Rehearsing the Social: Beethoven's Late Quartets in Paris, 1825–1829

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Histories of Five Quartets

For two and a half years after the first performance of the Ninth Symphony in 1824, Beethoven occupied himself almost exclusively with composing five new string quartets. Although they were all completed between early 1825 and November 1826, most appeared in print only in the months after the composer's death in 1827.[1] This lapse between completion and publication (up to two years in the case of the second quartet, Op. 132) was hardly the symptom of a hesitant creative act on Beethoven's part. Rather, the delays tell a story about the complex network of people and interests within which these pieces were first conceived, performed, and published. Retracing Beethoven's own circumstances and aesthetic priorities offers only a partial perspective on the late quartets; the expectations and agendas of the works' early performers, publishers, and listeners are equally significant. Indeed, while Beethoven oversaw some rehearsals (for although deaf, he could look at the players' bows to check tempo fluctuations),[2] the performers involved in the premieres of these pieces were essential in clarifying phrasing or articulation and correcting the publishers' proofs.[3] Publishers, for their part, took pride in advertising

[1] Only Op. 127 was published before the composer's death, by Schott, simultaneously in Paris and Mainz in March 1826.

[2] See the account of the violinist Joseph Boehm, quoted in Robert Winter, "Performing the Beethoven Quartets in Their First Century," in *The Beethoven Quartet Companion*, ed. Robert Winter and Robert L. Martin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 29–57, at 40.

[3] During 1826 the violinist Karl Holz proofed several of Artaria's offprints for Op. 130, which, according to his entries in Beethoven's conversation books, even at advanced stages contained many significant mistakes. Similar tasks were carried out by other

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their editions of Beethoven's last works as including the touch-ups of these performers; some even claimed for themselves an active role in making Beethoven write the quartets in the first place.[4] The agencies of these different historical actors are so interconnected that it can appear artificial to separate them neatly, policing what was (and what was not) the product of Beethoven's creativity. Musicologists have long tasked themselves with assessing individuals according to typologies or degrees of control over the final shape of a piece. A telling case is the scholarly debate around which finale of Op. 130 should be preferred: the original labyrinthine *Grande fugue*, or the more accessible movement Beethoven composed to replace it, much to his publisher's relief.[5] In searching for an ultimate truth—usually the composer's truth—scholars have created separate, specialized histories of the late quartets: one outlining the phases of Beethoven's creative process, another focusing on the quartets' first performances across Europe, still another documenting their critical reception, and so forth. Each boasts its own, distinct cast of professionals (composers, performers, publishers, and critics), explored in the present by similarly specialized musicologists (Beethoven scholars, scholars of music criticism, publishing, or nineteenth-century quartet concerts, etc.).

In the case of Beethoven's late quartets, the proliferation of rich branches of historiography owes much to the unusually ample documentation of the processes leading to the first performances and editions, as well as the debates that ensued. On one hand, the composition of these string quartets coincided with Beethoven's near-total deafness and heavy reliance on written communication. For this reason, his conversation books bear copious references to the late quartets: from detailed discussions about who should prepare clean copies (even where and when the copying should take place), to the scheduling of rehearsals and negotiations with publishers to maximize publicity and earnings.[6] On the other hand, the intricacies and conceptual novelties of Beethoven's late music

members of the ensemble led by Ignaz Schuppanzigh, such as the cellist Joseph Linke and the second violist Ferdinand Piringer; see John M. Gingerich, "Ignaz Schuppanzigh and Beethoven's Late Quartets," *Musical Quarterly* 93 (2010): 450–513.

[4] See Maurice Schlesinger, "Réponse à MM. Schott fils," *Revue musicale* 5 (1829): 382–83, at 383. Aside from Schlesinger's more direct involvement in commissioning Op. 135, the general grounds of Schlesinger's claim to have solicited all these quartets have been questioned. Emil Platen, "Beethovens letzte Streichquartette und der Verleger Maurice Schlesinger," *Bonner Beethoven-Studien* 10 (2012): 69–110, at 96–97.

[5] For a recent outline of the debate, see Barry Cooper, "Two—or Two Dozen—Finales for Beethoven's Quartet Opus 130," *Ad Parnassum* 8 (2010): 7–52. In the first edition the movement later published separately as Op. 133 is titled "Grande fugue," in French, an eloquent trace of the international taste and fashions characterizing string quartet culture in these decades. The German title in common use today, "Große Fuge," was introduced only in 1863–64 by Breitkopf und Härtel possibly as part of a broader effort to offer an image of the composer in keeping with the German national project.

[6] See Gingerich, "Ignaz Schuppanzigh and Beethoven's Late Quartets."

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sparked controversy, prompting the European musical intelligentsia to write in support of or against it.[7] Hailed by all sides as unconventional and compositionally exploratory, the late quartets were discussed not only in terms of Beethoven's own artistic trajectory but also in connection to broader questions about what aims music should have. Far from fostering the accessible, engaging communication that was held as a hallmark of the musical eighteenth century,[8] this music was perceived as a language for the initiated. It required effort.[9] The changing contexts of listening, ever more associated with decoding the peculiarities of a given musical idiom, can be observed in the proliferation of music journals and miniature scores during the central decades of the nineteenth century.[10] Whether in the form of literary portrayals, potted histories of music, or descriptive analyses of scores, musical literacy from the 1830s onward was widely promoted to support listening. Katharine Ellis has detected such impulses in the language of criticism around Beethoven, highlighting how commentators felt the need to educate the public in the enigmas of his music.[11] Both history and analysis were called upon to justify these quartets' difficulties.

Early commentaries on Beethoven's late quartets also discussed this music's intricacies in terms of new challenges for the players. A telling account is that of Adolph Bernhard Marx in 1828. Although the text is a review of the edition of Opp. 132 and 135 (newly available in score format), it turns almost immediately to advise performers on how to manage their relationships within the ensemble:

> Beethoven's latest quartets rise far above . . . all other compositions in this genre; as of yet, they very rarely find performers who are fully prepared [to play them]. . . . A first examination of the scores shows in all four voices such a free, quite independent, almost always self-sufficient and in itself beautiful conduct, as has not been prevalent in any composer of instrumental music since Sebastian Bach. They are no

[7] In the Parisian arena, for instance, François-Joseph Fétis criticized the late works for their aridity, preferring Beethoven's middle period as a model of "juste milieu" between linguistic exploration and conventional forms; see Katharine Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France: La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris, 1834–80* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 101–26.

[8] See, for instance, Kofi Agawu and Danuta Mirka, eds., *Communication in Eighteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Mary Hunter and Richard Will, eds., *Engaging Haydn: Culture, Context, and Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[9] See Mark Evan Bonds, "Rhetoric versus Truth: Listening to Haydn in the Age of Beethoven," in *Haydn and the Performance of Rhetoric*, ed. Tom Beghin and Sander M. Goldberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 109–28, at 127–28.

[10] See Leon Botstein, "Listening through Reading: Musical Literacy and the Concert Audience," *19th-Century Music* 16 (1992): 129–45.

[11] Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France*, 101.

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longer four jolly brothers-in-art who make music for their own and our delight; they are four profoundly creative spirits, who soar in glorious freedom and wonderful sympathy in a fourfold brotherly embrace.

If the performers do not form a union of noble, equal, free, [and] fraternized spirits, then no proper manifestation of the work of art is conceivable, nor is the full satisfaction of the players to be hoped for. It does not suffice for each player to become a technical master of his part and to be able to play it with the required sound, strength, delicacy, and lightness; a more profound sensibility is necessary to grasp it with deepest feeling in the innerness of its soul, more profoundly than its external circumstances might suggest; true artistic knowledge is necessary, and for the best trained and most gifted [performers] it takes long practice until one voice follows another freely and flexibly, seeming to give up none of its own content, as it makes every effort not to disturb the free progress of the others. With better artistic education, the younger generation will have it easier in the conditions of this kind of playing, just as our contemporaries no longer find those of Haydn's quartets difficult. He who now turns to the new Beethoven's [quartets] with the greatest diligence, effort, and time shall know in advance [and] be repaid by the conviction that he joins the progress of the art as one of the first, whom all artists and the whole public [will eventually] have to follow.[12]

Marx highlights a key tension between "freedom" and "sympathy." The rather independent conduct (freedom) in each part calls for an intensified communion (sympathy) among the performers. They can no longer merely master the required technique and lend refined nuance to their own parts. The announced "freedom" from more typical quartet textures requires a new kind of practice—an ensemble rehearsal—for performers to "fraternize" (to grasp each other's parts and coordinate each other's moves) before they can render in performance this constantly "free and flexible" interplay.

Mary Hunter and Nancy November have traced this new approach to performance in a thread of early nineteenth-century accounts of string quartet performances.[13] Commentators often celebrated the genre's recent elevation from favoring a solo part and harmonic fillers

[12] M. [Adolph Bernhard Marx], "Quatuor für zwei Violinen, Viola und Violoncell von Beethoven. [Opp. 132 and 135.] Partitur. Schlesinger in Berlin," *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 5 (1828): 467–68. Unless otherwise specified, translations are my own.

[13] See Mary Hunter, "'The Most Interesting Genre of Music': Performance, Sociability and Meaning in the Classical String Quartet, 1800–1830," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 9 (2012): 53–74; Nancy November, *Beethoven's Theatrical Quartets: Opp. 59, 74 and 95* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 8–49; and November, "The String Quartet in Early Nineteenth-Century Performance and Criticism," in *Nineteenth-Century Music Criticism*, ed. Teresa Cascudo (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 255–67.

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(a disposition identified with terms such as "galant" or "brillant") to four independent parts. In the words of Johann Conrad Wilhelm Petiscus, players now had to act in a "fourfold union," mindful of the ever-shifting relationship between their own part and the whole.[14] To explain this attitude Petiscus and Marx, among others, resorted to metaphors of worthy social interaction (such as "fraternize" and "unite everyone together as friends"), qualifying what in this perspective made a "true" or "good" quartet.[15] A goodwill "not to impose oneself too strongly" but to "[mediate] between individual and collective consciousness" became the hallmark of early nineteenth-century discourse on the genre.[16] The continuous slippage between the features of the four voices and model behaviors for the players creates the impression of a genre *about* social relations. The strong sense of reciprocity enacted by four instruments of the same family exchanging ideas and roles was often equated to the ideal relationship between the self and others, to an ideal of how individuals are best behaved in modern society: preserving their individuality while being receptive to difference. W. Dean Sutcliffe has stressed how this "aesthetic of sociability" permeated most genres in this period (for instance, in the fabric of musical syntax or the use of quick shifts of musical topics to engage the audience).[17] But more so than in other genres, the social qualities of a string quartet were commented upon with reference to the interactions among the performers.

Reporting on the progress of the string quartet genre in the early nineteenth century also served nationalist agendas. Writers such as Petiscus presented their ideal of the quartet—where individuals meshed in an ideal social body—as a German invention that conquered widely.[18] November has offered a nuanced analysis of this rhetoric, warning

[14] P. [Johann Conrad Wilhelm Petiscus], "Ueber Quartettmusik," *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 12 (1810): cols. 513–23. The concept of a fourfold union is identified by Petiscus as the essence of the quartet, "in which the unity of the whole and the independence of each of the four voices set mutual limits on each other. Each instrument shows its individuality when, and insofar as, it performs the principal part—in melodies or passage work; in these places it is allowed to exert the art and rights of a soloist, and to stand out above the other parts with a stronger tone. All the subtleties of solo players are permissible here (not their ornamentation); yet everything that does not appeal to the whole is forbidden" (520).

[15] Petiscus, "Ueber Quartettmusik," col. 514.

[16] W. Dean Sutcliffe, "Before the Joke: Texture and Sociability in the Largo of Haydn's Op. 33, No. 2," *Journal of Musicological Research* 28 (2009): 92–118, at 95. Sutcliffe's definitions concern music from the 1780s, but they resonate strongly with the terms chosen by the likes of Petiscus and Marx in the early nineteenth century to discuss the progress of the string quartet genre.

[17] See W. Dean Sutcliffe, "The Shapes of Sociability in the Instrumental Music of the Later Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 138 (2013): 1–45; and Sutcliffe, "Topics in Chamber Music," in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 118–40.

[18] Hunter, "Most Interesting Genre of Music," 56.

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against deriving from it any practical distinction between national quartet traditions. In the decades after 1800, November argues, most compositions in this genre blended all types of textures, from "brillant" and "galant" to more densely conceived ones, much in line with what Leonard Ratner noted as chamber music's proclivity in this period for combining a rich variety of topics and textures within the span of a single movement: a microcosm opening up countless musical and social worlds.[19] In contrast, stereotypes of superior Germanic socialities have proven harder to dispel with regard to the players' attitudes in performance. A case in point is the commentary on the Parisian violinist Pierre Baillot. From 1814 to 1840 Baillot led an acclaimed series of quartet concerts during the winter months, which were dedicated almost entirely to the works of Boccherini, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. Although Beethoven's late quartets were first heard in Paris at these concerts (Baillot's ensemble played the slow movement of Op. 135 in 1828 and Op. 131 in 1829), in 1830 a reporter from Berlin did not hesitate to belittle Baillot's initiative in comparison to a new Parisian series led by the German-born Anton and Max Bohrer, both formerly employed at the Berlin royal orchestra:

> Baillot has, indeed, held soirées in a similar fashion last year; but he sought to shine alone in these [concerts] and let the first violin prevail everywhere in such a way that everything else was repressed. [In contrast], this time each [player] has his share, and everyone strives to bring out the ensemble in all its perfection. In this past soirée, [the quartet led by the Bohrer brothers] has performed [Beethoven's] last quartet [Op. 135].[20]

Given the nationalist overtones of the discourse around the string quartet as a democratic ideal, it is unsurprising that a review from Berlin of two household names of that concert scene would depict Baillot as stuck at an earlier stage of history: unwilling to engage in the flexible give-and-take of roles recommended by Petiscus (letting go, at times, the attitude of a soloist[21]) or to practice (in Marx's words "to fraternize") with the other players to coordinate such shifts.[22] Both Baillot and the Bohrer brothers often concluded their quartet soirées with virtuoso pieces that they

[19] November, *Beethoven's Theatrical Quartets*, 18. See also Leonard Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980), 142. Ratner's image of chamber music as an ideal "clearinghouse for texture and topic" is developed in Sutcliffe, "Topics in Chamber Music," 121.

[20] "Berichte," *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 7 (1830): 135.

[21] See note 14.

[22] It is worth noting that the German verb "verbrüdern" used by Marx has no direct correspondence in English. We have the adjective "brotherly" but not a verb for it (something along the lines of "act in a brotherly way").

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themselves had composed (an air with brillant variations in the case of Baillot, a duo concertante for the Bohrers).[23] Yet the anonymous Berlin reporter, writing in the same journal as Marx (its editor), takes only Baillot to task. His solo number, in which the other players provided only an accompaniment, is taken to characterize the group's attitude throughout the concert. The alleged egotism of a French violinist is invoked to explain how not to handle Beethoven's late quartets.

Scholarly literature has told and retold the story of Baillot and his soloistic attitude as causing the failure of the first Parisian performances of Beethoven's late quartets. This has been reinforced by Joël-Marie Fauquet's (probably unfounded) claim that Wilhelm von Lenz, in attendance at the 1829 premiere of Op. 131, saw Baillot playing standing while the other three players sat.[24] Although acknowledging Fauquet's claim as dubious, Edward Klorman aligns it with other sources to portray Baillot as a staunch proponent of "a Franco-Italian focus on the melody (and therefore the first violin) . . . , probably a consequence of the elevated role of bravura and operatic traditions in those countries." Klorman even concludes by coining a motto Baillot never pronounced, "le quatuor, c'est moi," to embolden the contrast between characterizations of German and French attitudes regarding the interaction among players in these decades.[25] From this perspective, Baillot's encounter with the late

[23] In the soirée of March 24, 1829, when Beethoven's Op. 131 was premiered, Baillot concluded the program with an "Air de Handel, variée pour le Violon par Baillot." Pierre Baillot, *Programmes de toutes mes séances de quatuors et quintettes, depuis l'origine*, 15e année, 112e séance; manuscript available online in *Bru Zane Mediabase: Ressources numériques autour de la musique romantique française*, http://www.bruzanemediabase.com/Fonds-d-archives/Fonds-Baillot. The Bohrer brothers, meanwhile, concluded the soirée at which they played Beethoven's Op. 135 with a "Duo sur un air français et boléro par A. et M. Bohrer." Joël-Marie Fauquet, *Les sociétés de musique de chambre à Paris de la Restauration à 1870* (Paris: Aux amateurs de livres, 1986), 117–18.

[24] Fauquet, *Les sociétés de musique de chambre*, 48. Fauquet does not specify his source, but he may have misinterpreted a passage from Lenz's 1872 colorful retelling of his piano lessons with Liszt in the 1820s. In discussing the first four measures of the Andante of Weber's Sonata No. 2 in A Flat, Lenz quotes Liszt saying that the left-hand accompaniment (here in sixteenth notes "sitting" high in the texture) should be rendered like Baillot's ensemble would, i.e., probably giving relevance to all parts and not just the melody. ("Diese Exposition ist zu machen, wie *Baillot* Quartett spielt, die begleitenden Stimmen sitzen in den abgehobenen Sechzehntheilen, aber Baillots Stimmen sind sehr gut, Sie [talking to Lenz] dürfen es nicht schlechter machen! Sie haben eine *gute* Hand, Sie *können* es lernen; passen Sie auf, es ist nicht leicht . . . ") Wilhelm von Lenz, *Die grossen Pianoforte-Virtuosen unserer Zeit aus persönlicher Bekanntschaft: Liszt, Chopin, Tausig, Henselt* (Berlin: Behr, 1872), 14. The image of the standing Baillot is discussed in direct contrast with the workings of Beethoven's late quartets in Markella Vandoros, "Pierre Baillot (1771–1842): Institutions, Values and Identity" (PhD diss., King's College London, 2015), 60.

[25] Edward Klorman, *Mozart's Music of Friends: Social Interplay in the Chamber Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 48–52, 71. That Klorman glosses his own argument with this imagined motto is problematic; it directly contradicts the terms used by reviewers of Baillot's quartet soirées to praise the violinist's versatility in impersonating different composers or styles. In the words of François Fayolle, Baillot "dépouille son moi"

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Beethoven quartets was an unavoidable cultural clash; he could not play them properly because they did not fit this allegedly French, first-violin-centric conception of the genre. Accounts of the quartets' Viennese and Parisian premieres, however, hardly tell the story of a rift between national traditions.[26] Baillot's student Eugène Sauzay, who attended the premiere of Op. 131 in 1829 (and who would join the ensemble in 1832 as second violin or viola player), recalled how the unusual conduct of the four parts had challenged Baillot, who was used to the clearer interaction "consecrated" in quartets by Haydn, Mozart, and earlier ones by Beethoven. This is the tradition against which Beethoven's late quartets are contrasted, not one of "French" showmanship.[27] Moreover, all too similar debacles played out at the Viennese premieres of the late quartets, where the performers likewise blamed unexpected difficulties in ensemble coordination.[28] Like their Parisian colleagues, the Viennese players—some of them with decades of experience working with Beethoven—were caught unprepared by the degree of "fraternizing" these quartets seemed to require.

Since the impulse to tell the story of Beethoven's late quartets through binary oppositions (German vs. French, worthy sociability vs. showmanship, etc.) holds fewer attractions in today's critical climate, I reconsider the quartets' Parisian debut from a different perspective. Both Beethoven and the publisher Maurice Schlesinger had to deal with the challenges that this music posed to performers well before it got in the performers' hands. In what follows, then, I weave together the interests or anxieties of Beethoven and Schlesinger in marketing the quartets with those of Baillot's ensemble in playing them. I reassess what was

(strips away his ego) to become, in turn, Haydn, Boccherini, Mozart, and Beethoven. François Fayolle, *Paganini et Bériot, ou, Avis aux jeunes artistes qui se destinent à l'enseignement du violon* (Paris: Legouest, 1831), 41.

[26] For a broader reconsideration of Dalhausian-like divides in the early decades of the nineteenth century, see Nicholas Mathew and Benjamin Walton, eds., *The Invention of Beethoven and Rossini: Historiography, Analysis, Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[27] See Fauquet, *Les sociétés de musique de chambre*, 44, 248, 271–72; and Brigitte François-Sappey, "La vie musicale à Paris à travers les *Mémoires* d'Eugène Sauzay (1809–1901)," *Revue de musicologie* 60 (1974): 159–210, at 195. Discussing the premieres of Beethoven's late quartets, Sauzay depicts Baillot as "no more made for equality and fraternity [among the parts/players] than Napoleon was in 1814 for the additional act [i.e., the hundred days]" (195). Yet this statement needs to be read in connection with Sauzay's fashioning himself in his memoirs (written much later on, in 1889–91) as part of a progressive generation of revolutionaries "oblivious of Mozart and Haydn," who "dreamt only of Beethoven's Ninth and the late quartets" (175).

[28] After the unsuccessful premiere of Op. 127, Schuppanzigh wrote in Beethoven's conversation book: "I would be lying if I said the passage-work is too difficult for me, the ensemble is difficult." Karl-Heinz Köhler, Grita Herre, et al., eds., *Ludwig van Beethovens Konversationshefte* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1968–81), 7:201. See also Gingerich, "Ignaz Schuppanzigh and Beethoven's Late Quartets," 468–77.

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difficult about this music in a history of performance before and during rehearsals. The set of parts from which Baillot and his affiliates played is still preserved and bears abundant traces of their first encounter with the late quartets: a wealth of handwritten annotations that the players left throughout the set. Indeed, it is evident that, with the exception of the *Grande fugue*, the ensemble worked their way through all the Beethoven late quartets, not just the two presented at their concert series.[29] What is more, the annotated parts provide evidence of the players' efforts to devise their interactions and figure out, as they rehearsed, the shifting relationship between their parts. Their annotations, in short, offer glimpses of an approach to this music different from the approach musicologists have long associated with Baillot's ensemble. Yet rather than considering the musicians within their specialism (say, how Baillot might have played the violin[30]), I am interested in gathering—in Bruno Latour's terms, "reassembling"—individuals who, like Baillot, handled the late quartets between 1825 and 1829 and did things *with* them. Seeing these quartets as the "matter of concern" for a variety of historical actors casts them as complex, active assemblages, existing in a shifting network of relationships: among producers, between producers and the public, and even among the four performers of Baillot's ensemble.[31] I want to attend to this mediating and avoid sorting people into separate categories (production, publicity, performance, reception, etc.). I see an opportunity to write a history of hands in which the composer is not granted a more defining role than other agents in the network. I propose to navigate the traffic among these parties as a means to disrupt familiar binaries and test new routes for exploring early nineteenth-century string quartet culture.

Beethoven, Schlesinger, Baillot

The Parisian chapter of the story of Beethoven's late quartets is no mere reception history, cut off from Beethoven's making. Rather than slowly crossing the border as reprints of original Viennese or German editions,

[29] See Fauquet, *Les sociétés de musique de chambre*, 53–54.

[30] Exploring and comparing performers' annotations in search of patterns (in fingerings, articulation, or other technical tools) has been the impulse driving the performance-led research of scholars such as Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth, aiming to decode the performance style of specific nineteenth-century performers, their notating habits, or expressive grammar. See, for instance, Wadsworth, "'Precisely Marked in the Tradition of the Composer': The Performing Editions of Friedrich Grützmacher" (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2017).

[31] Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2004): 225–48; and Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

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the publication of Op. 132 and Op. 135 was first conceived and implemented in Paris. The other late quartets were published in Paris simultaneously or just months apart from the editions issued in Mainz (Op. 127 and Op. 131) and Vienna (Opp. 130/133).[32] The Parisian editions were realized mostly on the initiative of Beethoven and the publisher Maurice Schlesinger, although not without complications, as the composer and the publisher had at times competing interests.

Comparing evidence from Beethoven's conversation books with that of the Viennese premieres of the late quartets, John M. Gingerich has shown how intently the composer and his associates worked to make these pieces the best business possible. Famously, both Karl Holz (Beethoven's secretary and second violinist in some of the premieres) and Beethoven's relatives suggested that Op. 130 was long enough to make—and be sold as—two quartets, which is partly what happened when the *Grande fugue* was published separately as Op. 133 after being replaced by a shorter finale.[33] Gingerich also stresses how Beethoven managed, in effect, to turn the difficulty of these works to his advantage. After the messy premiere of Op. 127 in Ignaz Schuppanzigh's series, Beethoven's decision to hand over the quartet to not one but two of Schuppanzigh's rivals (Joseph Böhm and Joseph Mayseder) fomented debates and bitter comparisons. Vienna watched enthralled, and the public took sides as three of its finest first violinists publicly competed in handling Beethoven's intricacies.[34] Beethoven was well aware of the publicity such scrambles and repeated performances provided. As the public's curiosity rose, he asked the publisher Schott to delay the publication of Op. 127 (the first of the late quartets), most likely to keep anticipation high, and resolved to charge a substantially higher price for the following four quartets.[35] Just as he profited from the competing interests and reputations of prominent performers, Beethoven sought to secure the most profitable deals by offering the quartets simultaneously to different publishers.[36] In negotiating, he would leverage the active interest of other parties to put pressure on his interlocutors. This rhetoric at times seems intended to set publishers against one another, which usually worked in Beethoven's favor. Inciting competition and keeping these agents from reaching deals among themselves safeguarded the

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[32] See Ludwig van Beethoven, *Streichquartette III*, critical edition and commentary by Emil Platen and Rainer Cadenbach (München: Henle, 2015), 12–15.

[33] See Gingerich, "Ignaz Schuppanzigh and Beethoven's Late Quartets," 485.

[34] See Gingerich, "Ignaz Schuppanzigh and Beethoven's Late Quartets," 470–75, 479.

[35] See Beethoven to Schott in Mainz, after March 19, 1825, in Ludwig van Beethoven, *Briefwechsel Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Sieghard Brandenburg (München: Henle, 1996–98), 6:1950; and Gingerich, "Ignaz Schuppanzigh and Beethoven's Late Quartets," 476.

[36] See Beethoven, *Streichquartette III*, 12–15.

composer's ability to extract maximum profit.[37] Crucially, his decision to divide the publication rights of the late quartets among the sons of Bernhard Schott (Paris and Mainz, Opp. 127 and 131), Maurice Schlesinger (Paris, Opp. 132 and 135), and Mathias Artaria (Vienna, Opp. 130/133) meant that, in theory, no one but Beethoven could have arranged for reselling them together as a set or within a subscription series.

Collected editions were a favorite business model of Maurice Schlesinger's new Parisian publishing trade. Beginning with a collection of Mozart's operas in vocal score in 1822, Schlesinger published several series in the 1820s, dedicated, for instance, to the piano music of Weber, Hummel, and Moscheles. By 1825 his imprint on the title pages of his editions read "Maurice Schlesinger . . . publisher of the works of Mozart, Rossini, Hummel, Moscheles, etc.," suggesting that the public could expect to find the entire oeuvre of these composers at his shop.[38] No later than January 1825 he had proposed to Beethoven a collected edition of all his previous quartets, plus some new ones that would appear for the first time in Schlesinger's series. It is significant that we learn of this proposal from Beethoven's 1825 letter to another publisher, Schott, in a probable bid to solicit a counteroffer. Beethoven flaunts that he is not giving in to Schlesinger and keeps open the possibility of preparing himself a similar collection with someone he trusted more, such as the addressee of his letter.[39] In reality, promising all the new quartets to a single publisher would have undermined Beethoven's concerted efforts to receive competitive, individual bids. It is also possible that, as he did with Op. 127, the composer intended to pace the publication of these pieces, strategically managing the public's expectations rather than issuing them all at once or on a predictable schedule. Once the sense of anticipation for each quartet had made a maximum profit, he could still have them repackaged and sold again within a series. Beethoven, in short, might have wanted to make the most of all these opportunities and partners at the right time.

Schlesinger's intention to sell "all" of Beethoven was clear when he visited Vienna to deal directly with the composer. In September of 1825

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[37] For instance, Beethoven first sold Opp. 130, 133, and 134 (the piano arrangement of the *Grande fugue*) to Artaria, but before they were issued in Vienna he also negotiated the French rights for these works with Pleyel. Platen, "Beethovens letzte Streichquartette," 75; and Gingerich, "Ignaz Schuppanzigh and Beethoven's Late Quartets," 464.

[38] "Maurice Schlesinger, M[archan]d de Musique du Roi, Editeur des Œuvres de Mozart, Rossini, Hummel, Moscheles &c." See, for instance, Ignace [sic] Moscheles, *La petite babillarde, Rondeau composé pour le Pianoforte Op. 65* (Paris: Maurice Schlesinger, 1825); and Alan Tyson, "Maurice Schlesinger as a Publisher of Beethoven, 1822–1827," *Acta Musicologica* 35 (1963): 182–91, at 186.

[39] Beethoven to Schott in Mainz, after January 22, 1825, in Beethoven, *Briefwechsel Gesamtausgabe*, 6:1925; and Tyson, "Maurice Schlesinger as a Publisher of Beethoven," 186.

he wrote in the conversation book: "I have now decided to publish your works in their entirety, but I want to start with the trios, quartets and quintets. . . . I think we start with them, in the second year tackle your piano works, and after that everything else."[40] Beethoven's verbal responses in this exchange are not recorded, but the publisher left Vienna with a manuscript of the recently completed Op. 132 (the second of the late quartets) and a signed document committing Beethoven to sell him a further quartet.[41] This was not how Beethoven was inclined to proceed, however. The following quartet, Op. 130, much to Schlesinger's dismay, went to Artaria; the fourth one, Op. 131, again to Schott. Schlesinger had to wait more than a year after his first Viennese visit for Op. 135, the last one. But Schlesinger's business idea was worth the wait. Acquiring new quartets to include in the plan of his Beethoven collection gave him a significant edge. From the first advertisement of the series, announced as soon as he returned from Vienna, Schlesinger stressed that he had "just purchased from the famous Beethoven" new quartets shortly to appear in a "complete collection of his trios, quartets and quintets that will not be sold separately."[42] In other words, whoever wanted the latest Beethoven had no choice but to buy the entire collection. Furthermore, although Beethoven's tactic to scatter the pieces among publishers made the process laborious, Schlesinger managed to acquire the rights to reprint the other late quartets in his series. Bypassing the composer, he proposed to Schott half the price originally paid for Op. 127 and Op. 131. He even instructed another publisher, Ignaz Pleyel, to negotiate on his behalf and purchase from Beethoven in January 1827 the right to publish Opp. 130/133 in France.[43] By gathering these other rights and not selling further those he had acquired directly from the composer, Schlesinger published the only collection to include all quartets (Opp. 132 and 135 were not sold anywhere else): the only one to present, as far as quartets were concerned, "all" of Beethoven.

The publicity for Schlesinger's collection hammered the point home by focusing almost entirely on its exclusive completeness. In the run-up to its release on July 31, 1827, after more than two years of planning and tortuously patching together rights, the advertisements were unequivocal: "the price of subscription will be the same as that of the edition published by Janet et Cotelle, which does not include the [late] quartets"; these "cannot be part of any other collection than the one [Schlesinger] is publishing at the moment."[44] The value of the collection

[40] Köhler, Herre, et al., *Ludwig van Beethovens Konversationshefte*, 8:106.
[41] See Platen, "Beethovens letzte Streichquartette," 72.
[42] *Journal général d'annonces d'objets d'Art et de Librairie* (October 21, 1825).
[43] See Platen, "Beethovens letzte Streichquartette," 75–76.
[44] *Journal général d'annonces d'objets d'Art et de Librairie* (January 27, 1827; July 18, 1827).

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was declared in explicitly relational terms: it was defined by what other publishers could not sell. The Schott brothers were furious. Standing their ground from their recently opened Parisian branch, they intervened in the local press with a series of announcements to reaffirm themselves as the "only legitimate publishers" of Opp. 127 and 131, which Schlesinger was printing only on their authorization. Furthermore, they made sure to remark that these two works could still be purchased separately at their shop, which for those already in possession of the Janet et Cotelle collection would have been more convenient than buying everything again from Schlesinger.[45] In this public row between the two publishers, accusations of false advertisement were followed by further publicity for each publisher's own merchandise.[46] The back and forth worked in Schlesinger's favor for the same reason the scrambles between Viennese violinists had delighted Beethoven: getting people talking was, after all, the best publicity. Much in line with Beethoven's own managing of these pieces, recriminations and rivalries were a driving force behind Schlesinger's advertising for the late quartets.[47]

Directing the public's attention to publishers' infighting may also have been a ploy to avoid discussing music that, inconveniently, one could no longer just "play through." In practice, purchasers were tacitly asked to engage in quartet rehearsals that were a far cry from what they were used to. But how many groups of players would have been willing to do so? Schlesinger's uneasiness in this respect is particularly evident when reading through the advertisements for his other complete collections, such as that dedicated to Hummel's piano music. The publicity for this series, issued in parallel to that for the Beethoven quartets, focused on Hummel's talent for reconciling "science and melody, energy, and grace," stressing that his collected works comprised an ideal method for the aspiring pianist.[48] In comparison, comments about the music and who should play it are almost entirely absent in the advertisements for the Beethoven collection. Only once, next to the omnipresent statement that he was the only one selling them, Schlesinger characterizes the "last

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[45] Les fils de B[ernhard] Schott, "Avis," *Revue musicale* 2 (1828): 600; and "Avis," *Revue musicale* 5 (1829): 360.

[46] See Schlesinger, "Réponse à MM. Schott fils."

[47] That controversies played a key role in Schlesinger's business strategy is confirmed also by his decision to publish engaging accounts of the quarrels he was involved in. After he established his house journal in 1834 (the *Gazette musicale*), its pages were enlivened by stories of court cases for defamation or pirating, and even pistol duels he was involved in. See Katharine Ellis, "The Uses of Fiction: *Contes* and *Nouvelles* in the *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 1834–1844," *Revue de Musicologie* 90 (2004): 253–81; and Shaena B. Weitz, "Propaganda and Reception in Nineteenth-Century Music Criticism: Maurice Schlesinger, Henri Herz, and the *Gazette musicale*," *19th-Century Music* 43 (2019): 38–60.

[48] See "Collection des Œuvres composées pour le piano-forté par J. N. Hummel, à Paris, chez Maurice Schlesinger," *Revue musicale* 2 (1827): 312.

sounds of the immortal lyre" as "more religious and agreeable" than Beethoven's previous compositions.[49] More than a comment on the music, however, this may be an acknowledgment of the heading chosen by Beethoven for the third movement of Op. 132, *Heiliger Dankgesang* (holy song of thanksgiving). Schlesinger saw fit to tread only at the very edge of this music, if at all. Although vague, his statement is once again overtly relational: the late quartets—which only Schlesinger can sell—are more agreeable (*suave*) than all other works by this master. But rather than saying anything about how agreeable they were to play, the advertisements emphasized the beauty of the edition and how important it was to possess. Engraved with special care, it was meant "to match (*faire pendant*) the beautiful collections of Mozart and Haydn published by Pleyel."[50] The last reference here is to Pleyel's landmark collected edition of Haydn's quartets (Paris, 1801), famously publicized as sanctioned by the composer.[51] Beethoven had anything but approved Schlesinger's collection, yet it was announced as having been "corrected by the author" and realized "from the original manuscripts."[52] In truth Schlesinger had only one autograph manuscript, a clean copy of Op. 135, which he did not fail to show off. At the outset of his collection, he included a foldable facsimile of one page of the quartet with Beethoven's handwriting, date, and signature. If somewhat stretched, the claim to completeness and authenticity was leveraged by Schlesinger to turn music that would be otherwise difficult to sell into the very thing that made his brand unique.

What the advertisements could not mention was that these quartets broke with the highly evocative and topical idiom to which, by the late 1820s, Parisian performers had become accustomed in works by Haydn, Mozart, and early Beethoven. Especially in the first movements, the late quartets appeared geared toward making the genre's proverbial sociability less immediately discernible.[53] Schlesinger had heard both Op. 127 and Op. 132 in private auditions during his stay in Vienna in 1825.[54] It is possible that, having sensed or heard about the difficulties in figuring out the unconventional ensemble interplay, he was cautious when it

[49] *Journal général d'annonces d'objets d'Art et de Librairie* (July 18, 1827).

[50] *Journal général d'annonces d'objets d'Art et de Librairie* (July 18, 1827).

[51] *Collection complette des quatuors d'Haydn, dédiée au premier consul Bonaparte* (Paris: Pleyel, 1801).

[52] *Journal général d'annonces d'objets d'Art et de Librairie* (January 27, 1827).

[53] See Daniel K. L. Chua, *The Galitzin Quartets of Beethoven: Opp. 127, 132, 130* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 4–5, 10; and Eric F. Clarke, "The First Movement of Beethoven's String Quartet in A Minor, Op. 132," in *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 156–88.

[54] Op. 132 was played for Schlesinger on September 9 and 11, 1825; Op. 127 on September 26, 1825. Gingerich, "Ignaz Schuppanzigh and Beethoven's Late Quartets," 480, 508–9.

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came to advertising the quartets in Paris. One document that seems to reveal Schlesinger's prudent attitude in this matter is a manuscript penned by none other than the violinist Pierre Baillot. Bearing the same title as Schlesinger's collection, the text reads as an introduction to the publication, probably solicited by Schlesinger for inclusion alongside the table of thematic incipits and the facsimile of Beethoven's autograph manuscript.[55] In his successful series of chamber concerts, Baillot had established himself as the Parisian authority on the quartets and quintets of Boccherini, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. It is hardly surprising that Schlesinger intended to capitalize on the violinist's reputation to endorse his new editorial project. Although Baillot's contribution was ready on May 21, 1827, well in advance of the collection's release on July 31, it never made it to the press. At issue, almost certainly, was what Baillot had to say about the late quartets:

> These [works] show an allure so independent that one would take them for the product of delirium, if one did not discover, beneath an appearance of disorder, a plan whose details initially obscure an understanding of the whole but whose unfolding and even depth one soon comes to admire. Fantastical images, a reverie which has much charm, recall the manner of Goethe and Lord Byron. Something indecisive and vaporous excites an indefinable allure of melancholy; then suddenly a ray of light illuminating the scene awakens the soul and exalts it to enthusiasm. . . .
>
> Two men of a superior genius have been, in the middle of their career, deprived of the sense that most affected their work: Milton gone blind and Beethoven turned deaf may have owed to this illness the boldness and individuality of their conceptions, being no longer able to consult the concrete model of nature. They have sprung up on the wings of the imagination and beyond the imaginary they have met the sublime. It would seem that fate, by depriving one of sight, the other of hearing, has obliged both of them to pioneer new roads, and that, singularly, the loss of a sense would have enabled them to extend the domain of the senses. But what they could gain in scope, they had to lose in rectitude: reduced to rely on his inner hearing and not being able to test his productions for their effect, Beethoven has been driven into great and numerous aberrations, but at the same time his genius profited by this profound solitude to which a complete deafness had condemned him; devoid of all distraction, of all influence, for himself like Milton, he made up worlds. . . .

[55] Pierre Baillot, *Collection de Trios, Quatuors et Quintetti de Beethoven* (autograph manuscript, May 21, 1827), the private collection of Daniel Lainé, digitized in *Bru Zane Mediabase*, www.bruzanemediabase.com/fre/Documents/Archives/A-la-memoire-de-Beethoven-Pierre-Baillot/(offset)/1. "À la Mémoire de Beethoven" is the title of the folder in which the manuscript is preserved.

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Glory and immortality alone can . . . pay the debt of gratitude. This is the purpose of this publication.

21 May 1827. [Pierre Marie de Salles] Baillot[56]

In Baillot's characterization the late quartets are original to the point of compromising immediate intelligibility. An unordered and fragmented surface, punctuated by abrupt contrasts, prevented performers from making sense of the ensemble. Where their interaction usually stood for model social behaviors, here it seemed the product of madness, an antisocial state of mind and conduct. Early commentators on the late quartets often explained these oddities as a result of Beethoven's deafness. As early as 1826 a review describing the *Grande fugue* as "incomprehensible, like Chinese" admitted that "maybe some things would have not been written down so, if the master had been also able to hear" them.[57] Against the backdrop of this discourse, Baillot's lengthy comparison with John Milton underscores a conscious effort to present these works in a most favorable light. Almost a hundred and fifty years after his death, the English poet's reputation remained that of a legendary bard who had composed his opus magnum (*Paradise Lost*) after becoming completely

[56] "Ceux-ci montrent une allure tellement indépendante, qu'on les prendrait pour l'effet du délire, si l'on n'y découvrait, sous une apparence de désordre, un plan dont les détails avaient d'abord empêché de saisir l'ensemble, mais dont on admire bientôt après la conduite et même la profondeur; des images fantastiques une rêverie qui a beaucoup de charme, y rappellent la manière de Goethe et de Lord Byron. Quelque chose d'indécis et de vaporeux y excite un intérêt indéfinissable de mélancolie, puis tout à coup un rayon de lumière éclairant la scène vient réveiller l'âme et l'exalter jusqu'à l'enthousiasme. . . .

Deux hommes d'un Génie supérieur ont été, au milieu de leur carrière, privés du sens particulièrement affecté à leurs travaux; Milton devenu aveugle, et Beethoven devenu sourd ont peut-être du a ce malheur la hardiesse et les écarts de leur conceptions, ne pouvant plus consulter le modèle réel de la nature, la se sont élances sur les ailes de l'imagination, et a côte de l'imaginaire ils ont rencontré le sublime. Il semblerait que le sort en privant, l'un de la vue, l'autre de l'ouïe, les a obligés tous deux à se frayer des routes nouvelles, et chose singulière, la perte d'un sens leur aurait permis d'agrandir le domaine des sens. Mais ce qu'ils ont pu gagner en étendue, ils ont du le perdre en rectitude: réduit à s'en rapporter à son audition intérieure et ne pouvant vérifier se productions d'après leur effet, Beethoven a été entrainé dans de grandes et nombreuses aberrations, mais en même tems son génie a profité de cette solitude profonde à laquelle une surdité complette l'avait condamné; exempt de toute distraction, de toute influence, il s'est à la manière de Milton, crée des Mondes. . . .

La Gloire et l'immortalité peuvent seule . . . acquitter la dette de la reconnaissance. Tel est l'objet de cette publication." Baillot, *Collection de Trios, Quatuors et Quintetti de Beethoven*, 2–5.

[57] "Nachrichten," *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 28 (1826): cols. 310–11. As in the case of Baillot, this review points out that what at first sight appears clouded and confused may, with time, become clear and well formed. In a famous two-part review of Op. 131, François-Joseph Fétis linked the presence of exaggerated procedures, excessive repetition, unclear melodic contour, and the harshness of harmonic successions to Beethoven's almost complete deafness. François-Joseph Fétis, "Bulletin d'analyse: Les Derniers Quatuors de Beethoven (œuvre 131e)," *Revue musicale* 7 (1830): 279–86, 345–51.

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blind. In one of his most famous poems, Milton mentions his will not to keep his talent "lodg'd with me useless" once he had lost the sense of sight.[58] In 1804 the poet's resolution became even the subject of an opéra-comique by Gaspare Spontini, *Milton*, which thematized for the Parisian public the connection between sensory deprivation and artistic potential.[59] The association allows Baillot to discuss the two artists' sensorial impairments as conducive to a highly valued freedom from models, which naturally led them to set out new paths for their arts. While deafness had made the composer unable to monitor how his late works sounded, resulting in what seemed (at first hearing) hysterically scattered gestures, Baillot identifies this fated deprivation of hearing as the true source of Beethoven's original creations.[60]

Baillot's assessment bears a striking resemblance to a well-known passage from Georg August Griesinger's biography of Haydn (1809). There Haydn explains the originality of his own music as the congenial result of years spent working at the remote court of Esterháza with an orchestra at his disposal to "try things out, observe what creates a [good] effect and what weakens it, and thus revise, make additions or cuts, take risks."[61] From this perspective, deafness had created for Beethoven a sort of ideally remote Esterháza, albeit one without musicians. Baillot praises Schlesinger's collection as an important tool to chart the development of the composer's talent, which "will reveal the direction of the human spirit in this universal language."[62] Charting this progress within the quartets, however, risked highlighting the progressive emptiness of "Beethoven's Esterháza" and almost inevitably setting the late quartets

[58] Sonnet 16, "When I consider how my light is spent"; see Angelica Duran, "The Blind Bard, According to John Milton and His Contemporaries," *Mosaic* 46 (2013): 141–57. French translations of Milton appeared as soon as 1729; see Christophe Tournu, "'The French Connection' among French Translations of Milton and within Du Bocage's *Paradis terrestre*," in *Milton in Translation*, ed. Angelica Duran, Islam Issa, and Jonathan R. Olson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 139–60.

[59] See Ellen Lockhart, *Animation, Plasticity, and Music in Italy, 1770–1830* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 123–24. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, musically inclined Parisians would have been familiar with Milton's *Paradise Lost* also as one of the sources for the libretto of Haydn's *Creation*, first performed in Paris to great acclaim in 1800.

[60] The romanticization of Beethoven's deafness would consolidate in the later nineteenth century, also in response to Wagner's 1870 *Beethoven* essay. K. M. Knittel, "Wagner, Deafness, and the Reception of Beethoven's Late Style," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51 (1998): 49–82.

[61] [Georg August] von Griesinger, "Biographische Notizen über Joseph Haydn," *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 11 (1809): cols. 657–68, at 662. I use James Webster's translation in his *Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style: Through-Composition and Cyclic Integration in His Instrumental Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 364.

[62] "pourra servir à indiquer la marche de l'esprit humain dans cette langue universelle." Baillot, *Collection de Trios, Quatuors et Quintetti de Beethoven*, 5.

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apart from all his previous ones. The impulse to understand Beethoven's increasing degrees of isolation resonated with other accounts in the Parisian press around the time of the composer's death. An article that appeared at the end of March 1827, for instance, described Beethoven's seclusion as a source of originality as well as harshness and faults that had led many to "prefer his earlier works to his latest compositions."[63] Schlesinger, however, could not have Baillot cast shadows upon the music on which he was building his monopoly. Too much of his Beethovenian business hinged on the late quartets to allow notes of abnormality or a disorderly appearance to compromise their value and, thereby, that of the whole collection. Perhaps for this reason his series was printed without Baillot's prefatory text.

Before long, however, Schlesinger thought it better to provide his own story about the late quartets rather than let others voice opinions beyond his control. Once all the issues of the series were in place and delivered by September 30, 1827, Schlesinger returned to Baillot's text and softened its sharpest edges (in keeping with his own interests).[64] An almost entirely rewritten version appeared in the *Revue musicale* in December 1827, which, even as it acknowledged some of the same issues raised by Baillot, presented them as a success narrative: the allure of Beethoven's music always outweighs its flaws.[65] Beethoven's biting originality (*originalité piquante*) may first have appalled "those who admire only what they already know," but the composer had managed to "turn his adversaries into supporters." Less observant of rules than Haydn's or Mozart's, Beethoven's instrumental music inaugurated new routes that, "despite some faults," placed him "among the greatest musicians on whom Germany prides itself."[66] Schlesinger offers here an eloquent disclaimer: purchasers of the parts will indeed encounter something unexpected, but even the staunchest traditionalists have already warmed up to it. This quasi-Pauline conversion is hardly an impartial report on the reception of Beethoven's late quartets. The story is rather meant to proselytize: Schlesinger is telling his readers how they ought to react if

[63] "Notice sur Beethoven," *Journal général d'annonces d'objets d'Art et de Librairie* (March 28, 1827).

[64] The dates of the four "livraisons" are specified in the *Journal général d'annonces d'objets d'Art et de Librairie* (July 18, 1827).

[65] "Publications Classiques," *Revue musicale* 2 (1827): 427–29. As usual for this section of the journal, the advertisement is not signed. Platen ("Beethovens letzte Streichquartette," 83) has suggested Fétis as the author, but he, however, was hardly a keen supporter of Beethoven's late quartets (see notes 7 and 57 above). If it is not by Schlesinger himself, I would argue that this text was penned by someone taking excellent care of Schlesinger's interests and who most likely had seen Baillot's manuscript (suggested by the references to Goethe, originality, errors, and Boccherini, whom Baillot characteristically mentions alongside Haydn and Mozart).

[66] "Publications Classiques," 428.

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they wanted to belong to the cultivated musical elite who allegedly had already approved this music.[67] Whether or not critical consensus had been reached, Schlesinger presented himself as the spokesman for a cultural consensus about Beethoven intended to pique public desire and compel people to buy into the imagined community he was selling.

The story engineered by Schlesinger to accompany his "all" Beethoven collection suited his interests in that the composer's baffling originality is never associated specifically with the late quartets. All mentions of a less conventional idiom and "new routes" in the field of instrumental music are discussed as if one could find these elements across Beethoven's output.[68] The attempt to divert readers from considering the late quartets as a separate (and problematic) group is explicit also in the proposed division of Beethoven's output into two "very distinct" epochs. Starting with Op. 59 (1806), the second epoch is characterized by Schlesinger as a time when Beethoven looked back at his previous compositions with disdain, finding them full of melodies that can be "followed plainly and clearly." His new works, inspired by an admiration for Goethe and the elusive in the arts, seek to accomplish "greater effects" that the composer "believed much superior."[69] Here the link with Baillot's text seems particularly strong, but there is a crucial difference in agency. In Schlesinger's account, before Beethoven became completely deaf he *chose* a new aesthetic path: he wanted to be less intelligible. In later years, deafness only reinforced this new proclivity for the indeterminate and did not bring any impediments or "faults."[70] Baillot's practical considerations are erased; illness is sublimated into a poetic mood to which Beethoven had already and consciously subscribed. The music of late Beethoven, according to the publisher who sold it, was no mistake. The point is reinforced in the publicity for a new edition of the collection in 1829, "corrected with the greatest care by the artists who performed [these pieces] under Beethoven."[71] While the claim raises the

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[67] See Peter Mondelli, "Parisian Opera between Commons and Commodity, ca. 1830," in *Consuming Music: Individuals, Institutions, Communities, 1730–1830*, ed. Emily H. Green and Catherine Mayes (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2017), 222–40.

[68] Further examples of Pauline-like conversions to do with Beethoven's music in these years are discussed in Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France*, 101–26.

[69] "Publications Classiques," 428.

[70] In contrast, most authors around the time of Beethoven's death tended to make sense of the composer's output by separating the music composed in his last decade from what came before. K. M. Knittel, "Imitation, Individuality, and Illness: Behind Beethoven's Three Styles," *Beethoven Forum* 4 (1995): 17–36.

[71] Schlesinger, "Réponse à MM. Schott fils," 383. Given Schlesinger's tendency to exaggerate claims, it is possible that he never received such a recorrected copy. Baillot, however, had acquired a set of annotated parts from Prince Galitzin, the dedicatee of Opp. 127, 132, and 130, which could be what Schlesinger is referring to. Fabio Morabito, "Theatrical Marginalia: Pierre Baillot and the Prototype of the Modern Performer," *Music and Letters* 101 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/gcz110.

authenticity stakes of Schlesinger's trademark (possibly to outdo his competitors), it also speaks to his anxieties about the late quartets' reputation as unintelligible. That a group of performers—not just the deaf composer—had worked through them under Beethoven's supervision with a fine-tooth comb was a guarantee that Beethoven's isolation had not compromised the music's playability.

Playing Together without Topics

In his unpublished introduction to Schlesinger's collection, Baillot's remarks on the late quartets appear grounded in his experience playing them. It is likely that he had played through these pieces before writing his introduction in May 1827 (excepting, perhaps, Op. 131, first released by the Parisian branch of Schott in June). Baillot seems to have acquired the late quartets as soon as they became available from individual publishers; only later did he bind them together following the order of Schlesinger's collection.[72] Most importantly, the terms chosen by Baillot in his introduction resonate vividly with the traces he and his affiliates left on their parts. The handwritten annotations (most indicating nuances of tone and phrasing) are concentrated in Baillot's first violin part, as is the case throughout the library of music used by Baillot's ensemble. What distinguishes the Beethoven late quartets in this archive is the presence in the other parts of annotations that target the interaction among players. No Boccherini quintet or Haydn quartet annotated by the ensemble bears similar traces of coordinated gestures and rehearsed synergy.[73] The late Beethoven quartets made this group of performers work differently. As predicted by Marx, their rehearsals went beyond crafting the rich variety of instrumental colors and inflections evidenced

[72] Except for Op. 135, the order of the late quartets in Schlesinger's collection reflects that in which he acquired them (Opp. 132, 130, 133, 127, 131, 135). Baillot owned and annotated Schott's first editions of Op. 127 and Op. 131 (issued in March 1826 and June 1827 respectively) and Schlesinger's Opp. 132, 130, 133 and 135. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Vma 3900; and Fauquet, *Les sociétés de musique de chambre*, 53–54. The annotated chamber music parts previously owned by Baillot are currently being digitized. They will be freely available online (with permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France) as part of the AHRC Project "Collection of Historical Annotated String Editions" (CHASE), University of Leeds, now hosted by the University of Huddersfield, http://mhm.hud.ac.uk/chase/.

[73] Throughout the music library owned by Baillot and used by his ensemble, the second violin, viola, and cello parts tend to show markings related to corrections of wrong notes, accidentals, and a few sparse fingerings; see, for instance, Quintets nos. 12 (Op. 13), 13 (Op. 22), 51 (Op. 37, 2me livraison), 53 (Op. 37, 3me livraison), 58 (Op. 37, 5me livraison), and 84 (Op. 48), *Collection des Quintettes à cordes de Boccherini op. 12 à 49* [various editions bound together], 5 vols., Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fonds Lainé, Carton 5.

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in Baillot's parts.[74] Grappling with the music's apparent madness (*délire*), the performers' annotations evince a distinct effort, as Baillot put it, "to discover a plan beneath the appearance of disorder."

The desire to piece together disjointed fragments and coordinate the players' interactions is most manifest in Baillot's annotations to the first movement of Op. 130. Musicological commentary has singled out this movement as perhaps the most extreme example of Beethoven's splintered musical surfaces. Thematic manipulation is often not immediately discernible but submerged in a paradoxical collage of Adagio and Allegro sections and a seemingly continuous unfolding of the opening four-measure motto.[75] In three instances Baillot annotated his part with the words "Basse" (cello) and "alto" (viola), which mark the relevant segments entrusted to these instruments while the first violin has rests (see the fifth stave on the first page of fig. 1, transcribed in ex. 1a in relation to the full ensemble). The placement of the words "Basse" and "alto" suggests that Baillot did not intend them to cue entries: "alto" is placed two quarter notes after the viola's entrance, and the entry of the second violin is not acknowledged at all. Rather than marking the correct order and timing of entries, Baillot's annotations seem to chart the opening motto's dislocations. At the start of the movement the first violin enunciates the motto clearly at the top of the texture, but here it returns split between the two lower parts (see ex. 1b). Each segment is also somewhat muffled by the rest of the texture, whose lines—the "details" mentioned by Baillot in his introduction—submerge the motto. The other "Basse" indication in Baillot's part (see the last stave on the second page of fig. 1) charts a further splitting of the motto at the start of the development section. This time both segments are in the cello part but interpolated by short fragments of the Allegro. Baillot's annotations map the apportioning and displacement of the motto, and bespeak his willingness to explore the entanglement of the parts and rehearse their deep interconnections—in other words, the intensified "fraternizing" among players that Marx deemed essential to realize this interplay in performance.

Baillot's annotations to Op. 130 cast a different light on why the late Beethoven quartets were the first to be published nearly simultaneously in parts and score format. Gingerich interprets the event as the sign of an instant monumentalization, as if publishers like Schlesinger and Artaria deemed this music straightaway worthy of the status of "classics," similar to Mozart's and Haydn's quartets issued in scores by Pleyel or André

[74] See Morabito, "Theatrical Marginalia."
[75] See Chua, *Galitzin Quartets of Beethoven*, 202, 222; and Kofi Agawu, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 289.

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FIGURE 1. Louis van Beethoven, *Treizième Quatuor pour 2 Violons, Alto et Violoncelle, composé et dédie at son Altesse Monseigneur le Prince Nicolas de Galitzin . . . Œuv. 130* (Paris: Schlesinger, 1827), I, 1st violin, 116–17, with Pierre Baillot's pencil annotations; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la musique, Vma 3900 (2).

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FIGURE 1. *(Continued)*

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EXAMPLE 1A. Beethoven, Op. 130, first movement, mm. 20–24: positioning of Pierre Baillot's pencil annotations.

EXAMPLE 1B. Beethoven, Op. 130, first movement, mm. 20–24: segments of the opening motto highlighted by Pierre Baillot's pencil annotations.

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from the early 1800s.[76] Schlesinger was surely interested in making the public want these works as part of an imaginary "library of classics."[77]

[76] See Gingerich, "Ignaz Schuppanzigh and Beethoven's Late Quartets," 476–78. Gingerich stresses how the scores would have facilitated listeners in following (and digesting) the workings of the late quartets.

[77] In 1834 Schlesinger set up a society for the publication of classic and modern music "à bon marché," offering per subscription (just as the "Panthéon litteraire" did for

Yet canonization attempts elegantly disguised the fact that both Beethoven and his publishers had rushed to make scores or four-hand piano arrangements available to assist performers in a new step required of them: that of figuring out the constantly shifting interplay among the four instruments. Beethoven was famously dissatisfied with Anton Halm's four-hand arrangement of Op. 133, which the composer himself rewrote, making fewer concessions to pianism and favoring the integrity of each part.[78] Such a synoptic visualization would have helped the players familiarize themselves with the succession of textures, achieving an "ensemble view" similar to that which Baillot attempted with the annotations in his part. Before players could heed Marx's suggestion and give the impression that "one voice follows another freely and flexibly," each had to grasp their role within the group dynamic. To render naturally the unconventional socialities that this music seemed to represent, ensemble synergy had first to be construed and then rehearsed.

That the members of Baillot's ensemble felt confronted with a new, experimental model of quartet sociability is further supported by their experience with the first movement of Op. 127. Since its earliest reviews, this quartet has been portrayed in terms of a pervasive contrapuntal logic. Reflecting Beethoven's move from sketching on a single stave to thinking out the material on four-stave sketches, the first of the late quartets is built on a contrapuntal complex of motives that move through the texture, whose inner workings remain almost inaudible.[79] The effect is that of a densely interwoven ensemble, whose four parts continuously exchange textural roles, often from one measure to the next. For Baillot and his affiliates, the constant shifting, burying, and resurfacing of contrapuntal fragments subverted their usual modus operandi. In coordinating both joint and individual gestures, the performers had to rely less on the patterns of interaction typified in countless quartets by Boccherini, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven (among others) and vividly depicted by Giuseppe Carpani in 1812:

> A friend of mine imagined, in listening to a quartet of Haydn, that he was in attendance to a conversation of four amiable people; I always liked this idea, as it very much resembles the truth. It seemed to him that he recognized in the first violin a man spirited and affable, middle aged, well spoken, who sustained most of the discourse that he himself initiated and animated.

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literature in the same years) a curated library of masterpieces at a considerably lower price than that of buying individual volumes. Anik Devriès, "Un éditeur de musique 'à la tête ardente': Maurice Schlesinger," *Fontes Artis Musicae* 27 (1980): 125–36, at 128.

[78] See Gingerich, "Ignaz Schuppanzigh and Beethoven's Late Quartets," 477.

[79] See Chua, *Galitzin Quartets of Beethoven*, 11–53.

> In the second violin he recognized a friend of the first, who sought in every way to let him shine, rarely taking care of himself and intent on sustaining the conversation more by adhering to what he heard from the other than with his own ideas.
>
> The cello was a solid man, learned and sententious. Bit by bit he went along supporting the discourse of the first violin with laconic but confident statements, and occasionally—as a prophet, a man well experienced in the knowledge of things—predicted what the principal orator would have said and gave strength and foundation to his sayings.
>
> The viola, then, seemed to him a somewhat loquacious matron, who actually did not have very important things to say, but nonetheless wanted to intrude into the discussion, and with her grace seasoned the conversation, and at times with some delightful cicada-ing gave the others chance to take a breath; in the rest [of the time] [she was] more a friend of the cello than of the other interlocutors.[80]

Carpani's anthropomorphization of the four parts of a Haydn quartet rests on the observation that each part shows recurring, almost stereotypical behaviors that are defined relationally. The viola, for instance, is characterized as paired ("more a friend") with the cello, when not busy repeating accompaniment figurations ("making the sound of the cicada"). This familiar group dynamic must have felt stripped away from the members of the Baillot ensemble when handling Op. 127. Its contrapuntal matrix and swift shifts of roles eroded consolidated models. The impression must have been that of playing constantly out of character, figuring out measure after measure who was leading, who just commenting, and who was "friend" (playing together) with whom at any given point.

Every winter between 1814 and 1827 Baillot's ensemble had performed weekly quartets and quintets by Boccherini, Haydn, and Mozart. They also played Beethoven quartets Op. 18 and Op. 59/3, the quintets Opp. 4, 29, and 104, as well as a transcription for quintet of the popular septet, Op. 20. In their subscription concerts, the same works were taken up again and again: in the first thirteen years, the group played the transcription of Op. 20 ten times, Op. 18/5 eight times, and Mozart's clarinet quintet K. 581 (in an arrangement for two violins, two violas, and cello) nine times.[81] Even when works were not repeated, this core repertoire of four composers presented highly typified patterns of interaction,

[80] Giuseppe Carpani, *Le Haydine ovvero Lettere sulla vita e le opere del celebre maestro Giuseppe Haydn* (Milano: Buccinelli, 1812), 96–97. The text appeared in French as Louis Alexandre César Bombet [Henrie-Marie Beyle Stendhal], *Lettres écrites de Vienne en Autriche sur le célèbre compositeur Jh Haydn, suivies d'une Vie de Mozart, et de Considérations sur Métastase et l'état présent de la musique en France et en Italie* (Paris: Didot, 1814), 61–62.

[81] See Fauquet, *Les sociétés de musique de chambre*, 293–315. Among the recurring works played by the ensemble in these years are Mozart K. 387 (twice), K. 421 (five times), the quintet in G minor K. 516 (three times), and Beethoven quintet Op. 29 (five times).

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like those described by Carpani but in a richer variety of combinations. The viola player, for instance, could be found switching from a light-hearted accompaniment in repeated triplets to leading the ensemble with a *minore* melancholic theme (as in the third variation in the last movement of K. 581), or being given a segment in a goal-oriented sequence (as in the fast-paced finale of Op. 59/3, where the four players alternate in a gradually ascending and descending passage *su una corda*, recalling waves in a raging ocean).[82] These exchanges would not have required much decoding by the players, as they were consolidated in a set of characteristic textures. While the notes—and the stories that could characterize them—were different from one work or occasion to the next, the possible interplays between the parts formed a thesaurus of textural situations and related social imaginaries functioning in conjunction with (and at times as a key component of) the broader system of topical references postulated by Ratner.[83] These "topics of interaction" favored an almost immediate, shared grasp of the performers' interplay. From a textural perspective, topical play worked as a means of communication not just with listeners but also among performers within the ensemble. By referencing typified group dynamics from other genres and styles (e.g., "a rhapsodic concerto-like passage of the first violin"), and from the topically "parasitic" chamber music universe,[84] topics suggested to performers which musical identity to impersonate from one section to the next. Even with little rehearsal time, Baillot's ensemble could present every week a lengthy program. On December 17, 1825, it was Boccherini Op. 41/1, Haydn Op. 33/5, Beethoven Op. 18/4 plus the finale of Op. 59/3, the arrangement of Mozart's clarinet quintet, all brought to a close by the Andante and Rondo from Baillot's violin concerto Op. 30. The players' preparation was surely facilitated by prior performances in previous seasons. But most importantly these quartet professionals could jump seamlessly between the variations in the finale of Haydn Op. 33/5 and those of Mozart K. 581 like a troupe of *commedia dell'arte* actors relying on stock characters and scenarios.[85]

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[82] The image of a storm is evoked in Marx's characterization of this movement. Adolph Bernhard Marx, *Ludwig van Beethoven: Leben und Schaffens* (Berlin: Janke, 1863), 2:50.

[83] Ratner, *Classic Music*; see also Sutcliffe, "Topics in Chamber Music."

[84] Sutcliffe, "Topics in Chamber Music," 121.

[85] Late eighteenth-century sources often describe a heterogeneous topical play with reference to a genre of German-speaking improvised comedy that, just as the *commedia dell'arte*, used stock characters (for instance, the infamous *Hanswurst*). The mixture of comic and serious elements in the same work (in many respects the hallmark of topical play typified in instrumental music by Haydn and Mozart in the 1770s and 1780s) first attracted criticism, especially in Northern Germany, for breaking the rules of decorum. That Haydn's music had been previously considered "incorrect," and for this reason difficult to perform, is echoed in Marx's claim that the players of Beethoven's late quartets will have to

The difference between the roleplays consolidated across the string quartet repertoire in these decades and the first movements of Op. 127 and Op. 130 was a loss in topicality. Fragmented and less characteristic roles, switching abruptly between players, meant less time to step confidently into the shoes of a specific character or mode of textural interplay. As soon as textural and topical identities take shape, they are contested. As Robert Hatten and Kofi Agawu have noted in the case of Op. 130, these first movements are essays "in textural contrast."[86] Extreme textural differentiation is made structural, to the point of undermining its expressive logic. Rather than topical play, in Op. 130 it seems more a matter of topical fight and, at times, topical annihilation. For instance, both Hatten and Agawu characterize the returning Allegro portions as a vertical stratification of two gestures: the *non ligato* "brilliant" sixteenth notes and a "fanfare" or "archaic canzona" figure. Rather than successive, the contrast between these two topics is simultaneous: what Hatten terms topical troping.[87] But these two flavors are not as vivid as their labels seem to indicate. While the guiding principle of the brilliant style has been theorized as administering "command," showing who is in "control" of the music (and to whom the audience should pay attention), here the simple and catchy canzona is put under a musical spotlight.[88] Hatten has recently refined the terms used to discuss the interaction between topics, enriching our analytical vocabulary with notions such as topical inflections, tropological potential (a given topic's potential to be troped), and assessment of dominance between competing topics and emergent meanings (such as parody, irony, etc.). Yet the theory's working assumption remains that of a productive interplay to sophisticated expressive ends: semantic puzzles for listeners and analysts alike.[89] I am interested instead in the confusion or mixed signals that such

adjust to "the conditions of this kind of playing, just as our contemporaries no longer find those of Haydn's quartets difficult." Marx, "Quatuor für zwei Violinen, Viola und Violoncell von Beethoven. [Opp. 132 and 135.] Partitur," 467. See also Elaine Sisman, "Haydn, Shakespeare, and the Rules of Originality," in *Haydn and His World*, ed. Elaine Sisman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 3–56, at 19–22; and Wye Jamison Allanbrook, *The Secular Commedia: Comic Mimesis in Late Eighteenth-Century Music*, ed. Mary Ann Smart and Richard Taruskin (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014).

[86] Kofi Agawu, "The Chamber Music of Beethoven," in *Nineteenth-Century Chamber Music*, ed. Stephen E. Hefling (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1–38, at 32. See also Robert S. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 134; and Agawu, *Music as Discourse*, 289.

[87] Robert S. Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004).

[88] Roman Ivanovitch, "The Brilliant Style," in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 330–54, at 333.

[89] Robert S. Hatten, "The Troping of Topics in Mozart's Instrumental Works," in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 514–36.

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combinations could cause in the interaction among performers reading through their parts for the first time. In Op. 130 the tension between the two abovementioned topics is articulated only briefly before these five measures of Allegro are interrupted by an unexpected intermission of the Adagio (mm. 20–21, where Baillot wrote "Basse" and "alto" in his part). At this point in the movement, almost nothing has persisted long enough to serve as a reference for the performers to work out independently how to play their parts.

More than the consequential development of scenarios or the story of a character, the first movement of Op. 127 sounds like a polyphonic machine in continuous permutation, jamming every time the initial Maestoso gesture comes back.[90] Perhaps to keep abreast with these clumsy machine-like textural twists, the violist in Baillot's ensemble marked on his part a total of seventeen crosses in pencil (see fig. 2). These markings are placed at points where the player's role within the ensemble changes momentarily—calling for a different inflection, even musical identity in the group dynamic—without this being readily inferable from the notation of the viola part or what the ensemble has just been playing.[91] The cross first appears only a few measures into the piece, when the viola surfaces from an internal harmonic line with a fragment of the Allegro's head motive, before plunging again into a profileless muttering. Two staves below, a second cross signals another sudden shift of character, as the player goes from covering inner cadential material to sharing a short solo intervention in octaves with the first violin (mm. 36–38). In Carpani's terms, this abrupt but closest of "friendships" strikes as both nerve-wracking and too short-lived (only two measures long). Throughout the movement the penciled crosses flag the sudden appearance in the viola part of one of the machine's driving motives, to be played either together in a brief entente between two instruments (as it happens again at mm. 89 and 223) or in a succession of imitative entries, at times hidden, at times awkwardly exposed (m. 113). Since

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[90] As I write, I have in mind the live recording by the Alban Berg Quartet at Vienna's Mozart Hall (EMI, 1989). But what made me think of the jamming machine is the first violin's tentative and ever so slightly faster stepwise figuration at measure 6 (and 80) just before the Allegro, recalling a starting mechanism clumsily getting into motion.

[91] In the first movement, crosses are marked at measures 15, 36, 89, 113, 121, 143, 170, 188, 198, 223, 227, 245, and 267; in the second, at measures 57, 96, 118, and 123. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Vma 3900 (4). A single cross appears in the second violin part (first movement, m. 49) to single out a two-measure-long motivic element. On other occasions Baillot's ensemble used crosses or circles to mark the beginning of a section correspondingly in all four parts (as today players use letters to find their way through a piece during rehearsals); see, for instance, their annotations on Beethoven, Op. 131, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Vma 3900 (5). Here, however, the crosses in the viola part show no correspondence with markings in the other parts.

FIGURE 2. Louis v. Beethoven, *Grand Quatuor pour 2 Violons, Alto et Violoncelle, composé et dédie at son Altesse Monseigneur le Prince Nicolas de Galitzin . . . Œuv. 127* (Paris: le Fils de B. Schott, 1826), I, viola, 2–3, with pencil crosses; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la musique, Vma 3900 (4).

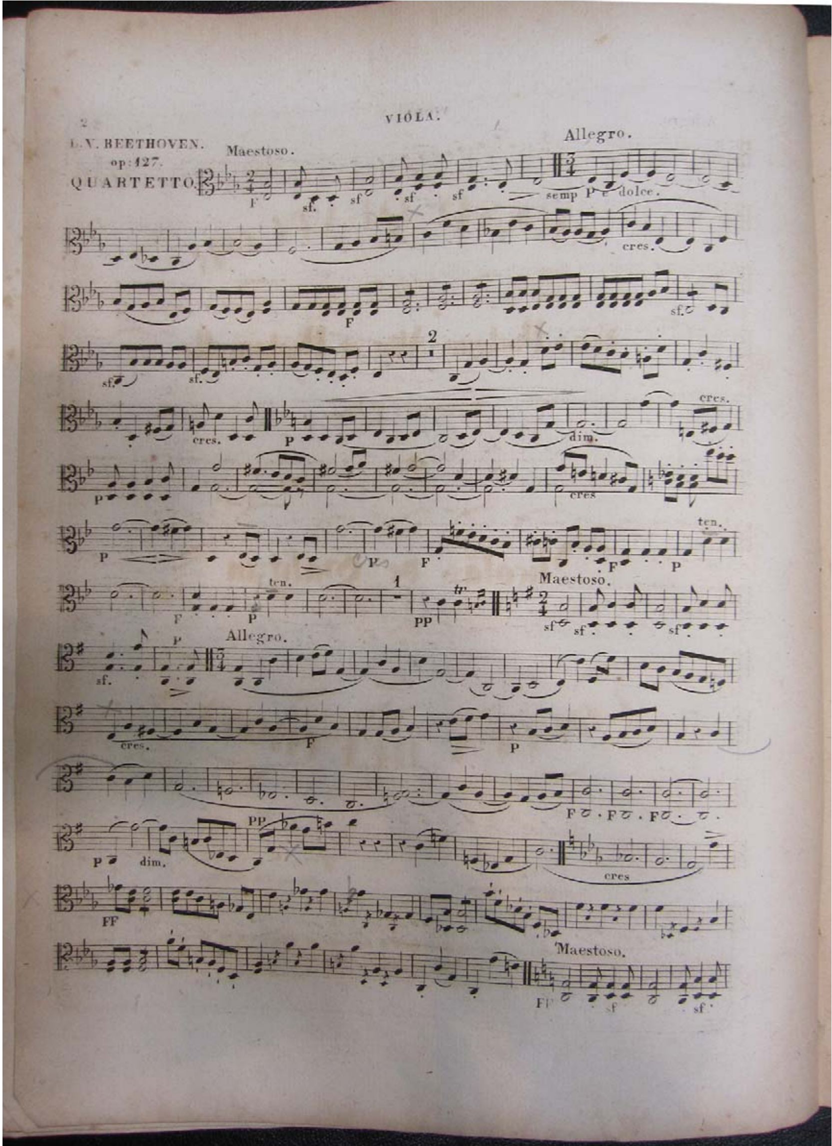

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FIGURE 2. (*Continued*)

these pairings or exchanges rely less on topical scenarios, they are harder to predict. The idiom's pervasive sociability, theorized by Sutcliffe as a shared toolset to mediate between individual and collective consciousness, is compromised.

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If the rehearsals of Beethoven's late quartets were conducted with the same formation that performed Baillot's quartet concerts in these years, the performer who used this annotated viola part of Op. 127 was Chrétien Urhan. An extremely accomplished violinist, violist, and organist, Urhan was well known in Paris for his improvising and sight-reading skills. Berlioz would famously call upon him in 1834 to perform the solo viola part of *Harold en Italie* when Paganini refused to play it.[92] Yet for all his skills, sight-reading the viola part of Op. 127 turned out to be less of an option, but not because the viola in this quartet was suddenly rescued from a subordinate accompaniment role: one need think only of Mozart Op. 10 or Beethoven Op. 59/3, which Baillot and Urhan played several times together, to get a sense of the rich variety of roles these performers were used to impersonating. As predicted by Marx, playing Beethoven's latest quartets was hardly a matter of characterizing these roleplays with sophisticated nuances. The challenge was to envision their rarefied sociability. What both Marx and Baillot called an independent (*selbständige*, *indépendant*), even self-asserting (*selbstgeltende*) unfolding of the parts—paired with adjectives such as indecisive and indefinable (*indécis*, *indéfinissable*)—resonates strongly with a sensed loss of familiar references to a shared topical and social imaginary. This freedom came as so much of a shock that Baillot at first simply considered it "mad." Even the enthusiastic Marx had to report that these quartets had very rarely found performers ready for them. In prescribing a more intensive ensemble rehearsal than a routine performance seemed to warrant, Marx envisaged the need for a reformed model of musical education, training performers to give shape to the ensemble in constantly new ways.

The late Beethoven quartets are often portrayed as the epitome of a key modern move: the transition from an ancien régime of "brillant," hierarchical quartets to a democratic ideal of part writing and performance. In such a story, the ensemble led by Pierre Baillot, which premiered these quartets in Paris, is cast in the French past rather than in the Germanesque universal future of string quartet culture—and, metaphorically, humanity—revealed by Beethoven.[93] Traces of the ensemble's rehearsals, however, invite us to rethink the challenges that the late Beethoven quartets presented in the late 1820s. Against the backdrop of the Boccherini, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven they had

[92] Urhan had played in the orchestra of the Chapelle Royal, then in that of the Opéra, eventually replacing Baillot as concertmaster. In April 1824 he replaced Simon Mialle as the first viola in Baillot's ensemble. Paul Garnault, "Chrétien Urhan (1790–1845)," *Revue de Musicologie* 11 (1930): 98–111; and Fauquet, *Les sociétés de musique de chambre*, 44.

[93] Studies that do not focus on the ensemble's experience with the late quartets tend to portray Baillot's series as key in accustoming Parisians to Beethoven's "revolutions"; see, for instance, James H. Johnson, "Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France," *19th-Century Music* 15 (1991): 23–35, at 23, 32.

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performed almost in a loop since 1814, the annotations that Baillot and his affiliates left on Beethoven's Op. 127 and Op. 130 highlight one difficulty they faced: anticipating the interplay among the four instruments. As Marx put it, players of Beethoven late quartets could no longer be brothers-in-art (*Kunstbrüder*) who understand each other at a glance via shared codes, which is what topics provided in the usual repertoire played by Baillot's ensemble. In selling the late Beethoven quartets, Maurice Schlesinger predicted that "we will never get tired of performing or hearing Beethoven's inimitable productions."[94] Yet, in the case of these quartets, the claim had less to do with the fact that these works were perceived as "classics" or "exemplary" of the quartet repertoire, and more to do with the fact that they were not. Throughout the nineteenth century their story would be one of repeated hearings; listeners required multiple goes at decoding their unconventional idiom.[95] I have told a story of repeated playing, one that connects the priorities and anxieties of different agents who first handled the late quartets. Beethoven encouraged public interest by having different performers compete to measure themselves against the unconventional interplay of Op. 127, while Schlesinger, in selling the music, was wary it would necessitate rehearsals that had challenged even quartet professionals of the calibre of Baillot and Urhan. The sociability of Beethoven's late quartets had to be patiently engineered behind the scenes, a step that increased this music's distance from past quartet cultures and shaped a whole new notion of making music together.

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ABSTRACT

The history of Beethoven's late quartets has usually been told by separating (and redeeming) the composer's aesthetic priorities from the difficulties encountered by the works' early performers, publishers, and listeners. This article weaves together Beethoven's interests with those of his publisher Maurice Schlesinger and the violinist Pierre Baillot, whose ensemble first performed the late quartets in Paris between 1827 and

[94] [Maurice Schlesinger], "Monument érigé à Beethoven. Seule Collection complète des Trios, Quatuors et Quintetti composés pour instrumens à cordes, par Louis van Beethoven," *Revue musicale* 5 (1829): 285.

[95] On the rise of societies dedicated to the late Beethoven quartets in mid-nineteenth-century Paris and London, see Fauquet, *Les sociétés de musique de chambre*, 125–36; and Christina Bashford, "The Late Beethoven Quartets and the London Press, 1836–ca. 1850," *Musical Quarterly* 84 (2000): 84–122. On events featuring repeated auditions of the same quartet, see Robert Adelson, "Beethoven's String Quartet in E flat Op. 127: A Study of the First Performances," *Music and Letters* 79 (1998): 219–43.

1829. I navigate the traffic among these parties to reassess what was difficult about this music and, on this basis, test new routes to explore early nineteenth-century string quartet culture. One issue these different agents faced—whether in presenting the quartets to the Viennese public (Beethoven), selling them in Paris (Schlesinger), or performing them (Baillot)—was that the late quartets seemed to call for a new kind of ensemble rehearsal. The genre's proverbial sociability, historically supporting an almost immediate and shared grasp of the performers' interplay, was compromised in Beethoven's late quartets by a loss in topicality. The erosion of topical references and familiar textures in these quartets made it harder for performers to predict how to coordinate their moves. Musical topics, I argue, functioned as a means of communication not only with listeners but also among performers within an ensemble. In contrast, the sociability of Beethoven's late quartets had to be patiently engineered through dedicated rehearsals, a step that distanced this music from past quartet cultures and shaped a new notion of making music together.

Keywords: Beethoven's late quartets, ensemble rehearsals, sociability, musical topics, Maurice Schlesinger, Pierre Baillot

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