interruption to the Allegro. In fact, even the Allegro music is shadowed because of the scoring: there is a general avoidance of the bright E string of the violin, the supposed gaiety being relegated to the less brilliant lower strings, making a timbral expressive effect of enormous subtlety: *La malinconia* is never really banished in the finale. As E. M. Forster says in *Howard's End* of the analogous effect in the finale of the Fifth Symphony: "Beethoven knew the demon can always come back." (As Forster also said throughout that novel, relevant to analyzing music as to many other endeavors: "Only connect.")

FORM

-*Beethoven's forms are usually traditional, though he put his stamp on all of them.* In other words, he remained essentially true to the formal models of Haydn and Mozart, to which we give names including sonata form, sonata-rondo, cavatina, theme and variations, ABA, the genres of symphony, sonata, string quartet, and so on. Sometimes, as in the finales of the *Eroica* and the Ninth, Beethoven created unique hybrid or ad hoc forms. Most of the time he revolutionized received forms from within, by expanding their proportions and recasting the relative weights of sections, such as his longer and weightier developments and codas.

-At the same time, *Beethoven changed the overall balance of multi-movement works* from the generally *front-weighted* approach of Haydn and Mozart (the first movement the weightiest and most serious, finales often light and dancelike) to at first a roughly equal weight of first and last movements (the Fifth Symphony), to finally a fully *end-weighted* model, the prime example being the Ninth Symphony.

-To compensate for the increasing weight and seriousness of his finales, Beethoven turned the traditional minuet of the third movement into the faster, more nimble and playful scherzo (a genre Haydn invented but did not use in his symphonies). In the Ninth Symphony, in order to prepare the intended climactic and revelatory quality of the finale, Beethoven made the first movement radically unstable: resolutions and root-position chords are few and far between.

-In general, *Beethoven pushes and transforms every element of his inherited forms and genres.* He pushes the length, the weight, the contrast, the variety of keys, the integration of material among movements, and on and on. In the late works movements often flow together, introductions and interludes acquiring so much weight as to obscure (but not fully erase) the traditional four-movement pattern, infusing the whole form with elements of the fantasia.

-As a master principle: *In Beethoven the emphasis of the work is largely on the entire form more than on individual moments.* In other words, the forms are not vehicles to contain and show off great moments and beautiful themes; rather the individuality of the moments and themes are geared to keep our attention on the whole: how the spine-tingling climax or the lovely tune is part of the complete unfolding. In still other words: Ultimately Beethoven's works are less

"about" their material than they are "about" the total experience of the work, which resembles a little life or a single prolonged experience. As in most other dimensions, the late music brings this sense of integration to its highest point--while simultaneously emphasizing small moments and sudden quixotic changes of direction. I.e.: In the late music Beethoven intensified *both* the control *and* the sense of spontaneity.

-A quote from Friedrich Schiller is relevant to this sense of form being more important than content: "In a truly beautiful work of art the content should do nothing, the form everything...Therefore the real artistic secret of the master consists in his annihilation of the material by means of the form." [*Aesthetic Education* 105-6] This can't be said precisely to represent Beethoven's attitude toward form, but it suggests the direction of much of his music (likewise that of Haydn and Mozart).

-In keeping with the above principal, *Beethoven is extremely concerned with large-scale balances and proportions within movements, and from movement to movement*. A coda might be the same length as a development, or the development and coda together equaling the length of the exposition.

-Beethoven's long codas can often be considered a second development, working with issues left outstanding or, as in the Fifth Symphony, adding a new degree of intensity. At the same time, the coda may prepare a coming movement, tonally or thematically: at the end of the Fifth Symphony first movement, the sweeping descents of a sixth from Eb to G (unique in this movement) prepare the same descent in the "refrain" motif of the next movement. At the same time his codas may do their traditional job of restoring tonal stability around the tonic and giving a sense of finality. But in some works, such as the first movements of the *Eroica* and the Ninth Symphony, the coda deliberately leaves a feeling that nothing is settled.

-*Most often Beethoven composed works in movement order, front-to-back, sometimes with sketching ahead. However, there is an important collection of works which he also in some degree composed back-to-front.*

-A striking example of back-to-front composing is the *Kreuzer* Sonata, for which Beethoven began with a discarded movement from an earlier violin sonata. He used ideas from that existing finale, including a "sore note" next to the dominant and an embedded chain of 3rds, as fundamental material for the *Kreuzer's* new movements. In the case of the *Eroica* he also started with recycled material, a bass line and melody from his *Creatures of Prometheus* ballet music, which he intended to use as a theme for variations in the finale. With that ending concept in hand, though not yet the completed finale, he used the *Prometheus* bass line as a framework to create the opening "*Eroica* theme" of the symphony. From that point he composed front-to-back. Thus the *Eroica* was

composed *both* back-to-front and front-to-back. As a result, the triadic quality of the *Eroica* theme pervades the material of the symphony, and at the same time the endpoint, the *Prometheus* bass, also spreads its influences throughout. A generating conception here seems to be that the *Prometheus* bass would appear like the distillation and completion of the *Eroica* theme. This in turn suggests a programmatic conception. If we call the *Eroica* theme "the hero" and the *Prometheus* theme "humanity," what the hero has wrought in the first movement makes possible the human freedom and enlightenment symbolized in the finale, which takes shape in the style of a dance called the *englische*. That popular dance, because it involved changing partners, came to symbolize a democratic mingling of classes, a harmonious state.

-Similarly, in drafting the Ninth Symphony Beethoven first settled on the beginning of the "Joy" theme of the finale, then sprinkled the earlier movements with increasingly overt foreshadowings of it, so that the "Joy" theme would arrive in the finale as a goal and revelation. This and other elements make a significant connection from the *Eroica* to the Ninth. The first movements of each are the most complex in the symphonies, and both works were composed in some degree back-to-front. And both *Eroica* and Ninth have a manifest extra-musical social and ethical dimension that relates back to the Enlightenment ideals Beethoven absorbed in his youth in Bonn: the goal of a happy and harmonious society, which in *An die Freude* Schiller called *Elysium*.

PHRASING AND ARTICULATION

-Much of Beethoven's phrasing is surprisingly "regular"--the old 2+2, 4+4, etc. The variety comes at the higher levels: the grouping of phrases, the articulation of them, etc. As noted above in regard to the Eighth Symphony, phrasing itself can have motivic significance: the one *two three four* phrasing of the Eighth's opening theme has implications in the articulation of all the themes: it is a fundamental *articulation conception* particular to that piece. Perhaps this is the place to note that Beethoven was a master of the eloquent silence: the angry silences of the first movement of the *Serioso* quartet, the violent silences of the introduction of the *Coriolan* Overture ending with the bleak silence of the hero's death.

EXPRESSION, NARRATIVE, PROGRAM

Caveat: The expressive aspect of music is of course elusive and personal. Many musicians, Beethoven included, are not given to talking about expression. Instinctively they seem to feel that music is an emotional language beyond words, and you either get it or you don't. If you get it, words aren't necessary, and can even limit the effect of the music. If you don't get it, words will not help much.

That said, I believe words, including emotional descriptions, can help *some*. General knowledge of formal and technical issues can also help--some. Certainly professional musicians

need an understanding of all the technical as well as expressive issues in music. Meanwhile academics sometimes dismiss musical expression as subjective and therefore unscholarly. I agree in part, but add that everything about music has a subjective (also traditional, cultural, etc.) element, and meanwhile scholarly traditions have their blind spots. Western music theory, for example, has so far proven helpless in conceptualizing rhythm, the most primal element in music.

-In regard to expression, I believe that *Beethoven intended listeners to sense, whether consciously or not, the expressive qualities and dramatic narratives of his music, especially in the works of the First and Second Periods*. In the case of the *Pathétique*, Beethoven names the expressive quality for us, and from that point it is not hard to intuit a narrative of pathos, resignation, and defiance (or some such qualities) in the three movements of the sonata. I would argue that anyone who does not sense the rage and violence of the first movement of the Op. 90 *Serioso* Quartet does not "understand" the piece. (Beethoven largely avoided those kinds of headings; the *Moonlight* and *Appassionata* are not his titles, though the *Pastoral* Symphony, *Serioso* Quartet, and *Lebewohl* Sonata are his.) For another case, having to do with the expressive effect of proportion: The short, abrupt conclusion of the massive *Missa Solemnis*, with war-drums rumbling in the distance, is eloquent; it tells us God has not answered humankind's anguished prayer for peace.

-As early as the Op. 1 piano trios and the Op. 18 quartets, it is clear that *Beethoven understood a work to be a unified dramatic narrative, one story, from beginning to end*. A familiar example is the tragic quality that marks the whole of the *Appassionata*; its middle movement, like that of the *Pathétique*, has a tone of, say, noble resignation. To return to the Op. 18 #6 quartet: the roots of *La malinconia* can be traced to hints in the first movement's second theme; that quality expands in the eerie Eb-minor central section of the next movement; it is put aside in the scherzo (often true of Beethoven's scherzos, especially the early ones); then *La malinconia* appears full-blown and so labeled; and it rears up repeatedly in the supposedly-carefree finale. Like Haydn and Mozart, or for that matter all truly great composers, Beethoven was a superb psychologist in tone. Part of the fundamental conception of each piece is an implicit encompassing dramatic/expressive/psychological narrative.

-*Beethoven deplored overtly programmatic and pictorial music as superficial and tasteless, but wrote lots of it anyway*, and not only in manifest potboilers like *Wellington's Victory*. Part of the inspiration for the frankly pictorial *Pastoral* Symphony was Haydn's *Seasons*, whose birds and frogs Beethoven was apt to ridicule. His disclaimer for the *Pastoral*, "more expression of feeling than illustration," does not negate its brook, its birds, its dancing peasants and rolling thunder. He did not try to obscure the story of the *Lebewohl* Sonata, in fact wrote the word over the first three notes and labeled each of the movements to make clear its story of departure, sadness, and reunion. Beethoven said that this sort of program is present in virtually all his works, but most of the time he did not reveal them. Instead, quite wisely, he left the stories for us to discover in our own terms. On the other hand, his theater overtures--*Leonore* 1-3, *Coriolan*, *Egmont*, among them--are highly pictorial and programmatic, and for that reason were prime models for the tone poems of the later 19th century.

-To expand the point: Beyond the obvious pictorial and narrative pieces such as the

Pastoral and *Lebewohl*, Beethoven actually steadily wrote illustrative music. Again: *He said that he always had a scene or story in mind when he composed.* Clearly, since he rarely revealed those inspirations, he considered them a private device to help him achieve consistency of tone and narrative. He wanted his notes to speak for themselves, each listener to receive them as an individual. But sometimes something slipped out. Beethoven told a friend that the slow movement of the first string quartet was based on the death of the lovers in *Romeo and Juliet*. On the sketch of another slow movement he jotted, "a weeping willow or acacia on the tomb of my brother." Since his own brothers were alive at the time, he was referring perhaps to another fictional story. Those anecdotes suggest that the private stories behind his pieces were likely to be from literature or mythology rather than from his own life--though surely some of his private programs were autobiographical, like the journey from fateful to triumphant in the Fifth Symphony.

-The works of the Third Period turn away from the relatively clear dramatic narratives of the earlier music to a more nuanced and poetic expressive flow. The late music is characterized by apparently capricious shifts of direction and mood, though equally by stretches of minimalism and time-stopping meditation. The late music pushes all envelopes technical, formal, and expressive even further than he had before.

CODA, OF BEETHOVENIAN DIMENSION

-There are exceptions to every one of the above rules, but not as many exceptions as you might think. Beethoven's craftsmanship is consistent, though so is his voracious and lifelong search for more thorough technique, new angles in every dimension of his art.

Example: As noted, the disruptive C# in the finale of the Eighth Symphony makes its debut in the first movement, but *not* on the first page, rather at the beginning of the second theme. (So, while *the beginning, das Thema, is sacred*, important things can also happen after the beginning.) Meanwhile, concerning the C# in the Eighth: Instead of functioning like a proper sore note with manifold implications, the joke about the C# in the finale is that *it has no implication whatever* on the course of the music--until Beethoven convinces you the symphony is almost over, at which point the C# runs amok until the music ends up in F# minor. Here Beethoven lampoons his own craftsmanship, using the same sore C#/Db that had so many implications in the *Eroica*.

In the late music appear a number of new elements, or intensifications of old elements. We find extended harmonic periods with no cadences, long-breathed songful melodies, even more use of mediant-related keys, small motifs serving as seeds of many themes rather than motifs derived from the opening theme. Movements run together and are more closely integrated in material, sometimes with clear cyclic returns, as in the Ninth Symphony. Again: *In the late music Beethoven pushes every dimension even further than before.* There are more intense contrasts, as in the finale of the Ninth; at the same time there are long stretches of minimalism,

like the trio of the Ninth's scherzo; there is more complexity and more simplicity; there are more dissonance and more childlike glee, at the same time more depth and quietness; and there is a decisive turn away from the heroic model of the middle period toward a spiritual model and the dream of the happiness and brotherhood of humanity.

None of the holistic approach given here is to say that individual movements do not have integrity and individuality of their own. The unprecedented sound and effect of the Seventh Symphony's slow movement made it a particular favorite from its first performances. There had simply never been anything like it. At the same time, that movement is no less part of the motivic, tonal, and narrative whole of the Seventh Symphony, which is not a dramatic narrative but rather a generating conception based on contrasting moods and rhythms of dance. The late Bb String Quartet, Op. 130 is a special case, boggling in the vagaries of its course down to the epically boggling *Grosse Fuge*. But it is possible that the Bb quartet was still conceived as a whole—as a radical experiment, a study in disjunction.

In analyzing Beethoven we should keep in mind that he never heard of Schenker and never heard of our school version of "sonata form," so he can't be required to conform to either of them. He surely was aware of long-range linear elements in his music, but I am skeptical that any of Beethoven's pieces truly follow Schenker to the final reduction. Meanwhile our sense of sonata form was cooked up mainly by Beethoven pupil Carl Czerny and by theorist and Beethoven disciple Adolf Marx in the 1840s. I suspect Beethoven thought of sonata form as essentially this: I--(V) :] X--I (improvise, vary, with contrast). (The parentheses around (V) indicate that the second key in the exposition is "normally" the dominant, but the important point is that it is not the tonic—it may be any key, such as Beethoven's frequent mediants. "X" means that the development typically ranges through a number of keys.)

Still, Beethoven had in a general way the same sense of sonata form we do. In sketches he referred to "first part" and "second part," meaning the sections before and after the repeat. Our first theme was his *Thema*, our second theme his *Mittelgedanke*, middle idea. Our "development" was his *Durchführung*, working-out. Our recapitulation was his *da capo*. And a coda was a coda. But the rigidity of our "school" sonata form was unknown to Beethoven, and therefore he treated it freely. (It is worth mentioning that often Haydn was sometimes freer in his use of sonata form than Beethoven was.)

Something not usually realized about sonata form is that in a singular way it combines the qualities of formal presentation--the exposition and recapitulation--with the freedom of a quasi-improvisation in the development. In the exposition, clarity of form and presentation are the norm; in the development, surprise and boldness are valued, as in free improvisation. The ability of sonata form to suggest character, conflict, narrative, logic, the joining of opposites, at once the qualities of an essay and a drama, allowed instrumental music to subsume qualities of drama, poetry, fiction, even religion and philosophy--and so finally to be called, "the art to which all other arts aspire."

Beethoven, of course, is one of the greatest exponents of that sense of "pure" music. His "heroic" works suggest drama (say, Goethean, Schillerian, and Shakespearian drama) and epic poetry (say, Homer). The late music seems to enfold lyric poetry, Enlightenment deism, and

philosophy.

In the largest view, the final reduction, perhaps the essential terms in which Beethoven composed were *variation* and *improvisation*. In his own time he was a legendary improviser and likely in private used improvisation to discover and develop his ideas: a visitor listened to him improvise on the *Prometheus* bass for two hours, and left with the composer still going (Beethoven was working on the *Eroica* at the time). He wrote many sets of variations, starting with the ones of his student years. For a young composer the variation form is an ideal study of what *composition* is about: taking an idea and making it into something quite different, while preserving its essence. Beethoven did that in all his works: a tight collection of ideas and conceptions that both consciously and instinctively (we can never know which was which) he varied to fashion large works of enormous impact and variety.

Among Beethoven's abiding goals was clearly a sense of logic, rightness, an *organic* quality (whether or not he would have used that word). *Pace* postmodernists and their yen for the arbitrary, the inorganic, and so on, until recent times most artists in all media possessed a horror of the arbitrary. In what one created one wanted freshness and surprise, but also rhymes and reasons. Beethoven, the Enlightenment man who galvanized musical Romanticism, never left behind the Enlightened ideals of clarity and reason.

Of course, by no means are all the above points unique to Beethoven. Nearly everything he did had precedents in the past, in the legacy of Haydn, Mozart, Handel, Bach, et al going back to the polyphony of Palestrina, and theorists of his time whom he is known to have studied. Beethoven believed in precedents, traditions, authorities—though he was not slavishly devoted to any of them. But the issue of his precedents is another story. *Most of the points in this essay also apply to the music of Haydn and Mozart, but they apply more to Beethoven.* That in turn suggests an important element about Beethoven's originality: Most of what he did was based on models, and his most important models were first Mozart, then Haydn. For idiomatic piano writing, Clementi was a prime model; when it came to opera, even to the style and scoring of overtures, Cherubini was his man. For fugue: Bach. All these models were apt to leave audible stylistic traces in his music. His earlier theater-music scoring recalls Cherubini, his fugues often recall Bach. What Beethoven mainly did with his models was to absorb their ideas and then personalize them by doing things *more*: more intense, more consistent, with more intense contrasts, longer, both louder and softer, more elaborate modulations, and so on through the elements of music. As he got older, the audible evidence of his models tended to fall away. But when he prepared for the *Missa Solemnis* he studied the mass repertoire extensively.

We should note that Beethoven was cool to the kind of technical analysis outlined here. He called it "counting syllables," probably thinking of pedants who analyze the meter of a poem and think they know what it means. Beethoven read everything written about himself, and it appears that his preferred response to his work was not of the nuts-and-bolts variety but rather the more poetic and imaginative evocations that we tend to dismiss as "Romantic" and "flowery," by the likes of E.T.A. Hoffmann and Adolf Marx (the latter was a theorist but could be plenty flowery). For a sense of how people in Beethoven's circle who were personally influenced by him responded to his work, read Czerny and, believe it or not, Anton Schindler. The latter, besides

being a toady and a pathological liar, was an accomplished and insightful musician and representative of his generation. We can't take on faith that Beethoven said to Schindler of the Fifth Symphony opening, "Thus fate knocks at the door!", but Schindler was certainly correct that a fundamental conception of the piece had to do with fate and triumph over fate--or qualities in those directions, to taste.

I will hold out one solace to postmodernists. To be logical and organic is one thing, but *how* to achieve those qualities is another. The same train of logic can take myriad and sometimes surprising routes. A motif can be used in a million ways. So, if it makes one feel better: Nothing is utterly determined, composing is not mathematics, so to call a *specific* development or derivation of an idea "arbitrary" is not entirely wrong. After all, there are myriad ways to skin a cat (though most will make a mess of it). The logical working out of an idea may involve uncertainty, the taste of the composer, the taste of a patron, egregious lapses of taste, the intended occasion and performers, the press of a deadline, the inspiration of a moment, a stomachache, the luck of the draw... the "arbitrary," if you like.

It should also be remembered that the above craftsmanly excellences could equally apply to perfectly uninteresting or even incompetent pieces. Whatever the technical skill, a composer like any artist has to make it happen, has to realize the ideas with material that is interesting, exciting, moving at every moment. When Beethoven sketched a lame second theme derived from the main theme it may have had an organic connection, but he had to wait until inspiration supplied him with a *good* theme--something nobody can make happen by will or craft, but only wait for.

To realize and develop any idea in an expected and nicely predictable way is exactly what serious artists of any era are not interested in doing. That's called "clichéd" and "boring." To expand on a point above: Rarely if even does an ambitious composer set out to write a regular piece in a regular form with all the regular modulations and perfect authentic cadences in all the expected places, and so on. Rather he or she sets out to do something new, fresh, and unique to the work at hand. In other words, while serious composers may use received formal models, they use them imaginatively: they do not *conform* to the model but rather creatively *interact* with it, with the goal of creating not a "normal" work but a unique one. To put it yet another way: The *idea* unique to a work is mapped into traditional formal models, and inevitably the models are bent and adapted to conform to the idea. So, again, I suggest that the many analyses that propose to place every work, say, within the conventions of sonata form (with a few quirks perhaps) are seeing the matter backward from how composers see it.

Once again, Beethoven was a master of this game. He is relentlessly logical, organic, holistic, and traditional, while at the same time surprising, delighting, even shocking us at every turn. The wild, dazzling, out-of-nowhere moment that on examination turns out to have been carefully prepared is a Beethoven thumbprint. A prime example is the hair-raising dissonant added-sixth chord that climaxes the development of the *Eroica* first movement, which subsumes everything that came before and changes everything that comes after--including preparing the key of the "new" theme that follows it. (The famous surprise in Haydn's *Surprise* Symphony is likewise logically prepared, but still knocks us out of our seats.) The ability to be logical and

surprising at the same time is one of the most sophisticated achievements of the Classical style.

Moreover, master composers understand that expression is not just a matter of surface gestures in the music but goes all the way to the form. The expressive impact of a piece has to do with its tempo, melodic shape, rhythm, articulation, phrasing, and no less its form. One example is the steady four-bar phrasing of the Fifth Symphony first movement, which contributes importantly to its sense of relentlessness. Another example is Beethoven's Sonata in D major Op. 10 #3: the playfulness of the material in the first movement is reflected in a playful treatment of form, with a transition (or something) in B minor at the bottom of the first page coming on as if it were a theme, the second theme proper not showing up till the end of the next page, that followed by nearly a full page of comically obsessive concentration on the four-note motif of the beginning. This is *expressive form*. It is part of what makes the form of every ambitious and successful work, even if based on tradition, unique to that work. Under all that lies the generating conception, which reshapes the formal models. We can only wonder what Beethoven had in mind, late in life, when he said that he wanted to shape his tenth symphony "in order to create in it a new gravitational force."

As coda to the coda, some thoughts on the conscious and unconscious elements of creation.

When an artist is at work, she or he is *inside* the piece in a way no one else can ever be. Many artists will say that they work in a kind of trance--an intense, feeling kind of concentration that in some degree excludes all else but the job at hand. Artists I've queried say, as do I, that they can barely remember the time they spend at work. Beethoven's trances were so profound that in his youth his friends gave them a name: his *raptus*, rapture. With Beethoven and with many others, during that rapture much of the work of creation goes on unconsciously, by feel and instinct, with the steady contribution of studied and practiced skills.

In analysis we can never know which elements the creator was conscious of and which were unconscious. We can only know what is there on the page. I surmise that Beethoven was a relatively conscious craftsman. In every piece he was deliberately working with a specific plan, a generating conception or related conceptions and roughly a handful of ideas melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, and so on, at the service of those conceptions. Still, he ultimately had to rely on instinct, inspiration, the unconscious, the Muse, the angels, {*your metaphor here*}, to do the vital work. From a conscious motif, formal concept, etc., he had to keep sketching until the Muse gave him something good.

Schoenberg wrote that most of what he understood about his own work from a technical perspective was after the fact, looking back on what he had done in the heat of inspiration. Usually Schoenberg wrote quite fast, in a creative trance, riding the waves of inspiration. In fact, despite all the sketches, Beethoven usually wrote fast too, as did most of the great composers: Bach, Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Brahms--the list is long. They were great in part because they were unusually "inspired." The concept of "talent" may be best seen as an inborn understanding and a gift for inspiration. "Genius" is what lies on the other side of talent. It rests on talent but goes far beyond it, involving an unusual degree of discipline, a tolerance for hard, lonely work, and a restless compulsion to learn and to grow.

Near the end of *Remembrance of Things Past* Marcel Proust wrote that the most profound organic relationships in a work are the ones created unconsciously. Only the unconscious is capable of working at the necessary level of complexity, sensing the whole direction of a work with every word or note added. Brahms apparently believed the opposite: In regard to the *German Requiem* he wrote a critic that only elements consciously crafted by an artist have any meaning. I suggest Proust was right and Brahms in this case wrong. Leonardo da Vinci put the matter succinctly: "The organ of perception acts more rapidly than the judgment." For an artist, the act of creation is much like an act of perception. You sense something around you however dimly, you seize part of it, and it begins to reveal itself, sometimes faster than you can get it down. For a fiction writer, characters appear as if in a dream and start talking. In composing a work of music gestures and melodies often arrive on their own. Drafting these words, I followed a thread of logic I had little time to define because the words came faster than my analysis of their direction. Later, judgment steps in and the revising process begins: *What am I trying to say here? Are there corollaries? How can I make this clearer and better?* The growth of skill as an artist involves sharpening *both* the conscious and unconscious elements.

Ultimately, for the artist a great deal of the matter comes down to a very simple question: Is it any good or not? In practice, that simple question is too complex for the conscious mind to answer--or for that matter, for any one person including the artist to answer. When Beethoven's pupil Ferdinand Ries, hoping for some insight, asked Beethoven why he changed an accompaniment figure in a symphony, Beethoven only shrugged and said, "This way is better." That's all he needed to know. And he was an acute and unforgiving judge of his own work. Hemingway said that the one indispensable tool for an artist is "a built-in, shockproof, crap detector" (my paraphrase). Surely he understood that nobody's detector is infallible. I have found Beethoven's detector unusually acute, including an unsentimental recognition of his own lesser works and potboilers.

In analysis, we can't be *inside* a work as the creator was; only sometimes can we sort out what was done consciously and unconsciously by the artist; often we can only guess at the generating conceptions. Ultimately we only know what is on the page. But there is a great deal to be learned by subjecting music to careful analysis. It is a fascinating, enlightening, and necessary process for a musician to examine the work of the masters of our art. By getting some insight into how Beethoven made his music, we learn to make music better ourselves.

In examining instrumental music particularly, we are literally looking into the mind of its creator, seeing the traces of his or her thoughts and inspirations, all communicated without words. In analyzing music, the difficulty is turning an art that is by nature beyond words, into words--a task invariably limited and often frustrating, but vital to our understanding of our craft, and ultimately enlightening about ourselves as artists and human beings.