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# PROJECTE FINAL

## Pathétique Sonata

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A Study of Musical Aspects in Subjection of Aesthetic Aims

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# Abstract

This study makes an attempt to capture some of the aesthetic ideas prospering in the latter half of the eighteenth century and investigates in what way these are possibly being manifested in different musical aspects in Beethoven's early work, and most specifically in his eight sonata, often referred to as the *Pathétique* sonata. Beginning the first chapter with an introduction to aesthetic notions in Beethoven's age, the second chapter is mostly concerned with anecdotes regarding the *Pathétique* sonata. Further the third chapter exhibits possible influences between Cherubini, Beethoven and Wagner, and the last three chapters treat different musical and aesthetic aspects like Beethoven's relation to the C minor tonality, the German S*turm und Drang* movement, and finally some parallels that can be found between literature and music.



# Resumen

Este estudio intenta captar algunas de las ideas estéticas que prosperaban en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII e investiga de qué manera estas ideas posiblemente se manifestaban en diferentes aspectos musicales en las primeras composiciones de Beethoven, y más específicamente en su octava sonata para piano, conocida como la sonata *Pathétique*. El primer capítulo empieza con una introducción a los conceptos estéticos en la época de Beethoven. El segundo capítulo se concentra sobre todo en anécdotas relativas a la sonata *Pathétique*. El tercer capítulo presenta las posibles influencias entre Cherubini, Beethoven y Wagner y los últimos tres capítulos tratan diferentes aspectos musicales y estéticos, como la relación de Beethoven con la tonalidad do menor, el movimiento *Sturm und Drang* y finalmente algunos paralelismos que se pueden encontrar entre la literatura y la música.



# Resum

Aquest estudi intenta captar algunes de les idees estètiques que prosperaven en la segona meitat del segle XVIII i investiga de quina manera aquestes idees possiblement es manifestaven en diferents aspectes musicals en les primeres composicions de Beethoven, i més específicament en la seva vuitena sonata per piano, coneguda com la sonata *Pathétique*. El primer capítol comença amb una introducció als conceptes estètics en l'època de Beethoven. El segon capítol es concentra sobretot en anècdotes relatives a la sonata *Pathétique*. El tercer capítol presenta les possibles influències entre Cherubini, Beethoven i Wagner i els últims tres capítols tracten diferents aspectes musicals i estètics, com la relació de Beethoven amb la tonalitat do menor, el moviment *Sturm und Drang* i finalment alguns paral · lelismes que es poden trobar entre la literatura i la música.

# Prologue

As a musician you devote a great deal of your youth to gain the technical knowledge initially required to be able to execute music on your instrument of choice. The physique has to be properly trained so that you will become able to execute all kinds of musical passages with the best possible comfort and ease.

With time, this initially physical relationship evolves in the same manner as do all relationships in life, and the love for music deepens, it matures. Instead of being preoccupied with concrete technical matters, the attention is drawn to more intellectual stimulations.

A person is formed by a complex interwoven of sensory impressions, inner and outer landscapes, conscious and unconscious memories and so on. In the same way is music a composite of all this and expresses it by own means. Since the culture and aesthetics of an age also forms its artists, I find it interesting to see how these ideas are manifested in different musical aspects.

My study of Beethoven's *Pathétique* Sonata has been an endeavour to broaden the horizons for what an interpreter should embrace by going beyond such compositional aspects as form and tonality, hoping to be able to grasp what aesthetic aims are lying underneath the surface. I think that this search is what makes a distinction between a craftsman and an artist – it is the moment when you dare to step out into the open to become an interpret.

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# An Introduction to Aesthetic Views in Beethoven's Time

When we look back at the age when Beethoven lived, it is today very common to note that he was an artist living between the idealistic concepts of the Classicism and Romanticism – often he is even identified and regarded as a key figure of this very transition. At this initial stage it is interesting to draw attention to a suspicious thought that irritatingly tickles the consciousness, like an annoying fact that will come to light eventually, even if you are trying your best to avoid it: *Was Beethoven himself aware of the existence of such historical concepts?* Well, it is naturally a question that can not be gifted with an assured answer, but we can probably establish that what we consider to be Classical or Romantic periods, for him was simply daily life, regardless the fact that he at all time where highly aware of his own importance in the musical canon. But for by the present generation, it is always difficult to fully analyze the undergoing historical changes and have a confident survey.

During Beethoven's lifetime many great aesthetic ideas prospered, and not without behalf we have to assume that Beethoven lived daily with these impressions. Among his literary references[1] we can find some of the most popular authors of that time and from early years Beethoven was deeply fond of the leading German poets. This was a devotion that seemingly lasted thru time and a pleasing evidence is the fact that he used Schiller's poem *Ode to Joy* in the finale of the *Ninth Symphony* as late as 1824. It was also this particular poem that inspired him to consolidate his own

1 His more general reading included works by Goethe, Schiller, Klopstock, Herder, and other contemporaries; a number of Shakespeare's plays (in German); and books by Greek and Roman writers, such as Homer, Plato, Aristotle, and Horace, some of which may have been concerned with oratory (Rosenblum 1988: 15).

Note also this paragraph upon Beethoven's somewhat deficient education: Indeed Beethoven had little formal education. A “backward student”, he did not attend Gymnasium, although he occasionally sat in on university lectures. He wrote French badly, and because he had no Greek or non-liturgical Latin, no Italian or English, he had to rely on translations of Shakespeare, Homer, Plato and Aristotle, Plutarch and other classical poets and historians. His written German was flawed, as Sieghard Brandenburg notes, “It was difficult for him to formulate his thoughts precisely...his vocabulary was small and his sentence structure not seldom grammatically correct (Stanley 2000: 25).

fundamental values in a young age: “To do good whenever possible, to love freedom above everything else, never disavow truth, not even before the throne” (Magnani 1970: 126).

In Eleanor Selfridge-Field's article from 1972 she presents to us a possible encounter between Beethoven and the ideas of Greek Classicism, and the article is highly intriguing because of the ability to evince in what manner the primary Hellenic conceptions are woven into what we call the Classical period, and thereby reinforced in Beethoven's attachment to this inheritance. We can affirm that the Classical period was an age when the concept of order was held high, and while instrumental music was gaining ground beside vocal music the need for structure was indicated by the increasing interest in musical form. The predilection for form, proportion and symmetry are to be traced from antique Greek philosophy and the German culture was at that time harboring a growing interest in precisely these matters.[2]

An example of Beethoven's consideration for antique culture, as well as his special regard for Goethe, is the ballet music he composed to his poem *Prometheus* in 1801.[3] The intrigue consists of Prometheus creating two statues representing a man and a women, which he brings to live making them responsive to all the passions of human life – they are then directed to the Mount Parnassus estimated as home of poetry, literature, music and learning. Barry Cooper writes the following:

> *Prometheus* was described as 'heroic allegorical', with the allegory explained thus: 'It portrays an exalted spirit, who found the people of his time in a state of ignorance, and refined them through knowledge and art and brought them enlightenment.' Thus the subject was essentially about the civilizing influence or art; and however quaint it may seem to some today, it was bound to have a powerful appeal on Beethoven, who strongly believed in the ability of art to uplift and ennoble mankind (Cooper 2007: 106).

2 Note: In the same manner that all posterior cultures in their time have turned their glances towards the cradle of the Western culture.

3 See Cooper (2007: 105-106) for more information concerning the premiere and the environment etc.

The Promethean figure was primarily regarded as a heroic subject, resembling the symbolism of compositions like the *Eroica Symphony* from 1803-04, the incidental music to *Egmont* op. 84 (1810), or the "Eroica" variations for piano op. 35 (1802), which he in fact intended to give the subtitle "Prometheus". Hence Heroism was a notion much aligned with the spirit of the time, and highly present in the writings of both Schiller and Goethe. Stanley writes:

> Beethoven's conception of heroic greatness must, however, derive in great measure from two real-life sources: his veneration for Napoleon, the "Prometheus" of his age and the original "subject" of the Third Symphony, and his own self-image. (…) It seems likely that Beethoven identified closely with these suffering heroes; his artistic voice expressed his own person, not just an aesthetic persona, and in the Heiligenstadt Testament it is the artist in Beethoven who saves the man (Stanley 2000: 27-28).

Closely associated with the Promethean figure is the towering myth created around Beethoven, beginning in his own lifetime and fomented partly by himself, as well as conveyed in the writings of Bettina Bretano and E. T. A. Hoffmann. There has to be noted though, that the actual music written for the ballet might not fully equal the powerful symbolism.[4]

> Beethoven's growing consciousness in this period of art as a transcendental force, and of the artist – in this case himself – as a Promethean figure, a fire-bringer from the gods to humankind (Plantinga 1998: 144).

In his book *Nineteenth-Century Music* Carl Dahlhaus means that the *Pathétique* sonata is one of the works on which the Beethoven myth is based, the others being the "Appassionata" sonata op. 57, the *Third*, *Fifth*, and *Ninth Symphonies*, the opera *Fidelio* and the music of *Egmont*. It has to be observed here that Dahlhaus makes a clear distinction between the fact that the compositions are claimed to be representative of the myth, rather than them actually being so.

4 Beethoven himself (…) set about merely to provide music that should suit the dances and please the people who listened to it. His work, *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus*, consisted of an Overture, which is still popular as a concert piece, an Introduction and sixteen other numbers. As a whole it is fairly light music, with none of the strength which the combination of subject and composer might lead us to expect. It was clearly regarded by Beethoven as of little importance (Antcliffe 1926: 111)

> it would be a gross simplification to claim that the myth of Beethoven is a direct imprint of his music. The mythical figure in the "romantic image of Beethoven," whether revolutionary, sorcerer, or saint, cannot be conveniently equated with the persona behind his works, however close the connection between them. Just as the aesthetic "subject" that we sense in Beethoven's music bears little relation to the man as we know him from his biography, it is no less foolish to try to identify this subject with the Beethoven of myth and legend. (…) To the same extent that the myth was abstracted from the music, the reception of the music was, tempered by the myth. And if myth, once it impinges on the biography, transforms anecdotes into allegorical ciphers, it also creates an order that separates symbolic works from nonsymbolic ones (…) Yet, beyond a doubt, they belong to the symbolic works that sustain the Beethoven myth and that in turn owe their pride of place to that myth (Dahlhaus 1989: 76).

In the *Heiligenstadt Testament* from 1802, mentioned slightly above, we are provided with a deeper insight to Beethoven's emotional reliance on his art and work to give a more profound meaning to life in difficult moments when he was in great need for courage and endurance. The music was for him the supporting foundation on which he confided when the curse of a deteriorating deafness, which must have begun around 1796, became inexorably evident for him: "I would have ended my life – it was only my art that held my back. Ah, it seemed to my impossible to leave the world until I had brought forth all that I felt was within me" (Stanley 2000: 27).

The underlying aesthetics are those of Schiller expressing the moral resistance to suffering strengthen by art, as opposed to the conception of the struggling artist retrieving his inspiration from his own suffering soul (Schiller [1795] 1990). Beethoven expressed this conviction throughout his life and traces of the philosophy are to be found over his entire compositional output.[5]

The Age of Enlightenment was primarily conducted by an intellectual movement based on the indisputable power of reason that promoted new values such as

5 Music was Beethoven's primary weapon of resistance; the creative urge gave him the stoic inner strength to endure, day in and day out, in times of the greatest personal crisis and psychological stress. The theme of salvation through art sounds again and again in letters and in the diary used by Beethoven in the years 1812-18; the *Heiligenstadt Testament* of 1802 offers one of its earliest and most powerful testaments (Stanley 2000: 27).
For more reading about Beethoven's loss of hearing, see: Cooper (2008: 108, 120) and Ealy (1994: 262-273).

individualism, skepticism, intellectual dialogue and scientific thought. It was gaining ground just around the late eighteenth century, and not surprisingly the new tendency evoke a conflicting reaction, as an endeavor to establish balance:

> Inspired by its own trubles, the German spirit – as if reacting to the austere rationality of the Enlightenment – began to investigate new and unknown spheres by which it felt instinctively attracted (Magnani 1970: 125).

It was the dehumanizing tendency, subsequently in history depicted as the Industrial Revolution, thriving in the later half of the eighteenth century, that paved the path to the romantic notions that where to follow. As a counterpoise to the cold and mechanical world displayed, where the people became pure numbers and slaves under the machines, arouse the perception of the sublime[6] and the beautiful with an outcome of goodness and an essential faith in the intuitive and inborn. The *Empfindsamer Stil* or *Sensitive Style*[7] in music intended to express all these true and natural feelings, with a special emphasis on sudden contrasts of mood. The sensibility itself would be depicted as: "the capacity to respond, as if instinctively, to the emotional and the pathetic (…) feeling has become not simply the subject matter of the arts in general, but something that lies at the foundation of the proper life" (Downs: 112).

Or as expressed in Chevalier de Jaucourt's *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*:

> A tender and delicate inclination of the soul which disposes it to be moved and touched readily. (…) sensibility of the soul leads to a kind of wisdom in honourable matters that goes much deeper than purely intellectual comprehension. Sensible souls may fall into errors that calculating men would never commit, simply because they are so responsive. However, they do infinitely more good. They are more fully alive than others, and in their hands both good and evil can thrive. Contemplation can make a man upright, but sensibility makes him virtuous (Jaucourt 1765: 52, 566-7).

6 For futher reading: Downs (1992), Kaltenecker (2000: 26-41), Rosenblum (1988:10-13) and Scruton (1997).

7 The *Empfindsamer Stil* (literally *sensitive style*) is a style of musical composition developed in 18th century Germany, intended to express "true and natural" feelings, and featuring sudden contrasts of mood. It was developed as a contrast to the *Baroque Affektenlehre* (lit. *The Doctrine of Affections*), in which a composition (or movement) would have the same affect, or emotion, throughout. See: Lang (194: 585) and Newman (1963).

Again the beautiful had long been seen as an elongation of the concept of "good taste", which in turn was presumed to be constituted by preconceived rules. Since Nature had become a more limited force, which would increasingly submit to the surveillance and control of man, the artists and philosophers begun to seek for such aspects that would still be shrouded in recondite for the power of reason. Edmund Burke's contemplations upon the differences between the beautiful and the sublime uncovered new possibilities in the artistic fields, and he expressed his ideas as follows:

> sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small: beauty should be smooth and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line, and when it deviates, it often makes a strong deviation: beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy: beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid and even massive. They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure (Burke [1739] 2008: 237-38).

In 1790 Immanuel Kant lays the foundation for modern aesthetics with his philosophical work *Kritik der Urteilskraft.* For him beauty was no longer a definition of a certain quality within a given object, it was rather a function of more subjective pleasure and higher aesthetic value. Kant developed his theory of "free beauty" and "dependent" beauty, suggesting that vocal music, as a praxis of "dependent beauty", belonged to a higher category of art since the words enabled the listener to find corresponding between the music and what was being presented.

When it came to purely instrumental music, on the other hand, he found it to be of an inferior category. Kant categorized it under the notion of "free beauty", rejecting the idea that instrumental music would be able to incorporate any aesthetic aims, and thus stated that it could only be estimated on the basis of its form.

> He dismissed any ideas one might experience while listening to instrumental music as mere mechanical byproducts of associative thought. Unlike poetry, music speaks "only through sentiments and without concepts, and thus … leaves nothing to be contemplated." It was on this basis that he deemed untexted music to be "more pleasure than culture," even while affirming its potential emotional power (Bonds 1997: 399).

Friedrich von Schiller,[8] presumably the most influential philosopher during the final years of the century, went a step further in his cogitations arguing that though the *content* of emotions could not be represented in art, the *form* of the emotions certainly could, and that music was the most powerful mediator.

> If the composer and the landscape painter penetrate into the secret of those laws that govern the inner movements of the human heart, and if they study the analogy that exists between these movements of the emotions and certain external manifestations, then they will develop from merely ordinary painters into true portraitists of the soul. (…) And they may justly take their places not beside the sculptor, who takes as his object the *external* human form, but rather beside the poet, who takes as his object the *inner* human form (Bonds 1997: 399).

With Herder came the notion that music likewise serves the education of humanity, and with Friedrich Schlegel the idea that music do represent a train of thought.[9] So by that time we find a firm conviction that music is capable of being elevated to the level of literature. In light of this knowledge it is not difficult to realize why Beethoven desired to entitle himself *Tondichter* or "tone poet". His claim was much aligned with the rising consciousness of the artist as an independent individual, free from the requests of the aristocracy and urging a higher social status, as well as a deeper value for his own work.

8 Elaine Sisman associates the Piano Sonata op. 13, *Pathétique* (1799), with Schiller's emphases on pathos and the sublime as aesthetic categories (Stanley 2000: 27).

9 With the ideas of Joseph von Schelling music was also being elevated to a spiritual plane where the forms of music – encompassing the rhythm, melody and harmony – manifests the purest forms of movement in the universe. For him the contemplation of the artwork, or the ideal, was but a means to the end of achieving the *Absolute* (Bonds 1997: 403-404).

Beethoven was in many ways a pioneer in his time: he represented the idealist aesthetic, the heroic herald and the eccentric genius. With him music had found its supreme exponent, and the Beethoven myth was withhold, not only during his own lifetime, but also for generations to come, thus facing immortality and the history.

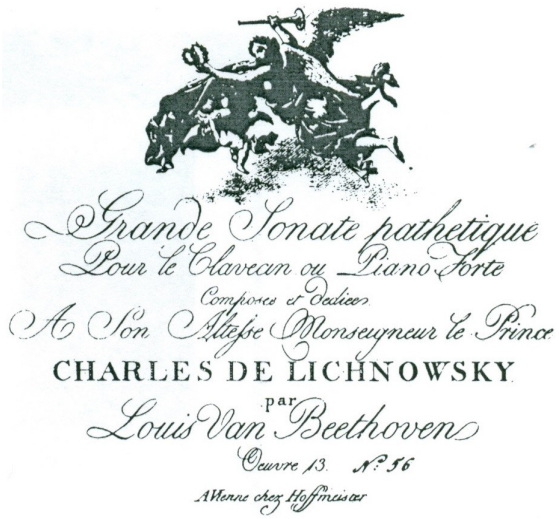
# Chapter 2: The Eighth Piano Sonata

Beethoven's eighth piano sonata op.13 was written in 1798, when he was 27 years old, and it was published one year later. This popular composition is commonly referred to as the *Pathétique* sonata, which would be an abbreviation from the title *Grande sonate pathétique,* thought to have originally been given by its publisher. In the foreword to his analysis of the work D. F. Tovey gives the following account about this predication:

> The title *Pathétique* was given to this sonata by the publisher. His justification is that nothing so powerful and so full of tragic passion had hitherto been dreamt of in pianoforte music. Much of its immediate impressiveness was due to its pianoforte style, which utterly eclipsed anything Mozart could conceive (Tovey 1998: 63).

The most accepted adoption is that Beethoven's publisher at the time would be Joseph Eder, with whom he had previously formed a provident connection in Vienna. Alan Tyson makes a forcible counter to this view in his article from 1963 by asserting that the sonata would actually have been published slightly earlier, and by Hoffmeister instead. His argumentation is based on the confident observation that the two editions have clearly been printed out from the same plates, and that they consequently are identical – with the sole difference that Eder's has a plate-number (128) at the bottom of each page.

Eder's edition is very elegant, maybe the most refined of the two, with a beautiful vignette on the title-page (Tyson 1963: 333):



Tyson asserts that the copies he have seen of op.13 made by Hoffmeister, have been extracted when the plates where in a fresher state than when Eder used them, and that the copies bare no sings of having Eder's plate-number removed. Accordingly he makes the inference that they must have been produced prior to the edition commonly accepted as being the original one. Furthermore there is more evidence to be found that propone this supposition: Hoffmeister announced the publication of the sonata in the *Wiener Zeitung* on 18 December 1799, but there was no announcement made by Eder at this time. It was also Hoffmeister's edition which was the one to be reviewed in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* on 19 February 1800. Tyson precises as follows:

> We must, I think, conclude that Hoffmeister was the original publisher (…) but that after enjoying the benefit of their initial sale he disposed of the plates to Eder. (…) The continuing popularity of the 'pathétique' sonata, however, must have caused him to regret that he no longer had the plates, and early in 1802 he brought out an entirely new edition which was a passable imitation of the old one. (…) It is surely this 1802 edition of Hoffmeister's which has mislead musicologists (Tyson 1963: 334).

As mention on the title-page above the sonata op.13 is dedicated to Prince Charles de Lichnowsky, who at the time was a benefactor and patron of Beethoven. Prince Lichnowsky was a Chamberlain at the Imperial Austrian court and he was a cultivated person with a special interest in music, being himself an instrumentalist and composer. During his lifetime he collected manuscript copies of Johann Sebastian Bach's works and made an important contribution as a proponent of talented artists. Nonetheless it has to be alleged that his initially benevolent relations to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven both ended in grievous hatred.[10]

After traveling together with Mozart to Berlin in 1789 and lending him a considerable amount of money, Prince Lichnowsky turned against his protege, when it was obvious that he would not be able to settle the loan. Just a few weeks before Mozart died he was sued by his former friend on 9 November 1791.[11]

10 See: Elliot Forbes and William Meredith. “Lichnowsky”. Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press. Web. 30 Mars.2014. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/16584pg1>

11 See: Solomon (1995).

One year later, in November 1792, the Prince made acquaintances with Beethoven who had recently arrived to Vienna bringing a letter of introduction with him from Count Waldstein. Prince Lichnowsky was to become Beethoven's foremost patron at that time, and he remained so for more than a dozen years. During his first years in Vienna Beethoven lived under the housing of the Lichnowsky's: first in the attic of their apartment at the address Alstergasse 45, then in a more spacious apartment at the ground floor of the building, and finally he had the honor to be provided with a set of rooms in their own personal apartment. During these years Beethoven performed frequently at the Friday concerts held in their salon, and here he had the opportunity to meet many influential people and establish valuable contacts, since the Lichnowsky family had been a leading force in Viennese musical life for several generations. Prince Lichnowsky's wife, Princess Maria Christiane was in fact celebrated for her considerable pianistic skills by the local nobility, as well for her renowned beauty.[12]

Beethoven decided to move out in May 1795 to the first floor of the Ogylisches Haus, located at what would be Kreuzgasse 35 at the time (today the address is Löwelstrasse 6). The reason was that he felt quite oppressed by all the attention given to him by the Lichnowsky family. Despite the disrupted cohabitation their friendship still remained confident thou, and over the years Beethoven came to dedicate a considerable amount of compositions to Prince Lichnowsky, among which figure the piano sonata op.13, as a testimony of the sincere gratitude he felt towards his protector. In a letter from 16 January 1805, addressed to Breitkopf & Härtel, Beethoven wrote the following lines: “He really is – surely a rare thing for a person of his social class – one of my most faithful friends and one of the most loyal patrons of my music” (Clive 2001: 203).

From 1800 Lichnowsky settled an annuity of 600 florins per year to Beethoven, an indulgence that would continue till 1806, when a disagreeable encounter between them two made an irrevocable rupture to their relationship. In August 1806 the Prince had taken Beethoven away to his country estate at Grätz, near Troppau in Silesia. It was

12 See: Deutsch (1965: 339).

an endeavor on his part to alleviate his friend, after he had experienced some adversities in the form of a professional recession with the failed production of the opera *Leonore*, and a personal displeasure being unable to prevent his brother Carl to marry Johanna Reiss on 25 May 1806.[13] The wherefores of the altercation are retold beneath:

> His refusal to play before visiting French officers reportedly led to an angry scene with Lichnowsky, who may even had threatened him in some manner, whereupon, according to one version, Beethoven was only just prevented by Count Oppersdorff from striking the prince. Beethoven then rushed out of the house and walked by night (…) to the village of Hirschdorf (…) about 8 kilometers. (…) On arriving back in Vienna, he is said to have smashed the bust of Lichnowsky which he had in his rooms (Clive 2001: 204).

It is said that Beethoven later responded to this incident by a letter containing these dramatic words:

> Prince, what you are, you are through the accident of birth. What I am, I am through my own efforts. There have been many princes and there will be thousands more. But there is only one Beethoven! (Wright 2012: 142).

When it comes to other aspects regarding the *Pathétique* sonata, it is profitable to for a moment dwell upon the close commuting relationship that is formed between the composer and his instrument of choice, and how this interaction affects the creative outcome. For Beethoven the piano was his medium above all, and perhaps so due to an inherent accord between its characteristics and his renown temperamental personality.

> The two seem to be so aptly and effectively combined that it is difficult to believe that their combination was an accident of the time. A new weapon distinguishes a new man, who develops, not without criticism from the orthodox, a surprising and victorious campaign. (…) Of his deliberate choice of it as the hourly partner of his thoughts there can be no question. The piano was a central feature of his life. Between him and it there was a very special relation (Dyson 1927: 206).

13 For further information: Clive (2001).

Contemplating these words it is not hard to realize that the 32 piano sonatas represent a lifework, and that they are a manifest of Beethoven's universal creative genius – as well as a musical notebook for all his human feelings and thoughts:

> These works do in fact portray the most striking features of his temperament with remarkable fidelity. There is little that he said elsewhere which cannot be found in essence in the volume of his piano sonatas. In all his works he used devices of expression which belong especially to the piano. Chief of these is that dynamic power of contrast, of sudden and unforeseen changes of volume and quality, which is as characteristic of the piano as it is of him (Dyson 1927: 207).

Grown so intimate together, perhaps it is also intriguing to make acquaintance with the physical instrument itself, and ask the question: *Beside what kind of piano did Beethoven write his eighth piano sonata?*

If we look at the instruments that where at hand in the turn of the eighteenth century, we can see that the pianoforte was evolving quite rapidly.[14] It is also natural that the compositional development goes hand in hand with the evolution of the instrument, and during the Classical period the composers had often a direct contact with the instrument manufacturers.

> Feedback between composer-performers and makers encouraged experimentation in design that ultimately led to improvements in the instruments. (…) Beethoven maintained contact with the Stein-Streicher family throughout his years in Vienna. His letters to them contain reactions to pianos and piano playing; requests for borrowing, maintenance, or alteration of instruments (Rosenblum 1988: 49).

Before the 1790s the keyboard compass of the pianos was commonly five octaves, or in some cases only four and a half. These where the kind of instruments that Mozart and Haydn where familiar with and they continued to be the most customary till about the beginnings of the next century. The last decade represent a time of innovation, where the range of the pianoforte was successively extended towards c4 and f4, and these instruments begun rapidly to spread over the Continent. Nevertheless, it

14 See: Bilson (1980), Komlós (2008) and Newman (1970).

seems like Beethoven at the time was using the typical Viennese piano, the one extending from contra F to f3 and we can also easily see that the Pathétique sonata is comfortably written within this range. In this context, it is also interesting to note that Beethoven's subsequent piano sonata Op.14,[15] is the first sonata to indeed exceed the upper range of f3. A fact that could clearly indorse the supposition that he had a less modern piano at disposal while working with Op.13. Further the Op.14 was also the first of the sonatas that had the denotation solely "Pour le pianoforte" rather than "Pour le pianoforte ou clavecin" written on its title-page.

There is still some uncertainty regarding which particular piano Beethoven was possessing by the time he composed the *Pathétique* sonata, even though Michael Broyles determines the following:

> We know that Beethoven purchased a piano upon first arriving in Vienna in 1792, even that he made monthly payments of 6 florins for it, but we do not know definitely what kind it was. It would be extremely unlikely, however, that any piano Beethoven would purchase in Vienna in 1792 would have a range extending beyond f3. There is no further record of Beethoven acquiring another piano until 1803, when he is given an Érard by the manufacturer (Broyles 1970: 413-414).

Thus it would be the common Viennese piano that Beethoven played on until about 1803, accordingly also the same kind of instrument that had been used by Mozart and Clementi till the 1790s, and by Haydn until his London visit. These pianos where quite delicate and brittle, initially with thin strings that would not be overspun until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and the five-octave instruments had commonly only double-stringing, even though some makers used triple-strings on the higher octaves to gain more tone. They had small wooden hammers covered with leather, which would usually be deerskin, and the hardness or softness of the leather had great significance for the quality of sound of each individual instrument. Further the keys were much narrower than those of a modern piano and the key dip was considerably shallower, which made the action much more lighter compared to our contemporary instruments.

15 For further reading: Broyles (1970).

> a Viennese piano of Mozart's time had a key dip of "about 3 millimeters and it takes roughly about 10-15 grams to get it down," whereas our modern piano has a key dip of "about 9 millimeters and it takes roughly 55 grams (about 2 ounces) to push it down" (Rosenblum 1988: 32).

It is interesting to note that Schindler, one of Beethoven's contemporaries, mentioned in 1816 that the composer himself considered to prepare a new edition of his piano works – and that one of the reasons he had for fulfilling this desire was the notion that he would then be able to take more advantage of the extended keyboard range. Tovey writes in his analysis of the sonata op.13, regarding a passage in the first movement consisting of upward figuration (bars 243-278): "is a masterstroke of pathos (…) the 5-octave pianoforte preventing Beethoven from carrying the passage higher. We can not carry the passage higher, without mere guesswork" (Tovey 1998: 66).

As a counter to this statement, we have both Czerny[16] and Schindler arguing against the desire to alter any of Beethoven's texts:

> Czerny stated merely that in pieces "written for the five-octave instruments of former times, the attempt to employ the sixth octave … is always unfavorable …" Schindler pointed to the characteristic sound of each octave of the piano as a reason for not tampering with the texts (Rosenblum 1988: 37).

16 Czerny gives a very vivid description of the first visit he paid to the great master at his home sometimes between the winter of 1800 and the beginnings of 1801. He was accompanied by his father and their common friend Wenzel Krumpholz, who made the introduction, and Czerny who was only about ten years old at the time played several pieces for Beethoven during their stay, among them the recently published *Pathétique* sonata. Beethoven was in fine very pleased with the talent he saw inherent in the young pianist and accepted to became his teacher and mentor, giving him lessons several times a week (See Cooper 2008: 110).

Note: There prevails uncertainty regarding when the *Pathétique* sonata was first premiered in concert. The only concerts that are documented to been given by Beethoven around these years are the following: **1798:** 29 March Jahn's restaurant [org.: Josepha Duschek] accomp. sonata (op. 12?) / 2 April, Burgtheater [org.: Tonkiinstler Sozietdt] Quintet in E|>, op. 16 / 27 Oct, Theater auf der Wieden [org.: Emanuel Schikaneder] Concerto (?) **1800:** 18 April, Karntnerthortheater [org.: Johann Wenzel Stich] sonata for horn and piano. See: Komlós (2008: 42).

# Chapter 3: Between Medea and Tristan

Beethoven had a very keen consideration for the contemporary composer Luigi Cherubini,[17] and he kept the scores of his operas *Medea* and *Faniska* in his personal library. His esteem was grand as to the point that he considered the ten years older composer to be the foremost master beside himself.

> Beethoven, who is reported to have kept always at hand the score of Les Deux Journees, who declared the opera Faniska the best dramatic work of the age, said to Louis Schloesser, a young musician who was about to go to Paris: "Tell Cherubini that I most ardently wish to receive a new opera from him." At fifty-four he wrote Cherubini: "I am often with you in spirit. I value your dramatic works more highly than those of any other. Every time I hear a new work of yours I am enchanted, and I take greater interest in them than in my own." When asked who beside himself was the greatest living composer, he answered: "Cherubini" (Albrecht 1940: 5).

There is in fact a letter that was given to the young musician Louis Schloesser by Beethoven on May 1823 in Vienna, that can probate the above stated, and where his special regard for Cherubini is equally evident:

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17 Luigi Cherubini was born in Florens and properly schooled in the Italian compositional tradition beginning his studies at a very early age under the guidance of his own father Bartolomeo, who was a recognized *Maestro al cembalo*. In 1780, at the age of twenty, he received a scholarship from the Grand Duke of Tuscany Leopold II which enabled him to proceed with his studies in the neighboring city Bologna and in the busy metropolitan Milan. During these years he was strongly influenced by the leading composers of his country, amongst which are prominent Niccolò Jommelli, Antonio Sacchini and Tommaso Traetta. At the age of twenty-five, eager to broaden his horizons, he made his first journey to London where he stayed for only a short while before moving on to Paris. There he was promptly introduced and surrounded by the Parisian society and he finally decided to settle down in the ... capital. Accordingly he was to spend the rest of his life in France, where he was also very highly regarded, and in 1822 he was to become the director of the Conservatoire de Paris. Cherubini received some of the highest and most prestigious honors during his lifetime, listed as follows: the *Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur* in 1814, *Membre de l'Académie des Beaux-Arts* in 1815 and he was also made *Commandeur de la Légion d'honneur* in 1841.
Luigi Cherubini (1760-1842) has been described in an engaging oversimplification as “the Italian who wrote German music in France,” that is, an Italian-born composer who created music of a strongly contrapuntal cast during a long and distinguished career in the French capital (Selden 1974: 421).

For further reading see: Boyer (1954), Deane (1965), Holden (2001), Tovey (1944), Willis (1994).

> MY DEAR SCHLOESSER,-I enclose a letter to Cherubini and one for Schlesinger. You must enquire the address of the latter at Steiner's, Paternoster Gaissel. Only mention that I send you with an introduction to Schlesinger. Say all manner of nice things for me to Cherubini-that I desire nothing so much as to hear soon of another opera by him; that I entertain for him of all living composers the profoundest admiration; that I trust he has received my letter, and that I shall soon hear from him. At Schlesinger's, ask also if he has received and delivered the letter to Cherubini? Also why I have not yet had any copies of the C minor Sonata? Now I would ask you to be so good as to write to me from Paris on both these matters, Cherubini and Schlesinger. At the Paris Post Office, where the letters are put in a box, do not forget to pay the postage, otherwise one cannot get these letters without writing to Paris for them. May Heaven give you all blessings; I shall always take the liveliest interest in you.-Yours very truly, BEETHOVEN (Lessman 1894: 306).

In an article from 1924 Scott-Baker points out numerous resemblances between different musical aspects in *Medea*[18] and Beethoven's *Pathétique* sonata, and displays faithfully the probability of a close influence.

The narrative is a dramatic tragedy filled with severe and violent feelings such as hatred, jealousy, anger and grief. It is a three-act opera that take place in the Corinth in antique time.[19] Medea is determined to avenge the iniquity committed to her by Jason, who she ones helped to steel the Golden Fleece, and who had now chosen to leave her and their two children to marry an other women named Dirce. She gives her slave Néris the task to bring Dirce two wedding presents, which prove to be poisonous. Together with her two children and her slave, Medea takes refuge in a temple from the

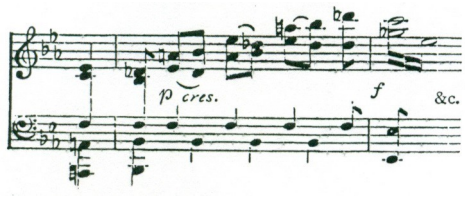
18 While for many years almost entirely ignored in the country where it was produced, Medea, how ever, has long been deservedly esteemed in Germany as one of the grandest masterpieces of dramatic music; worthy comparison, in deed, with any work of its kind, excepting only Beethoven's *Fidelio* that unparagoned instance in music of human passion and sentiment expressed in accents of pure and elevated sublimity. In many of his numerous stage works Cherubini has proved his possession of a high order of dramatic power, as well as of that severe sublimity and grandeur of style which is also admirably displayed in his great church music (*Watson's Art Journal*, Cherubini's "Medea, 1867, Vol. 7, No. 18, pp. 276-277).

19 Cherubini wrote *Medea* in French and used the popular genre *Opéra comique* for its scheme. The libretto was written by François-Benoît Hoffmann together with Nicolas Étienne Framéry, and it was largely based on Euripides tragedy of Medea and Pierre Corneille's play *Médée* from 1635. The opera was premiered on 13 March 1797 at the Théâtre Feydeau in Paris. See: Tranchefort (1983: 97).

enraged crowd, and in the last act she appears with a blood-stained knife with which she has killed the children, before she returns to the temple now set in fire.[20]

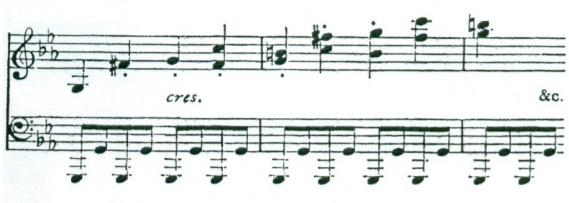
In the second act we find the scene where Medea is being banished and her plea to be allowed to see her children is refused by the king. Affected by the great injustice committed to her, she is overwhelmed by immense feelings of hatred and jealousy. The scene is further intensified by a chorus of warriors urging the given verdict and appealing to the gods to protect Corinth from Medea's witchcraft. The frequently appearing figure that is used in the accompaniment to stress the anguish of hatred and of a passionate revenge is the following:

Figure 1. *Medea* (Scott-Baker 1924: 701)




The resemblance to Beethoven's figure starting in bar 25 in the first movement of the Pathétique sonata is striking, and there is room for little doubt that Beethoven would not be familiar with Cherubini's written music[21]:

Figure 2. *Allegro di molto e con brio* (Scott-Baker 1924: 701)

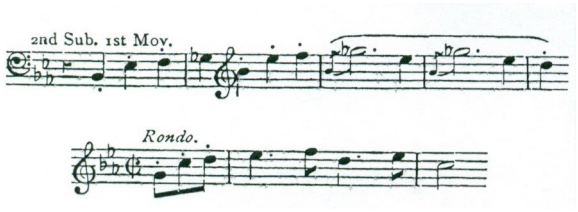



20 For the synopsis, see:
<http://web.archive.org/web/20091028182127/http://geocities.com/Vienna/Strasse/1523/opera2.htm>
<http://www.opera-arias.com/cherubini/medea/synopsis/>

21 The writer of the article in *Die Musik* states that it is unlikely that Beethoven was never conscious of the relationship between this Sonata and 'Medea'. If such is the case, then Op. 13 is 'more the expression of feelings than a *fantasia* on themes' – to paraphrase the Master's own words. On his own admission he always worked to a picture. As to what this may have been he very seldom affords a clue (…) the atmosphere of 'Medea' seems to be reflected in the Sonata, added to which there is an apparent working of some of Cherubini's themes which will justify an association of the two works (Scott-Baker 1924: 703).

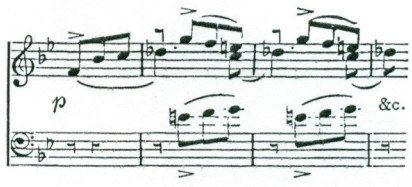
There are several other themes in *Medea* that bear resemblance to the second subject of Beethoven's first movement and to the Rondo theme in the third movement. Beneath we have Beethoven's writings:

Figure 3. *Pathétique* 2nd subject and *Rondo* theme (Scott-Baker 1924: 702)



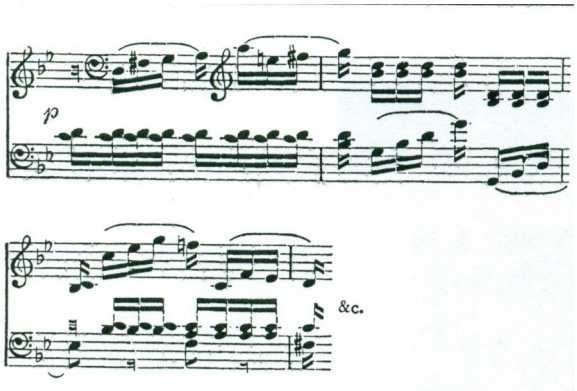

In Cherubini's work the first of these related subjects emerge in Act 1 and it pays attention to one of the central conflicts revealed in adultery: Dirce expressing her doubt of Jason's fidelity, bearing in mind that he has already been unfaithful to his wife Medea when entering a relationship with her.

Figure 4. *Medea* (Scott-Baker 1924: 701)



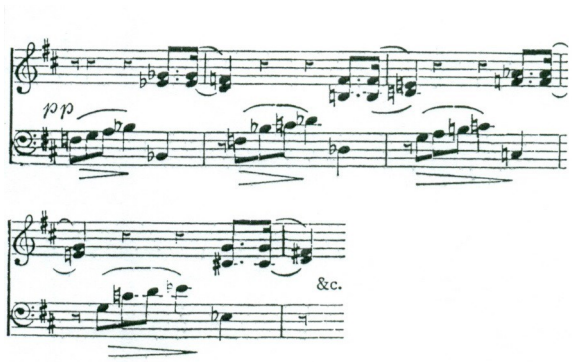

In the second Act, we have the accompaniment to Néris assurance of "loyalty unto death" to Medea after her banishment.

Figure 5. *Medea* (Scott-Baker 1924: 702)



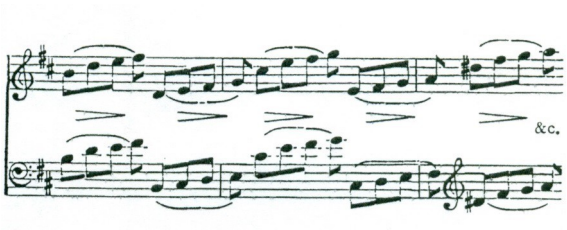
In the last act of the opera there are two dramatic themes that also remind of the same motifs above mentioned in the *Pathétique* sonata. We have for example the theme depicting the humane moment when Néris pleads Jason to rescue his children:

Figure 6. *Medea* (Scott-Baker 1924: 701)




Followed by the figure that accompanies Jason's hopeless endeavor to succeed with the retrieve:

Figure 7. *Medea* (Scott-Baker 1924: 701)




As we can clearly see Beethoven was a faithful observer and admirer of Cherubini's production[22], in the same way that he himself would later be considered and studied by all the succeeding generations of composers. One of these pronounced descendants was Wagner, and there are in fact some interesting resemblances to be find between his opera *Tristan und Isolde*[23] and the *Pathétique* sonata.

22 Beethoven was a close student of Cherubini's work, much in the same way as Wagner was of Beethoven's (Scott-Baker 1924: 701).

23 For the opera synopsis and more information see: Barry Millington. "Tristan und Isolde." The New Grove Dictionary of Opera. Ed. Stanley Sadie.*Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. 16 May. 2014.<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O905152>.

But before submitting the musical examples, there is an important question that has to be contemplated: *What is the underlying thread binding together such essentially diverse compositions as Cherubini's Medea, Beethoven's Pathétique sonata and Wagner's Tristan und Isolde?*

Scott-Baker points out two possible relations. First he introduces the theory presented originally by George Grove[24], where the likenesses could be described as cases of "Apostolic succession" instead of just being mere coincidences. Scott-Baker (1924) writes: "We are told that 'great minds think alike,' and if a 'condition of mind which results from contemplation' produces musical ideas which have a likeness, it is feasible that dissimilar stories have a common origin".

Thus this in fact existing "common origin" leads us to the second notable relation – the one concerning mythology, sorcery and deities. The story of Medea belongs to Solar mythology, since she is perpetuated in Greek mythology as the grand-daughter of the Sun, and similarly the earliest form of the Tristan tale derives from ancient Solar mythology as well.[25] Furthermore, concerning the aspect of sorcery, both Medea and Isolde are in possess of magical capacities, an ability that was customary for princesses to practice in elderly legends. Medea uses her knowledge to create the poisoned gift, and Isolde in turn extracts an initially lethal venom, that later turns out to be a powerful love concoction instead.

Wagner uses a specific motive when sorcery is prevailing, here appearing in the *Prelude*:

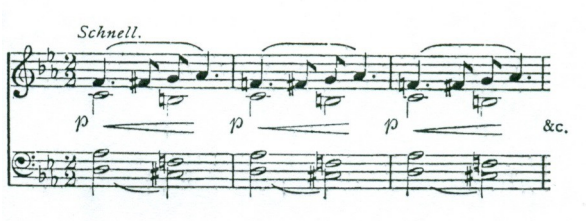
24 These are among the links which convey the great Apostolic Succession of Composers from generation to generation (Grove 1896: 60).

25 Scott-Baker writes: (…) is it not possible that, considering the circle in which Beethoven moved, and which would have contained eminent scholars, philosophers, and the like, some account of the original mythology of 'Medea,' and the sinister influence of passion, love, and magic would set him thinking? Indeed, the phrase 'Fire of Love,' which is exemplified in both these dramas, comes from Pagan sun-worship (Scott-Baker 1924: 703).

Figure 8. *Tristan und Isolde* (Scott-Baker 1924: 702)

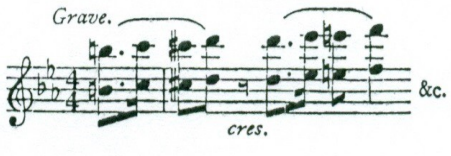

And later present when Isolde exclaim the words, 'O zahme Kunst der Zauberin'[26]:

Figure 9. *Tristan und Isolde* (Scott-Baker 1924: 702)




These motives have an apparent affinity with the seventh and eight bars of Beethoven's *Grave*.

Figure 10. *Pathétique, Grave* (Scott-Baker 1924: 702)




26 Translated: “Oh, tame the Art of the Sorcerer”.

Further, the introductory motive of the *Grave*, later also reappearing in the middle section of the *Allegro*, similarly seems to find its correlate in *Tristan*:

Figure 11. *Pathétique, Grave* (Scott-Baker 1924: 702)

Figure 12. *Pathétique, Allegro* (Scott-Baker 1924: 702)

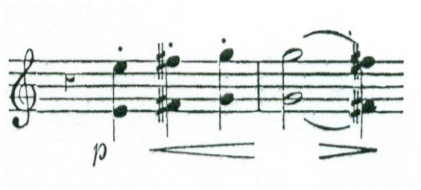
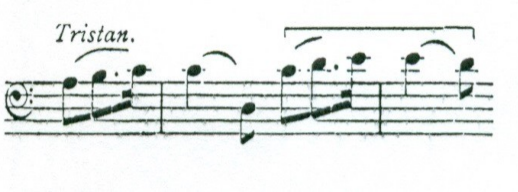



Figure 13. *Tristan und Isolde* (Scott-Baker 1924: 702)



The coherence between Beethoven's and Wagner's ideas can be illustrated by the ensuing conformity. The importance of figure 8 and 13 is emphasized by the fact that they are used in the most dramatic moment of Wagner's opera – the culminating scene when Tristan sinks dying into Isolde's arms. Similarly Beethoven brings his musical motifs from figure 2 and 12 closely together in the middle section in his first movement. Coincidence or Apostolic Succession? Scott-Baker terminates as follows: “their associations might typify passionate hatred and sorcery, although the latter is not apparent, so to speak, until Wagner has pointed it out” (Scott-Baker 1924: 703).

# Chapter 4: The Minor Tonality

For Beethoven the C minor tonality represented a very special key for which he devoted his most powerful and dramatic works[27]. An early description of this phenomenon is given by George Grove at the end of the nineteenth century:

> "The key of C minor occupies a peculiar position in Beethoven's compositions. The pieces for which he has employed it are, with very few exceptions, remarkable for their beauty and importance" (Grove 1896: 181).

In our century Charles Rosen describes the same fact more pronouncedly:

> Beethoven in C minor has come to symbolize his artistic character. In every case, it reveals Beethoven as Hero. C minor does not show Beethoven at his most subtle, but it does give him to us in his most extrovert form, where he seems to be most impatient of any compromise (Rosen 2002: 134).

Beethoven was not the first composer to give the C minor tonality an explicitly important role though. He was actually following a tradition that had developed in the late eighteenth century, which used this particular tonality to emphasize dramatic works that additionally exhibited musical material featuring opposing sentiments. Haydn for example had previously written an early piano sonata in C minor urging these qualities and in 1782 he composed his highly influential *C minor Symphony* no. 78. Mozart in turn composed a *C minor Fantasy* K. 475 featuring great dynamic contrasts, which served as an introduction to the his great *Piano Sonata* K. 457 written in 1784[28].

27 See for instance: Taruskin (2005). Chapter 31 "C-Minor Moods".

28 Rosen develops: It is in these works that we can see the advantage for composers of displacing contrast from the large structure into the initial material itself, juxtaposing drama and pathos – the drama centered on an authoritative tonic harmony, while the pathos often emphasized the sixth degree, A flat, either in a fully realized or virtual implied harmony of a dominant ninth chord (Rosen 2010: 72-73).

Beethoven answered devotedly to the tradition, and among his several C minor compositions we find the *Pathétique Sonata*, the *Third Piano Concerto* (1800), the *Fifth Symphony* (1808) and his last *Piano Sonata* Op. 111 (1822).

Joseph Kerman notes in his essay *Beethoven's Minority* that Beethoven associated C minor with both its relative (E♭) and parallel (C) majors. His sonata-form movements in other minor keys use the minor dominant (v) as the second key area leading to a recapitulation of the musical material in the minor mode, but most of his C minor sonata-form movements embrace the relative major E-flat (III) as the second key area[29], which facilitates a restatement of the second theme in C major in the recapitulation. The choices Beethoven made for the second key areas in his minor sonata-form movements where important and quite peculiar innovations for his time:[30]

> Both of these Beethovenian syndromes – the hankering of C minor for its parallel major, and the tropism of other minor keys towards their minor dominants – are aberrant according to the norms of the Classic period. They are certainly not characteristic of Haydn and Mozart (Kerman 1994: 220).

The use of C major in his C minor works was also a very consistent statement made by Beethoven, with a clear and somewhat obsessive conviction:

> The tendency of works in C minor to break into C major is something we take for granted, perhaps, because of the Fifth Symphony. It is still rather remarkable to see this tendency played out on one level or another in every single one of Beethoven's many works in this key (Kerman 1994: 223).[31]

29 For the C-minor works, table Ia indicates first of all the key of the second group of the exposition – generally a single key, though the first movement of the *Pathétique* Sonata, to take a rare example, brings its lyric "second theme" in the minor mediant (iii) and the following cadential material in the major (III) (Kerman 1994: 220).

30 For more information upon Sonata form in minor keys see: Darcy, Warren, Hepokoski, James (2011). *Elements of Sonata Theory.*

31 In the first movement of *Pathétique* this occur at bar 215.

It is difficult to point out with certitude what Beethoven's exact purpose was with these tonal changes, but if we are to be aligned with the aesthetic ideas of his time, it lies close at hands to believe that this was his personal way of making a rhetoric statement in the best manner to evoke turbulent emotions:

> "it is not always easy to empathize with the early Beethoven C-minor recapitulations. That pathos was his idea does seem to be borne out, however, by the most accomplished and beautiful case, that in the finale of the *Pathétique* Sonata" (Kerman 1994: 226).

# Chapter 5: Under the Storm

During the later half of the eighteenth century a Proto-Romantic movement called *Sturm und Drang* rouse in Germany and taking its starting point from literature it inevitably inspired an immediate reflection on the other arts[32]. Its leading figure was the young Johann Wolfgang von Goethe[33], but we find both Friedrich Maximilian Klinger and Friedrich Schiller to be strongly present in the development. The term *Sturm und Drang*[34] was for instance withdrawn from Klinger's play written in 1776, bearing the same name.

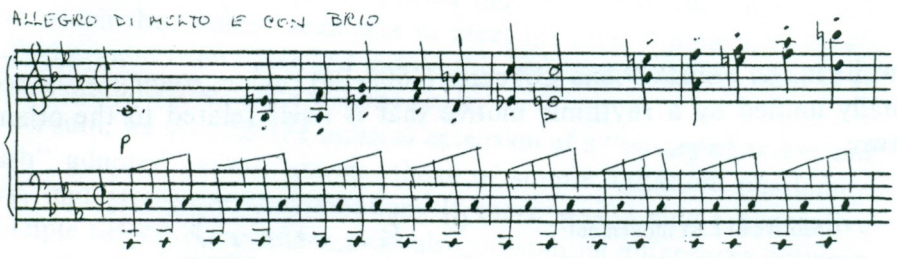
Characteristic for the movement is the depiction of a continuous struggle between nature and reason which often leads to obtrusive consequences when irrational actions are committed as a sequel to altered feelings and raw instinct[35]. As an example we have the trenchant painting *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818) by Caspar David Friedrich[36], where the very essence is masterfully manifested and captured. Here we can see Man standing in front of the untamable Nature, in an aspiring attempt to be a part of it, yet hopelessly unable to connect fully because of human Reason.

32 See Brook (1970) and Chantler (2003).
33 See his work: *The sorrows of the young Werther* (1774).
34 For more information see also: Kurrelmeyer (1927) and Walz (1905).
35 Note: Beauty, Lessing believed, was the end of the visual arts, while truth was the end of the verbal arts. He urged his literary peers to abandon their "mania for description" and develop a poetry and drama of action. The trait that developed in response to this plea was called "*Strurm und Drang*" (Selfridge-Field 1972: 581).
See also: Daniel Heartz and Bruce Alan Brown. "Sturm und Drang." Grove Music Online. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. 17 May.
2014.<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/27035>.
36 Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840). For more information: <http://www.caspardavidfriedrich.org/ and http://www.caspar-david-friedrich-gesellschaft.de/>

With Beethoven *Sturm und Drang* made its irrevocable entrance into music and, according to Eleanor Selfridge-Field, his *Pathétique* sonata present some of the earliest traits of how musical content[37] can exemplify these aesthetics.

> Musical depictions of "storm" seek to generate a sense of excitement or agitation usually by means of a regular, sometimes monotonous, rhythm heard at a moderately fast tempo. "Stress," which is not likely to be as emphatically represented, may be suggested by such harmonic means as the use of dissonance and the minor mode. An early example of Beethoven's treatment of "storm and stress" may be seen in the following passage from the Sonata Pathétique. "Storm" is suggested by the rapid octave alternations of the left hand, while "stress" is felt in the melodic pull of dissonances (here Bb and D) and leading tones (here E♮ and B♮ ) of the right (Selfridge-Field 1972: 582).

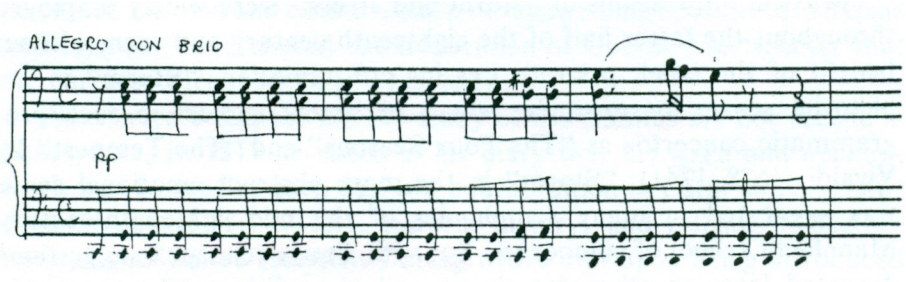
Figure 14. Op. 13 – First movement, bars 11-14. (Selfridge-Field 1972: 582)




Along Beethoven's production his relationship to *Sturm und Drang* developed and changed. The representation of "stress" was gradually omitted and consequently the emphasis on dissonance in this context was removed. Instead the attention was drawn to rhythm in series of repetitious figures, as for example in the opening bars of the *Waldstein* sonata Op. 53 (1804).

37 A description of *Sturm und Drang* music would include – in addition to a heightening of "sensitive" characteristics – an increase in minor keys, syncopation, propulsive rhythms, chromaticism, abrupt changes, and the use of instrumental recitative (Rosenblum 1988: 13).

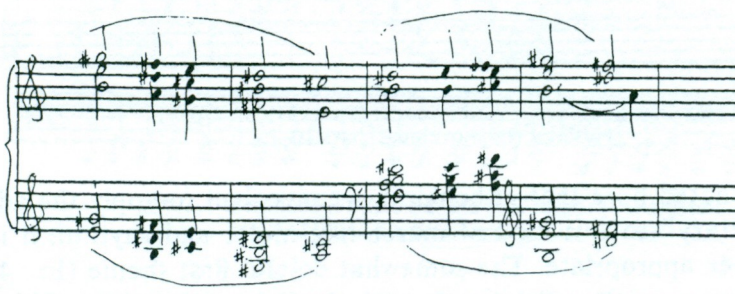
Figure 15. Op. 53 – First movement, First theme (Selfridge-Field 1972: 583).




In contrast to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing we have the aesthetic vision of Johann Joachim Winckelmann[38], who praised the placid qualities of visual representation, and held up the ideal of "noble simplicity and serene greatness".

For Beethoven the atmosphere of tranquil repose was represented in music by slow passages built on chords instead of counterpoint. The use of dissonances was being restrained and in such passages only few or no ornaments where introduced. An example of this concepts is seen in the entrance of the second theme in the *Waldstein* sonata.

Figure 16. Op. 53 – First movement, Second theme (Selfridge-Field 1972: 585).



38 See for example: Lippmann (1971).

Eleanor Selfridge-Field concludes as follows:

> It is significant that Beethoven's portrayals of “noble simplicity” always follow expressions of “storm and stress” (…) By allying first themes with “storm and stress” and second themes with “noble simplicity” Beethoven seems to be juxtaposing the ostensibly superficial “throes of passion” with the “calm depths” of the noble soul. Sonata form is no longer as ordinary and perfunctory as a draftsman's blueprint. It has become a mediator between the poet´s truth and the artist's beauty (Selfridge-Field 1972: 585).

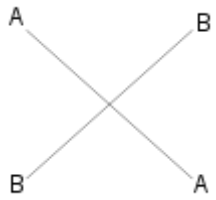
By this said, I feel that the relationship between music and poetry is worth being more closely examined, and this leads us plainly to the next chapter.

# Chapter 6: Beethoven on Rue Morgue

Literature and music are perhaps the two arts that are most naturally linked together[39]. We are compelled to use verbal expressions in our attempts to explain musical meaning and clarifying semiotic processes. My teacher in Music analysis pointed out an interesting example of this interwoven connection – the rhetorical[40] chiasmus formed in the first bars of the *Pathétique* Sonata. The example is highly concrete since it makes the use of a literal expression to explain a musical one.

In Greek Chiasmus means "to shape like the letter X" and it represents an inverted parallelism in rhetoric, not necessarily repeating the same words but instead bending larger structures.

Figure 17. Chiasmus represented as an X structure (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiasmus>).

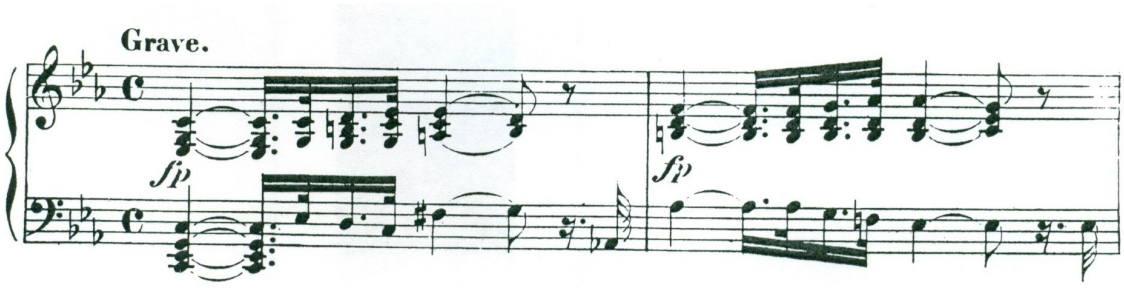



When it comes to a Chiastic structure in the Grave we find its correlate in the first two bars. It is presented by the path created between the tonic and the dominant in the first bar, that is instantly mirrored from dominant back to tonic in the second bar.

39 Music and Literature (…) are in several ways unique among the arts. Essentially, they differ from painting, sculpture, and architecture in that they communicate through time and in sound (broudly defined) (Wallace 1977: 457).

40 See also: Some influences on Performance – *Music and Rhetoric* (Rosenblum 1988: 8-10).

Figure 18. *Pathétique*, *Grave*, bars 1-2 (Beethoven 1862: 121).




In his article from 1977 Robert K. Wallace finds an intriguing similarity between the structure of Beethoven's *Pathétique* sonata and Edgar Allan Poe's short story *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* from 1841.[41] Wallace clarify though:

> The point is not to show that Poe was directly influenced by Beethoven or by the concept of sonata allegro form, but rather to show that music and prose fiction are potentially so similar in the way they work that the kind of "musical" effects a Mann or Joyce intentionally strove for can also be achieved unconsciously and unknowingly (Wallace 1977: 458).

Wallace bases his comparison on the observation that Poe's story may be said to have an exposition, a development and a recapitulation in the same manner as a sonata allegro movement does. This would naturally make any movement in sonata form by Haydn or Mozart equally suitable, but he considers that the first movement of *Pathétique* is particularly appropriate:

41 Edgar Allan Poe was a literary man obsessed by music – or at least by the idea of music. He played the flute and perhaps the piano. Protagonists in his fiction are mesmerized by the sound of stringed instruments. His literary criticism points to Music as the Art to which all Poetry aspires. Poe's works have themselves inspired several hundred musical compositions. Yet there is no evidence that Poe had a technical knowledge of musical forms or that he consciously imitated musical models in fiction. This being so, the structural comparison offered here between one of his short stories and a movement of a Beethoven sonata is strictly coincidental (Wallace 1977: 457-458).

> The first movement of Beethoven's “Pathétique” has been chosen for two reasons. Poe listened to piano music and during his lifetime the “Pathétique” was extremely popular among both professional and amateur players. The likelihood that Poe had heard the work many times (…) makes the comparison of it with one of his stories appropriate. More important is the fact that the first movement of Beethoven's “Pathétique” is a sonata allegro movement with “options.” Before the exposition is an introduction; between the exposition and the development is a transition; following the recapitulation is a coda. Each of these “options” has its parallel in the Poe story, as the following analysis will make clear (Wallace 1977: 458).

The scheme below presents a structural comparison between the first movement of *Pathétique* and *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*. The numbers for the sonata indicate bars, and for the story it indicates paragraphs.

Figure 19. Scheme: structural comparison (Wallace 1977: 458).

| | Sonata | Story |
|---|---|---|
| Introduction | 1–10 | 1–4 |
| Exposition | 11–120 | 5–50 |
| Transition | 121–132 | 51–57 |
| Development | 133–194 | 57–98 |
| Recapitulation | 195–285 | 99–122 |
| Coda | 286–310 | 123–124 |

Wallace claims that there is a meaning on two different levels – one would be called the structural level and the other the dynamic level. On the structural level we find the correspondence to the scheme, where both works relate to each other by bar groups and paragraph groups. We are also provided with an additional scheme featuring sub-groups under the Exposition and the Recapitulation that more exactly matches punctual parts of the narrative:

Figure 20. Scheme: structural comparison with sub-groups (Wallace 1977: 461).

| | Sonata | Story |
|---|---|---|
| Exposition | 11–120 | 5–50 |
| First Theme | 11–50 | 5–25 |
| Second Group | 51–120 | 26–50 |
| First Part | 51–88 | 26–31 |
| Second Part | 89–120 | 32–50 |
| Recapitulation | 195–285 | 99–122 |
| First Theme | 195–221 | 99–116 |
| Second Group | 222–285 | 117–122 |
| First Part | 222–253 | (117–122) |
| Second Part | 254–285 | (117–122) |

I will not retell the exact passage analysis of the sonata movement, nor the specific happenings in Poe's story (for this it is better to consult the article directly), but I wanted rather to highlight some central conclusions about the relationship between music and literature made in the text, and that are to be found in what would form part of the dynamic level mentioned above.

> Comparable dynamic structure refers not to the fact that the sonata movement and the short story have measurable parts that can be seen as comparable to each others but to the fact that in each separate case those measurable parts interact with one another in such a way as to produce comparable development, tension, and form. (…) The kind of tension felt by one who reads the story is comparable to the kind of tension felt by one who hears the sonata movement, for it is a tension that results from apprehending similar structural developments. This is not to say that the moods, or the affective effects, of the two works are comparable. What the listener and the reader are left with emotionally may very well be different. But whatever each gets he gets by apprehending comparable forms (Wallace 1997: 461-2).

This small excursion give us a glimpse of how to very diverse creative expressions can be said to have a common foundation. It is fascinating to see that music and literature might be far more related to each other than we are able to initially comprehend or perceive, due perhaps to the fact that the field is still quite uncharted and needs to be more carefully studied. Even though there are no obvious strings to pull from, I find it highly exhilarating when to art forms come together in a perhaps somewhat unexpected manner.

Upon music and rhetoric Rosenblum writes:

> Türk [Daniel Gottlob Türk (1750-1813] draws repeatedly on analogies between rhetoric and music as he discusses clarity, punctuation, accentuation, and other aspects of "good execution." In describing the forms of instrumental music he ranks the sonata first among pieces written for the keyboard, comparing it to the ode in poetry (Rosenblum 1988: 9).

And grasping firmly this last sentence I would like to conclude this aesthetic inquiry with a poem by T. Weiss[42].

**SONATA PATHETIQUE**

Let it be some sheets of music,
molding lamplight into the shapes
of music, and a fly, a last
survivor in this bleak November,
sitting on the page, humming
to himself like one of the black
notes come alive.

42 Weiss, T. (1953).

I listen
as though to overhear the strains
of an Eden he once belonged to, bit
of troublesome troubadour, archaic
chord - and then he chirped most
merrily? - lost out of a great
green air, jostled
by want
or suffering or decay. The fly,
flicking his tired wings, sparkles
in the light, a haloing late warmth
of overtones he is not equal to,
as he submits to memories plainly
not his own.
But whose?
Some original, a giant or a genius
of a stubbornness to outlast
his death? An ancient, cloudy maker
whose gifts, needing a longevity
no single flesh can give, are
clamoring still?
Or perhaps
some homespun, too pure, too local,
to understand. Moments there are
undoubtedly so self-willed
that their day of wakening, though
it be bluster-big, glitters,
grit upon their wing;
and they,
outlandish, zither about till they
find a setting - sheets of music
in a lamplight - they can be
moderately at home in. This note is
the only fellowship I can offer
the fat St. Franciscan fly.

T. WEISS

# Epilogue

Working with this study has been personally very enriching, since it has given me not only a historical overview, but also a philosophical survey with many new angles of incidence. It created a platform where associations have been allowed to freely flow and various new ideas have had the possibility to settle and prosper. I found it very enthralling to approach the *Pathétique* sonata from different aesthetic points of view, trying to discover what possible influences and notions Beethoven could have had when writing his music.

This study led me to various domains: starting from Beethoven's milieu at the time, again finding all kinds of anecdotes surrounding his *Pathétique* sonata, to dwell a moment among composers who internally admired and draw inspiration from each other, to go forth and trace cultural conceptions that where probably more or less unconsciously rooted in Beethoven's mind. Finally I made an excursion to other art forms that could be found to favour one another, even if not deliberately.

I believe that as an interpreter it is significant to widen your intellect and thus enhance the associations. Therefore it is pleasing to be aware of the several conditions that surround a composer and the music we are working with for the moment. This enriches not only the actual interpretation, but further life itself, it gives meaning and joy to our work and thus hopefully this is transmitted to the public. Hence I believe that culture is a precious and important part of a society: it forms a pediment that contribute to unify people by emphasizing our inner similitudes thru art and our common experience of it.

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**Upon recordings and performances:** In a single concert cycle, the whole 32 sonatas were first performed by Hans von Bülow, and Artur Schnabel was the first to make a complete recording (for EMI between 1932 and 1935). Other pianists to make complete recordings after Schnabel include Vladimir Ashkenazy, Claudio Arrau, Wilhelm Backhaus, Daniel Barenboim, Alfred Brendel, Annie Fischer, Richard Goode, Friedrich Gulda,Wilhelm Kempff, András Schiff, Russell Sherman and Gerard Willems. Emil Gilels also began to record the set but died before he could complete it. See: Tovey (1998) and Rosen (2002).

Note: There are two very interesting articles written about Liszt's and Schenker's interpretation of Beethoven's piano sonatas. See: Newman (1972) and Rothstein (1984).