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Review of Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphonien V: Nr. 9 d-Moll Opus 125, ed. Beate Angelika Kraus

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Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphonien V: Nr. 9 d-Moll Opus 125*, ed. Beate Angelika Kraus (Beethoven Werke, Abteilung I, Band 5), Munich: Henle, 2020. 381 pp. ISMN 979-0-2018-9819-3.

This new edition of Beethoven's "Choral" Symphony forms part of the *Neue Gesamtausgabe* (New Complete Edition) of all his works. Much of the detailed work that involved examining and comparing the original sources has been done before, in editions by Jonathan Del Mar (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1996) and again by Peter Hauschild (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2005), but the present volume has made an even more thorough examination of the sources, with fresh details appearing for the first time.

The authentic sources for this symphony are extraordinarily complex, and are now scattered in about twenty different libraries. They include no fewer than five complete manuscript scores written or checked by Beethoven, now stored in four different cities, as follows:

- A: autograph (mainly Berlin State Library)
- B: Beethoven's working copy (New York, Juilliard Manuscript Collection)
- D: copy for Philharmonic Society of London (London, British Library)
- E: copy for performance in Aachen (Aachen State Archive)
- F: dedication copy for King of Prussia (Berlin State Library)

In addition, Source C is an incomplete set of parts used at the Viennese premiere on May 7, 1824, with Beethoven's markings. Source G is the first edition, published by Schott's and based on Source B, which served as the *Stichvorlage* (printer's copy) after being used for the first performance. These main sources are also subdivided. For example, the autograph is in twelve different portions; and Schott's edition appeared in three formats: score, instrumental parts, and vocal score. There are also various other manuscripts, which contain such things as discarded pages from Source B, correction lists, trombone parts, and metronome marks, plus a few lost sources, including two small portions of the autograph score and the final version of the contrabassoon part. Beate Angelika Kraus has taken many years to examine and assess such a huge mass of material, and the result is an extremely impressive account of

them, in an extended commentary of about 140 pages. The commentary also lists all known sketch sources, twenty-eight of them.

Kraus describes each of the main sources of the finished work in great detail, including the precise dimensions of each page, measured to the nearest millimetre, and accurately traces the history of how it got from Beethoven to its present location. The numerous copyists are carefully distinguished, and their names given where known. For example, six copyists were involved in the preparation of Source B, and for Source C no fewer than seventeen have been identified (though only one by name). This number would doubtless have been even higher if all the original parts had survived, instead of just nine of them.

Beethoven's early work on the symphony in the form of sketched material is summarized only briefly, but the dating of the various movements in the autograph is discussed more fully, and a large amount of information is presented about the copying processes, with Beethoven's correspondence, his conversation books, and the sources themselves providing much detail. Kraus then gives an account of the preparations for the premiere, again with many little-known details. At the performance, Beethoven used the autograph score while the main conductor, Michael Umlauf (not the composer Ignaz Umlauf as stated here, p. 279), used Source B.

Kraus also discusses at some length the early premieres in several other cities. For London, Beethoven had promised to send the Philharmonic Society a new manuscript symphony for £50, and did so (Source D) just before the date of the premiere. It is implied here that Beethoven was somewhat duplicitous in arranging a performance in Vienna before the Philharmonic Society had received their copy; but in fact this was fully in line with their agreement, which was that he would not publish the work until at least eighteen months after sending it, and he kept to this condition. There was nothing in the agreement that the Philharmonic Society should have the world premiere. The London premiere finally took place on March 21, 1825.

The fascinating story of how the work came to be performed in Aachen under Ferdinand Ries's direction as early as May 23, 1825, is narrated in even more detail. There were almost insuperable difficulties, since the symphony was still unpublished and Ries was based in Bonn and nearby Godesberg, a good distance from Aachen. Beethoven was as helpful as possible—perhaps slightly ashamed at not having given Ries

the promised dedication of the work—and kindly arranged for a fresh score to be prepared (Source E). Various letters document the problems of getting the score and a set of parts copied and sent, and the whole process is traced here in considerable detail. In the end the performance took place as planned but had to be incomplete, with the second movement omitted.

Kraus also discusses an even earlier performance that had taken place in Frankfurt on April 1, 1825. The exact circumstances of this little-known event are unclear, but the material that Beethoven had sent to Schott that January formed the basis for the parts that were copied for the occasion. The publisher was able to use the performance to check for errors before printing the work, which did not appear until August 1826. Two further performances are also described that occurred before Schott's edition appeared. These took place in Leipzig in March 1826, again through the help of Schott and without Beethoven's co-operation. The Berlin premiere in November 1826 is covered too—the first performance to use the newly printed edition—and also the Bremen premiere in December 1826.

Kraus then examines the complex relationships between the many sources, none of which provides a definitive text, though Source B comes closest, as was already known. This source did, however, contain some copying errors, and a few were spotted by Beethoven only when checking later sources; but the single example Kraus gives is flawed: she says that the last oboe note in m. 99 of the first movement was corrected from *g* to *f* in Source D but that this was “not corrected” in Source B (p. 298), whereas this source actually shows a clear correction in Beethoven's hand (in red crayon) at this point. This section of the commentary concludes with a useful four-page chronological list of all the relevant events from initial commission in 1817 to the addition of metronome marks in the second printing of Schott's edition in 1827.

Discussing the new edition itself, Kraus lists all the sources for the metronome marks and assesses their relationship, followed by the question of repeats in the second movement (there should be none during the reprise of the *minore* section), and a beautifully clear diagram of the six stages in the evolution of the problematical contrabassoon part in the finale. The whole of Schiller's poem in its original version is included, and the myth that Schiller originally wrote “Freiheit” (freedom) rather than “Freude” is quickly dismissed. Kraus then

examines dozens of editions of Schiller's poem to establish which was the one most likely for Beethoven to have used, and she examines the minutiae of Beethoven's orthography and punctuation in the text. Finally there is an investigation of the title of the work, followed by extensive textual commentary that lists the variants in the two main sources and how they have been treated in the musical text. Variants in subsidiary sources, however, are not listed unless deemed significant.

With such an impressive array of contextual material and thorough investigation of the sources, one might expect the musical text to supersede any previous edition. Unfortunately it does not. Measures 257–58 of the first movement can be taken as illustrations of several issues. In m. 257 the first bassoon begins with four sixteenth-notes. In the autograph, Beethoven flagged the first note separately from the next three, since these three form part of a new phrase. This feature was retained in subsequent sources but is obliterated here, with all four notes beamed together, thus obscuring his carefully designed phrase structure. This is not the only place where this defect occurs.

In the same measure, the first clarinet has no dynamic mark in sources A, B and most others, but it should obviously be marked *p dim.*, like the first oboe. This would be in line with the marking in the previous measures in all the other parts, where the clarinet and oboe were silent. Yet the new edition has plain *p* (taken from Source F) without the *dim.*, which means that the clarinet would be the only instrument not getting softer in that measure. Kraus also does not indicate whether the *p* in Source F is Beethoven's correction or an inspired guess by the copyist, as seems to be the case. Del Mar's edition has just *dim.*, taken from Source D and Schott's set of parts; the result is no better, since the clarinet was previously *forte* before the rests, and would theoretically therefore enter too loudly. This important *dim.*, however, is not mentioned here in the textual commentary.

At the beginning of the same measure the cello and bass part have a sixteenth-note *d* in Source A, but a sixteenth-note rest in all other sources. Kraus, like Del Mar, rightly restores the *d*, but simply notes that it is replaced by a rest in source B, without mentioning the other sources and without giving any reason for the decision. The explanation is that in Source A the note is detached from the following sixteenths and looks rather like an eighth-note rest. The copyist of Source B was evidently uncertain and appears to have left a blank space initially, before filling

the blank space with a sixteenth-note rest, in what looks to be a slightly different script and ink, to create the right number of beats. Beethoven overlooked the error, which was then transmitted to all other sources, since they all derive directly or indirectly from B, and it is still seen in some modern editions. Thus the text here is correct but the critical commentary is insufficient, for we need to know both why the rest is considered incorrect and that the faulty reading is found in all sources except A. One cannot assume that a variant in Source B will be reproduced in all subsequent sources: in m. 116 of the third movement, Source B has a strange triple-stopped chord for viola, reproduced in the present edition, which simply notes that this is a double-stopped chord in Source A, “corrected” to triple-stop in B. It does not indicate that the revision appears in no other source except Schott’s separate printed part, nor that the triple-stop is extremely awkward to play and should surely be distributed between first and second violas by means of separate stems.

Three deficiencies in one measure might begin to look like carelessness, which would be an unfair assessment when there is such a huge amount of detail painstakingly sifted and recorded in the score as a whole. There are almost bound to be minor defects somewhere, and it may be just by chance that there happen to be three in the same measure. Yet the next measure, 258, is scarcely without problems. Here the first clarinet and first bassoon conclude with a sixteenth-note, followed by a sixteenth-note rest, in Source A, but the B copyist substituted an eighth-note in both parts, probably because he was mindlessly following the previous measure. Here, unlike in the cello/bass part in measure 257, Kraus has retained the probably faulty text and relegated the autograph version to the textual commentary.

The lower strings in this measure have no staccato on notes 5–8 in Sources A and B, presumably because Beethoven wanted a less sharp attack here. Staccato signs have been added to the second violin (but not viola or cello/bass) only in Source D, apparently not by Beethoven but by the copyist following the previous staccato notes. Yet this single doubtful reading has been adopted here, and editorial staccatos have been added to viola and cello/bass in brackets, thus generating a more lively sound than is implied in the two main sources.

These are minutiae, but more substantial problems can be found in some later passages. In m. 127 of the third movement, Beethoven

marked “Cantabile” for the flute and oboe parts, which have an important melody at this point; but the word was written in rather large script in Source B. This has resulted in the new edition using large print for the word, as a tempo mark that applies to the whole orchestra, which is clearly not what was intended.

In the preface we are told that peculiarities of Beethoven’s notation are preserved in the edition, and modernized only if the “sense” is not altered. Thus cross-beaming, some clefs, and notation of rests are modernized where appropriate, but other idiosyncrasies are preserved, including Beethoven’s unusual but distinctive habit of placing text consonants at the end of a melisma, generating words such as “Ba - - - hn” rather than “Bahn_____”. One might assume, therefore, that the twenty-four internal double bars found here in the finale all appear in the autograph score, but in fact none of them do. Since they can affect the way performers perceive phrase structure and sectional structure, their presence is unwelcome. Many conductors have treated the double bar after m. 91 as a signal for a substantial pause, whereas the single barline in the autograph implies immediate continuation and should have been shown here.

Regarding metronome marks, Beethoven’s half-note = 116 for the trio section of the second movement has long been doubted, and most conductors take a much faster speed. It is found in every source, however, and is preserved here. This may well be in line with Beethoven’s intentions after all, as Erica Buurman has shown (“New Evidence in an Old Argument: Beethoven’s Metronome Mark for the Trio of the Ninth Symphony,” *Musical Times*, 152, no. 1917 [2011], 15–30). One cannot, however, accept the ridiculously slow metronome mark at m. 331 in the finale, where the tempo is marked “Allegro assai vivace.” Beethoven originally produced the metronome marks in collaboration with his nephew Karl, who wrote them down in one of Beethoven’s conversation books, which still survives. Karl usually wrote down the metronome figure and the relevant note value, but at measure 331 he just wrote “84” without the note value. It was obviously intended to apply to the whole 6/8 measure, making the “Freude” tune very slightly faster than the 80 for “Allegro assai” when the tune had first appeared. Unfortunately, when Karl copied the figure into Source F shortly afterwards, he spotted that the beat was a dotted quarter-note and assumed the figure 84 applied to this, without checking with Beethoven.

Once he had entered the wrong note value, the error was perpetuated in all subsequent sources; but it is successfully challenged in Del Mar's edition and elsewhere. It is extraordinary, therefore, that the error is simply reproduced here without comment, and the faulty note value is even supplied in editorial brackets in the transcription from the conversation book (p. 306). It is inconceivable that Beethoven intended such a slow speed, and one must hope that conductors will ignore the indication. Had Beethoven intended to give a metronome mark for a dotted quarter-note, he would have had to put 168, but he and Karl hardly ever used that part of the metronome: the highest figure they used anywhere in this symphony was 132.

Measure 331 illustrates another problem: the low B flat for the contrabassoon, here and elsewhere, is consistently transposed up an octave in this edition. All known sources checked by Beethoven repeatedly use this low note, but Schott's separate printed part, based on a lost manuscript, always places it an octave higher. The change was probably made by the publisher on the grounds that very few contrabassoons of the period had the note available, whereas Kraus assumes, unconvincingly, that Beethoven made the change in the lost manuscript from which the printed part derives, and she therefore follows the printed part, merely listing the original version in her critical report. It is surely regrettable that the note, so striking in measure 331 in particular, has been suppressed in the score on such dubious grounds. Elsewhere the contrabassoon part is mostly as in Del Mar's edition, but it is added intermittently during measures 237–312 (the first three stanzas of the vocal section), again based exclusively on the individual printed part. Since the start of this section includes pizzicato strings and no bassoons, use of a contrabassoon here would be distinctly unorthodox and arguably improbable, suggesting a misreading of Beethoven's intentions by the publisher. The contrabassoon is conversely omitted in two passages (mm. 619–26 and 904–15) where it had been present in the previous stage and is included in Del Mar's edition, again suggesting a misreading in Schott's part.

Another problem concerns the supposed appoggiatura on the word "Töne" (finale, m. 221). Performance issues in general are rarely mentioned in this edition, but here Kraus notes that, although Beethoven wrote the notes $f-f$, an appoggiatura (thus $g-f$) was "expected," on the basis of singers' habits in operatic recitative, and indeed the text was

amended to this in the London score at a later date. This interpretation, however, is highly dubious, for there are several counter-arguments in favour of *f*–*f*. What singers did in operas and what Beethoven wanted in a symphony are not necessarily the same: in symphonies he normally wrote what he intended and intended what he wrote. Moreover, a few measures later he did write out an *appoggiatura* at the word “*anstimmen*.” This would be interpreted as “not these tones” without *appoggiatura*, for an *appoggiatura* is “more pleasing” (“*angenehmer*”). If one sings both the same way, the message is lost, and also one cannot explain why he wrote the two passages differently. A close look at the autograph score shows that he originally did write *g* – *f* but then carefully amended the *g* to *f*. This would be a singularly pointless act if he actually wanted a *g* all the time. Thus the written text is surely preferable; but the issue is left largely unexamined here.

Overall, therefore, the musical text and accompanying critical report are no real advance on what is already available, and some places are even slightly defective. On the other hand, the volume is to be highly praised for its excellent commentary—especially the detailed description of the sources and the exceptionally thorough discussion of the first and early performances and the dedication to the King of Prussia. Here a comprehensive account has been constructed from the numerous pieces of information scattered in letters, conversation books and elsewhere. It will doubtless be of great value to future music historians.

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