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MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL BEETHOVEN CONFERENCE

MARTIN HARRIS CENTRE FOR MUSIC AND DRAMA, UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER, 25–27 JUNE 2012

With *Beethoven Forum* having been defunct since 2007, Beethoven-centred conferences have provided a much-needed opportunity for scholars to meet and exchange ideas. Whereas the New Beethoven Research conference that took place shortly before the 2011 meeting of the American Musicological Society in San Francisco created such a forum mainly for North American scholars, the Manchester International Beethoven Conference brought together researchers from the United States, the United Kingdom and other English-speaking countries, as well as from the European continent, namely Austria, Germany, Poland, Hungary and Italy. Contributions covered an enormous variety of Beethoven-related issues, and each of them deserved to be presented to all the other attendees; my main suggestion for following instantiations of the event would be to avoid having two simultaneous sessions, as was the case during this year's debut.

Having been unable to attend all the papers, I will focus on those that I heard and mention those that I heard about during the discussions over tea and biscuits that followed each pair of sessions. One of the extremely valuable outcomes of the conference was that it fostered communication between well-established Beethoven scholars and emerging ones, as well as scholars who only dabble in Beethoveniana but offer valuable new perspectives. Interestingly, most of the researchers who have published widely on Beethoven subjects presented papers on one of the most traditional aspects of musicological enquiry: sketch study. Barry Cooper (University of Manchester), ever the gracious host of the conference, discussed the sketches for the String Quartet in E flat major Op. 127, specifically the traces of a movement called 'la gaieté'. The eventually discarded ideas found a place in the slow second movement and in the coda of the finale. Cooper also pointed out that although many commentators use 'la gaieté' to contend that Beethoven originally wanted the quartet to be in six movements, the sketches show that the six-movement scheme represented only one of many possibilities. Lewis Lockwood (Harvard University) presented a similar investigation of Beethoven's compositional choices, this time focused on the autograph manuscript of the first movement of the Cello Sonata in A major, Op. 69. Beethoven executed radical transformations in that manuscript, and Lockwood's paper focused on the composer's changing concept of the development section. The keynote address by Sieghard Brandenburg was entitled 'Problems in the Interpretation of Beethoven's Sketches', but rather than problems, it featured a defence of the scholarly study of Beethoven sketches and an exhortation to younger scholars to continue with this particular endeavour. That sketch studies are of interest to emerging scholars became apparent in the presentation by Siân Derry (University of Manchester) on Beethoven's handwritten exercises for the left hand. Derry established a chronology of the individual sketches and showed how they coincided with a shift in the treatment of the left hand in the composer's published piano works.

These forays into the compositional process were complemented by several papers that analysed finished Beethoven works. Matthew Pilcher (University of Manchester) talked about the rarely discussed songs and arias Beethoven wrote in the late 1790s and early 1800s, especially 'Erste Liebe', WoO92, also called 'Primo amore'. Departing from the tradition of viewing this piece as an unsuccessful Italian aria, Pilcher discussed the word-painting in relation to the original German text by Gerhard Anton von Halem, calling the song a 'uniquely sophisticated (and subtly prophetic) manifestation of Beethoven's approach to text setting'. Martin Harlow (Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester) discussed the Clarinet Trio, Op. 11, especially performance issues relating to the opening unison gesture and the ways in which this gesture foreshadows later material. The effectiveness of Harlow's and others' analytical points greatly profited from two recitals of Beethoven's chamber music (including the Trio, the Cello Sonata Op. 69 and the Violin Sonata Op. 96) by students and staff of the Royal Northern College of Music.

Other analytical papers turned from Beethoven marginalia to more mainstream compositions. Jürgen May (Richard-Strauss-Institut Garmisch-Partenkirchen) discussed Beethoven's Bagatelle WoO59 ('Für Elise')



in connection with the composer's other movements in 3/8 time from the same period. May proposed that most of these works share the topoi of what he called 'romantic restlessness and melancholia' and thus are linked to piano music of the later nineteenth century. Susan Ahn (Peabody Conservatory and University of Pennsylvania) provided numerous insights into the Violin Sonata in G major Op. 96, the last work Beethoven composed in that genre. She showed that Beethoven incorporated his personal farewell to the violin sonata by infusing the work with explicit and subtle metaphors of departure, including a quotation from the opening of the earlier *Les Adieux* Sonata, Op. 81a. As Ahn noted, the piano and violin sonatas are also closely connected to the other works dedicated to Archduke Rudolph through what she termed an 'elevated intent', marked by a sense of elegance, dignity and inwardness. Anupam Roy (Goldsmiths, University of London) discussed how the Fourth Piano Concerto, Violin Concerto and Pastoral Symphony compare to the most explicitly 'heroic' works of the middle period. He contended that these three pieces contain previously overlooked strands of heroism that complement those found in the *Eroica* and the Fifth Symphony.

Two papers developed Matthew Pilcher's venture into the composer's interactions with vocal music, an increasingly fruitful field of Beethoven scholarship. John David Wilson (Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien) offered a new perspective on tonal symbolism in Beethoven's instrumental works. Instead of relying on lists of key characteristics compiled by eighteenth-century theorists, he looked into expressive uses of keys in contemporaneous operatic repertoire, more specifically in the works Beethoven would have experienced during his formative years when he played viola and continuo at the Bonn court theatre (1789–1792). Besides providing a glimpse into this period of Beethoven's career, Wilson also came up with fascinating connections between the C minor–C major turn in the Fifth Symphony and similar moments in the operas performed in Bonn two decades earlier. My paper (Martin Nedbal, University of Arkansas) uncovered how Beethoven grappled with censorship and the concept of German national theatre in his creation of two replacement arias for the mid-1790s Viennese production of Ignaz Umlauf's popular singspiel *Die schöne Schusterin*. Through these arias Beethoven streamlined and clarified the didactic message of the opera, thus responding both to the demands of the theatre censor and to his own aesthetic preferences. Similar issues later marked Beethoven's approach to *Fidelio*, and these replacement arias therefore point to the Viennese roots of Beethoven's only finished operatic work, often viewed merely as a transplanted French rescue opera.

Two papers cast new light on Beethoven's philosophical and religious views. Małgorzata Grajter (Akademia Muzyczna, Łódź) adumbrated ways in which Schiller's concepts of freedom, beauty and the sublime affected Beethoven's choice of subjects for his vocal and stage works, and how these same concepts affected his music. Susan Cooper (independent scholar, Manchester) presented a summary of Beethoven's changing religious views and their influence on his musical compositions.

Several presentations focused on problems of biography. Edward Walden (independent scholar, Ontario) addressed the ongoing dispute about the identity of Beethoven's 'Immortal Beloved', weighing the prospects of the two main present-day contestants for the legendary title and endorsing Bettina von Arnim as opposed to Josephine Countess von Brunsvik. Theodore Albrecht (Kent State University) offered a fascinating investigation into the Beethoven conversation books, uncovering traces of a quite lengthy falling-out between Beethoven and Anton Schindler that lasted from early August until mid-November of 1823. Beethoven composed significant portions of the Ninth Symphony during that period, and Schindler therefore most probably did not witness the compositional process.

The final group of presentations broached the subject of Beethoven iconography. Suzanne Francis (independent scholar, London) deconstructed the idealized visual image of Beethoven as it appears in the famous oil-painting of 1819–1820 by Joseph Karl Stieler. Comparing it to the more accurate 1823 portrait by Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller and its more subdued reception, Francis drew connections with the mythologizing approach to Beethoven and his music that started during his lifetime and continues to the present day. Benedetta Saglietti (Università di Torino) discussed three statues, a mural painting and an oil-painting of Beethoven created in Italy between 1863 and 1910. Each of these artworks presented a unique



and distinct vision of the composer, yet all of them reflected the growing importance of Beethoven's music and of the composer as a cultural icon in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century.

As the previous paragraphs suggest, the conference brought together an impressive assortment of new findings and approaches to Beethoven scholarship, and it is to be hoped that the organizers can find the resources to turn it into a recurrent annual or biennial event.

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FIFTEENTH BIENNIAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BAROQUE MUSIC  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON, 11–15 JULY 2012

The fifteenth biennial International Conference on Baroque Music was hosted by the Music Department of the University of Southampton. This conference has in the past been a wonderful meeting place for scholars and scholar-performers, senior and junior, and this year's event continued the tradition. It was especially nice to connect and reconnect with colleagues from all over the world – there were delegates from some twenty countries. The one hundred and fifty papers and lecture-recitals, filling three days (12–14 July), were organized into coherent sessions by Valeria De Lucca (University of Southampton). Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century topics were about equally represented, but even with the help of several colleagues I was unable to get a first-hand report of every eighteenth-century paper among four parallel sessions. It is clear that music of the baroque era continues to generate lively interest.

A number of sessions were dedicated to the best-known composers of the era, Bach, Handel and Rameau. Six sessions were devoted to Bach and his musical environment, four of these sponsored by the Bach Network UK. Among the highlights was the paper by Robin Leaver (Yale University/Queen's University, Belfast), 'The Organist Encounters the Hymnologist: J. S. Bach and J. C. Olearius in Arnstadt', in one of the conference's first sessions. The network of theologians and churchmen within which Bach found himself in the early years of the eighteenth century provided the young composer with an 'unparalleled opportunity' to explore the Lutheran chorale. Further papers in this session were given by Russell Stinson (Lyon College), who provided an enlightening exploration of Bach's variation technique and its north German roots, and by Ruth Tatlow (Danderyd, Sweden), whose paper was a fascinating but controversial take on numerical relationships among the Neumeister Chorales, and between them and other works. Other Bach sessions were devoted to 'Sources and Performance', 'Bach and the Magnificat', 'Nineteenth-Century Bach Reception' and 'Approaches to Bach'. The latter dealt with musical practices of Bach's time and included a paper by Charles Medlam (London Baroque) on the background to Bach's cello suites. Bach, according to Medlam, was the first to see the potential of the instrument as a vehicle for the French suite, a type of music perhaps brought to Germany by Ernst Christian Hesse, who studied viol playing in Paris and lived for a time in Eisenach. Medlam provided yet another perspective on the question of what instrument Bach had in mind.

Handel sessions were devoted to 'Handel's Dramatic Music' and 'Sources and Performance'. A short session on Rameau contained papers by Rémy-Michel Trotier (Université de Paris-Sorbonne), on 'Stage Music and Musical Staging' in Rameau's *tragédies en musique*, and Raphaëlle Legrand (Université de Paris-Sorbonne), on 'Jean-Philippe Rameau and the Musico-Dramatic Structures of French Opera'. Trotier's discussion of the numerous short instrumental pieces in *Hippolyte et Aricie* and other works provided considerable insight into the staging of these works, revealing that Rameau employed these pieces to regulate the stage action.