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Why do we need another recording of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony?

Symphony No. 9
Benjamin Zander Discusses Beethoven's Ninth Symphony

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Notes and discussion in English

After more than 150 recordings of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, why do we need another? According to Benjamin Zander – who also recorded it with the Boston Philharmonic in 1992[1] – the answer is that 'none of the available versions I know actually follow Beethoven's instructions literally throughout. Neither in the matter of tempo, nor dynamics. (...) I believe that we are offering, as closely as we are able, Beethoven's stated intentions.' Accordingly, Zander takes Beethoven's metronome marks as holy writ, and every section starts exactly at the indicated speed and stays there, with very few departures from the tempo that are not explicitly indicated in the score, and a fairly rigid adherence to the printed dynamics. As a result, and with a few exceptions that will be discussed below, Zander's recording follows Beethoven's tempo indications and dynamics to an unprecedented extent.[2]

[1] Benjamin Zander, cond., Boston Philharmonic, Chorus Pro Musica, *Beethoven: Symphony No. 9, Op. 125*, IMP Masters, 28094812, 1992.

[2] The recording, including Zander's discussion, can be found on Youtube, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEPmY38gewc&list=OLAK5uy_mI5prpNqxXcUgUN_tg1UgOwYyhRhv9k90

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This might surprise those familiar with the recordings of this symphony by period instrument ensembles such as the London Classical Players and Anima Eterna, or the 2011 recording by the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under Riccardo Chailly, and others that made similar claims about the tempo and often even printed the published metronome marks in the CD booklet.[3] Nevertheless, however, almost all of these ensembles actually perform one or more parts of the symphony at speeds slower than indicated. In the first movement, for instance, while Beethoven's metronome mark is ♩=88, the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and Anima Eterna hover in the lower 80s, while Norrington's London Classical Players approach it from around 78.[4] True to his word, Zander starts at 88, and stays there throughout as described above; the other movements, even the slow third movement, are subjected to the same approach. The sheer audacity of this undertaking is worthy of admiration, and the display of the players' technical skills is certainly impressive,

[3] Roger Norrington, cond., London Classical Players, *Beethoven: Symphonies 1-9, Overtures*, EMI, 0724356194328, 1999 (reissue of recordings between 1987 and 1989); Jos van Immerseel, cond. Anima Eterna, *Beethoven: Symphonies / Overtures*, Zig Zag, B0014WSWTY, 2008; Riccardo Chailly, cond. Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, *Beethoven: The Symphonies*, Decca, 478 2721, 2009. Incidentally, Zander replaces the published metronome marks in the CD booklet by a page from Beethoven's conversation books, where the metronome marks were first written down. See Dagmar Beck, ed., *Ludwig van Beethoven's Konversationshefte* 11 vols., vol. 10 *Hefte 114–127* (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1993): 243–245.

[4] For a comparison of Norrington's reading with earlier recordings, see Richard Taruskin, 'Resisting the Ninth', in *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 235–261, specifically at 239–242.

although an extra recording session had to be organised to ensure that all the takes were as close as possible to the indicated speeds.

Zander's interpretation clearly owes a debt to the recordings mentioned above, but its closest relative is probably René Leibowitz's 1961 recording with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Beecham Choral Society,[5] which constituted one of the first recorded attempts to follow the metronome marks closely at a time when they were still regularly dismissed on the basis of Schindlerian folklore.[6] And much like Leibowitz, Zander's most important achievement is to show how disconnected we are from the speeds that Beethoven's metronome marks *literally* indicate, and how counterintuitive they are, particularly if one adheres to them all the way through.

Nevertheless, the press release that accompanied the recording makes a very different claim:

> *Musical Disruptor: Conductor Benjamin Zander Challenges Orthodoxy in Recording of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. London's Philharmonia Orchestra & The Philharmonia Chorus Realize the Composer's True Intentions*
>
> Imagine Beethoven sitting in the balcony as you play the Ninth Symphony, shaking his head and saying "no, no, no" every time you stray from how he wants his monumental

[5] René Leibowitz, cond., Royal Philharmonic Orchestra & Beecham Choral Society, *Beethoven: The 9 Symphonies*, Urania Records, 2014 (reissue of recordings released in 1961).

[6] See Donald W. MacArdle, ed., *Beethoven as I Knew Him: A Biography by Anton Schindler*, trans. Constance S. Jolly, (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 423–426. Many of these claims were already contradicted by Gustav Nottebohm in *Beethoveniana*, (Leipzig: J. Rieter-Biedermann, 1872), 126–137.

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> piece performed. That's the vision conductor Benjamin Zander conjured up to ensure he would remain true to the composer, fulfilling what has been a nearly five-decade quest to give listeners something they have never before heard – the Ninth exactly as Beethoven intended. (...) Beethoven's original intent has been misrepresented, misunderstood, ignored or just considered too darn difficult to play. "The vast majority of performances of the Ninth diverge quite significantly from what is written in the score. I have sought to unearth exactly what is written. For me, this study has proved to be revelatory. I hope people will be moved anew by the beauty and power of Beethoven's vision, not because a conductor has slavishly followed those instructions, but because it reveals new evidence of his 'unfettered genius,'" he says.[7]

The problems with claiming to have understood and achieved a composer's intentions have been discussed in detail elsewhere;[8] in addition to the concept of intentions being unstable the primary problem is that they cannot be fully known due to a lack of evidence. As Richard Taruskin put it, 'we cannot know intentions, for many reasons – or rather, we cannot know we know them',[9] and

[7] 'Musical Disruptor: Conductor Benjamin Zander Challenges Orthodoxy in Recording of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. London's Philharmonia Orchestra & The Philharmonia Chorus Realize the Composer's True Intentions', https://www.benjaminzander.org/press-release-the-story-of-the-project/ (Accessed 6 June 2019).

[8] The classic example here is William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy', *Sewanee Review*, liv (1946), 468–488.

[9] Taruskin, *Text & Act*, 97.

those who claim to have realized them make a bigger claim than the evidence can justify. Furthermore, the idea that 'true intentions', to the extent that they can be known, constitute an interpretational zenith is one that has been thoroughly discredited.[10] So the fact that this recording is advertised with such a disreputable notion gives the impression that Zander is not really interested in musicological debate. Considering the large amount of explanatory material on the two accompanying disks, however, that is clearly not the case, and it seems uncharitable to consider the press release as anything else than a misstep or deliberate provocation by his publicist. Much more important is the question to what extent this recording actually incorporates what is known about Beethovenian performance practice, and by implication could represent something close to 'Beethoven's vision'. As the following will show, the very aspects of Zander's interpretation that provide the most persuasive answer to the question asked at the start of this review actually depart from, rather than conform to, Beethoven's intentions – to the extent that we can know them.

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The importance that Beethoven ascribed to being able to communicate the tempo that he had in mind is well documented, and he embraced the metronome as soon as he could: the first known metronome mark is found on a corrected copy of the Cantata *Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt*

[10] For a rather pointed formulation of this, see Taruskin, *Text & Act*, specifically at 212.

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op. 112 sent to Michael Umlauf,[11] the director of the choir at the premiere on 25 December 1815,[12] shortly after Maelzel's patent was granted.[13] In 1817, after a year of compositional inertia, legal battles, and depression,[14] Beethoven published the metronome marks for all the previously published symphonies,[15] with those for the string quartets following the year after.[16] Further evidence for the importance that Beethoven attached to the metronome is found in his correspondence from 1818 onwards, which shows that he planned to provide metronome marks for almost every new composition from then on.[17] Although these metronome marks were often

[11] Corrected copy of the Cantata op. 112, Beethoven-Haus Bonn, BH 85.

[12] 'Wien', *Wiener Zeitung*, (6 January 1816): 21. Like many others, Zander overlooks these early markings, and places Beethoven's first use of the metronome two years later.

[13] 'Specification of the Patent granted to John Maelzel ....', *The Repertory of Arts, Manufactures, and Agriculture...*, 2nd series, vol. 33 (London: J. Wyatt, 1818): 7–13.

[14] See Barry Cooper, 'Declining Productivity (1815–1817)', in *Beethoven*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): 254–279.

[15] 'Die Tempo's sämmtlicher Sätze aller Symphonien des Hrn L. v. Beethoven, vom Verf. selbst nach Maelzels Metronom bestimmt', *[Leipziger] Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, 19 (1817): 873–874.

[16] *Bestimmung des musikalischen Zeitmasses nach Mälzel's Metronom, Zweite Lieferung. Sämmtliche Quartetten von dem Author selbst bezeichnet*, (Vienna: S.A. Steiner, c1818). A copy of this document survives in the New York Public Library, Drexel 3613.

[17] This includes the Missa solemnis (Briefwechsel, vol. 6, Letter 2244), the Piano Sonatas opp. 109, 110 and 111 (vol. 4, Letter 1476), the String Quartet op. 127 (vol. 6, Letter 2110), and various

set outside of a direct performance context,[18] the vast majority were for compositions that had already been performed many times, and as such hold some value for understanding historical performance practice.

Unlike the metronome marks of some later composers, which can be fairly erratic, those by Beethoven fall into a certain pattern, an observation first made by Rudolf Kolisch,[19] with whom Zander was personally acquainted in his earlier years. Kolisch's ideas were developed by several other scholars, and a consensus was formed that there was a correlation between the time signature, Italian tempo indication, and the smallest note values on the one hand, and the metronome marks that Beethoven supplied between 1815 and 1826 on the other.[20] Other factors, such as instrumentation or affect, do not seem to have much influence, as one can see from a comparison of the two Allegros in ¢ with quavers as smallest note values: the first movements of the piano

other works. See also Marten Noorduin, 'Re-examining Czerny's and Moscheles's Metronome Marks for Beethoven's Piano Sonatas', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 15/2 (2018): 209–235, at 210.

[18] In the case of those for the Ninth Symphony, there is clear evidence for this in the conversation books. See Beck, *Konversationshefte* vol. 10: 243–245.

[19] Rudolf Kolisch, 'Tempo and Character in Beethoven's Music', trans. Arthur Mendel, *The Musical Quarterly* 29/2–3 (1943): 169–187 and 291–312.

[20] See amongst others Sandra P. Rosenblum, *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music: Their Principles and Applications* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988) and Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performance Practice 1750–1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

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sonata op. 106 (𝅗𝅥 = 138) and the String Quartet op. 18 no. 4 (𝅗𝅥 =132, printed as 𝅝 =66). Drawing on all of the metronome marks that Beethoven supplied, as well as the early ones by Czerny and Moscheles, it is possible to construct a model of Beethoven's thinking on the subject of tempo, with hypothetical ranges of speeds for each combination of the three factors above.[21] Doing this for *Allegro con brio* movements in 3/4 with semiquavers as smallest note value, for example, results in a range of 𝅗𝅥 = 92–100; other combinations also generally give ranges in which the upper limit is 10% higher than the lower limit. These relatively narrow ranges suggest that Beethoven's sense tempo remained fairly consistent between 1815 and 1826.

But this consistency also suggests a distinction between fast and slow music. In music marked *allegretto* and faster, the metronome marks in any particular metre correlate with the presence of smallest note values no matter where they appear in the movement, as can be seen in a comparison of the 3/4 *Allegro* third movements of the Second and Fifth Symphony. The former contains quavers from bar 22 onwards, while the latter only from bar 116, and only from bar 140 are they found in all instruments. Nevertheless, both movements have very similar speeds: 𝅗𝅥 = 100 and 96, respectively.[22] By contrast, in *andante* movements, or movements with slower tempos, the metronome mark only seems to correlate with the note values in the first few bars. To pick one of many possible examples, the *Adagio ma non troppo* second movement of the String Quartet op. 74 and the short *Poco Adagio* in 3/8 in the last movement of the String Quartet op. 18 no. 1 both have semiquavers as smallest note value at the start and have similar metronome marks (𝅘𝅥𝅯=72 and

[21] Marten Noorduin, *Beethoven's Tempo Indications* (PhD dissertation, University of Manchester, 2016).

[22] Noorduin, *Beethoven's Tempo Indications*, 220.

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69, respectively), despite the fact that the former contains extensive demisemiquaver and even hemidemisemiquaver figurations after about 60 bars. As the consistency observed throughout fast movements is only found in the first few bars of slow movements, it may very well be that Beethoven only intended the metronome mark to apply to the first few bars in the latter, leading to a more flexible tempo.

There is a substantial amount of other circumstantial evidence in support of the conclusion that Beethoven had a more flexible conception of time, particularly in slow music. The most frequently cited evidence is the autograph of the song "So oder so" WoO 148, which reportedly contained the following comment:'100 according to Mälzel, but this can only apply to the first bars, because feeling has its own tempo; this is, however, not completely expressed in this figure (namely 100).'[23] Since the manuscript is lost and neither the comment nor the implied metronome mark appeared in the first edition or any other verifiable document,[24] the extent to which this statement can be taken at face value is debatable. But the principle may very well have applied, as several of Beethoven's closest associates also suggest some degree of flexibility: Ferdinand Ries, a long-time friend of Beethoven, remarked that Beethoven generally kept a strict tempo, with departures to

[23] *Beethoven Werke*, vol. 12, Helga Lühning, ed., *Lieder und Gesänge mit Klavierbegeleitung*, (Munich: G. Henle, 1990), kritischer bericht, 74.

[24] See the annotated first edition in the Beethoven-Haus in Bonn, BH 96.

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create special effects,[25] and other eyewitnesses also describe Beethoven's use of rubato.[26] One of the most detailed descriptions comes from Ignaz Moscheles, another close associate of Beethoven, who translated Schindler's 1840 biography into English and added commentary in the footnotes. One passage discusses the second movement of Beethoven's Second Symphony, and suggests various alterations to tempo for a few bars before returning to the original tempo. Although Schindler's testimony is generally deeply problematic, in this case it may have some value, since Moscheles added a footnote stating that he agreed with this description, and that a certain amount of flexibility was indeed needed to enhance the expression.[27] It is of course debatable to what extent these testimonials represent the authors' knowledge about Beethoven's performance style,

[25] Frederick Noonan, trans., *Remembering Beethoven: The Biographical Notes of Franz Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries*, (London: Deutsch, 1988): 94.

[26] See for instance Ignaz von Seyfried, *Ludwig van Beethoven's Studien*, (Leipzig: Schuberth, 1853): Anhang, 18. Carl Czerny's piano school is often cited as an important source here, specifically the *Complete Theoretical and Practical Piano Forte School ... op.500*, 3 vols. trans. J.A. Hamilton (London: R. Cocks, 1839) vol. 3, 33–4. Nevertheless, the extent to which these descriptions can be said to describe Beethoven's practice is questionable, considering Czerny's own statements in vol. 4, as well as his general attitude towards older playing styles. See Noorduin, 'Re-examining', 224–225, and James Parakilas, 'Playing Beethoven His Way', in *Beyond "The Art of Finger Dexterity": Reassessing Carl Czerny*, ed. David Gramit (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2008): 117–123.

[27] Ignaz Moscheles, ed. & trans., *Life of Beethoven* 2 vols., vol. 2 (London: Henry Colburn, 1841): 141.

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or whether they are attempts to bring into being a new style of interpretation of Beethoven's music that postdates the composer's death.[28] But considering that all of the above evidence points to some degree of flexibility, it is most likely that Beethoven's tempos were also sometimes flexible, and that the pertinent question is where, not whether, flexibility would have been expected or implied.

In Zander's reading of the first two movements of the Ninth Symphony, the lack of flexibility combined with his adherence to the metronome mark gives the music a not inappropriate oppressive quality, but in particular in the first movement there are several rhythmically complex passages that come across as rushed. A good example that can be heard on Youtube is found at the end of the exposition, where the *espressivo* entries of the winds (bars 138–145) are played with the same forward drive and no extra time to breathe, as the preceding flurry of demisemiquavers in the strings.[29] Here, it might have been appropriate to take a little extra time on account of the expressive marking. The third movement also contains similar examples where a completely stable tempo seems inappropriate, particularly at the transition between the *adagio* and *andante* themes,[30] where many other conductors slow down slightly to highlight the transition. Zander's seems to follow the principle here that unless there is an unambiguous instruction to slow down in the score, the tempo is kept constant. As the above has shown, that is not necessarily a principle that Beethoven would have shared, and by only following the indications in the score, Zander reduces a set of complex historical and artistic questions – concerning what historical evidence is valued,

[28] See Noorduin, 'Re-examining', 224–226.

[29] The passage referred to begins at https://youtu.be/EEPmY38gewc?t=191

[30] See bars 23–24, 63–64, 123, etc.

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how to interpret it, and how that information can be fruitfully incorporated into a modern performance – into a purely philological one about texts.

This can most clearly be seen in Zander's choice of which metronome marks to follow, particularly in the *Presto* in ¢ of the second movement, in which the 𝅗𝅥 = 116 is often considered to be too slow for a *Presto*, and for which – like several other scholars[31] – Zander considers the 𝅗𝅥 a misprint for 𝅝. The arguments for this, supplied by the musicologist Stewart Young,[32] include the following. Firstly, there appears to be an incongruity between the metronome mark and the tempo indication: at 𝅗𝅥 = 116, the Trio does not sound like a *Presto*. Secondly, there is similar music by Beethoven that is often played at around 𝅝 = 116, such as the *Scherzo* in ¢ of the String Quartet op. 131. Thirdly, at the first performance of the Ninth Symphony in Vienna directed by Michael Umlauf during which Beethoven was on stage supposedly indicating the tempos, the *Presto* was described as 'a brilliant march'.[33] So at first sight it would not seem inappropriate to play the *Presto* at around 𝅝 = 116.

But the evidence does allow for alternative interpretations that complicate Zander's claims. Taking the arguments in reverse, Beethoven's marches almost always move at a speed of around

[31] See Peter Stadlen, 'Beethoven and the Metronome,' *Music & Letters*, iil (1967): 330-357, and Clive Brown, 'Historical Performance, Metronome Marks and Tempo in Beethoven's Symphonies', *Early Music*, xix/2 (May 1991): 247–258, at 256–258.

[32] See Stewart Young, *A Reappraisal of Tempo, Character, and their Relationship, with particular respect to the Music of Beethoven and Schumann* (PhD dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1979) 2 vols., vol. 2, section 5.4.78 and following.

[33] *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 26/27 (1 July 1824): 437–442, at 440.

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80 applied to a variety of note values,[34] far enough from 116 to raise the possibility that the speed taken at the first performance could have been different from that written down more than two years later. So although that comment is hard to square with the relatively slow printed speed, it arguably supports taking the *Presto* at around 𝅗𝅥 = 80, a popular alternative.[35] Furthermore, there is also other music by Beethoven with similar characteristics that moves at a speed close to ♩=116, although these tend to have somewhat more extensive quaver figurations.[36] And finally, the fact that ♩ = 116 does not sound like a *Presto* is not necessarily persuasive: if as 21st-century listeners we could reverse engineer our listening habits, these metronome marks would not be controversial in the first place. In the context of other *Prestos*, ♩=116 can make good sense, considering the fact that the penultimate metronome mark for the symphony is a *Prestissimo* with a similar range of note values marked ♩=132, not too far away from 116. Consequently, despite Zander's reasonable argument for 𝅗𝅥 = 116 and its interesting effect, there are also other options that are historically plausible. But whether Beethoven intended minim or semibreve when he wrote down the metronome marks, the interpretation of this section is one of the more striking features of this recording, and demonstrates that the argument that it is too fast to be practicable is ill-founded.

[34] Noorduin, *Beethoven's Tempo Indications*, 151.

[35] Cooper, *Beethoven* (Oxford, 2008), 371-2, and Jonathan Del Mar, ed., *Beethoven: Symphonie nr. 9 in d-moll / Symphony no. 9 in D minor op. 125*, (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1996). Critical commentary: 38.

[36] For instance, the final *Presto* of the Septet op. 20, the *Prestissimo* final movement of op. 2 no. 1 (which Czerny and Moscheles gave editorial speeds between ♩= 104 and 112), and even the final *Prestissimo* from the Ninth Symphony, which Beethoven marked ♩= 132.

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There is one other metronome mark that Zander discusses at length: the speed for the Turkish March, indicated as ♩. = 80 when the metronome marks were printed. But the lengthy treatment is hardly justified: back in the 1950s a persuasive case was made in favour of 𝅗𝅥. = 80 by Hermann Beck,[37] who argued that since the *Freude* theme always appears at a speed of around 80, and the original list in the conversation books misses out the note value for this section, it seems likely that the dotted crotchet that was added later, although seemingly plausible in a 6/8 bar, was a mistake. This argument has been widely accepted, with the notable exception of Norrington's recording with the London Classical Players.

Besides tempo issues, the other selling point of this recording involves the dynamics, which are treated with similar literalism as the tempo, but remain largely undiscussed in the accompanying material. Here, it is worth pointing out that nineteenth-century discussions of dynamics generally did not stress the inherent absoluteness of the dynamic level, but (as with tempo) the underlying mechanisms that facilitate changes.[38] Nevertheless, as Thomas Schmidt has argued, there were composers who swam against the tide, warning performers against changes in dynamics with cautionary dynamics, and Beethoven seems to have been one of them.[39] In the second movement, for instance, it seems that Beethoven tried to control the dynamic level as much as possible with successive indications of *sempre pianissimo*, providing support for Zander's

[37] Hermann Beck, 'Bemerkungen zu Beethoven's Tempi', in *Beethoven-Jahrbuch* (3d series), ii (1955–1956): 24–54.

[38] Thomas Schmidt, 'Preventive and Cautionary Dynamics in the Symphonies of Mendelssohn and his Time', *The Journal of Musicology* 31/1 (Winter 2014): 43-90, at 55-6.

[39] Schmidt, 'Preventive and Cautionary Dynamics', 57-60.

concern with these indications. But on the whole, most recordings show a fair amount of fidelity towards Beethoven's dynamics with few clear contradictions, so in this respect Zander's choices are arguably less impactful than those regarding tempo.

There is nevertheless one remarkable re-interpretation of dynamics, on the last harmony of the first choral section, immediately preceding the Turkish March. On this *fortissimo* and *molto tenuto* chord, Zander makes a large tutti decrescendo.[40] It is one of the most striking moments in this recording: the avoidance of a dynamic cliff edge as heard in most other recordings subtly changes the dramatic effect of the passage, highlighting the approaching military march that follows. In the commentary Zander states that this controlled decrescendo initially caused some problems for the choir, but it is nonetheless a very impressive effect.

The justification, however, is curious, and depends entirely on a decrescendo marking in this passage that Beethoven added to the autograph score that he sent to the Philharmonic Society in London, which had commissioned the symphony.[41] It is worth noting that the marking only occurs in the violins and not in the other parts, an observation made by Jonathan Del Mar, whose edition Zander uses in this recording.[42] So was this marking for the violins alone meant to apply to the entire ensemble?

[40] See https://youtu.be/a1if-qr2XyA?t=493 for the relevant passage.

[41] Autograph copy of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony for the Philharmonic Society, British Library, RPS MS 5, 226.

[42] Del Mar, *Symphony no. 9*, critical commentary, 57-58. There are nevertheless some small differences between Zander's recording and Del Mar's text that suggest that the soloists may have used a different edition: in bar 767, 777, and 779, the soloists sing 'Freude', the reading in most

The circumstances of the first performances would suggest otherwise. As Otto Biba has shown, an inventory of 1827 indicating the materials used in the first Viennese performance suggests that the string section may have been of comparable size to the Philharmonia's, with an estimated 60 string players in the former and 51 players in the latter.[43] The first London performance may have used similar numbers: an account list from 1831 includes the names of 50 string players. The choirs, however, were vastly smaller than the one used in the recording: the Viennese 1827 inventory includes parts for ten sopranos, nine altos, eleven tenors, and nine basses,[44] and the choir used for the first London performance may have been of a similar size: for a performance in 1837 the same ensemble engaged '10 tenors, 12 Basses, and 14 Women for the Chorus', as well as 8 boys.[45] By contrast, the list of singers in the CD booklet includes 45 sopranos, 26 altos, 25 tenors, and 30 basses.

editions, rather than 'Tochter', which Del Mar advocates. *Symphony no. 9*, critical commentary, 67.

[43] Biba, 'Zur Uraufführung von Beethovens 9. Symphonie', in *Münchener Beethoven Studien*, ed. Johannes Fischer (Munich: Katzbichler, 1992): 57-69, at 64-66.

[44] Otto Biba, 'Zur Uraufführung', 64.

[45] The minute book of the directors of the Philharmonic Society show that the size of the choir was discussed on 5 April 1837 in advance of a performance of the symphony later that season. The directors resolved to engage '10 tenors, 12 Basses, and 14 Women for the Chorus', as well as 8 boys, so the London choir probably had a comparable size to that in Vienna. British Library, RPS MS 280, 165r.

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All of this indicates that the balance of the ensemble was very different in the two early performances. It seems possible that the Viennese choir struggled to sustain the *tenuto* chord over the full force of the orchestral *fortissimo*, and that Beethoven added the decrescendo to the violins to accommodate them, rather than challenge them even further. By extending the decrescendo to the entire ensemble, Zander has created a very impressive effect, but has also elevated what appears to be a practical solution to a problem with the balance of the ensemble to 'Beethoven's vision'.

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Considering the large number of interpretations of this symphony that have cited historical evidence as a direct justification for artistic choices, there is a sense that unless a truly radically fresh perspective is adopted this approach might now be yielding diminishing results. As the preceding discussion has shown, if the evidence had been followed more closely, the most interesting aspects of Zander's recording – the radical adherence to the metronome marks and the decrescendo before the Turkish March – would have never made it to the disk. As it stands, this recording offers an overwhelmingly energetic performance with virtuosic playing and a number of worthwhile interpretative surprises, inspired by interpretations of historical evidence with varying degrees of accuracy. There are flaws that many might not be able to look past, and particularly the third movement could have used a much more flexible approach, but the sheer force of Zander's forward drive does make this recording stand out.

But in terms of approach, this recording is in essence no different from many that precede it, as it too seeks to recast the conductor's own artistic vision as the composer's intention. The real

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answer, however, to the question raised at the start of this review is not that Zander has (finally!) achieved Beethoven's intentions. Instead, it simply is that this recording constitutes a new and stimulating approach to a well-known work that both engages with and distances itself from previous interpretations, and offers an opportunity to be re-inspired by one of music history's most important and influential compositions. The press release – which all but uses the A-word[46] – will only inspire a sigh of 'Oh Freunde, nicht diese Töne'.

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[46] For a wider discussion of the problems of 'authenticity', see in particular the contributions by Taruskin 'The authenticity movement can become a positivistic purgatory, literalistic and dehumanizing' and Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, 'What We Are Doing with Early Music Is Genuinely Authentic to Such a Small Degree That the Word Loses Most of Its Intended Meaning' *Early Music* 12/1 (Feb., 1984): 3-12 and 13-16, respectively.