Eleventh New Beethoven Research Conference

November 5-6, 2025, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota

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Wednesday, November 5: 9:00-12:00: *New Perspectives on the Piano Music*

Chair: Alan Gosman

Malcolm Miller (Open University, UK):

"Freedom and Space in Beethoven's Fantasie, Opus 77"

> Beethoven's structural and expressive use of space and boundaries is a significant aspect of his compositional strategy, yet scant attention has been devoted to it in the theoretical literature. In this paper, as in my recent book (Boydell 2025), I propose a new analytic approach to illuminate Beethoven's exploratory uses of sonic space and keyboard choreography. My case-study is the Fantasie, Opus 77 (1809), which Barry Cooper describes as "one of Beethoven's most original, challenging and forward-looking piano works, with a Romantic wildness that easily obscures its ingeniously crafted design." (Cooper, 2000). Its freedom of form and "progressive tonality" reflect the work's possible source in the improvisation performed in the famous Akademie of 1808, alongside the Choral Fantasy Opus 80, the improvisatory opening of which was also notated in 1809. This aspect is explored in the seminal 1993 *JMT* essay 'Schenker and Improvisation' by John Rink, whose Schenkerian reading, like that of Edward Laufer (Integral, 1988), interprets the opening sections as "structural upbeat" to the B major *Ursatz* of the concluding theme and variations. Both analyses are challenged by Sean Schulze, whose 2004 *The Beethoven Journal* article proposes the semitone E/D-sharp as unifying motif at foreground and middleground levels connecting the freer opening section to the variations. My paper offers a complementary response, demonstrating how structural and expressive use of pitch space creates a large-scale narrative involving structural dislocation and coherence. Using linear and computational techniques I interpret Beethoven's deployment of long-range linear progressions at extreme registers, wide-span distribution, and more local registral bridges and markers. My analysis illustrates how the spatial characteristics of the free improvisatory sections, made up of scales and arpeggios which, for William Kinderman (2009), seem "...torn, as it were, from the celestial ether," contrast with those of the 'fixed' thematic sections. Mapping the spatial approach to a tonal analysis shows correlations of registral events with tonal "thwarting points," a reading that echoes Laufer's by foregrounding the narrative of losing, then finding tonal directionality central to the Fantasy genre. Moreover, it highlights Beethoven's original uses of sonic space pointing to compositional processes in the later bagatelles and sonatas.

Rose Mauro (independent scholar, Southborough, Massachusetts):

"Beethoven at a Crossroads: His Piano Sonata in E Minor, Opus 90, as a Meditation on Vocal and Instrumental Styles"

When surveying the literature on Beethoven's Opus 90, it is surprising to find that the insights of two influential authorities have been generally passed over. Donald Francis Tovey was especially struck by the lack of dominant preparation for the first movement's recapitulation. This transition features two canonic voices in high register over a 6/4 chord. According to Tovey, "The 6/4 chord is evaporating while awaiting its resolution; the anxious voices ask, Where? Where? When? and How?—and all the time the answer is 'Here and now.'" I became aware of Theodor Adorno's unpublished aphorisms on Opus 90 through Federica Rovelli's new book on the late Beethoven sonatas. For Adorno, Opus 90's final *singbar* movement is not "content to remain mere lyricism." Adorno's comments on the movement's "curious ending," "closing on a question," must refer to this. This passage consists of a running 16th-note melody in high register, completely distinct from the rest of the movement until its last few notes. 1814 is a difficult year for Beethoven biographers, and the "Dessauer" manuscript (A-Wgm, A 40), where much of Opus 90 was sketched, may reflect uncertainty about his path forward. While devoted primarily to the revision of *Fidelio*, it was also used for several occasional vocal works. Also present are sketches for the rather theatrical "Namensfeier" overture, containing material previously associated with a Schiller text. But there are also concept sketches for several symphonic movements (discussed by Erica Buurman), and six pages of sketches perhaps intended for another piano sonata or a chamber work. I propose that Beethoven uses the passages discussed by Tovey and Adorno to experiment with unexpected shifts in vocal and instrumental styles. Regarding his use of canon in the first movement, my paper will draw upon Richard Kramer's work on Beethoven and C.P.E. Bach, and will also cite Kramer and Joanna Biermann on Beethoven's familiarity with Sulzer. I will also lend support to Rovelli's proposal of a link between Opus 90 and Opus 101. With its suggestions of "voice," "fugue", and "contrast" (Joseph Kerman), Opus 90 can be seen as a forerunner of Beethoven's late style.

Gilad Rabinovitch (Associate Professor of Music Theory, Queens College, CUNY):

"Diabelli vs. Diabelli: A View from Schema Theory"

When fifty Viennese musicians looked at Diabelli's notorious waltz, what did they perceive Beyond Notes (Rasch 2011)? What potentials for embellishment did they see in this simple piece? How does their output relate to Beethoven's monumental undertaking? What are we to gain by suspending value judgments and adopting a descriptive stance on the building blocks of Viennese music ca. 1820? One of the weaknesses of Anglo-American music theory is its canon-centrism, which obscures from our view important contexts for well-known pieces like Beethoven's Opus 120. If we focus our analysis on a limited number of works and composers, we are bound to have a distorted picture of their conventionality as well as their uniqueness (cf. London 2022). Thankfully, recent analytical scholarship (e.g., Gjerdingen 2007; Burstein 2020; Greenberg 2022; Horton 2023) charts musical conventions in tonal repertoires, allowing us to analyze more accurately the relations between well known pieces and the musical practices of which they are a part. My paper presents findings from work in progress on the "other" Diabelli variations (Diabelli 1824). I view this as an exercise in schema theory or cognitive archaeology à la Gjerdingen (2007) and Byros (2012): I argue that these musicians' creative outputs give us a glimpse of their mental schemata. By engaging their variations, we can enrich and contextualize our analytical and aural experiences with Beethoven's Opus 120.

Siân Derry (Assistant Director of Postgraduate Studies, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire)

(Dr. Derry's paper will be read by Malcolm Miller)

"Evoking the Spirit of Beethoven: Charles Halle as Performer and Editor of the Piano Sonatas"

Charles Hallé (1819-1895) is arguably best remembered as the founder of Manchester's Hallé orchestra, the first professional orchestra in Britian. However, Hallé was also a virtuoso pianist and a Beethoven enthusiast; he dedicated his life to researching and promoting Beethoven's music. Hallé gave the first known complete cycle of Beethoven's piano sonatas (1862-63) and his interpretations were widely acknowledged by critics as those which came closest to the spirit of the composer. On hearing Hallé perform Beethoven's Opus 10, No. 3, the Irish critic and playwright George Bernard Shaw observed (1888) "the secret is that he gives you as little as possible of Hallé and as much as possible of Beethoven." Hallé's admiration for Beethoven brought him into contact with many of the composer's contemporaries, including Spohr, Ries and Moscheles; he was friends with Czerny's pupil Stephen Heller; he examined Beethoven's manuscripts at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde with Pohl and discussed sketches with Nottebohm. Given Hallé's reputation as a Beethoven interpreter par excellence, it is unsurprising that he edited a complete volume of the piano sonatas (Chappell, 1861). At a time when virtuosic interpretations were celebrated, Hallé favoured fidelity to the composer's intentions, producing what can arguably be considered an early *Urtext* edition. In a separate series, he also published selected sonatas with more comprehensive pedagogical editorial interventions (Forsyth, starting 1873), providing a detailed insight into his own interpretation of these works and allowing us to see why his performances were held with such high regard. While scholarly attention has understandably focussed on the editions of Czerny, Moscheles and von Bülow, for example, Hallé's have yet to receive the same level of scrutiny despite their immense popularity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This paper addresses that imbalance by providing an examination of the editions, revealing insights into the performances of a celebrated Beethoven interpreter who hitherto appears to have remained largely overlooked by Beethovenian scholarship, not only furthering our understanding of nineteenth century performing practices, but also adding to our appreciation of what English critics considered to be those closest to evoking the spirit of Beethoven.

Wednesday, November 5: 2-5 p.m.: *From the Baroque to the Present: Reimagining Form, Philosophy, Literary Muse, and Disability*

Chair: William Meredith (emeritus director, Beethoven Center, San José State University)

Francesco Fontanelli (Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at Humboldt University, Berlin)

"'Predestined' Sonata Forms in Beethoven's Quartets, Opuses 127 and 132: Testing Subthematicism through the Sketches"

In his essay *Brahms the Progressive,* Schoenberg cites the first movement of Beethoven's Quartet, Opus 95, as an example of a new compositional logic grounded in an almost unconscious "foresight": a "basic idea," latent in the opening bar, is projected across the entire form, justifying its "enigmatic procedures" and serving as a "connective." Similar insights appear in the writings of Réti and Dahlhaus, the latter notably interpreting Beethoven's late works through the lens of "subthematicism." Here, the material derives its coherence from "abstract configurations"—mainly tetrachords—that articulate a "network" of long-range relationships;

even the tonal trajectory appears to unfold from the motivic framework defined at the outset. Although compelling and influential, this view has not gone unchallenged. James Webster, for instance, argued that Dahlhaus's approach is "not Beethovenian, but Wagnerian and Schoenbergian," while Stephen Rumph questioned a proto-serial reading that overlooks the semantic dimension of motifs. My paper aims to reexamine subthematicism by investigating Beethoven's experimental sonata forms from within the creative process. I focus on the first movements of Quartets, Opuses 127 and 132—widely analyzed, yet seldom considered from a genetic perspective. Reconstructing the chronology and internal connections among the sketches will allow for a closer assessment of the composer's intentions: how he conceived the themes, which harmonic areas he envisioned, whether and to what extent "half-hidden intervallic structures" foreordain the formal layout. In the case of Opus 127, a chordal preamble is established from the earliest stages, leading to a cantabile melody through a strategy of integration and motivic mirroring. By contrast, the sketches for Opus 132 show that the opening with tetrachords emerges only later, after the profile of the first theme had been drafted. Comparing the final leaves of Autograph 11/2 with the score sketches in Artaria 213/1, I explore Beethoven's attempts to graft the mysterious contrapuntal background onto the Allegro's melody, gradually turning the two into fatefully linked entities.

Nicholas Chong (Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University)

"Beethoven and the Liberal Philosophy of Isaiah Berlin"

Isaiah Berlin (1909–1997) was among the most prominent theorists of political liberalism during the twentieth century. His writings on liberty, pluralism, and the Enlightenment were especially influential during the 1950s and 60s, at the height of the Cold War. A recent article by musicologist Sarah Collins ("Naivety, Liberalism, and Isaiah Berlin's Musical Thinking," 2025) has drawn attention to the place of music in Berlin's thought, a topic whose previous neglect is surprising given that in addition to political and historical works, Berlin wrote music criticism for popular audiences throughout his career. Collins's article also exemplifies the ongoing interdisciplinary interest in the role of aesthetics in the history of liberalism (see, for instance, the 2019 essay collection edited by Collins, *Music and Victorian Liberalism*). This paper will build upon Collins's work by demonstrating the specific role that Beethoven and his music played in Berlin's thought. While Collins focuses mostly on Berlin's musical writings, I concentrate instead on musical references in the philosopher's better known *political* works. On multiple occasions in these works, Berlin invoked Beethoven as the paradigmatic example of Romanticism's obsession with personal authenticity, which he connected to multiple strands of political extremism during the twentieth century. His critique of Romanticism in this regard was related to his controversial argument in "Two Concepts of Liberty" (1958), his best known work, that certain common ways of understanding freedom actually encourage authoritarianism. Despite his deep suspicion of Romanticism, however, Berlin appreciated its encouragement of a respect for "value pluralism," a concept central to his vision of liberalism. This paradox, I suggest, may explain the tension between the negative view of Beethoven in Berlin's political writings and the neutral or even positive one that comes across in his music criticism. The main concerns of Berlin's

philosophy, especially freedom, resonate with themes that have long dominated discourse about Beethoven. Therefore, in addition to highlighting Berlin's work as a notable example of twentieth-century Beethoven reception outside of music, I conclude with a brief reflection on how Berlin's ideas might also affect how we interpret the political meanings of Beethoven's music.

Donna Beckage (Independent scholar, Los Angeles)

"Beethoven's Diabelli Variations as Literary Muse"

"Those incredible Diabelli variations," wrote Aldous Huxley in his 1928 novel *Point Counter Point*. "The whole range of thought and feeling, yet all in organic relation to a ridiculous little waltz tune. Get this into a novel." Huxley is not the only literary author who has found Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* fascinating and worthy of emulation. My presentation will focus on three who have incorporated these remarkable variations into their poetry, fiction, and drama in distinctive ways. The three authors are American poet Theodore Enslin, who wrote a sequence of poems titled *The Diabelli Variations*; American-born fiction writer Irene Dische, whose novel *Sad Strains of a Gay Waltz* (1993) follows the contours of Beethoven's variations while chronicling the life of a reclusive mathematician; and Venezuelan-American playwright Moisés Kaufman, whose 2007 play *33 Variations* dramatizes the quest of an American musicologist to understand why Diabelli's seemingly undistinguished tune became a rich source of inspiration for Beethoven. My aim is to expand our knowledge of the intersections of literature and music as related to Beethoven.

Kristin Franseen (postdoctoral associate in musicology, Western University) and Hester Bell Jordan (independent scholar, Montreal)

"'Maelzels Metronom ist da!' Reconsidering Technological Accessibility in Beethoven's and Salieri's Metronome Usage"

On February 14, 1818, an announcement cosigned by Ludwig van Beethoven and Antonio Salieri appeared in Vienna's *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in support of the metronome patented by Johann Nepomuk Maelzel. While the letter focused on potential pedagogical applications of the device, both men were also interested in employing it in their own published compositions and revisions of earlier works. Beethoven's metronome markings in particular have inspired debate amongst performers, scholars, and biographers as to their playability and reliability (see for example Kolisch 1993, Buurman 2011, Noorduin 2021). More broadly, musicologists such as Roger Mathew Grant (2014), Alexander Bonus (2021), and Emmanuel Reibel (2023) have also considered the metronome and metronomic time in relation to other forms of technological standardization during the first decades of the Industrial Revolution.

While existing scholarship tends to position the metronome as an external object through which the composer places temporal strictures on the performer, its affordances vis-à-vis the composer—and especially the composing body—remain underexplored. Using an interdisciplinary lens drawn from embodiment, aging, and disability studies, we argue that the metronome can be understood as serving multiple functions for Beethoven and Salieri beyond the pedagogical, including as a tool for memorialization, a form of assistive technology, and a

way of preserving musical knowledge. We build on embodied approaches to musical engagement (Le Guin 2006, De Souza 2017), studies of other assistive technologies used by Beethoven (Ealy 1994, Beghin 2017, Wallace 2018), and recent work on Salieri and other composers in old age (Herrmann 2019, Straus 2025). Furthermore, we consider how the metronome interacted not just with these composers' sense of compositional authority but also with their aging and/or disabled physical presences in a pan-European musical community. Through our examination of documentary sources–including personal letters, articles in the musical press, and musical evidence of metronome use–we expand discourse beyond issues of accuracy and pedagogical control. By placing the metronome in dialogue with Beethoven's and Salieri's experienced and inventive musical bodies, we propose new ways of understanding how and why these early adopters engaged with this technology.

Thursday, November 6: 9:00 a.m. to Noon: *Late Works Reconsidered: Mode, Operatic Stretta, and Metric Shifts*

Chair: David B. Levy

Jonathon Crompton (PhD candidate in music theory, Columbia University)

"Beethoven's Quartet in C-sharp Minor, Opus 131: The Neo-Phrygian Quartet"

Mode in late Beethoven has been primarily understood as occurring through mode-signifying scale degrees, whether in melodic or harmonic contexts, and often as variations of major or minor keys (Biamonte, 2001; Tuttle, 2016; Grajter, 2020). But this may overlook other older forms of idiomatic modal behavior predicated on mode-signifying *half steps* in relation to a final, rather than as inflections of an abstracted, *a priori* diatonic scale. Some of Opus 131's more enigmatic harmonic features—the ambiguous closes of the tonic-key bookend movements, where C-sharp major emerges as V/iv rather than via a PAC, and the fugue's subdominant rather than dominant answers—cannot neatly be understood as employing inflected scale degrees to shift a tonal context into a modal one. Instead, this paper argues that, in the above, Beethoven employs two Phrygian conventions as they had absorbed into Baroque tonal practice, which, historically, emblematized the Phrygian mode's signal half steps. First, Phrygian Points of Imitation: through an examination of J.C.F. Fischer's *mi* fugue in his *Ariadne Musica*, whose subject is the Phrygian hymn *Aus tiefer Noth*, I show that explicitly Phrygian fugues could feature subdominant answers in which the tonic subject's 5–flat 6 (in E: B–C-natural) is transposed to 1–flat 2 (in E: E–F-natural), thematizing these important Phrygian half steps. Second, Phrygian Tonal Closes: through exploring historical surveys of the change from modes to keys by Harold Powers and Joel Lester, I highlight the mode-signifying half steps in the Phrygian Tonal Closes flat vii–I and iv–I. While literature concerned with the nineteenth-century breakdown of tonality (Bailey, 1985; Kinderman & Krebs, 1996; Lewis, 1984) notes the importance of the subdominant in obscuring harmonic function at moments of close in late-nineteenth-century music—and sometimes cite Opus 131 as a precursor—I note antecedents from Baroque Phrygian Tonality, such as Bach's chorale setting of *Aus tiefer Noth*, and suggest, again, that composers were emphasizing the mode-signifying half step in these closes. Having surveyed the above historical antecedents, I return to Opus 131 to

demonstrate how these Baroque Phrygian strategies parallel key moments in the Quartet. While this interpretation supports the accepted notion that Beethoven's late style, beyond being forward-looking and experimental, also engages with historical practices, further, it suggests an expanded view of his modal thinking, beyond harmonic and melodic inflections or major or minor keys, to include modally-idiomatic Points of Imitation and Cadences.

Matthew Boyle (Assistant Professor of Teaching in Music Theory, Oregon State University)

"Rossinian Closure, Begging Cadences, and the Finale of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9"

In 2013, the musicologist Nicholas Mathew invited modern listeners to rehear Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with ears attuned to the conventions of Rossinian opera. This presentation responds to Mathew's call and engages with the concluding prestissimo of the Ninth as an operatic stretta. Within this framing, I propose that passages of the finale contain a highly modified Rossinian *felicità* schema, a cadential convention that closes operatic numbers and cues applause. Unlike Gjerdingen's contrapuntal schemata, non-musical social behaviors such as those governing applause partially define the *felicità*. Beethoven's modifications to this schema in the Ninth shed light on how musical schemata can mediate social and affective experiences. Typically, the *felicità* ends a cadential process that accumulates musical agitation and energy. This process usually contains three repeated phrases of progressively shorter length. The second and third phrases of this process are so well known, their stereotyped melodies (| |: *sol – fa – mi – re* :| |) and harmonies (| |: I^6 ii^6 V^6_{4-5} :| |) have become sonic emblems of bel canto opera. In contrast, scholars have overlooked the first and longest repeated phrase, whose loud orchestration, shrill timbres, and chromatic harmonies were central in securing audience engagement before the end of a number. Nineteenth-century listeners recognized these devices as applause-securing ploys. German-language critics, for example, mocked the *felicità* by calling it the *Bettelcadenz* (begging cadence). In the finale of the Ninth, Beethoven only uses the first repeated phrase of the *felicità* schema and never continues to the stereotypical second and third phrases of the convention. Instead, Beethoven presents a series of paired phrases that individually resemble a new first section of a rejected three-phrase *felicità* process. Although subsequent paired phrases accumulate more agitated musical energy than their predecessors, none find the musical release that the second and third *felicità* phrases would offer. The earliest accounts of the Ninth indicate a mixed audience reception. Perhaps Beethoven's unorthodox modifications bewildered the audiences at its earliest performances by disrupting the interactive script of the *felicità*.

Richard Cohn (Battell Professor of the Theory of Music, Yale University)

"Primed Metric Shifts in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony"

Nineteenth-century composers sometimes "primed," or prepared, modulations by introducing a chromatic tone into an otherwise diatonic phrase, then later returning to the same tone and pursuing its modulatory potential. My 1992 article showed an analogous metric phenomenon in

the Scherzo of the 9th Symphony, which shifts between four- and three-bar hypermeter. Moving both in and out of *ritmo di tre battute*, Beethoven introduces a syncopation in an otherwise regular hypermeter, then later returns to the same syncopation and pursues its potential to leverage a hypermetric shift. Here I show the same phenomenon in the Adagio of the 9th Symphony, which shifts between four-beat meter in B-flat major and three-beat meter in D major. Moving both in and out of triple meter, Beethoven introduces a local syncopation, maintains the previous meter, reintroduces the same syncopation in a parallel context, and exercises its potential to leverage a metric change.

Guest speaker: Birgit Lodes (University of Vienna)

"Echoes of Dedication: Beethoven and the Women Who Shaped His Art"

Beethoven dedicated works to sixty-three individuals, including twenty-three women, most of them from the high nobility or the "second society" that shaped Viennese musical life and patronage around 1800. Nearly all knew the composer personally and shared his enthusiasm for a refined ideal of music that functioned as social and symbolic capital in the Bourdieusian sense. Beethoven's dedications thus can offer a window into the social conditions of composition, early performance practices, and the meanings attached to these works. The pieces Beethoven dedicated to women—chiefly songs and piano compositions—not only reflect the gendered norms of musical education and salon culture central to his professional life, but, as I will argue, were often specifically crafted to suit the individual tastes and abilities of these women. Several of these works might never have existed without the inspiration and engagement of these female patrons and performers. Shifting the focus from the composer's public "heroic" oeuvre to works reflecting his artistic and social engagements within these circles reveals a different Beethoven: one deeply embedded in the musical, cultural, and sociological networks of his time. Reconsidering these contexts challenges long-standing nationalist and bourgeois-masculine narratives and highlights the active, formative role of aristocratic women as patrons, performers, and mediators of Beethoven's art in Habsburg Vienna.

The NBR Planning Committee is a group of musicologists and theorists who volunteer to organize and put on these Beethoven-centered pre-conferences. We are especially grateful to all the organizations and people who have made this year's conference possible without us having to charge a conference fee. This year's committee consists of Joanna Bierman, Erica Buurman, Paul Ellison, Alan Gosman (chair), William Kinderman, David Levy, William Meredith, Julia Ronge, Federica Rovelli, and John Wilson.