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FRANCESCO FONTANELLI

INTRODUCTION

In 1977, as the 150th anniversary of Beethoven’s death fell and heated debates about the role of sketch studies were ongoing, Robert Winter shed light on the genesis of one of the composer’s most unique late creations, the String Quartet Op. 131. Winter showed that the seven-movement structure was the outcome of a laborious process, in which Beethoven contemplated at least five other possibilities of formal articulation. These included a tripartite scheme with the two outer movements in the key of C-sharp minor and the middle one in the major variant, a reference to the model of the Sonata quasi una fantasia Op. 27, No. 2.1 Winter’s study drew particular attention to a specific type of preparatory materials, which he called “telescoped drafts” or “tonal overviews,”2 in which it is possible to grasp a distinctive feature of the composer’s thinking. As Beethoven said, his custom while working was “always to keep the whole in view (das Ganze vor Augen),” that is, an overall idea of the form of the piece, not often “scattered in all directions,” destined to change as the individual parts were developed.3

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3 See Beethoven’s letter to Georg F. Treitschke, Vienna, early March 1814, in BB-707 and A-479. Abbreviations BB- and A- refer to letters in Ludwig van Beethoven, Briefwechsel...
By means of special drafts, consisting of both musical notations and verbal comments, he would define the structural junctures of the composition (themes, key, meter and tempo indications, number and arrangement of movements), and test the effectiveness of alternative solutions, observing the project “from above,” similar to an architect in front of a layout.4

Almost half a century later, with a new Beethovenian anniversary just behind us, I want to continue in the direction traced by Winter by investigating the original plans of another masterpiece for string quartet, which conceals within itself a complex history of transformations: Opus 127. In the early 1980s, Sieghard Brandenburg carried out a perusal of the manuscript sources which document its genesis, by reviewing the desk sketchbook used between October 1824 and January 1825 (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin [D-B], Autograph 11/2), the coeval pocket sketchbooks (D-B, Artaria 205/4; Kraków, Biblioteka Jagiellońska [PL-Kj], Grasnick 4) and the collection of score sketches (PL-Kj, Artaria 206).5
The codicological reconstruction was intended as a basis for examination of the content of sketches, which would help clarify some issues that remained unsolved, foremost among them “the question of the cyclical design of Op. 127.” Barry Cooper addressed this issue in a seminal essay which represents, to date, the benchmark for analyzing the work project in its sequential evolution. The next challenge is to bring out the cultural referents behind Beethoven’s intentions, decoding the compositional process as a journey through genres, forms, and styles.

**LATE WORK AS A RETHINKING OF THE “CLASSIC”**

The score of Op. 127, finished in February-March 1825, shows the known outcome: the slow movement in A-flat major is the quartet’s center of gravity, not only because of the admirable depth of its content, but also, more simply, because of the breadth of its time span—it lasts a full sixteen minutes, more than twice as long as the first movement (the Scherzo and Finale do not exceed seven minutes each). The backbone of the structure tilts on the side of ecstatic lyricism: the opening Allegro itself, dissolving any dominant tension, appears almost as a prelude to the following “pre-Mahlerian” Adagio. The achievement of such a formal and aesthetic conception came only after other possibilities had been explored. Op. 127 is the last E-flat-major work of Beethoven’s catalogue and the aging composer, who had composed not a few masterpieces in that tonality, looked back, searching in his own past and in the works of the masters for examples to measure up against, to stimulate ingenuity. Maybe this Rückblick is one of the hallmarks of a “late work.”

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6 Brandenburg, “Die Quellen zur Entstehungsgeschichte,” 273.


8 “Only those who know a composer’s complete work well, only those who have broad experience with it and have an overview of it, will be reasonably confident in their judgment. A late work does not reveal itself by itself, it can only be discovered in comparison with the other stages of compositional development” (Albrecht Riethmüller, “Nimbus des Spätwerks,” in *Beethovens Kammermusik*, ed. Friedrich Geiger and Martina Sichardt [Laaber: Laaber, 2014], 342).
Precisely because they reveal the presence of patterns and prototypes, the movement plans sketched by Beethoven become the litmus test of his creativity. We thus learn how his predilections in conceiving the new quartet turned to that line of E-flat works pervaded by an “anti-heroic” melodicism, such as the Quartet Op. 74 or the Trio Op. 70, No. 2; and that he allowed himself to be involved, with apparent disenchantment, in the fashionable Hausmusik repertoires demanded by the amateurs. In this sense, the question posed by Stefan Kunze in 1977 seems fitting: Is Beethoven’s late style really a universe unto itself, an avant-garde “escape” (Ausbruch) from all that preceded it? Adorno, as is well known, emphasized the rupture with the canons of Viennese classicism, the isolation of the artist in an esoteric experimentation of languages, but it is also possible for another historiographical view that does not interpret the “caesura” as a clean break.9 Temporal distance rather fuels nostalgia, urging the extreme attempt at a (perhaps only imaginative) restoration of lost continuity. Besides, the idea of progress as an internal leap within tradition and continuous redefinition of one’s musical language belongs to the history of the Wiener Klassik. After a ten-year hiatus, Haydn returned to writing string quartets, the six of Op. 33 (1781), presenting them as “written in a new and special way” (auf eine ganz neue besondere art).10 In the last phase of his production, behind the appearances of a melodic vein with a popular and at times naïve flavor, he would take a further step forward, experimenting with highly unusual ways of handling the movement plan of works: harmonic links on distant keys, daring chromatic modulations. Of all this, as we shall see in a moment, Beethoven had occasion to remember, when he jotted down the first ideas for his E-flat quartet.

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9 “The last quartets can only be understood if, despite the more than ten-year caesura between the F minor Quartet Op. 95 (1810) and the E-flat major Quartet Op. 127 (1822–25), they are placed in the circle of the preceding string quartets by Beethoven, the quartets by Haydn and Mozart as a final possibility of classical composition” (Stefan Kunze, “Fragen zu Beethovens Spätwerk,” Beethoven-Jahrbuch 9 (1977): 297–98).

ENGELMANN, P. 1: BETWEEN FUGUE SUBJECTS AND MYSTERIOUS ENHARMONICS

“Monsieur! As much a passionate amateur in music as a great admirer of your talent, I take the liberty of writing to you to ask if you would consent to compose one, two or three new quartets:” on November 9, 1822, this letter from the young prince Nikolai Galitzin, not yet thirty years old and a skilled cellist, arrived from St. Petersburg. Beethoven had not followed up on the many requests for quartets he received from publishers such as Thomson, Schlesinger or Peters, but in this case he gladly accepted the proposal. “I have noticed with great pleasure that Your Highness likes to approach the works of my spirit,” he wrote to Galitzin on January 25, 1823; he agreed on an honorarium of fifty ducats saying he was ready to “complete the first quartet by the end of February, or by mid-March at the latest.” In the end, however, it would be two years before Op. 127 was completed. In the meantime, the composer began working on page 1 of the so-called Engelmann sketchbook (Bonn, Beethoven-Haus [D-BNba], February–March 1823); next to the sketches for the Fugue of the Diabelli Variations, we find the first notations for the quartet.

Example 1 shows the concept sketch for the opening bars: a motif built on an E-flat-major arpeggio over a sustained open fifth, with pauses and thirty-second note upbeats, almost in the manner of a French overture. Beethoven specified the character of this incipit in 2/4: “un poco maestoso,” like the first movement of the Ninth symphony (which, moreover, is sketched in the same book, beginning on pages 7–15). After the introduction, the main theme of the Allegro is outlined, in which a four-note cell emerges. It is basically an “arabesque,” which makes the arpeggiated triads more sinuous through the inclusion of a chromatic appoggiatura: B-flat–(F-sharp)–G–E-flat, G–(D)–E-flat–C. The third variation of Diabelli’s waltz begins this way, with the E₄ declining for a moment on the leading tone before reaching the fundamental of the

\[\text{Example 1}\]

\begin{align*}
\text{B-flat} &- \text{F-sharp} - \text{G} - \text{E-flat}, \\
\text{G} &- \text{D} - \text{E-flat} - \text{C}.
\end{align*}

\[\text{The third variation of Diabelli’s waltz begins this way, with the E₄ declining for a moment on the leading tone before reaching the fundamental of the.}\]


12 BB-1535; A-1123 (in French).
tonic arpeggio; and the opening melody of the “Archduke” Trio also has a similar inflection, in an Allegro moderato brimming with lyricism. In both cases, the composer wrote dolce to emphasize the amiable tone of the gesture. He would write the same for the quartet’s main theme, as can be seen in the excerpt from the score in Example 1c, also adding a

Example 1: D-BNba, HCB Mh 60 (Engelmann), p. 1, st. 8–9

Example 1a: *Diabelli Variations*, Op. 120, III Var., m. 1

Example 1b: *Piano Trio* “Archduke”, Op. 97, I, m. 1

Example 1c: String Quartet, Op. 127, I, mm. 7–11
further characterization: *teneramente*. In the final version, the sequence with the four-note cell is still recognizable (only the interval order is permutated: Beethoven chose to begin with the ascending fourth, placing the two thirds of the arpeggio in succession; instead, he kept the chromatic segment intact, B-flat–B–C5). The main traits of the idea, visualized in the first sketch, retain their value: the composer may vary them, but the original intuition is never completely forgotten and, until the final stages of the process, reappears as a possibility to be developed. Revealing in this sense is the remaining part of the quartet plan.

Immediately after the sketch for the first movement, Beethoven indicated a key signature with four sharps (Example 2) and drafted a progression of diminished sevenths resolving on the respective triads, refining in detail the contrapuntal texture. This is not a theme, but rather a short cadential passage which ends in suspension on the V of E major, preparing for the striking attack of a “fugue” (fuga) in C-sharp minor. This is one of several fugue subjects sketched on this page, in both sharp and flat keys. At the bottom of the page is a four-bar “fugue” in F minor with a severe chromatic profile, then a last “fugue” in 3/4 which begins in C minor and modulates to E-flat, probably intended as the final movement of the quartet. We have, in this case, no certain elements to with which make a comparison (there are no movements in fugue form, like those concluding Haydn’s Quartets, Op. 20, in the final version of Op. 127), but, with its use of Neapolitan relationships and adventurous

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13 The adverb has a precise connotation referring to works of *cantabile* tone. Consider the “Schubertian” second movement of the Piano Sonata, Op. 90: The E-major theme, indicated as *dolce*, must also resonate *teneramente* (m. 24). The same goes for the intense declamation emerging unpredictably, amid the ticking of the sixteenth notes, in the second variation of the final movement of the Piano Sonata Op. 109. We could continue by citing the cello solo at the beginning of Op. 102, No. 1 (*dolce cantabile, teneramente*), but there is a source that even more closely relates to the kind of melodiousness sought in the first movement of Quartet Op. 127, i.e. the folk songs of Anglophone tradition arranged by the composer at George Thomson’s request (as Haydn had done in his time): *teneramente* returns in the Andanti and Andantini amorosi of the 20 *Irische Lieder* WoO 153, Nos. 9 and 16, both in E-flat major; a simple Andantino in E-flat, “amoroso teneramente,” can also be found in No. 20 of the *Schottische Lieder* Op. 108.

14 Beethoven will only allude in an almost parodistic tone to the practices of imitative counterpoint—think of the Scherzando theme, with its canon entrances and the mirror inversion of motifs, or mm. 107–20 of the Finale.
path to the tonic key, the first plan for Quartet Op. 127 comes across as a rethinking of strategies already explored in the “Hammerklavier” Sonata, Op. 106. As is well known, the final movement of Op. 106

Example 2: D-BNba, HCB Mh 60, p. 1, mm. 10–12; 15–16; «Vi-de» → mm. 6–7
features a slow introduction of improvisatory character, which soon deviates from the tonic B-flat to B major, with canonic figurations; then suddenly attacks an Allegro fugato in G-sharp minor, and only after several wanderings is the concluding fugue in B-flat major reached. A similar harmonic sequence is present in the Engelmann draft (E major, then a fugue in the relative minor, and the tonic E-flat at the end). Beethoven would not abandon these ideas easily; in fact, the last folios of the Autograph 11/2 sketchbook testify that he had thought up the subject of the Große Fuge initially in E-flat major with the intention of using it for the Finale of the Quartet Op. 127.15

THE REDISCOVERED ADAGIO

As Erica Buurman and Barry Cooper rightly observed, the extension of Neapolitan enharmonic relationships to the large-scale plan, which in the telescoped draft for the quartet sounds new and bold, can actually be read as one aspect of the dialogue with Haydn: the Piano Sonata in E-flat major, Hob. XVI:52 (the last one, from 1794), has an Adagio in E major.16 And it is interesting to look closely at how the Austrian master handled these distant tonal links, because we may discern some similarities with Beethoven’s procedures. Already in the first movement of his E-flat sonata, Haydn inserted a few bars in E major: he did so in the development, unpredictably, after a half cadence on the dominant of C minor (see mm. 69–70). It would appear to be a mere “touch of color,”


but in light of what is to happen shortly thereafter, those unusual bars will sound retrospectively like an omen. Indeed, at the center of the composition, a whole slow tempo in the key of E major looms up. The sketches show how Beethoven intended to articulate the structure of Op. 127 by making use of similar “narrative strategies”: the triad on the Neapolitan degree was to emerge as a startling, awe-inspiring epiphany, only to be evoked again in the course of the piece, activating the unconscious connections of memory.

In the final version of the quartet, the appearance of E major occurs in the second movement, within the Adagio in A-flat; with a chromatic shift from C₂ to C-sharp₂ and a leap of a third, Beethoven propels us into a new dimension, amid the ineffable sonorities of a hymn (Variation III, mm. 59–76; see Example 3). It is perhaps the highest and most “transcendent” moment in the entire work, but it was not to be the only one: the original plan for the quartet included another “mysterious Adagio in E major” as a prelude to the Finale—Brandenburg revealed this, but without indicating where the sketches would be found.¹⁷ No one has investigated further, except Barry Cooper; in his already quoted essay on the genesis of Op. 127, after consulting all available sources, he declares that there is no trace of the Adagio (“Brandenburg’s ‘mysterious Adagio’ remains a mystery”).¹⁸ Instead, I have finally discovered it and am giving its transcription for the first time (Example 4).

Example 3: Beethoven, String Quartet, Op. 127, II, mm. 59–61

¹⁷ See Brandenburg, “Die Quellen zur Entstehungsgeschichte,” 274.
¹⁸ Cooper, “The Role of Beethoven’s ‘la gaiete’ Movement,” 53.
Example 4: PL-Kj, Mus. ms. autogr. Beethoven Artaria 206, p. 69, st. 1–10
The projected slow movement in the key of the Neapolitan degree, intended at one point as an introduction to the Finale of Op. 127, is found among the so-called “score sketches” of the Artaria 206 miscellany, in a loose bifolio in vertical format composed of twenty-three-staves. Beethoven had used the same type of paper to prepare the autograph of the Ninth symphony, and he used it for the bulk of the writing process of the last quartets.\textsuperscript{19} The string parts are sketched on two lines, as in a short score, and the texture is polyphonic (similar to that in the first sketch of Example 2). The page takes on the appearance of a chorale, stripped of any melodic ornamentation—Beethoven had added a few eighth notes in the second and fourth bars, as appoggiaturas that would have enriched the counterpoint, but then he deleted them, leaving only the quarter notes to scan each subdivision—he thus achieves the effect of a homophonic cortège, realizing chordal sequences by the means of four-part polyphony.\textsuperscript{20} The eighth notes will appear later, not surprisingly, near the Allegro, as an eloquent signal of a new beginning. It is possible, in fact, to catch the junctures of a sound “plot” between the folds of the Beethoven sketch. The tonal center is not clear at first. E major is revealed after the tenth bar, following a modulating journey between the minor triads of the II and III degrees, marked \textit{pianissimo}—that same \textit{pp} that in the Adagio of the second movement had been employed in the connecting sections, to shroud them in mystery.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} I have learned from Federica Rovelli, whom I thank, that a further draft of the Adagio in E major, penned in ink with pencil additions, is found in a loose sheet, sold in March 11, 2020 at the Berlin auction of J. A. Stargardt and acquired by the Beethoven-Haus (see D-BNba, NE 380, f. 1r: the key signature with four sharps and the position next to the sketches for the Finale of the quartet leave no doubt to its identification). This still unpublished manuscript, which belonged to Louis Koch’s collection, bears the initials of Anton Schindler; it is in fact one of those sheets that Beethoven’s secretary and biographer had extracted from the desk sketchbook in his possession, Autograph 11/2, to make a gift of it to friends (on Schindler’s tampering and the hypothesis of reconstruction of the original folders, see Brandenburg, “Die Quellen zur Entstehungsgeschichte,” 243–44).

\textsuperscript{20} The chorale, all of quarter notes, at the center of Chopin’s Nocturne, Op. 37, No. 1 comes to mind, or, to stay in the Beethovenian sphere and in the same key, the Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo with which the Piano Sonata, Op. 109 concludes.

\textsuperscript{21} See Op. 127, II, mm. 1–2, the introduction to the theme; mm. 76–77, the transition from the third to the fourth variation, with an imperceptible chromatic slip E–E-flat;
Beethoven was planning in this way another of his evocative transitions, making use of a device dear to him: thematic anticipation. The chorale stops on the dominant of E major and heralds the incipit of the quartet’s concluding movement (“Allegro moderato”). The two-beat pattern, with the eighth-note quadruplets alternating in imitation, is repeated a second time, causing an unexpected slippage to the flat area (at the half-bar juncture, the N6 of E major becomes V2 of the E-flat dominant). Only now, after due suspense has been built up, can the Finale begin.22 The alternative variant that Beethoven noted below, marking it “meilleur,” is a radical rethinking of the passage, which agrees with the final version: a four-bar introduction, with a descending pattern of quarter notes, and the initial Allegro motto entrusted to the first violin, not the cello (see Op. 127, IV, mm. 1–9).

By examining the draft in Artaria 206, we have made a considerable time jump from the first concept sketches in the Engelmann sketchbook (more than two years apart, since Beethoven began composing the quartet’s Finale between December 1824 and January 1825). But it is revealing to note how the primal idea of the structure, all centered on the Neapolitan relationships, somehow resurfaced in the composer’s concerns in the last elaborative stages, when he was practicing what Wagner would call the “art of transition” (Kunst des Übergangs), that is, the subtle and veiledly symbolic connection between the parts of the form: the E-major pianissimo of the mystic chorale, with its inflections to the minor mode, would call to mind the central variation of the Adagio, in 2/2, the emotional core of the quartet.23 Before working out the mm. 95ff, the entrances in canon that prepare the episode in C-sharp minor, pp sotto voce; mm. 118–23, the coda, as an ecstatic moment in which reminiscences surface.

22 Something similar occurred in the Piano Concerto in E-flat, Op. 73, with the slow movement in the remote key of the lowered VI degree, enharmonically B major—according to a harmonic relationships again mindful of late Haydn (see the Quartet Op. 76, No. 6 or the Trio Hob. XV:29). In that case, the B octave of the bassoons drops to B-flat in pp, prolonged by the horns, preparing the mysterious transition to the last movement. On the dominant pedal, the piano anticipates in slow motion the opening motif of the Rondo.

23 At that stage, the E-major variation (in the key of the lowered enharmonic VI degree compared to the A-flat theme) had already been composed, along with the rest of the second movement; an early draft of October–November 1824 can be found in pocket sketchbook PL-Kj, Mus. ms. autogr. Beethoven Grasnick 4, ff. 28r–29r.
eighteen-measure Adagio of Example 4, Beethoven had also considered
preceding the Finale by a different short movement in E major with a
march-like character (see Autograph 11/2, f. 22r, st. 1–5). These ideas
would not make their way into the final quartet; they would, however,
resurface shortly thereafter in other contexts—an “Alla marcia, assai
cadence is the penultimate movement of the next quartet, Op. 132, and
Neapolitan relations play a role in the unconventional structure of the
Quartet Op. 131 (suffice it to mention the chromatic slip, in pp, at the end
of the Adagio fugato, which unexpectedly leads from C-sharp minor to
D major in 6/8 of the Allegro molto vivace). The gestation of the first
“Galitzin” quartet thus becomes a kind of laboratory, in which ideas
converge in superabundance and are, so to speak, “tested”: some find
fulfillment within a gradual process of redefining the work and its
stylistic codes, while others become potential material for subsequent
works.25

BH 112, p. 3: A PAIR OF QUARTETS

Reeling from the exertions of the academies of May 7 and 23, 1824 (which
saw the premiere of the Ninth Symphony and parts of the Missa solemnis
in Vienna), Beethoven wrote to Galitzin, “You will soon receive the
quartet promised to you so long ago, and perhaps the others as well.”26
The symphonic-choral monuments were now completed and offered to
the public; the composer felt sufficiently free to devote himself to the

24 The sketch, of sixteen measures, concludes with a suspended cadence, preceded by
a ritardando: The B, in the octave, with now customary gesture, slips to B-flat, a
dominant that leads back to the quartet’s tonic key. One can then find, in McCallum’s
article, the transcription of another possible connection to the concluding Allegro, built
on the tonality of the Neapolitan degree: three bars of “adagio,” on the recto of the
loose sheet D-BNba, HCB Mh 99, originally part of Autograph 11/2 (see “The Process
Within the Product,” 126). I notice the presence of an additional “adagio,” with an
introductory function to the Finale, in D-B, Autograph 45, f. 1r, st. 14.
25 Beethoven himself, not without irony, declared that he composed Op. 131 by putting
together “recycled” pieces, collected from among his papers. Indeed, on the title page
of the quartet’s Stichvorlage (D-BNba, NE 240), he wrote the following note:
“zusammengezogen aus verschiedenem diesen und jenem” (cobbled together from
various stolen odds and ends).
26 Letter written in Vienna, May 26, 1824, in BB-1841; A-1292.
project commissioned by the young cellist prince. He began working on
da bifolio (D-BNba, BH 112), datable to May–June 1824, which originally
belonged to the Landsberg 8/2 sketchbook, in which there are also some
sketches for the Bagatelles Op. 126. On page 3, he drafted the opening
theme of the future Quartet Op. 127, introducing significant changes
from the annotations of a year and a half earlier in the *Engelmann* page.
The Allegro is now in 3/4, and the cello introduction on the power chord
becomes more imperious and solemn, modeled after the fanfares with
which *The Magic Flute* or Mozart’s Symphony in E-flat K 543 opens—
Beethoven indicated a tempo “Andante”; in the final version only the
reference to the character, “Maestoso,” will remain. A movement plan
takes shape, which I will discuss below, but it is first important to stress
an aspect hitherto neglected by scholars and full of implications.

On the same page of bifolio BH 112 where the sketches for the first
“Galitzin” quartet are found, the plan for another quartet, in F minor, is
also defined. This, in itself, should not come as a surprise: the prince had
asked for “one, two or three new quartets,” and Beethoven, as was his
practice, began to consider several projects at once. What, however,
draws our attention is the musical content of this “quartett in F mol”
(Example 5): after the first movement, whose main theme is sketched
out, there are eight bars of an “allegretto” in D major and a “fuga” in C
major with a real answer on the dominant and the restatement of the
subject an octave higher. What is most striking is the change in key
between the first and second movements—a third relationship that, in
the terms of functional harmony, we would call “variant of variant
parallel” (TP)—but it is not new: Beethoven was evidently rethinking
the model of his Quartet Op. 95 in F minor, with an “Allegretto ma non
troppo” in D major.27 Mentioned at the beginning of this essay was
Stefan Kunze’s historiographical perspective, the idea that there is a
connecting link between the late quartets and earlier experiences,
despite the “caesura of over ten years” separating Op. 95 from Op. 127.
Well, the sketches precisely show this retrospective look: In initiating the
composition project urged by Galitzin, Beethoven imagined a very

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27 This pattern of tonal relationships finds only one precedent in Haydn’s Quartet, Op.
74, No. 3 (1793) in G minor, with a second movement in E major.
specific pair of quartets, ideally linking back to 1809–10, to the “Harp” Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 74, and the “Serioso” Quartet in F minor, Op. 95, as if to continue a story where he had previously left off.28

Example 5: D-BNba, BH 112, p. 3, st. 11–12 and 14–15; p. 4, st. 1

in F moll quartett

allegretto

fuga

28 The same historical conjunctures seem to support, indirectly, this reading hypothesis. The composer had written his quartets of the “middle period” with an outstanding ensemble in mind: the Schuppanzigh-Quartett, established by Felix von Lichnowsky and taken under tutelage, beginning in 1808, by Prince Razumovsky, who was himself a member as second violinist. It was in May 1814 when Ignaz Schuppanzigh and his musicians presented Op. 95, the last Beethovenian quartet (not yet given in print), to a small audience. A few months later, on December 31, a fire destroyed Razumovsky’s palace, also sending the glorious string ensemble to ruin: the members dispersed, Schuppanzigh moved to Russia, and remained there for nine years. He would return to Vienna in 1823, reintroducing himself to his audience with a performance of the “Harp” Quartet, Op. 74. The Schuppanzigh-Quartett is reconstituted, after nearly a decade: in those months, Beethoven was beginning to sketch out his new quartet in E-flat major, Op. 127. For an overview of these events, see the well-documented study by Ivan Mahaim, Beethoven: Naissance et Renaissance des Derniers Quatuors, 2 vols. (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1964), 1:39–42.
The allusive intent goes beyond the analogy of tonalities within the movement plan. There are stylistic, typical writing traits that recall the imagery of the *Wiener Klassik* in its dual meaning. On the one hand, there is the gallant, humming melody, enclosed in periodic units of four bars (note, in Example 5, the exquisitely outline of the “allegretto” theme; Beethoven took pleasure in tracing all what we would call *clichés*, in the use of repeated notes or appoggiaturas placed “at the right point”). Cecilio De Roda already said so, commenting on sketches found in the sketchbook he owned (D-BNba, NE 47a), from 1825:

The ideas, in their primitive form, seldom appear with that intensity of expression so intimate and so profound that they then acquire with later modifications. Many have, in emerging from his pen, if not an entirely Mozartian character, that peculiar flavor which distinguishes the works of his youth.²⁹

Alongside this sought-after simplicity, so far removed from the dialectical contrasts of the “heroic” period, the other side of classicism is evoked: the severe style, derived from the old masters, which inspired the art of motivic elaboration. It is not just the presence of fugues in late Beethoven that alludes to music of the past; the simple recourse to certain melodic-harmonic formulas, codified in the listening experience, is enough. As Example 5 shows, the opening theme of the planned F minor quartet was to be characterized by a four-note motif, akin in profile to the opening motto of Shostakovich’s Quartet No. 8: the first time it is expounded as B₄–C₄–A₄–G₄ (with the last two notes harmonized); the second time, B₄–C₅–A₅–G₅, with the descending semitone shifted to the upper octave. Try transposing a third under this variant of the motif and you will get G-sharp–A–F–E, i.e., the basic cell on which the entire first movement of what would become the second “Galitzin” quartet, Op. 132, is built. Beethoven began working on it in January 1825; in the penultimate sheet of Autograph 11/2 one can easily recognize the sketch of the introductory bars, with the cell unfolding in its original version, then transposed by fifths and counterpointed by its

inverse (Example 6). We do not know what the composer was planning when he sketched out the first bars of the “quartett in F mol”; it is certain, however, that that tetrachord plays a central role in the conception of subsequent works: as Dahlhaus explained, the four-note cell is more than just a theme; it is a “fundamental idea” (Grundgedanke), an “abstract configuration” that permeates “subthematic” the motivic fabric” of different compositions, from Op. 131 to the Große Fuge.30

Example 6: D-B, Mus. ms. autogr. Beethoven 11/2, f. 29r, st. 5–6

![Example 6]  

We are, however, in the presence not of a mere technical device to connect underground the thematic developments. Even before this, for Beethoven the four-note cell—especially when in a minor key and within a range of a diminished seventh—was a symbol linked to the history of the Baroque-classical repertoire, namely to those expressive fugue subjects, defined by Warren Kirkendale as “pathotype.”31 It is curious that precisely in July 1825, when he had recently completed the Quartet Op. 132 and was already working on Op. 130, the composer engaged in a dialogue with Karl Holz about these matters. They were talking about the Kyrie from Mozart’s Requiem and Holz, an experienced violinist in the Schuppanzigh Quartet, wanted to point out that Haydn had already used a similar theme: “Haydn also used the theme from the Requiem much earlier as a fugue theme in a quartet.”32 On the conversation book page, he jotted down a fleeting sketch of it, with two

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31 See Warren Kirkendale, *Fugue and Fugato in Rococo and Classical Chamber Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1979), 91. As an emblematic example, one might cite Fugue No. 16 in G minor, from Book I of the Well-Tempered Clavier.
whole notes and two half notes: C₅–D-flat₅–F₄–E₄. The reference, as can be guessed, goes to the first subject of the concluding Fugue of the String Quartet, Op. 20, No. 5, in F minor, but Holz was quoting from memory, and reversed the order of the two middle notes, resulting in an interesting slip, which made that Haydn motif even more similar to that used by Beethoven in the Quartet Op. 132, with the semitone at the beginning. ³³ The models of the past interacted, almost blending with the outcomes of the late style, and the composer himself recopied among his sketchbooks these four-note formulas, activating, in turn, the chain of analogies. In a bifolio preserved at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna, in the free space on the last page, after the sketches for the second movement of Op. 132, we find the transcription of the two fugue subjects, from Mozart’s Requiem and Haydn’s quartet, which had been the focus of the dialogue with Holz (Figure 1). And the surprising thing, which has so far gone unnoticed, is that Beethoven also did not write the correct version of Haydn’s motif: after the C₅ whole note, not F₄ is reached, but A-flat₄. This might seem like a simple mistake, an oversight. In fact, in transcribing the pathotype variant with the third instead of the tonic—as in the adjoining example from Mozart’s Kyrie—Beethoven was alluding to another, even earlier source: the Chorus No. 22 from Handel’s Messiah (“And with His stripes we are healed”), one of his favorite pieces, which he copied in its entirety when he was composing the Missa solemnis. ³⁴ What appears, again, to be an unconscious slip becomes significant, as it shows the motions of thought, a background of experiences. The hybrid between the two pathotypes in F minor transcribed by Beethoven is then transformed into an “exegetical” operation: with the reference to the Handel source, which inspired both

³³ It was Emil Platen who advanced the fascinating hypothesis of an influence, born of the apparent similarities between the two motifs; see “Über Bach, Kuhlau und die thematisch-motivische Einheit der letzten Quartette Beethovens,” in Beiträge zu Beethovens Kammermusik. Symposion Bonn 1984, ed. Sieghard Brandenburg and Helmut Loos (Bonn: Verein Beethoven-Haus, 1987), 154.

³⁴ The copy of the Handel chorus, which belonged to Arturo Toscanini and later to his daughter Wally, is now in California, in the Karpeles Manuscript Library of Santa Barbara. On the transcriptions from Messiah, which Beethoven knew in the adaptation made by Mozart for Baron van Swieten, see the essay by Bathia Churgin, “Beethoven’s Handel and the Messiah Copies,” The Beethoven Journal 29, no. 1 (2014): 5–13.
Haydn’s and Mozart’s fugues, the roots and links between the works of the masters are revealed.

Figure 1: A-Wgm, A 48, f. 2v, st. 3–4

After this parenthesis on the origins of the four-note cell of Op. 132, foreshadowed among the sketches of a “quartett in F mol,” we can turn to the remaining part of the bifolio BH 112, analyzing the movement plan for Op. 127 that the composer was beginning to outline. The main theme of the Allegro in 3/4 had been sketched out at the top of the page on staves 1–4; the continuation of the project is observed in the synopsis of Example 7. There is a sketch of an “anderes Stück,” an eight-bar period, still in 3/4 and in E-flat major, that seems more like a part of the first movement than “another movement.” Indeed, the cantabile tone and the soft, flowing design of the melody, which spans wide arcs within the interval of sixth, remain. Regarding the rhythmic profile and character, the appearance is that of a dance, a graceful Deutscher, with an upbeat and the frequent shifting of the accent to the weak beats.35 An “Adagio” follows, not in A-flat, as one would expect, but in C major, in common

time. There are not many precedents for Beethoven’s compositions in E-flat with central movements in the key of the major VI degree (we can mention only the Piano Sonata, Op. 7 and the Violin Sonata, Op. 12, No. 3); it is an idea, however, that periodically returns among the sketches: in the first conception of the Eroica, gleaned from the telescoped draft of the Wielhorsky sketchbook (pp. 44–45), there was to be an “adagio, C Dur,” for which Beethoven had sketched a simple melody in 6/8, with an accompanying figuration (a background of alternating octaves and thirds). The Adagio that the composer envisioned for his new quartet, in May–June 1824, moved along that expressive ridge; it was to be understood as the quintessence of lyricism. This can be seen in the transcription: the theme, apparently intended for the first violin, is the unfolded melody of a romance, which expands on an ascending line until it reaches the tenth (from $C_5$ to $E_6$), and then presumably cadences on $C_6$ (although Beethoven did not write the final note). In the bass clef staff, at the beginning, Beethoven also notes a soft descending arpeggio of thirds, to amplify the sound of the tonic and give depth to the singing.

Example 7: D-BNba, BH 112, p. 3, st. 5–9

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It is hard to imagine a greater contrast than the next sketch, the last in the movement plan: a skipping theme in 2/4, in the manner of a folk dance, built on the repetition of a four-beat pattern, within a symmetrical structure (I-V/V-I). It is the typical cue on which Haydn would base one of his “jokes,” found in the finales of symphonies or quartets (see, for example, Op. 33, No. 3): very simple motifs, reiterated almost out of inertia, exploiting the pendulum effect between tonic and dominant, in a path of sequences and rhythmic ostinatos that hypnotizes the listener, only to surprise them with an abrupt cadence or some syncopation. It was customary to refer to the Volkstänze repertoire in these playful rondos, and Beethoven’s sketch shows precisely one of these characteristic folk rhythms: “an eighth note followed by two sixteenths, in sequence,” as is often the case in the Anglaise or Dreher.37 Thus, the two poles around which the quartet was to develop are fixed in the telescoped draft of BH 112: singing, in the flowing melodiousness of the opening Allegro and in the more contemplative sense of the Adagio, and dance. The work was now underway and continued, almost simultaneously, on another source, where a somewhat different scheme of the four movements is outlined. Beethoven chose to insert before the slow tempo an “allegro grazioso” in C major with a title in French.


The sketches I am about to examine are found in the last pages of the aforementioned Artaria 206 miscellany, but they are actually the earliest in chronological order, dating from May–June 1824. Beethoven had brought together in a fascicle four bifolios of upright format, with paper of sixteen staves, and on this broad spectrum of writing he produced a new overview of the quartet. It begins with the continuity draft of the first movement, on page 98, of which the entire area of the exposition is defined. At the top of the page, the annotation “And[ante]” identifies the introductory bars; this is followed by the main theme of the Allegro in

3/4, and a secondary theme still far from its final form, written in B-flat major, in the key of the dominant. After the coda figurations, there is also a hint of the development, which begins by reprising in G major the majestic fanfare with which the piece opens (see st. 10 and 12, “2ter Theil”). It is, so far, a typical monolinear sketch, in which Beethoven follows the outline of the Leitstimme and only occasionally integrates some secondary voices. To compose the next movement, he experiments instead with another method: he sketches out a system of four staves, writing directly in score (see Figure 2 and Example 8). According to usual practice, the score sketch appears incomplete, with a few blank lines to be filled in possibly later, but it cannot be ruled out that there was an idea to create a bicinium, highlighting, at the beginning, a single pair of strings: the cello expounds a simple melody in 2/4 and the viola accompanies it, fitting into the flow of the quatrains of sixteenths, leveraging the two notes-pin, C and G. Thus opens the original second movement of Op. 127, entitled La gaieté (in the manuscript, Beethoven omits the accent).

In the entirety of its 97 measures, the Allegro grazioso La gaieté reflects the classic ABA’ form of the Minuet and Trio, which the composer, however, reworks, adding a seemingly inexplicable digression. After the first section (a rounded binary form), there follows a series of as many as four refrains, with the iterative effect of a loop: one

Figure 2: PL-Kj. Mus. ms. autogr. Beethoven Artaria 206, p. 99, st. 1–4

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38 Shortly thereafter, on pages 2–3 of the pocket sketchbook D-B, Artaria 205/4, Beethoven would opt for a second theme in G minor, articulating the formal balances around an evocative “chiaroscuro” between keys at a distance of thirds.
Example 8: PL-Kj, Mus. ms. autogr. Beethoven Artaria 206, p. 99, st. 1–16; p. 100, st. 1–4
Example 8: (continued)

at a time, the different groups of strings “enter the scene,” according to a studied pattern of alternations, and intone the initial eight-bar theme, while the other voices accompany with a counterpoint of triplets. Gustav Nottebohm, who first unearthed the sketch in one of his forays into the Artaria collection in Vienna, transcribed it almost completely, publishing it in an 1876 essay. It was in this way that the origins, surprising to say the least, of the Adagio in the Quartet Op. 127 were discovered: as can be ascertained from a comparison with the printed score, the incipit of the sublime slow tempo theme is nothing more than the transposition in A-flat major and in 12/8 of the initial gaieté motif (an ascending scale within the range of a sixth and a descent on the arpeggio of a dominant seventh, with the ninth as appoggiatura; see Example 9).

As he did in the Diabelli Variations, Beethoven reappropriated unpretentious “rustic” material and transformed it, sublimating it, within an Adagio of ethereal sonorities. The stages of this process have been reconstructed by Barry Cooper, but much remains to be clarified about the composer’s intentions; above all, there has never been any question about the provenance of that title in French that he placed on

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40 See Cooper, “The Role of Beethoven’s ‘la gaiete’ Movement,” 33–55 (the complete transcription of the gaieté draft at 43–45).
the draft. This is a significant paratext, linked to a precise musical and aesthetic sphere: as I was able to ascertain during my doctoral research, *La gaieté* is a title belonging to the contradance repertoires, found in at least two collections of *airs de contredanses* from the mid-eighteenth century.\(^{41}\) For the second movement of his new quartet dedicated to Prince Galitzin, Beethoven had thoughtfully crafted a stylization of the group dance most in vogue in European salons, entrusting pairs of string instruments with the task of “mimicking” the dancers’ entrances. As was the case in the *ancien régime* and in Napoleon’s early empire, the composer would take inspiration from a well-known melody (an *air favori*) to create his work and offer it to the noble patron, who often practiced music for pleasure. The mechanism was explicit in the “Razumovsky” Quartets, when the “thèmes russes” extracted from a collection of folk songs were given in the score, but the opening gesture of the *gaieté*, on closer inspection, is not very different from the Finale of Op. 59, No. 1 (in both cases, the cello expounds a simple dancing tune in 2/4 in a *piano* dynamic, which immediately imprints itself on the

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listener’s mind and is associated with a specific title).\textsuperscript{42} And the idea of a quadruple repetition of the tune against a background of triplets is also not new. In Op. 59, No. 2, Beethoven had treated the Russian song \textit{Slava} in this way, within the Trio section of the Allegretto, creating what William Kinderman perceptively defined as a “parodistic fugal medley.”\textsuperscript{43}

The country dance, as noted, eventually disappears from the final version of Op. 127, or rather, it finds itself transfigured into the theme of the Adagio with variations, unrecognizable in the guise of a melancholy \textit{danse lente}. In the sketches of Artaria 206 it is possible to discern the beginnings of this metamorphosis. Initially, Beethoven intended to articulate the transition between the second and third movements by enacting a contrast of tempos and characters: from the Allegro grazioso in 2/4 to the lyricism of an expressive slow tempo in 9/8. Observe Figure 3. The coda of the \textit{gaieté} is made up of a simple sequence of four-note figures in the first violin, an appendix of brilliant pith, ending with the dominant and tonic chords of C major. The double bar indicated by the composer, however, does not imply an actual conclusion; it is the graphical type that implies an \textit{attacca}, a seamless connection with the next part.\textsuperscript{44} Thus follows, after the Allegro, an Adagio in A-flat major (“alsdenn adagio in as dur”), introduced by a descending scale of eighth notes. As can be seen, the beginning of the slow-movement theme is nothing more than the transformation of the scalar motif on which the entire previous movement revolved (Example 10). Also highlighted with brackets is the reprise of the four-note segment derived from the

\textsuperscript{42} Galitzin, moreover, had referred in the aforementioned November 1822 letter to his own status as an amateur musician: “the instrument that I study is the violoncello.” (BB-1508; A-299); and Beethoven responded with polite condescension, “You wish to have some quartets; as I see that you cultivate the cello, I shall take care to satisfy you in this respect” (BB-1535; A-1123, in French). Indeed, it will be the cellist the first to intone the tune of \textit{La gaieté}, kicking off the playful evocation of a dancing scene.


\textsuperscript{44} See Barry Cooper, “Beethoven and the Double Bar,” \textit{Music & Letters} 88, no. 3 (2007), 466–70. For this use of the double bar, one need only cite the Sonata quasi una fantasia, Op. 27, No. 1, in the same key.
dominant seventh arpeggio which was reiterated in the first violin figure in the coda. Whereas this figure appears as a bravura passage at the end of the gaieté, it is now transformed into an ethereal romance. This is precisely the “theatrical” essence of the character variation, which Beethoven derived from the improvisatory practice of the fantasia: in the space of just two bars, the character (represented by the instrumentalist) “changes clothes” and expresses itself in new accents, while remaining recognizable in its essential features.

Moreover, the dimension of the stage seems intentionally evoked in the writing of the sketch: the garland of eighth notes, from E-flat₄ to E-flat₂, is like a curtain slowly opening on the solo singer (the first violin), ready to intone an aria, supported by a backdrop of chords. At least two precedents come to mind, both in 9/8 and dating from 1799: the accompanied melody of the Adagio con molto espressione from the Sonata, Op. 22 and especially the Adagio affettuoso e appassionato from Figure 3: PL-Kj, Mus. ms. autogr. Beethoven Artaria 206, p. 102, st. 9–16

45 This kind of imagery, related to actorly performance and mimesis of operatic vocality, is discussed in Nancy November, Beethoven’s Theatrical Quartets: Opp. 59, 74 and 95 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 19–24.
the Quartet, Op. 18, No. 1. Twenty-five years before, in that intense lyrical picture, Beethoven had already entrusted the first violin with the singing voice, moving the other strings homophonically on repeated triads. For the chordal accompaniment of the Adagio in A-flat, he holds the tonic still on the cello, making it resonate on each subdivision, and disrupt the triadic verticality with a subtle syncopated interplay that hints at the love duet of *Tristan* (“O sink’ hernieder, Nacht der Liebe”).

**Example 10a:** PL-Kj, Mus. ms. autogr. Beethoven Artaria 206, p. 99, st. 4

![Example 10a](image1)

**Example 10b:** PL-Kj, Mus. ms. autogr. Beethoven Artaria 206, p. 102, st. 13–16 and p. 103, st. 1–4 (motivic derivations highlighted)
It is important to analyze the sketch from the point of view of texture since choices in handling voices may conceal precise references to musical styles and genres. To account for the different possibilities with which the composition of a quartet was understood between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the words of Petiscus come in handy. The Berlin-based critic could be describing the slow movement that Beethoven outlined in Artaria 206, when he speaks of the primacy of the solo violin in certain types of quartets. The violin solo, while the other parts merely carry out the “harmonic filling,” can be pleasing, and Petiscus certainly did not wish to pass a condemnatory judgment, but he was keen to point out that this kind of writing in no way belongs to the rank of the “true quartet.” They are *quatuors brillants*, displaying the virtuosity of the soloist and enhancing his/her expressive gifts by placing cantabile movements conceived as opera arias at the center of the composition (think of the works of Pierre Rode, Baillot or Louis Spohr). Of a similar style was the *quatuor concertant*, in which instrumentalists took turns, alone or in small groups, intoning simple melodies. From what we have seen, it does indeed appear that Beethoven moved in these areas in the early stages of creating the Quartet Op. 127: he passed the theme of an *air de contredanse* from one pair of strings to the other, as if to reproduce the choreography of a group dance, and after the frolicking coda of the *gaieté*, he isolated the first violin, placing the lyrical self, the singing subject, at the center of the Adagio. The primacy of the singing theme in Beethoven’s late style is well known (not coincidentally, Joseph

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46 “A violin solo, a sonata in which one violin alone can be heard, while the other voices, merely to fill out the harmony, are heard in individual, non-melodic echoes that do not form a unity, is not a true quartet [*kein wahres Quartett*]; all theorists agree on this. If one wishes to distinguish this latter genre by the recently chosen title *Quatuor brillant*, then we have nothing against it; just as we by no means wish to reject this genre of solo sonatas with four-part [*sic*] accompaniment. [...] The same is indisputably true of the so-called (merely) *Quatuors concertants [concertirenden Quartetten]*, in which the solo part, which is incidentally simply accompanied, is divided between two or three alternating voices” (P. [Johann Conrad Wilhelm Petiscus], “Ueber Quartettmusik,” *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 12, no. 33 (1810): 515).

47 See Roger Hickman, “The Flowering of the Viennese String Quartet in the Late Eighteenth Century,” *The Music Review* 50 (1989): 158–65. Not infrequently, the themes were taken from folk songs or the operatic repertoire, as in the so-called *quatuors d’airs connus*, also called *quatuors d’airs variés*.
Kerman placed a chapter entitled Voice as an introduction to his analyses of the last five quartets), but it is necessary to grasp the problematic core that emerges from a study of the sketches in Artaria 206: the use of accompanied melody, such as we might find in a Bellini aria or a Field nocturne, risked Beethoven’s “deviation” from the technical-stylistic acquisitions of Viennese classicism. For a piece for four strings to qualify as a “true quartet,” a contrapuntal treatment (“a polyphonic song [...] in which all voices progress melodically”) was required. Anyone who knows Op. 127 in its final version will not struggle to detect an admirable interpenetration between singing and polyphony, and it was precisely the reference to the “classical” style that guided the stages of the creative process, up to the development of what he himself called “a new kind of voice-leading.” In the Adagio theme of Op. 127, as well as later in the Cavatina of Op. 130, he will make the polarity between melody and accompaniment almost disappear, achieving the ideal of Viereinigkeit (as Petiscus put it), that is, the inseparable union of the four voices in the imitative inlay.

Then there is a second problem that emerges in the original plan for the quartet and that Beethoven would reformulate at each stage of the genesis: it is the incidence of the “characteristic” and the fantasia procedures, as options that take over when the constructive criteria of

49 Petiscus, “Ueber Quartettmusik,” 516. Koch also followed this interpretative line in his treatise on composition. He described two quartet models: one “in the manner of the Fugue,” with “four obligato voices” of equal importance; another more modern one, in which one voice assumes the principal role and the others realize “the typical accompanying bass that is found in pieces of the galant style.” Between the two extremes are Haydn’s quartets and “Mozart’s six published in Vienna with a dedication to Haydn,” a quite special synthesis of learned style and freedom of melodic invention; see Heinrich Christoph Koch, Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Böhme, 1793), 3:326–27.
50 The quote refers to a significant judgment about the “Galitzin” quartets that Beethoven himself apparently made during a conversation with Karl Holz: “Sie werden eine neue Art der Stimmführung bemerken’ (hiermit ist die Instrumentierung, die Vertheilung der Rollen gemeint); see Wilhelm von Lenz, Beethoven: Eine Kunst-Studie, 6 vols. (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1860), 5:217, quoted in Winter, “Compositional Origins,” 15–16, with reference to Beethoven’s use of score sketches.
the sonata fail. Themes do not find ample development within a single movement, understood as a complex and dialectical unity; there is a preference for creating short movements, marked by a precise character, which are autonomous but at the same time complementary, suitable for being juxtaposed in a sequence of contrasts. This technical-stylistic trait emerged clearly in the seamless transition from the *gaieté* to the Adagio in A-flat; it is now a question of understanding how the composer followed up on these ideas, and to do this it will be necessary to consult Artaria 205/4, the pocket sketchbook he had with him in Baden in the summer of 1824, along with the first fascicles of Autograph 11/2.

**ARTARIA 205/4: THE SIX-MOVEMENT PLAN AND THE “MARCH” BEFORE THE ADAGIO**

Significant elements of divergence from the work structure we have so far described can be discerned as early as the first page of Artaria 205/4. Beethoven noted the theme of a Presto in C minor, in 6/8 time, identifying it as “3tes Stück” (Example 11a). In the third place, then, is not the Adagio, as in the earlier telescoped drafts, but a Scherzo—four bars of Trio in “maggiori” are also written, which are distinguished by the meter and the phrasing (the skipping outline of the staccato eighth notes gives way to a melody of quarter notes, enclosed under a single slur). At this stage, it does indeed appear that the composer wanted to repeat the pattern of the “Harp” Quartet, Op. 74, with the slow second movement in A-flat followed by an energetic Presto in C minor. Moreover, the idea also returns, with some variations, on f. 6v of Autograph 11/2: after the continuity draft of the Adagio theme in A-flat, Beethoven placed an Allegro in C minor (Example 11b). The question remains how to interpret, within this framework, the other sketch found on the first page of the pocket sketchbook. The key signature with only two flats seems to rule out the possibility that it might be a cue for the Finale (according to Barry Cooper, one must necessarily imply a larger...

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A different reading is possible, however, since it is not necessarily the case that the composer always has to note the main theme of a movement; what if it is an idea for an episode of a Rondo, in the key of the dominant? Or the B-section of a rounded binary form? The musical content of the sketch guides us to a possible answer. Indeed, we notice the recurrence of a not new motif, which had already caught our attention in the movement plan of BH 112: the eighth notes followed by two sixteenths (review the last staff of Example 7). Exploiting the repetitions of a typical “Haydnesque” dance formula, the composer had constructed an eight-bar period in 2/4 in the key of E-flat major, for the Finale of the quartet. The sketch found after the Presto, on the first page of Artaria 205/4, is nothing more than a continuation of that idea, in dominant key area.

Example 11a: D-B, Mus. ms. autogr. Beethoven Artaria 205/4, p. 1, st. 2–5

Example 11b: D-B, Mus. ms. autogr. Beethoven 11/2, f. 6v, st. 8

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52 Cooper, “The Role of Beethoven’s ‘la gaiete’ Movement,” 49: “a ‘3tes Stück’ in C minor in 6/8, which is followed on the next stave by an Allegro in B-flat (thus implying at least five movements, since this one is not in the tonic).”
The balance between the parts changes (the Adagio relegates *La gaieté* to second place, which seems to have been set aside in favor of a Scherzo in C minor), but the plan of the work still remains tied to the classic four-movement arrangement. A different configuration appears later in the pocket sketchbook. After sketching the opening Allegro in its entirety, in a form now very close to the final version, Beethoven redefines the structure of the quartet, as can be seen in Example 12. The Adagio in A-flat, which now has an outline in 12/8, returns as the third movement; a Presto theme follows, similar in some respects to the Allegro of Example 11b, which plays with changes of register and harmonies (the first four bars, in bass clef, enunciate a melodic segment in A-flat major, which is echoed by the response of the sixteenth notes in violin clef, that descend to touch E₅ and D-flat₅, hinting at a cadence on the F minor dominant). Then there is the annotation for a fifth piece in C major with a “serioso” character, such as the Allegro assai vivace in 3/4 from the Quartet Op. 95 (Beethoven dispenses, in this case, with the sixteenth pause and writes dotted eighth notes, but the idea of an obstinate repetition of the rhythmic cell remains, making the ternary meter of a dance step more like a march). Finally, in sixth position, a new sketch of a theme for the Finale, most likely to be given to the timbre of the cello.

53 To understand the meaning of “serioso” in Beethoven’s work, it is important to turn to a source that the composer possessed in his library and held in high regard, namely Türk’s treatise on piano technique. In the chapter on musical characters and agogic indications, there is a long list of terms, including *serioso*, which is translated into German as *ernsthaft*, “grave, serious,” but also *nachdrücklich*, meaning “insistent, obstinate, pathetic”; see Daniel Gottlob Türk, *Klavierschule, oder Anweisung zum Klavierspielen für Lehrer und Lernende mit kritischen Anmerkungen* (Leipzig-Halle: Schwicke, Hemmerde und Schwetschke, 1802), 111. There is thus the idea of an excess of severity, of a “punctiliousness,” which stylistically in Beethoven is associated with the practice of contrapuntal imitation, rendered in almost parodistic terms (on this self-mocking distortions, see Mark Evan Bonds, “Irony and Incomprehensibility: Beethoven’s ‘Serioso’ String Quartet in F minor, Op. 95, and the Path to the Late Style,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57, no. 2 (2017): 318–25). The “serioso” topic with the repetition of the motif will find ample space in the Scherzo of Op. 127 (see especially mm. 37–69), of which there is as yet no trace in the movement plan of *Artaria* 205/4, but which the composer had already somewhat foreshadowed, as we shall see.
This projected movement plan is significant, especially in light of the well-known landmarks of the late style (the six movements of Quartet Op. 130 and the seven of Op. 131), but, once again, we have to look back to the past to grasp the archetypes of Beethoven’s revolutionary planning. The model *par excellence* of a work in six or more movements was the eighteenth-century divertimento, from which the young composer, upon arriving in Vienna, had drawn inspiration for his chamber works: the String Trio, Op. 3 (1795–96), and the Septet Op. 20 (1799–1800), both in six movements and in E-flat major, with a lyrical Adagio in the key of the subdominant.\(^{54}\) It was a favorite music genre, in

\(^{54}\) Mozart’s Divertimento in E-flat major K 563 also follows this sequence of movements.
which graceful dances, themes and variations, slow movements of cantabile effusiveness alternated; and Beethoven knew this well, not hesitating to ironize about the “palatable” trait of such pieces: amateurs “would swarm around it and feed on it like insects,” he told Hoffmeister, as he suggested transcribing the Septet for string quintet with flute. In his later years, however, a sense of revulsion became more pronounced; according to Czerny’s account to Otto Jahn, the composer “could not endure his Septet and grew angry because of the universal applause with which it was received.” It can be intriguing to read from this angle the sketches we are dealing with, which show the—perhaps unsuspected—persistence of certain patterns, understood as the starting point of a process of stylistic transformation: the Adagio bars in A-flat sketched out in Artaria 206, with the first violin intoning the melody against a soft triadic pulses, seem to come out of the Adagio cantabile in 9/8 of the Septet, composed when Beethoven was in his thirties, but how different is the Adagio we will find in the final version of the “Galitzin” quartet! Through a long work of writing and reflection on the materials, the lyrical material from Tafelmusik is transformed into an introverted and densely contrapuntal elegy. The very idea of a six-movement plan, which we see emerging as a possibility in the pocket sketchbook of the summer of 1824, would be reconsidered within a horizon of languages and techniques aimed at almost provocatively contravening the aesthetics of galant entertainment: in the Quartet Op. 130, along with the Alla danza tedesca and the Cavatina, Beethoven would go so far as to place a Große Fuge, so “indigestible” to amateurs and professionals alike that it had to be eliminated.

One could go on at length with the finding of these short-circuits between musical styles, but let us return to the synopsis of Example 12, trying to understand what the “2tes Stück” of the six-movement quartet was supposed to be, since the gaiété now seems to have disappeared. The “dann” before the Adagio is a clear sign that the sketch noted on the first

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55 See Beethoven’s letter to Franz Anton Hoffmeister, Vienna, April 22, 1801, in BB-60; A-47.  
line of page 24 was taking over from earlier music: just turn the page to locate it, on the last line of page 23, and it is not the Coda in C major of the Allegro grazioso, but a passage in common time, in A flat. I have arranged the sketches of the two pages one following another in the transcription, to make sure that the direct connection between this second piece and the Adagio can be grasped: a motif is repeated twice, ending on E-flat, then it switches to the treble clef to initiate a descending figuration of eighth notes that, touching the degrees included in a dominant seventh, reaches E-flat and prepares for the entrance of the singable theme in 12/8. It is again the idea of an introductory curtain which Beethoven had accomplished by similar expedients after the last chords of the gaiété and which now serves as a transition after the scanned steps of a march tempo.

The thematic outline and character of this new second movement are not discernible in the small sketch in the pocket sketchbook; one must turn to the first two sheets of Autograph 11/2 to identify the piece’s origin. In its first appearance it is not yet in 2/2, but has the appearance of a Ländler in 3/8, in G major (Example 13). An upbeat motif is replicated over the span of an octave, in an ascending pattern of four bars culminating in the tonicization of the dominant; it switches to the treble clef, and the same motif descends, reproducing in mirror inversion the pattern of the preceding bars; four more bars follow, leading to the concluding cadence. We find the same idea again on the verso of folio 1, clearly recognizable in its basic lines, now, however, transposed into A-flat and binary meter (Figure 4). Beethoven modified some intervallic relationships and shortened the theme, framing it in the usual eight-bar grid, but the most notable variation, affecting the perception of the melody’s character, is the prolongation of the second note of the upbeat, which becomes a dotted eighth note. One can hardly discern in the sketch, even at a quick glance, the origin of what was to become the Scherzando theme of Op. 127 (Example 14). On the same folio, on st. 5–6, the “serioso” motif is written with the sixteenth-note pause instead of the dot, and with a thetic beginning directly on the quarter note, so as to obtain the formula (Example 15a).
Example 13: D-B, Mus. ms. autogr. Beethoven 11/2, f. 1r, st. 9

![Example 13](image)

Figure 4: D-B, Mus. ms. autogr. Beethoven 11/2, f. 1v, st. 9–11; the transcription on the right

![Figure 4](image)

Example 14: Beethoven, String Quartet, Op. 127, III, mm. 1–4

![Example 14](image)

As is evident, these are typical stylistic features pertaining to the march genre, countless examples of which could be cited in Beethoven’s works. What is of interest here is to stress the role of these annotations, hitherto identified in catalogs and specialist bibliography simply as
“sketches for the Scherzo, III.” To grasp their meaning, one must read the manuscript page striving to forget, at least for a moment, the image of the final version: at this stage of genesis, Beethoven was not thinking of an actual Scherzo, but of a short “character piece” in place of the gaieté, of a similar type to the fourth movement Alla Marcia of the Quartet Op. 132, which connects directly to the Finale through a recitativo-style cadenza. In the last telescoped draft, we had seen how the final part of an A-flat sketch was seamlessly connected to the Adagio, and it is in the Autograph 11/2 folios that we can find evidence of this procedure. After outlining the themes and architecture of the piece, Beethoven noted at least three possible transitions to the third movement: the first is in f. 2r, st. 5–7 and consists, as might be expected, of a suspension on the dominant (the theme of the march in common time is prolonged by a small cadential appendix which moves from D-flat to G3; the beginning of the Adagio in 12/8 follows on the next stave). The other possibilities for connection can be found in the interesting sketch of Example 15b. Beethoven realizes on the first staff a different version of the theme of the second movement, without dotted rhythms, in which the directions of the lines in the last two bars of each block are reversed (in mm. 3–4, the quarter notes descend to G2, while in mm. 7–8 they move in an ascending direction reaching the tonic A-flat3). At the close of the melodic arc is marked a double bar, of the not-quite-conclusive type we had encountered at the end of the gaieté: it will in fact follow in the same way, seamlessly, the now well-known incipit of the Adagio. However, the composer also considered another option (“oder 12/8”): he added the dot to the first four quarter notes derived from the march theme and reinterpreted them in the tempo (and expression) of the Adagio, thus softening the contrast between the two movements and exploiting the semantic potential of the reminiscences. Well suited to these passages is the Wagnerian term Verwandlungs musik, i.e. the “music of transformation,” bridging the different scenes of a single drama. In some

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Example 15a: D-B, Mus. ms. autogr. Beethoven 11/2, f. 1v, st. 5–6

Example 15b: D-B, Mus. ms. autogr. Beethoven 11/2, f. 2v, st. 1–4
cases, the genetic study shows that the connection between the parts becomes even more “important” than the parts themselves: the Adagio in 12/8 was no more than a preliminary sketch of two bars when Beethoven was working, in these first sheets of Autograph 11/2, on the striking transition that was to introduce it. To set the compositional idea in motion, it had been enough to imagine two subjects to be set against each other, not yet defined in the detail of form, but carrying a specific “sound-tint”: a march and the lyrical melody of a slow tempo.

**EPILOGUE**

With the plan of a six-movement quartet, the possibilities explored for structuring of Op. 127 come to an end. In its “canonical” four-movement guise, the final version will dispense with connecting sections, character pieces and short interludes, but it will not avoid the underlying problem that shines through from an analysis of the creative process: the “organicistic concern,” Beethoven’s intent to implement strategies of cohesion, based on similarities and contrasts. The connection between the parts will be more concise such as, for example, the introductory bar of the Scherzo that goes on to recover, in inversion, a three-note cell present in the Adagio.\(^{58}\) Organicity becomes something hermetic. The musical plot is concealed and unveiled within the material itself, and the search for meaning is proposed as a challenge to the participating listener. It is the development of a new poetics, inscribed in that hotbed of thought and experimentation that goes by the name of the late style. The sketches showed us its origin, hinting at the hidden dynamics of a creative process with romantic, “pre-Schumannian” traits: on the one hand, the composer fixed on paper the starting elements of the idea, which arrive as *objets trouvés* from his own baggage of experiences and memories (the classical forms, country dances, baroque tetrachords); on

\(^{58}\) Detail that did not escape Stravinsky’s ear (perhaps even more so to his eye): “the pizzicato figure at the beginning of the Scherzando movement derives from the preceding movement (at ms. 120, and, with arco articulation, ms. 95)”; see Igor Stravinsky, “A Realm of Truth,” *The New York Review*, September 26, 1968, also in Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Retrospectives and Conclusion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 134.
the other hand, he “reflected” on the given material, placing it in a symbolic-narrative frame that “poeticizes” it, mitigating its immediate recognizability. Hence the (only apparent) paradox of a very modern, timeless music in which the stylistic features of the past echo. The erasures and tortuous afterthoughts of the sketchbooks also indicate this: they are the signs of a tradition that is hard-won back, that can only be revived through the subjective and deforming filter of the artist.