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BEETHOVEN – THE ZEUS OF MODERNITY

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Abstract. A large part of German musicology sees itself as a science of art in the emphatic sense and is committed to quite different principles than historical-critical approaches in the discipline. The latter seek to gain a realistic picture of the history of music, including contemporary ways of thinking, and allow for historical actors to make meaningful, free will decisions within anthropologically determined circumstances. The emphatic science of art, on the other hand, claims to be able to prove and scientifically determine the objects of great art music and their nature. It originated during the Enlightenment, when philosophy took the place of religion and created ever new theoretical constructs of thought presented as scientifically proven and binding. In music, Beethoven rose to the ideal of the ingenious creator, who embodied the progress and achievements of mankind on the path toward perfection. Thus, in the course of the 19th century, a Beethoven cult developed using philosophy as its guide in selecting and evaluating historical sources, gladly accepting literary testimonies as historical fact. Historical criticism, which revealed this construction of a romantic image of Beethoven, was suppressed for a long time. Society's broad acceptance of the notion of the evolutionary progress of mankind, one to which modernity adhered, proved too powerful, and belief in it took the form of an art religion. Beethoven as Zeus of the Third Reich, as the god of modernity, was the program and message of the 14th Secession Exhibition in Vienna in 1902. This image was destructed in the late 20th century.

Keywords: the romantic Beethoven-image, art as religion, monuments, youth movement, national socialism.

For Helmut Kirchmeyer on his 90th birthday

This year, 2020, the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth will be celebrated. In preparation for the anniversary year, a fierce debate took place in the composer's native city of Bonn about his significance for our time and the organization of the celebrations. Manfred Osten, an award-winning German author, lawyer, and cultural historian as well as long-serving Secretary General of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, evidently counts himself among an intellectual elite who feel called upon to determine the course of society. As chairman of the Society of Friends of the

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Beethoven Orchestra, Osten champions his orchestra as “Beethoven’s genuine musical ambassador”. With his Ninth Symphony, Beethoven “formulated a beautiful idea of musical homage to a Europe that now seems to be drifting further and further away from Beethoven’s utopia of brotherhood”. With this, Manfred Osten addresses an ongoing concern, which is “the idea of freedom and brotherhood [...] and thus also the European idea” (Hartmann, 2016). Here Beethoven is politically instrumentalized: “The European idea has its origin here in Bonn with Beethoven”. He is used in a rather dubious sense as the absolute authority for a current social problem, apparently able to show people the right path to a united Europe. Behind this is the idea of Beethoven as a genius and leader, as a guarantor of the truth that promises mankind progress towards an ever better and higher existence. As an exceptional personality, he is considered ahead of the general consciousness, someone only the best intellectuals are able to succeed if his legacy is to be preserved and carried on. Modernism, with all its socio-political implications, once again proves to be the guiding idea here, employing a veritable master narrative to depict Beethoven, with his emphatic art music, as the chosen leading figure of bourgeois art religion. The affirmation of the bourgeois musical culture of the 19th century emerges as the continuation of a genius cult that has acquired great social significance, especially in the 20th century and even under socialist and social democratic auspices. With the declaration of postmodernism, this position has lost its social dominance.

The origins of the romantic image of Beethoven have long been known to musicology, at least since the important work of Arnold Schmitz in 1927 (Schmitz, 1927 & 1978). However, the fact that German musicologists have only been peripherally aware of this

study (Loos, 2013) is enough to indicate the long-held dominance and social validity of the romantic interpretation of Beethoven. Important early protagonists of this interpretation were E. T. A. Hoffmann, Bettina Brentano/von Arnim and Richard Wagner, to name but a few examples. The religious component of the romantic image of Beethoven is especially present in their writings, as it was already in Wilhelm Wackenroder’s romantic view of music (Wackenroder, 1984). Even though Beethoven, socialized as court musician of a prince archbishop, never expressed himself to this effect, artistic-religious tendencies were already attributed to him by contemporaries. E. T. A. Hoffmann ascribed to Beethoven’s instrumental music qualities that would typically be associated with old, polyphonic church music – in a secularized world (Dahlhaus, 1984). In her epistolary novel, Bettina von Arnim formulated fictitious letters to Goethe and described Beethoven in them: “Before you, I can well confess that I believe in a divine magic which is the element of the spiritual nature, this magic is exercised by Beethoven in his art” (Von Arnim, 1835). Here, she also put the sentence in Beethoven’s mouth that later became a dictum: “When I open my eyes, I must sigh, for what I see is against my religion, and I must despise the world that does not understand that music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy” (Von Arnim, 1835). Just like Robert Schumann (Bischoff, 1994), Richard Wagner became infected by the Beethoven hype that was rampant during his studies in Leipzig (Kropfinger, 1975). The extent to which Wagner himself elevated the Beethoven image to an object of religious worship is clearly on display in his Parisian novella *A Pilgrimage to Beethoven*, which contains — without any irony — sentences such as: “As far as I am concerned, the heavens were opened to me; I was



Beethovendenkmal
Bonn 1845



Julius Nisle, Faust (1840)

transfigured and worshipped the genius who – like Florestan – had led me out of night and chains into light and freedom” (Wagner, 1911b, p. 105). Or: “Here I was, in the sanctuary” (Wagner, 1911b, p. 107). Or: “Tears had come to my eyes, I could have knelt before him” (Wagner, 1911b, p. 111). Wagner’s religious understanding of Beethoven was enhanced by reading Arthur Schopenhauer, who all but declared music the supreme world principle and the most powerful means of perception. Schopenhauer’s influence is evident, for example, in Wagner’s essay “Beethoven” (1870). The “Bühnenweihfestspiel” (stage consecration festival drama) *Parsifal* represents the completion of Wagner’s secularized liturgy, an endeavour that was accurately depicted in the German feature film *Richard Wagner* from 1913 (director: William Wauer, Carl Froelich; screenplay: William Wauer).

Beethoven Monuments

The rise of the Beethoven cult in the 19th century can be seen particularly clearly in the Beethoven

monuments of the time, a central feature of which is the frequent correspondence with the paradigm of the enthroned ruler (Zeus or Christ as *Majestas Domini*) (Loos, 2018a). I have often worked on this topic, but since my remarks have rarely been taken into account in the research literature (Bettermann, 2007; Alai, 2000), I take the liberty of presenting them here once again. The construction of Beethoven monuments goes back to Robert Schumann, who proposed three monuments: in Bonn, Vienna and Leipzig (Schumann, 1836, p. 133). Many more would be created in the years to come, but these three in particular can shed light on the development of Beethoven reception in the 19th century: in 1845 in Bonn (Ernst Julius Hähnel), Beethoven appears as a scholar, as Faust; in 1880 in Vienna (Caspar von Zumbusch) he is portrayed as a prophet, as Moses; in 1902 in Vienna — but by an artist from Leipzig, where the monument later found its home — as Zeus, as God (Loos, 1996 & 1998).

In 1902, the famous (and for a long time also infamous) Beethoven sculpture by Max Klinger stood at



the center of the Vienna Secession exhibition (Klimt & Hoffmann, 2011). As an *Ideenkunstwerk* (artwork of ideas), it constitutes the modern counterpart to the Zeus figure of Phidias in Olympus in the sense of a dialectical philosophy of history. As the supreme deity in the synthesis of antiquity and Christianity, Beethoven thus represents the new bourgeois, advanced, and superior age. Klinger not only creates a polychrome god, like Phidias, he also has him assume the seated ruler's pose, a reference not only to Zeus but also to Christ (*Majestas Domini*). On the back of the throne, Venus Anadyomene and Golgotha, key scenes from antiquity and Christianity respectively, are juxtaposed, just as depictions of the Torment of Tantalus and the Fall of Man stand opposite each other on the armrests. Thus, the new God leaves thesis and antithesis behind and embodies the synthesis of a new, higher age. This subtext of the Klinger-Beethoven constitutes a theme that was apparently highly present in the inner circle of the Secession exhibition in 1902, functioning as a guiding concept. While the individual art contributions are all well known, the inner consistency this message lends them may be surprising. Klinger's Beethoven was positioned in the main hall of the exhibition pavilion, and visitors were essentially led in a procession through the building around the central statue of the god. The

thoughts behind the sculpture were introduced straight-away by the configuration of the main hall: The back wall behind Beethoven was designed by Alfred Roller as *The Sinking Night* in correspondence with the back of the throne, with the opposition between antiquity and Christianity that had been overcome. On the front wall, in the Beethoven's line of sight, Adolf Böhm depicted *The Day to Come*. The juxtaposition of a dark past and bright future, with Beethoven as the decisive figure in the transition, reveals an unbroken belief in progress based on the power of music and its divine creators.

After entering the temple of art, the visitor was first led into the left side room, where Gustav Klimt had installed his Beethoven Frieze.¹ We are familiar with the sequence of events: the longing for happiness leads a weak, suffering human race to the well-armed strong one, who is inspired by compassion and ambition and bears the facial features of Beethoven. He fights against the hostile forces that can be found on the narrow front wall: against the dangerous Typhon and the Gorgons, against disease, madness and death, against lust, unchastity and immoderation, and gnawing sorrow. Mankind's longing for happiness moves on toward poetry on the right wall. Here it accumulates and finds its expression. An empty space follows



before the Arts head into the ideal realm of pure joy, pure happiness and pure love, forming the choir of the angels of paradise with “Joy, beautiful spark of the gods” and giving this kiss to the whole world, redemption (XIV. Kunstausstellung der Vereinigung...). The significance of the peculiar empty space in the frieze was reliant on its exact position in the room. It was located above an opening in the wall through which the visitor could look into the main hall and see the statue of Beethoven by Klinger. The moment of redemption was thus set into motion by the statue of the god, which in turn was an indispensable factor in the programme of the frieze. After walking around Beethoven, the purified believer was led through the right side room (which corresponded with the opposite left one) to the exit, from which he could once again look through an opening in the wall to the main hall and see Klinger’s Beethoven. Above this opening toward the statue of the god was a fresco by Josef Maria Auchentaller “Joy, beautiful spark of the gods”, which apostrophized the figure of the Redeemer in jubilant appreciation (and also included a blank space above the view of Beethoven). On the opposite longitudinal wall was a painting by Ferdinand Andri, *Mannesmut und Kampfesfreude* (Eng. *Male courage and fighting spirit*). The new, advanced man, who was invoked by all of this, found his embodiment in the bronze figure

Athlete by Max Klinger (created 1898/1901), which was placed free-standing in front of a pillar in the hall. It is important to note that men represent positive ideal images here, as demonstrated by the savior Beethoven, Andri’s “manly courage and fighting spirit”, and the athlete as the culmination of evolution, while women represent above all hostile forces.

The exhibition was a great success, Gustav Mahler provided the musical backdrop for the opening with musicians from the Vienna Philharmonic. The enormous public response was reflected not least by caricatures of the exhibit appearing in various magazines in 1902 (Cadenbach, 1986, & Celenza, 2010, p. 515).

Satyr Play

1) The Beethoven who has become mad. Naive visitors who came after the meal. Come drink to the horror with a glass of wine.

2) “Beethoven in the bath boiler. The prototype of Klinger’s newest sculpture”.

3) “What’s this idea of Klinger, to sit me in the Steam-Bath and let an Eagle operate on my Corns”.

4) “Very oppressive it seems, Beethoven, your mood / The sweat is pouring out and your cheeks are glowing / Oh, we understand, Master, the rage — / Great is the agony, your efforts in vain!”



5) “Kikeriki at Klinger’s Beethoven. The man can be helped!” [with Hunyady bitter water, a laxative] (Kikeriki 42, No. 36, 1902).

6) “Why does Beethoven clench his fists as if he were angry and wanted to strike?” = But darling, Beethoven was only deaf and not blind. He must find the company of the Secessionists here quite repugnant.”

7) “Klinger’s Beethoven — Beethoven in rainy weather — the eagle as a corn surgeon — B. as a boxer — B. in the family circle — B. in the sitz bath.”

8) “Unpleasant adventures of Mahler at the Secession. Beethoven: I’ve finally got you! Just you wait, you symphony botcher.” (Kikeriki 42, No. 33, April 24, 1902).

9) “Very hasty draft of a national monument for the famous embryologist Professor Schenk.” Samuel Leopold Schenk (1840–1902) was an avowed Darwinian (Calenza, 2010, p. 515).

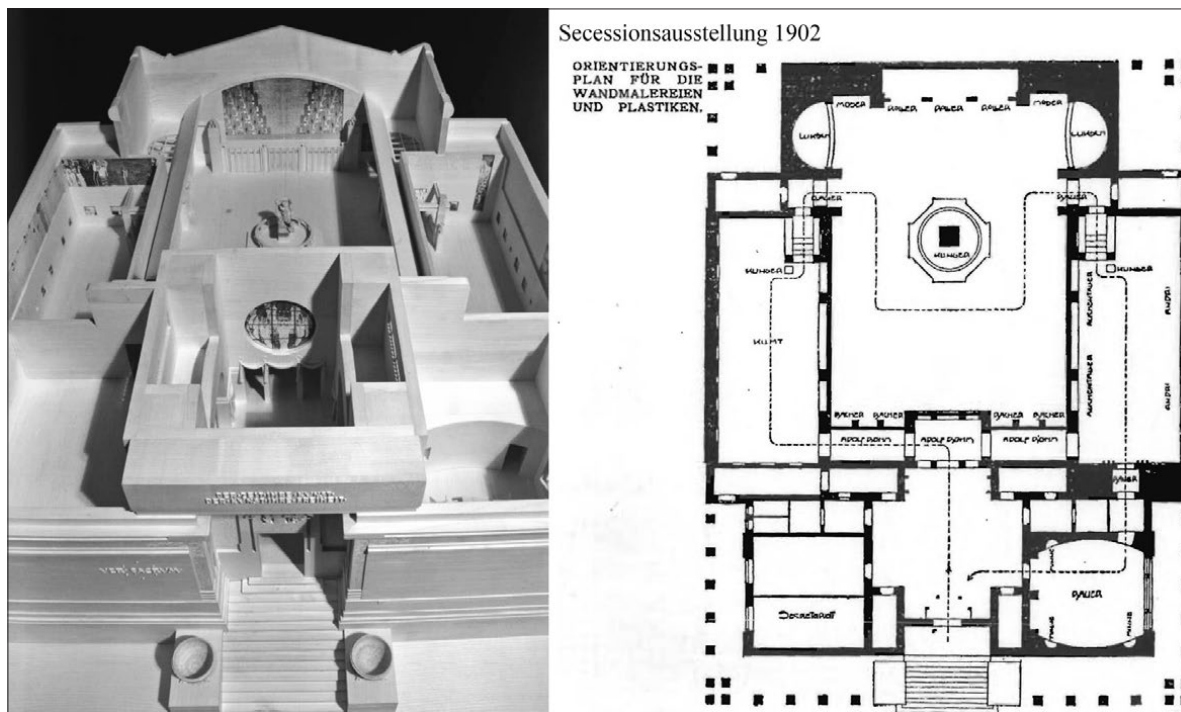
10) “System ‘Eagle’. Beethoven drives from Keller & Reiner back to Leipzig”. The Keller & Reiner Gallery was founded in October 1897 in Potsdamer Straße in Berlin and sold art and handicraft objects.

After the Secession exhibition was completed,

the city of Leipzig decided to purchase Klinger’s *Beethoven* and found a representative place for it in its Museum of Fine Arts, creating a separate annex in the form of an apse as the “most sacred cella” (Seidl, 1927, p. 416). From 1981 to 2004 it stood in the foyer of the newly built Gewandhaus on Karl-Marx-Platz, accentuating the art-religious consecration of this GDR representative building (after the University Church of St. Paul, which also stood on the plaza and had remained intact after the war, was demolished in 1968). Klinger’s sculpture embodies, when interpreted correctly, a crystallization point in the historical series of Beethoven monuments and sculptures, lending a moral quality to the art-religious exaltation of composers of serious music as genuine creators from nothing.

Weimar Republic

Due to both the cultural criticism of the German Youth Movement directed at the individualistic, “bad 19th century” and the collapse of all traditional values brought on by the First World War, the romantic image of Beethoven was increasingly called into question in the Weimar Republic. Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht summarized the Beethoven reception of the 1920s under

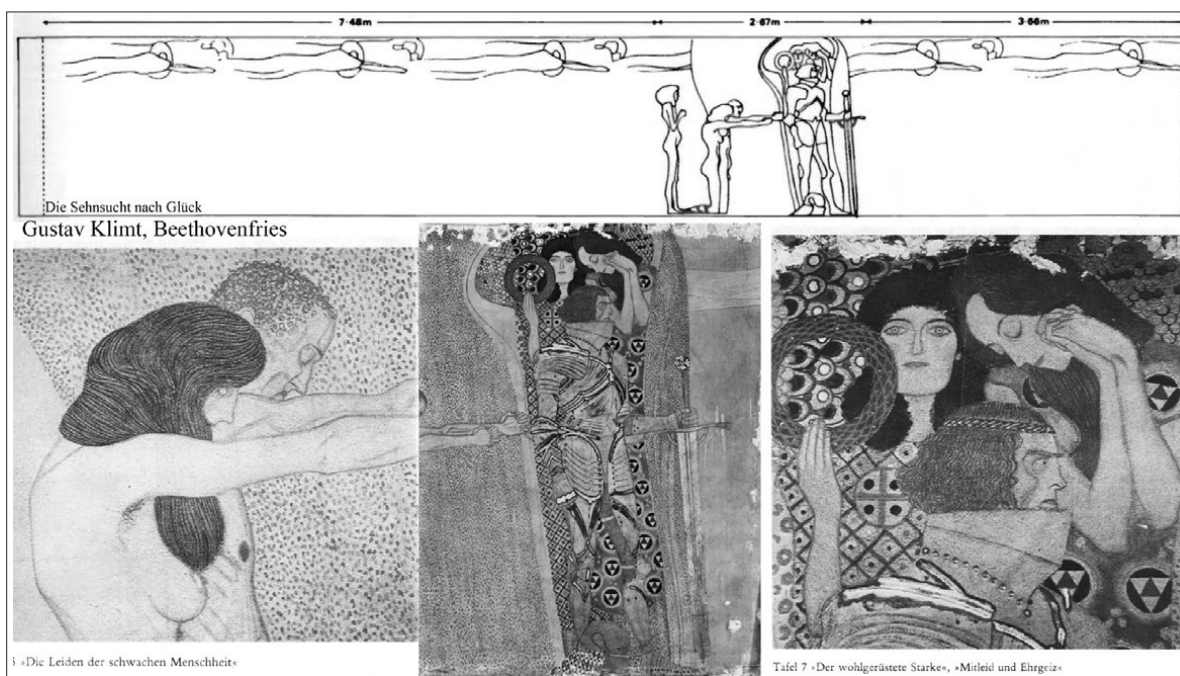


the title “Distance and Emphasis and what they have in common” (Eggebrecht, 1972). Eggebrecht cites none other than Ferruccio Busoni, who in 1922 posed the critical question: “What did Beethoven give us?” Busoni’s intention was to start a “discussion of a question that we have faithfully affirmed for a century without examining it; by whose standard we measured everything else, with the bias of its unconditional superiority; by which we allowed ourselves to be enslaved, in opinions and deeds” (Busoni, 1922, p. 19). Busoni sees bias above all in the disregard for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who, when compared to Beethoven, he thought deserved much more appreciation. However, while he denounces the excesses of the Beethoven cult, Busoni does not fundamentally question the position of Beethoven. He argues that with Beethoven, “the human condition [...] entered art music for the first time as a central issue” (Busoni, 1922, p. 20) and criticizes: “A militant priesthood organized itself without formal arrangement [...] and has henceforth stood guard over a work of musical humanity with thriving symbolic potential” (Busoni, 1922, p. 21). For Busoni, Beethoven had in any case managed to become a model through his “sincerity” and through “the withdrawal of the virtuoso in favor of the ‘idea’.” (Busoni, 1922, p. 22). However, the expansion of the musical

means proved to have pernicious effects afterwards, as “the constant desire to outdo everything before, when cultivated for its own sake, leads to decadence”. The cultural-critical tone that Busoni strikes here can also be found in the writings of Felix Draeseke and Hans Pfitzner. On the other hand, the crisis of the romantic image of Beethoven in the 1920s, limited to only a few exponents, was hardly profound (Haas, 1963). Even the frequently invoked New Objectivity or the politically committed music of the Weimar Republic retained the basic conviction of the status of music as an art religion of modernity in the sense of a “holy sobriety” (Loos, 2017; Loos, 2018b).

Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Beethoven Address in Zurich on December 10, 1920" demonstrates the continuity of the Beethoven apotheosis. Hofmannsthal conveys a virtually unaltered version of the romantic image of Beethoven when he claims

“that tones, to speak the unspeakable, are the sole equivalent to music – hence tones! called up into music in order to directly invoke the spirit, where his mouth, where Schiller’s and Goethe’s mouths fall silent, who remains to speak for the deepest urge of a deeply transcendental, i.e. religious nation, who remains to go up before God,



even if it is with a burdened, impeded voice like Moses, the first of the prophets – who remains but he: Beethoven.”

For Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Beethoven’s head is “templum in modum arcis, a temple of God in the shape of a castle”, similar to Arthur Paunzen’s depiction in his etching “Fantasy on Beethoven’s Ninth” from 1918. Hofmannsthal sees a deep affinity between Beethoven and Schiller in the

“deepest urge: to have the final say, to express the idea itself, not to seek the melodiousness of words, but to look for their sublime, immediately effective power – and is it not significant that when Beethoven wants to go beyond the boundaries of music, he reaches for Schiller’s rhythms and words to break through?” (Von Hofmannsthal, 1979a).

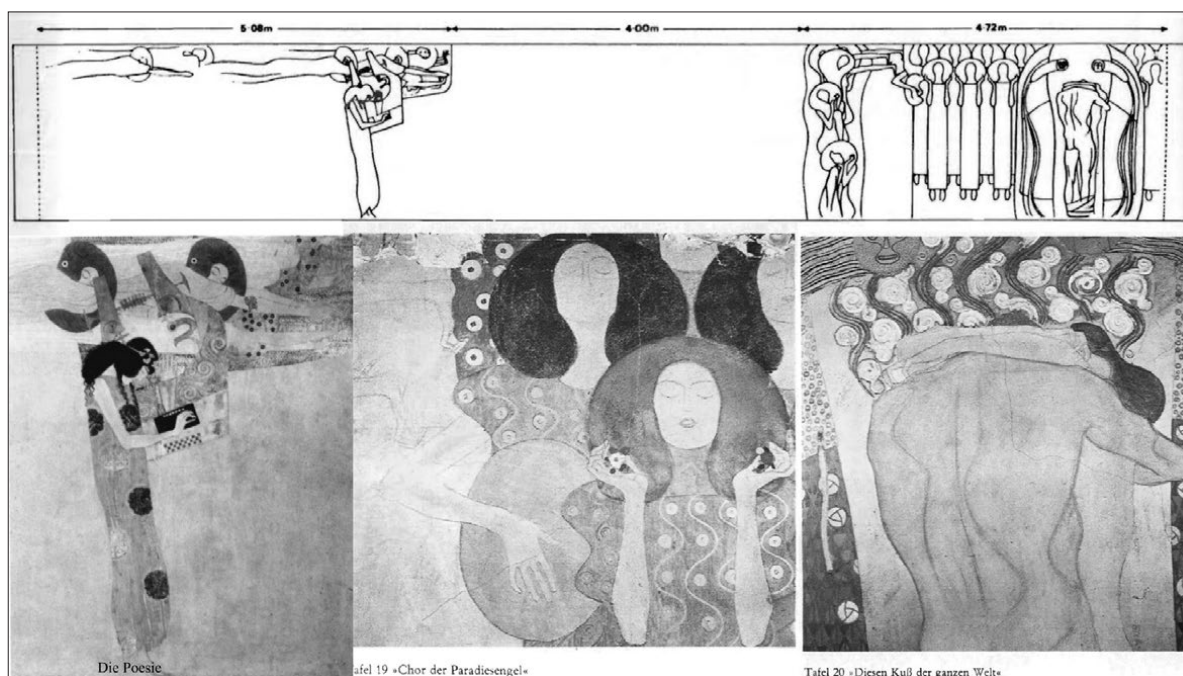
In a second “Beethoven Address 1770–1920” in 1920, Hofmannsthal again emphasized that for the “young German people” Beethoven had become the savior that the new, intellectual members of the fractured German nation had longed for:

“They wanted the orator who would unite them and purify and sanctify the excess of sen-

timent; the priest who would lift up their hearts before God like a covered sacrificial vessel; the spokesman – but how do I say this? They wanted the priest without a temple, the spokesman as mighty as Moses and yet with a burdened, impeded voice; they wanted the speaker to say the unspeakable. All their fervor was directed toward what seemed impossible. Then the genius of the nation called on one more: then Beethoven stepped forward” (Von Hofmannsthal, 1979b).

The following Beethoven anniversary in 1927 exceeded the previous one in terms of emphatic content. Following Wagner’s example (Wagner, 1911a, p. 135), the writer Hermann Stehr delivered a veritable creed in his “Words before a Beethoven celebration”:

“From the revelations of his Great Mass in D major we can see that he regards himself as the vessel of the supernatural, sees himself as the hero, the conqueror, and as an artist or poet, as he calls himself, going through it all a second time as a creator, who suffered, allowed himself to be crucified, descended to the graves of his past, to the dead, and then rose again, and felt God shining brightly within him.” “But just as he has been chased through life as a hotspur, so he will go,



on March 26th when the lightning flashes, up to heaven as if on a fiery chariot” (Stehr, 1936, p. 42f).

Hermann Stehr supported the rise of the National Socialists in Germany, his Beethoven apotheosis overlaps with the contemporary one of Alfred Rosenberg, who in his article “Beethoven” in the *Völkischer Beobachter* in 1927 emphasizes the “supremacy of the German Beethoven” and claims that Beethoven “can and must provide us with the driving will for German organization” (Rosenberg, 1927). In Rosenberg’s *Letzten Aufzeichnung* we can read: “That after a decline, such as that of 1648, there was still a Weimar, Bach and Beethoven, Kant and Schopenhauer were still born, gave us the hope of a new rebirth” (Rosenberg, 1955).

Leo Kestenberg and Social Democratic cultural policy

With the November Revolution in Germany in 1918, the Majority Socialists, and ultimately the labor movement, had taken over the political leadership, and Friedrich Ebert became the first Reich President of the Weimar Republic. Leo Kestenberg distinguished himself as the most important social democratic cultural politician for music. Anyone who expected a radical break was disappointed — though many, especially

music historians, still assume that just such a break occurred — since the labor movement adapted the traditional cultural values with only a few modifications. One indication of this was the performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony on New Year’s Eve 1918 in the Albert Hall in Leipzig under Arthur Nikisch and organized by the General Workers’ Education Institute, which marked the beginning of the now traditional performance of the symphony at the end of each year in Leipzig. Nor did Kestenberg seek a break, as he knew full well how to transfer the musical convictions and values of the old system to the new age. In 1902, the year of the glorious 75th anniversary of Ludwig van Beethoven’s death, Kestenberg celebrated his 20th birthday. He had already completed his training as a pianist, which included lessons from recognized masters such as José Vianna da Motta, Hermann Scholtz and Felix Draeseke, and had found in Ferruccio Busoni a pioneer as a role model. Beethoven’s piano works naturally belonged to the fixed canon of the repertoire, as the composer played a central role in the general musical socialization of the period. Socially, the romantic image of Beethoven dominated, and Kestenberg also liked to quote the dictum ascribed to Beethoven by Bettina Brentano: “Music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy” (Mahler, 2012b). Kestenberg had a special fondness for Beethoven’s Piano Varia-



tions; his memoirs from 1961 still speak of the great reverence he had for Beethoven, especially for the 33 *Variations on a Waltz by Anton Diabelli*, Op. 120:

“If one can speak of transcendental essence, of transcendental art, of transcendental music, then it is here, especially when we are confronted with the 20th of these variations. Actually, it eludes realization on the piano. And the last one, the 33rd, the minuet, leads us straight into the realm of the blessed, into a nirvana based on the deepest philosophical wisdom” (Kestenberg, 1961).

What is unusual about Kestenberg’s remarks is the apostrophization of Beethoven’s *Variations*, since it was the sonatas that were traditionally considered, in the words of Hans von Bülow, the “New Testament” of the piano literature (Hinrichsen, 2013). Kestenberg paid special tribute to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, whom he had always held in higher regard than Beethoven. Even so, Kestenberg still considered Beethoven “the undisputed Olympian among composers” (Kestenberg, 1961). While it is impossible to know whether he would count Beethoven among the 12 Olympic Gods or go as far as to apostrophize him as Zeus, the religious emphasis, just as he had come

to know it in his youth, is unmistakable. For many Enlightened Jews who had turned their backs on traditional religion and adopted the widespread belief in social progress, the notion that music functioned as an art religion of modernity, which was prevalent in society at the time, held a particular appeal. (No one could have guessed that the new form of racial anti-Semitism would produce an extermination machinery unknown to mankind, organized with scientific precision on an industrial scale.) In the context of progressive evolution, enlightened people saw themselves on the path toward moral perfection, and artists, especially composers, were considered pioneers of the movement, at the forefront of evolution. Kestenberg expressed this view, which today sounds almost absurd, with rather unusual clarity in his 1900 essay “Versuch einer materialistischen Darstellung der Entwicklungsgeschichte der Künste” (“Attempt at a Materialistic Representation of the History of the Development of the Arts”):

“As is evident from Schopenhauer’s deductions, we find in music the purest mirror of the innermost thoughts, the character, and the disposition of its respective creator. And, as a matter of fact, the great and true artists were also great, pure, and holy people, as the biographies of Bach,



Beethoven, Liszt, Wagner, Busoni, and d'Albert all prove" (Kestenberg, 1900, p. 49f).

Kestenberg's formulation demonstrates the vigor with which morality was ascribed to music as the highest form of art, as the most important expression of human capabilities, in other words, music gained an ethical significance comparable to that of religion. Especially in the period before the First World War (but continuing up to Theodor W. Adorno), music was appropriated by a multitude of esoteric movements, all of which looked beyond music's long apostrophized potential for salvation, ascribing to it the religious quality of a revelation of truth. By the end of the First World War, Kestenberg had undergone the transition from a performing artist to a cultural politician, transferring his Beethoven view to his cultural-political commitment. As a socialist, he took part in social democratic education committees; as a Prussian ministerial official, he devoted himself to the education of the masses. He was successful in exerting influence on the Prussian Academy of Arts in Berlin, initiating a far-reach-

ing reform of the traditional singing lessons in schools (Gruhn, 2015). Kestenberg lent a significant impulse to the work of public music schools (Holz, 2019). He not only supported the *Freie Volksbühne Berlin* association — whose motto was "Art for the People", which goes back to Lenin — at its main venue, the *Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz* (formerly Bülowplatz), but, as its "spiritus rector", he also championed the establishment of the Kroll Opera as a *Volksopernhaus* (People's Opera House), whose modern repertoire soon generated accusations of cultural Bolshevism (Sagrillo, Nitschké, & Brusniak, 2016). His fervent pursuit of educational reform corresponded to the general social concern for equal rights among broad sections of the population, which challenged claims to leadership, especially those of the educated middle class. The aim was to seize the bourgeoisie's cultural assets and claim equal rank. With the advent of social democracy, workers' choral societies emerged in the name of education for the people and workers. These developed into a powerful workers' singing movement that would compete with the long-established



Figure 1. "Unangenehmes Abenteuer Mahler's in der Secession" (1902). "Beethoven: Finally I've got you! Take that, you symphony botcher!" *Kikeriki* 42, no. 33 (24 April 1902), back cover.

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Figure 2. "Klimt-Klinger'sche Inspiration" (1902). "A very rash attempt at a National Monument for the famous embryologist Professor Schenk." *Wiener Luft: Beiblatt zum "Figaro"* 32 (1902), front cover.

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Deutscher Sängerbund (German Singers' Association) (Rhode-Jüchtern, 2016).

The reference to Beethoven can be found again and again in Kestenberg's programmatic writings. His proposals for a Beethoven celebration in the anniversary year 1927, which he wrote especially for the *Verband der Deutschen Volksbühnen-Vereine* (Association of the German Societies of Theatre for the People) provide evidence for his categorical heroization of Beethoven. He believed that, on the 100th anniversary of Beethoven's death, the goal should be to perform his works as perfectly as possible and to honor him in a variety of ways in order to shed due light on his significance "for artistic, human, national and international development" (Kestenberg, 1926, p. 1). The historical "heroes of our German culture", especially Beethoven, "champions of a truly national freedom, want 'all men to become brothers', want the idea of the human, the natural, to be placed above convention and authority". He was not thinking "of a select audi-

ence of 'educated people', but of humanity as a whole" (Kestenberg, 1926, p. 2). It was not until the 19th century that "the cultural needs of new, unencumbered social classes" had freed the old humanistic ideas from the shackles of "false romanticism and sentimentality" and created a new "lifestyle" that focused on the experience of art and "sanctified everyday life through 'Art'" (Kestenberg, 1926, p. 2). Thus, the task of the Volksbühne was, according to Kestenberg, not only to disseminate artistic works, but also to "shape people in the spirit of the arts". This would require new forms of celebration and general public holidays. Kestenberg, thus, took up the idea of Richard Wagner — whom he called upon as a witness and quoted as a prophet of the current rebirth of German music — that Beethoven's Symphonies would be perceived beyond national borders as a "new religion, as the world-redeeming proclamation of the most sublime innocence", and that the composer would be celebrated as a "gift to the world" and a "world-conqueror" (Kestenberg, 1926).

Kestenberg goes on to explain how all sorts of institutions and areas of cultural life should be involved in local Beethoven celebrations, placing special emphasis on the concerts. Here, too, it would be important not to get bogged down by the old customs like “evening gowns in the audience” and “tailcoats on the podium”, and instead escape from the “concert hall with its inevitable vanities” altogether just as the “singing Youth Movement, the musicians’ guilds, or the ‘young’ choirs” had. Only then could the “community spirit” inherent in the works come to the forefront in the sense of “announcing objectivity” and in the “spirit of the ‘Bauhütte’” (Kestenberg, 1926, p. 12). Kestenberg’s concrete proposals for Beethoven concerts contain an exaggeration of the emphatic concept of education, which until then had been found only in exceptional cases. For example, he recommends cyclical performances of the symphonies in order to convey a “coherent impression of Beethoven’s personality, his poetic, human-artistic mission” (Kestenberg, 1926, p. 13). He refers elsewhere to the relevant well-known works of all genres and recommends, for example, to avoid in a song recital “the selection of unimportant and uncharacteristic songs” (Kestenberg, 1926, p. 13). Thus, after having previously claimed that “basically every work, and needless to say, every symphony, is characteristic of Beethoven” and has its own special merits, he shows here that he is in fact completely committed to the traditional image of Beethoven with the corresponding specific canon of works (Kestenberg, 1926, p. 13). Kestenberg also ends his suggestions with a fiery appeal to the Volksbühnen to maintain the results of the Beethoven celebrations and to create permanent institutions “that contribute to the efforts of a people, supported by its great fighters, to liberate itself in the spirit of its immortal heroes (Kestenberg, 1926, p. 15).

Kestenberg’s suggestions for a Beethoven celebration, which were presented in *Die Kunstgemeinde. Blätter der Volksbühne* and reprinted in excerpts for the Volksbühne audience and in the *Deutsche Sängerbundeszeitung* during the anniversary year (Mahler, 2012a), are a clear reflection of how the socialist movement sought to appropriate the cultural values of the bourgeoisie, at the same time adapting them to their own needs. The art community not only reaffirmed Kestenberg’s suggestions most emphatically (Beethoven-Ehrung, 1926), it also provided a biographical outline full of stereotypes from the romantic image of Beethoven (Sender, 1926). Above all, it is the

perpetuation of the male hero cult that demonstrates how fundamental principles of modernism have been preserved here. That evolution and progress continued to form decisive categories of values can be seen in specific attempts to outdo bourgeois educational zeal, for example, in Kestenberg’s proposal for cyclical performances of certain work groups. Indeed, Arthur Schnabel played all 32 of Beethoven’s piano sonatas as a cycle for the first time at the 1927 Beethoven celebration in the *Volksbühne*’s main building on Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz. The string quartets were also performed cyclically. Kestenberg had been working intensively on the organization of the concerts from the very beginning and had planned a piano sonata cycle with Schnabel as early as 1916/17. In any case, Beethoven was — as was the case in bourgeois concert life — the most frequently performed composer in the concerts (Dümmling, 2008, p. 41–44: Beethoven-Feier 1927). The Kroll Opera, whose takeover by the *Freie Volksbühne Berlin* e. V. and subsequent transformation into a Volksopernhaus Kestenberg supported in 1920, was, after significant struggles, reinaugurated in 1927 with Beethoven’s *Fidelio* under Otto Klemperer (Sagrillo, et al., 2016). In his suggestions for a celebration of Beethoven, Kestenberg obviously aimed for a grand, unifying synthesis. Just as he continued the traditional topoi of the Romantic Beethoven image, he also utilized keywords from the new music movements such as “youth movement”, “musicians’ guild”, “‘young’ choirs”, “objectivity”, “the Bauhütte”, and “community spirit”. The effects of his activities continue to this day (Brusniak, Rhode-Jüchtern, & Weber-Lucks, 2019).

Exceptions to the Beethoven cult of the Weimar Republic can best be found in composers such as Kurt Weill, who will probably never be forgiven by German music historians for the fact that, as a successful exponent of socialism after his emigration, he composed French chansons and American Broadway musicals with the same conviction found in his earlier works (this was considered a “betrayal” of his “mission”).

The “Third Reich”

The adaptation of the traditional Beethoven cult to the National Socialist ideology required neither a reinterpretation of music history nor a change in concert life. Rather, it was in the National Socialists’ own best interest to pay homage to Beethoven and other specially selected composers commonly associated with an art-religious understanding of music (with the ex-

ception of Jewish composers). Offering such a tribute, which seemed appropriate for composers of ‘absolute’ music, was necessary for making the movement come across as acceptable to the educated middle classes. The presentation of the new state as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* did not fail to produce the intended effect, especially on artistically minded fellow citizens. “The myth of the 20th century” (Alfred Rosenberg) tied in seamlessly with the idea of serious music as an art religion of modernity.

Adolf Hitler was himself not an admirer of Beethoven’s music; he used Beethoven’s name primarily to legitimize the *Führerprinzip* (Hoffmann, 2010). In the anniversary year 1927 he casually mentioned Beethoven in this sense at the Circus Krone in Munich: “Millions are shaken by the 9th Symphony — but only one made it. Millions are delighted, but the creator is always only one man” (Dusik, 1992a). The apparent flip side of this was Hitler’s disavowal of democracy, as reflected in his announcement in Karlsruhe on March 3, 1928: “Believe me, all of Vienna could have voted to elect a committee to produce the Ninth Symphony: we would not have the Ninth Symphony today” (Dusik, 1992b). Hitler did not shy away from using Beethoven to propagate vicious racism in November 1928 in the Berlin Sports Palace: “Negro music is more widespread, but if we put a Beethoven symphony against a Jimmy,² victory is decided. Let us remember the German soul, then faith, creativity and tenacity will not fail” (Dusik, 1994). Hitler’s own pilgrimage site was not the Beethoven-Haus in Bonn but Bayreuth Festival Hall (Hitler, 1940).³

Other influential figures of the Third Reich filled this gap, like Peter Raabe, who was president of the Reich Chamber of Music from 1935 onward (Okrassa, & Raabe, 2004).⁴ On June 10, 1936, at a Beethoven celebration in Berlin Philharmonic Hall, he gave a commemorative speech before a performance of the Ninth Symphony in which he referred by name to Bettina von Arnim and thus also to the romantic image of Beethoven (Raabe, 1937a). During a Richard Wagner Festival in Detmold in 1937, Peter Raabe evoked the cultural achievements of Beethoven and Wagner with formulations resembling a creed: “Thus both stand in the sky of German nature like two bright stars, far away from each other and yet each shining upon the other, light from eternal light, value from eternal values, granted to mankind in order to gain clarity and warmth from its brilliance.” (Raabe, 1937b, p. 71).

Of the musicians at the time, Elly Ney was particularly close to National Socialism — as were Herbert von Karajan, Karl Böhm and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, among others (Prieberg, 2004/2005). From 1933 onwards, she turned enthusiastically to Adolf Hitler in her vehement campaign for the Bonn Beethoven Festival (Van Rey, 2003, pp. 52–123). Above all, she saw her task as that of winning over young people over to National Socialism (Ney, 1938). The following is just one of her statements from the 1942 wartime commemorative publication for Peter Raabe:

“An unrelenting readiness to fight and an overwhelming certainty of victory radiates from his [Beethoven’s] works. They reflect the same tensions and vibrations that we experience so strongly today. Letters from our soldiers prove that they are, in fact, the ones who are deeply touched and gripped by the experience of Beethoven’s music in the midst of battle, by the unbroken presentation of the eternal law that strengthens their fanatical will to fight and win. A front-line fighter writes: ‘When we think of Beethoven in the midst of battle, we feel as if we are also defending him’. A dive fighter: ‘After a Stuka attack I happened to hear the *Eroica* on the radio in the evening. I felt then that this music is the confirmation of our struggle, a sanctification of our actions’” (Ney, 1942, p. 62f).

In the same year of the war, Wilhelm Furtwängler conducted Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony in the old Berlin Philharmonic Hall on Bernburger Straße on April 19, 1942, in celebration of Adolf Hitler’s birthday. The birthday speech was delivered by the Reich Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda and President of the Reich Chamber of Culture, Dr. Joseph Goebbels. The participants were Erna Berger, Gertrude Pitzinger, Helge Roswaenge, and Rudolf Watzke as well as the German Philharmonic Choir and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. In the same year, Hermann Unger published an article in the *Deutsche Militär-Musiker-Zeitung* entitled “When I hear Beethoven, I become braver” (Schröder, 1986), a sentence that has been attributed to Otto von Bismarck.

The post-war period

The year 1945 was by no means a “zero hour” in Germany, as musical life in particular continued

uninterrupted at first. Elly Ney knew how to assert herself, she was courted as an artist by those in high political offices and continued to exert great influence on the Bonn Beethoven Festivals. The paradigm of an autonomy of music, according to which music was to have nothing to do with politics, was readily used as a means of repression and enabled the uninterrupted continuation of many musical careers. Herbert von Karajan advanced to become the undisputed sovereign in the realm of serious music. After having first signed with Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft in 1939, he signed a second contract with the company in 1959 and, in 1963, he released a recording of Beethoven's complete symphonies, the first of four. The record company undertook an unprecedented advertising campaign with resounding success.

The history of Beethoven reception took a significant new direction in the anniversary year 1970, when Mauricio Kagel and Karlheinz Stockhausen used Beethoven's music to create alienation effects, thereby committing a sacrilege according to the prevailing principle of faithfulness to the original (Loos, 2003). The young musicians of the rebellious 1968 movement crashed in during the heyday of classical music with their provocative adaptations of Beethoven (Loos, 2016). Mauricio Kagel produced a ninety-minute black-and-white film *Ludwig van* (Kluppelholz, & Prox, 2004), one passage of which also impressively parodies the pianist Elly Ney (Kagel, 1970). In his "Opus '70", Karlheinz Stockhausen processed Beethoven's music using short wave radio frequencies (Stockhausen; Hopp, 1998). The social upheaval was lasting, even if it did not have a dramatic effect. It was received more in the sense of a "repressive tolerance" (Herbert Marcuse). In the provocative booklet

"Beethoven '70", which includes texts by Adorno, Kagel, Metzger, Pauli, Schnebel and Wildberger, a quotation by Hilde Spiel from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* was printed. While it cannot be verified, it likely represents a mystification in the sense of a hoped-for, but unfortunately absent, public outrage:

"Whoever lost their nerves after seeing two playing monkeys, followed by an elephant, a wild sow, and a camel, during the 'Ode to Joy' chorus from the Ninth, probably realized at that moment the inhumanity of the whole undertaking. It was here that Aristotle, Erasmus, Kant were denied, and with them two or three thousand years of laborious ascent into a world of concepts that Beethoven expressed in his music [...] We prefer any bust of Beethoven made of lard to this fashionable document of inhumanity" (Fischer, 1970).

So began a social process in which the significance of music as an art religion quickly declined. Postmodernism, with its criticism of the principle of progress, formed the intellectual-historical background for the decline. Dirk von Petersdorff provides an example of this with his brilliant essay "200 years of German art religion" (Von Petersdorff, 2001). Thus, in preparation for Beethoven's anniversary in 2020, all the more strenuous efforts were made to restore Beethoven's status as a leading figure in society by attributing the birth of the idea of the European Union to his Ninth Symphony or by presenting him as a revolutionary. It would appear that such marketing strategies are destined to fail when applied to the realm of art.

Translation Sean Reilly

Footnotes:

¹ Illustrations of the above-mentioned works of art are easily accessible in the Internet, so that their reproduction is not included here. Special reference is made to the website of the Beethoven Archive Bonn and to Wikipedia.

² Hier wird bewusst oder unbewusst den Namen verdrehend angespielt auf die Hauptfigur der erfolgreichen Zeitoper von Ernst Křenek "Jonny spielt auf" (1927).

³ For another example of a mention of Beethoven see: Adolf Hitler, Rede am 8.11.1939 im Bürgerbräukeller, in: *Der großdeutsche Freiheitskampf. Reden Adolf Hitlers vom 1. September 1939 bis 10. März 1940*, ed. by Reichsleiter Philipp Bouhler, Zentral-Verlag der NSDAP, München 1940: "We Germans do not have to look at all to the English when it comes to culture. Our music, our poetry, our architecture, our painting, our sculpture can absolutely be regarded as equal to the English and English arts. After all, I believe that a single person — let us say Beethoven — has achieved more in music than all Englishmen past and present put together. And the cultivation of this culture, this is something we can appreciate

- ⁴ Nina Okrassa, Peter Raabe. Dirigent, Musikschriftsteller und Präsident der Reichsmusikkammer (1872–1945), Köln-Weimar-Wien 2004. On p. 5 note 20 she refers to an essay from 1920 by Raabe with reference to: David B. Dennis, Beethoven in German Politics 1870–1989, New Haven-London 1996, p. 141. “one might, in retrospect, fairly designate Peter Raabe’s tirade the Mein Kampf of music politics”.

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Гельмут Льюс**Бетховен — Зевс сучасності**

Анотація. Значна частина німецької музикології сприймає себе як науку про мистецтво в емпатичному розумінні й прихильна зовсім до інших принципів, ніж історико-критичні підходи в оцінці предмету. Останні прагнуть отримати реалістичну картину історії музики за вмістом сучасного способу мислення і дозволяють історичним мистцям приймати змістовні, вільні рішення волі в антропологічно обумовлених обставинах. З іншого боку, емпатична наука про мистецтво стверджує, що здатна довести й науково визначити об'єкти великої художньої музики та їхню природу. Це зародилося в епоху Просвітництва, коли філософія зайняла місце релігії і створила всі нові теоретичні конструкції думки, які були представлені як науково доведені та обов'язкові. У музиці Бетховен піднявся до ідеалу геніального творця, який утілює прогрес і досягнення людства на шляху до досконалості. Таким чином, протягом XIX століття розвинувся культ Бетховена, який використовував філософію як керівництво під час вибору та оцінки історичних джерел, із задоволенням сприймаючи літературні свідчення як історичний факт. Історична критика, яка виявила цю побудову романтичного образу Бетховена, була стриманою протягом тривалого часу. Широке сприйняття суспільством поняття еволюційного прогресу людства, до якого прихильно ставиться сучасний світ, виявилось занадто потужним, а віра в нього набула форми мистецької релігії. Бетховен як Зевс Третього Рейху, як бог сучасності був програмою та повідомленням 14-ї Сецесійної виставки у Відні 1902 р. Цей образ був зруйнований наприкінці XX століття.

Ключові слова: романтичний образ Бетховена, мистецтво як релігія, пам'ятники, молодіжний рух, націонал-соціалізм.

Гельмут Льюс**Бетховен — Зевс современности**

Аннотация. Значительная часть немецкой музыкологии воспринимает себя как науку об искусстве в эмпатическом понимании и благосклонна совсем к другим принципам, чем историко-критические подходы в оценке предмета. Последние стремятся получить реалистичную картину истории музыки по содержанию современного образа мышления и позволяют историческим творцам принимать содержательные, свободные решения воли в антропологически обусловленных обстоятельствах. С другой стороны, эмпатическая наука об искусстве утверждает, что способна доказать и научно определить объекты значимой художественной музыки и их природу. Это зародилось в эпоху Просвещения, когда философия заняла место религии и создала все новые теоретические конструкции мысли, которые были представлены как научно доказанные и обязательны. В музыке Бетховен поднялся к идеалу гениального творца, воплотил прогресс и достижения человечества на пути к совершенству. Таким образом, в течение XIX века развился культ Бетховена, который использовал философию как руководство при выборе и оценке исторических источников, с удовольствием принимая литературные свидетельства как исторический факт. Историческая критика, обнаружив это построение романтического образа Бетховена, была сдержанной в течение длительного времени. Широкое восприятие обществом понятия эволюционного прогресса человечества, к которому благосклонно относится современный мир, оказалось слишком мощным, а вера в него приобрела форму художественной религии. Бетховен как Зевс Третьего Рейха, как бог современности был программой и уведомлением 14-й Сецессионной выставки в Вене 1902 г. Этот образ был разрушен в конце XX века.

Ключевые слова: романтический образ Бетховена, искусство как религия, памятники, молодежное движение, национал-социализм.