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BARRY COOPER

Two groups of Beethoven sketches (see below) have recently been identified as preparatory work for his sixteen sets of flute variations, published as Opp. 105 (six sets) and 107 (ten sets). These works, composed in 1818–19, were scored for pianoforte with optional flute, and are based on popular or national melodies of various countries, chiefly British and commonly known as folksongs. An excellent initial account of the origins of these sets of variations was published by C. B. Oldman in 1951, but this does not take into account either the two new sources or most of Beethoven's other manuscript material, which had not then come to light.¹ An updated account of the composition of these works is therefore desirable; and in any case it is hard to discover from the existing literature how all the sources relate to each other.

THE SCHEIDE MANUSCRIPT

The Scheide Collection in Princeton University Library is well known to Beethoven scholars as the location of his famous Scheide Sketchbook, which contains sketches for numerous works from the period 1815–16.²

¹ See C. B. Oldman, "Beethoven's *Variations on National Themes*: Their Composition and First Publication," *The Music Review*, 12 (1951): 45–51. A complete edition of these works, with more comprehensive information about the sources, is found in the *Neue Gesamtausgabe*: Ludwig van Beethoven, *Werke für Klavier und ein Instrument*, ed. Armin Raab, Beethoven Werke, Abteilung V, Band 4 (Munich: Henle, 1993), hereafter NGA, V/4. Further details are provided in the new thematic catalog: Kurt Dorf Müller, Norbert Gertsch, and Julia Ronge, *Ludwig van Beethoven: Thematisch-bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis*, 2 vols (Munich: Henle, 2014), 1:657–60, 670–3 (hereafter LvBWV).

² See Hans Schmidt, "Verzeichnis der Skizzen Beethovens," *Beethoven-Jahrbuch*, 6 (1965–68 [1969]): 7–128 (hereafter SV), item 364. Detailed descriptions are provided in Douglas Johnson, Alan Tyson and Robert Winter, *The Beethoven Sketchbooks*, ed. Douglas Johnson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 241–52 (hereafter JTW), and Lewis Lockwood, "The Beethoven Sketchbook in the Scheide Library," *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 37, no. 2 (1976): 139–53.

This sketchbook tends to overshadow three other Beethoven sketch sources found in the same collection. One is a group of six leaves of a variety of paper types, containing sketches for the finale of the “Hammerklavier” Sonata Op. 106 on the first nine sides (the remaining three are blank).³ Another is a uniform sheet of four leaves, also containing sketches for the finale of the “Hammerklavier”.⁴ The third source contains material not previously identified, and seems not to have been mentioned in the Beethoven literature.⁵ It consists of a single 10-staff folio in Beethoven's hand, and is described on the Scheide Library website as: “Sketches for variations in G minor. Autograph manuscript. (Vienna, c. 1818–1819?) ... Accompanied by transcription by Marcel Dupré, dated 27 Feb. 1924. Scheide M149. Acquired: June 1982 (Lucien Goldschmidt).”⁶ The description notes that the leaf was acquired for the collection along with a Beethoven letter of 1826 to Klaus [*recte*: Konrad] Graf. This letter is duly included in Sieghard Brandenburg's edition of Beethoven's letters.⁷ A printed note attached to the verso of the sketch leaf provides additional information about the contents: “Autograph MS. music “ben Ligato”.... Probably for clavier. Very clearly written and apparently unpublished.”

There are several things to note about these descriptions. The transcription of the sketch was made by Marcel Dupré (1886–1971) for a Mr Sindrini(?), whom he addresses in English at the end of the transcription: “With my best regards and in remembrance of February 27th 1924.” The manuscript and transcription may therefore have passed direct from Sindrini's family to Lucien Goldschmidt (1912–92), who in 1982 was a rare-book dealer in New York, before they entered the Scheide Collection. Dupré's comment at the head of the transcription is also in English: “Manuscript of Beethoven (probably Variations in G major).” Dupré was an excellent organist and composer, and correctly spotted that the music consisted of variations in G major (not G minor

³ SV 365; see also JTW, 538, for details of staff rulings.

⁴ The source is not listed in SV but is described in JTW, 537. The two sources are treated as a single source in LvBWV, 1:665, under sketch source no. 29, but they were acquired for the Scheide Collection at quite different times: 1935 and 1958 respectively.

⁵ It is not listed in SV, JTW or LvBWV.

⁶ <https://dpul.princeton.edu/scheide/catalog/fj236611d> (accessed April 16, 2024).

⁷ Sieghard Brandenburg, ed., *Ludwig van Beethoven: Briefwechsel Gesamtausgabe*, 7 vols (Munich: Henle, 1996–8), letter no. 2108. Letters from the *Briefwechsel Gesamtausgabe* are hereafter given as BB-.

as stated in the catalog entry). But he was no Beethoven expert, and his transcription is inaccurate in several places, including the omission of Beethoven's instruction "ben legato" mentioned in the printed notice. Dupré evidently recognised his limitations, adding the word "probably" in several places in his transcription. Beethoven's sketch is indeed "very clearly written," at least by his standards, but certain features are easily misread. A new transcription is provided in Example 1, and the music is identifiable as a sketch for the set of variations Op. 107 No. 3, published by Nikolaus Simrock in Bonn in August or September 1820.⁸

The theme on which the variations are based is shown in Example 2, and the derivation of the variations from it is easy to see: the harmonic structure is retained with little deviation, and there is frequent allusion to the melodic shape of the theme. The theme itself was described in Simrock's edition as *Air de la Petite Russie*, referring to Little Russia, an old name for Ukraine. Beethoven actually informed Simrock shortly before publication that the theme was "Scottish and not Italian as it stands in the manuscript,"⁹ but it is not typical of Scottish melodies and is not found in any other British collection. It is in fact of Ukrainian origin, showing typical Ukrainian melodic features, and is still known in that country today.¹⁰ Beethoven's source has not been identified, but Simrock had already published Ferdinand Ries's variations on the same theme, with a similar title,¹¹ and reused the title for Beethoven's set; Beethoven was obviously misinformed about the country of origin.

⁸ Date is in LvBWV, 1:673.

⁹ BB-1384, dated April 23, 1820: "dies ist Ecosais u. nicht italienne wie es dem Manuscript steht."

¹⁰ I am very grateful to Ukrainian musicologist Anastasia Davitadze for this information and other details about Ukrainian folksong. On the theme's Ukrainian style see Yakov Soroker, *Ukrainian Musical Elements in Classical Music*, trans. Olya Samilenko (Edmonton and Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1995), 27–29.

¹¹ NGA, V/4, 156.

Example 1: Sketches for Op. 107 No. 3 (Princeton, Scheide Library, M149)

The image displays a musical score for sketches of Op. 107 No. 3. It consists of six systems of music, each with a piano part and a violin part. The piano part is written in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The violin part is written in G major and 3/4 time. The score includes various musical notations such as treble and bass clefs, notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Performance instructions are present: "ben legato" above the first system, "siml" (simile) above the fifth system, and "[verso:]" above the sixth system. The piano part features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth-note runs and chords. The violin part includes melodic lines and chords.

Example 2: Theme of *Petite Russie* (Ukrainian) Variations, Op. 107 No. 3

The sketch, which occupies the whole of the recto and part of the first two staves of the verso, appears to show four variations, separated by plain double bars. In sketching sets of variations, Beethoven often wrote just the first few measures of each variation, since once the figuration is established, the rest of the variation will easily fall into place, following the melodic-harmonic outline of the theme. The sketches on the Scheide leaf partly follow this pattern, showing the first four measures (counting the repeat) of an initial variation, with sixteenth-note figuration in the left hand, then twelve measures of a second variation, headed “ben ligato” for the right hand and with rapid scales for the left. The following variation, which uses almost incessant iambic rhythms, is the only one to include the complete 16-measure structure of the theme. The fourth variation begins in the middle of the last two staves of the page and appears to continue overleaf after three measures; but the foot of the page has been cut off, and the sketch probably continued there instead. The four measures overleaf, though shown in Example 1 (and in Dupré’s transcription) as following direct from the previous passage, probably represent the start of a fifth variation, utilising a dialogue between the two hands and roughly matching the harmonic structure of the first phrase of the theme. The remainder of the verso is blank apart from the printed notice mentioned above.

The most remarkable feature about these sketches is that none of the variations matches any of those in the final version (which may explain why the group has not previously been identified), and so this must have been an early attempt that was quickly abandoned. There are some slight similarities between the second variation of the sketch and Variation 1 of Op. 107 No. 3, where the right hand moves in thirds in a similarly high register and is marked “sempre ligato,” while the left hand keeps a low profile—generally even lower than in the sketch. In

addition, the left hand at the start of the third sketch variation resembles the accompaniment pattern in Variation 3. But any further connections between sketch and final version are even more tenuous.

Drafting and then rejecting variations was not uncommon amongst Beethoven's late sets. In the finale of the piano sonata Op. 109, composed little more than a year later, he appears to have noted ideas for no fewer than fifteen variations, of which only three were eventually used, along with three additional ones whose sketches are missing. Among the fifteen, one group is actually numbered as far as Variation 9, but little of this material filtered through to the final version.¹² In the Diabelli Variations, his initial draft in 1819 showed 23 variations with more to come, but one of the 23 was later discarded.¹³ And in the second movement of his String Quartet Op. 127, he planned at one stage to alternate slow variations in A flat with quicker ones in C major, but discarded those in C major.¹⁴ Nevertheless, it is surprising that he should opt to discard all the variations in the sketch for Op. 107 No. 3.

CONTEXT: THE FIRST TWELVE SETS OF VARIATIONS

This sketch and this set of variations, one of the above-mentioned sixteen sets that Beethoven composed during 1818–19, need to be placed in context. He was originally asked by George Thomson of Edinburgh to compose just twelve sets of variations for piano, based on “airs of various nations,” in a letter dated June 25, 1817, which offered a fee of 72 ducats.¹⁵ Beethoven eventually replied in a letter of February 21, 1818, proposing a fee of 100 ducats for twelve sets of variations.¹⁶ Thomson agreed to this price in a letter dated June 22, 1818, adding:

I would like you to choose the themes from among the Scottish airs that you have harmonised for me; you will also take two or three of them from

¹² Barry Cooper, *The Creation of Beethoven's 35 Piano Sonatas* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 183–4. Fuller details are given in Nicholas Marston, *Beethoven's Piano Sonata in E, Op. 109* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 171–217.

¹³ William Kinderman, *Beethoven's Diabelli Variations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 15.

¹⁴ Barry Cooper, “The Role of Beethoven's ‘la gaiete’ Movement in the Creation of His Quartet Op. 127,” *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 11, no. 1 (2014): 33–55.

¹⁵ BB-1133.

¹⁶ BB-1244.

among the Tyrolean airs if they seem to you pleasing and well adapted for themes. One would also like an accompaniment for flute ad libitum for all the themes, if you please, and that you write the variations in a familiar and easy and slightly brilliant style, so that the greatest number of our young ladies might play them and enjoy them.¹⁷

Thomson included the flute at this point because, as he had noted in an earlier letter, good flute players were plentiful, at least in his area: “We have a great number of flautists, but alas! our violinists are rare and quite weak.”¹⁸ He evidently hoped that adding this option would increase the interest of the musical public.

Beethoven had by that time already made harmonisations of well over a hundred British folksong melodies (all of which he regarded as “Scottish,” though many were Irish or Welsh and a few English), as well as nearly thirty continental melodies (including four Tyrolean), and so he had plenty of material to choose from. The settings were for one or more voices and pianoforte with optional violin and cello accompaniment.¹⁹ He therefore set to work sometime during summer or autumn 1818 making his selection of twelve themes for variations, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Themes used in Beethoven’s initial twelve sets of folksong variations

1	Oh Thou art the Lad
2	The Highland Watch
3	Bonny Laddie
4	O Mary, at thy Window be
5	The Cottage Maid
6	Of Noble Race was Shinkin
7	Sad and Luckless (later familiar as “The Last Rose of Summer”)
8	Chiling O’Guiry / Put Round the Bright Wine
9	St. Patrick’s Day / The Pulse of an Irishman
10	Paddy Whack / English Bulls
11	I bin a Tyroler Bue
12	A Madel, ja a Madel

¹⁷ BB-1262; my translations here and elsewhere.

¹⁸ BB-1207.

¹⁹ See Barry Cooper, *Beethoven’s Folksong Settings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) for a comprehensive account of Beethoven’s 179 settings.

The first four melodies were taken from Thomson's recently published collection of twenty-five of Beethoven's settings of Scottish melodies (one of the twenty-five, "Sally in our Alley," was actually English), which were later republished in Berlin as Op. 108. Beethoven clearly used Thomson's edition rather than his own manuscripts for these four, since he had originally set "Oh Thou art the Lad" in F major but Thomson had transposed it to E flat, the key now adopted for the variations. No. 5, "The Cottage Maid," was taken from among Beethoven's Welsh settings that Thomson had published, but No. 6 was a melody he had not used before, entitled "Of Noble Race was Shinkin." The origins of this melody have not previously been elucidated in the Beethoven literature, but it was first published by John Hudgebut in *Thesaurus Musicus* (volume 1, 1693), page 20, then in Henry Playford's *The Dancing Master* (9th edition, 1695), page 168, having been composed for Thomas D'Urfey's play *The Richmond Heiress*, produced in London in 1693.²⁰ The melody may be by Henry Purcell (Z. D136), who was active in the theater at the time; otherwise it must have been written by John Eccles or some other theater composer in London. It was later used in *The Beggar's Opera*, arranged by Pepusch, but where Beethoven obtained it is unclear. The next four themes were Irish melodies that Beethoven had set and Thomson had published. That of no. 7 has become better known with Thomas Moore's text "'Tis the last rose of summer," while nos. 8–10 are shown in Table 1 with both the standard Irish titles and the texts that Thomson used for Beethoven's settings. For the final two sets of variations Beethoven followed Thomson's request to take themes "from among the Tyrolean airs" that Beethoven had harmonised. Thomson had not published the settings as he had been unable to obtain suitable English verses for them, but he very much liked the melodies themselves.

²⁰ See Thomas D'Urfey, *The Richmond Heiress, or, a Woman Once in the Right* (London: Samuel Briscoe, 1693). The character "Rice ap Shinkin" is described in the preface as "a young, whimsical, Welsh fop," and the song is described as "Shinken's song to the Harp. In the Fourth Act." It begins: "Of noble race was Shinken, trum tery, tery, tery, trum trum, | The line of Owen Tudor, trum, trum, trum." Shinkin is probably a variant of the name Jenkin. The melody is therefore not a "Welsh folksong" as described in LvBWV, 1:658, and also in NGA, V/4, 155, which proposes that the melody might alternatively be Scottish. One might, however, describe it as a fake Welsh folksong, composed in London.

For each of the twelve themes Beethoven composed usually three, four or five variations, sometimes with an extended coda, Thomson having specified not more than eight. There is surprisingly little manuscript material for these twelve sets of variations. No autograph score survives, nor a corrected copy sent to Thomson, nor copies sent to the publishers Artaria of Vienna and Simrock of Bonn for continental editions. There is also a shortage of sketch material. No desk sketchbooks survive between 1816 and 1819, and no pocket sketchbooks between August 1818 and spring 1819.²¹ The book from August 1818 contains no sketches for the variations, suggesting that Beethoven did not begin work on them immediately after receiving Thomson's letter; but he had completed all twelve sets by November 18, 1818 (or just after), when he sent them to Thomson via the Viennese banker Fries.²² The first sign of them is on a loose leaf that contains some faint, scrappy sketches, mostly in pencil.²³ On one side of the leaf some brief pencil sketches can be made out for "Oh Thou art the Lad" and slightly more extensive sketches in ink for "The Highland Watch." These became the first two sets of variations. On the reverse are pencil and ink sketches for "The Cottage Maid" and brief ink sketches for "Of Noble Race was Shinkin," nos. 5 and 6 of the set. Thus at this stage Beethoven was working towards deciding the final order, and he fixed on this in a more extensive group of sketches, which includes the themes of all twelve sets, numbered in order.²⁴ In most cases here he sketched just the theme, with left-hand accompaniment, without any variations. Shortly afterwards, using darker ink and a different nib, he added indications of the optional flute part, such as "in unison mit der rechten Hand" ("in unison with the right hand"). Occasionally there are also brief ideas for variations. The sketches include a few alterations, and no. 4 has been crossed out for no obvious reason, although it is close to the final published version. The working out of all the variations, however, was done on paper now lost,

²¹ JTW, 247–53 and 355–8.

²² Cooper, *Beethoven's Folksong Settings*, 31. The original receipt from Fries is now lost.

²³ London, British Library, Add. MS 29997, f. 28.

²⁴ London, British Library, MS Egerton 2327. Beethoven's initial approach therefore differed somewhat from his normal method of sketching variations (as described in Sieghard Brandenburg, "Beethovens 'erste Entwürde' zu Variationenzyklen," in *Bericht über den Internationalen Musikwissenschaftlichen Kongress Bonn 1970*, ed. Carl Dahlhaus *et al.* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1971): 108–11), since he was creating a whole collection of variation sets rather just than a single set.

and there seem to be no further manuscript sources from this stage of composition.

THE LAST FOUR SETS OF VARIATIONS

Thomson had received the twelve sets of variations by December and he wrote a letter to Beethoven dated December 28, 1818, expressing his appreciation. By that time he had heard the first eight of them, but while he approved of six, applauding especially no. 7 (“Sad and Luckless”), he told Beethoven that “The Highland Watch” and “O Mary” “would not succeed here.”²⁵ Thus he asked for two replacements for an additional fee, and sent two unspecified melodies that he recommended for this purpose, while allowing Beethoven to choose different ones if he wished. He hoped at this stage to publish six sets of variations in three months’ time – presumably the six that he had heard and approved. Before Beethoven had had time to reply, Thomson sent him another letter, dated January 8, 1819, having heard the remaining four sets. Of these, he indicated that no. 11, Tyrolean variations, was “much too difficult” for the young ladies for whom he intended his publication, “for the ladies of Scotland may not be as strong as those in your country,” and again he asked for a replacement.²⁶ This time he invited Beethoven to choose his own theme, from “Russia, Germany, or any other country you please.” He also claimed that one of the variations in no. 9 (“St. Patrick’s Day”) was “too meager,” and quoted the first two measures, which show a *minore* variation. He therefore asked for another variation in a more cantabile, brilliant and flowing style, plus an extra variation for this set, since the piece was rather short and the theme very popular.

Beethoven appears to have responded promptly to the December request, for an autograph score survives containing two, not three, new sets of variations. These are for a Welsh theme, “Merch Megan,” and a “Cossack” one, actually Ukrainian, that had had the text “Schöne Minka” by Tiedge attached to it in 1809.²⁷ Both were themes he had

²⁵ BB-1275.

²⁶ BB-1283.

²⁷ NGA V/4, 155. The Cossack melody originally had the words “Ikhav kozak zu Dunaj” (“The Cossack was riding over the Danube”): see Anastasia Davitadze, “Timbre Dramaturgy of the Trio Accompaniment in Folksongs Settings by L.

previously received from Thomson and had returned in new settings,²⁸ and they are probably the two that Thomson had specifically proposed in his letter of December 1818. These are the only two of Beethoven's sixteen sets of variations for which autograph scores survive intact.²⁹ Numbered 1 and 2, the fact that there is no sign of no. 3 suggests that Beethoven had not yet received the request for a third replacement when he composed these two. The flute part appears to have been added slightly after the keyboard part, for although the ink is the same the part is on separate staves from the initial system braces covering the keyboard part.

For the third set, where the theme was to be selected from Russia, Germany or elsewhere, Beethoven chose an Austrian melody, "A Schüsserl und a Reinderl," which he had not previously used. This was a melody in which he had already expressed an interest in December 1816, when he requested a copy of it from his publisher Steiner, probably with a plan to include it in his next group of folksong settings for Thomson;³⁰ but shortly afterwards Thomson informed him he wanted no more continental settings, and so Beethoven had not used it. Now, given *carte blanche* to choose any country, he returned to "A Schüsserl" and composed a set of variations on it. The theme is related to the famous "Gaudeamus igitur," but no sketches or autograph score of the variations are known to survive. For the two new variations requested for no. 9 we are more fortunate. Beethoven went back to his manuscript of the twelve themes (Egerton 2327), found some space under no. 9 (on folios 5r and 4v) and sketched two new variations for it, which became Variations 3 and 4. Both sketches show drafts of complete variations, though without the flute part and often showing only one hand of the piano part. Variation 3 is again *minore*, though this is scarcely evident in the sketch. He then wrote out an autograph score for the two variations, and most of this survives.³¹ The fact that there are just these two

Beethoven (on the Example of WoO 158 and WoO 153 Collections)," *European Journal of the Arts*, 3 (2019): 8–15. The theme had already been used for variations by several other composers: see Kurt Dorf Müller, "Beethovens 'Volksliederjagd'," in *Festschrift Horst Leuchtman*, ed. Stephan Hörner and Bernhold Schmidt (Tutzing: Schneider, 1993): 107–25, at 118.

²⁸ Listed as Group I/1 and VIII/6 in Cooper, *Beethoven's Folksong Settings*.

²⁹ Bonn, Beethoven-Haus, BH 70.

³⁰ BB-1024; see also NGA, V/4, 151.

³¹ Bonn, Beethoven-Haus, NE 106 and Vienna, Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, A 49.

variations in the score, and the second is followed not by the final variation but a blank page that was soon used for sketches for the Ninth Symphony, indicates that these variations are the two new ones and not part of the original draft. It was previously assumed that these sketches for the Ninth were made in 1818,³² but as they must postdate the score of the two variations, it is now clear they were not made before at least February 1819. The original variation that Thomson considered “too meager” does not survive.

The three sets of variations reached Thomson by about the beginning of April 1819, and he responded with great delight in a letter of April 5.³³ He was so pleased with the Austrian variations in particular that he asked for another set of variations based on a “foreign air,” inviting Beethoven to choose one. He repeated his usual request for the variations to be easy, pleasant and brilliant, and asked that they be “as long as the Russian theme,” by which he presumably meant, as long as the variations on the Cossack/Ukrainian theme; and he also asked Beethoven to include a little Adagio Cantabile. His loose use of “Russian” to include Ukraine is comparable to Beethoven’s use of “Scottish” to include Irish and Welsh melodies,³⁴ and his reference to this particular set of variations as a model was no doubt due to the fact that it was longer than most sets, consisting of six variations and an extended coda. The letter reached Beethoven about April 16, brought to him from Fries by Beethoven’s friend Franz Oliva.³⁵ It was at this stage, therefore, that Beethoven chose the theme for what was to be his final set of flute variations – the Ukrainian theme quoted in Example 2 above. Thus the Scheide sketch quoted in Example 1 – previously thought to date from “c. 1818–1819?” – can now be dated more accurately to April–May 1819.

At this point it is necessary to examine another previously unidentified set of variation sketches from this period. These appear on a loose leaf now found in a Beethoven sketch miscellany in the British Library. They have been described variously as “Variations (D major)

³² Sieghard Brandenburg, “Die Skizzen zur Neunten Symphonie,” *Zu Beethoven 2*, ed. Harry Goldschmidt (Berlin: Verlag Neue Musik, 1984): 88–129, at 103.

³³ BB-1297.

³⁴ The unfortunate and incorrect conflation of Russia and Ukraine is also evident with Gustav Nottebohm, who described the theme for Op. 107 No. 3 as a “Russian folk tune” in his *Zweite Beethoveniana* (Leipzig: Peters, 1887), 273.

³⁵ See Theodore Albrecht, ed., *Beethoven’s Conversation Books Volume 1* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), 36.

for piano(?)” and “draft in G major for an undeveloped cycle.”³⁶ These prove also, like the sketches in the Scheide manuscript, to be preliminary work for the same Ukrainian Variations, Op. 107 No. 3. Again there is no sign of the flute part. To find one extended set of unidentified sketches for such a work is surprising. To find two such sets for the same work is extraordinary. Unlike the Scheide source, this set is in pencil and not so easily legible, but it consists of a similar group of mostly incomplete variations (see Example 3). The first two measures are marked “2ter Theil” (“second part”), and therefore correspond to mm. 9–10 of the theme quoted in Example 2 above. The previous eight measures were perhaps sketched on a separate leaf now lost. Beneath the two measures is the first half of a variation in G minor (with rather minimal left-hand accompaniment), which oscillates between *forte* and *piano* in alternate measures. This rapid alternation between these two dynamics is almost the only feature preserved from these sketches to the final version, in Variation 5, though there each dynamic lasts two measures, with only one chord per measure. The figuration is also completely different, and none of the six final variations is in the minor.

Example 3: Sketches for Op. 107 No. 3 (London, British Library, Add. MS 29997, f. 32r, staves 4–5, 7–8, 10–14)

³⁶ The source is London, British Library, Add. MS 29997, f. 32r. The descriptions are from SV 187 and LvBWV, 1:658 respectively. The reference to D major applies only to the top two staves on the page, which are in D major but not part of the variation sketches on staves 4–14.

Below the G minor variation is the second half of another variation, in which the theme is harmonised in E minor although left in its original pitch (a precedent for this procedure is Variations 6 of Beethoven's *Prometheus Variations*, Op. 35, where the theme in E flat is harmonised in C minor). The final variation in the sketch shows the complete 16 measures, and is the only one related to those in the Scheide manuscript: it takes up the iambic rhythms and melodic outline of the third Scheide variation, though it proceeds differently in the second half. The half variation in E minor sketched immediately above may actually be an alternative ending for this second half. Whether it is or not, this group of variation sketches has little in common with the Scheide group and even less with the final version, which must have been sketched elsewhere. It is impossible to be sure which of the two groups is earlier, since both are so different from the final version, but the Scheide group seems slightly more advanced.

The reasons why all these sketches were so comprehensively rejected are unclear, but the most likely explanation is that the drafts were insufficiently promising. All the variations in both groups, apart perhaps from the G minor one, are conspicuously commonplace, and could have been created by many of Beethoven's contemporaries. The same criterion probably applies to most of the numerous rejected variations for the piano sonata Op. 109. The final version of Op. 107 No. 3, by contrast, is much more original and inventive. Variation 1 uses a strange ostinato in the left hand, and very wide, unorthodox spacing. Variation 2 uses little motives tossed between the hands, while Variation 3 creates the effect of a high-pitched tin whistle above a throbbing accompaniment. Variation 4 uses interesting chromaticism and energetic, slightly irregular figuration, whereas Variation 5 strips

everything down to a single chord per measure—the ultimate in minimalist variation and a step further on from the G minor variation sketch that had just two chords per measure. There follows a highly expressive adagio variation in 3/8, evidently written in response to Thomson's request for a little Adagio Cantabile and for a set that was as long as the Cossack one, where there were also six variations plus coda. The adagio variation runs into a crazy fugato coda where the fugue subject in G major (taken from Beethoven's bass line for the original folk theme) is answered improbably in C minor then E flat major before a return to the tonic. Beethoven was clearly going out of his way to produce something out of the ordinary, in this his last set of variations on folksong melodies, and his initial ideas were not going to suffice.

What the two groups of sketches show, therefore, is that if they are typical of his approach to the sets of variations (and there is no reason to suppose they are not) then he did not just dash them all off as quickly as possible, as might be expected, but spent considerable effort to ensure they were all of the highest quality. The dearth of sketches for the other sets of variations is probably due to the above-mentioned loss of sketchbooks for the period during which most of them were composed, in late 1818, rather than a bypassing of his usual intensive sketching processes. It seems likely, therefore, that a whole desk sketchbook covering roughly the period early 1818 to March 1819, and a pocket sketchbook from late 1818, have been lost. They would have contained extensive sketches for the "Hammerklavier" Sonata, for which surprisingly few survive, in view of its length and complexity, and sketches for fifteen or even all sixteen sets of flute variations. If the sketches for the variations had been made entirely on loose leaves there would be a high probability of survival of at least some of them.

Sketches showing how his later ideas for the *Petite Russie* Variations emerged are mostly missing too, but a few that are much closer to the final version appear on the first three pages of the Wittgenstein Sketchbook.³⁷ They show only the final adagio variation and the fugato coda, but most of the measures of the adagio draft can be matched up with the final version, even though the figuration is very different, and many ideas from the coda sketches were also retained in some form. As usual, there is no sign of the flute part. The finished score

³⁷ Bonn, Beethoven-Haus, Bodmer Collection, BSk 1/49.

was apparently given to a friend of Thomson on or shortly after May 25, 1819, along with four folksong settings (Group XVI), to be taken back to Scotland in person.³⁸ Thus the beginning of the Wittgenstein Sketchbook can be securely dated to April/May 1819, whereas previously it had only been “tentatively” assigned to this period.³⁹ The variations eventually reached Thomson, who replied on November 23, but he lamented that the set would not succeed in Britain because once again it was “too recherché and difficult,” and so he would not publish it.⁴⁰

Meanwhile Thomson had set about publishing some of what he had purchased at great expense. Two volumes appeared on May 12 and a third on May 27, 1819, each containing three sets of variations.⁴¹ He placed the variations on “A Schüsserl” first in the collection, reflecting his delight in this set; and for no. 2 he printed the variations on “Sad and Luckless” (or “The Last Rose of Summer”), which he had also particularly admired. The third set was on “The Cottage Maid.” The second volume contained nos. 10, 6 and 8 from the original group of twelve, and the third volume contained the two that had arrived alongside “A Schüsserl” (viz. “Merch Megan” and the Cossack set) plus no. 3 of the original twelve, “Bonny Laddie.” This left just two that he had previously approved—“Oh Thou art the Lad” and “St. Patrick’s Day.” These are presumably the two he was referring to, in addition to the nine already published, when he wrote to Beethoven in his letter of November 23, 1819: “I have had eleven of the themes engraved, of which nine have been published....”⁴² To make up the collection of twelve that he had previously announced, he decided on no. 4 of the original set, “O Mary at thy Window be,” because, although he had previously rejected it, it was the easiest. However, he noted in his letter that it was by far the shortest, barely half as long as any of the others, with only two variations

³⁸ Cooper, *Beethoven’s Folksong Settings*, 33.

³⁹ JTW, 256.

⁴⁰ BB-1357.

⁴¹ These are the dates when publication was registered at Stationers Hall; see Alan Tyson, *The Authentic English Editions of Beethoven* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 101. According to LvBWV, 1:670-1, the third volume was registered on July 25; this appears to be an error for “27.5.1819” (see *ibid.*, 659).

⁴² Later correspondence with the publishers Boosey indicates that only ten had actually been engraved, including “Oh Thou art the Lad:” see Oldman, “Beethoven’s *Variations*,” 49–50. In his 1819 letter to Beethoven, Thomson was evidently anticipating the engraving of “St. Patrick’s Day” that was due to take place but eventually did not.

(though there was also a coda that might count as a third, unnumbered variation). He therefore asked Beethoven to add some more variations. Beethoven duly obliged, composing two new variations (nos. 3 and 4), for which the autograph score still survives.⁴³ The pianoforte part was written first, in ink, and the flute part added later in pencil on staves left blank for this purpose, beneath the keyboard part.

It is not clear precisely when Beethoven wrote these variations. December 1819 to early 1820 was not a good time to do so, since he was preparing documents for a court case concerning the guardianship of his nephew, and also desperately (and unsuccessfully) trying to finish the *Missa solemnis* in time for a scheduled performance on March 9, 1820. It seems likely, therefore, that the two variations were not composed until March 1820 or later. Nevertheless they had evidently reached Thomson by June, for on June 14 he wrote to Beethoven referring to a song setting that had recently arrived (“Sleep’st Thou or Wak’st Thou,” Group XVII/2),⁴⁴ and the end of the autograph of this setting is found on the same leaf as Variation 3 of “O Mary.” Presumably Beethoven sent both song and variations to Thomson together, around May 1820 or a little earlier. By this time, however, Thomson had given up the idea of publishing any more sets of variations, because, as he said in the letter, “There is nobody who is making any request for the Varied Themes that I have published.” No further correspondence between him and Beethoven is known after this letter.

CONTINENTAL EDITIONS

Beethoven’s agreement with Thomson allowed him to publish a continental edition once the music had appeared in Britain. Thus when he heard that Thomson had published the first six sets of variations, he quickly arranged a Viennese edition with Artaria & Co., which appeared in September 1819, less than four months after the British edition. The edition was advertised in the *Wiener Zeitung* on September 6 (page 815) as “Six varied themes for pianoforte solo. With optional accompaniment of a flute or violin ... Op. 105.” Reference to the violin is noteworthy, for Thomson had deliberately avoided the instrument because he perceived

⁴³ LvBWV, 1:672: one page is now in Berlin, Beethoven having incorporated it into his sketchbook Artaria 197, folio 5, in 1821; the other page is in Stockholm.

⁴⁴ BB-1394; the song is also known as “Mark Yonder Pomp.”

there to be a shortage of good violinists, compared with flautists. In Vienna, however, the reverse was probably the case. In 1796 Johann von Schönfeld had listed over forty able violinists in Vienna but only seven flautists,⁴⁵ and so it seems that Artaria attempted (probably with Beethoven's approval) to cater for them, just as Thomson had for his flute players.

The advertisement added an interesting description of the publication:

These folksongs are varied with much art, and yet with careful attention for the limits of easy execution. Nos. 5 and 6, however, indicate how the master always wanted to further the study of the performer through gradually increasing difficulties, and to be perfected as much in the greater fluency of the fingers as the more musically formed fantasy gave opportunity. The collection will be as welcome to Beethoven's admirers, through its prevailing elegance, as to students who wish to devote themselves seriously to keyboard technique.

It is striking that such an explanation was felt necessary, possibly because the publication differed considerably from anything Beethoven had published earlier and was perhaps not what his admirers might have expected. Only in this added explanation—not in the main announcement or the original title page—are the themes described as “folksongs” (*Volkslieder*), a term widely used in German by then, though not used in English till much later. Artaria also wished to make a virtue out of the fact that the pieces were suitable for learners and were relatively easy, which they certainly are when compared with the other pianoforte work of Beethoven's that Artaria published about the same time – the “Hammerklavier” Sonata, which bore the next opus number. Yet they are no easier technically than some of Beethoven's early sonatas such as those of Op. 14.

The issue of technical difficulty seems to have prompted Beethoven and Artaria to rearrange Thomson's order. Whereas Thomson had apparently placed these six pieces in the order that they appealed to him or that he thought most easy to sell, at least for the first

⁴⁵ *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst von Wien und Prag*; see “A Yearbook of the Music of Vienna and Prague, 1796,” trans. Kathrine Talbot, in *Haydn and His World*, ed. Elaine Sisman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997): 289–320.

two (see above), Beethoven and Artaria placed them in order of perceived difficulty, at least for the last two, so that the two most difficult pieces, the two fast Irish sets (“Chiling O’Guiry” and “Paddy Whack,” which had been nos. 6 and 4 respectively), were now placed at the end. In his collection of twenty-five folksong settings Op. 108, Beethoven attempted to make musical contrasts between successive songs,⁴⁶ but there is no evidence of this approach here: two successive pieces are in the same key (nos. 4 and 5), and nos. 5 and 6 are both allegrettos in 6/8. For convenience, the orders found in the two collections are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Contents of Thomson and Artaria editions of Op. 105

<u>Thomson</u>	<u>Artaria</u>
A Schüsserl	The Cottage Maid
Sad and Luckless	Of Noble Race
The Cottage Maid	A Schüsserl
Paddy Whack	Sad and Luckless
Of Noble Race	Chiling O’Guiry
Chiling O’Guiry	Paddy Whack

Shortly after Artaria’s edition had appeared, Thomson wrote to Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig on October 25, 1819, offering to sell them the nine pieces that he had published by then, plus three “foreign” airs that were still in manuscript.⁴⁷ These were the two Tyrolean ones plus the new Ukrainian one, which must therefore have reached him by then, for these were the only foreign ones that he had not yet published. He had considered all three as too difficult for the British market, but felt they would suit the German market much better if he offered them to Leipzig. He was not, of course, entitled to do this, since Beethoven had retained the continental rights to these works and allocated only the British rights to Thomson. Breitkopf & Härtel’s reply (lost) was evidently non-committal, and so Thomson sent all twelve sets to them on or before December 9.⁴⁸ He made no mention of the four British sets which he had not published. Breitkopf & Härtel, however, declined to publish the twelve, probably realising fairly quickly that the first six had

⁴⁶ See Cooper, *Beethoven’s Folksong Settings*, 116–7.

⁴⁷ Oldman, “Beethoven’s Variations,” 49.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

already appeared with Artaria, and that Beethoven was likely to be publishing the others somewhere else before long.

Beethoven, for his part, had gathered from Thomson's letter of November 1819 that nine sets had appeared, that three more were likely to appear quickly once he had sent the extra two variations for "O Mary," and that Thomson had no interest in publishing those he considered too difficult and *recherché* for the British market. Thus Beethoven felt able to begin negotiations for a continental edition of the remaining sets of variations. His first known approach was to Peter Simrock (who worked alongside his father Nikolaus) in a letter of February 10, 1820, offering eight themes with variations, for pianoforte and optional flute.⁴⁹ Of these, he said that six were Scottish, one Russian and two Tyrolean—which makes nine! Arithmetic was never Beethoven's strong point. If by "Scottish" he included Irish and Welsh tunes as usual, and by "Russian" he meant the Ukrainian Cossack melody, then the countries match up exactly with what was left after Op. 105 had been extracted, except that he omitted the Ukrainian one that he believed at that stage to be Italian—the last one he had composed. Perhaps he had mislaid or forgotten about it at this stage.

In subsequent negotiations, Beethoven also offered eight sets of variations to Moritz Schlesinger in Berlin, and to Anton Diabelli in Vienna,⁵⁰ but it was Nikolaus Simrock who eventually received the works. They were sent on Saturday April 22, 1820, by which time Beethoven had realised he had ten sets of variations available, and he therefore included the extra two without charge.⁵¹ Simrock published all ten sets in August or September that year. Although Beethoven had not received specific approval from Thomson that this was in order, and technically it infringed their agreement, he rightly reckoned that neither publisher would suffer any financial loss by this dual publication, and Simrock was informed that his publication rights applied only to the continent, not to Britain.

⁴⁹ BB-1365.

⁵⁰ LvBWV, 1:671; this refers to "Maurice Schlesinger in Paris" but the letter was sent to him in Berlin and uses the German form of his name.

⁵¹ BB-1384. It was at this stage that Beethoven erroneously informed Simrock that the Ukrainian theme was "Scottish, not Italian." The two extra sets of variations may be the two that survive in autograph ("Merch Megan" and the Cossack one), as proposed in BB-1384, note 2, since they are numbered 9 and 10 in red crayon in the autograph. Yet they had been counted in the original collection of eight, as indicated above.

In none of Beethoven's correspondence is there mention of optional violin, but Simrock nevertheless included it in his title page as an alternative to the flute—perhaps in imitation of Artaria's publication. And whereas Artaria had engraved the keyboard, flute, and violin parts separately, Simrock economised by issuing just one optional part labeled "flauto o violino," alongside the separate keyboard part. When Simrock's edition was finally advertised in the *Wiener Zeitung* on November 20, 1820 (page 1059), flute and violin were mentioned as alternatives, and the publication was described as containing Beethoven's latest variations, on "Russian, Scottish and Tyrolean themes." Strictly speaking, however, there were four Scottish, two Tyrolean and two Ukrainian themes, plus one Irish and one Welsh.

PERFORMANCE AS PIANOFORTE WORKS

The manuscript material for the sets of variations, though of limited extent, clearly shows that Beethoven conceived the works as being essentially for pianoforte, and this is how they were composed. The flute part was only added at a late stage as an optional decoration like a descant, and was often indicated in the manuscripts just in abbreviated form, if at all. The two new sets of sketches for the Ukrainian theme are completely in line with this approach, never showing any sign of a flute part but quite well-worked-out pianoforte parts. The flute parts were added for the final versions only because Thomson asked for them as an optional extra for performance, and he asked for them only as a possible means of increasing sales. Flutes were almost always played by men, but keyboard instruments more often by young women, and so the prospect of using his editions to help bring couples together or to provide entertainment for them may have been part of his underlying thinking. As for the alternative of violin, this is never mentioned anywhere in Beethoven's manuscripts or correspondence, or in Thomson's edition, but was added by the continental publishers, with or without Beethoven's co-operation, as a way of possibly increasing sales. Thus it is somewhat doubtful whether any such performances have Beethoven's authority.

Today the social context of pianoforte with optional flute or violin on occasion has long since disappeared, while today's flute players and violinists have understandably little interest in playing optional parts

that, however important they may seem when present, offer little challenge and can safely be omitted without loss to the harmony. The pieces do, however, work perfectly as solos for pianoforte, since this is how they were initially composed. The two newly identified sources confirm, moreover, that the variations were not just written out hastily but were the result of careful consideration and refinement, with anything too commonplace firmly rejected. Unfortunately, due to the way they appear in catalogs as chamber music, the sets of variations are rarely noticed by solo pianists. Yet they are a real treasure trove for those looking for unusual Beethoven works, and they exhibit many elements of his late style. They are certainly well worth exploring, and the two Ukrainian sets are amongst the latest and finest in the collection.