

# Reassessing Ferdinand Ries in Vienna: Ramifications for Beethoven Biography

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*Ferdinand Ries was one of Beethoven's most important piano pupils. In 1838 he published a book, together with Franz Wegeler, which contained a wealth of information on the composer. It comprised such topics as Beethoven's loss of hearing, his dealings with publishers, his working methods, and the genesis of some of his compositions. Today, Ries's book is still regarded as a crucial source for Beethoven scholarship.*

*A vexing question that has never been conclusively answered is: when did Ries arrive in Vienna to study with Beethoven? The answer is paramount for a correct appraisal and assessment of Ries's claims. In the literature proposals on the arrival date vary from 1800 to 1803, a relatively wide span in the light of Beethoven's compositional and personal development.*

*This essay provides evidence that Ries cannot have arrived earlier in Vienna than March 1803. Central to the argumentation is an illegal printing of Beethoven's Gellert Lieder (op. 48), a source that invites a new chronology for some of Beethoven's undated correspondence. This, in turn, provides a fresh perspective on a series of biographical events and the dating of a major sketchbook.*

*Ries's arrival in 1803 calls for a reevaluation of assumptions that have shaped the literature, such as the belief that writing the 'Heiligenstadt Testament' was a cathartic experience that led Beethoven to embark on the 'Eroica' Symphony.*

When did young Ferdinand Ries arrive in Vienna to study with Beethoven? This thorny issue has a long history of debate, yet a conspicuous lack of unanimity lingers in Beethoven scholarship. Suggestions for Ries's arrival date cover the relatively wide time range of 1800 to the first months of 1803. Ries himself is poor guidance, for he demonstrably contradicted himself. On the one hand he claimed to have entered into Beethoven's service 'in 1800', but on the other he recollected that his first activities comprised copying work for the oratorio *Christus am Ölberge*, the premiere of which was on April 5, 1803.<sup>1</sup>

The confusion was caused by a letter by Beethoven to his long-time friend Franz Wegeler, which was dated '29 June' (no year specified):

Concerning [father] Ries ... I will come back to you in writing on the subject of his son, although I think that he might be more successful in Paris than in Vienna. ... In the autumn or winter I will see what I can do for him, for at that period people hurry back to the city.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Franz Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries, *Biographische Notizen über Ludwig van Beethoven* (Coblenz: Rädiker, 1838), 75–6.

<sup>2</sup> Sieghard Brandenburg, ed., *Ludwig van Beethoven: Briefwechsel Gesamtausgabe*, 7 vols (Munich: Henle, 1996–98), vol. 1, 78–81.

Ries and Wegeler took this as having been written in 1800,<sup>3</sup> although it was from 1801.<sup>4</sup> Illustrative of Ries's own uncertainty was the short biography in the English periodical *The Harmonicon* ('Memoir of Ferdinand Ries', March 1824, based on details adduced by Ries himself) where the arrival in Vienna was determined to have occurred in 1801.<sup>5</sup> Whatever date is proposed in critical writing today, it is nearly always accompanied by such qualifications as 'probably', 'possibly' or 'evidently'. Some scholars have opted for pragmatic avoidance and refusal to confront the problem, resigned to its insolubility; others revert to unsubstantiated theories.<sup>6</sup> The problem is in need of an explanation, for – as will be shown – it permeates various strands of Beethoven scholarship.

In 2004 I defended the argument – tentatively proposed by others earlier<sup>7</sup> – that Ries cannot have arrived in Vienna earlier than March 1803, that is very shortly before Beethoven's mammoth concert of 5 April with the premieres of his oratorio *Christus am Ölberge*, the Third Piano Concerto and the Second Symphony.<sup>8</sup> I made my case by singling out chronologically those recollections by Ries in the *Notizen* that actually covered the young man's personal contact with Beethoven, from those that he must have gathered from hearsay: stories told to him by Beethoven or some third party. My claim was substantiated with new and hard evidence: a letter of introduction drawn up by the Munich composer Carl Cannabich for Ries's benefit and addressed to Beethoven's Viennese friend Andreas Streicher. Dated 29 December 1802, this document made it extremely unlikely, if not outright impossible, that Ries was in Vienna prior to receiving it, for this would imply that the letter was written while Ries had already properly installed himself there.

Yet, the arrival date of 1803 failed to win widespread acceptance. Subsequent commentators have maintained a critical stance, and it is still commonly held today that Ries was already in Vienna earlier. A selection from recent scholarly literature may illuminate this. William Kinderman challenged my dating in a review

<sup>3</sup> Wegeler and Ries, *Biographische Notizen*, 22–8.

<sup>4</sup> The letter continued to trouble biographers long after its re-dating by Alexander Wheelock Thayer; see Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 81. In his dissertation *Ferdinand Ries' Jugendentwicklung* (Bonn: Paul Rost & Co, 1915), 9–12, Ludwig Ueberfeldt conjectured that this re-dating was actually incorrect, maintaining that the letter had been written in 1800 and continuing: 'After receipt ... young Ries embarked on his trip, first to Munich, where he stayed from late autumn 1800 to summer 1801, to wander from there to Vienna.'

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Wheelock Thayer (rev. Hermann Deiters and Hugo Riemann), *Ludwig van Beethovens Leben*, 3rd edn, 5 vols, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1922), 290–91.

<sup>6</sup> A case in point is Lewis Lockwood and Alan Gosman, eds, *Beethoven's 'Eroica' Sketchbook: A Critical Edition* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013). For the chronology of the sketchbook the editors adopted an external hypothesis about Ries's arrival date, which gave rise to much confusion; see for example comments on the sketchbook in Kurt Dorfmueller, Norbert Gertsch, and Julia Ronge, *Ludwig van Beethoven: Thematisch-bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis*, 2 vols (Munich: Henle, 2014, hereafter LvBWV), where it is dated with 'approximately from June 1803 to April 1804' (vol. 1, 296 and vol. 2, 563).

<sup>7</sup> For instance, Max Unger, 'Beethovens letzte Briefe und Unterschriften', *Die Musik* (1942): 154 and Rudolf Klein, *Beethoven-Stätten in Österreich* (Vienna: Verlag Elisabeth Lafite, 1970), 38.

<sup>8</sup> Jos van der Zanden, 'Ferdinand Ries in Vienna: New Perspectives on the *Notizen*', *The Beethoven Journal* 19/2 (2004): 51–65 (German version: 'Ferdinand Ries in Wien. Neue Perspektiven zu den *Notizen*', *Bonner Beethoven Studien* 5 (2005): 191–212).

of Tilman Skowroneck's *Beethoven the Pianist*.<sup>9</sup> Walther Brauneis, in a study exploring the location of a dwelling widely known to visitors to modern Vienna as 'Eroica-House' (in Döbling), claimed that Ries was Beethoven's pupil 'from the winter of 1801/02 until fall 1805',<sup>10</sup> a view shared by Patricia Stroh.<sup>11</sup> In a description of the Wegeler collection, Friederike Grigat dated a Beethoven letter to Ries as 'summer 1802', implying that the latter was in Vienna then.<sup>12</sup> Theodore Albrecht, referring to Heiligenstadt, held that Ries 'walked three times a week for lessons while Beethoven lived there in 1802'.<sup>13</sup> Katherine Syer, in her study of the Landsberg 6 ('Eroica') sketchbook, asserted that Cannabich's letter of introduction was 'not in itself conclusive' as evidence, without however explaining its date, purpose or practical use.<sup>14</sup> Syer's theory, in turn, informed Lewis Lockwood's and Alan Gosman's chronology of Landsberg 6.<sup>15</sup> In LvBWV, the revised Kinsky/Halm catalogue, the new date was tentatively accepted under the heading of the Piano Sonatas op. 31 (Ries 'probably met Beethoven in Vienna only at the beginning of 1803'). But curiously, under op. 45, the Marches for piano four hands, it was stated that Beethoven wrote a letter to Ries in 'October 1802'. Furthermore, under the String Trios op. 9 can be found the contradiction that Beethoven procured a position for Ries 'in April 1802'. Evidently, the editorial team of the catalogue could not agree on the matter.<sup>16</sup> The list of those who denounce 1803 can be extended.

A reliable dating, at least one narrowed down to workable boundaries, would throw light on a number of uncertainties regarding Beethoven. Ries's wealth of information on the composer – a long list of sundry anecdotes, facts, observations and impressions comprised in his and Franz Wegeler's *Biographische Notizen über Ludwig van Beethoven* published in 1838 – has been unanimously acknowledged as an indispensable source for Beethoven studies, both musical and biographical. The only one who publicly denigrated the value of Ries's recollections was Anton Schindler, who in the first edition of his *Biographie* rather maliciously questioned

<sup>9</sup> William Kinderman, "'Beethoven the Pianist" by Tilman Skowroneck', *Performance Practice Review* 16/1 (2011): 5.

<sup>10</sup> Walther Brauneis, 'Der "Eroica"-Mythos und Döbling. Oder: Wo arbeitete Beethoven im Sommer 1803 an seiner Dritten Symphonie?', in *Beiträge zu Biographie und Schaffensprozess bei Beethoven*, ed. Rainer Cadenbach and Jürgen May (Bonn: Verlag Beethoven-Haus, 2011), 28.

<sup>11</sup> Patricia Stroh, 'Beethoven Auction Report (2015)', *The Beethoven Journal* 30/2 (2015): 82.

<sup>12</sup> Friederike Grigat, 'Die Sammlung Wegeler im Beethoven-Haus Bonn, Kritischer Katalog', *Bonner Beethoven-Studien* 7 (Bonn: Verlag Beethoven-Haus, 2008), 58.

<sup>13</sup> Theodore Albrecht, 'Time, Distance, Weather, Daily Routine, and Wordplay as Factors in Interpreting Beethoven's Conversation Books', *The Beethoven Journal* 28/2 (2013): 64.

<sup>14</sup> Katherine R. Syer, 'A Peculiar Hybrid: The Structure and Chronology of the "Eroica" Sketchbook (Landsberg 6)', *Bonner Beethoven-Studien* 5 (2006): 170.

<sup>15</sup> Lockwood and Gosman, *Beethoven's 'Eroica' Sketchbook*, vol. 1, 7: 'we attach considerable weight to Syer's view that Beethoven could have begun using this sketchbook, Landberg 6, before he had completely filled up Wielhorsky'. Elsewhere (53) Syer's hypothesis was called 'broadly persuasive', with compelling determinacy.

<sup>16</sup> LvBWV, vol. 1, 184, 244 and 47, respectively. Confusion about Ries's arrival date has long caused uncertainty with regard to the gestation of the 'Eroica' Symphony. About a century ago it was even believed that there had been two separate compositional phases: 'The year of origin for the second and final movements is 1801, the first and third movements are from 1803'; see Friedrich Berger, 'Kritische Bemerkungen zur Aufführung von Beethovens Dritter Symphonie', *Neue Musik-Zeitung* (1926): 118.

Ries's veracity.<sup>17</sup> In 1840 he disqualified the *Notizen* as 'the most appalling hack-work that has perhaps ever been released about such a great man' and in 1860 he described the book as a collection of 'follies and insignificances' (Albernheiten und Geringfügigkeiten), availing himself of every possible means to demonstrate that Ries and Beethoven had been mutually ill-disposed towards each other.<sup>18</sup> In actual fact, Ries's recollections cover a wide range of data on Beethoven's whereabouts, contacts, activities, habits, plans and interests, and they supply information on such topics as his loss of hearing, dealings with publishers, relationships with his brothers, working methods, and – surely pivotal – the genesis of some of his compositions. A fixed time frame for Ries's presence in Vienna facilitates the processing and interpretation of these data. It makes a substantial difference whether a certain piece of information is held against the backdrop of the psychologically unbalanced composer of the 1801 letters to Amenda and Wegeler,<sup>19</sup> against the gloomy, reclusive man of the 1802 'Heiligenstadt Testament',<sup>20</sup> or against the allegedly resolved and self-assertive composer of the 1803 'Eroica' Symphony. When Ries, for example, noted that Beethoven 'once' planned a concert tour during which he (Ries) should perform Beethoven's piano compositions ('his piano concertos and other works'), whereas Beethoven himself was only to conduct and improvise,<sup>21</sup> it would be desirable to know, for both biographical and musical reasons, whether this should be interpreted within the context of the 1801 'resignation',<sup>22</sup> the 1802

<sup>17</sup> Anton Schindler, *Biographie von Ludwig van Beethoven* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1840), 11–15, 69–72, 118, 255–6, and 296 (for this last page, see also the 2nd edn (1845), Nachtrag II, 88–9). In Schindler's view, Ries had been 'too young' to understand Beethoven's personality; *Biographie von Ludwig van Beethoven*, 12. In the 1860 edition he asserted that Ries had come to Vienna 'as a young man of 17 in the autumn of 1800'; see *Biographie von Ludwig van Beethoven*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1860), 72. But elsewhere in this book (vol. 2, 253–4) he claimed that he had been with Beethoven 'from his fifteenth to his twenty-first year'. Wilhelm von Lenz wrote that 'the spirit of Ries's 'Anekdotikon' [*Notizen*]' evidenced that teacher and pupil 'had not the slightest in common', adding a few pages later that 'without this nationality [Ries's supposed Jewish descent] their relationship ... would have been mutually much more intense'; see Wilhelm von Lenz, *Beethoven. Eine Kunststudie*, vol. 1 (Cassel: Ernst Balde, 1855), 255 and 257. This compromised Ries's reputation, especially in France. In his *Beethoven, ses critiques et ses glossateurs* (Leipzig: Gavelot, 1857), 57. Alexandre Oulibicheff commented that Ries 'at only 15 years of age ... predominantly saw and described what in the eyes of a child was most striking about his master's personality' (a peïn âgé de 15 ans ... voit et décrit ce qui devait surtout frapper les yeux d'un enfant, dans la personne de son maître). Vincent d'Indy still parroted in 1928 that Ries had been 'of the Jewish race, and could not penetrate into the inner life of the master's music, which was essentially Aryan. Also, Beethoven did not want to dedicate anything to Ries, nor to Moscheles, for the same reason' (de race sémitique et ne pouvait pénétrer le sens intime de la musique du maître, essentiellement aryenne. Aussi Beethoven ne voulut-il rien dédier à Ries, pas plus qu'à Moscheles, et pour la même raison); Vincent d'Indy, *Beethoven* (Paris: Henri Laurens, 1928), 63.

<sup>18</sup> Schindler, *Biographie von Ludwig van Beethoven*, 1840, 296; Schindler, *Biographie von Ludwig van Beethoven*, 1860, vol. 1, x and 170, and vol. 2, 252–9.

<sup>19</sup> Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 84–91.

<sup>20</sup> Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 121–4.

<sup>21</sup> Wegeler and Ries, *Biographische Notizen*, 100.

<sup>22</sup> Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 84–6. The first clear signs of his loss of hearing in 1801 drove Beethoven to despair.

'new way',<sup>23</sup> or against the 1803 plans for a trip 'to Paris'.<sup>24</sup> Those harbouring an interest in the love life of the composer would probably like to contextualize as specifically as possible Ries's assertion that Beethoven was 'always in love, though usually for a short time only' – the more so because at one occasion he was an eye witness to such an affair.<sup>25</sup>

Given the weighty consequences, opposition against the proposed date of March 1803 is understandable. Key ramifications of its adoption would be a chronological reordering of letters, a re-examination of the genesis of compositions and related sketches, as well as a change of perspective to stories and anecdotes. Moreover, the argumentation brought forward in favour of the new date has left some loose ends, and there are still several difficulties to be surmounted. These mainly pertain to two compositions: Beethoven's four-hand Marches op. 45 and his Piano Sonatas op. 31. The genesis and publication of these opuses are closely intertwined with duties performed by Ries for Beethoven. In order to obtain a clear picture of these aspects of both the works and Ries's activities, the source material needs to be reexamined, aligned and harmonized in such a way that no inconsistencies remain. This issue will be broached here.

### Dating the Marches op. 45

At the heart of discussions about Ries's first presence in Vienna is a frustratingly undated letter by Beethoven to his pupil. It is extremely concise and runs as follows:

Be so kind to inform me whether it is true that C[ount] Browne has already transferred the 2 Marches to the printer – I'm keen to know that; – I expect you always to tell me the truth – don't bother to come to Heiligenstadt, because I don't want to waste time. Bthwn.<sup>26</sup>

When were these grumbling words written? Was it in 1802, as Ries himself conjectured in the *Notizen*?<sup>27</sup> The reference to the village of Heiligenstadt led many scholars to believe that this date was indeed correct, for between April and October of this year Beethoven is proven to have sojourned there. Hence, editors and translators of Beethoven's correspondence unanimously assigned the letter to this year, more or less as a forgone conclusion. Sieghard Brandenburg, in his authoritative *Briefe Gesamtausgabe*, sought to demonstrate that it was written in 'summer 1802'. In a footnote he argued that Beethoven resided in Heiligenstadt in 1802, 1804, and 1808. Since in his opinion the reference to 'Marches' was an allusion to the four hand Marches of op. 45 (Nos 1 and 2), published in March 1804, the years 1804 and 1808 could be eliminated (a stay during the winter months was out of the question), leaving 1802 as the only possible candidate.<sup>28</sup> This conclusion was

<sup>23</sup> According to Carl Czerny Beethoven decided in 1802 to cover new artistic ground; Carl Czerny, *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*, ed. Walter Kolneder (Strasbourg-Baden-Baden: Heitz, 1968), 43.

<sup>24</sup> Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 176. In the year of the 'Eroica' Symphony (1803) Beethoven toyed with the idea of travelling or even moving to Paris.

<sup>25</sup> Wegeler and Ries, *Biographische Notizen*, 117.

<sup>26</sup> Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 115.

<sup>27</sup> Wegeler and Ries, *Biographische Notizen*, 117.

<sup>28</sup> Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 115.

subsequently linked to a well-known anecdote related by Ries about his playing a march for Count Browne, resulting in the count's 'immediate' order of three four-hand works in this genre from Beethoven.<sup>29</sup> A little later, when two of these marches had been presented to Browne, Beethoven feared a possible unauthorized publication, hence his anxiety in the cited letter to Ries, who had been employed by Browne as a tutor in his household. Evidently upset about the matter he summoned young Ries to be impeccably honest with him and to tell him about what Browne had contrived.

External data could be brought to the fore to support these assumptions. Most prominent among these is a letter by the firm of Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig, written to Beethoven on 20 November 1802. At that time the plagued composer, having just returned from Heiligenstadt, was much occupied with legal problems concerning the unauthorized edition by Artaria of his op. 29 String Quintet: a copy of this had circulated in the house of Count Fries and had fallen into the wrong hands. Breitkopf & Härtel, legal owner of the Quintet, pointedly reproached Beethoven for his negligence and the firm concluded its letter with an ominous comment:

You shouldn't be offended when in all honesty we add that, because of this incident [the op. 29 issue], which will surely elicit loud publicity, your artistic honour is at stake, the more so since a similar incident concerning a work that you entrusted to Count Browne has already attracted attention.<sup>30</sup>

This 'similar incident', Brandenburg and all others inferred, was to all appearances a reference to the op. 45 illegal printing somewhat earlier. Count Browne, although lost in admiration for Beethoven, had evidently abused his access to the Marches by giving these into print without Beethoven's permission.

Breitkopf's admonishing comments aroused Beethoven's ire, as so often when his honour was compromised or his integrity doubted. It was only by the soothing and mediation of Breitkopf's agent in Vienna, Georg Anton Griesinger, that a break between composer and publisher was prevented. A diplomatic letter of 4 December 1802, from Griesinger to his patron, is evidence of an attempt of reconciliation: 'as for his [Beethoven's] artistic honour, the least insinuation sets him veritably on fire ... if you should write him again, please drop a little incense into your ink'.<sup>31</sup> Even though Griesinger's diffusion of tensions was successful, Beethoven remained seriously upset that Breitkopf had doubted his honesty and he instructed his brother Carl to counter this affront, which he did on 5 December: 'As for Count Braun, I insist that you seek contact with the Kunst- und Industrie-handlung in Vienna for information, since this is too insignificant a matter for me to spend further words on'.<sup>32</sup> The staff of this Viennese firm apparently had more detailed information about what had actually happened.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Wegeler and Ries, *Biographische Notizen*, 91.

<sup>30</sup> Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 132–3. 'Breitkopf', in this paper, alludes to the firm of Breitkopf & Härtel; actually all correspondence was with Gottfried Härtl, Christoph Breitkopf having died in 1800.

<sup>31</sup> Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 138.

<sup>32</sup> Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 139–40.

<sup>33</sup> The Bureau des Arts et d'Industrie (Kunst- und Industrie-Comptoir) was in function since 26 May 1801. It was founded by Joseph Sonnleithner, Joseph Schreyvogel, Johann Siegmund Rizy, and Jakob Hohler and published products of art, music, and topographical maps. By the end of 1802 it was one of the few publishing houses in which Beethoven had full

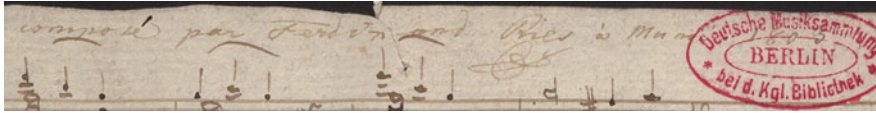


Fig. 1 Heading of the autograph of Ferdinand Ries's Piano Sonata in B minor (WoO 11). Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, *mus.ms. autogr. F. Ries, 133N*.

(With 'Braun', incidentally, Carl obviously meant 'Browne': the same error (a confusion with Peter von Braun, director of the two Vienna court theatres) was made by Griesinger and Beethoven.) The final word on the matter had Griesinger, in a letter to Breitkopf a few days later, 8 December: 'It was extremely painful for him [Beethoven] that you held against him the issues concerning Count Braun, since Beethoven was so totally innocent in this matter, which he is able to prove with most persuasive evidence'.<sup>34</sup>

The succession of events appears consistent and coherent. The assumption that (some of) the Marches op. 45, of which Count Browne had instigated an illegal printing, were composed in 1802 seems conceivable, perhaps even plausible. Still, some uncertain aspects need to be taken into consideration. Why, for example, has not a single copy survived of the alleged first printing of op. 45? According to Breitkopf the matter had 'attracted attention' in Leipzig, which would mean that this was not merely a plan, a proposition or a rumour: a print had actually been realized. Then there are the sketches for op. 45 in Landsberg 6, which figure among those for the second movement of the 'Eroica', a movement taken up by Beethoven well after his Akademie of 5 April 1803. If the letter to Ries about the Marches was written in 1802, this would necessitate the earlier dating of a sketch-book that can otherwise be unequivocally assigned to 1803–04 by virtue of both internal and external criteria. And finally, how is it possible that the manuscript of an early work by Ries, his Piano Sonata in B minor (WoO 11), bears the autograph heading 'par Ferdinand Ries à Munich 1803'?<sup>35</sup> This is less likely to mean that he left Vienna in that year – a trip otherwise unknown<sup>36</sup> – than that he was in Munich before coming to Vienna in 1803 (see Fig. 1). This inhibiting onus notwithstanding, the date of 1802 was firmly assigned to Beethoven's letter. Through constant repetition it gained the aura of fact.

Scrutiny of the relevant sources may shed light on the contravening evidence. Crucial about the cluster of information pertaining to what Breitkopf called an 'incident' is that all the sources are dated, with exception of Beethoven's letter to Ries. All are from November and December 1802 and they relate to a Beethoven

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confidence. For details see Alexander Weinmann, 'Vollständiges Verlagsverzeichnis der Musikalien des Kunst- und Industrie Comptoirs in Wien', *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft* (1955): 217–52.

<sup>34</sup> Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 141–2.

<sup>35</sup> Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Digitalisierte Sammlungen, *mus.ms. autogr. F. Ries, 133N*. Unluckily, a library stamp partly obliterates Ries's dating, which caused Cecil Hill to read '1805'; Cecil Hill, *Ferdinand Ries: A Thematic Catalogue* (Armida: University of New England, 1977), 200. The reading '1803' is beyond doubt, as was already noticed by Ueberfeldt at a time (1915) when the stamp was perhaps not yet there; see Ueberfeldt, *Ferdinand Ries' Jugendentwicklung*, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Puzzled about the date, Ueberfeldt hypothesized that Ries travelled from Vienna to Munich in 1803 with one of his patrons; Ueberfeldt, *Ferdinand Ries' Jugendentwicklung*, 21.

work that, according to Breitkopf, had a history more or less comparable to that of the notorious case of the String Quintet op. 29. 'Similar incident' meant that the work had been submitted to the person who had commissioned it and who had paid for it, and subsequently this person had been so neglectful as to lose sight of the manuscript, enabling a publisher to use it to his advantage (or the owner had been so bold as to wilfully violate his arrangement with Beethoven by having the music printed behind the latter's back). What work by Beethoven, then, composed prior to November 1802 and carrying with it a history that was more or less 'similar' to that of op. 29 could Breitkopf, Carl and Griesinger have been alluding to in their letters, without specifying it? Setting aside the possibility of op. 45 for a moment, is there any other candidate that meets the criteria?

A clue to a possible answer is latent within correspondence maintained between Breitkopf & Härtel and their agent in Vienna, the already mentioned Georg Anton Griesinger. This writer and journalist payed particularly close heed to the comings and goings in Vienna of the elderly Joseph Haydn, whose steps he watched like an hawk from 1799 onward.<sup>37</sup> His primary aim was to obtain yet-unpublished compositions by Haydn that might be of interest to the Leipzig firm. As a consequence, most of his letters were about Haydn. Beethoven is mentioned only sporadically in Griesinger's correspondence, and then primarily in relation to Haydn.<sup>38</sup> One of the letters, that of 20 March 1802, contains a passage intriguing for Beethovenians:

Count Browne, from Lithuania, who has been living here for a long time and who is a rake, often tried to persuade Haydn to offer him a dozen three- and four-voiced songs. ... A short time ago Count Browne sent Haydn five hundred florins with the request to present him with twelve songs. This was too tempting an offer for Haydn to resist. These songs, together with some works he [Browne] had had specially composed by Salieri, Beethoven and Paër, he now gives into print with young Weigel.<sup>39</sup>

The plan did not materialize. No edition issued by Thaddäus Weigl (a Vienna publisher and composer) of the envisaged combination of songs has come to light.<sup>40</sup> Griesinger mentioned the plan's failure and abandonment in a letter

<sup>37</sup> Shortly after Haydn's death, in 1809, Griesinger was to publish a series of articles on Haydn in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* and in *Der Sammler*, which were assembled later in *Biographische Notizen über Joseph Haydn* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1810).

<sup>38</sup> They were edited and annotated by Otto Biba in 1987 in *'Eben komme ich von Haydn ...': Georg August Griesingers Korrespondenz mit Joseph Haydns Verleger Breitkopf & Härtel 1799–1819* (Zurich: Atlantis, 1987). An abridged version had been issued earlier by Edward Olleson with references to Beethoven largely surpassed'; see Olleson, 'Georg August Griesinger's Correspondence with Breitkopf & Härtel', in *Das Haydn Jahrbuch* (1965): 5–53.

<sup>39</sup> Biba, *Eben komme ich von Haydn*, 152.

<sup>40</sup> Weigl was in charge of the k.k. Hoftheater-Musik-Verlag, and he seems to have had a penchant for publishing songs; see Friedrich Slezak, *Beethovens Wiener Originalverleger* (Vienna: Deuticke, 1987): 52. In 1802–03 he maintained a correspondence with Nikolaus Simrock in Bonn which shows that he was interested in publishing Beethoven's songs op. 52; Axel Beer, 'Zur Geschichte der Veröffentlichung und zur Rezeption von Beethovens Liedern op. 52', *Die Musikforschung* (1994): 161–3. He expected to acquire these but got the short end of the stick. Weigl distributed Simrock's reprints in Vienna, also by Beethoven. In a letter of 15 November 1803 (Stadtarchiv Bonn, Musikverlag Simrock No. 112, not in Beer, 'Zur Geschichte') he complained that as regards Beethoven works this



from 17 November 1802 to Breitkopf.<sup>41</sup> Haydn considered returning the five hundred florins he had received to free himself from any obligation, but Browne unanimously agreed that he could dispose of his songs without refund, after which Breitkopf issued them in 1803 as *Drey- und vierstimmige Gesaenge mit Begleitung des Pianoforte* (now catalogued as Hob. XXV:b/c).<sup>42</sup> This was a relief to Griesinger, who didn't like to see things escalate between Haydn and Browne. His impression of Browne was not altogether favourable. He criticized the Count's vexing idiosyncrasies, dubbing him hot-headed (ein Brausekopf), negligent (fahrlässig) and suffering from vanity (Eitelkeit). 'I am well aware', he confided to Breitkopf on 4 December 1802, 'that Count Braun, as soon as he obtains the copy [of a yet unpublished work], will not deny it to an attractive female pianist.'<sup>43</sup>

Griesinger's mentioning of Browne's ambitious plan bears significance with respect to Beethoven, who apparently had composed 'specially' for Browne a number of songs. By March 1802 at the latest, these were ready for print. The identification of them should not pose any problem, especially when yet another passage from a Griesinger letter to Breitkopf is taken into account, written a few months earlier (9 December 1801): 'Haydn organized a collection of 20 three- and four-voiced songs on serious and sorrowful texts by Gellert, Rammler and others; he completed 13 of these and he showed them to me'.<sup>44</sup> These 13 multi-voiced songs by Haydn, of which Griesinger saw the manuscript, must have been those 'presented' to Browne shortly later, to be published by Weigl in one batch with those by Beethoven, Salieri, and Paër. The name Gellert will alert Beethovenians. Had Beethoven's *Sechs Lieder on texts by Christian Fürchtegott Gellert* (op. 48) been envisaged for this edition? This very much seems so, for this was a collection commissioned by Browne, and it was completed by Beethoven in early 1802 or slightly earlier. The *Gellert Lieder* fulfil all requirements. When Mollo issued them by the summer of 1803, they were indeed dedicated to Browne: 'Dem Herrn Grafen Browne / Brigadier im Russischem Dienste / zugeeignet'.<sup>45</sup>

The genesis of these songs has long been shrouded in mystery. For a considerable time they were thought to have originated in 1803 and in 1934 Max Unger

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was however no longer tolerated due to a government edict: 'You know what *quantity* of *Beethoven* works I took from you. Well, imagine that *Beethoven* has been granted the prerogative by the government that no reprints of his works are allowed to be announced or retailed here. What do you say about that? – Is that not disadvantageous to me? What am I to do now with these works?' (Sie wissen welche *Quantität* [sic] *Beethovenscher* Werke ich Ihnen abnahm? – Stellen Sie sich vor dass *Beethoven* von der Regierung den Vortheil erhalten hat dass keine Nachstiche seiner Werke hier angekündigt oder frey verkauft werden dürfen. Was sagen Sie dazu? – Ist das nicht ein Schaden für mich? Was thue ich nun mit diesen Werken?) No details are known about Beethoven's alleged injunction against the selling of reprints of his works. Had he and/or his brother Carl simply been bluffing?

<sup>41</sup> Biba, *Eben komme ich von Haydn*, 174.

<sup>42</sup> Biba, *Eben komme ich von Haydn*, 173–4. The songs were lauded in the AMZ on 24 August 1803 (col. 799–800). Beethoven had in his estate '3 u. 4 stimmige Gesänge von Haydn' (in the category 'Geschriebene Musikalien verschiedener Compositeurs'), and he may have possessed a handwritten copy of these very songs; see Theodor von Frimmel, *Beethoven Studien II. Bausteine zu einer Lebensgeschichte des Meisters* (Munich and Leipzig: Georg Müller Verlag, 1906), 194, item No. 213.

<sup>43</sup> Biba, *Eben komme ich von Haydn*, 159, 173, 204 and 175, respectively.

<sup>44</sup> Biba, *Eben komme ich von Haydn*, 115.

<sup>45</sup> LvBWV, vol. 1, 266.

speculated that they might have been occasioned by the death of Browne's wife, on May 13 1803.<sup>46</sup> In 1963, though, Joseph Schmidt-Görg found a manuscript copy in the archives of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna, in the hand of Wenzel Schlemmer. This contained a heading in Browne's hand: 'Sechs Geistige Lieder v. Gellert / für den Graf Browne in Musik gesetzt / v. Ludwig van Beethoven / Diese Abschrift für die Fürstin Johann Lichtenstein / Montags den 8t März 1802 vBrowne.'<sup>47</sup> The first line of this heading is stylistically reminiscent of Beethoven. Browne probably copied this from another source, presumably the autograph that had been delivered to him by Beethoven, now lost. The second line was Browne's own and proves that he intended the copy as a present for his aristocratic lady friend Josephine Sophie zu Fürstenberg-Weytra, also known as Fürstin von Liechtenstein.<sup>48</sup> Striking about this source is that the musical text is different from the 1803 Mollo original edition. Particularly conspicuous is the reversed order of the two final songs, 'Gottes Macht und Vorsehung' and 'Busslied'.

Browne's exact dating with 8 March 1802 is evidence that Beethoven completed his *Gellert Lieder* at least one-and-a-half years earlier than the edition by Mollo. They were composed in the early months of 1802, possibly even already by the end of 1801.<sup>49</sup> At least two handwritten copies with the two final songs reversed circulated in aristocratic houses (Browne's and Liechtenstein's) by the time when Beethoven embarked on his journey to Heiligenstadt in spring 1802. Griesinger was certainly right in stating that Browne was ready to accommodate female pianists. Had Beethoven known about the copy, he would no doubt have protested, for it was not without risk when unpublished works passed from hand to hand. Publishers lacking professional integrity might avail themselves of them, as Beethoven experienced with his op. 29 String Quintet. The question now arises: is there any indication that one of the wandering copies of the *Gellert Lieder* landed on a publisher's desk, much like op. 29, to become subject of illegal printing while Beethoven was away from Vienna?<sup>50</sup> Indeed, there is palpable evidence of such misuse.

<sup>46</sup> Max Unger, 'Beethoven, Der Graf Browne und Hofrat Johannes Büel, *Baseler National-Zeitung*, 4 March 1934.

<sup>47</sup> Joseph Schmidt-Görg, 'Zur Entstehungszeit von Beethovens Gellert-Liedern', *Beethoven Jahrbuch* (1966): 87–91. For the identification of the copyist see LvBWV, vol. 1, 266.

<sup>48</sup> Peter Clive, *Beethoven and his World: A Biographical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 208. In 1802, Beethoven had dedicated to her his Piano Sonata op. 27 No. 1. In 1805 he appealed to her to grant Ferdinand Ries financial assistance (in a letter not delivered to her by Ries).

<sup>49</sup> In December 1801 Beethoven dedicated to Browne his Variations for Violoncello and Piano on Mozart's 'Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen' (WoO 46), of which Mollo's title page mentioned 'à Son Excellence Monsieur / le COMTE de BROWNE / ... par LOUIS van BEETHOVEN / à Vienne chez T. Mollo et Comp. / Le 1<sup>er</sup> Janvier 1802'. The autograph of this work shows a similar watermark to that of the left-over autograph of the *Gellert Lieder* (only that of the songs Nos 5 and 6 has survived). This may serve as an additional clue for dating the work. See Ingeborg Maass, 'Korrekturen in den Autographen der Cellovariationen WoO 45 und 46', in Sieghard Brandenburg, Ingeborg Maass and Wolfgang Osthoff eds, *Beethovens Werke für Klavier und Violoncello: Bericht über die Internationale Fachkonferenz Bonn, 18.-20. Juni 1998* (Bonn: Verlag Beethoven-Haus, 2004): 83–104, at 86.

<sup>50</sup> On 7 November 1798 the AMZ (col. 83) had reported about Mozart: 'These money-seeking gentlemen managed to get their hands on handwritten copies and unleashed their unbridled printing activities. One particular famous art dealer [further on identified

In 1993 a curious printed copy of the *Gellert Lieder* was acquired by the Beethoven House in Bonn.<sup>51</sup> It turned out to be strikingly different from the 1803 edition by Mollo. Although it originated from the same firm, Mollo, it did not come close to the later original edition. The title page reads: VI LIEDER von Gellert / Im Musik gesetzt / von / Luis van Beethoven / In Wien bey T. Mollo & Comp / 1 f.30.

The print was subjected to detailed scrutiny in 2001 by Johanna Cobb Biermann, who referred to it as 'the earliest known copy of the printed edition' (das früheste bisher bekannte Exemplar der Druckausgabe).<sup>52</sup> The copy bears no dedication or print number, nor are there plate numbers. The musical text is riddled with mistakes, inconsistencies and inaccuracies – in Cobb Biermann's words 'wrong notes, partly on the basis of missing accidentals, wrong wordings with several misspellings, faulty rhythms caused by overlooked stems of quavers etc.'. <sup>53</sup> Many of the mistakes have been corrected in red by an unknown hand, which prompted Cobb Biermann to declare it a 'proof copy' (Korrektorexemplar), but more to the point seems the definition as given in LvBWV: a 'retracted first print' (wieder zurückgezogener erster Druck).<sup>54</sup> Indeed, it would appear this was withdrawn from the market because it had been produced without Beethoven's knowledge or consent.

Most interestingly, the last two songs are in reversed order, similar to the Liechtenstein copy mentioned above. This, together with a range of other peculiarities registered by Cobb Biermann, suggests a chronological proximity of the print to the date of 8 March 1802.<sup>55</sup> Since nothing indicates that Beethoven was in any

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with "A"] had made a large number of such deals ... without asking the master'. Beethoven was well aware of the danger of circulating manuscripts, as is evidenced by his jotting on folio 15 of the Fischhof Miscellany (Berlin aut. 28): 'The only condition I must impose upon you, is not to pass it on to anyone else'; see Hans-Günter Klein, *Ludwig van Beethoven: Autographe und Abschriften* (Berlin: Merseburger, 1975): 99. By 1802, still another unpublished work circulated, the aria *Ah! Perfido*. The AMZ reported in May 1803 (col. 584; not mentioned in LvBWV) that this had been performed in the Gewandhaus: 'an excellent, extended composition of the well-known scene by Metastasio Ah perfido with the aria Per pietà from Beethoven, very well performed by Miss. Schicht' (eine treffliche, weitausgeführte Komposition der bekannten Scene von Metastasio: Ah perfido etc. mit der Arie: Per pietà, non dirmi addio etc. von Beethoven, die Mad. Schicht sehr gut vortrug). One wonders how musicians in Leipzig came into the possession of music that was to be issued only two years later by Hoffmeister & Kühnel.

<sup>51</sup> Catalogued as C 48/30.

<sup>52</sup> Johanna Cobb Biermann, 'Zyklische Anordnung in Beethovens Gellert-Liedern Opus 48', *Bonner Beethoven-Studien* 2 (2001): 45–61.

<sup>53</sup> Biermann, 'Zyklische Anordnung', 49.

<sup>54</sup> LvBWV, vol. 1, 264.

<sup>55</sup> Perhaps too much was made of the reversal of the last songs in the original edition, which inspired copious commentary; see, among others, Joanna Cobb Biermann, 'Cyclical Ordering in Beethoven's Gellert Lieder, Op. 48: A New Source', *Beethoven Forum* (2004): 162–180; Paul Ellison, 'Affective Organization in Beethoven's Gellert Lieder, Opus 48: Affirming Joanna Cobb Biermann's Theory on Beethoven's Intended Order of the Songs', *The Beethoven Journal* 25/1 (2010): 19–31; and Stephen Rumph, *Beethoven after Napoleon: Political Romanticism in the Late Works* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 37–52. One might speculate that Beethoven's decision to rearrange two songs was extrinsically motivated: practical considerations of copyright made a reordering of the legal print of 1803 readily discernible from the illegal earlier one. Critical opinion defies unanimity on the point whether op. 48 was designed as an actual song cycle. Biermann, for one, argues

way involved in this edition, it seems likely that these printing activities were carried out during his sojourn in Heiligenstadt, from April onwards. Those responsible may have known that he was bound to follow the advice of his doctor for a prolonged stay in the country, so that it was impossible for him to intervene. On his return, Beethoven was unpleasantly surprised. What had occurred was very like the misuse made of his String Quintet op. 29, which resulted in an extraordinarily disturbing and time-consuming legal battle. At the heart of both encroachments on his rights was a manuscript given into custody of a patron, the Fries case resulting from an unfortunate combination of circumstances, the Browne case from gross negligence.<sup>56</sup>

Was the premature publication of the *Gellert Lieder* the 'similar incident' referred to by Härtel, Carl, and Griesinger in their respective letters? Was this the topic that was so feverishly discussed by the end of 1802, nearly prompting Beethoven to break off relations with Härtel because he questioned his integrity? All circumstances considered, this seems plausible. The fact that the work was not mentioned in either letter is not strange: for those involved it was obvious. Precisely this, though, has led Beethoven scholarship astray. It was too readily assumed that the Marches op. 45 were referred to. Beethoven's letter to Ries, where he showed himself worried that Count Browne might have given two of his marches into print, may safely be disentangled from the year 1802. Rather, it belongs to 1803, in accordance with the sketches in Landsberg 6.

Two dividends now emerge. First, the content of the letter gains a new perspective. Given the circumstances, Beethoven's suspicion that Browne might have 'given the 2 Marches into print' becomes understandable. This was not written in 1802 but sometime in 1803, hence after the Count had failed to prevent an unauthorized printing. He was now again in the possession of unpublished music and consequently there was good reason for Beethoven to be distrustful. Browne, Mollo and Artaria had all demonstrated a willingness to exploit his music unlawfully. His anxiety, together with a touch of anger towards Ries who was temporarily not welcome for his lessons, was the logical consequence of unpleasant experiences in the recent past.<sup>57</sup>

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against it in 'Beethoven Thinking about Cycles and Some Consequences', in *Beethoven – Studien und Interpretationen 4*, ed. Myczyslaw Tomaszewski and Magdalena Chrenkoff (Kraców: Akademia Mus, 2009): 57–68, while Paul Reid takes this for granted; see Paul Reid, *The Beethoven Song Companion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 154.

<sup>56</sup> In a letter to Härtel of 5 December 1802 (Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 139–40) brother Carl described Beethoven's system of handling commissions: 'He who wants a work will pay a specified sum for the exclusive possession for a half or whole year, or even longer, and binds himself to give the manuscript to nobody else. After this period the author is free to do whatever he likes with it'. After the tribulations with op. 48 and 29 Beethoven seems to have largely abandoned this system.

<sup>57</sup> Mollo and Artaria worked closely together; see LvBWV, vol. 2, 264, Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 154, and Slezak, *Beethovens Wiener Originalverleger*, 70. In a letter to Breitkopf of 13 November 1802, Beethoven bluntly stated: 'Indeed it is true that *Mollo and Artaria* already constitute only one firm, that is to say: a whole family of villains together'; see Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 155. The fact that Beethoven even mistrusted Ries was clarified by the latter in a letter to Wegeler from 28 December 1837, in the aftermath of the completion of the *Biographische Notizen*. Ries asserted that brother Carl had conferred to Beethoven the rumour that he, Ries, had sold copies of some of the op. 45 Marches to Browne and had kept the money for himself. Hearing of this, Ries insisted that Beethoven should immediately contact Browne to be satisfied that

Second, the newly established trajectory of events throws light on the origin of the *Gellert Lieder*. It seems clear that Beethoven's choice for these pious Protestant poems from 1757, still enjoying vogue in 1802 in certain circles, resulted from practical deliberations. With Haydn's songs as a nucleus,<sup>58</sup> the other composers adjusted their choice of texts to what was already there as the result of Browne's preferences. If Beethoven merely complied with the wish of his commissioner, as seems likely, his choice for Gellert had little or nothing to do with his own religious sentiments, as is often surmised and argued. Maynard Solomon emphasized that the Gellert texts demonstrated Beethoven's 'trust in the Lord'; he emphasized that the text was significant because 'these works were not commissioned, so far as is known, but, like most of Beethoven's lieder, were freely chosen because of his affinity for their text'.<sup>59</sup> This seems no longer sustainable. Since the texts were evidently not freely chosen, they can no longer be deployed as an argument for Beethoven's affinity with Christianity, and it is difficult to maintain that they were selected because he 'began to grapple increasingly with religious ideas', let alone because signs of hearing loss caused a 'deep personal, musical, and ideological crisis'.<sup>60</sup> The opposite seems true: just about the time of the *Gellert Lieder* (8 April 1802), Beethoven made the well-known sarcastic remark to Hoffmeister about 'newly developing Christian times' – a change of climate that was evidently not much to his liking.<sup>61</sup>

### The Stay in Heiligenstadt

If Beethoven's letter to Ries is transferred from 1802 to 1803, a serious problem remains. At question is the reference to Heiligenstadt, the location that prompted

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Carl's insinuation was 'a downright lie' (Grigat, *Sammlung Wegeler*, 58). Both Grigat and Lockwood and Gosman date this story in 1802, relying on Ries who however confused dates; see Grigat, *Sammlung Wegeler* and Lockwood and Gosman, *Beethoven's 'Eroica' Sketchbook*, vol. 1, 7, note 7). It was no doubt this rumour by brother Carl that occasioned Beethoven to write the ominous undated letter to Ries discussed here – not in 1802 but in 1803.

<sup>58</sup> Haydn had a complete collection of Gellert's poems in his library; see Maria Hörwarthner, 'Joseph Haydn's Bibliothek – Versuch einer literarhistorischen Rekonstruktion' in *Joseph Haydn und die Literatur seiner Zeit*, ed. Herbert Zeman (Eisenstadt: Selbstverlag des Instituts für Österreichische Kulturgeschichte, 1976), 157–207. He availed himself of Gellert's words 'Hin ist alle meine Kraft' for his visiting card; Olleson, *Griesinger's Correspondence*, 51.

<sup>59</sup> Maynard Solomon, 'The Quest for Faith', *Beethoven Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 219.

<sup>60</sup> Birgit Lodes, 'Probing the Sacred Genres: Beethoven's Religious Songs, Oratorio, and Masses', in *The Cambridge Companion to Beethoven*, ed. Glenn Stanley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 218. Such conjectures were already dismissed by Alan Tyson on firm grounds; see Alan Tyson, 'Pictorial Beethoven', *The Musical Times* (1970): 1000. Nor are there indications that Beethoven's choice for Gellert was instigated by his study of *Oden und Lieder* by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach; see Alexander Wolfshohl, 'Beethoven liest Autoren und Texte mit Bezug zu Religion und Theologie', in *Beethoven liest*, ed. Bernhard Appel and Julia Ronge (Bonn: Verlag Beethoven-Haus, 2016): 105–41, at 112.

<sup>61</sup> Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 105–6. About the turn of the century, Beethoven seems to have been rather critical of Christianity. He eschewed Christian rituals (baptism, marriage, funeral) and nothing indicates that he ever entered a Vienna church. A work like *Christus am Ölberge* has in itself little explanatory power, for like the *Gellert Songs* this was simply an opportunity not to be missed.

commentators like Brandenburg to assign the letter to 1802 in the first place. To deal with this, a piece of conventional wisdom must be challenged, namely the point of view that, for his stay in the country during the warmer months of 1803, Beethoven had chosen the village of Oberdöbling. It has long been supposed that it was there that he largely composed his 'Eroica' Symphony. This even inspired the name of a dwelling there: the 'Eroica-House', which is currently a museum.

Walther Brauneis, in a revisionist essay, has challenged these assumptions, debunking them as a myth.<sup>62</sup> According to him, Beethoven cannot have written this work in the 'Eroica-House'. Indeed, he never lodged or worked there at all. The actual location in Oberdöbling where he once stayed was – as he himself communicated to Ries in an undated letter – 'at the left side of the road, where one descends the hill in the direction of Heiligenstadt'.<sup>63</sup> As can be seen in Figure 2 the route from Oberdöbling to Heiligenstadt went slightly downhill, and Beethoven's specification does not coincide with the location of the present-day 'Eroica-House'. Building on preliminary work by the insightful Max Unger,<sup>64</sup> Brauneis was able to identify convincingly both the correct house in Döbling, as well as the correct date of Beethoven's stay there. This was not in 1803 but in 1804, when he was fully absorbed in his opera *Leonore*.<sup>65</sup> The alleged stay in Oberdöbling in 1803, long uncritically accepted despite Unger's warnings, was predicated on unreliable data and hearsay. The misnomer 'Eroica-House' should better be altered into 'Leonore-House' – although for all intents and purposes the actual location of the museum is still misleading for tourists, because Beethoven never set foot there.

Brauneis's re-dating of Beethoven's stay in Oberdöbling is pertinent to the topic under discussion. In 1803 Beethoven was not staying in Oberdöbling but rather in Heiligenstadt, in accordance with the letter to Ries: 'don't bother to come to Heiligenstadt, because I don't want to waste time'. It was there that the 'Eroica' was conceived, at least partly, in accordance with Ries's claim in the *Notizen*.<sup>66</sup> Ries did not confuse Oberdöbling with Heiligenstadt, as is sometimes suggested,<sup>67</sup> nor did he refer to 'merely the vicinity of

<sup>62</sup> Walther Brauneis, 'Der "Eroica"-Mythos und Döbling. Oder: Wo arbeitete Beethoven im Sommer 1803 an seiner Dritten Symphonie?', in *Beiträge zu Biographie und Schaffensprozess bei Beethoven*, ed. Rainer Cadenbach and Jürgen May (Bonn: Verlag Beethoven-Haus, 2011), 27–34.

<sup>63</sup> This letter was assigned to 1803 by Brandenburg, but in a footnote he wisely left other possibilities open; see *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 172.

<sup>64</sup> Max Unger, 'Beethovens letzte Briefe und Unterschriften', *Die Musik* (1942): 154: 'It turned out with certainty that the Beethoven Haus in Döbling, which for many years has had a plate attached to it referring to the master's creation of the 'Eroica' there, has nothing whatsoever to do with this work.'

<sup>65</sup> He resided there presumably between June and October 1804. In early May he was taken seriously ill, as Stephan von Breuning informed Wegeler on 14 October; see Grigat, *Sammlung Wegeler*, 133. Breuning cared for Beethoven until the latter's health was restored, after which he departed for the country. Late in October Breuning informed his mother: 'Beethoven is currently taking his meals with me. When he is not here, as was the case during all summer – and which will likely be again soon, since he intends to go to Italy – I dine [alone]' (*ibid.*, 134). In the literature this letter is often erroneously dated with 1811.

<sup>66</sup> Wegeler and Ries, *Biographische Notizen*, 77.

<sup>67</sup> Armin Raab, *Beethoven. Neue Gesamtausgabe, Symphonien I* (Munich: Henle, 1994), 167. Raab showed himself irritated by Ries's alleged lack of precision.

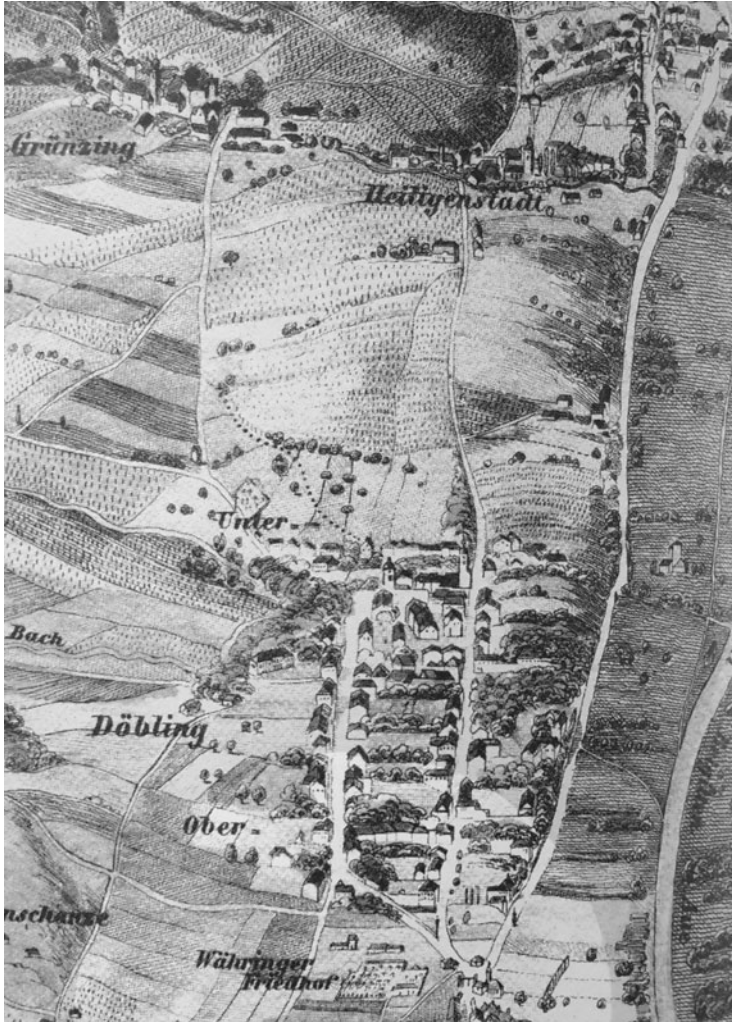


Fig. 2 Fragment of the 'Perspektiv-Karte des Erzherzogthums Oesterreich unter der Enns', ca. 1835.

Heiligenstadt'.<sup>68</sup> After more than 30 years he might perhaps confuse dates, but not visual impressions – all his reminiscences of Heiligenstadt seem utterly reliable. In 1803 Beethoven evidently returned to the place where he had jotted down preliminary ideas for his symphony a few months before, in 1802.<sup>69</sup> The Marches op. 45 were composed in Heiligenstadt as well (*pace* Lockwood/

<sup>68</sup> Barry Cooper, Review of Lockwood and Gosman, *Beethoven's Eroica Sketchbook*, in *Nineteenth Century Music Review* (2015): 131–5.

<sup>69</sup> Early ideas can be found in the Wielhorsky Sketchbook of 1802. Beethoven evidently planned a finale based on the Piano Variations op. 35, a genesis conspicuously similar to the Violin Sonata op. 47 composed only shortly earlier; see Lewis Lockwood, 'The Earliest

Gosman/Syer), in a yet to be identified 'Eroica-House' there. The stay in Heiligenstadt in 1803 may also account for the inspirational flashes elicited by the burbling of the brook on page 96 of Landsberg 6 ('Murmeln der Bäche' and 'je grösser der Bach je tiefer der Ton').<sup>70</sup> Finally, to return to the conundrum of this article, it must have been in Heiligenstadt that Beethoven commenced giving lessons (in piano, not composition) to the 18-year-old Ferdinand Ries, who had only recently arrived from Munich, where he had completed his Piano Sonata in B minor (WoO 11). It would be imprudent to insist that Ries was in Vienna any time before March 1803: an earlier arrival is as untenable as it is improbable.

### The Piano Sonatas op. 31

Building the case further, the reconsideration of Beethoven's whereabouts in 1803 may yet illuminate two consecutive anecdotes transmitted by Ries in the *Notizen*. A re-assessment of his stories may clear away arbitrary assumptions that have gained the appearance of fact by persistent repetition.

The first of these anecdotes was about a fight between Beethoven and his brother Carl during a walk – evidently one involving clenched fists. According to Ries, this quarrel was about 'sonatas' that had been promised to Nägeli in Zurich. One day after the confrontation Ries was instructed by Beethoven to send off the sonatas to Nägeli 'at once'. The fight occurred, as Ries explained with emphasis, when Beethoven 'was living in Heiligenstadt'. The second anecdote was about the arrival, at Beethoven's place, of copies of Nägeli's edition. These abounded with errors, which infuriated Beethoven to such an extent that he enjoined Ries to make a list of the mistakes on behalf of Simrock in Bonn, who was to issue a corrected reprint.<sup>71</sup> Ries rendered the anecdotes in the order as related here. The sonatas, according to him, were 'the three solo sonatas (op. 31)', of which two (Nos 1 and 2) were published by Nägeli by the end of April 1803. It was the edition of these two<sup>72</sup> that elicited Beethoven's anger, particularly when he noticed that Nägeli had tampered with his music.<sup>73</sup>

Ries's remark about the list of mistakes for Simrock was correct: on 25 May 1803 brother Carl requested that Simrock issue a reprint, promising him to send over a

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Sketches for the *Eroica* Symphony', in *Beethoven: Studies in the Creative Process*, ed. William Kinderman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 134–50.

<sup>70</sup> Barry Cooper, in his review of Lockwood and Gosman, *Beethoven's Eroica Sketchbook*, surmised that the 'Eroica' sketches 'neatly bypass' the sketches for the marches, which would make it conceivable that these were entered 'a little before' the surrounding pages. He supposed a time gap of 'a month or two', dating the op. 45 sketches to May–June 1803.

<sup>71</sup> Wegeler and Ries, *Biographische Notizen*, 87–9.

<sup>72</sup> Ries used the word 'Correctur', but it was in fact the original edition.

<sup>73</sup> As Ries specified (88), unauthentic bars had been inserted. In the literature these are generally interpreted as a headstrong intervention by Nägeli, who felt an 'editor's instinct for the security of the conventional'; see Richard Kramer, "'Sonate, Que me veux tu?": Opus 30, Opus 31, and the Anxieties of Genre', in *The Beethoven Violin Sonatas*, ed. Lewis Lockwood and Mark Kroll (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 57. Barry Cooper suggested convincingly that Beethoven himself may have been the cause of the problem: his manuscript may have shown an ambiguous reading; see his *Beethoven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 127–8; also in *The Creation of Beethoven's 35 Piano Sonatas* (London: Routledge, 2017), 111.



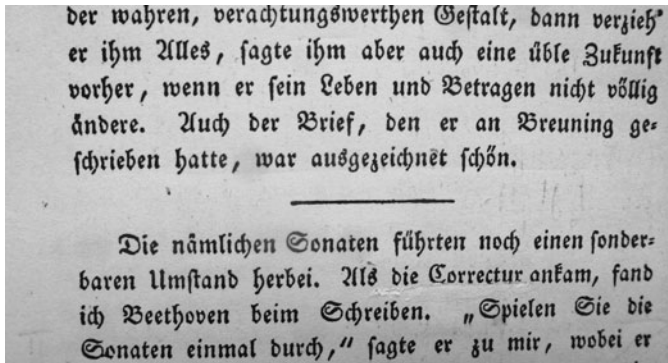


Fig. 3 Part of page 88 from Wegeler/Ries, *Biographische Notizen über Ludwig van Beethoven*, published in 1838.

list of some eighty mistakes.<sup>74</sup> Consequently, the second anecdote offers no problem whatsoever: the arrival of Nägeli's edition of the Sonatas in G major and D minor must have occurred in April or May 1803. However, was this also the music of the first anecdote, the story about the fight?

Ries's ordering of the two anecdotes strongly suggests that it was. But, in fact, nothing compels us to posit any kind of connection between the two. In the original layout of the 1838 *Notizen* the two stories were separated by a dividing line, an indication of mutual independence (see Fig. 3). Wegeler and Ries's book was not drawn up in chapters with self-contained story lines. Rather, it was a loose collection of reminiscences, sorted and collated in a more or less chronological order by Franz Wegeler.<sup>75</sup> Ries's contributions consisted of what he himself called 'Anekdoten', roughly sketched material that he left Wegeler to rephrase, order and edit. Ries repeatedly urged Wegeler to take as much freedom as he liked, because he had a low opinion of himself as a writer. That is why he preferred to submit his stories orally: 'Without your encouragement I would surely not have written a single word for publication' (ohne ihr Zureden hatte ich gewiss nie ein Wort für die Öffentlichkeit geschrieben), he confessed in 1837. Tellingly, very late in the process Ries still referred to the *Notizen* as 'your [Wegeler's] little book' (ihr Werkchen). Although consecutive in the finished product, Ries's two anecdotes about op. 31 were little more than isolated flashes of memory ultimately ordered by Wegeler. The dividing line indicates stand-alone stories, regardless of the topic.<sup>76</sup>

If Beethoven had a row with Carl about 'sonatas' for Nägeli while living in Heiligenstadt, as Ries attested, this cannot have occurred in 1802, as has been universally accepted, for Ries was not there and he was instructed to send off sonatas the next day. It must have occurred well after the Akademie of 5 April 1803, when he was again in Heiligenstadt. This discounts the possibility that the fight was about the same sonatas as the second anecdote (op. 31 Nos 1 and 2), because at

<sup>74</sup> Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 190.

<sup>75</sup> See Grigat, *Sammlung Wegeler*, 54–5.

<sup>76</sup> This stresses the paramount importance of the original (1838) Rädiker edition over numerous later ones – certainly over translations, which inevitably give rise to misunderstandings.

that time these were on the verge of appearing in Zurich. Consequently, the first anecdote warrants its own independent assessment. Immediately after the fight, Ries wrote, he was instructed by Beethoven to send off 'sonatas' to Nägeli. Which ones did he send? These cannot have been op. 31 Nos 1 and 2. Was one of these perhaps the third sonata (op. 31 No. 3), not yet published?<sup>77</sup>

With this suggestion in mind, we might venture a hypothetical scenario of what happened in the spring of 1803. Beethoven, residing in Heiligenstadt, still needed to send off his third promised sonata to Nägeli. Carl squabbled with him during a walk, with the avowed purpose of trying to talk him out of this plan (reasoning along the lines of 'Why are you still rewarding an unreliable publisher? Stop co-operating with him; give this third sonata to someone else instead, they'll pay us more'). Beethoven, irked by these suggestions, determined to discharge his obligations ('since Beethoven liked to keep his promise' (weil Beethoven sein einmal gegebenes Wort halten wollte)).<sup>78</sup> This led to heated discussions between the brothers about trustworthiness and honesty (Ries, Griesinger, Härtel and Hoffmeister all lamented Carl's propensity for cheating), to Beethoven's outrage, to altercations getting out of hand, and finally to physical assault. Subsequently Ries may have received Beethoven's instruction to send off the third sonata to Nägeli, regardless of Carl's opposition. Whether this shipment was accompanied by still another sonata (Ries wrote about 'sonatas') must remain unclear – the third sonata was published in November 1804 together with a reprint of the *Pathétique*.

There is no compelling reason to place the first anecdote chronologically before the second, although it is of course understandable that Wegeler chose to relate them in that order.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> The traditional dating of op. 31 to '1801–02' in Georg Kinsky and Hans Halm, eds, *Das Werk Beethovens: thematisch-bibliographisches Verzeichnis seiner sämtlichen vollendeten Kompositionen* (Munich: Henle, 1955), 78, was challenged as early as 1967 by Ludwig Finscher, who suggested 1803 for the third sonata; see his 'Beethovens Klaviersonate opus 31,3' in *Festschrift für Walter Wiora zum 30. Dezember 1966* (Kassel: Bärenreiter 1967), 385–396, at 387. The work is sketched at the beginning of the Wielhorsky sketchbook, which is difficult to date, however. Theodore Albrecht's suggestion that the book was used 'probably as early as August, 1802, and surely by mid-September' did not find universal approval; see Theodore Albrecht, 'The Fortnight Fallacy: A Revised Chronology for Beethoven's Christ on the Mount of Olives, Op. 85, and Wielhorsky Sketchbook', *Journal of Musicological Research* (1991): 268. Cooper conjectured that 'the sonatas were probably begun in June or July [1802], were more or less finished by the beginning of October, and were polished up in the autograph scores in the following month or two'; see his *Creation of Beethoven's 35 Piano Sonatas*, 101.

<sup>78</sup> Wegeler and Ries, *Biographische Notizen*, Wegeler/Ries, 87. In a letter to Simrock from 6 May 1803 Ries wrote: 'Charl[es] Beethoven is the greatest miser in the world. For a ducat he will go back on his pledged word fifty times over, and by doing so he creates the greatest enemies for this worthy brother'; see (Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechselwechsel*, vol. 1, 162). A correlation between this letter and the fight suggests itself and a date of early May 1803 for the row seems therefore plausible.

<sup>79</sup> In the scenario sketched here, op. 31 No. 3 was not sent to Nägeli together with Nos 1 and 2. The dispatch (possibly also its completion) may have been impeded by the time-consuming legal problems concerning op. 48 and op. 29 that awaited Beethoven when he returned from Heiligenstadt. He may have put the sonata aside for a while, taking it up again after his Akademie. However, arguments can be brought forward against such a scenario. In a personal communication Barry Cooper suggested that all three were sent together, and that Ries (in the aforementioned first anecdote) confused the two publishers, with the dispute arising over whether Simrock or Breitkopf should receive the corrected version of

### Conclusions

With the letter about the Marches op. 45 and both anecdotes about op. 31 safely assigned to 1803, there are no hurdles left for accepting that Ries knocked at Beethoven's door shortly before the Akademie of 5 April 1803. Not very much later he was engaged as a pianist for Count Browne, at the latter's summer residence in Baden. By August, Beethoven seems to have lost sight of him. 'Even Beethoven does not know where he is' (Selbst Beethoven weiss ihm nicht mehr), Catherine Dezasse wrote to Joseph Brunsvik in Korompa.<sup>80</sup> During the summer, lessons were probably incidental. From autumn 1803 on, Ries worked at Browne's home at the Sailerstadt under the supervision of Johannes Büel, an evangelical Swiss country pastor who had come to Vienna shortly earlier in 1803 and who comforted and helped Browne when his wife died, in May.<sup>81</sup> The *Gellert Lieder*, which appeared in August 1803, must have been an unadulterated enjoyment for this religious hardliner, who befriended Beethoven.<sup>82</sup> In the end, though, Büel's commitment to the Browne household was not very rewarding, for both father and son derailed. Due to what Büel called 'weakness' (Schwäche) and 'depravity' (Verdorbenheit) Browne was regularly hospitalized for indulgences and manic behaviour. His mentally unstable son perished at the age of 21.<sup>83</sup> Browne himself died in 1827. The heyday of his activities as a patron of music was still famous, for in 1825 a visitor of Beethoven looked back nostalgically at 'the era of Count Browne' (zu Zeiten des Grafen Broven).<sup>84</sup>

Ries was obliged to leave Vienna by late summer 1805. The young man's social intercourse with Beethoven was of considerable shorter duration than has been

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the first two sonatas. According to Cooper 'One needs to find a reason why Nägeli did not publish all three sonatas together. I wondered if the reason for its late publication lay with Nägeli. So I have checked his *Repertoire des Clavecinistes* to see what else it contained. Nägeli intended each volume to contain 8–10 Bogen, i.e. 32–40 pages (see *AMZ*, *Intelligenz-Blatt* 23 (August 1803), col. 100). The first 4 volumes contained 27, 37, 41 and 43 pages respectively, but Heft 5 is already 51 pages with just Op. 31 Nos. 1–2, and would have been 73 pages with all three sonatas. So I think it was Nägeli who decided to hold back the third, especially as he hoped to get a fourth, which he had asked for. When it did not arrive he paired No. 3 with the *Pathétique* in Heft 11, of 41 pages. None of volumes 6–10 had more than 48 pages, with the average being 37 (the same as vols. 1–4). I am grateful to Barry Cooper for bringing these suggestions to my attention. Perhaps it is relevant to add that on 23 November 1802 brother Carl offered three piano sonatas to André in Offenbach. If accepted, he wrote, these could not be obtained all at once 'but in 5 or 6 week increments'; Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 134. Was this perhaps to buy time because the third one was not yet ready? The problem is still unsettled.

<sup>80</sup> Rita Steblin, 'Franz Xaver Kleinheinz, a Very Talented Pianist Who Measures Up to Beethoven', *Bonner Beethoven-Studien* 12 (2016): 155.

<sup>81</sup> According to a contract drawn up on 22 June, Büel was engaged for the education of Browne's five-year-old son Moritz, who had Ries as his piano tutor. Büel attempted to raise the child 'in the Lord', as he himself said. He had no sympathy for Voltaire, Frederic the Great, the 'antichrist' Napoleon or Goethe, but expressed an ardent admiration for the poems of Gellert ('I read them every day, and when finished I start from the beginning. There is such pious strength in them, such admirable piety'; see Hans Noll, *Hofrat Johannes Büel vom Stein an Rhein – 1761–1830* (Frauenfeld und Leipzig: Huber & Co, 1930): 290.

<sup>82</sup> Noll, *Hofrat Johannes Büel vom Stein*, 218–19.

<sup>83</sup> Noll, *Hofrat Johannes Büel vom Stein*, 210 and 246.

<sup>84</sup> Karl-Heinz Köhler and others, eds, *Ludwig van Beethovens Konversationshefte*, 11 vols (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1968–2001), vol. 8, 133.

believed: two years and a few months. Contrary to Schindler, though, who likewise claimed a lengthier period of close association than was effectively the case, nothing indicates that Ries intentionally resorted to false generalizations or that he wilfully distorted the truth. Recollections in the *Notizen* are principally trustworthy, and the shorter stay with Beethoven does not affect their multivalence.

What was assembled by him in 1837, though, needs to be scrutinized against the background of the new date, and this may encourage revisionist views and interpretations. To give one example: Ries related about Beethoven's desperate efforts to perceive the sound of a shepherd's flute from distant woods, the failing of which seriously depressed him.<sup>85</sup> A corresponding account is found in the 'Heiligenstadt Testament' (1802), where Beethoven confessed that he felt so humiliated that he seriously contemplated ending his own life.<sup>86</sup> These two stories have generally been conceived as pertaining to the same incident. However, the one must have occurred at least six months earlier than the other, for Ries was not in Vienna in 1802 and he witnessed the event himself. This would mean that the feeble sound produced by a Heiligenstadt shepherd functioned as a kind of yardstick for Beethoven for testing and measuring changes in his hearing – unfortunately with negative result. This, in turn, implies that at the time of the 'Eroica', Beethoven had not shaken off the mental agony of the 'Heiligenstadt Testament', as is generally believed: in 1803 he felt as despondent, scared, and insecure about the future as he had felt the year before.<sup>87</sup> The often-heard suggestion that the radical new musical style of the 'Eroica' reflected a reborn Beethoven who expressed personal feelings of triumph over adversity and of a heroic victory over fate, may be in need of reappraisal. One should view with caution, it seems, attempts to account for the emergence of the heroic style by setting into relief a revitalized, resilient, and emotionally rebalanced composer who had shortly earlier mastered a psychological crisis by the cathartic experience of composing an oratorio about the sufferings of Christ. Changes in psychological disposition are nearly unprovable, and pronouncements on the relationship between psychic disposition and creativity are by definition subjective. As Carl Dahlhaus once warned: 'as soon as a biographer makes the shift from portraying the human being ... to portraying the composer ... he is compelled to reconstruct intuitively, instead of confining himself to documentary facts'.<sup>88</sup> As for the year 1803, the facts do not seem to reveal a mental transformation, irrespective of the alluring attractiveness of any such assumption.

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<sup>85</sup> Wegeler and Ries, *Biographische Notizen*, 98–9. Ries had formerly related this story to Ludwig Rellstab, who published it in 1841. See Klaus Martin Kopitz and Rainer Cadenbach eds, *Beethoven aus der Sicht seiner Zeitgenossen*, 2 vols (Munich: Henle, 2009), vol. 2, 693–4.

<sup>86</sup> Brandenburg, *Beethoven: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 122.

<sup>87</sup> He seems to have been able to conceal this gloom, though. Referring to 1803, Ignaz von Seyfried wrote that Beethoven as a rule was merry, cheerful and high-spirited and that 'no physical ailment had yet befallen him' (noch hatte ihn kein physisches Uebel heimgesucht). See 'Recensionen' (of op. 123, 125, and 131), *Cäcilia* (1828): 217–243, at 219.

<sup>88</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Ludwig van Beethoven und seine Zeit* (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 1987): 37.