

theorists of rereading, likens the shared space of rereading thus: “You cannot reread a book from your youth without perceiving it as, among other things, a mirror. Wherever you look in that novel or poem or essay, you will find a little reflected face peering out at you—the face of your own youthful self, the original reader, the person you were when you first read the book.”⁴

The journey to the past and youthful experiences is one of the most common moves in the transformation from rereading to rewriting. Lesser’s mirror and the remembrance of things past that it makes possible may be only tangentially Lacanian and Proustian, but her evocation of the ways in which rereading takes us to our own pasts is shared by other rereaders. For some critics, the shared space of the literary experience becomes so intensely personal that it opens up entirely new texts altogether, entry into which, nonetheless, relies on a journey with the original author.

It is because the journey of rereading the chapters in *Cursed Questions* leads to such rich collections of new texts that the book opens up new contexts and the pleasure of experiencing them through music. Many of these contexts lie between and beyond the lines. Each reader may choose his own companion, turning a cursed question on its head, or batting it back to Taruskin: “So, who do you suppose might have written this?” For this reason, I introduced Robert Lachmann to my rereading, whose work as a towering figure in the history of ethnomusicology represents a sea change for understanding the relation between music and context, the most fundamental question in this book. Taruskin never ceases to ask for more rather than less of the social contexts and practices that transform music history into musicology. I expect to find Lachmann and the questions posed by his ethnomusicology the next time round, when I, eagerly, reread Taruskin. I have every reason to believe they will be there, for as he writes in his final sentences about the strings in the musicologist’s bow, “there cannot be too many” (p. 436).

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Beethoven 1806, by Mark Ferraguto. AMS Studies in Music. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. xxi, 245 pp.

In *Beethoven 1806*, Mark Ferraguto addresses a number of issues that confront Beethoven scholarship some 250 years after the composer’s birth: the ubiquitous narratives of struggle and triumph in Beethoven biography and criticism; the privileging of certain works, often considered “heroic” in character, in the shaping of Beethoven’s image in popular culture and critical assessments; the limitations of the musical score and musical analysis as sources

4. Wendy Lesser, *Nothing Remains the Same: Rereading and Remembering* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 4.

of historical insights; the relationship of life and work in artist biography; and the relationship of historical contexts to aesthetics in the musical work. In place of the master tropes of the “Beethoven myth” and the typically dualistic (e.g., “heroic” vs. “nonheroic”) categorization of the composer’s works, Ferraguto presents what he calls a “microhistory” (p. 3) of Beethoven’s activities over a limited period of time—approximately from spring 1806 through the early months of 1807—as a way to illuminate the particularity and historical contingency of his works and reinsert him as a historical actor into the social and cultural milieu of his world.

In chapter 1, Ferraguto outlines the case for 1806(–1807), a period that is not particularly well documented by correspondence or surviving sketches, as a meaningful subphase in Beethoven’s career. Disillusioned with opera after his frustrating experiences with the first and second versions of *Leonore* and in need of income, Beethoven returned to instrumental music in 1806 to produce an impressive number of major works (opus 58 to opus 62 inclusive) that he brought to publication as a group so as to reassert his prominence as a leading composer of instrumental works and spread his reputation internationally. Ferraguto posits a “stylistic turn” (p. 19) in 1806 away from the heroic stances of the works of 1803 to 1805, a turn that is particularly evident in the Fourth Piano Concerto, op. 58, Symphony no. 4, op. 60, and the Violin Concerto, op. 61, thanks to such features as reduced scoring with soloistic use of the timpani; quiet, harmonically distinctive or disorientating beginnings; and seemingly nonteleological passages that suspend the prevailing musical discourse. The extent to which Beethoven himself conceived opuses 58–62 as a group is debatable; as seen in other negotiations with publishers, the composer at times packaged together his most recent works in different genres to simplify and strengthen his bargaining position. Prior to offering opuses 58–62 as a group to publishers, Beethoven had attempted to bundle opus 58 and opus 59 with *Leonore* and *Christus am Ölberge*. Ferraguto himself notes that none of the traits of the “stylistic turn” is brand new to 1806; perhaps it might be better to understand such features not primarily as a turning away from the rhetoric of works like the *Eroica* Symphony and the piano sonatas opus 53 and opus 57 but rather as a return to and intensified exploration of approaches found in earlier works (e.g., lyrical passages in remote keys that seem to open a window on another world in the first movements of the Piano Sonata in E-flat Major op. 7 and the Second Piano Concerto; soloistic use of the timpani in the coda to the first movement of the Third Piano Concerto; and quiet, harmonically unusual openings of pieces in the piano sonatas opus 31, no. 2, and opus 31, no. 3).

Each of the subsequent chapters deals with a subset of works of 1806 to propose ways in which they respond to various stimuli in Beethoven’s musical environment. Chapter 2 focuses on Piano Concerto no. 4 and the Violin Concerto, works that seem to downplay overt technical display generally associated with concertos in favor of a quiet, calm expressivity. Ferraguto notes

that the subdued virtuosity of these works is often explained as a withdrawal from the outsized rhetoric of the “heroic” works that precede them, but his dissatisfaction with such a schematic notion of “aesthetic dualism”—the idea that Beethoven alternated between “heroic” and “nonheroic” utterances out of some inner need to explore expressive opposites—leads him to relate the lyric expressivity in the two concertos to contemporary discourse on virtuosity, particularly an 1802 essay by Johann Karl Friedrich Triest in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* that explains true virtuosity in terms of congruence between the disposition of the performer and the work being performed. To relate this idea to the compositions at hand, Ferraguto highlights passages in the first movements of both concertos that through unexpected shifts in register from the brilliant to the intensely lyrical or delicately expressive seemingly dramatize the performance of interiority, ostensibly Beethoven’s own. The discussion of contemporary aesthetics does raise a question: If contemporary aesthetic theory equated true virtuosity with expressivity, would audiences of Beethoven’s day have perceived such a profound break between the virtuosic and expressive registers as do later commentators and Ferraguto? Or are we inclined to hear the Fourth Piano Concerto and Violin Concerto—both extraordinarily difficult pieces to play—as less virtuosic than, for example, the Third or Fifth Piano Concerto because we have been taught to perceive Beethovenian virtuosity in terms of the heroic, triumphalist narrative about his output?

Dissatisfaction with notions of stylistic retreat or aesthetic dualism also underlies chapter 4, Ferraguto’s discussion of Symphony no. 4. Here Ferraguto asks why this piece, at precisely this point in Beethoven’s career, adopts such a classicizing habitus in terms of scoring, dimensions, form, and tone. Rather than interpret the work as a reaction to negative criticism of the *Eroica* Symphony, he sees the Fourth Symphony as an attempt to compete with Haydn, or to point a finer point on it, with “Haydn,” the immensely popular cultural icon celebrated in contemporary criticism who was in the process of monumentalization through Breitkopf & Härtel’s initiation of a complete works edition. On this view, Beethoven may have regarded emulation of Haydn’s approach to composition as a “successful commercial strategy” (p. 147). To buttress the notion of competition with Haydn, Ferraguto adduces a number of similarities between Symphony no. 4 and two of Haydn’s later symphonies, nos. 99 and 102, making a persuasive demonstration of structural affinities between the last movements of Beethoven’s Fourth and Haydn’s no. 102, also in B-flat major. He notes, however, that Beethoven did not copy Haydn but rather refracted features of the older master’s works through the “prism of Beethoven’s personal style” (ibid.).

Other chapters center on works from 1806–7 that, although more easily accommodated to traditional narratives of Beethoven’s stylistic development, nevertheless offer Ferraguto opportunities to investigate connections between Beethoven and his environment. The discussion of opus 59 in chapter 3,

previously published as an article in this *Journal*,¹ focuses on the Russian themes in the first and second quartets, in particular the striking clash of registers between the simplicity of the folk melodies and the learned, contrapuntal treatments to which they are subjected by the composer. Ferraguto challenges interpretations according to which Beethoven was in some way mocking or disparaging the Russian folksongs through willful misreading of their original affective qualities and by overpowering them with Germanic counterpoint. Instead, he offers two complementary interpretations of the interaction of counterpoint with Russian folksong. First, with respect to style, the learned treatment of folk melody may be heard as an ironic stance that draws attention to its own artifice; Ferraguto hears the conflict of stylistic registers in the two movements in question as “music about different *kinds* of music” (p. 94). Second, he interprets the combination of Russian folksong with European art music as a tribute to or symbol of the commissioner and dedicatee of opus 59, Count Andrey Razumovsky, the Russian ambassador to the Habsburg court whose cosmopolitan (or conflicted) cultural identity—a balancing act of maintaining Russian roots and embracing European culture—is musically expressed in the merger of folkloric material with cutting-edge Western compositional technique. The chapter concludes with a very plausible argument that Beethoven may have derived the principal melody of the slow movement of opus 59, no. 3—the only quartet in the group that does not quote an explicitly acknowledged *thème russe*—from a Russian folksong arrangement published in 1804 in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* and from the article’s description of Russian folk music practices.

Chapter 5 deals with another kind of strand in the network of people and phenomena that conditioned Beethoven’s creative work: the impact of contemporary pianos on his compositional approach. In particular, Ferraguto argues for the influence of the Erard grand piano that Beethoven acquired in 1803, an instrument with an English-style action, a range of five and a half octaves, and a soft pedal mechanism that permitted a gradual shift from *una corda* to *tutte le corde*. Some of his points about the role of this particular instrument as a “mediator” (in the sense used by the philosopher Bruno Latour, p. 150) for Beethoven’s approach to composition are inarguable. Beethoven clearly took strategic advantage of the extended upper range of the Erard in pieces like the “Appassionata” Sonata and the 32 Variations in C Minor, WoO 80, saving the highest note on his piano (c^4) for use at key structural moments or climaxes, or, more generally, exploring the expanded possibilities of registral differentiation as a structural and expressive feature (particularly throughout the “Appassionata” and the Fourth Piano Concerto). Likewise, the ability to shift gradually from *una corda* to *due corde* and finally to *tre corde* plays an important role in the conception of the slow

1. Mark Ferraguto, “Beethoven *à la moujik*: Russianness and Learned Style in the ‘Razumovsky’ String Quartets,” this *Journal* 67, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 77–124.

movement of the Fourth Piano Concerto. More debatable are Ferraguto's thoughts about the influence of the Erard (and English-school pianism conceived in terms of the English action) on textures and pianistic techniques in WoO 80, since certain features adduced as evidence of Anglo-Franco influence—legato octaves and canonic writing in octaves—already appear in a work of 1795, the Twelve Variations on the “Minuet *à la Viganò*,” WoO 68. And while the English-style piano may have encouraged thicker chords in the works written after 1803, Ferraguto admits that certain aspects of WoO 80 do not play to the advantages of the Erard—for instance, the fast repeated notes in the first three variations or the detailed articulation of the coda. The fact that by 1804 the composer was already expressing dissatisfaction with the action of the Erard and requesting Viennese makers to modify it should at the least give one pause about giving it too much credit for the pianistic approaches taken in works like the Piano Sonata in F Major op. 54, the “Appassionata” Sonata, or WoO 80.

Ferraguto turns in chapter 6 to Beethoven's overture to Heinrich von Collin's tragedy *Coriolan* for his concluding case study. He downplays the recurring questions as to whether Beethoven really was inspired by Collin or Shakespeare or the extent to which the piece programmatically enacts a particular version of the Coriolanus story, largely because he thinks that Beethoven himself was wary of a narrative or illustrative approach to composition that threatened to push music too far beyond its natural boundaries as an art form. Instead, he approaches the piece through two contexts, one biographical and the other cultural. First, as in the chapter on the Fourth Symphony, he sees the composition of the *Coriolan* Overture as a calculated move by Beethoven to further his career, inasmuch as the piece afforded him opportunities to strengthen his ties to Collin, an author with whom he planned to collaborate on an oratorio or operatic project and an important figure in the reorganization of the Viennese theaters under the Gesellschaft der Cavaliere in 1807, as well as to demonstrate to the authorities his continuing interest in composition for the theater. Second, to address questions of possible dramatic meaning in the overture, Ferraguto turns away from the musical text to the multiple ways in which the Coriolanus story circulated through Viennese society in the years leading up to the work's composition: ancient accounts by Plutarch and Suetonius; a recent German translation of René-Aubert Vertot's anti-republican history *Révolutions romaines*; Collin's play; and Heinrich Füger's painting of the scene between Coriolanus and his mother. In Ferraguto's view, Beethoven could have drawn on any or all of these sources as inspiration for his own musical interpretation of the story; so too could the members of his audiences relate the overture to their own prior experiences of the Coriolanus story.

In the conclusion of *Beethoven 1806*, Ferraguto reminds the reader that one of his aims throughout the study has been to “make unfamiliar the familiar” (p. 207), to show Beethoven in a different light, not as the idealistic

Tondichter who wrote for the ages, but as an actor in a specific milieu seeking to take advantage of various opportunities to further his career through moves that affected his particular choices about genre, register, and compositional technique. In some respects, what Ferraguto demonstrates is not all that unfamiliar, at least not to Beethoven scholars, as Beethoven's dependence on aristocratic patronage as well as his efforts to seek stable employment and to negotiate favorable terms for the publication of his work for an expanding public of music consumers are well-known elements of his career as a freelance musician in an era of significant social change. Like Mozart before him, Beethoven could be regarded as a "working stiff" intent on making a living and building a reputation.² Nor does Ferraguto really overturn the prevailing paradigms of Beethoven's stylistic development; if anything, by insisting on the nonheroic or nonvirtuosic "otherness" of opuses 58, 60, and 61, he upholds the "heroic"/"nonheroic" dualism that underlies traditional interpretations of pieces that do not fit the Beethoven image as it developed across the nineteenth century. Yet by elaborating various contexts for Beethoven's activities in 1806–7—the discourse about virtuosity, the cult of Haydn, the problem of the Europeanized Russian, changes in the technology and sound of the pianoforte, the circulation of the Coriolanus story in Viennese culture—Ferraguto's work adds valuable nuance to our thinking about the composer, offering a compelling demonstration of the rewards of putting individual works into dialogue with the multifarious strands of the cultural and societal webs into which they are woven.

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Composing Community in Late Medieval Music: Self-Reference, Pedagogy, and Practice, by Jane D. Hatter. Music in Context. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019. xvii, 281 pp.

Self-reference occurs in a number of pieces written by well-known composers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. We normally associate this with textual references in works that mention musicians by name, such as laments, or musical prayers. Jane Hatter's *Composing Community in Late Medieval Music* explores many of these pieces, as well as a number of others that highlight the act of composing itself. Through analyzing self-referential works in conjunction with their social functions, Hatter uncovers how pieces alluding to composers and their trade were used to construct a sense of community and to promote the idea of the professional composer among several generations of

2. Neal Zaslaw, "Mozart as a Working Stiff," in *On Mozart*, ed. James M. Morris (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 102–12.