

San José State University

THE IRA F. BRILLIANT CENTER FOR
BEETHOVEN STUDIES

T H E

Beethoven Journal

Winter 2006

VOLUME 21, NUMBER 2

**A special issue in memory of
Elliot Forbes (1917-2006)**

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JOURNAL REVIEW

Beethoven, la revue de l'ABF— Association Beethoven France et Francophonie

KEVIN BAZZANA

THE ASSOCIATION BEETHOVEN FRANCE ET FRANCOFONIE WAS FOUNDED IN 1969, in anticipation of the bicentennial of Beethoven's birth, which it duly celebrated, in 1970, by organizing the conference "Beethoven in France" as well as several concerts. In the years that followed, the ABF sponsored a variety of Beethoven-related events around France: festivals, concerts, meetings, film screenings, even, in 1978, the inauguration of a bust of the composer in Luxembourg Garden in Paris. After 1984, however, the association was inactive until 2002, when it was revived and reorganized. Since then, it has been not just active but busy—participating in conferences, concerts, broadcasts, publications, and the release of CDs; maintaining a website; organizing trips to Bonn; promoting new books, recordings, and other Beethoven products; and developing its own library and "médiathèque" as well as a travelling exhibition that it makes available to organizations sponsoring Beethoven-related events.

In 2003, the ABF launched its own journal, titled simply *Beethoven* (ISSN 1765-3800), under the direction of Dominique Prévot. One or two issues per year are published; the price per issue is 10 euros, free to members of the ABF, in which regular memberships start at 45 euros. Recently, the Beethoven Center received three sample issues from the ABF—Nos. 4, 5, and 6, all of the issues for 2005 and 2006—so it seemed like an appropriate time for the *Journal* to review its French cousin. (A seventh number, the first of two issues for 2007, has since appeared.)

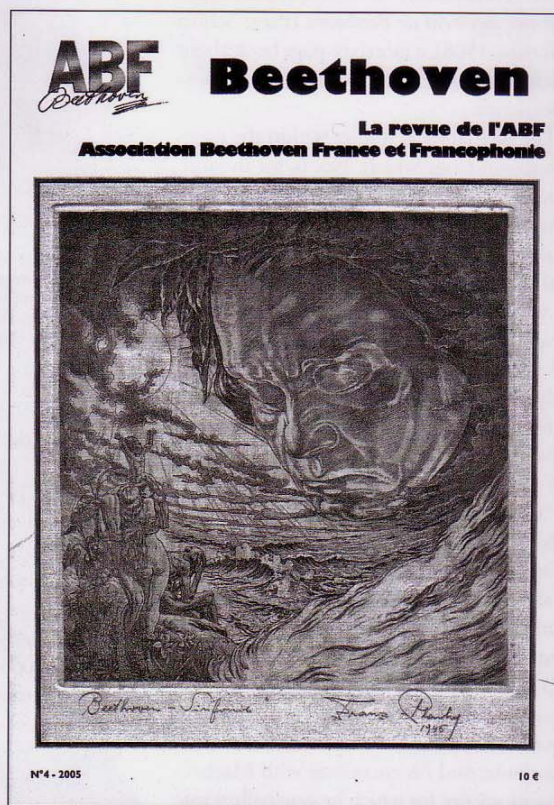
Beethoven is a lively and multifarious publication, ranging in tone from the scholarly to the chatty but including many contributions by writers with genuine credentials as Beethovenians. Some of its contents will appeal even to Beethoven specialists, though most of the

articles should be accessible to readers with little or no training in music. No. 6 is typical in its range—opening with a scholarly "dossier" of some fifty pages on Beethoven's death, closing with a two-page cartoon strip bearing the title "There is only one Beethoven!" The journal is generously illustrated (in black-and-white) with photographs, facsimiles, and musical examples; articles often include bibliographies, discographies, and other useful appendices; and editorial standards are quite high. Most articles are comparatively short, though some are ample, and a few are substantial enough to cross several issues. Within each number, articles are organized under headings including "Ludwig van Beethoven: The man," "Beethoven and his music," "Contemporaries of Beethoven," "Curiosities and anecdotes," "Conversation with ...," "Publications and recordings," "Productions and concerts," and "The life of the ABF." A good deal of space is also given over to advertising new books, scores, CDs, and DVDs. The journal has been growing at an impressive rate since it was launched: No. 1 was just 44 pages long, while No. 7 runs to 124 pages.

Among the biographical studies in *Beethoven*, the most notable to date is Michel Rouch's continuing series "Ludwig van Beethoven, his life, his work" (six parts as of No. 7), which deals with a variety of topics. In Nos. 3–5, Rouch offers an extraordinarily detailed study of musical life at the electoral chapel in Bonn, which employed the young Beethoven as well as his father and grandfather. (His study has so far reached only to 1733, in which year Beethoven's grandfather, also named Ludwig, received a court appointment as a bass singer.) Rouch provides a great deal of information about musicians and musical activities at court, and, in No.

4, includes inventories of scores in the chapel's musical library (as of 1719), a list of musicians (as of 1722), and a discography of recordings of works by two composers associated with the chapel in the early eighteenth century.

Rouch's biographical contribution to No. 6 is part of the "dossier" mentioned above, a series of articles collectively titled "Beethoven's last days ... and beyond." His detailed account of the activity around Beethoven in the days preceding and following his death on March 26, 1827, is followed by related essays by other writers: "Beethoven's final illness," by the medical professor Jean-Louis Michaux, author of *Le cas Beethoven: Le génie et le malade* (1999), and including tables of Beethoven's many illnesses and a facsimile of the autopsy report; reports on the recent research into Beethoven's hair and skull; a study of the vocal arrangement of Beethoven's *Equali* for four trombones, WoO 30, that was performed at his funeral; translations of Franz Grillparzer's famous oration for



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Beethoven – la revue de l'ABF

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Beethoven's funeral and of a poem (apparently never before available in French) that he wrote in homage to Beethoven; a translation of the Heiligenstadt Testament of 1802; and a summary of *Le dernier logement de Beethoven* (Paris: Schola Cantorum, 1908), a rare sixty-page book about the Schwarzschanerhaus in Vienna, Beethoven's last residence.

The biographical studies within the pages of *Beethoven* range widely. No. 6, for instance, includes Armando Orlandi's article on Andrea Luchesi (1741-1801), the Italian composer who inherited the position of court Kapellmeister at Bonn from Beethoven's grandfather in 1774, and whose pupils apparently included the young Beethoven. (He never acknowledged Luchesi as a teacher, however, perhaps out of family loyalty: his father, Johann, had hoped to inherit the Kapellmeister position from Ludwig, Sr.) Some of the biographical articles have a whiff of whimsy about them, to judge from the two "Curiosities and anecdotes" in Nos. 4 and 5. "Beethoven and the watchmaker's art," also by Orlandi, deals with several related matters, including the one clock of Beethoven's known to survive (in the Beethoven-Haus); the pieces he wrote for mechanical instruments (the five of WoO 33, and the *Grenadiermarsch*, Hess 107, all for mechanical clock); his relations with Johann Nepomuk Maelzel, the inventor of the modern metronome; and his encounter with Maelzel's Panharmonicon, for which he originally wrote *Wellington's Victory*. More speculative is James F. Green's "Beethoven and Jefferson: Did they meet in Bonn in 1788?," adapted from an article he contributed to *Bonner Beethoven-Studien* 4 (2005). The short answer to the question posed in his subtitle: We cannot know for sure, but such a meeting was certainly possible, and is intriguing—and fun—to ponder.

The musical studies in *Beethoven* include some very broad surveys of whole genres—the religious music (in No. 4), the works for violoncello and pianoforte (in No. 5). More substantial (and more useful) is Laurent Marty's survey of the overtures, which crosses three numbers (3–5) and offers an account of the compositional process and a detailed descriptive analysis (sometimes almost bar-by-bar) for each overture. There is a critical and biographical dimension to his survey, too—the subtitle of his article is "An aesthetic and human journey"—and it concludes with some thoughts on the balance of the "ancient" (read: Handelian) and the "modern" in the overtures. There are articles on specific



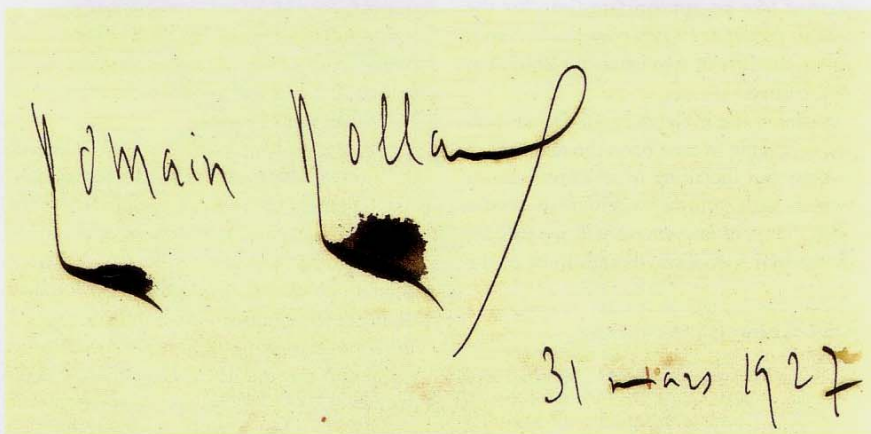
Engraving of Ferdinand Ries by Carl Mayer, published sometime in the nineteenth century by Schubert & Niemeyer, Hamburg (from the collection of the Ira F. Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies)

works, too, in *Beethoven*. In No. 5, for instance, Philippe Lemoine offers a detailed analysis of the Choral Fantasy, to which a discography by Patrick Favre-Tissot-Bonvoisin is appended. In No. 6, Bernard Fournier, the author of the doctoral thesis *Beethoven et la modernité* and of a three-volume history of the string quartet, launches a multi-part article on the *Missa solemnis*, in which (in the first installment, anyway) he eschews musical analysis in favor of consideration of the meaning and implications of this difficult, problematic work, and of what it can tell us about Beethoven's personality and thought, his artistic development and career.

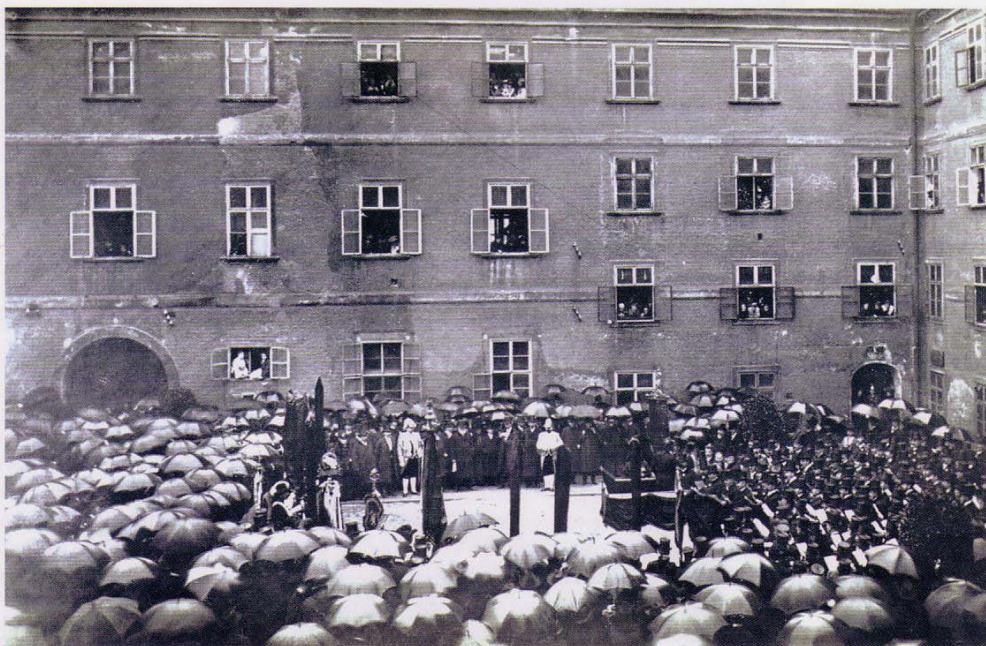
Not surprisingly, French topics are addressed from time to time in the ABF's journal. No. 4 includes a short account of the reception of Beethoven's music in France in the early nineteenth century, drawn largely from Beate

Angelika Kraus's book *Beethoven-Rezeption in Frankreich: Von ihren Anfängen bis zum Untergang des Second Empire*, published by the Beethoven-Haus in 2001. No. 5 includes a short interview with Elisabeth Brisson, the author of *Guide de la musique de Beethoven* (Paris: Fayard, 2005), which is the first modern catalog in French of Beethoven's works, and which is almost nine hundred pages long. (Brisson's other books include the biography *Ludwig van Beethoven* (2004) and *Le sacre du musicien: La référence à l'antiquité chez Beethoven* (2000).) No. 6 includes Bernard Duchatelet's long article on Romain Rolland (1866-1944), the wide-ranging French writer whose many works on music included several important books on Beethoven. The article, which unfolds largely chronologically, deals with the various influences (particularly Beethoven and Wagner) on Rolland's development as a musical thinker before treating in detail his writings and ideas on Beethoven. (Duchatelet is the author, most recently, of *Romain Rolland tel qu'en lui-même* (2002).)

Both biographically and musically, the articles in *Beethoven* sometimes range beyond the composer himself to subjects that provide some interesting and useful historical context. No. 5, for instance, includes Jos van der Zanden's detailed study of Ferdinand Ries's Opus 1, two pianoforte sonatas composed ca. 1803-06 and dedicated to Beethoven. Today, of course, Ries is best known as Beethoven's pupil and friend, though van der Zanden shows that these two sonatas, while admittedly reminiscent of Beethoven's music (and benefiting from his direct input?), boast many "original and rich passages," too, and often suggest "a powerful reaction against the Classical style" that looks ahead to early-Romantic music. At several points in Opus 1, no. 2, van der Zanden detects



Card bearing the signature of Romain Rolland and dated March 31, 1927 — almost exactly a hundred years after Beethoven's death (from the collection of the Ira F. Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies)



The musical farewell celebration at the Schwarzspanierhaus in Vienna, presumably in 1904, the year the building was destroyed (photograph by Brand & Barozzi, from Peter Pötschner, *Das Schwarzspanierhaus: Beethovens letzte Wohnstätte* (Vienna: P. Zsolnay, 1970), plate 20)

harbingers of Schubert, what he calls “un parfum schubertien”—an observation that calls to mind another early pianoforte work by a former Beethoven pupil: the Sonata No. 1 in A-flat Major, Opus 7, by Carl Czerny, from 1810, in which Beethovenian and Schubertian elements are also simultaneously in play. (The two Ries sonatas, incidentally, were recorded by Susan Kagan, in 2005, for the Raptus Records label, the Czerny sonata by Anton Kuerti, in 1994, for the Analekta label.)

The ABF's journal devotes considerable space to reporting the latest Beethoven-related news. The more significant reports in Nos. 4–6 include those on the recently discovered autograph manuscript of Beethoven's four-hand arrangement of the *Große Fuge*; on the new critical edition of the Ninth Symphony being prepared by Beate Angelika Kraus for the Beethoven-Haus; and on *Le piano de Beethoven* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), which is hailed as a “magnificent novel,” a “little jewel,” and a “thing of genius,” and, according to the publisher's blurb, tells “the story of two quests: that of Beethoven, who longed to find a pianoforte with a sound fuller than that of the ‘fortepianos’ of his day, and that of Gianni Malifici, a young craftsman from Rome who has built an instrument intended for the great composer.” (The report on the book is followed by an interview with its author, Bruno Streiff, who notes that prominent historical figures always figure in his novels—in this one, not just Beethoven but Napoleon, Prince Lichnowsky, and many others.)

Beethoven also reports on major performances, festivals, and other noteworthy events and activities, including an ABF-sponsored visit to Bonn in September 2005, and features interviews with conductors, instrumentalists, singers, and others with a special interest in Beethoven. No. 6, for instance, includes an interview with the popular young German conductor Jun Märkl, whom the ABF touts as “a very great Beethoven conductor.” (He became music director of the Orchestre National de Lyon at the start of the 2005–06 season, and this fall will concurrently become the principal conductor and artistic director of the Leipzig Radio Symphony.) Productions of *Fidelio* often merit special attention in *Beethoven*; No. 4 includes a dual interview with the director Marion Soustrot and the writer Maud Lescoffit on the subject of their innovative production of *Fidelio* at Nantes, in the spring of 2004.

But while events in the French-speaking world do receive considerable attention, the journal's scope is international. No. 4 also includes an interesting report on a Beethoven world premiere in Moneglia (near Genoa), Italy, in August 2005: the two-movement Pianoforte Trio in D Major, Anhang 3, from ca. 1799, performed by the Frank Bridge Trio in a completion by the Dutch musicologist Albert Willem Holsbergen. Once attributed to Mozart, the trio survives only in an incomplete manuscript in the hand of Beethoven's brother Caspar Carl; it is not certain which of the brothers actually composed it, and it is not listed as genuine in

The New Grove. (To hear and read about the trio, visit www.unheardbeethoven.org.) The Frank Bridge Trio has also recorded the piece, along with other obscure works for pianoforte trio, for Volume 5 of the Inedita label's series *Beethoven Rarities*.

This has been merely a brief look at a busy and often interesting and useful periodical. Francophone readers are encouraged to explore *Beethoven* for themselves, something that can be done most conveniently through the ABF's website (www.beethoven-france.org), which includes lists of the contents of all numbers to date.

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