

**BEETHOVEN,
THE MAN, THE MYTH,
THE MUSIC**

A FOUR-MOVEMENT MUSIC DRAMA

Music By
Ludwig van Beethoven

Libretto By
Cindi Sansone-Braff

BEETHOVEN THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE MUSIC

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BEETHOVEN THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE MUSIC

*“Our collective prayer for inner and outer peace.
From the heart, B. May it return to the heart.”*

Dona nobis pacem

*For My Husband, T.J. Clemente, whose loving support made the
BACCA Center production possible.*

&

*To my beautiful daughter, Shana Braff, for all her help on the
manuscript.*

Special thanks to Andrew Janosick for always being there.

Cindi Sansone-Braff, February 14, 2023

BEETHOVEN THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE MUSIC

BEETHOVEN, THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE MUSIC was produced by Tomorrow's Classics Theatre Company at the BACCA Center in Lindenhurst, Long Island, August 2017, using the original title *BEETHOVEN'S PROMETHEAN CONCERTO IN C MINOR WoO*, featuring the following cast:

CAST

(In order of appearance)

BEETHOVEN-----Michael Brinzer
KARL/TENOR-----James Lombardi
VOCALIST/CHOIR DIRECTOR-----D. Toni
SOPRANO-----Jessica Thompson
SOPRANO-----Christine Weber
SOPRANO/ALTO-----Amanda Peters
SOPRANO/ALTO-----Kerri Oman
TENOR-----Jeremy Kaplan
BASS-----Henry Hortsman
BASS-----Peter Muhr
EGYPTIAN DANCER/JOSEPHINE-----Cindi Sansone-Braff

Directed by Cindi Sansone-Braff

Music Direction by D. Toni

Music Scores and Soundtracks by Nicholas Yandell and Gary Hammond

Costumes by James Terrell and Cindi Sansone-Braff

Lighting by Russell Skadl, Sound by Markus DeJong

Cast of Characters

(In order of appearance.)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN 56 years old, gravely ill
KARL (BEETHOVEN'S NEPHEW) A man,
20
CHORUS A mixed choir
ISIS/BEETHOVEN'S MOTHER A woman, dancer
JOSEPHINE (IMMORTAL BELOVED) A woman in her 40s

TIME: August 6th, 1826

PLACE: The ruins of Rauhenstein. A hilltop in the Helenenthal Valley near Baden, Austria.

BEETHOVEN THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE MUSIC

SCENES ACT I

OVERTURE

FIRST MOVEMENT

Scene 1 ... Late afternoon, August 6, 1826.

Scene 2 ... A moment later.

Scene 3 ... A moment later

Scene 4 ... A moment later.

Scene 5 ... A moment later.

SECOND MOVEMENT

Scene 6 ... A moment later.

Scene 7 ... A moment later.

Scene 8 ... A moment later, sunset.

Scene 9 ... A moment later.

Scene 10 ... A moment later.

Scene 11 ... A moment later, dusk.

Scene 12 ... A moment later.

Scene 13 ... A moment later.

Scene 14 ... A moment later, nightfall.

THE END OF ACT I INTERMEZZO

ACT II

THIRD MOVEMENT

Scene 1 ... The middle of the night.

Scene 2 ... A moment later.

Scene 3 ... A moment later.

FOURTH MOVEMENT

Scene 4 ... A moment later, dawn.

CODA

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MUSIC

Note: The playwright has public-domain recorded music for this play. If you would like to use this music, you can request it from the publisher.

LEITMOTIFS

(Ten to twenty seconds of the music listed below serve as leitmotifs.)

BEETHOVEN ... *The Creatures of Prometheus*, op. 43

KARL ... “Turkish March” from the *Ruins of Athens*, op. 113

JOSEPHINE ... “An die Hoffnung,” op. 32

STEPHEN VON BREUNING ... Violin Concerto, D major, First Movement, Allegro ma non troppo, op. 61

BEETHOVEN’S BROTHERS ... Piano Concerto No. 5, Second Movement, Adagio, op. 73, “Emperor”

BEETHOVEN’S MOTHER ... Piano Sonata No. 14, C-sharp minor, No. 2, First Movement, Adagio sostenuto, op. 27, “Moonlight”

BEETHOVEN’S FATHER ... Piano Sonata No. 14, C-sharp minor, No. 2, Third Movement, Presto agitato, op. 27, “Moonlight”

ACT I

OVERTURE

The Creatures of Prometheus, op. 43

FIRST MOVEMENT

Scene 1

Symphony No. 6, F major, Second Movement, op. 68, *Pastoral*

Scene 2

Symphony No. 5, C minor, First Movement, op. 67

Scene 3

Extended Leitmotif for Karl

Scene 4

Leitmotif for Beethoven

Leitmotif for Karl

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“Alle die Herrscher darf ich grüssen, No. 3,” from *Der glorreiche Augenblick*, op. 136

Symphony No. 3, E-flat major, First Movement, Measure 65, op. 55,
Eroica

Scene 5

Symphony No. 5, C minor, Third Movement, Measure 71

String Quartet No. 3, C major, Fourth Movement, Allegro molto, op. 59,
“Rasumovsky”

SECOND MOVEMENT

Scene 6

Leitmotif for Beethoven

Leitmotif for Karl

Wellington's Victory (Battle Symphony), Part 1, “The Battle,” Allegro,
op. 91

Leitmotif for Josephine

Leonore No. 2, op. 72a

Leitmotif for Stephen von Breuning

Leitmotif for Karl

Leitmotif for Beethoven's Brothers

Leitmotif for Beethoven's Mother

Leitmotif for Josephine

Extended Leitmotif for Beethoven

Extended Leitmotif for Beethoven's Father

Scene 7

Unfinished Tenth Symphony

Scene 8

Kyrie from *Missa solemnis*, D major, op. 123

Scene 9

Leitmotif for Karl

Leitmotif for Josephine

Piano Concerto No. 4, G major, Second Movement, Andante con moto,
op. 58

Scene 10

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Extended Leitmotif for Karl

Scene 11

Piano Trio No. 1, D major, Largo assai ed espressivo, op. 70, “Ghost”

Scene 12

Credo from *Missa solemnis*

Scene 13

Symphony No. 2, D major, Fourth Movement, Allegro molto, op. 36

Leitmotif for Karl

Leitmotif for Josephine

Leitmotif for Karl

Piano Sonata No. 17, D minor, No. 2, Third Movement, Allegretto, op. 31, “Tempest”

Scene 14

Extended Leitmotif for Beethoven

String Quartet No. 4, C minor, Finale, Allegro, op. 18

Leitmotif for Josephine

Piano Sonata No. 17, D minor, No. 2, Second Movement, Adagio, op. 31, “Tempest”

THE END OF ACT I INTERMEZZO

Symphony No. 3, E-flat major, Second Movement, op. 55, *Eroica*

ACT II

THIRD MOVEMENT

Scene 1

Symphony No. 7, A major, Second Movement, op. 92

Scene 2

Fading away of the Second Movement of the Seventh Symphony

Leitmotif for Karl

Extended Leitmotif for Beethoven’s Mother

Extended Leitmotif for Beethoven’s Father

Extended Leitmotif for Beethoven’s Mother

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Leitmotif for Beethoven's Father

Extended Leitmotif for Beethoven's Brothers

Scene 3

"An die ferne Geliebe," op. 98

FOURTH MOVEMENT

Scene 4

Leitmotif for Karl

Piano Sonata No. 23, F minor, First Movement op. 57, "Appassionata"

Leitmotif for Karl

Leitmotif for Josephine

Piano Sonata No. 31, A-flat major, Fuga: Allegro ma non troppo, op. 110

Symphony No. 6, F major, Fourth Movement, Allegro, op. 68, *Pastoral*

String Quartet No. 13, B-flat major, Fifth Movement, Adagio molto espressivo, op. 130, "Cavatina"

Symphony No. 9, D minor, First Movement, Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso, op. 125, *Choral*

Leitmotif for Josephine

Leitmotif for Josephine

Leitmotif for Stephen von Breuning

Leitmotif for Karl

Agnus Dei from *Missa solemnis*

CODA

Leitmotif for Josephine

Piano Sonata No. 29, B-flat major, Third Movement, Adagio sostenuto, op. 106, "Hammerklavier"

BEETHOVEN

THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE MUSIC

A FOUR-MOVEMENT MUSIC DRAMA

ACT I

The scene takes place on a hilltop site known as the ruins of Rauhenstein Castle in the quiet Helenenthal Valley near Baden, Austria. Since antiquity, people have come to Baden to enjoy the comfort and healing properties of sulfuric thermal baths. Beethoven spent fifteen summers in this serene spa town. Moreover, this legendary band of forested hills in the Vienna Woods was a beloved spot where Beethoven came to seek solace and comfort in the beauty of nature. Amidst this scenic splendor, Beethoven was inspired to write his Pastoral Symphony and much of the Ninth Symphony and Missa solemnis.

Time: The action begins late afternoon on August 6, 1826, and continues through sundown, dusk, and darkness, until the dawn of a new day. Earlier this fateful morning, Beethoven's nephew, Karl (Beethoven was his legal guardian at the time), had climbed up to the ruins of Rauhenstein and tried to kill himself.

This play is a multidisciplinary piece combining music, narrative, poetry, dance, drama, puppetry, and sculpture and painting in the set design. It's meant to bring to life Wagner's philosophy of Gesamtkunstwerk. Ideally, the set would be capable of transforming itself to reflect Beethoven's ever-

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changing moods and visions. Thus, we will move back and forth from an idyllic vision of the world to a grotesque, surrealistic vision of hell on earth, reminiscent of “The Woods of the Suicides” in Dante’s Inferno. The lighting director could create some of these changing visions with the way light and shadows play on objects. Because the play takes place from daylight through sunset, from dusk through darkness to dawn, this moving from light through darkness and back to light will have a similar effect on Beethoven’s moods and visions. The idyllic set will represent a landscapist’s vision of the world along the lines of Lucas Cranach and Albrecht Altdorfer, who helped open the Austrians’ eyes to the beauty of their natural surroundings. The trees (high elms), shrubs, bushes, green foliage, and wildflowers used for the forest should be works of art – not realistic representations of them. The hell-on-earth vision would have grotesque black trees, shrubs, bushes, and foliage. The set should also have some ruins, including a portion of a castle circa 14th century. However, this could easily have been an ancient Greek or Roman ruin since the architecture was influenced by antiquity. The ruins also include attached archways with Roman columns, which are used for the Chorus to enter and exit through. Downstage, there are two ruins of marble statues that were replicas of some 4th-century BC bronze Greek sculptures. One statue depicts a man, and the other a woman. Their bodies are partially draped; their heads, faces, and torsos are still intact, but each is missing a limb. A section of the set serves as a memory corner. Some of the action takes place there. If the actor portraying Beethoven can play the piano, there will be a piano in this corner.

NOTE: Whether to use a live orchestra, recorded music, or perhaps some live and some recorded music will be determined by the resources of each theater. The setting described above is ideal, but it is possible to stage this production with a simple set. In this case, the lighting effects would mirror the changing

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moods of this piece. Throughout the play, the audience will hear the Recorded Voice of Beethoven. Because of the isolation that his deafness caused, Beethoven tended to have conversations with himself, and this back-and-forth dialogue represents that aspect of his being.

OVERTURE

*As the audience is filling the theater, the set is in Blackout, and the overture from *The Creatures of Prometheus*, op. 43, begins. When the overture finishes (about five minutes), the lights come up on the set.*

FIRST MOVEMENT

SCENE 1

Late afternoon, August 6, 1826, "Pastoral." Symphony No. 6, F major, Second Movement, Andante molto moto, "By the Brook," op. 68, Pastoral begins. The lighting mirrors the late afternoon summer sun. The set is in its idyllic form, reflecting the serene feeling of the music. The audience will drink in the beauty of Beethoven's music. The following quote from Beethoven is spoken with the music.

RECORDED VOICE. Almighty One, in the woods, I am blessed. Happy everyone in the woods. Every tree speaks through thee, O God! What glory in the woodland! On the heights is peace – Peace to serve him. *(When the music fades out, there should be some beautiful nature sounds like gently murmuring brooks, soft wind, rustling trees, and birds singing, yellowhammers, quails, nightingales, and cuckoos, since these are the birds that Beethoven claimed composed the Pastoral with him.)*

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SCENE 2

A moment later, “The Woods of the Suicides.” Suddenly the lighting changes as if a huge black cloud just crossed over the sun. There is a profound moment of silence. Then we hear the opening of Symphony No. 5, C minor, First Movement, Allegro con brio, op. 67. After the initial “da-da-da-dum,” “da-da-da-dum,” the music grows quieter, and we hear a horse-drawn carriage racing towards us. The hoofbeat rhythm is in the characteristic short, short, short, long rhythm of the Fifth Symphony. This section should have a dark, ominous feeling that fate has knocked – the wolf is at the door. It is a classic Beethovenian moment when life is about to catapult us – God knows where, and there’s nothing we can do to stop it. The horse-drawn carriage sound stops, as does the Fifth Symphony. Right before the audience’s eyes, the set transforms from the idyllic vision to the Dante’s Inferno set, with the grotesque black trees and foliage. The Harpies, flying puppets made to look like birds with human faces, descend upon the black trees, and as they feast upon the branches, the branches bleed. The human faces of the Harpies are copies of Beethoven’s life mask that Franz Klein made of him in 1812 with its characteristic scowl.

SCENE 3

A moment later, “Haunting Visions.” A screen or veil slowly descends. We hear the leitmotif for Karl, “The Turkish March,” from The Ruins of Athens, op. 113. The following scene enacted behind a screen, or a veil, represents what Beethoven imagined as he raced in the horse-drawn carriage on his way to the ruins. All we see is a silhouette of Karl’s suicide attempt. Karl is taller and thinner than his uncle and appears fashionably dressed circa 19th-century Vienna. We see only a shadow figure of Karl. He removes his top hat and puts it on one of the ruins. He begins

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marching like a soldier to his leitmotif. The music continues beyond the leitmotif for about 40 seconds. He has a pistol in his left hand. He continues his choreographed march. He aims the pistol at his left temple. He pulls the trigger, and the gun goes off. Holding the left side of his head, he stumbles offstage. The screen or veil disappears.

RECORDED VOICE. (*Offstage scream in the rhythm of “da-da-da-dum.”*) No, Karl, no! No!

SCENE 4

A moment Later, “Beethoven’s Opening Aria.” The set is still in the Dantesque, hell-on-earth version. We hear the 20-second introduction to the overture from The Creatures of Prometheus, op. 43. (Beethoven’s leitmotif.)

RECORDED VOICE. (*Once again, we hear Karl’s leitmotif. Beethoven screams over it with the “da-da-da-dum” rhythm.*) Why, Karl, why? Why?

BEETHOVEN. (*Beethoven is offstage. We hear the horse-drawn carriage door being slammed shut.*) No, don’t wait for me. I said, “Don’t wait!” Driver, are you deaf or just dumb? I said (*He delivers the following words with the “da-da-da-dum” rhythm.*), “No, no, no, no!!!” Damn you! What? When will I – what? Come down the mount? (*He begins laughing maniacally, a mixture of irony, pain, sarcasm, and disillusionment.*) When I am transfigured, of course! Drinking, you say? Have I been drinking? Yes, sir, I have been drinking. And I will continue to drink until I am (*He delivers the following words with the “da-da-da-dum” rhythm.*) drunk, drunk, drunk, drunk. To hell with my doctor’s orders! To hell with my stinking liver! To hell with my volcanic gut! May it spew my innards all over this hellhole like one of Napoleon’s infamous cannons. *Liberté, Égalité,*

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Fraternité. Viva Enlightenment – Emperor Napoleon! (For twenty seconds or so, “Alle die Herrscher darf ich grüssen, No. 3,” from Der glorreiche Augenblick, op. 136, plays. Beethoven wrote this for the Congress of Vienna in 1814 to celebrate Napoleon’s defeat.) Oh, how I’ve come to hate that wretched piece! What a fool I was – letting those pompous windbags prune and cut the text like it was a French garden. (BEETHOVEN enters. He is gravely ill. A little more than seven months from this day, all of Vienna would watch his funeral procession making its way through their streets. He is short and stocky with broad shoulders that his oversized head appears to rest on, almost neckless in appearance. He once had a dark complexion, but it has turned ruddy with time. It’s also pockmarked, and he has a cleft chin. He has a wild mane of shoulder-length grey, almost white hair, and he has a beard, unkempt, not as if he purposely grew it, but that it grew of its own accord like grey weeds sprouting here and there. He most definitely makes the appearance of the classic Byronic hero. He is dressed in a long, worn black topcoat, which almost reaches his ankles. It is several sizes too large for him, giving the impression of a Dracula cape, and the upturned collar only adds to the vampiric aura. He is wearing a black top hat, misshapen from having been sat on one too many times. To the undiscerning eye, he looks like a madman, a beggar, a vagabond. Still, as he speaks and opens up, we see his magnitude, charisma, energy, super-human gifts, and his indisputable genius despite his clumsiness. Beethoven begins addressing the offstage coachman, who we never see.) Excuse me? Coachman, you say you don’t understand me. That’s not new news. No one understands me! Now – go. You master of asses. You Charon! Take your twin nags and go to hell for all I care. Just leave me – alone. Pardon? You said you want me to go – where? I don’t hear well. Deaf as a dead man. Did you say you want me to go – home? Home? *(He laughs, but it sounds more like he is crying.)* I have no home. I am a nomad, a gentleman of the road, a vagabond. Home? At best, I run a

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boarding house for *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* alias – my servants. Home? I head an insane asylum for my good-for-nothing nephew who'd rather blow his brains out than deal with his senile uncle. Truth be told, the infamous Beethoven, the creator of so many immortal works, owns no home. He's not only deaf as a doormat and stubborn as a mule – he's damn near poor as a church mouse. And so, this so-called Master takes orders from "The Landlords." That is 'till I say, "The hell with you," storm out, and find myself quite homeless once again. (*Imitating the sound of a woman's voice.*) "Herr Beethoven, you are no musical genius to me, just another rotten tenant; that's what you are! You flood the place when you bathe and clatter on your untuned pianos like some crazed animal. And, to top it all off, you scribble on my shutters like an imbecile... why people come for miles just to see your chicken scratch. It's a disgrace; that's what it is!" Come again, sir? You want me to – what? Pay you? Ha! Money. It's always about money, isn't it? Well, how much do I owe you? Speak up, you braying ass. (*Pause.*) How much? I must be hearing things. (*Beethoven walks offstage with a notebook in hand. We hear him yelling.*) Here. Write the amount – here – in this notebook. Good Heavens! I heard you right the first time. You swindler. You swine. You snake in the grass. Why Judas sold Jesus for less than that. Take it. (*We hear coins falling and being thrown.*) Take all of it. What use have I for money – now – at the hour of my death? Let them bury me in that "Field of Blood" up there. If "Potter's Field" was good enough for Mozart, surely, it's good enough for me! (*He takes his cane and bangs it on the carriage four times in the short, short, short, long rhythm of the opening four notes of the Fifth Symphony, and the horses begin whinnying and bucking.*) Good riddance! (*We hear him throw his notebook at the horse-drawn carriage. Then he starts picking up rocks and throwing them, and we hear them smashing against the carriage. Symphony No. 3, E-flat major, First Movement, theme five, the transition passage, Measure 65, with its distinct "hoofbeat" rhythm plays as the carriage races*

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away.) Heathen! Take that and that and that! To hell with you!
To hell with the world! May the devil ride the whole lot of you!

RECORDED VOICE. Now, B., go fetch that damn notebook.
You've got sketches for your Tenth Symphony in there.

BEETHOVEN. (*Beethoven enters.*) Not to mention some highly treasonable things as well. Surely, the authorities will hang me by nightfall if they get a hold of it! (*A ringing, buzzing, roaring sound is heard. Beethoven screams at the top of his lungs.*) Stop! How is a man to think with all those bats and bees and bells besieging my brain? (*The ringing, buzzing, roaring sound stops.*)

RECORDED VOICE. Indeed, the next stop is the madhouse!

BEETHOVEN. Rest. I must rest. Yes, Dear God, your most humble servant needs rest. (*Beethoven removes his topcoat. He is wearing worn-out clothes from the 19th century – trousers, a jacket, a vest, and a white high-collar shirt with a cravat. There are holes in the elbows of his shirt. He takes a handkerchief from his pocket and wipes his sweating brow. A moment later, he begins coughing, then spitting blood into his handkerchief.*)

RECORDED VOICE. Why don't you draw some hieroglyphics, B? That always relaxes you. (*Beethoven opens his notebook and begins drawing for a moment.*) Imagine your beautiful statue of the goddess Isis bearing the inscription you love.

BEETHOVEN. "I am everything that is, that was, and that shall be. No mortal has lifted my veil."

SCENE 5

A moment later, "Hell on Earth." This scene should play like a fuga per canonem. The first voice we hear is French horns, blaring and barking like rabid dogs, from the Fifth Symphony, Third Movement, scherzo, "Allegro," Phrase 2b, measure 71, where the C minor key and the rhythms of the so-called fate

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motive have returned with all their dark, tragic force of despair. The second voice we hear is Beethoven's Recorded Voice, and so forth.

RECORDED VOICE. Oh, God, it's hot! I must be at the gates of hell proper itself. Why I do believe off in the distance, I hear the howling of Cerberus. *(He howls like a wild animal, and the Fifth Symphony abruptly stops.)* On the horizon, I see the dark realms of Pluto and the engraved portals forewarning: "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here." Ah, yes, Dante, you and I, brothers in exile, left to wander this earth all alone. O, Woe is me, all right. *(The String Quartet No. 3, C major, Fourth Movement, Allegro molto, op. 59, "Rasumovsky" begins. We hear the beauty of the music for a moment before it abruptly cuts off.)* Oh, what's the use? No one understood that piece either.

BEETHOVEN. Schuppanzigh, you fat pig! You double-ass! During rehearsals, even you cared nothing for the spirit that spoke to me! You only worried about your wretched fiddle! To hell with you! To hell with all musicians! Praise be to God; I cannot hear what those organ grinders cannot play! I hear the music here, in my heart, where it matters. As for the audience – a pox on the Viennese! They have no understanding of what true art is. Rossini and all the other Italian-inis are their new heroes. Bel canto! *(We hear Beethoven clear his throat and spit.)* My shit stinks less than that!

RECORDED VOICE. Why let it bother you, B.? The Austrians' taste knows from nothing but brown beer, sausages – **BEETHOVEN.** – and ice cream! *(The music abruptly stops.)*

SECOND MOVEMENT

SCENE 6

A moment later, the leitmotif for Beethoven plays.

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BEETHOVEN. I say it's high time the world knew – I make music for me ... for my maker ... for mankind to come. What weighs heavy on my heart must come out, and that – and that alone – is why I have written.

RECORDED VOICE. You are the “Generalissimus” of high art! Accursed be those troops who have deserted you and your noble cause! Who would even care if you starved to death up here and vultures feasted upon your remains? (*Leitmotif for Karl.*) Your nephew? No! He never wants to see you again. Never! Never! Never! Never!

BEETHOVEN. (*Beethoven begins singing the rhythms of “The Turkish March,” Karl’s leitmotif, while marching around like a soldier using his cane like a rifle.*) So, you want to be a soldier, Karl? But you say, “My uncle won’t let me.” Be my guest. (*He wipes his sweating brow with the blood-soaked handkerchief, and blood smears across his forehead.*) If you want your brains blown from here to Kingdom Come, do it for some noble cause – in the name of God or revolution! Not just to get even with me! (*We now hear Wellington’s Victory, Part 1, “The Battle,” Allegro. We listen to the battle sounds for about thirty seconds. Beethoven yells over the music.*) Napoleon fell from grace, and I arose from the dead – deified. “*Wellington’s Victory* is Beethoven’s greatest work!” My magnum opus? God forbid! *The Battle Symphony* – nothing but music for the moment. Crucify me for using my art for some greater good! Hang me for helping our wounded soldiers! Flog me for prostituting my music for the masses! God knows when the war-weary Viennese spirit beckoned, I answered their prayers. Yet I should have known – the masses are turncoats! Traitors! False brothers destined to betray you before the cock crows. (*The music stops, and he collapses down.*) Deserters and devils, the whole lot of them!

RECORDED VOICE. A wife. If you had only taken a wife, B., at least she would be on your side. Then you could be like Fidelio at the end of your opera singing the praises of conjugal love. *Leonore* and –

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BEETHOVEN. (*He screams out the two macho-sounding E-flat chords that introduce Symphony No. 3, E-flat major, op. 55, Eroica.*)

RECORDED VOICE. – *Eroica* – blessed be your twin creations! To think, you conceived your Third Symphony as a tribute to Napoleon. (*Leitmotif for Josephine.*) And your one and only opera – a gift to Josephine –

BEETHOVEN. (“*Beethoven’s Leonore Aria.*”) (*Leonore No. 2, op. 72a, the second overture to Fidelio begins.*) – newly widowed and big with child – her fourth! How swiftly she gave birth! How quickly Napoleon moved to abolish the old order! As for me, I struggled with *Leonore*, the brazen child of my spirit, who proved to be the most difficult of all to bring forth into this world. God, how I worked my fingers to the bone on that overture. And my reward – the curtain rose, and *Leonore No. 2* was accompanied by blood-curdling screams and the rat-a-tat-tat of the French army marching through Vienna. Libertarians, my ass! A pack of rabid dogs was more like it! My audiences ran for their lives – with Josephine leading the flock! It was hard to know what the countess feared more – Napoleon’s army or my love. How sorely mistaken I was about the two of them! And yet, with the whole world upside down, we went on playing – to empty houses – or worse – to a theater packed with French officers. Buffoons in uniforms! Ban this. Censor that. Change the name. *Leonore. Fidelio.* You jackasses! “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” Imagine those French pawns expecting me to create art while being led by the nose. Well, I let them have it! In no uncertain terms, I told those blockheads, “Beethoven’s nobody’s puppet! Guillotine me if you will but leave my opera alone!”

RECORDED VOICE. B., the gorbellied critics were, by far, your worst enemies!

BEETHOVEN. “Doesn’t Beethoven realize the woodwinds can’t play that?” “He needs to quicken the libretto.” “Revise the text.” “Revise it again.” “It’s too this!” “No, it’s too that!” Omit

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this. Abridge that. Add this. Revise the score – again and again, and again, and again!

RECORDED VOICE. An Italian-style opera –

BEETHOVEN. – written in German ...

RECORDED VOICE. – about a French subject ...

BEETHOVEN. – set in Spain ...

RECORDED VOICE. – ‘tis no wonder the whole bloody mess left you with nothing but diarrhea, double deafness, and debts! *(The overture to Leonore No. 2 fades into the ringing, buzzing, roaring sound in Beethoven’s ears. Beethoven covers his ears, and in a moment, it mercifully stops. The leitmotif for Stephen von Breuning begins, Violin Concerto in D major, First Movement, Allegro ma non troppo, op. 61, about three minutes and ten seconds into the piece when the music takes on a very macho military sound.)*

BEETHOVEN. Had Stephen not stepped in to revise the whole damned libretto, God knows what would have become of it. Stephen! That is who I need now. He’ll know what I, as a father, should do.

RECORDED VOICE. *Ab initio*, the von Breunings were dead set against you taking wholly to yourself, Karl. *(Karl’s leitmotif.)* Time and time again, they warned you, “The child needs his mother.”

BEETHOVEN. I genuinely believed I could be both mother and father to him! *(Leitmotif for his brothers, Piano Concerto No. 5, Second Movement, Adagio, op. 73, “Emperor,” about a minute and a half into the piece where the piano begins.)* God knows I had been that to his father. I regarded K. as my own child. I ignored all gossip and pettiness for the sake of that holy cause.

RECORDED VOICE. It might have turned out better if you had a wife to help you.

BEETHOVEN. Damn you! To be alone like this – was never my choice, nor was it ever my fault. People say, “He hates women. Why just look at what he did to Karl’s mother. Shame on him for dragging that poor woman in and out of court for five

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years! The nerve of him to think he had the right to take away her own child!” Hate women? Me? Never? I adore them. I worship in their temple. View them as great works of art ... Goddesses, earth mothers, nymphs, and Bacchantes. (*Leitmotif for his mother. This is the first theme, about twenty seconds of the Piano Sonata No. 14, C-sharp minor, No. 2, First Movement, Adagio sostenuto, op. 27, “Moonlight.”*) Oh, they will say, “He took his mother’s advice, who drummed into his head, ‘Never marry! You listen to me! Never marry! Never! Never! Never!’” God knows, had I been a noble v-o-n Beethoven and not a Belgium v-a-n Beethoven, I’d have bitten that bullet all right! Dear God in heaven, was she ever more than a chimera? A she-ghost haunting the very hollows of my heart. (*Josephine’s leitmotif plays. He screams at the top of his lungs in absolute agony.*) Josephine!

RECORDED VOICE. The whores in the brothel would miss you more than she ever did. But take heart, B. Surely, the police would miss you. Who would those treacherous dogs arrest as a vagrant if you stopped roaming their padlocked streets?

BEETHOVEN. And, dear, dear, Prince Metternich, our beloved despot. He would cry for me, as well!

RECORDED VOICE. In a heartbeat, that tyrant would have his Secret Police assassinate you –

BEETHOVEN. – if he thought he could get away with it.

RECORDED VOICE. (*Whispering.*) Herr Beethoven, one must remember not to speak too loudly –

BEETHOVEN. – or the police will give you lodging for the night.

RECORDED VOICE. Perhaps your fans would miss you?

BEETHOVEN. They have all forsaken me.

RECORDED VOICE. Your fellow musicians?

BEETHOVEN. They don’t even play my symphonies anymore. Too long. Too loud. Too this ... too that.

RECORDED VOICE. Why play your solo pieces when they can play their own watered-down little ditties?

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BEETHOVEN. (*The Creatures of Prometheus, op. 43, plays beyond the part that is Beethoven's leitmotif and continues for an additional 20 seconds. He conducts that piece of music for a moment.*) Oh, the gods, give me courage. Apollo, once upon a time, I honestly believed you'd made me one of the immortals. Wrong again. Even in this lifetime, no one cares for me anymore.

RECORDED VOICE. Why they mock and scorn you. (*Imitating a woman's voice.*) "Herr Beethoven is completely insane. We have often seen him walking around in public talking to himself!"

BEETHOVEN. The best kind of dialogue for a deaf man! (*He walks close to the audience.*) Communication with others becomes a dizzying game of "Pass the Damn Notebook." (*He extends his notebook towards an audience member.*) You write. I read. I respond. Repeat. You write. I read. I respond. Again, and again and again until I can't stand the crazy conversational carousel another second and scream at the top of my lungs to make it stop!

RECORDED VOICE. And so ... they call you a madman ... a raving maniac.

BEETHOVEN. (*Imitating a woman's voice.*) "Why Herr Beethoven is so crazed he even tells people he's the bastard son of the King of Prussia." You fools! (*The leitmotif for his father begins. This is the first theme of the Third Movement, Presto agitato, from the Piano Sonata No. 14, C-sharp minor, No. 2, op. 27, "Moonlight." It continues playing beyond the leitmotif as he rants.*) I made that up so they'd stop asking about my real father – the King of the Bacchanalia! (*Again, imitating a woman's voice.*) "And money. He's absolutely obsessed with it."

RECORDED VOICE. Wrong! One must have money to obsess about.

BEETHOVEN. Money! I have none! When inflation wasn't bleeding me dry, the currency changes put me in the poorhouse. Not to mention my nephew and his needs and the custody battle

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that nearly bankrupted me. And the comings and goings of my patrons – the princes. Royal pains in my ass, all of them! In a nutshell, I am left with virtually nothing. (*The Presto agitato abruptly ends.*)

SCENE 7

A moment later, “The Muse.” Suddenly a musical thought occurs to Beethoven, and a transformation occurs in his whole being so that he looks angelic, godlike, and larger-than-life. The set changes back to the idyllic one. He frantically begins searching through his jacket pockets. He takes a mangled double lorgnette from one pocket and then looks for a sharpened pencil and a scrap of paper. (The pencils he used were very thick.) He sifts through many crumpled pages, dropping this and that before finding the one he’s been looking for. While holding his lorgnette with his left hand, he writes some notes with his right hand. Then he begins humming several bars of his unfinished Tenth Symphony. He crumples that paper, puts it back in a pocket, then looks for another piece; then again scribbles some notes as he continues humming. He definitely planned on finishing this work, for he had stated his intention just eight days before his death. (In 1988, Barry Cooper first performed a reconstructed version of this symphony based on 350 bars of sketches. Universal Edition, London published this score, and various renditions can be heard on YouTube.) Beethoven continues frantically writing and humming. He begins chewing on his lead pencil.

RECORDED VOICE. How you dread the beginning of long works!

BEETHOVEN. Yes, and rightfully so! For whenever I endeavor to express my exalted emotions in music – I stop myself, convinced that no one born of flesh shall ever create anything

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worthy of the heavenly images above. *(He puts his writing away and lies on the ground looking up towards the heavens.)* Then I contemplate God's sky in wonder and feel my spirit rise to the constellations – towards that primal source from which all creations flow. Music must first come from above, mix alchemically with the human heart and soul, lest it remains nothing but notes, body without spirit – noise!

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