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JEREMY YUDKIN

FROM SILENCE TO SOUND: BEETHOVEN'S BEGINNINGS

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In 1975 Edward Said wrote in the Preface to his book *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 'Beginning is not only a kind of action; it is also a frame of mind, a kind of work, an attitude, a consciousness If we assume the presence of beginnings here and there for the reflective artist . . . a study of beginnings can all too easily become a catalog of infinite cases' (xi–xii). In this new volume on beginnings in the music of Ludwig van Beethoven, Jeremy Yudkin presents the embarrassment of riches that such a catalogue involves and proposes complex, overlapping modes of understanding through which it can be organized and discussed. Beethoven has long been noted for the qualities of his beginnings, whether they are portentous (as in the Fifth Symphony or Egmont Overture), arresting (*Große Fuge*), enigmatic (String Quartet Op. 59 No. 3, the 'Kakadu' Variations), tender (Piano Concerto No. 4), electrifying ('Waldstein' Sonata) or gracious ('Spring' Sonata, Piano Sonata Op. 109). It is therefore a long-awaited pleasure to see these and other beginnings collected up and explored in a single volume.

Yudkin's capacious understanding of beginnings includes not only the beginnings of works, but also the beginnings of individual movements and even of structural sections within them. He has thus set himself a nigh-impossible task. The eight chapters in the Table of Contents make clear the wide-ranging nature of this study. The headings for chapters 2 to 6 alone will suggest myriad possibilities to those with even a passing familiarity with Beethoven's oeuvre: 'Conventions of Beginnings', 'Unconventional Beginnings', 'Beginning as Structural Unit', 'Special Beginnings', 'Beginning as Public Statement'. While interspersing many examples from Haydn and Mozart makes matters no simpler for author or reader, those interested particularly in Beethoven's eighteenth-century models will be pleased to have examples of the wider implications of classical 'beginnings' conveniently at hand.

It is a daunting requirement for the reader, so tasked with the vastness of Beethoven's oeuvre, to assimilate the enormous amount of analysis and information spread throughout this book. The ordinary music-lover encountering this volume may find the often rapid-fire musical citations overwhelming. Even the scholar may struggle to put the shrewd critical apparatus of Yudkin's first chapter to work in considering such super-abundant material. The first chapter, aptly titled 'Begin at the Beginning', makes use of such diverse approaches as literary theory, classical rhetoric and music cognition in assembling this framework. To give some sense of the ways these approaches may be used to consider a single work, I will follow Yudkin's treatment of Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 18 No. 1, which receives around a dozen individual mentions. Significantly, Op. 18 No. 1 is Beethoven's first published string quartet – its beginnings could thus be thought of as the beginnings-of-a-beginning.

Op. 18 No. 1 opens with two unison statements of a two-bar motive which differ only in their final pitch. The narrow range and unison texture (the cello and viola begin on the F below middle C, the violins on the F above) announce the ensemble as a unit as well as clearly establishing the F major tonic and the affably assertive character of the movement. In chapter 2, 'Conventions of Beginnings', Yudkin notes the importance of the rhythmic profile of these opening gestures to the character of the beginning of the first movement (81); later in the chapter he mentions the dramatic effect of the *piano* dynamic of this figure in the first four bars, as it is followed shortly thereafter in bars 9–12 by the same figure at a louder dynamic (114). After both of these observations, which centre on the arresting quality of this gesture, some may be surprised to see this opening referred to as a beginning '*in medias res*' – a familiar term borrowed from literary criticism, but with unclear meaning in this context (115, 117). The slow second movement of Op. 18 No. 1 is also considered to have a 'conventional' beginning, noted for its 'gripping' opening texture and used as an apt example of the importance of texture as an agent of contrast between movements in this work (100).



In chapters 3 and 5 the quartet is considered thrice more. In chapter 3, Yudkin notes the delayed tonic of the third-movement Scherzo, comparing it to the opening of the First Symphony – drawing an interesting parallel between the ways Beethoven began both of his first forays into these significant genres (137). Yudkin further describes the two duple-metre bars near the beginning of the Trio of this same movement as disruptive ‘metrical “dissonance”’ (152). In chapter 5, we return to the slow movement, which the author uses as an example of a movement that ‘begins before the beginning’, as the accompaniment pattern begins an entire bar before the entrance of the primary theme. This reading of these bars and Yudkin’s observations in chapter 2 on the arresting texture of this opening passage (100) have significant overlap, leaving us with lingering questions about the distinctions between ‘special’ and ‘conventional’ beginnings. Uncertainty remains, as well, about the difference between ‘Unconventional Beginnings’ and ‘Special Beginnings’. While these categorizations do not necessarily have to exclude one another, a clear delineation between them might have provided clarity – or perhaps an interrogation of the effect such confluences might have on the listener.

In chapter 6 we turn from the more interior formal and affective qualities of the music to the exterior: ‘Beginning as Public Statement’. Yudkin convincingly observes that placing Op. 18 No. 1 at the head of the six Op. 18 quartets was a deliberate choice by Beethoven for his first published set of quartets (287). In the vein of exploring the idea of beginnings-of-a-beginning, the author draws a connection between this work and the start of Beethoven’s next set of quartets, Op. 59 No. 1, which he writes affect similarly ‘self-confident’ personas (294–295). Aside from such interesting parallels, questions remain about the framework in use here. With his headings in this chapter, Yudkin suggests that in order for the beginning of a work or movement to be a ‘public statement’, it must either be the first of a multi-work opus or ‘begin with words’ (‘Das Lebewohl’, ‘Muss es sein? Es muss sein!’ and so on). The narrow scope of ‘public statement’ precludes what we might think would be certain key examples, such as the opening of the Ninth Symphony, which, Yudkin rightly notes in a previous chapter, ‘has no precedent’ (242). What could be more public than a symphony? And what could be more of a statement than an unexpectedly quiet and fragmentary opening gambit from such large performing forces?

There is one further mention of Op. 18 No. 1 that deserves attention. Chapter 7, ‘Fighting for Perfection’, deals specifically with Beethoven’s compositional process. Put succinctly, it asks: how does a beginning begin? This is a stimulating topic that could indeed be fodder for its own volume. The sketches for the first movement of Op. 18 No. 1, primarily found in the sketchbooks Grasnick 1 and Grasnick 2, give us some ideas about when and how this beginning came to be. Yudkin notes that Beethoven went through several iterations of the distinctive opening motive, including (curiously) a version in duple metre (314). Yudkin’s innovative approach in this chapter suggests that we might go beyond considering how listeners perceive and are affected by the beginnings of works to examine how those beginnings were themselves first brought into being. I appreciate the author’s special attention in this chapter to Beethoven’s autograph manuscripts, in which the composer attempted (to varying degrees of success) a complete version of the work that was then to be duplicated by a copyist for legibility. Autographs typically represent the end of the compositional process in the composer’s hand. Beethoven’s revisions, however, continued into the autograph manuscripts themselves and sometimes beyond. As Yudkin observes, many of Beethoven’s autographs begin with a firm, deliberate style of writing: notes are spaced with ample breathing room, barlines are straight and regular. Particularly considering that this sense of measured organization often breaks down in subsequent folios, these observations lead us to valuable insights into the seriousness with which Beethoven regarded beginnings – both within the music and within the stages of his compositional process. Like Lewis Lockwood in his *Beethoven: The Music and the Life* (New York: Norton, 2003) and *Beethoven’s Symphonies: An Artistic Vision* (New York: Norton, 2015), Yudkin brings sketch and autograph studies out of the realm of critical editions and narrow specialism and engagingly presents them to a more mainstream musicological audience.

The cumulative impact of the various analyses dispersed throughout these chapters is thought-provoking. While the thorough catalogue of examples is one of the virtues of the book, the reader might benefit from more extensive explanatory text. We are given quite a bit of *what* and not a lot of *why* or *how*, which at



times leaves us wading through bar numbers and key areas without much sense of direction. For example, the title of the section starting on page 167, 'Beginning as Iconoclasm', is provocative, but we are afforded just ten words on the meaning of this heading before diving into the beginning of Mozart's Piano Concerto K271. In sections where the author turns his attention to a single work, or to a clear concept, in a more unified, sustained way, as he does when exploring the links between the movements in the String Quartet Op. 95, 'Serioso', the results are gratifying ('Beginning as Transition', 121–124).

The size of Yudkin's footnote apparatus bears witness to the heavy burden of precedent in addressing Beethoven and his music. It is thus refreshing to encounter a study both well-versed in the abundant literature that precedes it and focused in its pursuit of a new lens through which to view this familiar music. The reader is rewarded by Yudkin's numerous fresh viewpoints on Beethoven's oeuvre as well as a generous approach to the issue of what, indeed, a 'beginning' is. I prefer to see *From Silence to Sound* as a commendable effort at completism rather than Said's 'catalog of infinite cases'. Yudkin has admirably opened the door into the vast world of Beethoven's beginnings, and has offered intriguing tools and fruitful pathways into musical beginnings more broadly.

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JOHN ECCLES (c1668–1735), ED. MICHAEL BURDEN
EUROPE'S REVELS FOR THE PEACE OF RYSWICK
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The Peace of Ryswick was one of the most significant political achievements of the reign of William III. From the point at which he was crowned joint monarch with his wife Mary early in 1689, he directed English foreign policy and military power toward constraining the dominance in Europe of Louis XIV's France. William played a central role in constructing the Grand Alliance, in which Emperor Leopold I, Spain and the Dutch Republic joined with England against the French in the Nine Years War. The war was ended by a series of treaties signed in the Dutch city of Rijswijk in September and October 1697, which among other stipulations and exchanges of territory forced Louis XIV to recognize William III as the rightful English monarch rather than the exiled James II. In England the Peace was marked by a great outpouring of musical works of various sorts, including anthems by John Blow and William Davis, odes by Jeremiah Clarke and John Weldon, and a variety of songs and entertainments by Vaughan Richardson, Philip Hart, William Williams and Thomas Morgan. Perhaps the most notable and unusual of all of these works was *Europe's Revels for the Peace*, a collaboration between the émigré Huguenot writer Peter Motteux and the composer John Eccles.

No source records the date of the first performance of *Europe's Revels*, though the title-page of the printed libretto indicates that it was given at Little Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, where it must have been staged. The work is a generic oddity involving elements of court ode, dramatic opera, masque and street entertainment in praise of William's martial exploits and their dividend of peace. As Motteux's description of the work as a 'musical interlude' suggests, *Europe's Revels* is not a full evening's entertainment. In its earliest performances it was almost certainly performed with another work; when despite its occasional subject it was revived in 1706, it received seven performances with three different plays.