

**Reconstructing Beethoven:  
Mauricio Kagel's *Ludwig van***

by Nikos Stavlas

A Thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD in Music  
(Performance Pathway)

Department of Music  
Goldsmiths, University of London

June 2012

I, Nikos Stavlas, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Date:

## Abstract

The subject of this dissertation is *Ludwig van*, Mauricio Kagel's tribute to Beethoven on the occasion of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the latter's birth, which consists of three separate, but closely related, versions: a film, a musical score and a recording. The main aim of this project is to analyse the performance problems that musicians have to face when realising the score *Ludwig van*, which is an entirely indeterminate collage of Beethoven's music, and to suggest ways of tackling them. For this purpose, all three versions of the work are studied in this thesis. The film is examined in terms of the issues it raises concerning Beethoven's reception and of the function of its music, which consists of unusual performances of Beethoven's works. The score is analysed from the perspective of postmodern theory and 20<sup>th</sup>-century art movements, while the roles of the composer and the performer are discussed and redefined. The recording is studied as a sample of how Kagel himself chose to realise his own score. Finally, the difficulties I encountered in my own attempts to realise *Ludwig van* are discussed, and the ways in which I dealt with them are presented. The conclusion at which this dissertation arrives is that, in works of such indeterminacy as *Ludwig van*, the performers are required to step outside their conventional role and act partly as composers. Compared to works that are considered challenging to the performer in the conventional sense, of requiring technical virtuosity, this work presents a more fundamental challenge, which has to do with overcoming personal boundaries: it asks the performer not to execute a pre-composed work, but to create their own version of *Ludwig van*. Since very little has been written about *Ludwig van* by performers with an academic background, this thesis can offer valuable assistance to prospective performers of the work in their attempt to balance between the highly charged conceptual aspect of the composition and the practical need to achieve its successful performance.

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to:

My supervisor Keith Potter, for his invaluable help, his constant support, his insight and his devotion throughout these years

My piano teachers Andrew Zolinsky, Elina Grammatopoulou and Lola Totsiou, for helping me find my voice

The Greek State Scholarship Foundation, for supporting my studies

Matthias Kassel and the rest of the staff at the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel for being extremely helpful and efficient

Joan Atherton and Bruno Canino, for sharing their experiences from their collaboration with Kagel

Jenny Bredull, for the most exciting German lessons and her help with the translations up to the last minute

Sophia Karakantza, for having been the right person at the right time, and for still being there

My family, for their silent approval and their loud encouragement

Andriana, for inspiring me, saving me, and for having all the answers

Michalis, for his reassuring presence, his devotion, and for still asking questions

My talented and inspiring friends and colleagues Angelina, AnnaMaria, Artemis, Barbara, Beatrix, Ben, Ella, Erik, Isobel, Jessica, Kate, Kristin, Manolis, Maral, Polly, Rosamund, Sofi, for offering me their precious time and creativity in order to make *Ludwig van* happen

# Introduction

## 1. Preface

The subject of this dissertation is Mauricio Kagel's *Ludwig van*, a work that exists in three separate and distinct forms: a film, a musical score and a recording. The film, whose full title is *Ludwig van: Ein Bericht* (1969), commissioned by the German WDR (Westdeutscher Rundfunk) on the occasion of the celebration of Beethoven's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary, is a controversial commentary on Beethoven's reception rather than on the composer himself or his music, which reportedly shocked and even offended audiences of its time. The score, *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven* (1970), published by Universal Edition, is a collage of Beethoven's works, to which Kagel has not added a single note of his own, and which leaves its performers the freedom to manipulate the material at their own will. Finally, the recording of *Ludwig van* on Deutsche Grammophon (also 1970) reflects the way in which Kagel chose to realise the score. My final aim is to discuss the performance issues that *Ludwig van* poses and to show how I tackled these problems in performing my first realisation of it in May 2009, as part of my upgrade assessment, and in planning my final realisation in June 2011.

There are three main reasons for which I have decided to embark on such a task. The first is that I have always been fascinated by music of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries which deals with the Western classical tradition and the canon; although I do believe in faithfulness to the text and the composer when performing canonic works, I also believe that we can discover new things about old music and make it more relevant to us by incorporating it in contemporary musical language and by interacting with it. The second reason is that as a performer I feel especially challenged by works that question the boundaries between the role of the composer and that of the performer; asking the latter to take an active part in the conception of music rather than only in its execution makes them step out of their comfort zone, and, in my opinion, this can help them reconsider and reassess their own relationship with music. The third reason is also relevant to this challenge: as *Ludwig van* is a composition in the shaping of which the main role is played by the performer, I feel that, being a performer myself, I am suitable to study *Ludwig van* and its performance issues. I believe that there is not much

literature on contemporary music written from the point of view of the performer, so a study of a work of such an open form and the experience of realising it is certainly useful to musicological research.

## **2. Structure of the thesis**

The first chapter of this dissertation will have two functions: to present the primary sources which are the subject of my research and to review the secondary sources on this subject. Therefore, in its first section I will give a brief description of the film, the score and the recording, and I will also mention the other primary sources used, such as Kagel's notebooks and the film's script. In the second section of this chapter I will present and give a brief discussion of the most important secondary sources I will use for each of the issues I am going to address in this dissertation.

The second chapter will be an attempt to put *Ludwig van* into context. In its first section I am going to present the historico-social conditions of the time in which *Ludwig van* was created and discuss how composers of that time, including Kagel, were influenced by these conditions. In its second section I will provide some definitions from the field of experimental music, in which I believe that *Ludwig van* belongs, and I will discuss some of the performance issues that this music poses, as well as Kagel's attitude towards it.

The main part of this dissertation will start at the third chapter, where I will concentrate on the film *Ludwig van*. At the beginning I will give a brief description of each of its sequences and the music heard in each of them, all of which is by Beethoven, but performed or orchestrated in unusual ways. In the second section I will discuss the ways in which Kagel manipulated Beethoven's music for the purposes of the film, and the role the music plays in *Ludwig van*. Later on, I will examine the issues that Kagel addresses with his film: Beethoven's musealisation, his misuse for political reasons, the problems of performance of his works, the vast amount of academic study on Beethoven. Finally, I will provide a short section on the film's reception, based on reviews in West and East German newspapers.

The fourth chapter will be concerned with the musical composition *Ludwig van* and its performances. After identifying the Beethoven works that feature in Kagel's collage and discussing his instructions for the performance of the score, I will examine *Ludwig van* in the light of postmodern theory, and I will show the postmodern elements it exhibits. Then I will compare *Ludwig van* to art movements of its time, and try and

discover whether it can be considered part of them. Later on, I will analyse Kagel's own recording of *Ludwig van* and investigate how faithful he was to his own composition, in other words whether his recording could be considered as a performance of his score, or a different work entirely. I will also discuss other live and recorded realisations of *Ludwig van* by Kagel and others. Finally, in the last section I will discuss the performance issues which, in my opinion, *Ludwig van* poses, and I will provide my views on how they should be tackled.

The fifth and last chapter of this essay will be about my own attempts at realising *Ludwig van*. In its first section I will describe the preparation and the performance of my first realisation, which took place in May 2009 as part of my upgrade assessment, and I will discuss its outcome and the conclusions I have drawn from it. In the second section I will discuss my second and final realisation, of June 2011; I will present the decisions I took based on the outcome of the first one, the structure I generated and a general evaluation of the realisation and its performance.

## **Chapter I**

### **A presentation of primary sources and literature review**

In this chapter I am going to identify and evaluate the most important sources that I will employ in writing my dissertation on Kagel's *Ludwig van*. Firstly, I am going to present my primary sources, which are the film *Ludwig van: Ein Bericht* (Köln, 1969), the musical score, *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven* (London, 1970) and Kagel's recording of the music on Deutsche Grammophon (LP 2530014, 1970), as well as a number of documents that have to do with the making of *Ludwig van*, all accessed at the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel. Following that, I will name the secondary sources I am planning to explore for each issue addressed, and comment on the ones that I consider as most important and helpful.

## 1. Primary sources

Kagel's film, *Ludwig van: Ein Bericht* (Ludwig van: A Report), was made in 1969 for the bicentenary of Beethoven's birth in 1970. In the first part it pictures Beethoven (never fully shown, as he is supposed to be behind the camera and, therefore, the spectator experiences the film through his own eyes) arriving in Bonn in 1969, strolling around the city and visiting his birthplace, a fake "Beethovenhaus" designed by renowned artists of the time. The second part consists of several unrelated scenes, such as a talk show on whether Beethoven is "misused", an interview with someone who claims to be his "only" descendant and a scientific experiment on a pianist playing his Piano Sonata, op.31 no.2 (*Tempest*). There are several issues dealt with in this film, which is concerned much more with the perception and reception of Beethoven in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century world than with Beethoven himself. Such issues include the commercialisation of Beethoven's image and his works; the myth around Beethoven and the concern about everything around him, such as his personal life and his "external appearance"; the misuse of Beethoven for political or nationalistic reasons; the anxiety of modern performers towards Beethoven's masterpieces; and the problem of the so-called "historically informed performance".

The score, *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven* (Ludwig van: Homage by Beethoven), was made in a rather unorthodox way. In order to construct the music room in the Beethovenhaus for the purposes of the film, Kagel had covered everything in that room with random pages from Beethoven's music. The score is nothing else but forty-five photographs (mostly close-ups) taken from different parts of the room, rendering the score an artwork in its own right. The instructions given for the performance of *Ludwig van* leave the performers extremely free: pages can be read in any order, or they can even be omitted; the instrumentation and duration are to be decided by the performers; and any piece of Beethoven's music that does not appear in the score can be employed at the performers' will. What is also worth mentioning is an interview Kagel gave to Karl Faust about the score, which is included in its introduction (Kagel, 1970: VIII-IX); in this Kagel explains the concept behind *Ludwig van* and gives us some clues as to how he worked on his own recording of it.

In the recording Kagel used two male voices, two pianos, two violins, a viola and a cello. He also employed some studio techniques of editing the recorded material and included some “rehearsal” dialogues between the musicians. The most striking thing about the recording is that Kagel does not seem to have used his own score at all, since the extracts he chose to draw from Beethoven’s music in it are totally different from the ones in the photographs in the score. It seems that, although *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven* is an indeterminate composition, Kagel chose to be in control of the aesthetic result of his own recording rather than leave it to chance. In fact, he claims that he based its form on Beethoven’s *Diabelli Variations*, op.120. It is interesting that, although there are many fragments that are recognisably Beethoven’s in the recording, the overall result sounds like genuinely avant-garde music, making the work seem to be “a contribution by Beethoven to contemporary music” (Kagel, 1970: VIII), as Kagel himself puts it.

The other primary sources used for this dissertation were all found at the Mauricio Kagel archive of the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel, and most of them concern the film. Four copies of its script are held in the archive, some of which contain handwritten notes by Kagel himself. For most sequences, he gives a very detailed account of all the props used, the camera placement, even the impression he wants to create. It is worth mentioning that there are some sequences in the script which were not included in the film, and they give a further idea of Kagel’s purposes in making *Ludwig van*: for example, in one sequence there is a text about Beethoven’s food habits, and his intolerance of servants who would not cook properly; in another, the text Kagel intended to use was from Editha and Richard Sterba’s *Beethoven and his nephew*, in which the psychoanalyst couple tried to prove that Beethoven was a suppressed homosexual. There is also a documentary on the making of the film by Wilhelm J. Flues, some of the footage of which was actually used in one of the sequences of the film itself (“Internationaler Frühschoppen” sequence). In the archive there are also lists of Beethoven’s compositions used for the music of the film, as well as some audio tracks from the recording of this music. Finally, there are a number of miscellaneous documents from Kagel’s collection, which must have been sources of inspiration for the film: a comic strip about Beethoven from *Peanuts* by Charles Schulz, an article about an exhibition of one hundred and seventy Beethoven busts in Bonn, a brochure about a train travelling from Frankfurt to Amsterdam via Bonn – a journey similar to the one

Beethoven undertakes at the beginning of the film – the name of which was actually “Van Beethoven”, and others.

In the Sacher archive there is also some material concerning Kagel’s realisations of the composition *Ludwig van*. The most important document to be found in the archive is Kagel’s notebook about his recording of the work. In this, Kagel has written some of his thoughts on what he wanted to achieve through the recording, some of his ideas on how he would manipulate his material, and lists of the Beethoven works he would use, as well as his editing plan. There are also letters between Kagel and various performers, regarding both the recording and other realisations of *Ludwig van*: most importantly a letter to Walter Rosenberg at the Goethe Institute in Buenos Aires, where he gives some general advice on a realisation of the work there. Finally, there are some reviews of Kagel’s realisations of *Ludwig van* in concerts in Köln and London.

## 2. Secondary sources

There are a number of books and articles on Kagel's work in general, most of which are in German,<sup>1</sup> a few in French and less in English. One of the most important books is Björn Heile's *The Music of Mauricio Kagel* (Heile, 2006), the first book on Mauricio Kagel in English. It is a comprehensive study of Kagel's works, including several biographical elements. Of course it does not analyse individual works in depth, but it gives useful information regarding the ideas related to the conception of each composition and a very clear image of the development of Kagel's compositional techniques from his early youth in Buenos Aires until the beginning of the current century. It is also a good initiating point for research, as it gives a concise list of writings on Kagel and by Kagel. Dieter Schnebel's *Mauricio Kagel: Musik, Theater, Film* (Schnebel, 1970) is also very helpful for the purposes of this study, as it contains important information and detailed accounts of Kagel's work up to 1970, when he made *Ludwig van*. Schnebel's book does not include *Ludwig van*, but it can help us examine Kagel's creative activity at the time just before he made the film, including analyses of his films before *Ludwig van*, in which we can study his filming techniques and the manipulation of sound in his films as these evolved before the film in question. Finally, an equally useful piece of literature on Kagel is Werner Klüppelholz's *Mauricio Kagel 1970-1980* (Klüppelholz, 1981). Klüppelholz provides us with concise and critical accounts and analyses of all Kagel's works from the decade in which *Ludwig van* was made.

Concerning the film, once again, Klüppelholz's book is one of the most frequently cited sources in my own work. In his in-depth account of *Ludwig van: Ein Bericht* (Klüppelholz, 1981: 11-8), he includes many interesting comments on the music and content of the film, as well as a fascinating interpretation of Kagel's intentions. There are a number of other writings on the film which have been fruitful for the purpose of this dissertation; all of them are in German, since the English texts on *Ludwig van* seem to be intended for people who have not actually watched it, and therefore offer a description rather than an analysis of it – such an article is Michael

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the translations of the German texts have been done by me with the invaluable help of Jenny Bredull; in the case of Klüppelholz's "Ludwig van: 1. Ein Bericht; 2. Hommage von Beethoven" (Klüppelholz, 1981: 11-21), the translation is by Jenny Bredull alone.

Chanan's "Kagel's Films" (Chanan, 1974: 45-6). Christiane Hillebrand's book, *Film als totale Komposition* (Hillebrand, 1996), provides us with some useful information regarding the filming techniques used in *Ludwig van*, and Werner Klüppelholz's and Lothar Prox's *Mauricio Kagel: Das filmische Werk I. 1965-1985* (Klüppelholz-Prox, 1985) quotes a short note by Kagel himself on the film, as well as extracts from the script and a list of the music used in the film. Christian Brix's MA dissertation, »*Ludwig van*« *Zu Mauricio Kagels Beethoven-Film* (Brix, 2004), provides a discussion of several secondary sources concerning the film and its music, but, in my opinion, does not offer much of his own views on the subject. Finally, Knut Holsträter's articles, "Kompositionsweisen in Mauricio Kagels filmischer Arbeit zu *Ludwig van*, dargestellt an der *Handschuhsequenz* und dem *Musikzimmer*" (Holsträter, 2003) and "Kagel, Beuys, Beethoven ... in Flux" (Holsträter, 2004) are both extremely illuminating pieces of writing: the former provides both technical information concerning the shooting of the film, and, most importantly, an extended discussion of the film's music; the latter explores Kagel's connection to the Fluxus artists, some of whom designed the rooms of the Beethovenhaus in the film.

Since the film's main subject is Beethoven's reception in the years after his death, it is important to include some writings on this subject in this literature review. There are several published items on various aspects of the composer's reception. In "The four ages of Beethoven" (Burnham, 2000: 272-91), Scott Burnham analyses four different approaches to Beethoven that he has detected from the Romantic era to the present. He comments on the fact that everything surrounding Beethoven as a physical person has been analysed in such a depth that "no longer can any one person control the vision of the whole" (Burnham, 2000: 289). He speaks of a "ritual dismemberment of the hero, namely, the translation of the mythic composer into the objects of kitsch" (Burnham, 2000: 289), something that is very vividly portrayed in Kagel's film. Theodor von Frimmel's *Beethoven's äußere Erscheinung* (Beethoven's external appearance; Frimmel, 1905), which also features in a sequence of the film, seems to be a fascinating example of how scholarship has investigated every possible piece of knowledge on trivial things concerning Beethoven's life. Esteban Buch's *Beethoven's Ninth* (Buch, 2003) studies Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as a "political" work, as it has been used and misused from Beethoven's death till the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Buch dedicates some pages of his book to Kagel's use of the Ninth Symphony in *Ludwig van*, and even

to its reception by critics in West and East Germany. On the same topic, David Dennis' book, *Beethoven in German Politics (1870-1989)* (Dennis, 1996), concentrates on the political "misuse" of Beethoven in Germany over a shorter period; it is not restricted to one work, but follows the political uses of Beethoven's music and his image in general. It seems that all these writings investigate issues that Kagel has, in an artistic way, raised through his film. Finally, Stephen Loy's PhD dissertation *Beethoven and Radicalism: Socio-Political Engagement and awareness of Tradition in New Music, 1968-1977* (Loy, 2006) and, last but not least, Beate Kutschke's article *The Celebration of Beethoven's Bicentennial in 1970: The Antiauthoritarian Movement and Its Impact on Radical Avant-garde and Postmodern Music in West Germany* both relate music composed around the same period as *Ludwig van* containing references to Beethoven to the socio-political happenings in Europe at that time, and mainly the anti-authoritarian movement.

Because of the nature of the score, *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven*, there is no musical analysis (in the traditional sense) of it in the secondary literature – and it is probably pointless to embark on such a task. In order to examine this work musically and to reach conclusions as to how it should be performed, we need to consult literature on experimental music and its performance practice. Michael Nyman's *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* (Nyman, 1974) provides interesting views on experimental music of the 1950s and 1960s, although at times his categorisations can be – and have been – argued to be a little simplistic. John Cage's *Silence* (Cage, 1961) contains the beliefs of arguably the most influential person in the world of experimental music. As for the field of performance of such music, some of the works quoted in this essay are Philip Thomas' "Determining the Indeterminate" (Thomas, 2007) and "A Prescription for Action" (Thomas, 2009), as well as John Holzaepfel's "Painting by Numbers: The Intersections of Morton Feldman and David Tudor" (Holzaepfel, 2002a) and "Cage and Tudor" (Holzaepfel, 2002b), which offer different opinions on how a performer should approach indeterminate scores.

Although a strictly musical examination of the score is necessary, it also raises other issues to be dealt with, which are more philosophical and have to do with the spirit of its time. Since it is nothing but a collage (or a "metacollage", as Kagel calls it) of quotations and there is not a single note in any of the primary sources that constitute

*Ludwig van* that Kagel wrote himself, the score can be said to question very directly the concept of authorship, and it bears a relationship to postmodern and poststructuralist theories. The first article in this territory that comes to mind is Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" (Barthes, 1977, first published in 1967): in it Barthes argues that each text is made up of various quotations, and that it is not the author that gives meaning to a text, but each individual reader (Barthes, 1977: 142-8). It seems as if Kagel is by analogy presenting us with a musical text full of quotations and giving so much freedom to the performer (who can be regarded as the initial *reader* of the musical text) in order to demonstrate the importance of the performer's role. As he says at the end of his preface to the score, "I give all this as an introduction and invitation. Musicians can go from here" (Kagel, 1970: XI). The concept of intertextuality, coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966 and referring to the fact that "Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations" (Kristeva, 1986: 66, first published in 1966) is also obviously relevant to Kagel's "metacollage", as *Ludwig van* is literally a mosaic of quotations.

Both Barthes' concept of the end of authorship and Kristeva's concept of intertextuality are considered important issues of the postmodern debate, and therefore it is arguable that *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven* can be considered a postmodern composition. The most well-known and direct attempt to define, or rather to describe, postmodern music has been made by Jonathan Kramer, in his article, "The Nature and Origins of Musical Postmodernism" (Kramer, 2002: 13-26). In it, Kramer compiles a list of sixteen characteristics that postmodern music tends to have. It may seem quite simplistic to limit postmodernism to a list of characteristics, but Kramer does warn against the checklist approach, and he makes it clear that he does not consider postmodern music "a neat category with rigid boundaries" (Kramer, 2002: 17). As for Kagel and whether he could be labelled as a postmodernist composer, Björn Heile's article, "Collage vs. Compositional Control: The Interdependency of Modernist and Postmodernist Approaches in the Work of Mauricio Kagel" (Heile, 2002: 287-99), is an important piece of writing on this topic. Heile considers compositional control as a modernist principle and collage as its postmodern counter-principle, and believes that they are "intertwined and interacting" in the work of Kagel. However, he admits that *Ludwig van* can be taken as a typically postmodern composition, as it is Kagel's only work in which he has given up any form of "compositional control" (Heile, 2002: 291). The other approaches to postmodern art that I will employ in my dissertation include

Charles Jencks' definition of postmodernism as double-coding, presented in his books, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (Jencks, 1977) and *What is Post-modernism?* (Jencks, 1996, first published in 1986), and Hal Foster's distinction between a postmodernism of reaction and a postmodernism of resistance, addressed in his preface to the book *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Jencks, 1998, ix-xvii, first published in 1983).

Finally, in relation to the philosophical aspects of *Ludwig van*, it should be mentioned that many scholars refer to Kagel as a deconstructionist; according to Paul Attinello (in the "Kagel, Mauricio" entry in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Attinello, 2001, but also in "Imploding the System: Kagel and the Deconstruction of Modernism", Attinello, 2002), he is characterised by a "restless desire to *deconstruct* the canon". Unfortunately, Attinello does not provide us with a theoretical background in order to link Kagel's music to Derrida's concept of deconstruction. The first scholar who attempted to justify the use of deconstruction in musical analysis was Rose Rosengard Subotnik, in her article, "How Could Chopin's A-Major Prelude Be Deconstructed?" (Subotnik, 1996: 39-147), in which she provides a thorough theoretical justification for why and how we can apply deconstructive reading to a piece of music. However, Subotnik, like Derrida himself, refers to an application of deconstruction to an already existing text, albeit a musical one, and not to deconstruction through the process of composition itself, as presumably in the case of Kagel. In order to deal with the concept of deconstruction, and to relate it to Kagel's composition, I am going to use Derrida's writings, particularly *Positions* (Derrida, 1981), in which he explains his concept of deconstructing hierarchical binary oppositions, and "Letter to a Japanese friend" (Derrida, 1985), in which he explains the procedure that led him to coining the term deconstruction. Apart from these, I will refer to Greg Ulmer's "The Object of Post-Criticism" (Ulmer, 1998, first published in 1983), which examines the relation between deconstruction and the practice of collage in the arts.

## **Chapter II**

### ***Ludwig van in context***

The aim of this chapter is to provide some background information concerning *Ludwig van*, its composer and the time in which it was conceived. In the first section I will discuss the historico-social context of the late 1960s in central Europe: how the protest movement of the time influenced avant-garde composers, as well as Beethoven's reception at that time; subsequently I will try to identify Kagel's own attitude towards the political happenings of his time and his view towards tradition. In the second section I will introduce some genres of experimental music: since I consider *Ludwig van* an experimental work, I will examine some of the basic problems of performing such music and finally I will refer to some other works by Kagel which exhibit aspects of experimentalism.

## **1. Historico-social context – attitude towards tradition**

### **A. The anti-authoritarian movement of the 1960s and 1970s and its impact on avant-garde composers**

In order to understand *Ludwig van* better, and to examine its attitude towards Beethoven, it is necessary to bear in mind some of the most important historical events and currents of the era in which it was conceived. The late 1960s was quite a dramatic period for global politics: the Cold War and the Vietnam War were in full swing, Che Guevara and Martin Luther King were killed, the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia in reaction to the Prague Spring, to name but a few important events. On a social level, there was a lot of unrest as various social groups tried to oppose conservatism and demanded social reform: the civil rights movement reached its peak in the 1960s, and the second feminist wave, the hippie movement, the sexual revolution as well as the gay rights movement, all gained visibility around the same time. In Western Europe, the most significant social happenings of the time, which can be argued to have influenced Kagel and his conception of *Ludwig van*, were the demonstrations of students and workers which took place around the end of the decade in France, Germany and elsewhere, and which reached their climax in 1968.

Naturally, the protest movement in West Germany shared some of the reasons of the general unrest on an international level, such as disapproval of the Vietnam War and the various injustices that the Western world was imposing on third world countries. In addition to these it was also caused by discontent with a corrupt and authoritarian state, the urge to deal with the country's Nazi past, demands for a social reform and disapproval of a law which would limit constitutional freedoms in states of emergency, and which was finally passed in May 1968.<sup>2</sup> The protest movement was most closely associated with the New Left, a political movement which, according to Beate Kutschke, differed from the traditional Marxist Left in that it was against authority of any kind, including within a communist system (Kutschke, 2010: 571). This movement

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<sup>2</sup> Stuart J. Hilwig's, *The Revolt Against the Establishment – Students Versus the Press in West Germany and Italy* (Hilwig, 1998) and Claus Leggewie's "A Laboratory of Postindustrial Society – Reassessing the 1960s in Germany" (Leggewie, 1998) provide valuable information as to the general causes of the protests in West Germany.

was largely influenced by Wilhelm Reich, Erich Fromm and Theodor Adorno, and opposed any kind of authority or hierarchy, whether this had to do with the state, society, the educational system or even the family. Part of this mentality was responsible for a questioning of traditional values in the classical music world which is to be found in several works and writings of this period.

Kutschke shows the impact the antiauthoritarian movement had in musical life in the 1960s. She argues that, regarding classical music concerts, it was only some young musical critics that seemed to be influenced by the political climate, “by reviewing concert performances and recordings from the viewpoint of their new sociopolitically oriented value system” (Kutschke, 2010: 561); the classical music enterprise itself did not appear to change in any way. On the other hand, several composers of the time were affected by the antiauthoritarian climate in several respects: by rejecting the ideal of beauty as a product of bourgeois culture, and adopting Adorno’s aesthetics of negativity; by questioning traditional hierarchies of the classical music world, such as the opposition between composer and performer, or between conductor and musicians; or by adopting a critical stance towards the canon and the classical music tradition.

The ways in which the music composed in this period was influenced by the political climate vary considerably, especially according to the aesthetic value or authority being challenged. For instance, Nicolaus A. Huber and Helmut Lachenmann – the latter having being branded a “denial-musician” (Verweigerungsmusiker) – “set out to eradicate any trace of inherited (‘bourgeois’) notions of beauty attaching to particular instruments” (Toop, 2004: 473). Lachenmann’s *Guero* (1969) for piano, replaced the usual sounds of the piano with noises produced by scratching the piano's tuning pegs, strings, and keys themselves. Dieter Schnebel and Gerhard Stäbler, on the other hand, “turned against what Adorno had labeled omnipresent rationalization and instrumental reason and, instead, revitalized first nature, subjectivity, and creatureliness” (Kutschke, 2010: 561): in other words, Kutschke explains, they avoided “artificial” musical figures and employed the natural sounds of the human body. Works which exhibit this tendency are Schnebel’s *Schulmusik*, which consists of a series of musical events for six or more players designed to help young musicians develop their own creativity and ability to work in a team (Schnebel, 1975), and his *Maulwerke* (1968-1974), “for organs of

articulation and devices for reproduction”, as well as Stäbler’s *drüber...* (1972-1973), for eight active shouters, cello, synthesizer, and tape, which “drew attention to the body of the performer, her gestures, her movements as center, not just side-product or means of the sound production” (Kutschke, 2010: 597). Other composers questioned the idea of stylistic unity, such as Hans Werner Henze, whose idea of a “*musica impura*” described “a music whose style is deliberately inconsistent, since different styles are necessary to symbolize different social strata or reflect different ideologies” (Toop, 2004: 473). Another aspect of the tradition challenged was the hierarchy in the relationships between composer or conductor and performer, which led to the developing of “ensemble structures and performance practices that avoided not only a conductor and hierarchal relationships between the musicians, but also the use of a score” (Kutschke, 2010: 576).

Finally, in several works of this period, one of which is definitely Kagel’s *Ludwig van*, the authority attacked is that of great composers of the past, aspects of whose music are incorporated within the context of “new music”. Thus, according to Kutschke, the antiauthoritarian movement of the 1960s is to a great extent responsible for the emergence of postmodern music in the 1970s. When using this term in her article, Kutschke refers to “West German postmodern music”, as it has been established in German music discourse, namely “as label for a group of works composed between the early 1970s and the early to mid-1990s that shared a pluralism of styles, the mixture of high and low art, the display of ‘neoromantic’ characteristics produced by expressive articulation, the reintegration of major-minor tonality, and – most important in this context – the adoption of stylistic peculiarities or idioms of earlier composers” (Kutschke, 2010: 567). Therefore, it is no surprise that much of the music written by composers influenced by the anti-authoritarian movement fall into this category.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In section IV.2 of this thesis I will include extensive discussion of different points of view on what can be labelled postmodern art.

## **B. Beethoven as bourgeois symbol and as revolutionary – the Beethoven year 1970**

In the midst of this political climate, the Beethoven bicentenary in 1970, for which *Ludwig van* was commissioned, was bound to be affected by the anti-authoritarian movement. Kutschke argues that, although the numerous concerts and recordings of Beethoven's music, the publications on his music, as well as a film about his life, suggest an ordinary celebration, there were two "surprising deviations from the usual great-masters' celebration rituals". The first one she detects is a scepticism regarding the meaning and necessity of celebration: a characteristic example is the commentary "Heute noch Beethoven?" (Still Beethoven Today?) on Hessian radio, in which Kagel was also involved, among others. The second "deviation" is that, for this bicentenary, several new works were composed, in which extracts of Beethoven's music were incorporated in avant-garde musical idioms or concepts; some of those works were actually commissioned by well established cultural organisations (Kutschke, 2010: 562). The works that Kutschke mentions, all composed for the bicentenary, are, apart from *Ludwig van*, Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Kurzwellen für Beethoven*, Giuseppe Chiari's *Al chiaro di luna di Beethoven* and Wilhelm Dieter Siebert's *Unser Ludwig 1970*. There are also a number of other works composed in the period of the student demonstrations in Western Europe and America which make use of Beethoven's music and which can be argued to be influenced by the political climate of the time: Louis Andriessen's *De Negen Symphonieën van Beethoven voor Promenade Orkest en Yscobel*, (The Nine Symphonies of Beethoven for Promenade Orchestra and Ice-cream Vendor's Bell, 1970) and André Boucourechliev's *Ombres* (Shadows, 1970) were both commissioned by festivals celebrating Beethoven's bicentenary, whereas Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia* (1968), Bernd Alois Zimmermann's *Photoptosis* (1968), John Cage's *HPSCHD*, (1969), Hans Werner Henze's; *La Cubana: Oder Ein Leben für die Kunst* (1973) and even the Beatles' *Revolution 9* (released in 1968), all made use of Beethoven's music in a manner which can be argued, according to Stephen Loy, to have political connotations (Loy, 2006). Some of these works will be further discussed later in this section.

It is not surprising that Beethoven's bicentenary was met with scepticism and that, apart from conventional concerts and tributes, it triggered new works in which Beethoven's music sounded "torn apart and alienated" (Kutschke 2010: 565). The main

reason for this was that, since the protest movement attacked any kind of authority, it was only natural that, being arguably the most recognisable figure of the Western musical canon and a symbol of bourgeois culture, Beethoven had to be reassessed in the light of the anti-authoritarian movement's beliefs. As music critic Gerhard R. Koch put it in his article "Beethoven a tempo", "meaningful musical interpretation [of Beethoven's works] should aim at scratching off the gypsum and varnish, and washing away the layer of dirt of holy convention" (Koch, quoted in Kutschke, 2010: 569), meaning that Beethoven's music has been so associated with the aesthetics of bourgeois culture, that we have to perform it in new ways in order to shake this connotation off it. Koch goes on to argue that "the authoritarian claim of the classic culture must be abolished" (Koch, quoted in Kutschke, 2010: 577). Another reason why the bicentenary was not met only with enthusiasm is Beethoven's association with Nazi Germany and how the National Socialist party used his music and his image for propaganda purposes. This memory was still very fresh, and contributed to the association of Beethoven with repressive authority. According to Kutschke, this association may be responsible for the change in Adorno's view of Beethoven after the Second World War: he abandoned the idea of writing a book on Beethoven as an enlightened composer, and instead characterised his music as authoritative and repressive (Kutschke, 2010: 578).

The works composed in this period which are most directly political, according to Loy, are those by Andriessen and Henze, two composers who were involved in the radical left-wing political movements in Holland and Germany respectively, and who believed it crucial for music to be politically oriented (Loy, 2006: 78). Andriessen's *De Negen Symphonieën van Beethoven*, the result of a commission for Beethoven's bicentenary, includes quotations from all nine symphonies and some piano sonatas by Beethoven, merged with aspects of popular music and everyday sounds, as well as the Dutch national anthem and the socialist Internationale. Through this juxtaposition he removes Beethoven from the cultural context in which he is usually heard, and he "attacks the notion of classical orchestral concerts" and "challenges what he perceives as one of the cultural fundamentals of bourgeois society" (Loy, 2006: 31-2). Henze's *La Cubana* was composed in 1973 and Beethoven is not its primal focus: it is a vaudeville whose theme is "the futility and dubiousness of art and artists, explored in the person of a Cuban music-hall queen" (Henze, 1982: 207), who is devoted to art and indifferent to the revolution taking place outside. Excerpts from Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*,

played by “a tired old woman” (Henze, 1982: 211), are juxtaposed with different musical idioms, symbolising a fixation with tradition and the idea of art for art’s sake, which is criticised by Henze. Both these composers use Beethoven’s music in unusual contexts, in order to demonstrate their questioning of the role of art in bourgeois society; both composers have expressed their admiration for Beethoven and have claimed that such use of excerpts of his music in their works is not intended simply as a criticism of the composer himself (Loy, 2006: 62, 76): it is intended as a questioning of the notion of art as indifferent to the social movements of the time.

Stockhausen’s *Kurzwellen für Beethoven* is another work which deserves to be mentioned here, as, like *Ludwig van*, it was commissioned for the bicentenary in Germany and recorded on Deutsche Grammophon. The work is based on the same idea as his *Kurzwellen* (1968), which is one of his so-called process compositions, in which the actual content of the work is not prescribed for the performer, but only the process through which it is to be generated.<sup>4</sup> In *Kurzwellen*, which is scored for piano, electronium, tam tam and viola, each player is also assigned a short-wave radio receiver: each of them uses the receiver to produce sounds, to which they respond intuitively, according to certain guidelines given by the composer (Loy, 2005: 185-6). Thus, each performance varies depending both on the performers and on the material derived from the receivers. For *Kurzwellen für Beethoven*, Stockhausen replaced the radio receivers with tapes of collages from Beethoven’s music he made himself, including excerpts from symphonies, chamber music works, piano sonatas, choral works as well as extracts from his letters. The idea behind it was, according to Stockhausen, “to simulate the improbable ‘special case’ in which, wherever we tune, Beethoven’s music is playing from the short-wave receivers, interspersed with passages from his letters” (Wörner, 1973: 76-7). *Kurzwellen* is in line with his compositions of that time, in that it demonstrates a similar spiritual aspect: as in other works such as *Aus den sieben Tagen*, the performer is required to follow their intuition, in order, so to speak, to become a mouthpiece for forces beyond themselves. In *Kurzwellen*, by using radio broadcasts as a source material, he is pursuing the world-wide, the ego-transcending, the universal (Wörner, 1973: 68). Consequently, by replacing the radio broadcasts with Beethoven, he embraces an idea of the great composer as a “timelessly

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<sup>4</sup> Stockhausen’s process compositions are those “in which the score consists primarily of transformation processes: a blueprint for composition rather than a finished work” (Tarr, 2001: 402)

universal spirit” (Wörner, 1973: 77). Loy argues that although Stockhausen was never involved in the protest movements and “established a clearly non-leftist position” (Tarr, 2001: 405), “the influence of these radical movements on Stockhausen may be seen, not in specific ideologies, but [in] the idealistic belief in the vision of a better society” (Loy, 2006: 181). Loy sees Beethoven’s use in *Kurzwellen* as a unifying cosmic force serving Stockhausen’s utopian vision; Kutschke, on the other hand, sees it as “an upshot of the totalitarian Beethoven image”, since it depicts an omnipresent, total Beethoven (Kutschke, 2010: 580). It is hard to determine if it is Loy or Kutschke who interprets Stockhausen’s intention better; but it is worth noting that both of them discern influences of the anti-authoritarian movement in *Kurzwellen für Beethoven*, even though its composer was never part of this movement.

Another work worth referring to in this context is Boucourechliev’s *Ombres*, especially as it exhibits certain similarities to *Ludwig van* in the way it treats the quoted material. Although much of it is through-composed, there are some sections in which the performers are asked to move freely through a number of different quotations: “All instrumentalists have these double-pages in their parts: they can move inside at will, starting from the initial cell built around the held D...: Each of them may play and repeat each figure chosen on whatever stave (without being compelled to play them all)” (Boucourechliev, 1973: 5, quoted in Loy, 2006: 219). Boucourechliev stresses the importance of the choice of performers, rather than chance, in the shaping of any performance. This is the main political aspect in *Ombres*; the composer deconstructs the hierarchy that requires the performers to comply with rules imposed from the composer or the conductor, and asks them to be creative and intuitive: “The conductor does not conduct; at rehearsals, he calls all instrumentalists to mutual listening, he sees to the respect of the general level (ppp-mp) and to not allow any figure to be predominant through an excessive intensity (they must all melt into each other and be guessed rather than underlined)” (Boucourechliev, 1973: 5, quoted in Loy, 2006: 219).

Berio’s *Sinfonia* is a collage of various musical and literary texts from various eras, including Beethoven’s *Pastorale* Symphony, Beckett’s *The Unnameable*, as well as slogans from the May 1968 student protests in Paris, as a means of “critiquing the relationship of culture and society” and “question[ing] the relevance of past cultures, and culture in general, to wider contemporary social issues” (Loy, 2006: 309). In a

similar manner Zimmermann's *Photoptosis* combines various quotations, including extracts from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, over the chorale *Veni Creator Spiritus* as a cantus firmus; Loy argues that his use of Beethoven symbolises "an embracing of all eras of music history simultaneously, as a means of exemplifying musically his conception of spherical time" (Loy, 2006: 231). In Cage's *HPSCHD* for harpsichord, a number of quotations from Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Schumann and others are arranged using chance procedures; according to the composer, *HPSCHD* is

[...] a political art which is not about politics but political itself. As an anarchist, I aim to get rid of politics. I would prefer to drop the question of power... Only by looking out the back window, as McLuhan says, do we concern ourselves with power. If we look forward, we see cooperation and things being made possible, to make the world work so that any kind of living can take place (Cage, quoted in Kazin, 1972: 19).

*HPSCHD* is political in the same way as Stockhausen's *Kurzwellen*: not by overtly supporting the radical protest movements of their time, but by seeking utopian alternatives to authority and power.

It seems that the compositions which made use of Beethoven's music in this period, regardless of whether their main focus was Beethoven or not and whether they are politically oriented works or not, exhibit at least some reference to the political movements of the time; this confirms, once again, how associated Beethoven's image was with politics at this period, both due to his authoritative nature within the context of Western art music, and because of his misuse by the Nazi regime. What is most remarkable is that, while being used as a symbol of bourgeois culture and authority, Beethoven is also seen as the prototype of a revolutionary composer: as Loy states, "Beethoven represented both the icon of tradition against which they [socio-politically motivated composers] were compelled to rebel, whilst simultaneously embodying aspects of the revolutionary and aesthetic ideals that motivated such a rebellion" (Loy, 2006: 2). Instead of simply rejecting Beethoven as a mere symbol of a conservative society, composers found and highlighted elements of his music which surpassed this framework and served their revolutionary aims. Therefore, Beethoven's image either as a dangerous symbol of authority or as a source of inspiration of the revolutionaries seems to have been a rather significant influence on the music of the anti-authoritarian composers of that time.

### C. Kagel's political views and his attitude towards tradition

It is a difficult task to determine Kagel's political views or his attitude towards the protest movement. Paul Attinello, in his entry on Kagel in *The New Grove dictionary*, claims that, although he came from a left-leaning family and was associated with anti-Perón artistic circles in Buenos Aires, Kagel's disillusionment with the communists during the Spanish Civil War – because of their fighting the anarchists and thus becoming easy prey for the fascists – led to his sympathising with “anarchists, both political and artistic” (Attinello, 2001: 310). However, in his interview with Stephen Loy, Kagel says that he does not see himself as an anarchic composer, and implies that what Attinello means by this characterisation is that he rejects style, he never repeats himself and that his work is unclassifiable (Loy, 2006: 364). Loy also questions the credibility of Attinello's statement, since Kagel would have only been eight years old at the end of the Spanish Civil War, and therefore probably too young to reach any conclusions regarding the communist policies at the war. Bjorn Heile, on the other hand, argues that his political views were indeed leaning to the left, but that, around 1970, Kagel “fell out with his former political companions” and “dissociated himself from the West-German Left”, mainly because he criticised the Soviet invasion of Prague and because the New Leftists did not consider him radical enough (Heile, quoted in Kutschke, 2010: 602). Kutschke disagrees with him, claiming that the New Left did not have a clear position regarding the invasion of Prague, and that the fact that his works were not considered political by New Leftist critics does not imply that Kagel himself did not sympathise with their ideology (Kutschke, 2010: 602-3). Her opinion is that Kagel aligned himself with the New Leftist critical value system, even though he never took an explicit stand in favour of the student and protest movements (Kutschke, 2010: 570).

In any case, Kagel cannot be considered a political composer, in the sense that Andriessen and Henze were political composers. It is true that a few of his works do engage directly with political matters: for example, the radio play *Der Tribun* (The Tribune, 1979), for a political orator, marching sounds and loudspeakers, in which the text is a nonsensical collage of phrases alluding to political speeches, sounding like “a compendium of populist demagoguery” (Heile, 2006: 91); and the later work *Fragende Ode* (Questioning Ode, 1989), in which the ideals of the French Revolution “liberty,

equality, fraternity” are followed by the simple question “When?” in a number of different languages. Even in these works, however, Kagel does not take a specific position, aligned with a political current of the time, but rather poses questions and challenges the status quo: in *Der Tribun*, the speaker could belong to any political movement from fascism to communism, and it is not his political views that are being satirised, but the patronising propaganda which is an aspect shared between various political leaders; similarly, in *Die Fragende Ode*, the only comment Kagel adds to the ideals of the French revolution is one question, expressing his scepticism towards these ideals and their plausibility, but not from a specific ideological point of view. The main link between Kagel and the anti-authoritarian movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which reveals the influence that the political situation had on him, is the fact that he engages with tradition and constantly questions it. Glyn Perrin argues that

[E]ach of Kagel’s works is inseparably bound to tradition, more specifically to a musical one. But whether working with a genre (such as opera or the string quartet), re-examining another composer (such as Bach, Beethoven, or Brahms) or analysing the mechanisms of ensemble playing or the role of the conductor, Kagel neither blindly perpetuates nor contemptuously dismisses the tradition (Perrin, 1981: 10)

Kagel’s way of questioning authority was by composing works which referred to tradition – either the Western canonic masterpieces, or the concert hall tradition – in which he neither follows tradition, nor rejects it; he constantly reinvents his position towards it by viewing it in different ways.

*Ludwig van* is the first of a long list of compositions by Kagel which directly refer to canonic composers. Two years later, for the celebration of Brahms’ 140th anniversary in 1973, he composed *Variationen ohne Fuge* (Variations without a Fugue) for large orchestra on Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel for piano op.24 by Johannes Brahms (1861/62) (1972). It is obvious from the title that this is a musical work that refers to another, which already refers to another, in other words “a commentary on a commentary” (Heile, 2002: 291). The work consists of a series of transformations of Brahms’ variations, which sound distorted, demonstrating the historical distance (Heile, 2006: 116). Near the end of the piece, the figures of Brahms and Handel walk on stage, where the former recites a pompously dramatic monologue – a collage from his writings – while the latter waits silently. One of Kagel’s later works

refers to the third of the great B's of the German canon: *Sankt-Bach-Passion* (Saint Bach's Passion 1985) is, like Bach's own passions, scored for soloists, one of whom is the narrator, a large choir, a children's choir and an orchestra (including an organ). The "gospel" text is taken from the necrology for Bach by his son Carl Philipp Emanuel and his student Johann Friedrich Agricola and, as is typical in Kagel's work, a sense of irony is intertwined with a sincere feeling of respect and homage to the great composer.

There are numerous other works by Kagel which refer to canonic composers, but it would be outside the purposes of this chapter to discuss all of them. It would be worth, nevertheless, to mention some of them: *Unguis incarnatus est* (combination of "unguis incarnatus", a medical term meaning "ingrown toenail", and "incarnatus est", a phrase from the Latin Credo which refers to the action of the Son of God being incarnated, acquiring a human body, 1972), scored "for piano and ...", where "..." can be replaced by any bass instrument, is a chamber work most of whose melodic and harmonic material is taken from Liszt's *Nuages Gris* (Grey Clouds, S.199, 1881); *Mitternachtstück* (Midnight piece, 1980-1, 1986), for voices and instruments, is based on gothic short stories from the diaries of Robert Schumann. *Fürst Igor*, *Strawinsky* (Prince Igor, Stravinsky, 1982), for solo bass and instrumental ensemble, refers both to Stravinsky and to Borodin, from whose opera *Prince Igor* the bass's text is taken. The piece *...nach einer Lektüre von Orwell: Hörspiel in germanischer Metasprache* (...upon reading Orwell: radio play in Germanic meta-language, 1984) alludes to Liszt's *Après une Lecture de Dante* for piano. In *Interview avec D. pour Monsieur Croche et orchestre* (Interview with D., for Monsieur Croche and Orchestra, 1994), the narrator answers imaginary questions posed by the orchestra, reciting texts from Debussy's interviews.

There are also numerous of Kagel's works which refer to and comment on musical tradition in a more general way, rather than by concentrating on specific composers. The instrumental theatre pieces *Sonant* (1960/...) and *Sur Scène* (1959-1960), both comment on aspects of musical life, outside music itself. In the former, the musicians are instructed to perform several theatrical tasks, such as signalling entries, conducting passages of the music, humming or singing parts of the work, grunting when they have to play a difficult harmonic and grumbling when performing a crescendo (Schnebel, 1970: 77): all emphasising on the visual aspects of musical performance

while the music is hardly audible. Thus Kagel reverses the formalistic claim that music is only about sound, and that its visual aspects are only there to serve the music and should not concern the audience. By exposing the “making of” music and concealing the “final result”, he negates the “divine” character of music and highlights its more human aspects. In the latter work, in addition to the musicians, there are also a mime, who impersonates the audience, and an actor, who plays a music critic or musicologist who gives a nonsensical lecture on post-War music, thus incorporating music reception and criticism into the music itself; the result is a self-referential work which blurs the distinction between the stage (*scène*) and what traditionally happens *off* stage.

There are also works by Kagel whose focus is on the tradition of specific genres within the classical music tradition. For instance, *Staatstheater* (1967-1971) was described by Kagel himself as “not just the negation of opera, but of the whole tradition of musical theatre” (quoted in Attinello, 2001: 310). It consists of nine sections which make use of all the resources found in an opera house – singers, choir, dancers, orchestra – in a totally unorthodox way and with all the traditional hierarchies between them deconstructed: the choristers sing more individualised parts than the soloists; the instrumentalists move on stage on mechanised chairs, whereas the soloists stand in a semi-circle as a choir; various famous opera scenes are shown “inverted or emptied of meaning” (Attinello, 2002: 279). Kagel uses all the traditional elements of musical theatre, but in such a way that they lose their meaning in the traditional context. As Kagel says, “The same steps that are for instance necessary for a particular scene in *Tosca* are not emptied of contents in *Staatstheater* or parodied, but become the contents” (Kagel, 1975: 90; quoted and translated in Heile, 2006: 58). By depriving the components of an opera of their meaning, Kagel seems to deconstruct this genre and to speculate over its relevance in contemporary society.

His next opera, *Aus Deutschland* (1979), dedicated to Heinrich Heine, is based on texts from German Lieder by Schubert and Schumann and demonstrates an ironical stance towards common themes of the German romantic art song. The subtlety and intimacy of the Lied as a genre are replaced by vulgar scenes that take the metaphors which are typical of Romantic poetry too literally: the singer dies from Schubert’s songs in “Vergiftet sind meine Lieder” (my songs are poisoned); the phrase “beglücke mich” (please me) from “Leise flehen meine Lieder” is taken in its modern German meaning,

which is explicitly sexual, rather than in the sense in which Ludwig Rellstab, the poet, probably meant it, and it is therefore sung during a vulgar sexual scene; Carpani's *In questa tomba oscura* (In this dark tomb, set to music by Beethoven, WoO 133) is sung in an open grave, whereas Death from *Der Tod und das Mädchen* (Death and the maiden by Matthias Claudius, set to music by Schubert, D.531) appears on stage in a clichéd, grotesque impersonation, dressed in black and carrying a sickle. Similarly literal are the translations of some of the songs into English, which were done word for word, in such a way that the syntax of the English texts is peculiar and awkward. In general, Kagel decontextualises German Lieder texts: he presents them independently of their original music and aesthetic connotations, making them sound alienated, or even ridiculous.

It would be incorrect to label Kagel as a political composer, since his works do not tend to have an openly political meaning and they do not seem to have been composed in order to serve any particular political aim. But it is obvious that many of them are influenced by the political happenings of his time, and that in many of them this influence is expressed by the way of questioning authority, and particularly that of the established classical music tradition: composers of the past, common musical genres, the concert hall tradition. Thus, it seems that Kagel's turn to postmodern composition is, to a great extent, caused by his being influenced by the political climate of the time and his anti-authoritarian attitude. *Ludwig van*, the subject of this dissertation, is one of the most important examples of this turn in Kagel's career.

## **2. Experimental music and its performance**

### **A. Definitions**

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the score instructions for *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven* leave a great deal to be determined by the performers, and as a result of this, any two performances of the score are bound to be very different: the material from which the performers are to generate their parts – either by planning it or spontaneously – is vast (it includes all of Beethoven's works) and the order and manner in which this material is to be played is also not specified by Kagel. Thus, although he was essentially part of the European avant-garde, the work in question seems to have a lot in common with what is generally called "experimental music".

Obviously, this term is extremely general and hard to define in a few words; in one of the most well-known and quoted books on this subject, *Experimental Music – Cage and beyond* (Nyman, 1974), the English composer and critic Michael Nyman generally uses the music of the European avant-garde (such as Boulez, Xenakis and Stockhausen) in order to show in which ways so-called experimental music – which, according to him is essentially American and British – is different. Avant-garde music, the continuation of classical music, is based on "a system of *priorities* which sets up ordered relationships between its components, and where one thing is defined in terms of its opposite [...]: high/low, rise/fall, fast/slow [...]" (Nyman, 1974: 27); in this system every element has a specific function in the overall form of a work and "the identity of a composition is of paramount importance" (Nyman, 1974: 9). In experimental music, according to Nyman, all the opposites might occur spontaneously, and the idea of a climax which is central to the concept of form is no longer important. The identity of an experimental composition is fluid, since any two performances are essentially very different from each other. After all, according to Cage, an experimental act is "an act the outcome of which is unknown" (Cage, 1961: 13).

Björn Heile, however, disapproves of the binary opposition Nyman creates between European and Anglo-American music, especially since Nyman's distinction appears initially derived from the composers' nationalities rather than the characteristics of their music. Heile claims that there have been more examples of European composers

writing experimental music than Nyman admits, and that the latter's approach is ethnocentric and "essentializes national traditions" (Heile, 2004b: 175). In his book about Kagel's music, he mentions three uses of the idea of experiment in music: the first has to do with the scientific meaning of the word and is applied to computer or electronic music; the second has to do with Cage's definition of an experimental act mentioned above, and consequently is closer to Nyman's use of the term; and the last one refers "to the tendency of the avant-garde to explore hitherto unknown territory" (Heile, 2006: 69). Both the second and the third uses of the word "experiment" are relevant to Kagel's work, according to Heile.

Although I find Nyman's book very enlightening in terms of the aesthetics and characteristics of what he terms experimental music, I also believe that it is simplistic to distinguish two very important traditions of the twentieth century on grounds of geography. Furthermore, I find Heile's use of the term more inclusive: whereas Nyman tends to exclude much music that has elements of experimentalism, Heile provides a more general view of the term, which I find more accurate, as it reflects its vast use in musicology since the mid-twentieth century to refer to works and genres which are very different from each other. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will refer to some specific genres within the vast field of experimental music, which seem to be related to the concept of *Ludwig van*: in these genres, the composer employs ways in which some elements of the performance are left either to the performer's discretion, or to chance. Although, according to the *The New Grove dictionary*, both cases belong to the wide concept of aleatory, I will use the term chance music to refer to music which is composed using chance operations, and indeterminate music only for compositions which leave decisions to be made by the performer, those that Cage, in his lecture on indeterminacy, refers to as "indeterminate with respect to [their] performance" (Cage, 1961: 35-40).

Chance music stems from a concept which is essentially Cagean: the elimination of the composer's intention and his/her conscious or unconscious intervention in the sound world. Influenced by Zen Buddhism, Cage wanted to eliminate any trace of subjectivity from his music. The first work he composed in this manner is *Music of Changes* (1951) for solo piano; Cage devised a technique with which he determined the content of the piece by tossing coins and interpreting the results according to the *I*

*Ching*, or *Book of Changes*. But the chance procedures in *Music of Changes* were all employed in the process of composing it; this work is not indeterminate with respect to performance:

That the *Music of Changes* was composed by means of chance operations identifies the composer with no matter what eventuality. But that its notation is in all respects determinate does not permit the performer any such identification: his work is specifically laid out before him (Cage, 1961: 36).

Most of Cage's works after *Music of Changes* involved some chance operations in their composition; some notable examples are *Williams Mix* (1952) for tape, in which he used chance techniques "to dictate how the tape should be cut, spliced together and combined (Nyman, 1974: 48) and *Imaginary Landscape no.4* (1951) for 12 radios, where he used similar operations "to determine the loudness levels, durations and station tunings on the 12 radios" (Nyman, 1974: 62).

In indeterminate music (indeterminate with respect to its performance), there are certain aspects which are not determined in the score and which are, usually deliberately, left to the discretion of the performer, who either has to make conscious decisions beforehand, or react to the score spontaneously during the performance. The aspects left undetermined can be various: for example, Cage argues that *The Art of the Fugue* is an indeterminate composition, since the "timbre and amplitude [apparently "amplitude" signifies sound volume in Cage's writings] characteristics of the material" (Cage, 1961: 35) are not given; in Stockhausen's *Klavierstück XI*, the sequence of its parts, and thus the overall form, is indeterminate; Morton Feldman's *Intersection 3* leaves more to the discretion of the performer, since the pitches and durations are only vaguely determined within limits, and the amplitude is completely free; Earle Brown's graphic score *December 1952*, in the collection entitled *Folio*, determines very little, since it is a drawing of rectangles of different sizes which can be interpreted in various ways.

Finally, one division of indeterminate composition which might be relevant to this dissertation – since *Ludwig van*'s score is preceded by a series of instructions which can be argued to be more important than the score itself – is the text score, sometimes referred to as prose or verbal score. In this the means the composer uses to communicate

with the performer consists of text, instead of conventional notation. The text can be quite straightforward, as in La Monte Young's *Composition 1960 no.5*, which requires that a butterfly (or any number of butterflies) be released in the performance area, or rather abstract, as in George Brecht's *Two Durations* (1961), in which the text consist of two words:

red  
green

Text scores are more often associated with Fluxus artists, such as George Maciunas, Yoko Ono and the two mentioned above. But other composers, even members of the avant-garde, have also composed scores which consist only of words, a notable example being Stockhausen's *Aus den sieben Tagen* (1968), a collection of fifteen text compositions which resemble poems. Stockhausen calls this work "intuitive music" as it asks the performers not to follow a specific score or any given rules, but their intuition.

The aim of this section has been to present three types of experimental composition which appear relevant to the score of *Ludwig van*, and certainly not to cover the very wide field of experimental music. The relation *Ludwig van* bears with these types of composition and the question whether it can be placed in any of these categories remain to be examined in section IV.3.A.

## **B. Performance of indeterminate music**

It is evident that, in music which is indeterminate with regard to its performance, since certain matters are left undetermined by the score, there are issues which arise concerning the role of the performer. He/she is not merely a mediator between the composer and the audience, someone whose principal aim is to convey the composer's "message" or "intention" as accurately as possible; on the contrary, he/she has a separate role in the actual shaping of the music, since the music's "content", and not only its "interpretation", depends on his/her actions. In order to discuss the performer's function in such music, I believe we should first identify two separate tendencies within indeterminate music. In the first category, which, according to Griffiths (Griffiths, 2001: 346), is generally more of a European tendency, the reason for leaving aspects of a work undetermined in the score is in order to give some freedom of choice to the performer. In the second, which is mostly associated with Cage and his followers, what the composer aims for is the absence of subjectivity. Although, as I argued earlier, I believe the geographical distinction to be somewhat simplistic, I will make use of Griffiths' categorisation between works that aim to leave some of their aspects to chance and works that encourage the performer to make some of the decisions. It has to be noted that these two categories are not very distinct from each other and that there are works which can be argued to be a combination of the two; and this is why I will use the term "tendencies" rather than "categories" when referring to them.

A very common example of the first tendency is Boulez's Third Piano Sonata (1955-57/63), in which the performer is free to rearrange the order of its movements, and their materials, at will. In other works, such as Stockhausen's intuitive compositions, mentioned before, the performers are basically asked to play without a score, following their intuition while being aware of the sounds the rest of the ensemble is making. But whether it is conscious decisions or intuition that is being required, works of this category encourage the subjectivity of the performer: by not determining all the aspects of his/her work, the composer invites the performer to be more present in the creative process. At the same time, according to Griffiths, "the composition is still the product of an individual mind", and "the performer has still to realise the composer's intentions" (Griffiths, 2001: 346); the aesthetics of this kind of indeterminate composition are very far from Cage's ideals of non-intention, since the

target of such scores is not music generated by chance, but the blurring of more than one person's individual creativities into one work.

On the contrary, works which are characteristic of the other tendency carry further the ideals of chance composition. This can happen by asking the performer to carry out the chance operations themselves, as for example in Cage's *Variations II* (1962): its score is generated by the performer by throwing eleven transparent sheets marked with straight lines or dots onto a surface and interpreting the result through a complicated process instructed by the composer. Another way is by asking them to follow very specific processes *while* performing the piece; an example would be Christian Wolff's *Duo for Pianists* (1958), in which the actions of each pianist depend, to a great extent, on what the other pianist is doing. Thus "it is an entirely self-contained score with absolutely no need to refer to external sources, performance practices or analysis to execute this work perfectly well" (Thomas, 2009: 81). In other words, this kind of music seeks to avoid any cultural references or any source of subjectivity: the only requirement is for the performer to carry out the instructions of the composition, without trying to follow any style, performance practice or allowing his/her individual expression into the performance.

It is difficult to talk about a performance practice tradition of indeterminate music. Firstly because it is a relatively new genre, and there have not been enough performances of indeterminate works to create different schools or tendencies followed by several performers. Secondly because, due to its very nature, each and every performer approaches it in different ways, and the performances each work receives may be very different from each other even if it is the same person performing; for sure performances by different people are bound to be even more different. Moreover, the issue of the performance practice of indeterminate music is inextricably linked to the work of one single performer, David Tudor, who worked closely with several composers of experimental music, most notably Cage, Wolff and Feldman, and played a very important role in the realisation, but also in the conception of such music.

The most interesting thing about the way Tudor approached the indeterminate scores he was to perform is the way he prepared his realisations. According to John Holzaepfel, up to the early 1950's he always played experimental – but not

indeterminate – music from the composer’s scores or even their manuscripts (Holzaepfel, 2002b: 176 and 2002a: 161). But after playing Feldman’s indeterminate *Intersection 2* in the same manner and not being satisfied with the result, he started to undertake “a series of rigorous preparatory steps, including measurements, computations, conversion tables – whatever he found useful to the task – whose result he translated into a more or less conventional notation for his own use in performance” (Holzaepfel, 2002b: 176). In some cases, his involvement with the creative process was so significant that he has been argued to surpass the boundaries between the roles of performer and composer: James Pritchett, for instance, regards Tudor’s realisation of Cage’s *Variations II* as a composition in its own right (Pritchett, 2004: 16); Tudor on the other hand, talking about the same realisation, says

“Well, when you go that far, then in a sense you are co-composer. However, I still would be unable to call myself a co-composer. I call it my electronic version and I give my name as its being my version” (quoted in Kuivila, 2004: 20)

Although Tudor has largely been considered the indisputable expert in the field of experimental music performance and despite his being admired by Cage, Feldman and other experimental composers, there has also been some criticism of his approach towards indeterminate music. Philip Thomas, for example, argues that since “Cage’s priorities, like those of Feldman, were mostly concerned with the liberation of *sounds* and the unrepeatability of musical events” (Thomas, 2007: 133), it is important that at least certain aspects of the performance should remain to be determined at the time of performance. In his own performances of Cage’s *Music for Piano*, he plans the pedalling, the articulation and the approximate durations in advance using chance methods, and leaves the dynamics free to be decided during each performance itself. He admits that by this he might let matters of taste interfere with the performance, but argues that his general awareness of Cage’s music helps him avoid the clichés of improvisation, which would be against Cage’s self-less approach (Thomas, 2007: 133-4). It is interesting, however, that in another source Thomas seems to contradict his own method, since he claims that experimental scores are self-sufficient and do not require the performer to have any previous knowledge of the genre:

My argument from the performer’s perspective is that music which could be said to be ‘experimental’ requires a stylistically non-interventionist approach, whereby performers respond to the demands of the score, without reference to any external

stylistic code, and focus upon the production of sound within the parameters of the score (Thomas, 2009: 91).

Since he believes that experimental music should be performed without reference to any stylistic code and only following the requirements of the score, in my opinion he should not rely on his knowledge of Cage's music in order to avoid bringing his taste into his performance; on the contrary, he should be in favour of Tudor's approach, since the latter, by determining all aspects of his performance using chance methods, managed to exclude his personal choices from it, even if it is at the expense of the unrepeatability of performance. Of course, Thomas seems to argue that the fact that he lets some aspects of the music be determined through his knowledge of Cage's music and its performance practice does not mean that he embraces personal choice; but, all the same, being a performer myself, I believe that it is impossible to exclude personal taste from a performance which is shaped in this way; I believe that Tudor's tactic of determining everything using chance techniques *before* the actual performance is a much safer way of avoiding to make any personal choices when performing this kind of music.

In any case, this conflict clearly has to do with works of the second tendency mentioned earlier in this section, the one which is based on the ideals of chance music and aims to avoid any trace of subjectivity, both that of the composer and that of the performer. And for works that belong to this tendency it is important to avoid improvisation, personal choices or stylistic codes in favour of chance. But my view is that, following Griffiths, not all indeterminate music is against subjectivity: in works that belong to the first tendency described earlier, it is important for the performer to make personal choices and take an active part in the conception of the musical content of a performance. As I will argue in Chapter IV.3.A, I believe that Kagel's *Ludwig van* belongs to that tendency.

### C. Kagel and experimentalism

As I mentioned in section II.2.A, Heile believes that experimentalism can be traced in Kagel's work in two different ways: the first has to do with Cage's definition of an experiment as "an act the outcome of which is unknown", and therefore refers to a more "American" idea of experimentalism; the second relates to "the tendency of the avant-garde to explore hitherto unknown territory" (Heile, 2006: 69), which is a more "European" tendency. According to Heile, "Kagel was well placed to link both these conceptions of experimentalism" (Heile, 2006: 69), being an important part of the Darmstadt school who also embraced Cage's ideas more warmly than other composers. Kagel's interest in Cage's work and the American school, Heile claims, was related to Kagel's break with Stockhausen around the same time in the late 1960s (Heile, 2006: 70).

Kagel's first work that was clearly influenced by American experimentalism was *Transición II* (1959), for pianist, percussionist – who only plays on the body and the strings of the piano – and tape recorders. The work consists of 21 sections the order of which is to be decided before the performance following very complicated and meticulous rules; its score varies from absolutely conventional writing to clusters and graphic notation; and the tapes play material from the piece itself, either recorded before or during the performance. Another such work is *Metapiece (Mimetics)* (1961) for piano, in which the page order is also free under certain limitations, and whose score consists of very little material – chords and groups of notes – and very general instructions as to how to use it: as with many of Cage's works, it is almost impossible to play it from Kagel's score – the pianist has to "compose" their own version of it to make it possible to perform it. In *Prima Vista* (1964), for slide pictures and undefined sound sources, the score consists only of slide projections: the performers – "instruments, voices, props, mechanical or electrical sound generators, loudspeakers, objects etc. can be used along with unusual mutes, bows, or drumsticks" (Kagel, 1971: 7) – are divided into two (or more) ensembles and each ensemble is performing what they see in the slides which are being projected by the other ensemble. As the order of the slides and the duration of each slide are completely free, each ensemble cannot be prepared for the "score" they are supposed to perform, since the "score" is actually generated during the performance by a person from the other ensemble. Thus, a

performance of this work is truly an experimental action, according to Cage's definition, since there is no way it can be prepared: every time it is performed, its outcome is unknown.

As for works which can be characterised experimental in a more avant-garde way, which, in other words, experiment with unknown territory and new material, one of the examples Heile mentions is *Music for renaissance instruments* (1966), in which early instruments are played in the most unorthodox ways, using extended techniques and treating them as *objets trouvés* (Heile, 2006: 75). Another example is *Camera Oscura* (1965), chromatic play for lighting with actors: visually, its score could be taken for a graphic score for instrumentalists, judging from the signs it contains and from its layout; but there is no live music involved – the score describes the movements of the actors, the volume of the loudspeakers, and the movements, colours and intensity of the spotlights. Other works which can be labelled experimental in the same sense are: *Pas de Cinq* (1965), a “walking scene” in which the only sound produced on stage is that of the steps of five actors walking on a floor “covered with the most varied kinds of materials, for example sheets of metal, plastic and wood, and runners of jute, cloth and linoleum”, carrying a walking stick (Kagel, 1967b); *Ornithologica multiplicata* (1968), where the performers are twenty-five indigenous and forty-five exotic birds, depending on the area where the performance takes place; and *Privat* (1968), for lonely listener, which is not intended for public performance – it is a set of slightly bizarre instructions for listening in a domestic setting (Heile, 2006: 80).

One of the most important experimental works by Kagel, which, according to Heile, “sums up Kagel's approach to experimentalism, as opposed to a Cagean concept” (Heile, 2006: 79), is *Hallelujah* (1967) for voices. It consists of various sections, whose order is free, under some conditions: sixteen solo parts, four for each voice type, each of which can be sung along with others, but at the same time independently from the others; eight tutti sections, some of which are conventionally notated, whereas some are based on graphic scores, and include special uses of the voice; three sections for speaking chorus in which the performers have to cut out figures from the score and paste them on chosen texts which they then have to read according to the instructions written on these figures; three “protest choruses” shouting nonsensical slogans and imitating animal sounds; one section in which the choristers have to sing while blowing

into pan pipes; and a solo for a female voice to be performed at the end. Heile believes that *Hallelujah* exemplifies the difference between Kagel's and Cage's ideas on experimentalism:

[T]he relinquishing of control on Kagel's part and the emphasis placed on performers' cooperation in developing and presenting a version of the piece are not ornamental but part of the essence of the work. However, this is not at the service of the renunciation of communication, expression or the subjectivity of the composer: on the contrary, the work is clearly *meant* to engage with the dialectics between individualism and institutionalization of religious experience, although Kagel does not formulate an unequivocal 'message' and different versions of the piece may emphasize different aspects. Paradoxically, it is thus the piece's openness and – restricted – indeterminacy which communicate Kagel's intention (Heile, 2006: 79-80).

Thus, whereas in Cage's music indeterminacy mainly serves as a way to abolish the subjectivity of the composer, in Kagel's case it is a way to encourage the musicians' active involvement in the performance and to communicate his own intention.

Kagel's most experimental period, as is the case with many composers of his time, was the 1960s. From the early 1970s he started engaging more with musical tradition, in works such as the ones mentioned in section II.1.C. Some of his works from the late 1960s and early 1970s seem to combine these two tendencies. *Staatstheater* (1967-1971) is a very good example of this: at the same time as a critique of the whole tradition of musical theatre, as I argue in section II.1.C, it is a highly experimental work: the "instruments" used most of the time are actually any kind of sound-producing objects, the parts are to be played in any order or simultaneously, or to be omitted, and almost none of the parts is in conventional notation. Another work which clearly stands between these two tendencies in Kagel's output is *Ludwig van*: it is a work that treats traditional musical material in an experimental way.

## Chapter III

### *Ludwig van: Ein Bericht*

The subject of this chapter will be Kagel's film *Ludwig van: Ein Bericht* (Ludwig van: a report), which was commissioned by Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR), Köln, on the occasion of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ludwig van Beethoven's birth, and filmed between 23 September and 9 October 1969. The film received its first screening on 28 May 1970 in the Wiener Künstlerhaus and its first television broadcast on 1 June 1970 by WDR. In the first section I will give a brief description of each of the film's sequences; apart from the action, I will mention the music used, all of which is actually by Beethoven, but most of which was elaborated by Kagel in very remarkable ways. In the next section I will discuss the ways in which Kagel manipulated Beethoven's music, as well as its role in the film. Following that, I will discuss certain issues that Kagel raises through this film, which have more to do with Beethoven's reception in the centuries after his death than with his life and works. Finally, the last section will be about the film's reception by audiences and critics in West and East Germany.

## **1. “Plot” of the film – Musical materials**

In this section, I will present the sequences of the film one by one and I will give a brief summary of each of them, mentioning the music used in it. In the course of this summary I will include brief commentaries on some of its elements, found mainly in the secondary sources concerning the film.

The film, according to an early sketch by Kagel, is divided into two parts (Holsträter, 2004: 112-3). In the first one (chapters 1-10), Beethoven is depicted coming back to his birthplace, Bonn, in 1970, strolling around the city, visiting his house which has been turned into a museum and embarking on a boat trip on the Rhine. The second one (chapters 11-20) consists of independent scenes, parodies of television programmes, commenting on Beethoven’s reception. The following account of the plot and the musical materials of the film will be divided in chapters according to the DVD of *Ludwig van* (Kagel, 2007)<sup>5</sup> and then subdivided into the sequences of the film according to the script.

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<sup>5</sup> This division does not correspond to the division of the sequences of the film according to the script. The reason I chose to use the division according to the DVD of *Ludwig van* is because the sequences in the script do not appear in the order in which they are to be found in the film, and because some of them do not appear in the film at all. Therefore, in the course of the discussion of the film, I will use the word “chapter” to refer to the division according to the DVD and the word “sequence” to refer to the script’s division.

### Chapter 1 (0.00-0.53): Stefan Wewerka Shaving

- Sequence not in film script (0.00-0.53)

Action: The first sequence of the film is the first of a series of statements regarding the Beethoven year that Kagel asked the artists with whom he collaborated to make. It depicts Stefan Wewerka shaving and mumbling the words “Beethoven... Bummelei... Bumserei” (*Bummelei* means dawdling, idling; as for *Bumserei*, it does not exist as a word, but it alludes to the verb *bumsen*, which is a term of German slang for having sex), and other seemingly nonsensical words coming from an improvisation on the word “Beethovenrummel” (Beethoven-hype) (Holsträter, 2004: 112).

Sound: No music, the only sounds are that of the electric shaver Wewerka uses, and of course that of his voice.

### Chapter 2 (0.53-13.16): Beethoven's Arrival in Bonn

- Sequence AN (0.53-1.05): Broadcasters

Action: This is a sequence whose scenes appear several times in the film. Kagel had twelve people – aged over 65 and with very wrinkled faces, according to the script – read typical television broadcaster phrases, as if they were introducing television programmes on Beethoven.

Sound: First movement of the Piano Sonata, op.57 (*Appassionata*), broadcaster’s voice: “May it go from heart to heart”, from Beethoven’s inscription on his *Missa Solemnis*.

- Sequence BA (1.05-2.34): Bonn Railway Station

Action: Beethoven is shown getting off the D-Zug – which goes from Vienna to Hoek van Holland, the land of his ancestors (Klüppelholz, 1981: 12) – in Bonn. His face is never actually shown, as it is supposed to be him behind the camera, inviting the spectators to identify themselves with it and therefore to get involved in the film, according to Christiane Hillebrand (Hillebrand, 1996: 194).

Sound: The only sound as Beethoven gets out of the train is the first movement of the Piano Sonata, op.57 (*Appassionata*); when that stops, there is no sound whatsoever, although he is in a station full of people. This probably refers to the idea of Beethoven as a deaf person who can only hear music inside his head. In addition, it

makes it clear that not only do we experience the film with Beethoven's eyes, but we also hear with his ears.

- Sequence BB (2.34-4.12): Beethoven's Ramble (Bonn and Köln)

Action: Beethoven gets out of the station and strolls through the city. According to the script, Kagel expects a cameraman dressed up in 19<sup>th</sup>-century clothes to attract the attention of passers-by, and this proves true in the film: people's faces look bewildered as if they were actually seeing Beethoven in the streets of Bonn.

Sound: A strange performance of the *Scherzo* from the Ninth Symphony is heard: the instrumentation is that of a salon orchestra, as in Kagel's *Stücke der Windrose* of 1988-94 (Holsträter, 2003: 77-8), and the performance is out of tune and unsynchronised. The source of the sound is not visible on screen, apart from one point when Beethoven passes by a street musician, who plays the zither along with the recording.

- Sequence BC (4.12-7.55): Record Shop/Electrola

Action: In the first part of this sequence, Beethoven arrives at a record shop where several discs of his major works are displayed and lots of motionless people are listening to them through telephone speakers, as was the practice in the late 1960s. The second part takes place at the factory of the record company Electrola in Köln and shows scenes from the manufacture of records.

Sound: In the first part of this sequence we are still hearing the *Scherzo* from the Ninth Symphony, as in the previous sequence. The difference is that, as soon as Beethoven enters the shop, the music sounds distorted and flat, as if we were also hearing it through telephone speakers, like the people in the shop (Heile, 2006: 102). In the second part the music heard is an orchestrated version of the *Andante espressivo* (*The Absence*) from the Piano Sonata, op.81a (*Les Adieux*).

- Sequence Beethovenhaus Bonn (Bonngasse 20) (7.55-11.30)

Action: Beethoven is shown arriving at his birthplace. The person who opens the door for him is the "Fremdenführer" (guide) of the museum, who "exhibits a resemblance with another German 'Führer' of unfortunate memory" (Kluppelholz, 1981: 12) and who looks quite puzzled when he sees Beethoven. The sequence that

follows shows various objects from the collection of the Beethovenhaus, such as death masks, ear trumpets, as well as some austere busts of Beethoven.

Sound: In the beginning of this sequence, the *Leonore* Overture No.3, op.72b, is played by an ensemble featuring very prominent wind and brass instruments and piano, whereas afterwards the opening of the Piano Sonata, op.28, is heard, in an orchestration that might be described as alluding to light music.

- Sequence not in film script (11.30-13.16): Wine cellar

Action: The Fremdenführer leads us to the wine cellar of Beethoven's family, which, as he says, was discovered recently. This is the beginning of a tour in an imaginary Beethovenhaus, whose rooms were constructed by Joseph Beuys, Ursula Burghardt, Robert Filliou, Dieter Roth, Rudolf Rieser, Stefan Wewerka and Kagel himself. Apart from the latter, the rest were fine artists of the time, all of whom were associated with Fluxus, an artistic movement of the 1960s with Neo-Dada influences, in which Kagel was involved for part of his life. The wine cellar was created by Joseph Beuys.

Sound: The only sound in this sequence is the voice of the Fremdenführer presenting the wine cellar.

### Chapter 3 (13.16-16.51): Fire Drain and Kitchen in the Beethoven House (Joseph Beuys)

- Title Sequence (13.16-14.34): Burning Drain

Action: This is one of two actions-statements Joseph Beuys did on the Beethoven Year. It depicts fire coming out of a street drain, until it is covered by a kitchen pot lid.

Sound: Opening of the Ninth Symphony, amateurish instrumentation and performance.

- Sequence KU (14.34-16.19): Kitchen of the Beethovenhaus

Action: The Fremdenführer shows various elements in the kitchen of the Beethovenhaus, constructed by Joseph Beuys.

Sound: Same as previous sequence.

- Sequence not in film script (16.19-16.51): *Totenmaske Napoleons*

Action: This is the second statement by Beuys, called *Napoleon's death mask*. From within the kitchen, we see the artist out of the window, staring into the kitchen while wearing Napoleon's death mask.

Sound: The only sound here is Beuys' voice making his characteristic "ö ö" sound, of which he says:

"ö ö is simply the language without content. Just the carrier wave. The language without a conceptual implantation of a concept, like the animals emit their noises. A simple expression of an inner emotion is imitated by the ö ö, which is the roar of a stag" (Kramer, 1991: 20).

#### Chapter 4 (16.51-22.22): Bathroom, Beethoven Busts Made of Lard and Chocolate (Dieter Roth)

- Sequence TO (16.51-22.22): Toilet and Bathroom of the Beethovenhaus

Action: This sequence takes place in the bathroom, where about a hundred busts of the composer, made of lard and chocolate, are floating in the bathtub. Beethoven's hand takes several of them out of the water one by one, more and more disfigured to horrific effect, and finally gives some coins to the Fremdenführer. Subsequently, a view through the bathroom window down to the pavement is shown, where Dieter Roth and Rudolf Rieser are smashing and sweeping away more Beethoven busts. That, according to the script, is Dieter Roth's statement on the Beethoven Year.

Sound: In the first part of this sequence the Fremdenführer seems to be talking, but all we can hear is the cantabile and expressive last movement of the Piano Sonata, op.109, played by a string ensemble. In the second part, a nonsensical series of words starting with B, or made to start with B, is recited: Brobert, Bdorothy, Beer, Bamsterdam, Beer van Bschnapps, BP are only a few examples. Finally the phrase "Gute Nacht" (good night) is repeated several times and fades out.

## Chapter 5 (22.22-25.34): Living Room of the Beethoven House (Ursula Burghardt)

- Sequence WO (22.22-24.48): Living room of the Beethovenhaus

Action: The next room is the living room, made by Ursula Burghardt, where all the furniture is crowded together narrowly and plated with aluminium, as “an act of multiple musealisation” (from the film script).<sup>6</sup> The Fremdenführer sits in an armchair and reads *Beethovens äußere Erscheinung (Beethoven's External Appearance, Leipzig, 1905)*, an extensive study by Theodor von Frimmel, who “has treated in an exhaustive and masterly manner the whole subject of Beethoven's personal appearance” (Speyer, 1913: 169).

Sound: The *Arietta* from the second movement of the Piano Sonata, op.111, is played here. The first phrase is played by the strings sul ponticello, the second by the winds, the third by the guitar and the piano, and the last one by the brass instruments.

- Sequence KI (24.48-25.34): Children's room of the Beethovenhaus

Action: Beethoven moves to the children's room where “all props and pieces of furniture of this scene are altered in such a way that no square angle occurs in the entire construction [...] The children's room is to reflect Beethoven's damaged environment, the moral gloominess of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century”, according to the film script. Beethoven's feet are shown through a mirror of the room, giving the impression that they are doing some kind of slow and awkward dance.

Sound: The theme from the *Diabelli Variations*, op.120, again in an amateurish instrumentation.

## Chapter 6 (25.34-32.33): Music Room (Mauricio Kagel)

- Sequence MZ (25.34-32.33): Music Room

The music room is probably the most important part of the house: in it all the surfaces, even of the smallest props, are covered in Beethoven's music. According to Holsträter, the inspiration for this room lies in the works of the Czech artist Jiří Kolář, whose collages of musical notes on statues and surfaces Kagel must have seen in exhibitions (Holsträter, 2003: 83). Initially Kagel invited Kolář to realise the room, but

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<sup>6</sup> The term Kagel uses is Musealisierung, whose English translation seems to be conservation, but I think musealisation is closer to the German word in meaning. More discussion on the concept of musealisation is to be found in section III.3.A.

apparently the latter did not manage to obtain an exit permit from Czechoslovakia (Holsträter, 2003: 84), therefore Kagel decided to construct the room himself. Holsträter believes that there is a basic difference between Kolář's collage technique and the way Kagel applied it in the music room: the fragments of Kolář's collages are very small, most often being fragments consisting of individual notes, which bear no semantic or syntactic meaning, whereas Kagel uses particles of such a size that they are endowed with limited units of sense (Sinneinheiten) (Holsträter, 2003: 87). In this respect, Kagel's collage reminds us more of Wolf Vostell's "de-coll/ages", where an everyday image is torn apart and blended with fragments of other pictures. Nevertheless, this parallel still does not seem to be adequate: the context from which Vostell draws the particles for his de-coll/ages is much wider than that of Kagel, who only recombines fragments of Beethoven's music, a technique that Holsträter calls "de-de-coll/age", as opposed to Vostell's de-coll/age (Holsträter, 2003: 97). On the other hand, Kagel himself uses another term to refer to this technique: in his interview with Karl Faust, he introduces the term "metacollage" as a more suitable name for the music room collage, because all the fragments used are from the same source (Kagel, 1970: VIII).

Action: In the first part of this sequence, Beethoven's eyes – and, subsequently, the spectators' eyes – run over the surfaces of the room from such a close distance that the notes can actually be read. In the second part we see more general views of the room, in which several life-size two-dimensional paperboard figures of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven are to be found.

Sound: The music played in the first part of this sequence is actually the music that is shown on the screen. It seems that Beethoven is hearing the music imprinted on the surfaces of the room "through his inner ear" (Holsträter, 2003: 83). In order to do that, Kagel made his chamber ensemble record the music in front of a screen, interpreting a "kinetic note-text" (Holsträter, 2003: 87), i.e. the constantly moving score created by the moving camera – Beethoven's eyes – in the music room. In the second part, as the camera wanders through the paperboard figures of the three composers, we hear the first movement of the Piano Sonata, op.27 no.2 (*Moonlight Sonata*).

Chapter 7 (32.33-34.24): Lumber Room of the Beethoven House (Robert Filliou)

- Sequence RU (32.33-34.24): Lumber Room of the Beethoven House

Action: The Fremdenführer climbs the stairs to the lumber room of the Beethovenhaus. As he opens the door, a huge pile of volumes falls to the floor, and as he picks them up we see that they are all music scores by composers who lived after Beethoven, thus creating an interesting inversion of time.

Sound: Still the first movement of the *Moonlight Sonata*. Only when the scores fall to the floor, all the instruments play downward glissandos creating a chaotic effect.

Chapter 8 (34.24-37.01): Garden and Washhouse (Ursula Burghardt)

- Sequence GA (34.24-37.01): Garden and yard of the Beethovenhaus

Action: The last sequence of the Beethovenhaus takes place in the garden, designed by Ursula Burghardt, which is “equipped with numerous washing lines, so that pieces of laundry and clothing might be hung up in an abundance such as if in this space the immense washing fury of past centuries would convene” (from the film script). A number of people are guided by the Fremdenführer through the clothes and sheets, on which moral sayings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are sewn, such as “Der Mensch muss sich selbst bezwingen” (Man has to control himself). Several pages of Beethoven’s music are also left to dry amongst the laundry.

Sound: Sound of flowing water, orchestrated versions of the *Prestissimo* from the Piano Sonata, op.109, as well as the *Kreuzersonate* for violin, op.47.

Chapter 9 (37.01-38.12): Rhinepromenade Near Bonn

- Sequence not in film script (37.01-38.12)

Action: Beethoven leaves the house and walks towards the shore of the Rhine. On the way he meets some children in the park who look at him in a mixture of fear and curiosity.

Sound: *Leonore Overture No.3*, op.72b.

#### Chapter 10 (38.12-44.33): Shipping With Orchestra

- Sequence S: Rhine journey (38.12-44.33)

Action: Beethoven boards a ship called *Cecilie* (probably an allusion to Saint Cecilia, the patron saint of musicians) and embarks on a strange journey along the river: he keeps hearing music around him, but whenever he tries to find its source, the musicians seem to escape, as if he is chasing ghosts, or as if they are playing hide and seek with him. Later he becomes the audience of a shadow theatre where the musicians' shadows march in front of him one by one, playing the *Marcia Funebre sulla Morte d'un Eroe* from the Piano Sonata, op.26.

Sound: The *Leonore* Overture and the Piano Sonata, op.7, in the "hide and seek" scene. Later the *Marcia Funebre*, as mentioned above. It is a very special performance of this work, since the musicians' shadows are shown through a round window, one by one, and each time it is the instrument that the person behind the window is playing that is also more amplified in the sound track. For instance, when a bassoonist is marching in front of the window, the listener's attention is caught by the specific motive that the bassoon is playing at that very moment, as if the players are not only passing by the window, but also in front of an amplifying microphone. This is a fascinating practice: Kagel changes the focus on a specific and unchanging orchestration merely by changing the recording level for each instrument, as if casting light on different details at each moment.

#### Chapter 11 (44.33-55.50): Internationaler Frühschoppen

- Sequence AN (44.33-45.38): Broadcasters

Action: (See sequence AN in chapter 2 of the film) First broadcaster is talking but is not heard; second broadcaster is rubbing his face and ears for a long time.

Sound: Still from the previous sequence, the *Marcia Funebre sulla Morte d'un Eroe* from the Piano Sonata, op.26.

- Sequence IF (45.38-55.50): Internationaler Frühschoppen

Action: This sequence is a recreation of a talk-show of the Westdeutscher Rundfunk, hosted by Werner Höfer, called “Internationaler Frühschoppen”.<sup>7</sup> The guests are five musical commentators from different countries, one of whom is actually Kagel himself, and they are supposed to talk about the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Beethoven’s birth. Initially they are trying to come up with ideas of exactly what they are going to say, supposedly before the programme is on air, and then they decide to concentrate on the question of whether Beethoven is *misused* (missbraucht) in the world.

This is another very notable sequence of the film: on one hand, because it is the only sequence where views concerning the film’s main topics are heard; on the other hand, because we cannot tell whether Kagel shares some or none of these views, as the whole discussion is carried out on an ironic, even surreal level, and some of it is evidently sheer nonsense. A number of views concerning Beethoven’s “misuse” by bourgeois society, famous performers and politicians are heard: most importantly, Heinz-Klaus Metzger expresses his views on the false interpretation of Beethoven’s music, which are to be found in his controversial article “Zur Beethoven-Interpretation” (on Beethoven interpretation, Metzger, 1970: 5-8). He accuses bourgeois society of sending its classics to the dogs, by treating them as pop icons and criticises Herbert von Karajan for the way he conducts the composer’s symphonies, depriving them of their negative quality.<sup>8</sup> All of these subjects are just presented and not developed or discussed, and the show is brought to an abrupt end when the host proposes that they all drink to Beethoven.

Sound: Discussion, in the beginning not synchronised with the image.

#### Chapter 12 (55.50-59.06): Beethoven's Descendant in the Middle of a Field

- Sequence NA (55.50-58.51): Beethoven’s descendant

Action: A person is being interviewed in a field, in front of an oil refinery (Klüppelholz, 1981: 14) and claims that he is Beethoven’s only living descendant. He presents us with a number of documents and objects which, in his opinion, form positive proof of his statement, although it is very obvious that he is insane.

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<sup>7</sup> Although there is no direct English translation for Frühschoppen, Richard Toop translates it as “international morning drinks show” in the English subtitles of the film.

<sup>8</sup> More discussion on Metzger’s statement in section III.3.

Sound: The descendant's voice.

- Sequence AN (58.51-59.06): Broadcasters

Action: See sequence AN in chapter 2 of the film.

Sound: The broadcaster's voice.

#### Chapter 13 (59.06-1.00.30): Schuldt at the Typewriter

- Sequence SC (59.06-1.00.30): Prof. Schuldt

Action: An academic is typing a scholarly essay on the subject: "Do the Conversation Books merit a philo-semantic investigation based on their reciprocal relationship to didactics?"

Sound: Prof. Schuldt's voice and the sound of the typewriter.

#### Chapter 14 (1.00.30-1.02.58): Magic With Old Props

- Sequence not in film script (1.00.30-1.01.59, 1.02.17-1.02.30): referred to as "Handschuhsequenz" (Glove sequence) by Holsträter (Holsträter, 2003: 65)

Action: A gloved hand is shown from above, performing various actions with small objects on a table.

Sound: An orchestrated version of the *Grave* from the Piano Sonata, op.13 (*Pathétique*), is heard. Holsträter provides a thorough analysis of the relation between image and sound in this sequence and finds it striking that, although fragments of the music are used in a sort of collage, in this case, unlike in the music room, they retain their harmonic and functional sense (Holsträter, 2003: 65-74).

- Sequence AN (1.01.59-1.02.17, 1.02.30-1.02.37): Broadcasters

Action: See sequence AN in chapter 2 of the film.

Sound: Initially fragments of the *Pathétique* are still heard; later only the voice of the broadcaster.

- Sequence RI (1.02.37-1.02.58): Gutter channel

Action: The camera follows water flowing along a gutter channel into a street drain.

Sound: An extract from the third movement (*Largo*) from the Sonata for Flute and Piano (Anh. 4 in Kinsky's catalogue of Beethoven's works, attributed to Beethoven but not certainly by him), played in a considerably faster tempo.

#### Chapter 15 (1.02.58-1.04.52): Medical Demonstration Material

- Sequence ME (1.02.58-1.04.33): Medical Institute

Action: A number of items of medical equipment, like a rib cage, hearing aids or anatomy pictures, move to the rhythm of the music.

Sound: *Largo* from the Piano Sonata, op.10 no.3, *Allegro* from the Piano Sonata, op.81a (*Les adieux*).

- Sequence MO (1.04.33-1.04.46): Moon Landscape

Action: A miniature eagle (the German emblem) is shown landing on the moon.

Sound: *Allegro* from the Piano Sonata, op.81a (*Les adieux*).

- Sequence AN (1.04.46-1.04.52): Broadcasters

Action: See sequence AN in chapter 2 of the film.

Sound: The broadcaster's voice: "The world has lost its innocence".

#### Chapter 16 (1.04.52-1.07.44): Beethoven "In Questa Tomba Oscura" (Carlos Feller, Bass-Baritone)

- Sequence LI (1.04.52-1.07.44): Lieder soirée Carlos Feller

Action-sound: This sequence is a performance of Beethoven's song, *In questa tomba oscura*, WoO 133, in a setting that reminds us of a "provincial Lieder soirée" (Klüppelholz, 1981: 15), by a baritone and a pianist, both very solemn and motionless. "The provincial impression is to be emphasised by clumsy camera placement" (from the

film script). After they finish playing, their music continues to sound as if from far away. The lyrics of the song are related to the subject of the film in quite a moving way:

In this dark tomb let me rest;  
you ought, thankless one, to have thought of me, when I lived.  
Leave at least naked shades to enjoy their peace,  
and bathe not my ashes with ineffectual venom (by Giuseppe Carpani, translation  
by George Bird and Richard Stokes, found in Fischer-Dieskau, 1976: 254).

It seems as if Beethoven's voice is heard after all, commenting on the pointlessness of tributes and anniversaries, and asking to be left in peace.

#### Chapter 17 (1.07.44-1.13.07): Laboratory: Piano Playing of the Pianist Klaus Lindemann

- Sequence KB (1.07.44-1.12.55): Graphs

Action: Klaus Lindemann is shown playing the piano in the grotesque setting of a laboratory, his limbs connected to strange machines that produce graphs of at least fifty different variables. "Effective strength", "blood circulation", "synchronisation", but also "demonic acoustic impressions", "pianist's cramp", "sedatives", "pleasant monotony" and "artistic judgment" are only some examples of these variables.

Sound: *Largo-Allegro* from the Piano Sonata, op.31 no.2 (*Tempest*), *Coriolan* Overture, op.62, arranged for piano.

- Sequence TI (1.10.46-1.12.55): Animal paws (combined with the previous sequence)

Action: Various animal paws as well as human hands press keys on an enormous keyboard.

Sound: As in previous sequence.

- Sequence AN (1.12.55-1.13.07): Broadcasters

Action: See sequence AN in chapter 2 of the film.

Sound: Broadcaster's voice.

#### Chapter 18 (1.13.07-1.14.45): Props Museum

- Sequence not in film script (1.13.07-1.14.32): Props museum

Action: Various props from different eras are shown, such as a piano, some furniture and cutlery. They all carry a label with a number on it.

Sound: Variation XX from the *Diabelli Variations*, op.120, arranged for orchestra.

- Sequence AN (1.14.32-1.14.45): Broadcasters

Action: See sequence AN in chapter 2 of the film.

Sound: Broadcaster's voice.

#### Chapter 19 (1.14.45-1.22.24): Playing of the Famous Pianist Linda Klaudius-Mann

- Sequence Piano Soirée Linda Klaudius-Mann (1.14.45-1.22.24)

Action-sound: Lindemann comes to a stage disguised as the supposedly famous pianist Linda Klaudius-Mann, an elderly lady conceived as a parody of Elly Ney, a German pianist who died one year before the film was made, and who was known as a Beethoven specialist and, interestingly enough, as a supporter of Hitler during the Second World War (Kater, 1997: 31). She plays the first movement of the Piano Sonata, op.53 (*Waldstein*), with strong off-beat accents and extreme tempo changes. Soon she is joined by an out-of-tune and unsynchronised wind ensemble. In the end she only plays the two first bars repeated over and over again, while her hair grows more and more around her and into the piano. Eventually the music is still heard, but instead of playing she is smoking, until the only thing heard is a repetitive percussive sound, which sounds like heart beats, or like pressing and releasing a piano pedal.

- Sequence RÖ (1.18.46-1.20.25): X-rays

Action: X-ray images of hands, feet and skulls.

Sound: The same as in the previous sequence.

Chapter 20 (1.20.25-1.28.59). Zoo/Men's Choir of WDR

- Sequence ZO (1.20.25-1.28.59): Zoo

Action: Images of different animals are shown – “elephant, owl, polar bear, tortoise, boar, many ruminants, predominantly ears and paws” (Klüppelholz, 1981: 15).

Sound: The Prisoners’ chorus (“O Welche Lust”) from *Fidelio*, the *Ode to Joy* from the Ninth Symphony and, in the last few seconds of the film, the opening C major chords from the *Waldstein* Sonata, op.53, played by a brass ensemble.

## **2. The music of the film**

### **A. Manipulation of Beethoven's works**

For the recording of the music of the film, Kagel used a salon orchestra which he ironically named "Gesamtdeutsches Kammerorchester" (all-German chamber orchestra). It consisted of flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, percussion, two violins, viola, cello, double bass, piano and a singer (bass-baritone). All instruments except for the two violins are present only once, the result of which, according to Klüppelholz, is "a proportionalisation of the voices among themselves that pricks up one's ears" (Klüppelholz, 1981: 15). The fragments of Beethoven's music that Kagel chose are mainly from sonatas for piano and some symphonies, particularly the Ninth, which appears in at least three of the film's sequences. With the exception of two sequences, Kagel did not employ collage technique in manipulating his material; he included long fragments of Beethoven's music, performed or orchestrated in unorthodox ways.

- Transformation without collage

Even in the sequences where Kagel did not employ collage technique, he transformed Beethoven's music very effectively: he orchestrated piano works, changed the instrumentation of orchestral ones, or made very unusual performances of them, thus altering their character very much. His target was that the music would sound "as Beethoven would still hear it in 1826: pretty badly" (from the film script). The main issue to which this comment refers is Beethoven's deafness: Kagel argues that "the idea was to orchestrate his [Beethoven's] music in such a way that certain sound ranges and frequencies that a deaf person hears distorted or not at all would be treated accordingly" (Kagel, 1975: 83). The other reason why Beethoven was hearing his music badly is the way it was performed: Kagel claims that, for example, since the Ninth Symphony was performed after only two rehearsals, the quality of its premiere was probably not good, compared to 20<sup>th</sup>-century standards; however, he argues that it must have been more powerful, since, in this way, the music acquired an exceptional crudeness (Kagel, 1983: 214).

The music of the film exposes both these characteristics. On one hand, the balance between different instruments is bad: in most cases the middle voices, which are traditionally considered less important and are kept quiet in most professional performances, are too loud, as, supposedly, Beethoven might have heard them. On the other hand, the ensemble very often plays unsynchronised and inaccurately, as if they are amateur musicians sight-reading difficult works. What is worth noting is that, according to Kagel, the musicians did not have any problems of conscience playing Beethoven's music like this: on the contrary, they felt that they were discovering how modern his music really was (Kagel, 1983: 214). By performing it in unorthodox ways and not worrying about the result being "beautiful", they discovered new qualities in this music.

The way Kagel manipulates his material brings about the question of authorship. According to the title sequence, the music of the film is supposed to be by Beethoven, although many would argue that the way it is performed and manipulated is disrespectful towards the composer. Is it fair that Kagel claims that the music was by Beethoven only? And would it not be disgraceful if he had presented the music as his own, although he did not add a single note to Beethoven's scores? The music of the film cannot be attributed to one author: on the contrary, it belongs both to Beethoven and to Kagel, as the latter did not merely *reproduce* it, but he rather *recomposed* it. On the other hand, apart from the question of authorship – which will be further developed in section IV.2.B – Kagel also challenges the idea of authenticity, since he argues that the music of the film sounds the way Beethoven must have heard it. As Alexandre Tharaud writes, "performing Beethoven's music as he (mis)heard it makes authenticity turn against itself, and provides an acid counter-argument to a more orthodox homage, protesting against listening to Beethoven and performing his work without any critical or reflective thought" (Tharaud, in the booklet for CD Kagel, 2003). In a way, Kagel's versions of Beethoven's music claim to be even more authentic, closer to Beethoven himself, than performances that are generally regarded as "faithful" to the text.

- Application of collage technique

As for the collage technique, Kagel uses it in two different ways. One of them, employed in the "Glove sequence", does not actually rip the collage fragments out of their musical context. Kagel takes fragments from the *Grave* of the *Pathétique* Sonata

and puts them one after the other in such a way that both the harmonic sequence and the most important motives of the *Grave* are still there; the result is a compressed form of the piece, where all the chords retain their harmonic function and all the motives retain their character. In this way, Kagel “draws parallels between Beethoven’s motive technique and the assembling procedure on the editing table (montage)” (Holsträter, 2003: 73). On the other hand, juxtaposing a classically structured and tonal piece of music with an absolutely nonsensical image, as in this sequence, puts the music out of context, it makes it not sound so familiar any more. The result could be argued to be a postmodern synthesis, since this kind of defamiliarisation of an otherwise clear and common object – in this case, classical harmonic language – is a typically post-modern practice; as Holsträter says, “this total lack of modern development, combined with the visual layer and the montage, makes the ‘un’-modern turn to postmodern” (Holsträter, 2003: 74). Therefore, it is not the music itself, nor the image, that gives this sequence a postmodern quality: it is the combination between a visual layer which alludes to modern art and an audio recording of a classical composition. This sequence is postmodern in the sense Charles Jencks gave to the term, that of combining modern and “un”-modern or traditional elements within one single work (Jencks, 1996: 29).

The second way, manifested in the “Music room” sequence, works in exactly the opposite manner: the motives used are exclusively from Beethoven’s music, but they are put together in such a random way that they lose the function they have within Beethoven’s music in its originally composed form. Consequently, the result could be regarded as a manifesto of indeterminacy; everything is left to chance – at least if we take it for granted that Kagel did not have a specific plan for the musical result when he covered the room in scores. Unfortunately, we do not know what his intentions were at the time he built the music room, but judging from the photographs of the room which appear in the score *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven*, I have reasons to believe that he did it in a random way, as I will argue in section IV.1.A. Even so, it is exaggerated to claim that the music would be completely indeterminate, since there is something that these motives retain: the personal and stylistic language of Beethoven, if not as far as harmony or form are concerned, then surely regarding the way he built melodic or accompanying lines. The intervals that Beethoven uses in his melodies, the types of accompaniment he uses, the articulation markings he writes, even tonality manifested within a single line, are only some of the aspects of Beethoven’s musical language still

present in the collage. And this is partly what Kagel means when he characterises *Ludwig van* as a metacollage, as opposed to “collage”, or even “de-coll/age”. His aim was to “assemble as coherent as possible a montage by means of meticulous inbreeding of more or less familiar pieces without the introduction of alien bodies” (Kagel, 1970: VIII). Thus, the quotations would not sound like short “familiar” fragments scattered in a contemporary musical language to distract the listener; on the contrary, the listener would be left to “concentrate on the substance of the musical context” (Kagel, 1970: VIII).

## **B. Role of the music in the film**

Concerning the role of the music in the film, it could be argued that it is as varied as the sequences of the film themselves. Kagel himself claims that there are about sixty different ways in which image and sound interact in *Ludwig van* (quoted in Farabet, Jameux: 1973: 42), although in his notes at the Paul Sacher Foundation there is no evidence of that. Since there is not enough information on these sixty ways and how they function, I will organise the interaction between image and sound in three basic categories, according to my perception as a spectator. The first one will be when the music follows and comments on the image, a practice that is most common in conventional films, where the music usually serves as a background for the action; the second one when it sounds independent from it, as if it makes its own statement which is irrelevant to or contradicts the image; and finally the third will be when the music plays the most important role, and it seems that the image is the one that serves the music.

As an example of the first category, I would highlight the point when a huge number of music scores fall as the Fremdenführer opens the door of the lumber room (chapter 7). All the instruments, which were playing the music seen on the walls of the music room up to that point, suddenly start playing all together, mainly downward glissandi, creating a chaos, as if representing the notes of all these books which were released from the lumber room. Another example would be the transition from the aluminium-plated living room to the children's room (chapter 5): as the Fremdenführer moves from the one to the other, the solemn performance of the *Arietta* from the Piano Sonata, op.111, fades out and at the same time a grotesque orchestrated version of the Theme from the *Diabelli Variations* fades in, in order to highlight the different moods of the two rooms. Finally, in one of the most remarkable sequences (chapter 4), when the Fremdenführer takes the disfigured Beethoven busts out of the bathtub, the Theme and the first variation from the third movement of the Piano Sonata, op.109, is heard: the music here gives a ritual-like quality to this scene, as if mourning for Beethoven's deformed memory.

Many scenes in the first part of the film, in which the image suggests that there is some kind of sound (such as the noise of the Bonn railway station, or the voice of the

Fremdenführer talking) but all we hear is music, as if we are watching a silent film, would fall in the second category. Thus, it is also the music, apart from the camera, that makes us identify ourselves with the deaf Beethoven, who “could hear nothing but his own music” (Lang, 1970: 513). In the sequence “Bonn Railway Station” (chapter 2), just after Beethoven steps out of the station, we are confronted with a full body statue of Beethoven, with the typical grave facial expression and body posture. At the same time, the *Scherzo* from the Ninth Symphony starts, in a very pompous performance, but out of tune and unsynchronised, making the whole scene seem ridiculous. And it is because of the ironic use of music in this sequence that the grim expression of the statue strikes us as strange, although we are obviously used to such depictions of Beethoven in statues and paintings. The final sequence of the film would also be put in this category: the *Ode to Joy* certainly has nothing to do with vulgar images of animals in a zoo; it is the juxtaposition between the primitive image and the divine sound that gives this sequence a meaning. As for the question of what this meaning would be, it will be discussed in the next section.

Finally, the music plays the main role in sequences like “Rhine promenade” (chapter 9), the “Laboratory” (chapter 17) or “Playing of the famous pianist Linda Klaudius-Mann” (chapter 19). In the first one, it is the music that Beethoven is hearing that makes him walk around the ship looking for the musicians. In the second, Klaus Lindemann’s piano playing, as well as each movement of his body while he plays, is undergoing a scientific examination; it is again certain aspects of the music that are supposed to be analysed. In the third one, the whole procedure of a piano recital is commented on through the playing of an exaggerated, yet not entirely unfamiliar, caricature of a concert pianist.

It is interesting how, as in his previous films, and especially in *Duo*, Kagel plays with the concepts of diegetic and non-diegetic sound. There are, for example, several scenes where the music heard is presumably non-diegetic, as happens usually in traditional cinema, and after a while we realise that it is actually part of the action: for example, on Beethoven’s way to the coast of the Rhine (chapter 9), we hear the *Leonore* Overture, and, as soon as he boards the ship (chapter 10), we realise that it comes from musicians who are hiding in the ship. It is only natural to assume, initially, that the music is non-diegetic, as we have been hearing it in different places, from the garden of

the Beethovenhaus to the coast of the Rhine, and, therefore, it comes as a surprise to find out that it was diegetic after all. Sometimes the music is diegetic and non-diegetic at the same time: for example, when Beethoven strolls through the streets of Bonn (chapter 2), we hear the *Scherzo* from the Ninth Symphony, which, again, we assume is non-diegetic, until a busker plays along with the recording on his zither. In this case, although the zither-playing is a diegetic sound, we cannot conclude that what we have been hearing all this time was also diegetic; in this case, we have both diegetic and non-diegetic sound sources, playing the same work at the same time. The same happens in the sequence “Piano Soirée Linda Klaudius-Mann” (chapter 19), where, while in the beginning the music is diegetic (we can see the pianist playing), suddenly a wind ensemble, which is nowhere to be seen, joins her and plays along.

But apart from the use of diegetic and non-diegetic music and playing with the undecidability between them, Kagel also makes use of meta-diegetic music. This, according to Claudia Gorbman, is an extension of the concept of meta-diegetic narration, which refers to narration by a secondary narrator. Therefore meta-diegetic film music is music that we hear through one of the film characters, when “we are privileged to read his musical thoughts” (Gorbman, 1987: 22-3). Indeed, in several scenes of the first part of *Ludwig van* we are encouraged to believe that the music we hear is neither part of the film action (diegetic), nor a mere accompaniment that sets the mood for each scene (non-diegetic): we hear the music as if we are inside Beethoven’s brain. For example, in those sequences where the action implies some kind of non-musical sound (such as the Fremdenführer’s voice when he seems to talk) and we only hear music, it is natural to assume we are hearing what Beethoven is hearing, inside his head. The same happens in the “Music room” sequence (chapter 6), where all we can hear is the notes that we can see through Beethoven’s eyes, therefore we are obviously hearing through his inner ear. Again, as in the case of diegetic and non-diegetic sound, Kagel never lets us be sure that the sound is meta-diegetic. All three functions of sound coexist in *Ludwig van*, and it is not always important to know what the sound source is.

### **3. Issues raised by the film**

In the following section, I will examine some of the various issues regarding Beethoven's reception that Kagel brings up in *Ludwig van*. I will divide these into five categories. The first one will be about what Klüppelholz refers to as *musealisation* of Beethoven (Klüppelholz, 1981: 12), namely the fact that Beethoven – Beethoven himself, or maybe his image, but not his music – is rendered an icon, respected and admired like a god, but at the same time commercialised and (mis-)used for the sake of profit. The second category will examine the references to Beethoven's national identity, the allusions to Nazism and the (mis-)use of Beethoven and his music for political purposes. The third one will be related to the performance of Beethoven's music, regarding both its (mis-)use by performers, and the pressure they face when they play this music. The fourth category will discuss the film's references to the vast scholarship on Beethoven. Finally, I will try and trace Kagel's references to the "real" Beethoven, whoever that may be: the part of the film that could be regarded as a tribute to Beethoven as a human being, beyond the image that has been created around him in the years between his death and the realisation of the film.

## A. Musealisation – Commercialisation

The word “Musealisierung” is used by Kagel, as well as Klüppelholz, to describe the way Beethoven’s memory, his house and everyday objects are “preserved”. The reason why I am not using the term “preservation” in order to translate “Musealisierung” is that I find it necessary to convey the negative meaning of the latter term. According to Adorno:

The German word museal [museumlike] has unpleasant overtones. It describes objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying. They owe their preservation more to historical respect than to the needs of the present. Museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association. Museums are the family sepulchres of works of art (Adorno, 1967: 175).

Obviously, “Musealisierung”, as a derivative of the adjective “museal”, refers to more than just preserving Beethoven’s memory. It comments on the fact that we see Beethoven and his music as something dead, which we respect only because we see its historical value, and not because it is still relevant to us. Kagel was strongly against the musealisation of Beethoven, and he went so far as to propose that, for the composer’s bicentenary, “his music should not be performed for some time, so that the acoustic nerves, which react to his music, could recover” (Kagel, 1975: 80). Explaining this to Stephen Loy, he said:

Well look. Do you know the Song of Joy? This is prostitution. And I thought it [the Beethoven bicentenary year] would be a lot of things like that. It would be a lot of Beethoven music, all round the world... and avoid this, this kind of prostitution... I said... wait one year and then we will hear Beethoven again with a lot of pleasures, with fresh ears. It was simply that. It was a constructive irony. It was not trying to say ‘he’s not good enough’. Exactly the opposite. Let’s make a pause, and then we will see again that Beethoven is a very extraordinary composer... Look, in my telephone is the Song of Joy. I can’t influence this because it is the telephone company, but... when I call my wife in the next room, she hears the Song of Joy. It’s incredible. This is prostitution. [Kagel, interview with Stephen Loy, (Loy, 2006: 143)]

Kagel goes that far as to call the Beethoven cult “prostitution”: the fact that his music is played so much and in so different contexts (even in ringtones at the time of this interview, although this was impossible back in 1970), makes it sound banal, and it

prevents us from paying it the attention it deserves and appreciating it. For this reason, he seems to believe that if Beethoven's music was not played constantly around us and if we spent some time without hearing it, we would become more receptive to it and more capable of realising how relevant it still is.

From the first sequences of *Ludwig van* (chapter 2), Beethoven is depicted arriving in Bonn of the late 1960s to find out that he has become a myth: passers-by look at him bewildered, as if they find it too hard to believe that he is actually a human being, children are scared of him when he approaches them, his music is performed even by beggars in the streets, on instruments for which he never composed, and the city seems to be full of statues of him. The phenomenon is by no means a recent one: as Scott Burnham writes, the poet Franz Grillparzer, in the funeral oration he wrote for Beethoven's death, "describes the famous composer's music as something akin to a force of nature. Grillparzer goes on to claim that Beethoven will perforce have no successors: anyone who comes after him will have to begin all over again, 'for [Beethoven] only stopped where Art itself stops'" (quoted in Burnham, 2000: 273). According to Burnham, Grillparzer was the one who set the tone for a reception of Beethoven as a hero, back in 1827. This iconic image of Beethoven as a romantic hero, as a super-human whose level nobody will ever be able to reach, has never disappeared. Everything that has ever been said about Beethoven and his music takes this image for granted. And it is this image, as well as all the other images that people have invented for Beethoven, that constitute the film's main subject.

As Beethoven enters the house of his childhood he discovers that it has been transformed into a museum. Austere busts and drawings of his face glare at him; all the everyday objects he used, including his hearing aids, have been exposed to millions of visitors over the years; even his alcoholic father's wine cellar is now on full view; and in the living room of the house, which is all covered in aluminium in order to be "preserved", the Fremdenführer is reading Theodor von Frimmel's book on Beethoven's external appearance (chapters 2-5). According to Klüppelholz, Kagel initially intended to include two pieces of literature that highlight this phenomenon in his film: one of them is from Frimmel's book and provides a thorough description of Beethoven's complexion and hair and the other one narrates anecdotes about his nutrition and his nasty behaviour towards his servants: "Most of the times, he checked

the eggs himself because in gastronomic matters he met with even less opposition than normally, and if one of the eggs happened to smell badly, the back of the respective housekeeper was being pelted [with it]" (quoted in Klüppelholz, 1981: 14). Every seemingly unimportant aspect of everyday life seems to be studied very carefully, only because it has to do with the great composer, as if the shape of his hearing aids could help us understand his music better, or, more likely, as if we are more concerned about the myth that we have created than about the real Beethoven and his music, although his music is his only property that has reached us unspoilt. As Burnham puts it, "we collectively fill in the picture of Beethoven's personal and compositional paraphernalia, the contents of his pockets, the types of paper he wrote on [...] etc. Thus we are busy reconstructing something like a Beethoven for the digital age, a Beethoven of ever finer resolution [...]. No longer can any one person control a vision of the whole" (Burnham, 2000: 289). In other words, the contemporary world's need to examine all the details, to exhaust all sources of knowledge concerning Beethoven, has its downside: we know so many trivial things about him, that we cannot conceive him in his entirety any more.

Beethoven's deafness is also present in the film: apart from the ear trumpets exposed in the museum (chapter 2), there are several sequences where either no sound is heard, or the only sound is Beethoven's music, as only he could hear it inside his head, as well as a sequence that shows a diagram depicting the anatomy of the ear (chapter 15). This is another of the elements that constitute the Beethoven myth. According to Kristin M. Knittel, Wagner has played a very important part in this: "He proposed for the first time that Beethoven's late works were in fact his greatest and that his loss of hearing was beneficial, even vital, to the creative process" (Knittel, 1998: 51). As Scott Burnham notes: "Not unlike the blindness of the seer Teiresias, Beethoven's deafness becomes a martyrdom that guarantees his immortality" (Burnham, 2000: 279). The Beethoven myth believes his deafness to be a guarantee of his genius, rather than an obstruction to his creativity, as he seems to have considered it.

In another sequence of the film (chapter 4), Beethoven finds about a hundred busts of himself floating in a bathtub. This scene has several possible allusions: first of all, it could refer to the French sculptor Antoine Bourdelle, who made over forty-five attempts for a bust of Beethoven between 1887 and 1927, but was never content with the result. "Never convinced that he had captured the face definitively, Bourdelle

returned to it again and again, each time discovering a new Beethoven, ever more distorted by his sufferings – or by the sculptor’s recognition that no single perspective could signal the totality of the man” (Dennis, 2000: 299). On the other hand, the fact that the busts that the Fremdenführer takes out of the water are more and more disfigured, could be seen as an allegory for Beethoven’s image or memory. The further the chronological distance to Beethoven, the more unrecognisable he is; the more people try to reconstruct his image, the less this image resembles the real Beethoven. We are tempted to believe Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, who, in his monograph *Zur Geschichte der Beethoven-Rezeption*, argues that “there is no ‘real’ Beethoven waiting beneath the accretions of history; rather, Beethoven is fully a construction of that history” (quoted in Burnham, 2000: 288). Beethoven’s image has been so distorted through the years since his death, by all the things people have written, said, or believed about him, that our perception of Beethoven – or Beethoven’s perception in the late 1960s, when *Ludwig van* was made – has probably very little to do with Beethoven as a human being.

On the other hand, the busts of Beethoven made of lard and marzipan allude to the industry made out of important artists and scientists of the past – “Leibniz crackers, Schiller pasties, Mozart balls”, as Heinz-Klaus Metzger says in the “Internationaler Frühschoppen” sequence of the film – which is a direct consequence of “musealisation”. Beethoven’s image is so popular that extraordinary sums of money are being earned through it. The scenes in the record shop and the record factory (chapter 2) have a clear reference to the commercialisation of the great composer: we witness a mass production of identical records of a music composed two centuries ago, when it could be heard only where it was performed. Beethoven is now a product of pop culture, copied and sold millions of times throughout the world. In order to demonstrate this, Klüppelholz compares Beethoven to Beckenbauer, a German football player and popular celebrity, who was nicknamed “the Emperor”: “Beethoven and the latter’s [Beckenbauer’s] status as representative of German culture is said to sometimes get confused – not only abroad [i.e. outside Germany]” (Klüppelholz, 1981: 16). According to Burnham, the Beethoven myth “remains alive as ever in mainstream commercial culture” (Burnham, 2001: 112).

Many examples can be brought to show this: Romain Rolland wrote his novel *Jean Christophe* on “a Beethoven in the modern world”; the hero of Anthony Burgess’

*A Clockwork Orange* (Burgess, 1962) is made to undergo the “Ludovico” treatment, which, in Stanley Kubrick’s film adaptation (Kubrick, 1971), makes use of the Ninth Symphony;<sup>9</sup> there are plenty of Hollywood films on Beethoven, as well as one that is actually called *Beethoven*, in which the title role belongs to a dog; an alternative rock band is called Camper van Beethoven; the European anthem is no other than an instrumental version of the *Ode to Joy*; it is claimed that even the size of the Compact Disc was decided in such a way that it would fit the longest recorded version of the Ninth Symphony ([www.marantzphilips.nl](http://www.marantzphilips.nl)). Beethoven is for sure the most popular musician of all times and one of the most famous people in the world. And, as happens usually with idols, it is not his music that makes him so well-known, but his image, as well as what he stands for in our conscience: the person who, in spite of being of humble origin and not a child prodigy – like Mozart for instance – managed to become the most important musician ever; the artist who struggled against his physical disability and composed masterpieces while being deaf; the first musician who managed to be autonomous and compose at his own will; the great humanitarian; the revolutionist; the artist who unifies the world, even centuries after his death, through the universal language of music. We cannot be sure whether all of these aspects are discernible in Beethoven’s music, or, as a matter of fact, whether he considered himself to be any of these. The way the 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup>-century world likes to see Beethoven is the way it depicts him in its mainstream culture. And if there is something dangerous about this, it is that we cannot be objective about him any more: the constructed image of Beethoven is too huge to ignore and surpass.

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<sup>9</sup> It is interesting that the central character of *A Clockwork Orange* calls Beethoven “Ludwig van”, omitting the surname. However, Kagel claims that there is no connection between the title of his work and Burgess’ novel (Brix, 2004: 35).

## B. National identity – Politics

As I argued in section II.1, the Beethoven bicentenary was very influenced by the political climate and the anti-authoritarian movement in West Germany in the late 1960s. Beethoven was regarded by many as a symbol of authority and bourgeois society, and there was a lot of reflection regarding whether there was any point in still celebrating him, two centuries after his death. This attitude must also have been influenced from Beethoven's misuse by the Nazi state, a fact that contributed in the association of his image with totalitarian authority. In various sequences of his film, which will be presented in this section, Kagel comments on the political misuse of Beethoven throughout the time following his death.

In the “Internationaler Frühschoppen” sequence (chapter 11) of the film, one of the subjects that are highlighted is Beethoven's national identity, or else the question of how German Beethoven was. Of course, as Austrian musical commentator Otto Tomek says in this sequence, when asked whether Beethoven was German, Austrian or something else, there is never going to be a clear answer to that, and the question is rather pointless. Still, Beethoven's nationality has proved to be an important matter in the history of the past centuries, and that is exactly what Kagel wants to comment on by including such a discussion in the film. He even makes a joke about the infamous *van* in Beethoven's name: when, again in the film, Werner Höfer talks about Herbert von Karajan, he is not sure whether to call him *von* or *van* Karajan. This is most probably a reference to the fact that, until 1818, Beethoven signed some of his letters as Ludwig *von* Beethoven, preferring the German and aristocratic *von* to the Flemish and common *van* (Buch, 2003: 89). It becomes obvious that Beethoven himself was also very concerned about his identity and even tried falsely to claim a noble origin, in order to achieve social status. And it seems that his status as a German composer is still very important for his international popularity: when, in the same film sequence, Kagel is asked whether Beethoven is more famous in Buenos Aires than Kagel himself is, his answer is positive, and he adds ironically that it is because Beethoven has a sign fastened to his left vest pocket saying “Made in Germany”. At the same time as he says this, the German native speakers at the “Internationaler Frühschoppen” show continuously correct his language mistakes, as if trying to remind him that he is, and always going to be, a non-German.

Of course, the whole issue about Beethoven's national identity has always played a very important role in German politics. According to Burnham, it was Wagner, once again, who played an important part in rendering Beethoven a political composer: in his monograph for the centenary of the composer's birth, in 1870, which coincided with the German victory in the Franco-Prussian War, he "explicitly equated the sublimity of Beethoven's art with that of the German spirit". In Wagner's words, "Today it behooves us to show that, through this musician Beethoven, who speaks in the purest language of all peoples, the German spirit redeemed the spirit of man from profound disgrace" (quoted in English translation in Burnham, 2000: 278). Since then, and although Beethoven's attitudes about government and society are said to have been amateurish and even disoriented (Dennis, 1996: 23), or maybe because of that, Beethoven's music has been associated with all major events and regimes in German history. Even during the years of the Third Reich, Beethoven's music was highly appreciated and accompanied all major events, making him part of the Nazi propaganda. David B. Dennis reports that, because his appearance did not match the characteristics of the Aryan race, extensive research was devoted to reconciling his racial characteristics with his musical legacy. By 1934, the journal *Volk und Rasse* had concluded that his eyes were entirely blue (Dennis, 1996: 148). Therefore, the question that Höfer, the host of "Internationaler Frischoppen", poses about Beethoven's nationality could also be considered an allusion to the Nazi claim that the great composer belonged to the "chosen" race.

This is not the only reference to Nazism in *Ludwig van*: firstly, Hitler himself plays an important role in the first part of the film, as the "Fremdenführer" of the Beethovenhaus (chapters 2-8). According to Esteban Buch, it is "a Hitler who has arrived at a tranquil old age to guard a classical treasure that has become as decomposed as the bodies in any concentration camp" (Buch, 2003: 229). The question about whether Beethoven is misused in the world comes up once again: the classical treasure is "guarded" by those who actually use it for their own ends; Beethoven comes to the 20<sup>th</sup>-century world only to be guided through his own house by the Nazi Führer. Another reference to Nazism comes much later in the film, in the "Piano Soirée Linda Klaudius-Mann" sequence (chapter 19). Although Linda Klaudius-Mann is a female name for Klaus Lindemann who plays the piano dressed up as an overaged transvestite,

the sequence refers to Elly Ney (1882-1968), a German pianist who, according to Michael H. Kater, did particularly well in the Third Reich and was regarded as “the prototypical National Socialist musician”. Kater goes on to say that the anti-semitist pianist had a preference for Beethoven, “after whom she styled herself physically, displaying that same heroic facial expression and that well-known untamed mane” (Kater, 1997: 31). Both these characteristics are discernible in the film: the mane is so “untamed” that it gradually grows into the piano while she is playing, until it covers part of the strings, and Lindemann’s facial expression seems to be the one of someone who believes she has captured the essence of Beethoven’s music and personality, although her performance is very far from being loyal to the score. Finally it could be argued that the reference to Karajan in the “Internationaler Frühschoppen” sequence (chapter 11) also has a slight allusion to Nazism, since it has been proved that he joined the Nazi party twice, although he repeatedly denied it (Kater, 1997: 57).

The music of the film also seems to relate to the political side of Beethoven’s reception: there is very frequent use of works like the *Leonora Overtures*, *Fidelio* and, most importantly, the Ninth Symphony, which, as all of his “heroic” works, are “highlighted in political culture” (Dennis, 1996: 20). Particularly in the last sequence (chapter 20), both *Fidelio* and the *Ode to Joy* accompany the images of animals shown. It is not surprising that this scene is what outraged critics most of all: how is it possible to combine the most sublime work of music ever written with images of animals’ biological functions? “The moral distortion to which the music has been subjected is thus topped off by voiding the work of the ‘great humanist’ of all trace of humanity” (Buch, 2003: 230), Buch says, implying that this is only a grotesque reflection of what Beethoven’s music has already been through. On the other hand, Klüppelholz finds the criticism towards Kagel’s film mere hypocrisy: “Whoever has missed out the occident’s downfall 40 years ago and seen it approach at the end of *Ludwig van* where at the Freudenthema apes are delousing each other, surely also turned a deaf ear to Kagel’s question if not at least all animals could become brothers” (Klüppelholz, 1981: 17). Klüppelholz seems to be arguing that nobody has the right to criticise the film’s last sequence for juxtaposing the Ninth Symphony with images of animals. Since humans have proved, thirty years before the film was made, in the Second World War, that they are never going to stop killing each other, we can still hope that at least the animals might manage to do what humans cannot, to become brothers. On the other hand, we

could suppose that Kagel took a little too literally the *Ode to Joy*'s references to animals:

All creatures will drink joy  
At Nature's bosom  
[...]  
Even the worm is given pleasure,  
And the cherub stands before God (quoted in Buch, 2003: 46).

Thus, he created an absolutely nonsensical sequence, just to illustrate the fact that the *Ode to Joy*, however appreciated and treasured throughout the world, has not managed to change humanity and to make all humans become brothers, as the famous sentence from its text says.

### C. Beethoven and performers

Another crucial subject concerning Beethoven's reception that Kagel comments on through *Ludwig van* is the performance of his music. It can be argued that the music Kagel used for the film, as well as the way this music was performed, recorded and juxtaposed to the images of the film, is already a statement of his ideas on how Beethoven should be performed. First of all, as it has already been suggested in section III.2.A, the idea of performing Beethoven's music as he could hear it in 1826 – pretty badly – shows Kagel's scepticism towards the concept of “authentic” and “historically informed” performance. He claims that Beethoven's music is performed in a much more “authentic” way in the film, than by any supporter of the so-called historical performance movement. Secondly, by using contemporary studio techniques as well as by making a collage out of Beethoven's music, he illustrates his point that “the music of the past should also be performed as music of the present” (Kagel, 1970: IX). Or, as Friedrich Nietzsche put it:

Should we put our soul [...] into the older works according to their own soul? Not at all! Only in approaching them with our soul are old works capable of surviving. It is only our blood that makes them speak to us. The really historical performance would talk to ghosts” (quoted in Dorian, 1942: 313).

By using Beethoven's music in an unorthodox manner, and by combining it with moving images, Kagel makes the viewer hear it in a different way; as Klüppelholz says, “Beethoven's music, abstracted from the context of the concert ritual, is granted an effect, which within the context of the concert ritual was almost lost” (Klüppelholz, 1981: 15). It is true that, for example, the *Adagio* from the Piano Sonata, op.109, sounds warmer and more emotionally charged in the “Bathroom” sequence (chapter 4), as it is played by string instruments while disfigured Beethoven busts are shown. Similarly, the *Marcia Funebre* from the Piano Sonata, op.26, in the “Rhine journey” sequence (chapter 10), gains a different quality than when it is performed in a piano recital: firstly because it is actually played by a marching band as a proper funeral march; and secondly because of the focus on different lines of the musical texture, as I described in section III.1.

Another performance-related issue is the misuse of Beethoven's music by well-known performers: Heinz Klaus Metzger's attack on Herbert von Karajan, at the "Internationaler Frühschoppen" sequence (chapter 11), has to do with the way the latter performs this music. Metzger claims that Karajan performs Beethoven's symphonies with a "beautiful" orchestral sound, although there is nothing in Beethoven's scores stating that they have to sound "beautiful", and that he conducts the orchestra, not the works themselves. He argues that Karajan's performances, in line with the approved culture industry, rob Beethoven's works of their "negative" and revolutionary essence and distort them into something positive so as to make them enjoyable. The other well-known performer attacked is Elly Ney, whose "Piano soirée" (chapter 19) is parodying the performance of someone who claims to be, or is widely regarded as, a Beethoven-expert: the pianist is not faithful to the text, adding artificial accents and altering the rhythm unreasonably. In the end, it is only her expression and her hair that make her look like a Beethoven-expert. It seems that, in both cases, Beethoven is only a medium through which performers satisfy their narcissism, performing "beautiful" music, according to their own criteria, but not the actual score.

There is one more performance-related issue highlighted in *Ludwig van*: the pressure put on performers of Beethoven's music and their subsequent anxiety about it. Beethoven is widely considered as one of the most "difficult" composers to perform, and it seems that everyone has very strong views on how his music should be played. Talking about the piano sonatas only, one could name a vast amount of performers who have dedicated books and articles on what they consider the right way to perform them: Artur Schnabel, Joanna Goldstein, Alfred Brendel, William Newman are only few of them. Kagel illustrates this anxiety in the "Rhine journey" sequence (chapter 10), where Beethoven hears music played on the ship and tries to find the source of it, but the musicians disappear when he goes towards them, as if they are frightened of him. It looks as if the musicians' awe of Beethoven is so great, that they do not want to play in front of him for fear of his judgement.

The explanation for this fear comes later in the film, when Klaus Lindemann plays the Piano Sonata, op.31 no.2, in a laboratory (chapter 17). More than a hundred aspects of his performance are measured by different graphs according to the script, although only about fifty can be seen in the actual film. Very few of them are technical

terms concerning the performance, or rather errors of the performance, such as “collapsed accentual points” or “unfortunate events”; most of them refer to scientific examination of the body of the pianist, as in “pianist’s cramp”, “skeletal support”, or “rheumatic pains”; quite a few refer to feelings the performer or the audience might have, such as “contentment”, “spoilt enjoyment” or “demonic acoustic impression”; finally, some of them, like “church music”, “conservatory” or “sedatives” seem to be irrelevant to an examination of a performance, although they might affect it. Although most of these aspects do not seem to make any sense, the whole idea brings to mind all the aspects of a performance that can be judged, by the critics or the “experts”, or even by the musicians themselves, while trying to achieve a better performance. Anyone who endeavours to play Beethoven in public has to face such a detailed criticism that he/she has to try very hard during both the preparation and the performance in order to be satisfactory from every perspective, even more if we take into account that experts very often disagree with each other. In the end, it is most probable that what will be missing from the performance will be the performer’s enjoyment.

Finally, another issue that the film addresses is about the recordings of Beethoven’s music, which are somehow related to performance, since they have made it possible for music lovers to listen to the music without going to the concert hall, hiring a performer, or playing the music themselves. It is needless to say that records have affected musical performance very much: firstly, because fewer performers are needed in the music industry, which makes it harder for performers to survive in it, and, therefore, the level of performance has become much higher; secondly, because for the first time in the history of music, a single performance of a composition is not unique anymore, as we can capture it and listen to it over and over again. This last point is highlighted in the sequence “Record Shop/Electrola” (chapter 2): in its first part, lots of people are shown listening to Beethoven’s music as motionless and expressionless as the machines they are listening through; in the second, we witness a mass production of identical records that can deliver a specific performance of a specific work anywhere in the world. Kagel comments on this subject also through the way in which he recorded the music of the film: it could be argued that the bad performances heard during the whole film are partly a way of expressing his opposition to the absolute but inhuman perfection of most commercial recordings.

## D. Scholarship on Beethoven

“Beethoven’s conversation books as the focus of a study of the structural interdependence of involuntary literature and reception”: this is the title of a scholarly essay that a “typical” academic, wearing a tie and glasses, writes on a typewriter in the sequence “Prof. Schuldt” (chapter 13). Here Kagel obviously satirises the endless scholarship on Beethoven and his music that has been conducted over the years after the composer’s death. The style of writing is pompous and nonsensical, and the subject is so narrow that, firstly, it would not interest anyone but its writer, and secondly, it would not help us get any closer to understanding the composer or his music. Another reference of the film to academics’ misuse of Beethoven is Frimmel’s *Beethovens äußere Erscheinung* (Beethoven’s outer appearance), the book which the Fremdenführer is reading in the living room of the Beethovenhaus (chapter 5): the myth around Beethoven’s personality is so fascinating that people devote themselves to systematic research about the exact colour of his hair and eyes, the quality of his complexion, or the width of his forehead.

It can be argued that apart from being the only composer who has become the subject of so many books, articles and research projects, Beethoven was also the first composer on whom it was considered necessary to conduct research. According to Burnham, E.T.A. Hoffman and A.B. Marx were the first to point out that his music was not to be judged at a first hearing, but had to be studied and analysed carefully. “A hermeneutic imperative quickly gathered strength in the face of his music, one which has not abated. His works have been heard to be telling us something, as a kind of secular scripture in need of hermeneutic mediation” (Burnham, 2001: 112). Since then, all kinds of different aspects of his life have been studied in depth: the hearing aids he used, his physicians, even the suicidal attempt of his nephew, are only few of the subjects studied. Talking about the endless scholarship on Beethoven, as portrayed in the film, Klüppelholz writes: “Beethoven as an object of science that gives birth to heaps of books; traces Beethoven by x-rays; renders him the subject of lectures that are not less half-witted than the mindless drivel of the descendant” (Klüppelholz, 1981: 17). In saying this, not only does he address the massive production of essays on Beethoven, but he also compares the intelligence of the scholar who appears in the film to that of

the insane person who claims that he is Beethoven's only descendant in the sequence "Beethoven's descendant" (chapter 12).

Of course, it is not Kagel's intention to denounce academia in its entirety; the above references to scholarship on Beethoven address a very specific type of pedantic research on trivial things. And on the other hand, it would not be in the film's goals to cover the whole range of writings on Beethoven; since one of the main aspects of the film is its irony, it is only reasonable that it highlights the most mediocre or exaggerated samples of this vast scholarship. That being said, we can detect one reference to this subject that does not seem to be ironic, that is in fact only addressed and not commented on. That is Metzger's reference to the "negative essence" of Beethoven's works in "Internationaler Frühschoppen". By the term "negative essence" Metzger, whom "Adorno considered one of the most genuine interpreters of his own thought" (Hoeckner, 2005: 48), refers to the concept of *negation* or *antithesis* in the classic dialectic triad *Thesis – Antithesis – Synthesis*. In the notes he kept for a book he never managed to write on Beethoven (published under the title *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music* several years after his death), Theodor Adorno claims that "in relation to him [Beethoven], the concept of *negation* as that which drives a process forward can be very precisely grasped. It involves a *breaking off* of melodic lines before they have evolved into something complete and rounded, in order to impel them into the next figure" (Adorno, 1998: 18). Metzger discusses the socio-political connotations of this negation: Beethoven's music bears a negation towards bourgeois society, which the latter conceals and avoids seeing by turning this music into something positive, in other words to something simple and without depth. This concealment of the negative essence of Beethoven's music is illustrated in an earlier sequence of the film (chapter 8) where his scores are left to dry among the laundry. Washing Beethoven's scores in order to rid them of anything "dirty" or "negative", signifies a form of false purification, an attempt to reconstruct a memory of Beethoven which will retain only the positive aspects of him and his music.

In Metzger's opinion, Beethoven's works cannot simply be tamed and purified according to bourgeois ideals: in spite of what bourgeois society wants to believe about them, they are never going to be fully interpreted and understood; they are always going to reveal new elements. And this is true art's way of refusing to conform with the

culture industry, as Michael Spitzer claims in his book on Adorno's views on Beethoven's late style: "Art's cognitive negativity (its resistance to interpretation) enables it to resist being neutralised by the 'culture industry'; unlike 'mere' entertainment, authentic art doesn't sell out" (Spitzer, 2006: 270). What Metzger argues is that, regardless of the fact that some modern performers interpret Beethoven's music as simple and entertaining, it will always prove to be multifaceted, to reveal more unexplored sides.

## E. Beyond Beethoven's myth – Distance

Although Kagel's film mainly addresses issues regarding Beethoven's reception, there are still some details in it through which Kagel seems to pay tribute to the actual Beethoven, the person behind the image. Probably that is why, in his characteristic ironic way, he called *Ludwig van* a declaration of love to Beethoven (Kagel, 1975: 77). The facts, first of all, that Beethoven is personified by the camera and that his deafness is often illustrated through the lack of sound, forces the viewer to watch the film through his own eyes, to wonder how he would react to the world's attitude towards him. Likewise, the non-square angles and the narrowness of the children's room (chapter 5) are supposed to "reflect the damaged environments of Beethoven, the moral gloominess of the late eighteenth century" (Klüppelholz, 1981: 12). Here Kagel – and of course Stefan Wewerka, who constructed the room – tries to get closer to the great composer by reflecting on the way he grew up. Another reference to Beethoven's environment and upbringing is the laundry in the garden, where every sheet has a moral epigram of his era sewn on it. These epigrams, along with the fact that all the sheets are white – the colour of innocence – seem to reflect the conservative ethics in late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Germany. Finally, the choice of the song *In questa tomba oscura* (WoO 133), sung by a baritone in a "provincial lieder soirée" (chapter 16), is the only occasion where Kagel gives Beethoven an opportunity to speak for himself: although sung by someone else, the text of the song suggests that it is Beethoven who is asking to retire in a dark tomb, not wanting to know more about how people of the 20<sup>th</sup> century regard him.

It can be argued that there is another aspect of the film that, in a more subtle way, refers to Beethoven the human being, rather than the great composer or the hero. This is its preoccupation with the body and its functions, the matter of physicality. One of the ways that it is manifested is in the various representations of body organs: a rib cage, a skull, a diagram of the anatomy of the ear, x-rays of arms and heads and others. Another way is through the emphasis on body parts of the people appearing in the film: the film starts with a man shaving his beard; there are often close-ups on broadcasters' hands; one of the broadcasters in chapter 11 is shown rubbing his face with his hands for a considerable amount of time; Klaus Lindemann's playing is examined in the "Laboratory" (chapter 17) through machines connected to his limbs; Linda Kladius-

Mann's hair grows into the piano while she plays the first two bars of the *Waldstein* Sonata (chapter 19). It seems that Kagel highlights Beethoven's physical side, as opposed to the spiritual side: Beethoven must have been a real human with flesh and bones, regardless of whether we want to consider him a god on earth. And in order to illustrate this fact in an even more ironic way, Kagel ends his film on the great composer by showing images of animals: he leaves the spirit out of the final sequence and shows only bodies doing their common functions.

In trying to get to the real Beethoven, Kagel finds that it is too hard a task. According to Klüppelholz, a number of aspects of the film illustrate the distance with which we are confronted in our attempt to approach Beethoven (Klüppelholz, 1981: 15). All of these aspects have to do with the concept of time: all of the several television presenters that appear are old; there are several anachronisms, like a telephone in the Beethoven house or music scores of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century in the lumber room of the house; very often in the film there is a lack of synchronisation between image and sound. Klüppelholz believes that the games Kagel plays with time illustrate our chronological distance from Beethoven: we cannot claim to know anything about him for sure, nothing is really clear, even "the most convincing factual evidence is being questioned" (Klüppelholz, 1981: 15). The film does not claim to depict any undeniable facts about the great composer; what it rather means to express, as a tribute towards Beethoven, is, in Klüppelholz's words, "Love from a distance" (Klüppelholz, 1981: 18).

#### **4. Reception of the film**

It is hardly surprising that Kagel's film was widely regarded as blasphemous. According to Chrisitan Brix, during the first screening the comments uttered by the audience ranged from "disgrace" to "brainless shit". One man even threatened "I'm going to report this to Herr von Karajan". Brix goes on to say that it seemed as if these reactions were actually staged by Kagel himself (Brix, 2004: 55). Indeed, in a way Kagel could hardly have hoped for a better feedback from his audience: it was as if the audience wanted to demonstrate the absurdities of the Beethoven myth that Kagel addresses through his film. The fact that some people got so insulted by a film that exposed the Beethoven cult – without even insulting Beethoven himself, or his music – shows the level of fanaticism and intolerance among the supporters of the Beethoven myth, which is reminiscent of fundamentalist religious cults.

The reviews the film received were not more welcoming, the most striking being Hilde Spiel's criticism of Kagel in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. She sees *Ludwig van* as an attack on two or three thousand years of Western civilisation, and believes that this attack could have equally been aimed at Aristotle, Erasmus or Kant. She claims that it is Kagel, more than anyone else, who should let Beethoven rest in *questa tomba oscura*, obviously referring to chapter 16 of the film (quoted in Buch, 2003: 230). In an interview with Klüppelholz, Kagel admitted that he did not expect a Jewish person to express views that could easily come from a Nazi critic, and claimed that "insisting on tradition was only an excuse in order to reject every innovation" (Kagel, 2001: 26). Indeed, Spiel's attack on Kagel does not seem to be inspired by her love and respect for Beethoven, but by her disapproval of anything progressive or even merely different.

The only critic I have come across who did not condemn the film at the time of its first appearance was Gerhard Brunner, who seems to have appreciated its anti-authoritarian attitude: in his view, *Ludwig van* was a criticism of concert organisers and audiences who, actively or passively, participated "in the gigantic convergence of culture and commerce that we have to thank for the beautiful years of jublations and festivals", which he considers "the most visible signs of our belief in authorities, an adherence to the notion of the indestructibility of the classic tradition." (Brunner, quoted and translated in Kutschke, 2011: 577).

It is worth mentioning that, although Kagel indirectly expressed his resentment for the misuse of Beethoven by bourgeois society through Metzger's talk in the "Internationaler Frühschoppen" sequence, the film was heavily criticised by Eastern German critics too, as an example of the decadence of late bourgeois society. Georg Knepler dismisses Kagel's statement that Beethoven's music should not be performed for some time so that our acoustic nerves would recover, by saying that we should not hear Beethoven only with our ears, but also with our brain, and that the problem of bourgeois society does not lie in its ears, but in its whole body and soul (Knepler, 1971: 34). Werner Rackwitz says that Kagel's statement is typical of the imperialist hostility against culture and argues that *Ludwig van* is not a love declaration to Beethoven, but to nihilism and decadence (Rackwitz, 1971: 16). Finally, Ernst Hermann Meyer believes that the film is a deliberate attempt to damage Beethoven's reputation:

Some individuals are emptying buckets of trash on Beethoven. Doing so, Mr Mauricio Kagel tries to denigrate his [Beethoven's] character and to spoil his legacy through a representation that verges on the pornographic (Meyer, 1971: 583).

Kagel's *Ludwig van* was far from well-received by audiences and critics of its time. I do not believe that this reflects the film's quality as an artwork. In fact, I believe that Kagel must have foreseen the criticism he would get for it. The film exposed the myth around Beethoven, but for the supporters of this myth, who could not see beyond it, it felt as if it was attacking Beethoven himself. In addition, the film was made after a commission from German television, which means at public expense, and it attacked mainstream culture, including television programmes. Finally, Kagel's sense of humour was probably too cynical for German audiences of the time: they were obviously not prepared to accept ironic allusions to the Nazis less than thirty years after the Second World War, and they were shocked to hear the humanistic and divine *Ode to Joy* as background music to images of animals performing their earthly functions. I am convinced that Kagel knew how insulting they would find *Ludwig van*, and I find it admirable that he did the film despite that. Being a foreign artist and shooting such a provocative film on Beethoven in the country which boasts to be his birthplace must require a lot of courage, and a strong confidence in one's ideas. Both through the film and through its reception, Kagel managed to get his point across.

## Chapter IV

### *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven*

The subject of this chapter is Kagel's score *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven*, its realisations to date and the performing issues and challenges it poses. In the first section I will give a brief description of the score, a list of the recognisable Beethoven quotations in it, and an account of Kagel's performing instructions for it. In the second section, the work will be reviewed according to principles of postmodern art, and I will investigate whether *Ludwig van* is a postmodern work of art, whereas the third section will compare *Ludwig van* to art and music movements of its time. In the fourth section I will analyse Kagel's recording of *Ludwig van* on Deutsche Grammophon, and in the fifth I will talk about other known realisations of the composition. Finally, in the last section I will talk about *Ludwig van* from the point of view of a performer who sets out to interpret this score: I will present the challenges that such a score poses, as well as my view on how these challenges are to be tackled.

## 1. The score

As mentioned before, *Ludwig van* is the only case in Kagel's career where a musical score is not the starting point for the making of a film, but the score itself is derived from an already existing film. *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven* seems to be a by-product of *Ludwig van: Ein Bericht*. The whole score consists of photographs and close-ups of the walls, furniture and props of the music room that Kagel constructed for the purposes of the film. And the fact that the score exists could even be considered a mere coincidence: had Jiří Kolář obtained permission to leave Czechoslovakia and construct the music room, Kagel would not have made it himself, and therefore he would not have been able to make a score out of it and present it as his own work. In addition, as Holsträter argues (Holsträter, 2003: 87, referred to in section III.1), the result would have been very different: the fragments of scores on the walls of the room would have been much smaller, consisting of individual notes, and the essence of Beethoven's music would have got lost in the procedure.

The score consists of 45 photographs, taken mainly from parts of the music stands, the window, the door and a chair in the room. Different degrees of clarity can be found even in the same picture, depending on the distance from the camera and the angle from which the picture has been taken. In some of the photographs long fragments of Beethoven's music can be found intact, whereas in others the fragments are much shorter – there are even some one-note fragments. Therefore, not all the fragments can be identified, but the ones that are clear suggest that most of the pages used for the construction of the music room were from the violin sonatas, the piano sonatas and some piano reductions of *Fidelio* and the symphonies. Although there is no evidence that Kagel deliberately restricted the scores used, it seems that he preferred to use chamber music and reductions rather than orchestral parts and full symphonic scores. It is also interesting that there is not a single singing part in the photographs. As one would expect, there are very few tempo indications in the score, the key and time signatures are most of the times absent, and there are also many fragments with no indicated dynamics. What is more, some of the fragments are upside down, making the viewer who holds the book in the usual way see the inversion rather than the original version of the material shown.

Below you will find a list of all 45 photographs of the score, the part of the room where they were taken, and the Beethoven works to which the fragments in the photographs belong. As pointed out earlier, there are fragments in the photographs that could not be identified; but they constitute a small minority, and, therefore, the list can help us get a good idea of the music Kagel used for *Ludwig van*. Latin numbers are used to signify which movement of each work is being used. Bar numbers of the fragments are not shown in the list, as there are usually many short fragments of a work rather than one longer one, and it would be too complicated and, in my opinion, unnecessary to indicate exactly which bars are being used. For example, in the third page of the score, shown in Example 1, some fragments of the Violin Sonata, op.12 no.1, are to be found: in the first column, bars 127-128 and 133-134 from the first movement and bars 14-16, 131-133,137-139, 146 and 154 from the third movement; in the second column, bars 131-132 from the first movement and bars 11-13, 129-131 and 135-137 from the third movement; in the third column, bars 126-127 and 132-133 from the first movement and bars 12-15, 130-132, 136-138, 145-146 and 153-154 from the third movement. I believe it is obvious that there would be no point in giving such a detailed account of all the fragments used in all 45 pages of the score.



Example 1, Ludwig van score, p.3

## A. List of fragments of Beethoven's music used in the score of *Ludwig van*

<u>Page</u>	<u>Part of room</u>	<u>Beethoven works</u>
1	music stand – overview	too far away to trace any fragments
2	music stands – columns	Violin Sonata No.1, op.12 no.1, I (violin part)
3	music stands – columns	Violin Sonata No.1, op.12 no.1, I (violin part) Violin Sonata No.2, op.12 no.2, III (violin part) Violin Sonata No.5, op.24, II (violin part)
4	music stands – columns	Violin Sonata No.1, op.12 no.1, III, Var. 2, 3, 4 (violin part)
5	music stand – base	Violin Sonata No.2, op.12 no.2, I (violin part) Violin Sonata No.3, op.12 no.3, I (violin part) Violin Sonata No.5, op.24, II (violin part)
6	music stand – base	Violin Sonata No.2, op.12 no.2, III (violin part) Violin Sonata No.5, op.24, II (violin part)
7	music stand – base	Violin Sonata No.2, op.12 no.2, I (violin part) Violin Sonata No.5, op.24, II (violin part)
8	music stand – screw	Violin Sonata No.1, op.12 no.1, III, Var. 4 (violin part)
9	music stand – from above	no notes can be traced, only stems are visible
10	music stand – detail	Violin Sonata No.1, op.12 no.1, III, Var. 2, 4 (violin part)
11	music stand – detail	Piano Sonata No.11, op.22, I, II
12	music stand – detail	Violin Sonata No.1, op.12 no.1, III, Var. 2, 4 (violin part)
13	window – overview	too far away to trace any fragments
14	window detail	Symphony No.2, op.36, I (piano transcription)
15	window detail	too short fragments to identify
16	window detail	Symphony No.2, op.36, II (piano transcription)
17	window detail	Symphony No.1, op.21, I (piano transcription) Symphony No.8, op.93, IV (piano transcription)

18	window detail	Symphony No.1, op.21, I (piano transcription) Symphony No.8, op.93, IV (piano transcription)
19	window detail	too short fragments to identify
20	window detail	Symphony No.2, op.36, II (piano transcription)
21	window detail	Piano Sonata No.12, op.26, I (var. 2), III
22	chair	Piano Sonata No.10, op.14 no.2, II
23	chair	Piano Sonata No.15, op.28, II, IV
24	chair	Piano Sonata No.11, op.22, IV
25	chair	Piano Sonata No.11, op.22, I
26	chair	Piano Sonata No.1, op.27 no.1, IV
27	chair	Piano Sonata No.10, op.14 no.2, I
28	not clear	<i>Fidelio</i> Overture (piano reduction)
29	oval picture	Violin Sonata No.4, op.23, III (violin part) Violin Sonata No.8, op.30 no.3, I (violin part)
30	oval picture	Violin Sonata No.8, op.30 no.3, I (violin part) Violin Sonata No.9, op.47, I, III (violin part)
31	oval picture	too short fragments to identify
32	not clear	too short fragments to identify
33	not clear	too short fragments to identify
34	oval picture	Violin Sonata No.8, op.30 no.3, II (violin part) Violin Sonata No.9, op.96, IV (violin part) <i>Fidelio</i> , “Nur hurtig fort, nur frisch gegraben” and “Euch werde Lohn in bessern”
35	oval picture	<i>Fidelio</i> , “Nur hurtig fort, nur frisch gegraben” and “Euch werde Lohn in bessern”
36	door – overview door handle	too far away to trace any fragments too short fragments to identify
37	door detail	Piano Sonata No.21, op.53, III
38	door detail	Piano Sonata No.16, op.31 no.1, II

		Symphony No.3, op.55, IV (piano transcription)
39	door detail	Piano Sonata No.16, op.31 no.1, I Piano Sonata No.30, op.109, III (Var. 4) Symphony No.4, op.60, I (transcription for piano four hands)
40	door detail	Piano Sonata No.16, op.31 no.1, II Piano Sonata No.21, op.53, II Symphony No.1 op.21, I (transcription for piano four hands)
41	door detail	Symphony No.3, op.55, IV (transcription for piano four hands) Symphony No.4, op.60, I (transcription for piano four hands)
42	door detail	Piano Sonata No.19, op.49 no.1, II Piano Sonata No.20, op.49 no.2, I Piano Sonata No.21, op.53, I Symphony No.4, op.60, III (transcription for piano four hands) Symphony No.9, op.125, IV (transcription for piano four hands)
43	door detail	Piano Sonata No.17, op.31 no.2, III Symphony No.4, op.60, II, III (transcription for piano four hands)
44	not clear	Violin Sonata No.8, op.30 no.3, I (violin part) String Quartet No.1, op.18 no.1, I (2 <sup>nd</sup> violin) String Quartet No.6, op.18 no.6, II (1 <sup>st</sup> violin)
45	not clear	Piano Sonata No.11, op.22, IV Piano Sonata No.12, op.26, I (Var. 2), III

There are a number of things this chart might suggest, but none of them can be proved, since there is no surviving evidence casting light on how Kagel created the music room, or on how he decided which objects to shoot in order to make the score. First of all we can see that there are lots of piano and violin sonatas, several piano transcriptions of symphonies, some fragments of piano arrangements of *Fidelio*, and a couple of violin parts from string quartets. It seems that he chiefly used extracts that contain the main layers of the music's texture, rather than musical background. For instance, he did not use accompanying patterns from parts or full scores of the symphonies, or the viola parts from the quartets, which are usually less significant. The

fact that he used piano transcriptions of orchestral works instead of original scores also highlights the fact that he probably wanted the melodic lines of the music to be in *Ludwig van*, rather than insignificant fragments of Alberti bass or long notes, as would have been the case had he employed orchestral scores or parts.

Secondly, it seems that Kagel did not have a specific programme or pattern in mind when he was creating the music room. There are several cases where two or three subsequent works – the first and second violin sonatas, the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first piano sonatas – are found next to each other in the same picture. This probably suggests that he covered the room in scores in a random way, not trying to mix different scores together or to juxtapose different genres. That said, it might not be completely random that on the chair, which is in front of the piano, there are mainly piano sonatas, whereas on the music stand there are only violin parts from violin sonatas. Obviously, in these two cases, there might be an allusion to the fact that a pianist would sit on the chair whereas a violinist would stand in front of the music stand, so maybe these particular scores are there on purpose. Still, we cannot find a connection between the window of the room and the symphonies that cover most of its surface, and there seems to be no apparent reason why the door contains both piano sonatas and symphonies.

## B. Kagel's instructions

Kagel provides the performer with a long list of instructions on how to interpret the score; but although they are very detailed and precise, they seem to be able to be replaced by one sentence: the performers can play anything they want, as long as it is by Beethoven. What actually happens is that Kagel explains very clearly how the score of *Ludwig van* should be used, only to reveal, in the last instruction, that other Beethoven works can be used as well, and that this can be done both in random and in organised ways. Below is a summary of the instructions for using the score, and subsequently Kagel's suggestions for using additional material from Beethoven's music.

Most of Kagel's instructions on the use of the score are about what the performers are *allowed* to do, rather than what they *have* to do or what they are *forbidden* to do: the sequence of pages is *ad libitum*, each page can be seen both as a musical piece in its own right and as part of a larger composition, players can play from the same or from different pages at any time, not all notes on a page have to be played, anything can be repeated and each of the four edges of the page can be the bottom edge. Original tempi, even of identified fragments, are not obligatory, and dynamics are to be followed, when they are there, which, more often than not, is not the case. The number of performers and the instrumentation are absolutely free, and the use of old, exotic or electric instruments, experimental sound sources, tape recording or electro-acoustic alterations of instrumental sound is welcome. Finally, the duration of performance is free.

Only two of the instructions given are of an imperative nature: one of them demands that the reading of the score can be done in only one of two suggested ways for any one performance: either 1) performers produce their normal sound ("ordinario-tone") when the picture is very clear, and the blurrier the image becomes, the more they alter their sound; or 2) they play their ordinario-tone when the image is very blurry and alter their sound as the image becomes clearer. The other instruction which does not *allow* but *dictates*, says that even performances with larger ensembles should be transparent, and that tutti passages should be few and short in any one performance, presumably in order to prevent the chaotic sound of several instruments performing random fragments of music, all at the same time. Even in the latter case, although this

instruction is phrased as an obligation rather than as a choice, it is not clear to what extent tutti passages should be avoided. They have to be “few” and “short”, but these adjectives are anyway very subjective: for instance, one performer might consider a one-minute tutti passage to be short enough, but another could find it too long. Even this instruction leaves room for the subjectivity of the performer.

As to how to use the material – “short fragments”, Kagel says, once again without specifying how short they should be – from Beethoven’s music that is not in the score of *Ludwig van*, Kagel gives us no fewer than five different options, without limiting the performer to using only one of them. The first three options are under the subtitle “Chance instrumentation”, and describe possible instrumentations for when all players perform the same extract at once: the first one suggests that each performer plays parts which are originally for another instrument; the second, that all performers play from piano arrangements of symphonic works; the third, that they all play parts from piano sonatas. The other two are under the title “Montage”<sup>10</sup> and they refer to ways of combining more than one work by Beethoven: the first one suggests that each performer plays a part originally designed for their instrument, whereas the second proposes that the performers be divided in groups, each playing a different Beethoven composition, in the original instrumentation.

From all the above, it is clear that Kagel did not want to set any limits on the performers’ creativity. Beethoven’s music can be used in many different ways: it can be played, combined and ordered in a totally random way, if the performers want to make use of Kagel’s score only, or it can be reorganised according to the performers’ will, applying different levels of control, from a vague decision on the overall structure, to a written-out collage. Therefore, the result could sound like an aleatoric work, like a Beethoven parody, or even like a fully composed atonal work, depending on the way the performers want to structure it. What seems to be important from Kagel’s point of view is that he did not make the decisions himself. *Ludwig van: Hommage von*

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<sup>10</sup> It is not clear whether Kagel uses the words “collage” and “montage” in the same sense. In The New Grove dictionary they are mentioned as synonyms (Burkholder, 2001: 110), whereas in Mayer’s *Dictionary of art terms and techniques*, “montage” is defined as a picture made up of various *images* (Mayer, 1969: 250), whereas “collage” can include “fabrics or any natural or manufactured material”. This distinction does not seem to be made, or to make sense, at least literally, in music.

*Beethoven* is not simply a piece of chance music, where important decisions are left to chance; it is a composition in which the decisions are to be made by the performer.

## **2. Ludwig van as a postmodern composition**

In this section, I will relate *Ludwig van* to some of the key concepts of postmodern theory. It is not clear whether Kagel himself was interested in the postmodernism debate: as Heile quotes, when requested to give a statement for a conference on postmodernism, he claimed that none of the important composers is interested in it (Kagel, 1991b: 41; quoted in Heile, 2002: 296). On the other hand, in an interview with Klüppelholz, although he argues that the concepts of modernism and postmodernism are inseparable (Kagel, 1991a: 99), he seems to identify postmodern elements in his works:

There have been postmodern elements already in my early works, because I was always fascinated by the opportunity that composers have: to illuminate inherited material in new ways and to pass it on (Kagel, 1991a: 101).

Later in the same interview, he reveals his fascination for the question of how canonic composers would develop their musical language, had they been born 150 or 200 years later, and suggests that “the answer would probably have to do with the essence of the postmodern” (Kagel, 1991a: 104). It seems that Kagel identified musical postmodernism, to a great extent, with the turn to tradition that happened in music of the avant-garde of the late 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, *Ludwig van* would certainly have been branded as a postmodern work by Kagel, as it is mainly concerned with interpreting inherited music in new ways. However, in my opinion postmodernism in music does not only have to do with incorporating aspects of the canon in new works. In this section I will examine *Ludwig van* from the points of view of literary theorists and musicologists who have engaged in the postmodern debate.

## A. Intertextuality

*Ludwig van* can be seen as exemplifying the term “intertextuality”, coined in 1967 – only three years before the score’s publication – by the poststructuralist philosopher Julia Kristeva. Intertextuality refers to the interdependence between all literary texts, and the fact that no text exists on its own; all such texts bear relations, references to and quotations from other texts. Of course it must be highlighted that Kristeva did not talk only about deliberate quotations and allusions to other texts: she claimed that intertextuality is present in every text, either purposefully or not. But since the coining of the term there have been several works which use a vast number of quotations deliberately.

The use of quotations and references in music, as in literature, is by no means a new practice. The parody mass and the quodlibet are two of the oldest forms in Western art music that were constructed using borrowed material. These precedents of collage are different from the actual collage technique in that the quoted elements in them are assembled in such a way that they fit smoothly in their new context, and they sound as if they are part of it. On the contrary, in collage, in music as well as in the visual arts, the separate elements retain their character and they are usually juxtaposed to other material. The first composer who systematically applied this technique in his works was Charles Ives, but it became popular with the European avant-garde composers in the 1950s and 1960s: Karlheinz Stockhausen, Bernd Alois Zimmermann, Goerge Rochberg, Luciano Berio composed significant works using the collage technique. The influence of Ives, but also the socio-political climate and its focus on and questioning of tradition must have played a role in this development, as I argued in section II.1. The main difference between these works and the referential works before them is that they use quotations to a greater extent and in a more conscious way; it seems that the very substance of this music lies in the diversity of the styles it incorporates.

*Ludwig van*, a product of the same period, is yet a different case. Instead of consisting of different and contrasting styles like the polystylistic works, it is made up only out of quotations from the music of one specific composer: it still focuses on tradition, but one very specific part of the classical music tradition. This is why Kagel responds to the labelling of his composition as “collage” by replying that a more

appropriate way of describing it would be “metacollage” (Kagel, 1970: VIII), since the fragments he used in its construction were all from Beethoven’s music, without mixing them with music of any other style or composer. It is hard to tell whether Kagel’s concept of metacollage bears any connection with Stockhausen’s: the latter gave a lecture at Darmstadt called *Metacollage and Integration* in the summer of 1970, only months after Kagel’s use of the term in his interview with Karl Faust. It is also hard to find out who came up with the term first, and also whether the one was familiar with the other’s use of the term. What is quite clear is that, although they both used the term to mean “beyond traditional collage technique”, and although they both called for a more coherent form of collage, they did not mean quite the same thing: according to Stockhausen, metacollage would involve “the intermodulation of all the different forces that are combined in one composition” (Cott, 1974: 174). Therefore, whereas in Kagel the coherence is achieved through the use of material from the same source, according to Stockhausen it is brought about by the interaction between heterogeneous elements.

In any case, the ideal of the metacollage lies in the coherence between its elements, although these elements are fragments of different entities. Whereas in Schnittke’s and Berio’s works the collage is made by incorporating music from the past into a contemporary musical language, which makes the fragmentation and the clash between the different elements very obvious, Kagel wants to avoid this:

Listening to a composition in which musical quotes occur sporadically is often rather like watching at the window: people walk past while you stay; if you happen to know somebody, there is an exchange of polite nods. I on the contrary wanted to assemble as coherent as possible a montage by means of meticulous inbreeding of more or less familiar pieces without the introduction of alien bodies. Rather than distract him with anecdotes to be recognised, I wanted the listener to be able to concentrate on the substance of the musical context (Kagel, 1970: VIII).

Kagel did not want the listeners to keep themselves busy with trying to identify the quotations; he wanted them to listen to the essence of Beethoven’s music in a different setting, in a different form, to listen to Beethoven played “*as new music*” (Kagel, 1970: VIII), and not *along with* new music.

## B. The death of the composer

The subtitle of the score of *Ludwig van*, “*Hommage von Beethoven*”, is actually a reversal of the traditional homage, which ought to be a “hommage à”, a tribute *to* someone. The act of composing a “hommage von Beethoven”, a tribute *by* Beethoven, is actually an oxymoron, since you cannot compose something which is composed by someone else. Through this oxymoron Kagel seems to be implying that he did not regard himself as the composer of *Ludwig van*: the composition is actually, in Kagel’s own words, “a contribution by Beethoven to contemporary music” (Kagel, 1970: VIII). Needless to say, this phrase is also an oxymoron: Beethoven could not possibly have contributed to the music of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, at least not knowingly. He cannot be considered the composer of *Ludwig van* either, since the composer, as an author, is supposed to be aware of his/her creations.

The conclusion we should draw from Kagel’s oxymora is given to us by Kagel himself: “the principle of collage would eventually bring about the abolition of intellectual authorship” (Kagel, 1970: VIII). There is actually no author for *Ludwig van*, or rather, it is not important who the author is. As Roland Barthes claimed in his essay “The Death of the Author”, also written three years before Kagel’s score was published, it is not the figure of the Author-God that can give a unique meaning to a text, as modernist criticism would have it. Whereas modernist criticism regards a text as the creation of one person and tries to find the meaning of the text by identifying the author’s intention, in the postmodern world, the text, which is “a tissue of quotations” (Barthes, 1977: 146), is an independent existence whose meaning depends on each of its readers. Thus, according to Barthes, the death of the Author signifies the birth of the Reader.

This is what happens with *Ludwig van*: since neither Beethoven nor Kagel can claim authorship of this “text”, which is actually “a tissue of quotations”, as Barthes would call it, we cannot examine “the composer’s intentions” in order to find its “meaning”: it is the Reader who gives it a meaning. But as *Ludwig van* is a musical text, there is not only one Reader, as in literary texts; with Western art music there can be two possible “Readers”: the performer, who is the first reader and interpreter of a musical work, and the listener, who is the ultimate “Reader”. Through the abolition of

intellectual authorship, or the Death of the Composer, if we can adjust Barthes' famous phrase to musical terms, it is both the Performer and the Listener who become more important. The former, because they have to make decisions that would normally be beyond their responsibilities, and to make music happen out of mere fragments. The latter, because they can no longer tell whether what they hear is a product of Beethoven's, Kagel's, or the Performer's creativity; they can no longer listen to music as conveying a message from an originating genius.

In this sense, *Ludwig van* is the musical parallel to what Barthes would call a writerly ("scriptible") text, as opposed to a readerly ("lisible") text, both terms used in his book *S/Z* (Barthes, 1974). According to Barthes, traditional literature mainly consists of readerly texts, in which there is a unique meaning, which is pre-determined by the author, and the reader only has to follow the author's guidance in order to locate this meaning. The writerly text, on the contrary, encourages the reader to take active part in constructing the meaning of the text. It is open to different interpretations and invites the reader to become the writer by determining their own unique interpretation and constructing their own version of the work's meaning. In the same way, the performer of *Ludwig van* takes the role of the composer: they are "no longer a consumer but a producer" (Barthes, 1974: 4).

### C. Deconstructing hierarchies, deconstructing Beethoven

With the abolition of “intellectual authorship”, Kagel shows his scepticism towards a traditional hierarchy of Western art music: that between the composer as a creator of an artwork, and the performer and listener, as its recipients. Traditional discourse would look into a musical composition, trying to identify the composer’s message or objective behind it – which, ironically, is what I have also been trying to do in the course of this essay. This fact in itself demonstrates just how musicological discourse is composer-centred: even in analysing a musical work that questions the idea of authorship, we are obliged to determine the author’s intentions. However, through *Ludwig van* Kagel shifts the point of reference from the composer to the performer and the listener, by demonstrating that the “meaning” is not always determined by the composer. *Ludwig van* can have as many meanings as the number of different performances it receives, multiplied by the number of the listeners attending each of these performances. With this I mean that each performance of *Ludwig van* incorporates an interpretation by the performer, which, in its turn, can be interpreted differently by each member of the audience. In the end, Kagel, the “composer”, has only set the rules of the game, which can be played in an indefinite number of ways. The binary opposition between the composer and the performer, or the composer and the audience, is thus deconstructed, since, according to Derrida, “to deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment” (Derrida, 1981: 41): the composer is no more the favoured side of this opposition, the one who controls the meaning of a musical work.

Deconstruction is happening in *Ludwig van* also in another sense, that has to do with the original definition of “deconstruction” in the Littré dictionary, which Derrida quotes in “Letter to a Japanese friend”, when he explains how he came up with this term while trying to translate the Heideggerian word “Destruction”:

Deconstruction: action of deconstructing. Grammatical term. Disarranging the construction of words in a sentence. [...]

Deconstruire: 1. To disassemble the parts of a whole. To deconstruct a machine to transport it elsewhere. 2. Grammatical term... To deconstruct verse, rendering it, by the suppression of meter, similar to prose. [...] 3. Se deconstruire [to deconstruct itself] ... to lose its construction. [...] (Derrida, 1985: 1).

Derrida says that, although these definitions concerned only regions of meaning and not the totality of what deconstruction aspires to mean, they bore an affinity with what he meant (*voulait-dire*, i.e. wanted to say) by using this term. It seems that the Littré entry, although it can by no means be taken as a definition of Derrida's deconstruction, served as a basis for his conception of the term.

The first and third definitions of "deconstruire" (to deconstruct) in the Littré seem to be very close to what is happening in *Ludwig van*. Kagel disassembles the parts of Beethoven's music, scattering its fragments in the score of *Ludwig van* in an almost random way, as I showed in section IV.1.A (first definition, of the transitive verb "deconstruire"), and, thus, Beethoven's music loses its construction (third definition, of the intransitive "se deconstruire"). The fragments are still there, absolutely unaltered, but deprived of the context in which they are to be found in Beethoven's music. Thus, the structure of the music, which has to do with the relations between the various elements in it, is lost.

In their new environment, all the elements that form Kagel's collage of Beethoven's works – or any collage, for that matter – retain a certain reference to the context from which they were taken, while at the same time being a part of their new context. Thus, each element in a collage can be read in two ways. As the Group Mu put it:

[Collage's] heterogeneity, even if it is reduced by every operation of composition, imposes itself on the reading as stimulation to produce a signification which could be neither univocal nor stable. Each cited element breaks the continuity or the linearity of the discourse and leads necessarily to a double reading: that of the fragment perceived in relation to its text of origin; that of the same fragment as incorporated into a new whole, a different totality (Group Mu, 1978: 34-5).

Gregory Ulmer, in his article "The object of Post-Criticism", compares the above quotation to Derrida's definition of the "gram" principle, according to which:

Whether in the order of spoken or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present [...] Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent (Derrida, 1981: 26).

According to Ulmer, it is this undecidability between the present and the absent, the text and the outside of the text, that Derrida tries to achieve in his double reading of texts, which leads to their deconstruction. In this sense, *Ludwig van*, as any collage, offers itself for multiple readings, through the diversity between the contexts from which its elements are taken and their actual place in the final product.

#### **D. Collage vs. compositional control: Björn Heile's view**

The fact that Kagel surrenders his control of the aesthetic result to the performer is central to Björn Heile's assessment of *Ludwig van* as a postmodern composition. In his article "Collage vs. Compositional Control: The Interdependency of Modernist and Postmodernist Approaches in the Work of Mauricio Kagel", he regards postmodernism "as something like the counter-image of modernism, embracing everything that modernism has excluded" (Heile, 2002: 287). Thus, as modernism emphasises unity and hermetic systems, postmodernism stresses heterogeneity and openness. Heile goes on to argue that compositional control is a modernist principle, since it ensures unity, whereas collage is more of a postmodernist practice, since it loosens compositional authority and involves intertextual references and heterogeneity.

Heile goes through various works by Kagel and shows that, in most of them, collage and compositional control co-exist, and that modernist and postmodernist practices are thus intertwined. Therefore, he concludes that it would be nonsensical to characterise these works as modern or postmodern, since they combine techniques of both. It seems that, when Heile refers to postmodernism, he refers to the postmodernism of reaction, and ignores the postmodernism of resistance, to use Hal Foster's division of postmodern culture. According to Foster, the postmodernism of reaction, voiced mainly by neoconservatives, repudiates modernism to celebrate the status quo; I would agree with Heile that Kagel cannot by any means be classified in this category, since he never rejected modernism and the avant-garde. On the other hand, the postmodernism of resistance "seeks to deconstruct modernism and resist the status quo" (Foster, 1998: xii); a very important aspect of postmodernism of resistance is that it is not an anti-modernist turn towards tradition. Instead of rejecting modernist techniques, it embraces them and develops them, while at the same time incorporating aspects of other traditions and eras and adding new practices; thus it deconstructs modernism *from within*, using its own practices.

Besides, by creating pairs of opposed techniques and values between modernism and postmodernism, Heile constructs hierarchical binary oppositions: a modernist composer would favour compositional control and not collage, a postmodernist would do the opposite. I believe it is against the concept of postmodernism to construct a

hierarchical system of its values. From a postmodern point of view, this opposition would be undecidable; a postmodernist composer would anyway not favour the one side of such an opposition, and that is what Heile claims Kagel does in his music: not showing any preference to modernist over postmodernist techniques, and vice-versa. In my view, Heile's argument brings us closer to considering Kagel a postmodernist composer, rather than undecided between modernism and postmodernism.

In any case, Heile seems to exclude *Ludwig van* from his conclusion, since it is actually a collage – or a metacollage, to use Kagel's term – with no compositional control whatsoever. He acknowledges that *Ludwig van* “has been hailed as a specimen case of a postmodernist music in the neoconservative sense”, since it consists of “little more than a collage of pre-existing music from the canon” (Heile, 2002: 291), but points out that it is an isolated case in Kagel's work. Indeed, it is the only composition by Kagel that is based only on pre-composed material, with no hint of modern musical language, and the only one with such an open form. Therefore, even Heile, who is reluctant to label Kagel as a postmodernist, regards *Ludwig van* as an example of postmodern music.

## **E. Jonathan Kramer's conception of postmodern music**

In the assessment of whether *Ludwig van* is a postmodern composition, it seems necessary to include Jonathan Kramer's article "The Nature and Origins of Musical Postmodernism" (Kramer, 2002: 13-24), which, for all the controversy around it, is one of the most widely known articles on postmodern music. Kramer defies the popular belief which, according to him, "identifies as postmodern any composition that was written recently but sounds as if it were not" (Kramer, 2002: 14), and follows the thought of critical theorists such as Umberto Eco and Jean-François Lyotard in his attempt to identify the nature of postmodern music. Finally, he compiles a list of sixteen characteristics (Kramer, 2002: 16-7), which, in his opinion, postmodern music tends to exhibit. It is clearly far too ambitious a task to reduce such a wide, complicated and controversial term as "musical postmodernism" to sixteen characteristics, and, in many ways, Kramer's list appears too simple to be reliable. Nevertheless, it provides a useful reflection on the general directions of postmodern music, and one of the very few thorough approaches to this subject.

Below are some of the characteristics from Kramer's list which I find relevant to *Ludwig van*. Many of them have already been discussed in this section, and I do not, by any means, intend to consider the so-called "checklist approach" valid in proving that *Ludwig van* is a postmodern composition, something that even Kramer himself warns against. That said, I find it worth including a brief discussion of some of the characteristics.

According to Kramer, postmodern music:

- is not simply a repudiation of modernism or its continuation, but has aspects of both a break and an extension

This was already discussed in my criticism of Heile's view of the relationship between modernism and postmodernism (section IV.2.D). Here Kramer highlights the difference between postmodernism and antimodernism.

- is, on some level and in some way, ironic

Irony is one of the main characteristics of Kagel's works, and it is apparent in his considering *Ludwig van* an "Homage von Beethoven", or "Beethoven's

contribution to contemporary music”: the idea of Beethoven composing a homage to himself or writing music in a 20<sup>th</sup>-century style is ironic because of its absurdity.

- does not respect boundaries between sonorities and procedures of the past and of the present

“*Ludwig van* [...] attempts to say to the interpreter: the music of the past should also be performed as music of the present” (Kagel, 1970: IX).

- shows disdain for the often unquestioned value of structural unity

As discussed in the previous section, Kagel does not determine the structure of *Ludwig van*, leaving it either to the performer or to chance to determine it.

- includes quotations of or references to music of many traditions and cultures

Obviously, *Ludwig van* is made up only of quotations from an earlier musical culture.

- considers technology not only as a way to preserve and transmit music but also as deeply implicated in the production and essence of music

Kagel encourages the use of tape recordings and electro-acoustic alteration of the instrumental sound in his instructions for performing *Ludwig van*. Moreover, in his recording of the work he makes wide use of studio techniques of alteration of the sound.

- distrusts binary oppositions

This was discussed in section IV.2.C, “Deconstructing hierarchies, deconstructing Beethoven”.

- includes fragmentations and discontinuities

Once again, *Ludwig van* is obviously a composition entirely made out of unconnected fragments.

- locates meaning and even structure in listeners, more than in scores, performances, or composers

As shown in section IV.2.B, “The Death of the Composer”.

The only criterion for the selection of the above characteristics is how relevant they are to *Ludwig van*. There are some more items in the list that could also be applied to *Ludwig van*, but only depending on the performance: for example, according to Kramer, postmodern music “(7) avoids totalising forms (e.g. does not want entire pieces

to be tonal or serial or cast in a prescribed formal mold)” (Kramer, 2002: 16). It is up to the performers whether the whole performance of *Ludwig van* will be of a homogenous texture or style; as shown earlier, it can be played using only Kagel’s score, in which case the sound would more or less be homogenous in its indeterminacy – that is to say, indeterminate throughout – or it can also incorporate some more structured collage and some intact performances of Beethoven’s music, in which case the result would be heterogeneous. Kagel, for his part, avoids prescribing a “formal mold”, and at the same time does not impose heterogeneity to the performers.<sup>11</sup> Some other items in the list could not be applicable to *Ludwig van*, due to the nature of this work: for example, Kramer argues that postmodern music “(4) challenges barriers between ‘high’ and ‘low’ styles”. Although within Beethoven’s music there are works that can be considered to be in a higher style than others – for example, we could not help considering the late piano sonatas more significant and of “higher style” than the *Twenty-five Scottish songs*, op.25 – Kramer probably means more radical differences of style, and therefore I judged this characteristic as not applicable to *Ludwig van*.

Overall, and for all its simplicity, I believe that Kramer’s list does present a valuable general idea of the nature of postmodern music. And, as shown above, most of the characteristics in the list are applicable to *Ludwig van*. Of course, I would not consider this as proof, but it certainly is one more piece of evidence of *Ludwig van*’s postmodern nature.

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<sup>11</sup> The issue of indeterminacy in *Ludwig van* will be addressed in section IV.3.A.

### **3. Comparison to artists and art movements of its time**

#### **A. Experimentalism**

In the previous section, and in my attempt to point out the postmodern characteristics of *Ludwig van*, I showed its connection to other works of its time which exemplify the term intertextuality. However, what makes it special among other referential works of its time is that, whereas most of them are conventionally notated scores which determined where each quotation would be used and how it would be played, in *Ludwig van*, Kagel does not take any decision as to how the material from Beethoven's music will be used in any performance of it. In this sense, *Ludwig van* is truly an experimental work: in this section I will try to investigate its relation to the categories of experimental composition which I presented in section II.2.A.

As I showed in section IV.1, the making of the score was largely based on chance: there seems to be no specific plan as to which of Beethoven's works should be next to which; on the contrary, the evidence shows that he probably did it in a random way. But on the other hand, the fact that consecutive pages of the same Beethoven works appear next to each other often in the score, means that he did not apply any chance techniques in order to generate the score. Therefore, it seems that Kagel pasted the Beethoven scores on the walls and furniture of the music room in a "random" way just because the order of pages did not matter to him, and not because he aimed for a chance result; otherwise, he would probably have done it using chance operations and he would have avoided consecutive pages appearing together in the score, or at least it would not have happened so many times. Therefore we cannot label *Ludwig van* a chance composition, since it does not seem to be in Kagel's intentions to leave the combination of quotations to chance and avoid any interference of other factors: if it was, he would have done it in a much more effective way.

On the other hand, it is self-evident that *Ludwig van* is an indeterminate composition – with respect to its performance: the instrumentation, the duration, the order in which the quotations are to be played, the speed, the timbre are all left undetermined by Kagel in the score. And in a way it could be argued that it exhibits certain aspects of the text score: its instructions are many, and of great importance,

whereas the score itself can be done without. In this sense, *Ludwig van* seems to have something in common with Stockhausen's intuitive works, since all he gives the performers is very general instructions as to how to approach the material, and since he grants them a lot of freedom. Nevertheless, *Ludwig van* does not consist only of words: even if Kagel's score is not used, the score is the total of Beethoven's works. Therefore, I do not believe that we can label *Ludwig van* a text score, however important its instructions are.

*Ludwig van* is an indeterminate work with respect to its performance: what remains to be answered is in which tendency of the ones I described in section II.2.B it belongs: whether Kagel left some aspects undetermined because he wanted to avoid any trace of subjectivity (the "American" tendency, according to Griffiths), or because he wanted to leave space for the performers' subjectivity into any realisation of the piece (the "European" tendency). My opinion is that he leaves this question open, depending on the way the piece is approached. If the score of *Ludwig van* – and no other Beethoven scores – is used, the performance is, to a great extent left to chance, since the order, the instrumentation, and even the material that will be played is not determined beforehand. Of course, even in this case some aspects of the performers' personalities will affect the result, but this can be said of any such composition. On the other hand, Kagel does leave the performers the freedom to shape their performance however they want, even by omitting the score and devising a collage of Beethoven works themselves. In the latter case, it is obviously the performers' subjectivity which will determine all aspects of the realisation. So in a way it can be argued that *Ludwig van* can be realised as a work of either of the two tendencies; nevertheless, since it is the performers who have to decide whether to use Kagel's score in a random way or make their own collage, this is already one aspect of the performance that they have to determine. Therefore I believe that Kagel's *Ludwig van* is closer to the "European" tendency in indeterminate works. This argument is further supported by his own recording and performances of the piece, in which, as I will argue in sections IV.4.C and IV.5.A, he did not use his own score but recomposed his own versions of *Ludwig van*: therefore, when he approached his composition as a performer, he avoided leaving its realisation to chance. As Bjorn Heile put it, "while he [Kagel] flirted with the idea of anti-art and of giving up authoritarian control, he was probably too much of an aesthete to actually do so" (Heile, 2006: 34).

## B. Fluxus, Conceptual Art

*Ludwig van* also exhibits some of the characteristics of the Fluxus movement, which was influenced by John Cage and his lectures at the New School for Social Research in New York. Kagel himself was involved in this movement for part of his life, and, as I mentioned in section III.1, the artists who designed the rooms of the Beethovenhaus – apart from the music room – belonged to it. Although there is not any official definition of Fluxus, George Maciunas, one of its chief figures, proposed the following:

FLUX ART – non art – amusement forgoes distinction between art and non-art, forgoes artists' indispensability, exclusiveness, individuality, ambition, forgoes all pretension towards significance, variety, inspiration, skill, complexity, profundity, greatness, institutional and commodity value (From a Fluxus manifesto by George Maciunas, date unknown, quoted in Saper, 1998: 139).

As shown by this manifesto, the Fluxus artists were against the artistic establishment and its elitist attitude concerning what is and what is not art and who is eligible to make art happen. In many ways they can be considered one of the expressions of anti-authoritarianism in art, since they despise all kinds of hierarchies in the art world. Their performances consisted of simple happenings which anyone could do, usually by following some simple instructions. In *Ludwig van*, Kagel similarly questions key concepts of Western art music by letting the performers play Beethoven's music in their own way, regardless of its institutional value and its significance, and without having to demonstrate the skill and the virtuosity traditionally required of them. Moreover, by leaving all the important decisions to the performers, Kagel prompts them to act as composers, distrusting the idea that special skills are needed in order to make music.

It is, however, important to stress out that unlike Fluxus happenings, *Ludwig van* cannot be performed by everyone: it is necessary that the performers can at least read music and play an instrument or sing. Furthermore, according to Heile, Kagel never regarded himself as a member of Fluxus, and found many of their happenings amateurish (Heile, 2006: 35). However, *Ludwig van*, being a unique case in his output, and not a Fluxus happening itself, seems to be significantly influenced by their philosophy, at least in a conceptual way.

Many of the Fluxus artworks are considered as conceptual art, a term coined by Sol LeWitt in his article “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art”, published in *Artforum* in June 1967. According to LeWitt:

In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. [...] It is usually free from the dependence on the skill of the artist as a craftsman (LeWitt, 1967; quoted in Wood, 2002: 38).

In other words, conceptual art is more about the concept and its perception by the audience than about its realisation, more about the idea behind the artwork than about the artwork itself as an object and its aesthetic value. The impact it has on the audience does not have to do with how it is constructed, performed or executed, but with its original conception.

Similarly, according to Kagel, *Ludwig van* is “a concept rather than a composition completed or a work-in-progress” (Kagel, 1970: IX). The “composition” of *Ludwig van* was clearly all about conceiving a score which is a random collage of Beethoven’s scores, whereas the making of the score – that is, making the collage and taking photographs of it – was merely a perfunctory affair, to use a phrase from the definition above. Even the performance of *Ludwig van* can also be a perfunctory affair, if someone decides to use only the score –and not other pieces of Beethoven’s music – and follow Kagel’s instructions. The point in which *Ludwig van* differs from conceptual artworks is that Kagel gives the performers the option to make a more elaborate performance of *Ludwig van*, which would not be inferior to the concept, and would not be a mere perfunctory affair. And, as mentioned before and will be shown in section IV.4, this is exactly what he did in his recording of *Ludwig van*.

### C. Borges

Like several of Kagel's works, *Ludwig van* exhibits two of the characteristics that are common in the work of the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, who was Kagel's English literature lecturer at the Colegio Libre de Estudios Superiores in Buenos Aires and who seems to have been a major influence on the latter's work (Heile, 2006: 11). One of these characteristics is the fascination with the concept of infinity in Borges' works. In "The Library of Babel" (Borges, 1964: 62-8) he describes a library with a possibly infinite number of rooms, which contains all books that can be written by combining the letters of the Latin alphabet in every possible way, therefore including all the books ever written and all the books that will ever be written. And in "The Book of Sand", he describes a book which has an infinite number of pages and can never be opened on the same page twice. I believe there are similarities between these short stories and Kagel's *Ludwig van*: of course, the score can by no means be considered as infinite, but the possible interpretations of it certainly are. Especially since Kagel allows the performer to use any fragment of Beethoven's works, however short it may be, almost everything is possible: if, for instance, we just take single notes from Beethoven's works and reassemble them in certain ways, we can reconstruct any musical composition, from Bach's *Kunst der Fuge* to Ligeti's *Atmosphères*, to name two random examples. Therefore, on a theoretical level, *Ludwig van* is like "The Library of Babel": it can contain all the works that can ever be composed using the notes of the chromatic scale.

Another characteristic that *Ludwig van* shares with some of Borges' writings is their relation to tradition. "Pierre Menard, author of the *Quixote*" (Borges, 1964: 49-56) is a literary essay on a non-existent author of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, whose most important work was a re-writing of two chapters of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, word for word. The essay is so absurd that it actually tries to convince the reader that Menard's *Quixote* is superior to Cervantes', but it ends with a very interesting conclusion:

Menard (perhaps without wanting to) has enriched, by means of a new technique, the halting and rudimentary art of reading: this new technique is that of the deliberate anachronism and the erroneous attribution. This technique, whose applications are infinite, prompts us to go through the *Odyssey* as if it were posterior to the *Aeneid* and the book *Le jardin du Centaure* of Madame Henri Bachelier as if it were by Madame Henri Bachelier. This technique fills the most

placid works with adventure. To attribute the *Imitatio Christi* to Louis Ferdinand Céline or to James Joyce, is this not a sufficient renovation of its tenuous spiritual indications? (Borges, 1964: 56, translated by James E. Irby)

Similarly, in *Ludwig van*, Kagel invites the performer to re-compose Beethoven, albeit not note by note, as that could only happen in Borges' fiction. He proposes the same new technique of reading that Menard invented: the fact that he asks the performer to re-construct Beethoven and at the same time brands *Ludwig van* as a tribute by Beethoven, is, indeed "deliberate anachronism and ... erroneous attribution", to use Borges' words. Listening to Beethoven's music as music of today and as if it was by Kagel – after all, he is officially the composer of *Ludwig van* – prompts us to "read" Beethoven in new and adventurous ways.

The similarity between Borges' and Kagel's relation to tradition is also shown in the former's essay "The Argentine Writer and Tradition". In this, Borges argues that it is not only their local gauchesque poetry that Argentine writers draw upon, but the whole of Western culture. He believes that their right to this tradition is "greater than that which the inhabitants of one or another Western nation might have" (Borges, 1964: 177), and in order to support his argument, he brings up the example of the pre-eminence of Jews in Western culture and of the Irish in English culture. The reason of this pre-eminence, according to Borges, is that "they act within that culture and, at the same time, do not feel tied to it by any special devotion", and, thus, they find it easier to make innovations:

I believe that we Argentines, we South Americans in general, are in an analogous situation; we can handle all European themes, handle them without superstition, with an irreverence which can have, and already does have, fortunate consequences (Borges, 1964: 177, translated by James E. Irby).

Kagel, being an Argentine and Jewish at the same time, is an example of Borges' view. His experiments with Western music tradition, including the film and the composition *Ludwig van*, were considered very provocative, and it can be argued that very few Europeans could be as free as he was with this tradition. And it is partly this lack of superstition that made him such an innovative force within the European avant-garde.

#### **4. Kagel's recording of *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven***

Kagel made his own recording of *Ludwig van* between 2 and 11 January 1970 for Deutsche Grammophon. The musicians who took part in the recording were two singers, two pianists and a string quartet: Carlos Feller, bass, William Pearson, baritone, Bruno Canino and Frederic Rzewski, pianos, Saschko Gawriloff and Egbert Ojstersek, violins, Gérard Ruymen, viola, and Siegfried Palm, cello. The recording, released by Deutsche Grammophon under the serial number 2530014, is about 52 minutes – 26 on each side.<sup>12</sup> At the Sacher Foundation there is a 65-page notebook of handwritten notes that Kagel made while working on the recording. This includes some general outlines of what he wanted to achieve in it, some ideas on how he would combine different Beethoven works, plus a detailed plan of the editing he would do.

I will start this section by giving a translation of some of these outlines, as well as a brief discussion of them. Afterwards I will give a list of the quotations Kagel used in it, and finally I will discuss my conclusions based on my findings concerning Kagel's recording of *Ludwig van*.

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<sup>12</sup> The recording is now out of print, and can only be accessed in libraries or obtained from second-hand sellers on the internet. Moreover, there is a CD copy of the recording at the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel.

## A. Kagel's notes

Some of Kagel's notes are very general and have to do with what he wanted to achieve through *Ludwig van*, how he wanted *Ludwig van* to function. For instance, at some point, he calls the work a thank-you song ("Dankgesang") to Beethoven, which shows that, in spite of his irony, Kagel felt great respect for Beethoven. The alterations to which he subjects Beethoven's music are there only to highlight it from a different point of view: as he says, "An alienation of Beethoven is maybe necessary in order to show the biting ["das beissende" in German, which can also mean acrid, caustic] and the avantgardist element in his music". In other words, if he treated Beethoven's music as music of the present, it was only in order to show that it is always contemporary. Another function of the recording, according to Kagel's notes, is that it "should be an introduction so that other players undertake [*Ludwig van*] themselves". Once again, it becomes apparent that he did not see *Ludwig van* as his own intellectual property: on the contrary, he did the recording in order to encourage other people to play Beethoven's music "as music of the present", to use his own words.

Some other notes have to do with the interpretation of Beethoven's music. For instance, contrary to the recording tradition and its obsession with flawless and thus superhuman performances, Kagel writes: "Bad interpretations have rights too...!" At another point he notes: "The player as 'human' (breathing, in order to sing etc.)", once more highlighting the fact that he did not want the recording to be perfect or divine, but human. In general, he seems to want to highlight the role of the performer in music making, in reaction to the conception of the performer as a mere conveyor of a divine music to the audience, who should be as faithful to the text as possible: "Instead of falsely understood faithfulness to the work [of Beethoven], one should incorporate contemporary changes of the concept of the performer in interpretations of the music of past times". In other words, he claims that the concept of faithfulness to the composer is widely misunderstood, and that it prevents performers from putting their own creativity into the works they play, as it assumes that the performer's role is inferior to the one of the composer; *Ludwig van* is an opportunity for the performers to overthrow this hierarchy and treat the music of the past with more freedom.

There is also a section in Kagel's notebook which is entitled "Formal Criteria", in which he writes different ideas on how to treat different aspects of the music, such as tempo, tonalities, volume etc. Some, but by no means all, of these were used in the recording; it seems that he wrote this section quite early in the procedure, before *Ludwig van* took its final shape in the recording studio. Some of these notes are about interpretation, such as "like beginners", in which he invites the players to record a "bad" interpretation, or "No collage, only an alteration of the interpretation praxis", in which he calls for the performance of a single work, but probably in an unusual way.

But most of the notes are about ways of editing the recorded material: "tempo differences, which, layered on top of each other, produce a canon-like polyphony" is about playing the same work simultaneously but in different tempi; "Concert guide, thematic analysis, repetition as a source of chopping [the music] up. For example, joining together only the themes, the second themes and principal motives from one piece. Like analytical lectures on radio, but without commentary" suggests an editing procedure that would leave only the thematic material on the recording and would throw away all the linking sections of a work. There are many more notes on how to edit and regulate the recorded material, and interestingly enough, Kagel did not use all of them in the final version – none of the ones I quoted here appear to have been used in the recording. There is no information as to why he did not use all the ideas he wrote in his notebook, and how he chose the ways in which he edited the material. What is important to note is that he intended to achieve what he wanted mainly by editing, and less through the performances themselves. The version of *Ludwig van* on the record cannot ever be performed live: it is a composition that was actually shaped on the editing table, rather than in the recording studio.

Regarding the overall form that Kagel wanted to give the recording, there is surprisingly little information in the notebook. There are only two phrases which are worth mentioning, the first of which is: "*Ludwig van* is based on the 32 'Diabelli Variations' (or 33?) [...] The Beethovenian variations (changes) are varied (changed) in a transformed way, so an augmentation of Beethovenian technique takes place here." In other words, Kagel claims that he actually transforms Beethoven's music in the way the latter transformed Diabelli's Waltz, and thus Kagel's recording is a transformation of a transformation; in this sense, he believes that he augments Beethoven's technique. The

*Diabelli Variations* are also mentioned in Kagel's interview with Karl Faust, where he says that:

[*Ludwig van*'s] overall form is based on the 33 Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli, op.120. I translated each of Beethoven's variation techniques into the terms of my compositional methods, thus altering Beethoven's music in a manner similar to that in which he altered Diabelli's theme. The outcome was a transformation on a secondary plane, though without a constantly recurring subject (Kagel, 1970: IX).

It is very difficult to find out how exactly he did that, especially since, as he himself admits, there is no "constantly recurring subject"; in other words, without transforming one specific theme, but rather all of Beethoven's music. What is really surprising is that, apart from the two mentions of the *Diabelli Variations* quoted above, there is no evidence whatsoever in his notes on the recording as to how exactly he applied Beethoven's variation techniques to Beethoven's music. We can either suppose that Kagel used another notebook which was eventually lost, or that the connection to the *Diabelli Variations* is quite loose, in which case he did not need to keep notes on how exactly he would use them.

The other clue which Kagel gives us to the form of the recording is: "Record side A or B, B or A". Similarly, in his editing plan he refers to one side of the record as "Side A or B" and to the other as "Side B or A". It is not clear whether by this he meant that it was not important which side would be first in the final editing or that he would actually leave it to the audience to decide, by labelling the sides the same way (Side A or B, B or A) in the final product. I would assume it is the latter: in my opinion it would make more sense for Kagel to leave the decision to the audience, if he did not want to make it himself. But, for some reason, in the final product the record sides are very clearly labelled as Side A and Side B. Whatever Kagel's intention was concerning the labelling of the record sides, it is surprising that it did not make any difference to him which side of the record would be first and which would be last: although he claimed that the recording had a very specific form, which was based on one of Beethoven's forms, he did not mind reversing the order of its two halves. It seems that he did not use the *Diabelli Variations* as a model for the structure of the recording, but rather as a sort of inspiration on ways of transformation; in other words, that he just used some of Beethoven's variation techniques as a basis in order to develop his own transformation

techniques in the recording. This is what he seems to be saying in his interview with Stephen Loy:

SL: You set that up I understand based on the *Diabelli variations*, in some way. Can you elaborate on that?

MK: Yeah. For me, you don't hear the *Diabelli variations*. But I analysed the different variations of Beethoven, lets see... what kind of a... is it ornamental variation, is it rhythmic variation, is it structural variation. This. And I projected this in my *Ludwig van*. This was exactly... You don't hear...

SL: You don't hear the separate sections.

MK: No, no. I was not interested in the...Much more interesting was the projection of the structural devices on my piece (Loy, 2006: 361).

Apart from the notebook, there is surprisingly little material concerning the recording at the Paul Sacher Foundation. The only other items worth mentioning are two letters, addressed to the pianists who took part in the recording, Bruno Canino and Frederic Rzewski, sent in November 1969. The letters contain some information regarding the dates of the recording, and a list of Beethoven piano sonatas that the pianists would have to play: op.90, op.101, op.106, op.109, op.110, and op.111. Interestingly enough, Kagel reassures the pianists that they do not have to play these sonatas perfectly, since Beethoven himself must have played wrong notes too! There are no copies of any correspondence with the other musicians who took part in the recording, maybe because they were living in Köln, so Kagel had personal contact with them. Finally, through an e-mail correspondence with Bruno Canino, I found out that, as I had expected, Kagel was the one who determined the works that the musicians would play, and often the way they would perform them as well. The musicians did not take part in the editing procedure and it was difficult for Canino to recognise his (their) work in the final product. What is also striking is that Canino did not know anything about the connection between the structure of the recording and the *Diabelli Variations*, which makes even more plausible the hypothesis that this connection was in fact quite loose.

## B. Structure of the recording, list of quotations from Beethoven's works

Below is a list of the quotations Kagel used for the recording. As in the list of quotations in the score, I will not include the fragments that are very short, as most of them cannot be identified. The timings in the list are according to my copy of the LP of *Ludwig van*.<sup>13</sup> Latin numbers refer to the movements. Bar numbers are added only when it is clear where the extracts begin and end; therefore, when they are not specified, it is either because the extracts fade in and out very gradually, or because whole movements are included.

### Side A

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 0'08 – 1'28  | Piano Sonata No.29, op.106, Largo-Allegro-Tempo I   |
| 0'18 – 1'29  | Violin Sonata No.9, op.47, second Variation, b.1-8, violin part only                                |
| 1'24 – 1'40  | Various cadences, piano (E major and E minor) and violin (F major)                                  |
| 1'43 – 2'06  | String Quartet No.9, op.59 no.3, II, 8 last bars (cello pizzicato)                                  |
| 2'09 – 2'18  | Cadences, piano (G major)   |
| 2'15 – 3'15  | String Quartet No.9, op.59 no.3, II, 8 last bars, (cello pizzicato)<br>Sparse staccato piano chords |
| 3'21 – 3'35  | A descending sequence of dissonant chords, piano and strings  |
| 3'35 – 4'59  | Cello Sonata No.2, op.5 no.2, I, b. 7-17<br>Violin Sonata No.10, op.96, b.19-36                     |
| 4'49 – 5'27  | Long dissonant chord, strings   |
| 5'23 – 7'56  | Piano Sonata No.30, op.109, III, Theme and first variation  |
| 5'31 – 7'47  | Short motives from various chamber music works, violins and cello                                   |
| 6'43 – 7'56  | Sparse cadences, piano and strings  |
| 7'57 – 8'33  | Staccato chords, strings  |
| 8'00 – 8'33  | Ascending C major scale in canon, two pianos  |
| 8'36 – 10'00 | “Wo die Berge so blau”, op.98 no.2, voice and piano   |

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<sup>13</sup> Therefore the timings would be different if I had used the recording at the Sacher Foundation, since the latter, although it is identical to the LP, is divided in four tracks instead of two.

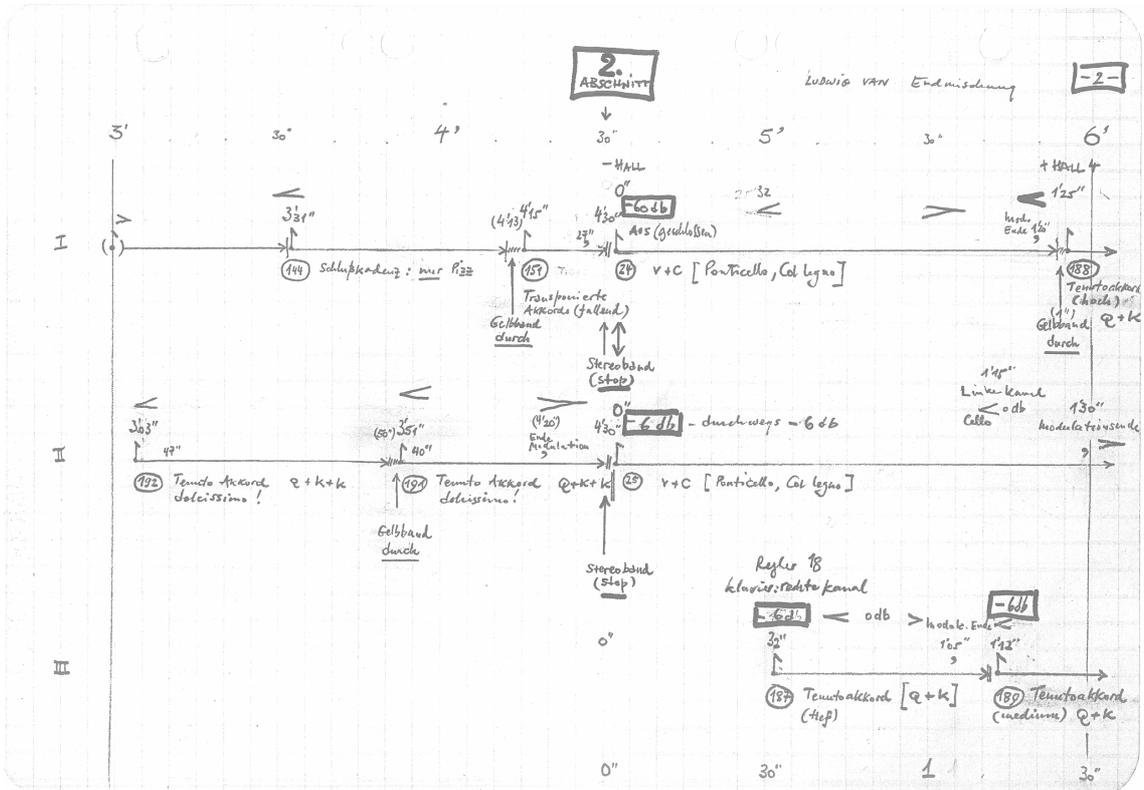
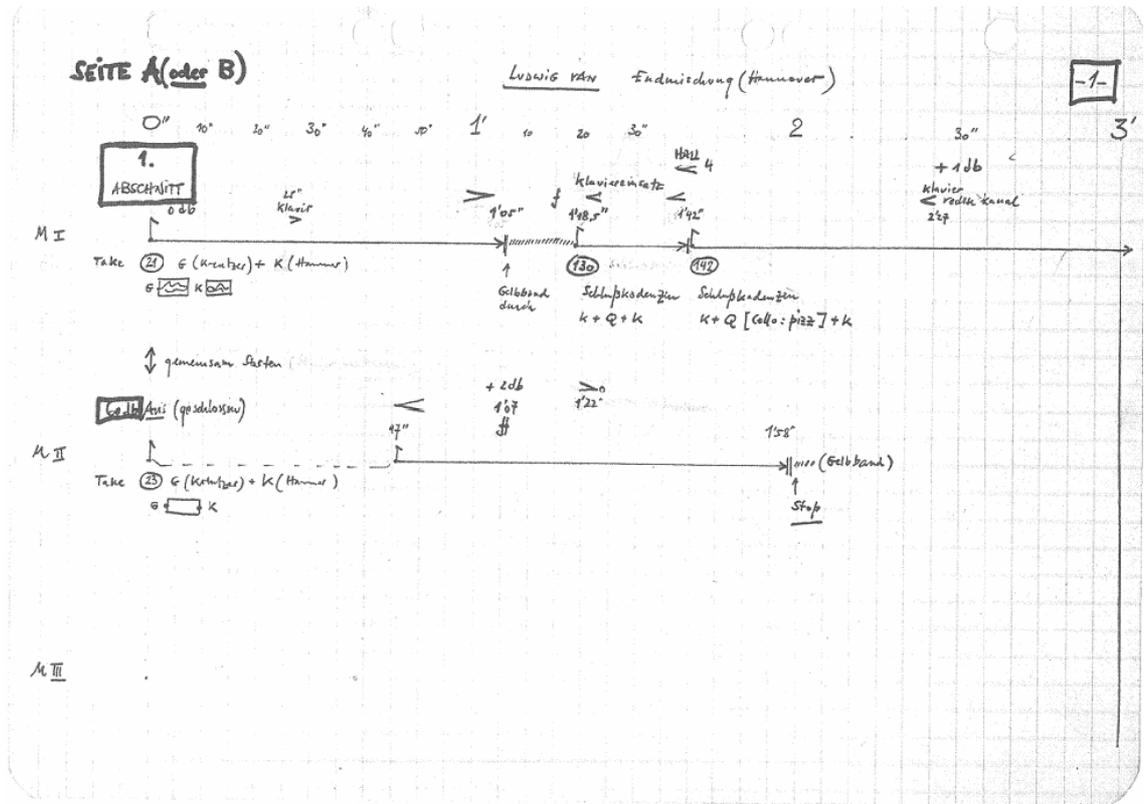
- 8'57 – 10'27 String Quartet No.7, op.59 no.1 III, b.23-40, cello occasionally doubled by voice
- 10'19 – 10'59 Slowly descending chromatic scale, piano  
Col legno chords, strings
- 11'00 – 16'45 Fragments of Piano Trio No.5, op.70 no.1 (*Geistertrio*), II, unsynchronised, piano, violin and cello
- 11'31 – 12'24 Sparse cadences, piano
- 15'09 – 17'29 Piano Sonata No.30, op.109, III, occasionally doubled by singer  
Short motives from various chamber music works, violins and cello, occasionally doubled by singer
- 17'04 – 17'59 Long dissonant chords, strings
- 17'32 – 19'13 Fragments from Piano Sonata No.32, op.111, I
- 17'59 – 18'35 Repeated chords, strings
- 18'35 – 18'56 Unisono chord, strings
- 18'14 – 21'19 String Quartet No.15, op.132, V, b.27-89
- 19'20 – 21'43 Occasional cadences, strings and piano
- 21'46 – 22'45 Piano Sonata No.31, op.110, III, b.1-5
- 21'46 – 22'45 Piano Sonata No.32, op.111, II, b.65-76
- 22'20 – end Quickly alternating fragments of various works, such as  
String Quartet No.8, op.59 no.2, II  
Piano Sonata No.29, op.106, I  
Piano Sonata No.30, op.110, III  
Piano Sonata No.32, op.111, II  
Use of several studio effects

### Side B

- 0'05 – 6'45 Piano Sonata No.29, op.106, III (b. 1-60)
- 0'07 – 5'11 String Quartet No.14, op.131, IV, viola part (the whole movement)
- 1'04 – 1'44 *In questa tomba oscura*, WoO 133
- 3'04 – 7'14 "Gottes Macht und Vorsehung" from *Sechs Lieder nach gedichten von Gellert*, op.48, speaking voice  
String Quartet No.15, op.132, III (b. 1-31)

- 7'12 – 12'39 Piano Sonata op.109, III, sixth Variation
- 7'12 – 11'38 Piano Trio op.97, I, fragments, 2 violins and a cello
- 12'47 – 14'38 String Quartet No.7, op.59 no.1, III, b. 110-133, IV, b. 1-7
- 13'01 – 14'18 *Merkenstein*, op.100, 2 singers
- 14'40 – 16'01 Cello Sonata No.5, op.102 no.2, II, b. 25-39
- 14'58 – 15'59 Violin Sonata No.5, op.24, II, b. 59-73, violin part
- 16'01 – 16'35 Cello Sonata No.5, op.102 no.2, I, b. 129-147
- 16'01 – 16'35 Violin Sonata No.5, op.24, I, b. 70-83, violin part
- 16'37 – 19'23 Quick alternation of very short fragments, mainly cadences
- 17'41 – 18'36 “Gott ist mein Lied”, op.48 no.5
- 19'24 – 19'49 Cello Sonata No.3, op.69, II, b.161-188
- 19'27 – 19'46 Violin Sonata No.2, op.12 no.2, I, b. 204-222
- 19'53 – 20'27 Cello Sonata No.5, op.102 no.1, I, b. 135-153
- 19'46 – 20'25 Violin Sonata No.4, op.23, II, b.24-46
- 20'25 – 21'16 String Quartet No.14, op.131, VII, b.329-388
- 20'40 – 21'13 Piano Sonata No.30, op.109, III, third Variation, prepared piano at some points
- 21'13 – 22'06 String Quartet No.14, op.131, V, b. 58-66, very slow
- 21'47 – 23'36 Rehearsal for String Quartet No.14, op.131, V, amateur playing, unsynchronised, tuning sounds, dialogues
- 23'38 – 25'51 Piano Sonata No.31, op.110, I  
String Quartet No.14, op.131, V  
“Diese Wolken in den Höhen”, op.98 no.4  
Constantly interrupted sound
- 25'51 – 26'05 Three cadences in F major, piano  
Cadence in E major, piano  
Cadence in B flat major, string quartet

### C. Notes on the recording



Example 2. Kagel's editing plan for *Ludwig van*, pp.1-2, copies obtained from the Paul Sacher Foundation

The most striking thing about Kagel's recording of *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven* is that he does not appear to have used his own score at all. This is certain for two reasons: firstly because there is not a single moment in the recording in which it sounds as though he delivered pages of the score to the musicians and asked them to play what they saw at will: on the contrary, his recording sounds quite planned. Secondly, because in his notebook on the recording there is a very detailed plan on how exactly he would do the editing, the first two pages of which are shown in Example 2. In it we can see that there are three different audio tracks in the recording, all at the same time, which fade in and out according to the crescendo (<) and diminuendo (>) symbols over each track. The numbers in circles correspond to different takes Kagel recorded in the studio, whereas the letters Q, V, C and K stand for the string quartets, the violin sonatas, the cello sonatas and the piano sonatas that he used respectively. The works used, as well as all the takes recorded, are listed in separate pages of his notebook. But not all takes consist of long fragments of specific works: some of them contain specific features of Beethoven's music, such as cadences ("Schlußkadenzen") or tenuto chords ("Tenuto Akkord"). It is obvious that he would not have had such control over the recorded material had he used his own score of *Ludwig van*.

What we can conclude from the recording and from Kagel's notes is that he asked the musicians to perform specific passages from Beethoven's music in specific ways – which are not always the usual ways of performing this music – and then made a montage of the recorded material. It seems as if the score of *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven* and Kagel's recording of it are two different artworks. On the other hand, there is no rule in the score's instructions saying, for instance, that at least one page of the score should be used; therefore the performers are entitled to avoid this score, as long as every single note heard in the performance is by Beethoven. And this is the case with Kagel's recording, so it can be considered as one version of the score, although it does not seem to use it at all.

Other conclusions that arise from the recording are the following:

The fragments used are not always short:

Whereas in the score most of the fragments which are discernible are not very long – usually not more than ten bars – some of the fragments in the recording last several

minutes. For example, at the beginning of Side B (or A), one of the pianists is playing the opening sixty bars of the third movement of the Piano Sonata, op.106, which last a little less than seven minutes. These longer fragments are usually heard along with other fragments, but there are still some moments in the recording where one work by Beethoven is left alone for some time, as, for instance, the third movement of the Piano Sonata, op.109, at 15'09-17'04 of Side A. Compared to the music room sequence of the film, where the music heard is much closer to the score than in the recording, since the musicians are actually reading music off the walls of the room, it is obvious that in the recording Kagel wanted Beethoven's music to be clearer and more present: in the music room sequence all we get to hear is a chaotic mixture of melodies, whereas in the LP there are several moments of clarity.

#### Selection of Beethoven's works

As we can presume from the letter Kagel wrote to the pianists who took part in the recording, Canino and Rzewsky, mentioned in section IV.4.A, he had a very clear idea of which Beethoven works he wanted to include in the recording. And looking at the list of the quotations above, we can see that he used: Piano Sonatas, op.106, 109, 110 and 111, Violin Sonatas, op.12 no.2, op.24 and op.47, Cello Sonatas, op.69, op.102 nos.1 and 2, String Quartets, op.59, op.1, 2 and 3 and op.131, and Songs, op.48, op.98 nos.2 and 4, op.100 and WoO 133 (there might be some more that I have not identified, but that is probably because the fragments used are too short). In the case of piano sonatas, it is clear that he deliberately used the four last ones, probably because they are the most well known and respected. With the violin sonatas, he chose the second, one of the middle ones which is very well-known – the *Frühlingssonate* – and the penultimate one, which is also very famous – the *Kreuzersonate*. From the cello sonatas he chose the three last ones, more or less as he did with the piano sonatas. He chose the three *Razumovsky* Quartets, from Beethoven's middle period and op.131, arguably the most famous quartet of his late period. Finally, the selection of songs used is quite wide: early and late opus numbers, one posthumous song, songs about love and death. Overall, there seems to be a preference for compositions of the late period of Beethoven's life, but as we can see from the list above, this is not exclusive. It is very possible that Kagel chose these works mainly because he liked them, since there seems to be no particular logic behind this selection.

### Techniques of transformation through performance

In some cases, the alteration of the initial material (Beethoven's music) takes place through performance. Some ways in which this happens are the following:

- At several places, different works by Beethoven were recorded simultaneously. This is obvious both because they are registered as one track in Kagel's notes, and because most of the times the players play in the same tempo, although they play different works. For example, at the beginning of Side B, one of the pianists is playing the third movement of the Piano Sonata, op.106, while the violist is playing the fourth movement of the String Quartet, op.131. The fact that both movements have the same key signature (the piano plays in F sharp minor and the viola in A major) and that they are played in the same tempo makes a large part of this "chamber music" sound more or less consonant, so that it becomes confusing for the listener: what is heard is very synchronised and almost tonal, and for a few seconds one might be tempted to think it is actually one work; but on the other hand some of the harmonies sound strange and non-Beethovenian. Overall, this is a very sophisticated approach to collage, as the musicians perform *as if* it is not a collage.
- At 21'47 of Side B (or A) Kagel includes some tuning sounds and rehearsal dialogues, as well as some amateur playing. This comes as quite unexpected, and out of context: the first 45 minutes of the recording do not contain anything like that. It seems that, as in the case of earlier works, like *Sur scène* and *Sonant*, he incorporates fragments of musical life into the artwork itself, breaking the borders between music and the process of its creation.
- At 11'00 – 16'45 of Side A (or B), we can hear a very special performance of the second movement of the Piano Trio, op.70 no.1, widely known as the *Ghost Trio*. In this case Kagel asked his performers "to play their parts independently of each other but at the same time, [...] neither chronologically nor non-chronologically, but in fragments and in whatever way they pleased". He did that in order to show that Beethoven is always modern in essence. It is true that, in this rendition, the *Ghost Trio* sounds very radical and extremely haunting, much more than the original version. It is, as Kagel puts it, "a Ghost Trio raised to a higher power" (Kagel, 1970: VIII).

### Transformation through editing

In other cases, the rendition of Beethoven's music as "contemporary" music happens through the editing of conventional performances:

- Most of the times when different works of Beethoven are heard simultaneously, it is not a case of simultaneous recording, like the ones I describe above, but a case of montage, in the sense that they have been put together through editing. This can be seen clearly in Kagel's editing plan, where there are up to three sound tracks superimposed over each other. The effect of that, apart from giving him the possibility to have, for instance, more than one string quartet playing at each given moment of the recording, is that there is a sense of space in the result: through different settings of volume, reverb etc. in each sound track, the listener gets the impression that the music is coming from very far or very near, as well as from different directions. In this way Kagel avoided a static result in the recording.
- Another technique Kagel uses in order to give Beethoven's music a more radical dimension is altering the sound of the recordings at the editing table. For example, by constantly interrupting the sound, by alternating the left and right channels very fast, or by applying so much echo that the music sounds as if played in a cave, he surely confronts the listener with versions of Beethoven's music that even Beethoven himself could probably not imagine. And still, the music heard is clearly music by Beethoven, no matter how avant-garde it sounds.

## **5. Other realisations of *Ludwig van***

### **A. Realisations by Kagel**

In the Mauricio Kagel Archive in the Paul Sacher Foundation, Basel, there are a number of programmes of concerts of *Ludwig van*, as well as some of the reviews they received. It seems that the first performance of the work was given on 20 March 1970 in Madrid by the Kölner Ensemble für neue Musik, under Kagel himself, but unfortunately there is no other information on that concert in the archive. For what seems to have been the first performance in Germany, in the Städtliche Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf on 3 January of the following year, on the contrary, there is much more information. It was given by an ensemble with the ironically pompous name “Gesamtdeutsches Kammerorchester” (Pan-German Chamber Orchestra), which was the same ensemble which recorded the music for the film version of *Ludwig van* and which, needless to say, was created only for the purposes of *Ludwig van* and never played anything else. The instrumentation was that of a classical chamber orchestra without double bass, and with the addition of a guitar and a piano, played by Kagel himself.

There are three reviews of that concert at the Sacher Foundation, none of which is very enthusiastic about Kagel’s undertaking. Emil Fischer’s “Collage of snippets”, in the *Düsseldorfer Nachrichten*, informs us that the performance consisted both of improvisations and of “planned successions of alienations of Beethoven’s music”, both of long quotations and of small extracts. Fischer believes that this music did not really work outside the context of the film: “What proved effective as film music, as background to the image, rarely obtained a valid form without reference [to the image]”. He claims that the performance sounded like an orchestral rehearsal and that “we can almost be certain that after such experiments anyone would prefer to go back to the ‘original version’” (Fischer, 1971). Heinrich von Lüttwitz is even less sympathetic to *Ludwig van*: as the title of his review in the *Rheinische Post* reveals, he considered the concert as “Just cacophony based on crazy ideas”. He dismisses Kagel’s belief that “we would have to modify Beethoven many times and thoroughly before our ears would actively readjust to him again”, merely by claiming that this would be a waste of time (Lüttwitz, 1971). Finally, the editor of the *Neue Rhein Zeitung* – the author of the article is signed as “Rd.”, which means the editor (Redaktor) of the newspaper, presumably

Jens Feddersen at that time – thought that the concert was more about Kagel than about Beethoven, as the title of his review suggests (“More Kagel than Beethoven”). However, he found the transcriptions of some compositions such as the *Diabelli Variations* or the Piano Sonata, op.111, for this ensemble quite witty, although old-fashioned (*Neue Rhein Zeitung*, 1971).

Kagel also presented *Ludwig van* in Bochum in July 1974, with a student ensemble, while the music room of the film was being exposed. It is possible that Kagel instructed the students to read the music *from* the exhibition, in order to reproduce the initial idea of *Ludwig van*. Other realisations include concerts in Torino in 1975, and in München and Paris in 1977, but there is no other information in the Archive apart from the programmes. Finally, Kagel directed several concerts of *Ludwig van* along with his *1898* during the concert season 1978-1979; with the London Sinfonietta in Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow and Liverpool, as well as at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London; and with the Ensemble Intercontemporain in Paris, Gennevilliers and Amsterdam.

There are no reviews available for the concerts in France and the Netherlands, but the English reviewers were much less critical of *Ludwig van* than the German ones. David Roberts found both the composition and its performance satisfactory:

*Ludwig van*, an irreverent but not iconoclastic collage of Beethoven’s music is a work of elusive identity. The published score, the recording and the film are all different: how the performance related to them was difficult to follow, but the result was enjoyable and lighthearted, the Sinfonietta entering into the spirit of the occasion (Roberts, 1979: 60).

Keith Potter, on the other hand, seems not to have believed that the Sinfonietta entered “into the spirit of the occasion”: in his article “Lutoslawski, Kagel: contrasted attitudes” in *Classical Music Magazine*, he gathers that “some of the orchestra gave Kagel a rough time in rehearsal” (he does not specify his sources, but admits that it is not Kagel himself who told him), claims that *Ludwig van* “is open to much less sober performances than the one given in the QEH” and ironically comments that the work poses a threat to the musicians’ way of life (Potter, 1978: 13). Potter obviously believed that the Sinfonietta players were too serious for a work like *Ludwig van*, and possibly

that they were not prepared to step outside their traditional role as the work seems to require.

Indeed, there seems to have been some discontent with *Ludwig van* within the ensemble. The violinist Joan Atherton, who took part in the 1978 Sinfonietta tour, reported an incident that suggests as much:

I remember vividly Harold Lester (the pianist) storming out of the first rehearsal. He was very offended by the piece and upset because it was a desecration of his favourite piece of music. However, he was at the next rehearsal having decided to take a professional attitude towards it and put aside his feelings (Atherton, personal e-mail correspondence).

It seems hardly surprising that Potter found the Sinfonietta players too “sober” for *Ludwig van*: since at least one member of the ensemble agreed to perform it only out of professionalism, there must have been too much tension between the musicians and Kagel for the collaboration to be fruitful. Unfortunately, Atherton claims that she remembers very little about the piece, and could not answer my questions about the structure of the performance and the way Kagel directed it. What she certainly remembers is that the materials from which the musicians performed on these occasions were not a collage of Beethoven’s notes. Which brings us to the conclusion that Kagel did not use his own score of *Ludwig van* at all in the 1978-1979 tour.

## B. Realisations by others

According to my findings at the Sacher Foundation, performances of *Ludwig van* have also been given by Gerardo Gandini in Buenos Aires (1977), by Karl Heinz Zarius in Düsseldorf (1977), by Martin Derungs in Zürich (1978), by Helmut Imig in Essen (1985), by musicians of the Royal Academy of Music in London (2001) and by Pierre-André Valade in Milano (2007). Furthermore, the French Ensemble Musique Vivante includes *Ludwig van* in its repertory list, but I do not know of any performance of it that they have given. There is a review of the 1978 performance in Zürich, in which Martin Derungs apparently devised his own version of the work. The performance was conducted by Armin Brunner, while Mauricio Kagel himself played the piano part. The review in the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* reads:

The new version of *Ludwig van*, produced by Martin Derungs, received, so to speak, its premiere; this version draws its special quality from the fact that the Beethoven citations are almost always so short that they cannot be identified, and thus the music is held in charming suspense (Author unknown, *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 1978).

What Derungs seems to have done differently from Kagel is that he only used short and unrecognisable fragments of Beethoven's works: this means that, unlike Kagel, he did not want to present an alienated version of familiar extracts, but rather to rearrange the smallest extracts of Beethoven's music into something different.

Another very interesting document to be found at the Sacher Foundation is a letter Kagel wrote to Walter E. Rosenberg at the Goethe Institute in Buenos Aires, including some advice intended for Gandini, presumably the conductor of a scheduled performance of *Ludwig van*, on how to interpret it. Kagel actually describes briefly what he did in his own performances, without trying to impose his way on Gandini:

I usually conduct *Ludwig van* in such a way that, apart from the chosen succession of [pages of] the score, all participants receive photocopies of various piano sonatas (sometimes also violin and cello sonatas) by Beethoven. Of course the same pages for all players. Thus the performance becomes strangely concrete [...] and at the same time unreal. Gandini could maybe try something similar with his musicians. (Kagel, letter to Rosenberg, accessed at the Paul Sacher Foundation)

Although he does not give us much information about how he used to conduct *Ludwig van*, we can understand that, contrary to what he did in his recording, in the concerts he did not plan every single detail. He did use the score of *Ludwig van*, which was not used in the recording at all, and in order to obtain some consistency when other Beethoven works were played, he had all musicians randomly performing fragments of the same sonatas, even the same pages.

### C. Alexandre Tharaud's recording

There is one more commercial recording of *Ludwig van* apart from the one Kagel did: it is part of a CD of Kagel's piano music, recorded by the French pianist Alexandre Tharaud in 2003. The performance is about 23 minutes long and it features piano, in a somehow dominant role, flute, horn, clarinet, cello, a baritone and a choir. It is not in the purposes of this thesis to offer a complete analysis of Tharaud's recording of *Ludwig van*; what I would like to do here is to point out some of its characteristics and the techniques it uses that I find worth mentioning.

- The most interesting aspect of this recording is also the main way in which it is different from Kagel's: Tharaud uses Kagel's score quite a lot throughout his realisation of *Ludwig van*, and it seems that he does not do so in a random way, but, on the contrary, in a very planned fashion. In fact the only other compositions of Beethoven that I could recognise in the recording are the Piano Sonatas, op.2 no.1 and op.109, the first song from the cycle *An die ferne Geliebte*, op.98, and the baritone solo from the Ninth Symphony.
- An important quality of this realisation is the fact that it is very economic, both in terms of instrumentation – there are very few points in the recording where more than two instruments are heard, and arguably none where all the instruments are playing at the same time – and in terms of the material used – for example, in the fourth section, there is only the piano, playing motives only from the second page of the score along with some fragments of Piano Sonata, op.109, for over two minutes.
- In the third section, which, compared to the others, has a thick texture, with the three winds and the piano playing almost incessantly, Tharaud uses a very effective method of keeping the result from becoming chaotic: he introduces a fast and steady ternary metre. Thus, although each instrument is playing fragments of different works, the rhythm of the section is consistent.
- In the first section we hear Tharaud playing Beethoven's First Piano Sonata, while a woman is singing the notes in the manner of solfège. To whoever comes from a country where the solfège syllables (do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti) are used as names of the notes – and France belongs to this category – this combination

sounds like a piano lesson, where the teacher would lead the student by singing the melody while the latter would play the sonata. Thus, in almost a Kagelian way, Tharaud is bringing musical life into musical practice.

- The choir never sings as a choir during the recording. For the most part of their role, the choristers whisper something that sounds like the word “Beethoven” in an unsynchronised way. And in the eighth section, each of them sings a different melody, probably from the score. In order to prevent this section from becoming chaotic, Tharaud has them singing as from far away, presumably by manipulating the balance of the different sound tracks.
- Finally, an interesting technique of alienation of Beethoven that Tharaud uses is to read fragments from Kagel’s score assuming a different key signature (since the original key signature is usually not given in the score), even in places where it is obvious where the motives come from. For example, one of the recurring motives of the whole recording is a fragment of the *Marcia Funebre* from the Piano Sonata, op.26, slightly changed due to this reading: the result sounds absurdly familiar and at the same time not Beethovenian, due to the strange harmony. Another example is the last section of Tharaud’s *Ludwig van*, where he plays motives from p.17 of Kagel’s score in a slow and atmospheric manner, assuming there is no key signature, where in fact there should be, and repeating the same motives over and over again, varying only the rhythm from time to time: the result is a modal and minimalist piano miniature that really sounds “like the music of today”, as Kagel would say.

Tharaud’s realisation of *Ludwig van* is a fascinating rendition of the work, not only because it is very cleverly planned and beautifully made – at least to my ears – but also because it offers an entirely different perspective on the composition itself: Tharaud’s recording seems to have nothing in common with Kagel’s recording, apart from the fact that both are made out of quotations from Beethoven’s music. Tharaud can be argued to be more faithful to Kagel’s text than Kagel himself, since he bases his recording mainly on the score of *Ludwig van*, which Kagel does not use at all in his recording. On the other hand, what the two recordings do have in common is that they both seem to be thoroughly planned rather than based on chance. Overall, Tharaud presents us with totally different ways of processing the same material, and produces a

very different result out of the same composition. In this way he demonstrates what is most fascinating about *Ludwig van*: that it can be realised in innumerable ways, without losing its originality, since each performer contributes their own ideas to the final result.

## **6. Discussion of performance problems**

As shown in this chapter, both through the presentation of the score and through the discussion of its different realisations, *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven* is a unique work in terms of the challenges it poses to performers. It is arguably Kagel's most indeterminate composition, in which the performers are given almost absolute freedom, and yet the material on which they have to exercise this freedom is the music of Beethoven, possibly the most respected composer of all times. As I argued in section III.3.C, Kagel demonstrated the performers' fear of Beethoven's music, as well as the stylised way in which it is usually performed, in the film version of *Ludwig van*; in the score, he asks performers to abolish the stylisation that derives from this fear and treat this music in a completely different way: he invites them to use their creativity and feel free with it. In this section I will discuss my view on how performers should respond to this challenge, on what they should do with a work like *Ludwig van*.

The first way of treating the score of *Ludwig van* that any classically trained musician would think of when confronted with it would probably be the obvious: to take Kagel's score, distribute the pages to the members of the ensemble, read them Kagel's instructions and ask them to play, while at the same time listening to the others and trying to fit in without making the texture too dense. They would probably add some more Beethoven works in order to add some variety to it, since Kagel allows that in his instructions. But the main source for the performance would be the actual score, the random collage of Beethoven's quotations. After all, only one of the instructions talks about using additional material from Beethoven's music, whereas all the others specify how the actual score of *Ludwig van* should be used.

However, my view is that there is no point in such a performance. This random collage of quotations is exactly what happens during the music room sequence of the film. And it does function well in that sequence, but firstly because it is only a few minutes long and secondly because the viewer has the notes in front of him/her while hearing the music, so he/she can follow it. Since the camera impersonates Beethoven, this sequence depicts him reading through pages of his music and at the same time hearing the music in his head; the random succession and overlapping of quotations have a function in the film, and therefore there is a point in them in that context. In the

context of the concert hall, such a performance would sound chaotic and there would be no sense of form, since the performers would not have any control over chance. My opinion is that it would not manage to keep the audience's attention for more than a few minutes, since the texture would remain more or less the same throughout. Kagel himself would probably not approve of such a performance: according to Heile, quoted above, he was probably too much of an aesthete to actually give up authoritarian control (Heile, 2006: 34).

Moreover, as I showed in section IV.3.A, *Ludwig van* does not fall in the category of indeterminate works which aim for the elimination of subjectivity, in which case it would be appropriate to perform it in such a way that would leave as many aspects as possible to chance: in this case, we would have to follow the performance practices of musicians who collaborated with the American experimentalists, such as David Tudor. But in my opinion *Ludwig van* follows what Griffiths would call the "European" tendency in indeterminate music, which does not aim for a chance-generated result, but trusts the subjectivity and creativity of the performer. That is made more obvious, as I showed in section IV.4, from the fact that even Kagel himself did not use the score at all when he made his own recording of *Ludwig van*: on the contrary, he planned it in every detail and avoided leaving anything to chance. Interestingly enough, along with asking performers to play Beethoven in their own way, without necessarily following the composer's instructions, Kagel encourages them to ignore his own instructions by ignoring them himself.

Therefore, it seems as if *Ludwig van* is a game of shifting authority and control in a rather complex manner, eventually aiming at liberating the performer's creative authority as much as possible. Thus, Kagel seems to be striving to pose himself as an "example" of a composer who resists the "temptation" of conventional creative authority through a demonstration of his lack of interest in being idolized or stylised, but, rather, in sharing his creativity with the performer. This links the indeterminate character of the composition *Ludwig van* to the anti-authoritarian claims of the film: Kagel refuses to take certain decisions in composing it, not because he opposes subjectivity in general, but as an anti-authoritarian effort to overturn the composer-performer hierarchy and giving the latter what he is not "supposed" to have, the freedom to re-compose the work, rather than to merely interpret it.

It seems as if the score is actually a piece of visual art in its own right, and that it does not have anything to do with the composition, *Ludwig van*. The only thing the score offers performers is the concept. Through it, Kagel gives the performers the licence to create something of their own, to act as composers without having to pretend they are composers, without officially betraying their traditional role. At the end of the foreword to the score – in which the instructions are to be found – Kagel highlights the fact that the performers should feel free to be creative and not take the instructions too seriously: “I give all this as introduction and invitation: musicians can go from here” (Kagel, 1970: VI). He seems to be saying that his instructions on the use of the score are not so important: what counts is the invitation to other musicians to undertake the task themselves. According to Kagel, the concept of faithfulness to the work (*Werktreue*) has led to performances which are too moderate and well-behaved (*Salonfähig*, which actually means acceptable in the salon, i.e. in high society); on the contrary, he believes that in order to distill the essence of the masters, musicians have to give very subjective performances and to ignore the “commercial-ethical-musical-social pressures” which require them to play their music in a specific conventional way (Kagel, 1970: V-VI).

In *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven*, performers do not actually *have* to do anything. This composition, or, more precisely, this concept, is about what the performer *may* do. It allows performers to play Beethoven’s music outside the rules set by the composer and by the commercial-ethical-musical-social pressures mentioned above. Thus, the traditional composer-performer hierarchy, according to which the performer has to obey the instructions of the composer and the former’s only role is to convey the message of the latter to the audience without altering it in any way, is overthrown. In *Ludwig van*, the performer is encouraged to be creative and unconventional. This is how Beethoven’s music can become alive again and sound like music of the present. With *Ludwig van*, Kagel tries to resist the musealisation of Beethoven: he asks us not to see his works as masterpieces of the past which we must preserve, but to treat them as art that can still be relevant to us.

If there is anything that I consider advisable to performers who intend to undertake the challenge of *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven*, it is to get acquainted with the work of Mauricio Kagel and, most importantly, the film version of *Ludwig van*.

I believe that it is crucial to become familiar with Kagel's sense of irony, his instrumental theatre works, and his heretical views on the musical world and the way it functions. It is useful to know that Kagel was part of the European avant-garde of the 1960s, and that *Ludwig van* is his only composition that leaves so much freedom to the performers. It is also important to acknowledge his sincere respect and love for composers like Beethoven, Bach, Brahms, and the others for whom he wrote works that include elements of parody, and to realise that it is not out of tactless mockery that he composed such works. As for the film, it would serve as a starting point for reflection on the issues that concerned Kagel; it would help potential performers deconstruct Beethoven's myth and try to disconnect the myth from the actual music; it would make them listen to Beethoven's music as if they knew nothing about him, and try to get to the "real" Beethoven, however impossible that might sound.

However, although it is important for a performer to be familiar with Kagel's work before they create their own version of *Ludwig van*, it is even more crucial to realise that this work is not about Beethoven as seen by Kagel; it is about Beethoven through the eyes of the performer, each performer who dares to use their individual creativity with Beethoven's music as the initial material. For this reason, *Ludwig van* should not be played in a "historically informed" way: it is a concept rather than a finished work and for this reason it changes according to the people who perform it and the time in which it is performed. In much the same way as he proposed that Beethoven's music should be played as music of today – which happened to be the early 1970s for him but it could have been any other time –, Kagel seems to be proposing that we should play *Ludwig van* as if it was composed today. Playing *Ludwig van* as a period piece would contradict its actual concept: *Ludwig van* was conceived as a reaction to the idea of period performance, and therefore it would make no sense to apply the principles of period performance to it. On the contrary, the concept of *Ludwig van* should be interpreted as a concept of today, and it actually is still very relevant today: Beethoven's music is even more present in our lives owing to the new technologies, the easy access to millions of scores and recordings through the internet, and we hear it even involuntarily, in television advertisements or even mobile phone ringtones; the myth around his personality is also alive and well, with several films on his life having been produced in the last few decades; finally, with the Arab spring and all the

demonstrations by students and workers in the last few years in Europe and the USA, it seems that our time has a lot in common with the time when *Ludwig van* was conceived.

For all these reasons, it is important to realise that *Ludwig van* is not a work that we should interpret with what Kagel called “Werktreue”, trying to be as faithful as we can to its composer and its time. It is against the work’s concept to try to play *Ludwig van* as Kagel would have done it: firstly, because this has already been done and there is no point in doing it again; secondly, because we cannot have an idea of how Kagel would do it, were he to do it now, under today’s circumstances and with today’s technology; and thirdly, because Kagel is absent from *Ludwig van*: he is not the author. *Ludwig van* is a composition whose authorship belongs to Beethoven and to the performer who undertakes it; it is a work that is recomposed each time it is performed.

## Chapter V

### **Realising *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven***

In this section I will present and discuss my own attempts at realising *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven* in the course of my research. The first section will be about my first realisation of the score in May 2009, as part of my upgrade assessment. I will describe the preparation procedure and provide a detailed account of the structure I decided to give to my realisation, based on Beethoven's *Elf Neue Bagatellen*. After that I will review the performance of this realisation and draw some conclusions based on its outcome. In the second section I will talk about my second and final realisation of *Ludwig van*, which took place in June 2011, as part of my final recital. Once again, I will describe the structure, giving some examples of the scores I made for its performance, and then I will evaluate the performance, leaving my final conclusions for the next chapter.

## 1. May 2009 realisation

### **A. Preparation**

As I argued in the previous chapter, the score for *Ludwig van* is unique from many aspects:

- The instrumentation is absolutely free, and, according to Kagel's instruction, "old, exotic and electric instruments as well as any other sound sources of a purely experimental nature may be used" (Kagel, 1970: VIII).
- The duration of performance is ad libitum.
- Pages can be played in random order, repeated or omitted at the performers' discretion, and any of each page's four edges may be considered the bottom edge.
- Short fragments of works by Beethoven that are not in the score can be used, either in the original instrumentation or not.
- It could be argued that all the instructions Kagel writes in the score could be replaced by the following rule: the performers can do anything they want, as long as every single note they play is by Beethoven. In this way, *Ludwig van* poses a great challenge to the musicians who want to perform it. Classically trained musicians consider their work as reading and interpreting a musical text that someone else has composed. This is even more the case for performers of serialist or avant-garde scores, which tend to minimise the degree of freedom left to the performer: rhythmic and dynamic markings are so precise that they do not allow for much variety of interpretation, and faithfulness to the text is considered a major advantage for a performer of our time. Therefore, giving such performers the freedom – and, to some extent, the instruction – to be creative and to rearrange Beethoven's music in any way they want, is completely outside their training.

My initial idea about the first version of *Ludwig van* was to bring together musicians whom I consider creative and keen to explore a different way of music making, one that is actually beyond the traditional sense of "performing" music. Therefore I decided to choose musicians with whom I had already worked in the past,

and whom I found to be excellent team workers. It was important for me that the musicians would not behave like traditional performers, waiting to be given instructions in order to play; I needed people who would have ideas and take initiatives. And of course I needed people who would not regard *Ludwig van* as only *my* project, but who would be personally interested in it. Since *Ludwig van* is Kagel's composition which, according to him, "brings about the abolition of intellectual authorship" (Kagel, 1970: VIII), and therefore there is no composer-author of it, it is the performers who determine its aesthetic result much more than in any other composition. Based on these thoughts, I chose a team of nine performers, including myself. The ensemble featured a singer, two violins, two cellos, a clarinet, a melodica, and two pianos.

In the first rehearsals I decided to try performing the score without giving the musicians any other instruction than the ones Kagel gives, in order to see how this would function. Moreover, we only used Kagel's score, without any other music by Beethoven, and we did not use any programme or structure for that. After doing this a number of times, and always discussing the results with the ensemble, we reached the conclusion that this is not effective at a performance level. The juxtaposition of motives from different works by Beethoven did sound fascinating, and the timbres in the ensemble did make a powerful combination, but there was no sense of development: although we managed to interact very well with each other and to create different atmospheres and moods, each of the performances was overall quite static. I had the impression that such a performance could be very effective, but only for a short time.

In order to deal with this problem, I started to organise the sessions in different ways, so that the performance would acquire a structure: I asked the performers to change specific variants, such as the tempo, the articulation, the pitch, the dynamics, the density of texture, according to specific plans. Thus, the performance would not be static and it would have a sense of direction and development. We experimented with many different ways of structuring the performance, and this improved the result drastically: we came up with many possibilities for different and radical moods and structures, whereas before that the result was homogenous and somewhat plain. With these experiments, I reached the conclusion that I had to control the aesthetic result to a greater extent, and that I myself had to decide the structure I wanted the performance to have. I also decided not to base my realisation only on Kagel's score, but mainly on

quotations from Beethoven's music that were not in it. The main reason for this decision was that I thought that a structured and carefully considered juxtaposition of motives from Beethoven's music would be much more effective than a random succession of quotations. And I did not have any reason to believe that this would be against Kagel's intentions, as I knew that in his recording of *Ludwig van* he did not make use of the score either, but he rather planned everything in detail.

Therefore, my decision not to use Kagel's instructions for the realisation of *Ludwig van* was, ironically, closer to Kagel's spirit and his actual vision of the work. And, as Kagel claimed to have based the structure of his version on the structure of a Beethoven work – the *Diabelli Variations*, op.120 – I decided to do the same, and the work I chose for this is his previous opus number, the *Elf Neue Bagatellen*, op.119. The reason I chose this work, apart from my personal attachment to it, was that it consists of eleven short pieces of very diverse character, and that it exhibits many of the features of Beethoven's style, from the light and lively character of his early works, to the sublime qualities of his later period. I thought that taking such a work as a basis would help me embrace many different aspects of Beethoven's music in my project.

I could not claim that the way I worked on the structure was analytical or systematic. I rather decided to employ the Bagatelles in a more creative way: in some cases what I kept from them was only their character, in other only a harmonic progression, a technical aspect, or even just a motive. I used the Bagatelles mostly as a source of inspiration, in order to create a sense of unity in the whole performance instead of making it sound like a potpourri based on Beethoven's music. The way in which each of the eleven sections of my realisation was derived from each of Beethoven's Bagatelles, the material used for each of them and the basic ideas behind them will be described below. I will also include some examples of the scores I made for some of them, in order to illustrate the different degrees of control I applied to the different sections.

## B. Structure

i.

For the first section, my idea was to start from Kagel's score and the random succession of quotations it involved. Thus, the only thing that I kept from the first Bagatelle was the opening motive, which I used as an opening motive for *Ludwig van*. For the rest of the first section, all the musicians, including me, were playing from random pages of Kagel's score. I asked the musicians to sit among the audience, so that the performance would start as a solo piano recital that would be interrupted by musical motives from throughout the room, which would be sparse in the beginning and would build up into chaos. For this building-up, I asked the musicians to stick to one motive near the end of the section, so that the result would be a minimal sound that would gradually augment. This chaos was interrupted by a very ironic scene, in which an outraged member of the audience – the singer of the ensemble, who had not sung anything up to that time – stood up and sang the baritone solo which introduces the Ode to Joy in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: "Oh friends, not these tones! Rather, let us sing more pleasantly and joyfully!" His interruption is further interrupted when his phone starts ringing, and the ringtone is nothing but the opening of *Für Elise*, to which he rushes out of the room.

ii.

The "more pleasant and joyful tones" appear, indeed, in the second section, which I scored for four hands on one piano with the help of my piano duo partner Andriana Minou. The Bagatelle on which it is based is a very simple and joyous piece in the bright key of C major, in which a constant and rather plain chord progression in the middle register accompanies a number of short motives in a higher or lower register. From it, I only kept the accompanying line, and I replaced all the insignificant motives of the other lines with very well-known motives from Beethoven's masterpieces, mainly the most important piano sonatas and the Ninth Symphony. I arranged these in such a way that they still sounded consonant with the accompanying line, and therefore the harmonic language of this section was actually very close to Beethoven's own. The form of this section, on the contrary, was far from being Beethovenian, with its vast thematic material in a very short time. The result was a piece that sounded a lot like Beethoven, but whose structure could not have been further from Beethoven's style, with so many unconnected motives scattered in only two pages of music.

In example 3 you can see the second page of the score I generated for this section: the printed notes are from Beethoven's Bagatelle, the phrases in brackets are the ones that we omitted and the handwritten notes are the ones we added to the Bagatelle. All the quotations are used in such a way that they sound right in terms of harmony. The following quotations can be seen in Example 3, in the order they appear: the opening of the Piano Sonata, op.10 no.2, the opening of the Piano Sonata, op.2 no.3, the opening of the *Scherzo* from the Ninth Symphony, the main theme of the *Coriolan* Overture, the opening of the *Marcia funebre* from the Piano Sonata, op.26, the theme of the *Rondo* of the Piano Sonata, op.13, a theme from the *Scherzo* of the Fifth Symphony, the Theme of the *Scherzo* from the Ninth Symphony, and, finally, the Ode to Joy. It is obvious from this score that I left nothing to chance in this section: there is as much indeterminacy in this score as in any traditionally notated score; in other words, only the tempo and the interpretation are left to the performers, whereas the notes and the rhythm are determined by me.

Handwritten musical score for piano, measures 16-28. The score is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The music features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes. Handwritten annotations include "dim.", "over pedal", "pedal...", and "pedal". The score is numbered 16, 20, 24, and 28. The bottom of the page includes the text "www.schott-music.com · SKK 46".

Example 3. May 2009 realisation, section ii, p.2

iii.

From the third Bagatelle I decided to use two of its aspects: the first one is the arpeggio as a primary musical feature instead of an accompaniment, as this Bagatelle is one of many Beethoven works whose themes are based on an arpeggio; the second is the harmonic succession dominant-tonic, since the entire piece is built on this succession. Therefore I made a collage of arpeggios from different piano pieces which were forming the circle of fifths (C, F, B flat, E flat etc.). Thus, each arpeggio was at the same time a tonic chord and a dominant for the next arpeggio. And all the arpeggios used were from very characteristic points of Beethoven's music: their role in the end result is not merely functional, for instance to signify the harmony or to link two episodes together; on the contrary, they were taken from what I consider some of the most beautiful moments of Beethoven's music. As I always found it striking how Beethoven made sublime music out of basic musical material, I decided to highlight it by bringing some of these moments together in this section.

iv.

The circle of fifths of the third section finishes with the opening F-major arpeggio of Beethoven's Sonata for violin and piano, op.24 (*Frühlingssonate*), and therefore the arpeggio becomes again what it traditionally is, an accompaniment figure. From the fourth Bagatelle, the only thing I decided to keep was the light-hearted and carefree character, as well as the simplicity of its melody. I chose the *Frühlingssonate* because it is a very characteristic example of these elements in Beethoven's work. I asked one of the violinists to play the theme in a very exaggeratedly personal way, in order to satirise the fact that many performers cannot conceive the simplicity of such parts of Beethoven's music and tend to over-romanticise them, in an effort to show that they have captured the essence of the music. The second half of this section was satirising another kind of abuse of Beethoven's music: I asked all the musicians apart from the pianists and the singer to play the same melody unisono and loud, alluding to the amateurish sound of some school orchestras, where although none of the players is familiar with the music they play, they all tend to be very enthusiastic about it.

v.

In contrast to the fourth Bagatelle, the fifth one is a very serious *Risoluto* in the dramatic key of C minor. This key, in which so many of Beethoven's "passionate" works are

written, is often considered to be the tonality in which he expressed his heroic and tragic nature. In order to highlight the recurrence of this tonality in most of Beethoven's tragic works, I wrote a collage in which motives from a number of these works – the Fifth Symphony, the Piano Sonatas, op.10 no.1, op.13 (*Pathétique*) and op.111, the Third Piano Concerto – were sounding simultaneously. I organised this in three pieces: in the first one, the opening motives of all pieces were heard all together, and the harmony implied was obviously the tonic chord; in the second, the same motives were sounding, this time implying the dominant chord, something that, interestingly enough, occurs in all the pieces; in the third one I brought together all the cadences of the pieces I mentioned. Thus I created a compressed version of a number of heroic works, which, given the circumstances, could not but sound comical, or indeed ridiculous, since it comprised so many outbreaks of the composer's heroic nature in some thirty seconds of music, isolated and decontextualised.

Example 4 shows the first page of the score I made for section v. From top to bottom, the clarinet is playing the opening of the Piano Sonata, op.10 no.1, the pianos are playing the openings of the Piano Sonatas, op.13 and op.111, and the cellos are playing the first motives of the Fifth Symphony and the Third Piano Concerto. As in the previous example, all the notes are predetermined, but here the rhythm is not strict: each instrument plays its motive in their own time, depending on the work from which the motive is taken.

LV 5 I

The musical score is handwritten and consists of five systems of staves. The first system features a Cello (ce.) staff in 3/4 time and two Piano (Pn. I and Pn. II) staves in 7/8 time. The second system continues the Piano parts. The third system includes two Cello (ce. I and ce. II) staves in 7/8 time. The fourth system shows empty staves. The fifth system includes two Piano (Pn. I and Pn. II) staves, with a trill (tr) and a crescendo (cresc.) marking.

Example 4. May 2009 realisation, section v, p.1

vi.

The aspect of the sixth Bagatelle on which I decided to elaborate was its cheerful and playful character. What I wanted to draw attention to here was an aspect of the Beethovenian myth. Beethoven is so widely regarded as a tragic figure that even his light-hearted compositions are very often seen as containing an underlying element of tragedy. In other words, we can never view Beethoven's works for what they really are: we always interpret them taking into account the image we have created for their composer. I decided to illustrate this by creating a chaotic soundscape of different cheerful tunes, under which a tragic image – the *Allegretto* from the Seventh Symphony – would lurk. I structured this section in such a way that the *Allegretto*, played by the second pianist who was off stage, would be hardly heard in the beginning, like an underlying threat, and it would be left alone and revealed towards the end.

For this section, as I wanted it to sound chaotic, I did not want to produce a conventional score. On the other hand, although I did not want to have control over what and when the musicians would play, I wanted to control the character of the motives they were going to play. Therefore I decided not to use Kagel's score, but to make collages of works that were in the character I had in mind for each of the instruments. I asked the musicians to play any part of any motive in the collage I gave them, and in any order they liked. Example 5 shows the compilation of tunes I made for the clarinet in this section, all chosen from piano sonatas and chamber works that exhibit the playful character I intended for this section.

6. Clarinet

Rondo.  
Allegro molto.

Musical notation for the first system of the Rondo section. It consists of two staves. The first staff contains a melody in G major with dynamics *p* and *sf*, and fingerings 7, 3, 2, 4, 3, 1. The second staff continues the melody with a trill (*tr*) and dynamic *p*.

Musical notation for the second system of the Rondo section. It includes piano accompaniment in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand. Dynamics are *p* and *m*. Fingerings include 3, 5, 4, 2, 1, 3, 14, 5, 4, 5, 5, 4.

Musical notation for the third system of the Rondo section, featuring a Scherzo section. Dynamics include *m*. Fingerings include 2, 3, 5, 2, 2, 3, 2, 1, 4, 1, 5.

Musical notation for the fourth system of the Rondo section, featuring a melodic line with dynamics *p*. Fingerings include 5, 2, 1, 3, 2, 5, 5, 3, 1, 3, 2, 5, 5.

Musical notation for the fifth system of the Rondo section, starting at measure 24. Dynamics include *m*. Fingerings include 3, 5, 2, 1, 3, 2, 5, 5, 3, 2, 1, 5, 2, 4, 3, 2, 2, 1, 3, 2, 5, 5, 3, 1, 3, 1, 3, 2, 5, 5.

Musical notation for the sixth system of the Rondo section, featuring piano accompaniment with dynamics *m*. Fingerings include 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 4, 1, 5, 4, 1, 3, 2, 5, 5, 4, 5, 5.

Musical notation for the seventh system of the Rondo section, featuring a melodic line with dynamics *m*. Fingerings include 4, 1, 4, 5, 5.

Musical notation for the eighth system of the Rondo section, featuring a melodic line with dynamics *m*. Fingerings include 1, 5, 3, 2, 5, 3, 2, 1.

Example 5. May 2009 realisation, section vi, clarinet part

vii.

The next section was also based on an aspect of the Beethoven myth. The fact that the seventh Bagatelle is virtually full of trills brought to my mind one theory about his late piano works, which claims that by incorporating so many trills in them, he was trying to portray the constant buzzing he was hearing at the late stages of his deafness. I recall having been told this as a child, but I have not managed to find it in any of Beethoven's biographies or the analyses of his late works. All the same, this did not discourage me from alluding to it in my realisation of *Ludwig van*, since it seems to be another popular myth about Beethoven and how his suffering was portrayed in his music, and therefore is relevant to a work about Beethoven's reception. For this section I orchestrated the *Adagio Cantabile* from the Piano Sonata, op.13 (*Pathétique*) for clarinet and strings and had the pianists interrupt the flow of this beautiful melody with disturbing simultaneous trills.

viii.

The eighth Bagatelle's texture is polyphonic with many suspended notes. In each beat of the bar, only one or two voices change their note, and therefore the piece moves gradually and subtly from one harmony to another. I decided to imitate this technique, but I replaced classical harmonic language with random pitches. I asked the performers to use Kagel's score – each of them a separate page – and play very long pianissimo notes from it, which they had to hold for several seconds before they moved to the next note. The result did not allude to Beethoven's music in any way, although all the notes were taken from his works. On the contrary, it sounded more like a slowly changing cluster, thus illustrating Kagel's claim that *Ludwig van* was Beethoven's contribution to contemporary music (Kagel, 1970: VIII). Kagel's score leaves such freedom to the performer that there can be realisations of it which could sound like original works, in almost any musical style, depending on how short fragments of Beethoven's compositions are used.

ix.

The ninth Bagatelle, in A minor, could be argued to foresee the school of Romantic piano music. In my opinion it is actually reminiscent of Chopin's waltzes. This Romantic character was all I kept for the ninth section of *Ludwig van*. I decided to dedicate this section to a typically Romantic subject, unfortunate love. For this, I wrote

out a Lied, in which the accompaniment was taken from Beethoven's *Wonne der Wehmut* (*The joy of melancholy*), op.83 no.1, whereas the singer's part was a collage of various motives from Beethoven's songs that bear the words Liebe (love) and – in the second part – Tränen (tears). Thus this section alluded to *Untitled (love)* by Jim Hodges, a visual collage that comprises fragments of vocal scores with the word *love*. The result was a caricature, from the aspect of “composition” as well as of performance: the “composition” itself parodied the obsession with the subject of love found in 19<sup>th</sup>-century poetry and Lieder, whereas the performance was so exaggeratedly emotional that it parodied the attitude some singers have of taking themselves too seriously and of over-emotionalising texts that are already intense and sentimental.

x.

The tenth Bagatelle is probably Beethoven's shortest piece of music, lasting only about fifteen seconds, and with a staccato and elusive character. It was precisely this character that I wanted to capture for the tenth section of *Ludwig van*. I created an equally short section in which the strings would play fast pizzicato notes, which would act as the disintegration of the pseudo-dramatic mood of the previous section.

xi.

It was the character, once again, on which I chose to elaborate in the last Bagatelle. This piece exhibits the sublime, even religious character of some of Beethoven's last works, and ends with a simple and divine chorale. For the last section of *Ludwig van*, I asked each performer to find a piece of Beethoven's music that, for them, had a similar character, a piece that they personally regarded as sublime. I wanted all the performers to participate in this section at the same time, but without creating the chaos of the first section. In a way, I saw the last section as the counter-image of the first: in both of them, all the performers were playing simultaneously and with a certain degree of indeterminacy as to what would coincide with what; but whereas the first was chaotic, the last one had to be peaceful and serene. Thus, I asked the musicians to perform this as if it was a dialogue: each of us had to listen very attentively and play short fragments of our own melody only when we each judged it appropriate. In this way, I managed to achieve the result I intended, without posing too many rules for the performers, which made the section more improvisatory and natural. As a coda, I chose to keep the chorale of the last four bars of the Bagatelle, but instead of playing it, we sang it. This

intensified the religious character of this section and ended the performance in a peaceful and sincere homage to Beethoven.

### C. Performance evaluation

The performance of the first realisation of *Ludwig van* was quite successful, given the small number of rehearsals I managed to have with the whole ensemble and that it was the first time that I was experimenting with this material. The ensemble was well coordinated, the timing was according to my plan, the “chance” sections worked quite well and the audience was very enthusiastic. Most of the humorous and ironic moments came across to the audience, and seemed to be appreciated by them. Furthermore, the musicians seemed to enjoy being experimental with Beethoven’s music, which I believe was very important to the performance’s success.

There were, of course some things that could have been better, either from the perspective of performance or from that of “composition”:

- The chorale in the last section was not very well in tune or very synchronised. As it was much better in the rehearsals, I believe that it was because our voices were not warmed-up after playing instruments for twenty minutes. Therefore I think that it was not a particularly good idea to have the ensemble sing a five-part choral, at least not at the end of the performance.
- It occurred to me that sometimes it was not very clear to the whole audience whether some of the performances were purposefully exaggerated and over-sentimental or not. Although ambiguity is one of the main characteristics of Kagel’s music, I was not content thinking that the audience might have not realised that some of the performances they heard were kitsch and grotesque because they were actually planned to be this way.
- Finally, as my main concern was for the “chance” sections not to be chaotic, I spent most of the rehearsal time on them, feeling quite secure about the written-out sections. This resulted in some of the latter being slightly under-rehearsed and the coordination of them not being as accurate as it could have been.

Another issue that occurred to me when I watched the video recording of this realisation was the staging of the work. I conceived this realisation primarily as a purely musical work, rather than a work of musical theatre. Therefore, there was not much “theatrical” action, with the exception of two sections. One of them was the first one, in

which all the instrumentalists apart from me were sitting among the audience and the singer who interrupted them was supposed to be an audience member. The theatrical aspect of this section was that his mobile phone started ringing and he rushed out of the room embarrassed. The other was the fourth section, in which the violinist who was playing the theme of the *Frühlingssonate* was reading the music from sheets that were hanging on the other performers' backs, as they were advancing towards the stage. Therefore, the theatrical aspects I used, and especially the latter, were mainly functional, and they mainly served the music. I used them as a way of justifying the fact that the musicians were among the audience in the beginning and the fact that they had to come on stage at some point during the performance.

In my opinion, this did not have a very good effect on the whole performance, especially since both theatrical episodes happened quite early in the course of it. After the fourth section and until the end, all the musicians were on stage, performing pure music, something that made the performance lack in symmetry. Introducing two theatrical actions near the beginning of the piece probably made the audience expect the whole realisation to be more theatrical and made the rest of the performance feel quite static. I believe that the theatrical aspect in a work like *Ludwig van* could be much more present, not only because of Kagel's nature and his association with musical theatre, but also because it would make it more possible to introduce Kagel's thoughts on Beethoven's reception, as expressed in the film. In other words, incorporating some theatrical action would make the connection between the film and the musical composition clearer to the audience.

Of course, the incorporation of more theatrical action in an otherwise musical performance raises the issue of direction, something which, as a musical performer, I was not entirely prepared to face. The formalities of conventional musical performance are quite inflexible, and musicians and audiences alike, in my opinion, tend to ignore its visual aspect, and therefore they seldom reflect on the staging of a concert. However, when the performers have to step out of their traditional roles and to act out a task other than playing music, as in Kagel's instrumental theatre, the performance stops being exclusively musical and its visual aspect becomes quite important. As I found out when watching the video recording of my realisation, the incorporation of theatrical elements into musical performance, however few they may be, requires much more reflection on

the staging of the performance. A performance of instrumental theatre does not only need to be rehearsed and conducted: it also needs to be directed, in the theatrical sense of the word.

## D. Conclusions

Overall, I was very content with this realisation of *Ludwig van*. I managed to find solutions to the various problems the score poses quite early in the preparation procedure, and worked out a highly satisfactory version in only five rehearsals. I believe that the structure I decided to use was in accordance with Kagel's spirit in many ways. First of all, it was faithful to his instructions, but at the same time it was a highly creative project on my part. Secondly, it gave some freedom to all the performers who took part in it, but it was not as chaotic and undisciplined as a mere reading of Kagel's score would have been. Thirdly, it dealt with some of the issues that Kagel deals with in his film *Ludwig van*, such as commercialisation of Beethoven's music (the ringtone in section i), performers' abuse of Beethoven (grotesque performances in sections iv and ix), and the Beethoven cult (his tragic fate and deafness in sections v, vi and vii). Finally, despite the humour and irony that were obvious in most sections of my realisation, I strongly believe that there was an overall sense of homage to the great composer.

Another element of this realisation which I believe was in accordance with Kagel's intentions is its postmodern nature. Of course I am not talking about the postmodern elements of the work itself, which were naturally already there, and which I have discussed in section IV.2. I am talking about the way in which I employed the material and combined the different quotations by Beethoven. I believe that the performance was postmodern, in the sense Charles Jencks gives to the word: he defines postmodernism as *double-coding*, meaning that postmodern art (in his case, architecture) combines modernist techniques with other material in order to communicate both with a concerned minority, and with the wider public (Jencks, 1996:29). In other words, postmodern art contains both the elitist qualities of modernist art and the more accessible qualities of popular art.

I believe that everyone in the audience of this realisation could follow the performance, and that there were different levels of understanding the references. For example, I did not expect everyone in the room to realise the connections between the Bagatelles and their distorted version in *Ludwig van*, and it was not my intention to make these connections apparent to everyone. Moreover, some members of the

audience might have noticed the juxtaposition of Beethoven's C minor works in the fifth section – but surely some did not. On the other hand, anyone could tell that the connotation of a mobile ringing the tune of *Für Elise* has to do with the commercialisation of Beethoven and his incorporation into mainstream popular culture. And anyone could – and did – find funny and ironic the over-romanticised and dramatised performances of some of his works.

Finally, it is very important to highlight the fact that I learnt a lot through the preparation and performance of this realisation. First of all, I found out how my ideas could be realised with an ensemble, and which of them actually sounded as I imagined them and intended them to sound, and which did not. Secondly, I had the experience of confronting a number of performers with different levels of freedom and seeing how they react to them. Thirdly, I experimented with rehearsal time and drew conclusions on how long the preparation for a performance like this needs to be. Fourthly, I made an attempt in staging and directing a musical performance that contains theatrical elements, a skill on which I elaborated more in my next realisation. Overall, through this first effort in realising *Ludwig van*, I gained some experience towards my second and final realisation of this work, both by experimenting and having new ideas on how it can work, and by knowing which things should be avoided.

## **2. June 2011 realisation**

### **A. General aims**

My second and final realisation of *Ludwig van* took place in June 2011 at the Great Hall, Goldsmiths College, as part of my final PhD recital. As with the earlier realisation, I still considered it a work that should, to a certain extent, be shaped through the rehearsals, by all those involved in it. That said, thanks to the experience I had gained through my first realisation, I was better prepared for what might or might not work, and therefore I had a clearer view of what I wanted to achieve through it, as well as of the general structure I intended this realisation to have. Thus, contrary to my first realisation, for which I started the rehearsal procedure with very little idea of the outcome, in this one I had taken most decisions before I started rehearsing with the ensemble. In this section I will present my main aims for the second realisation of *Ludwig van*.

First of all, I intended to apply different degrees of control to the final product: from an absolutely traditional score, where everything is written out, to more indeterminate approaches, but excluding an absolutely indeterminate reading of Kagel's score. I decided against the latter, firstly because I did use it in my first realisation but was not entirely content with the result, and secondly because Kagel himself did not employ this approach at all in his realisations, as I argue in sections IV.4.C and IV.5.A. Thus, I decided to make use of a variety of ways of organising the material in this collage, described below; the Latin numbers in brackets are the sections in which I used each of these ways in my realisation, as described in section V.2.B:

- Use of Kagel's score, but not in a totally random way. One approach would be actually to compose a collage based on the notes that happen to be on the pictures in the score, as Alexandre Tharaud did for most of his recording. Another way would be to "improvise" on specific motives from the score, which would be chosen beforehand, in order to achieve a more consistent result (section vii).

- Collages of motives from only one work, as Kagel did with the *Ghost Trio* in his recording, where he asked each of the musicians to play his own part, but in his own time, creating a fascinating juxtaposition of motives while retaining and even augmenting, as Kagel argues (Kagel, 1970: VIII), the character of the work (section x).
- Pre-composed collage of specific features of Beethoven's music, in such a way as to produce a piece that might not have anything to do with Beethoven's style (sections iv, v, ix)
- Performance of an original work by Beethoven, without changing any of the notes, but played in a very personal way, which could be against the rules of faithful rendition of the work, and therefore would be unacceptable if presented in a conventional recital of Beethoven's music. This is done by Kagel mostly in the film rather than in the recording of *Ludwig van*; for instance in chapter 19, in which a caricature of Elly Ney plays a *Waldstein* Sonata full of unjustified accents and tempo changes (sections iii, viii).
- Deliberate use of iconic moments, even clichés, which are commonly associated with specific ideas concerning Beethoven and his music, such as the opening motive of the Fifth Symphony as a representation of "Fate knocking at the door" (sections ii, v, vi, ix).

I did not aim for this variety of ways of manipulating Beethoven's music because I believed that this is the way *Ludwig van* should always be realised. On the contrary, I think that even using only one of these ways would produce a perfectly valid performance of the work. That said, as this was the final product of my research on *Ludwig van*, I was interested in exploring various different ways in which its material can be organised. Apart from that, as I was aiming for a performance of twenty to thirty minutes, I felt that employing several different approaches to *Ludwig van* was a good way to keep this realisation from being monotonous.

Another resolution for my final realisation of *Ludwig van* was to include theatrical elements in the performance, as I had done in my first realisation. Once again, I do not think this is a fundamental requirement of the score, but I believe that it is in accordance with Kagel's spirit and his work, as he was primarily associated with

instrumental theatre, particularly in his earlier years. I attempted to incorporate these elements into the music more effectively than I had managed the first time, as I felt that they had not been sufficiently linked to the music then, resulting in them seeming superfluous. The main way in which I incorporated dramatic elements into this second performance was by employing a collage of Beethoven's letters alongside that of his music. I regard this as perfectly valid in a performance of *Ludwig van*, as I still only used material whose author is Beethoven, and my role was limited to rearranging this material, exactly as with the musical material. This can also be considered a typically Kagelian technique, since this is exactly what he himself did with Brahms' letters in *Variationen ohne Fuge*, with Debussy's interviews in *Interview avec D.*, and elsewhere. As with the musical collage, in the textual collage I employed different approaches: using short or long fragments, from words to paragraphs, keeping the meaning of the text unaltered or changing it deliberately in order to suit my own purposes.

Another aim I had for my final performance of *Ludwig van* was to include some allusions to the film, both by including an actual film, and by referring to some of its themes. Once again, I do not regard this as necessary in every performance of the score, since I see the film as a separate work and since the only actual connection between the film and the score, apart from the name, is that the latter is derived from one sequence of the former. Nevertheless, having studied the film in depth, I believe that the issues it addresses concerning Beethoven's reception are still relevant today. Furthermore, I believe that addressing the same issues through a performance of *Ludwig van* is a very interesting and challenging experiment: after all, it is a common practice for Kagel to comment on aspects of musical life *through* music itself, as he does with *Sonant* and *Sur scène*.

As far as choosing the musicians of the ensemble is concerned, I applied the same principles as in my first realisation: I chose people with whom I had worked in the past and whom I considered as very talented, willing to experiment, with original ideas and a team spirit; furthermore, I had collaborated with most of them in realising musical works with theatrical elements in the past, and I knew that apart from being skilled musicians, they were good performers in a broader sense. Knowing some of Kagel's troublesome experiences in realising *Ludwig van* with conservative performers, however good musicians they might have been (as for example the incident with the

pianist from London Sinfonietta mentioned in section IV.5.A), I was convinced that it was important to have the ensemble's support and enthusiasm in trying to perform Beethoven's music as "music of today", as Kagel himself would put it. The ensemble consisted of two pianists, two violinists and singers, a clarinetist and a cellist.

## B. Structure - staging

As I wrote earlier in this chapter, I based the structure of my first realisation on a work by Beethoven, *Elf Neue Bagatellen*, op.119, following the example of Kagel himself, who, in his interview with Karl Faust, said that the structure of his recording of *Ludwig van* was based on the *Diabelli Variations*, op.120. This helped me maintain a sense of unity and coherence in the realisation, but also had its downside: I had several ideas that could not fit in this structure, and therefore I had to abandon them in favour of it. In the time between the first and the second realisation, after my visit to the Paul Sacher Foundation and my research on the recording, I drew the conclusion that the connection to the *Diabelli Variations*, if there is any connection, had to be quite loose, as I argue in section IV.4. Therefore, I decided not to use any single Beethoven work as a model for the structure of my final realisation; thus I would not have to compromise my ideas to a set musical form.

As an alternative, I decided to build this realisation around a text that I constructed with a selection from Beethoven's letters. In this way, the structure would be based on the dramaturgical elements of the performance, rather than on a specific musical composition, bringing the realisation closer to Kagel's instrumental theatre. This is not to suggest that I intended the text to be the dominant element of the performance: *Ludwig van* is essentially a musical work, and even the text used would be directly related to the music. The musical material would still be the basis of the performance, but it would be organised according to the text, which would hold the whole performance together and make it easier to follow. Based on that thought I determined the structure of the whole performance: it consisted of ten sections, where the odd-numbered sections consisted of pure music and the even-numbered ones featured text along with the music. I organised the quotations from Beethoven's letters into five categories, according to their subject, each of which categories were used in each of the even-numbered sections.

As for the staging of the performance, I took two decisions that helped give a visual element to the realisation and avoid a conventional, concert-like performance. The first one was to cover all chairs and music stands on stage with pages of Beethoven's scores. In this way, apart from providing a reference to the film *Ludwig*

*van* and to the connection between the film and the score, I aimed to transform the stage into a space of some aesthetic interest: not merely the place where musicians stand to play their instruments, but an intriguing sight that is already part of the performance; after all, many of Kagel's "musical" works, are not only about sound, but also about image.

The second decision I took had to do with the fact that each of the sections of my realisation would have a slightly different instrumentation, so there were many moments where the instrumentalists would have to remain silent. I felt that it would not be dramatically convincing if the people who were not playing in one section simply put down their instruments and waited for their turn to play, like orchestral players: I thought that it would spoil the visual element of the performance if, for example, in a piano solo section, all the other instrumentalists were on stage waiting patiently for me to finish in order to play their parts. On the other hand, I did not want them to leave the stage in between sections, as most of the sections were relatively short and moving on and off stage all the time would make the performance feel segmented. Thus, I decided to have all performers wear Beethoven masks and stay motionless whenever they were not playing, and reappear with their own personalities whenever they had to play. The musicians themselves became theatrical objects during the sections in which they were not playing, and in this way the incorporation of the theatrical element did not look forced or pretentious, but became one more element that contributed to the sense of unity of the performance. Furthermore, Beethoven's presence was felt throughout the performance, something which served the concept of the opening video ("Opening credits", described below).

There follows a brief account of each of the sections:

i. Prologue ("Opening credits")

A short video alluding to chapter 2 of the film. Beethoven is depicted arriving at Goldsmiths in June 2011 – we only see his shoes and gloves, as he is supposed to be behind the camera. He gives some coins to a street beggar who is playing his *Ode to Joy* on the melodica, he strolls through the corridors and arrives at the practice rooms where several people are practising his music. Peeking through the windows he sees that the

musicians momentarily transform into Beethoven himself.<sup>14</sup> He finally enters one of the rooms, where two pianists are rehearsing his *Variations on Ich denke dein* for four hands, WoO74. He informs them that it is time for them to go on stage, whereupon they rush towards the Great Hall, where the performance is about to begin.

The film at the beginning of the performance serves as a link between Kagel's film and this realisation, between past and present: Beethoven's "visit" to Goldsmiths in June 2011 underlines how relevant *Ludwig van* can still be today, despite having been composed over forty years ago. The Beethoven masks that the practising musicians are wearing depict the effort to approach the "real" Beethoven, to understand his music and play it as he would. The fact that the masks appear and disappear shows the ambiguity of this undertaking and poses questions: is it really possible to know how Beethoven would play his music, or is this just an illusion, however historically informed we are? And even if it is possible, is there really a point in trying to suppress our own personality in order to play exactly like Beethoven might have?

ii. Text: Letter Endings ("End credits")

The two pianists play cadences from various Beethoven sonatas while the two violinists recite endings from some of Beethoven's letters. Each cadence was chosen in such a way that its character matches or comments on the character of each text fragment. The fragments become shorter in the course of the section, and from one point onwards the text fragments are recited in very quick succession over a very long and dramatic cadence in C major from the *Waldstein* Sonata, op.53 (bars 294-311). This cadence stays unresolved, and the section finishes with another, much more playful and naive cadence in C major, the one from the *Andante* from the Piano Sonata, op.14 no.2, while Beethoven signs the letter in French and in German.

The title of this section and the fact that the performance starts with endings of Beethoven's works and letters are reminders that *Ludwig van* takes place on a "meta" level; it is a homage *by* Beethoven but at the same time it is *post-Beethoven*, since it mainly has to do with the way we see and interpret Beethoven rather than with Beethoven himself. Similarly, the unresolved dominant chords hint at the fact that although Beethoven is long dead, his music and the possibilities of different interpretations it offers are far from exhausted: there is so much we can still discover in

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<sup>14</sup> This is done by alternating the musicians' actual images with images of the same people wearing masks with his face on them.

Beethoven's music, and so many different ways in which we can perform it, that we cannot put a full stop or, in musical terms, a perfect cadence to our explorations of him and his music.

iii. Solo Piano Recital ("Rage over a lost page turner")

In this section I played various extracts from Beethoven's piano sonatas in a very "personal" way, deliberately not following the rules of any performance tradition, trying to play as I would if I had no knowledge whatsoever about Beethoven and his music. This could have sounded distasteful, but in my opinion it gave an interestingly different reading of this music. I was challenged to attempt what might actually be impossible: pretending not to know Beethoven's music and trying to free myself from the rules of traditional performance is certainly an extremely difficult task, but I felt it was worth trying, as I believed that it would make me realise new things about this music. As Francis Bacon says in one of his *Essays* quoted by Borges in his story "The Immortal", since, according to Plato, all knowledge is remembrance, then all novelty is oblivion (Bacon, *Essays*, LVIII, quoted in Borges, 1964: 109). In Beethoven's case, I believe that we must try to forget all the knowledge we have about his music; although it is practically impossible, the effort itself can give us the chance to discover it anew. This section was inspired by Kagel's suggestion of a piano recital where the pianist would allow Beethoven's music "to flow through his fingers [...] without perhaps playing any movement entirely". Kagel claims that he prefers this experience "to the commercial-ethical-musical-social pressures which compel a performer to present complete works for the umpteenth time" (Kagel, 1970: VIII-IX).

There was some degree of indeterminacy in this section, as the page-turner turned random pages in random moments, while I was trying to play what I saw, as accurately as possible. In this way I made it easier for myself to "forget" my preconceptions about how Beethoven's music should be played, since I did not have the time to think about tempi, pedalling, articulation and so on before playing the extracts I had in front of me; the fact that I was totally unprepared for the next page every time the page was turned, was a "technique" that transformed Beethoven's scores into unknown scores, completely free from the "burden" of Beethoven's image. Finally, by giving the page-turner the power to dictate which page of Beethoven's sonatas I would play, I also tried to cast light on the role of the page-turner, which is always taken for granted in concerts: the best page-turner is one that will not even be noticed. When a page-turner

steps outside their traditional role and turns the pages whenever he/she likes, the hierarchy between page-turner and pianist is overturned and the latter is at the former's mercy. By adding this humorous aspect to this section, I tried to cast light on musical life in a similar way that Kagel employed in his *Sonant*, as I have mentioned before.

iv. Text: Immortal Beloved (“Ludwig in love”)

The text for this section was a collage from Beethoven's letters to women to whom he seems to have been attracted, especially from the famous letter to the Immortal Beloved, which has been the object of research and has inspired speculation on who the recipient was, as well as a well-known feature film of the same title (Rose, 1994). I set these extracts to music by Beethoven, trying to give it the character of popular music through the harmony used and the style of interpretation. As introduction and accompanying pattern for the piano I chose the *Adagio Sostenuto* from the *Moonlight Sonata* (Example 6a and 6c), whereas the singing lines and the harmonic progressions were from the *Arioso* from the Piano Sonata, op.110 (Example 6a), the *Thema* from the *Diabelli Variations* (Example 6b), and the *Allegretto* from the Seventh Symphony, op.92 (Example 6c). The mood and singing style of this song were very clearly intended as a parody, especially since I interpreted the divine *Arioso* in a most melodramatic way. Nevertheless, the quotation from the Seventh symphony at the end of the song was suddenly serene and “introverted”, sung pianissimo by the two female violinists: this created some ambiguity as to whether the song was actually more of a parody or of a celebration of Beethoven's emotional life.

This section was an allusion to Kagel's opera *Aus Deutschland* in which, in some cases, the Lieder texts are sung in English in a jazzy style, sounding not far from commercial music. By imitating Kagel's ironic and humorous approach, I intended to make it clear that if we take works of great authors away from their context, which is what Kagel does with literary texts in *Aus Deutschland* and with music in *Ludwig van*, they might lose their artistic value: if we read Beethoven's letter to the Immortal Beloved ignoring the fact that it is the great composer talking to the woman with whom he was in love, we can actually find it simple, or even banal. But for me the sense of the ridiculous does not by any means overshadow the sense of awe for the great composer: in reality, by acknowledging his human, sentimental and even melodramatic nature, we can appreciate the divinity of his music on a deeper level.

Violin

Mezzo-soprano

Violin

Contralto

thine

Baritone

I have a mi - graine - Fly to my arms a gain - -

Piano

Example 6a, June 2011 realisation, “Ludwig in love”, bb. 9-12

Vivace

Voice

Mezzo-soprano

On the day You

Contralto

Voice

The day the day that we met

Baritone

need.

Vivace

Piano

Example 6b, June 2011 realisation, “Ludwig in love”, bb. 16-20

Voice

Mezzo-soprano

Day - and night I cough - and cough but don't let that put you off

Voice

Contralto

Day and night I cough and cough but don't let that put you off

Baritone

E varzine

Piano

Example 6c, June 2011 realisation, “Ludwig in love”, bb. 63-66

v. Alberti bass (“Ludwig van Alberti”)

In this section I decided to isolate a very common feature of Beethoven’s music, but one that does not directly refer to him as a composer, since it has been used in most keyboard compositions of the Classical era: it consisted exclusively of Alberti bass accompaniment features, with no melody on top of them. Thus, this was a section referring to the music of Beethoven’s time, rather than his music in particular, but it also alluded to minimalist music, since the material on which it was based was actually a motive of four notes, repeated and transformed gradually. At the beginning the motives were combined in a consonant way and were played simultaneously – i.e. each instrument was playing the first note of the four-note motive at the same time. Later the texture became more chromatic and each entry of the motive was shifted by one quaver, in such a way that there were audible chromatic motives shared between the instruments, as shown in Example 7. Towards the end there was an increase in the density, the range and the dynamics, creating an extremely dissonant sound which was suddenly replaced by an ironically triumphant dominant seventh in C major, the key of the next section.

Example 7, June 2011 realisation, “Ludwig van Alberti”, bb. 16-20

vi. Text: Politics (“Queentet”)

This section dealt with Beethoven’s image as a political man who, according to popular belief, opposed aristocracy and did not want to be a court musician, but a free artist. A very important aspect of this belief has to do with a meeting between Beethoven and Goethe, during which they allegedly came across the Imperial family and Goethe took his hat off and stood on the side while Beethoven advanced stubbornly. This incident

was actually invented by Bettina Brentano, who included it in a fake letter which she claimed Beethoven had written to her (Goddard, 1927: 169). In this section I used parts of this letter, although it was not written by Beethoven himself, and therefore cannot be considered his intellectual property. However, I considered it legitimate to use it, since *Ludwig van* is about Beethoven's reception, and the letter in question has played a big part in shaping his reception.

As this was one of the first "facts" about Beethoven that I ever learnt, and it has influenced my perception of the composer to a great extent, although involuntarily, I recorded various schoolchildren reciting this text and played back the recording during the performance, while a video of a childlike drawing of the incident was played. At the same time I was playing the first four variations Beethoven composed on *God save the King*, WoO78, but in reverse order, starting from the fourth, so that the audience would not recognise the tune from the beginning but would gradually find it more and more familiar. After the text and the video, I played the theme while one of my performers encouraged the audience to stand up and sing the British national anthem, showing a totally different reality to the one Bettina Brentano wanted to create, as far as Beethoven's political views are concerned: the radical revolutionary appears to have composed music on royal themes. This section finished with another oxymoron: the pompousness of the anthem was followed by each instrument playing the *Ode to Joy* in different tempi and tonalities, creating a chaos reminiscent of the Tower of Babel. In this way, I attempted to express my scepticism towards the ideal of brotherhood – so vividly expressed in the *Ode to Joy* – and how plausible it is after all.

vii. Improvisation on given notes ("Ludwig van Kagel")

This was the most indeterminate section of my performance, and the only one for which I actually used Kagel's score. But, as I explain in section V.2.A, I did not want to use it in a completely indeterminate way: following Alexandre Tharaud's example (described in section IV.5.C), I chose specific motives from Kagel's score, which mainly alluded to the natural scale of A minor (the Aeolian mode) in order to maintain a sense of tonality. Unlike Tharaud, I did not want to write out a collage and control every detail of the result for this section. I decided to ask the musicians to "improvise" on these motives, that is, to play them in free rhythm, style, order and dynamics, but, of course, without changing the notes, as this would be contrary to the work's instructions. This is the way

in which I chose to let each member of the ensemble pay their own, more personal tribute to Beethoven.

viii. Text: Beethoven's temperament ("Quarreltet")

This is another section in which the focus was on a popular belief about Beethoven, one that probably has more truth in it than the one about his political views, referred to in section vi: the text used was a collage from Beethoven's angry statements, presented in the form of an argument between me and the other pianist while we played a slow and serene piece of his music, the *Rondo* from the Piano Sonata, op.6 for piano four-hands. We started by exchanging insults in a calm voice and ended up shouting at each other, while the music we played remained calm and harmonious till the end, when my duo partner slapped me and left the stage. This juxtaposition aimed to show the humanity of Beethoven. Contrary to the tendency for musealisation in Beethoven's reception, I wanted to highlight the fact that, despite the sublime music he composed, he was not perfect: he was a human being, and actually one with a very strong temperament and a vivid imagination in making up insulting phrases, such as the ones used in the text of this section.

ix. Avant-garde ("Ludwig (a)van(t) garde")

This section expressed musically the repressed anger of the previous one. It was another solo piano episode, for which I gathered dissonant chords from various Beethoven works and presented them one after the other and unresolved. Thus the music lost every trace of tonality and sounded like a succession of unrelated pitches. My aim for this section was for it to sound like a piano piece of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the style of Boulez or Stockhausen. Thus I made it very angular, with abrupt changes within a wide range of dynamics, speed and pitch (Example 8a). Although the dynamics changed very frequently, there was a general build up to a *fortissimo possibile*: at the end of this section, I played the opening motive of the Fifth symphony, one of the most famously tragic moments of Beethoven's work, in heavy dissonant chords (Example 8b). Immediately after that, a knock on the door was heard, imitating this rhythm and alluding to Schindler's saying that this motive symbolised fate knocking at the door. On hearing the knock, I escaped the stage and in came a performer wearing a Beethoven mask, in order to recite the last monologue while standing behind the audience.

Example 8a, June 2011 realisation, “Ludwig (a)van(t) garde”, bb. 1-7

Example 8b, June 2011 realisation, “Ludwig (a)van(t) garde”, bb. 18-20

x. Text: Self-pity (“I am not human yet”)

For this section I constructed a collage of sentences from various letters, making up a monologue in which Beethoven talks about himself. The character ranged from melancholic to desperate, and there was a sense of self-pity in most of the quotations. As for the music, I did what Kagel does with the *Ghost Trio* in his recording (Side A, 11’00-16’45) and what he suggests in his letter to Rosenberg (quoted in section IV.5.B); namely, I asked all performers apart from the two pianists to play motives only from one specific work, so that “the performance becomes strangely concrete” (Kagel, from

the same latter). The work I chose for this was the third movement (*Adagio molto e mesto*) from the String Quartet, op.59 no.1, as I believed that its character matched the monologue I had created. During the rehearsal procedures we determined how the musicians would react to the text: at times playing random motives from specific sections of the work, each in their own time, at times playing all together. Towards the end of the monologue the music becomes more and more sparse and the musicians leave the stage one by one. Beethoven is left alone reciting the last line of his monologue: “Silence. There is no other way”.

### C. Performance evaluation

I was very satisfied with the outcome of my final realisation of *Ludwig van*. Both my preparation and the ensemble's creativity, hard work and support made it possible to produce a result which outdid my expectations in only four full-day rehearsals. Without changing much of my planned structure of the realisation, we made some decisions regarding the staging which held the whole performance together in a very effective way. It proved to be the right decision to choose people with whom I had already worked in the past, and who already had some experience in the performing arts as well as in music performance, as their contribution both in the musical and in the theatrical aspect of the performance was crucial. At the same time, the fact that I had prepared all their parts, even for the most indeterminate sequences, before the rehearsals started, saved a lot of rehearsal time which we could then use for more elaborate work on the material.

The performance itself was, I considered, very successful. The "opening credits" video worked very well as an introduction: the video artist who edited it juxtaposed the images of the musicians with and without the Beethoven masks in such a way that it seemed like an optical illusion; and the sound in the corridor of the practice rooms resembled the sound in the music room sequence of the film, from which the score was derived. This was important, especially since I decided to exclude a totally indeterminate reading of the score from the performance itself; since the sound in the practice rooms was a totally random mixture of several Beethoven scores, the result was similar to an indeterminate performance of Kagel's score. In the "end credits" section, the texts and the music were very well coordinated, and I was satisfied with the combination of the letter endings with the cadences. Seeing the video of "Rage over a lost page turner", I was satisfied that although it is obvious that I was struggling to read the music that the page turner put in front of me at each moment, it is impressive how I managed to continue playing until the end. "Ludwig in love" created the ambiguity I intended between parody and homage: on the one hand the music and the women's beautiful voices were particularly moving, and on the other hand my over-dramatic performance and the lyrics sounded quite ridiculous. "Ludwig van Alberti" also worked entirely as planned: rhythmically perfect and with a wide dynamic range, from a seamless pianissimo to a disturbing and dissonant fortissimo. In "Queentet", the

coordination between the video and the variations I was playing worked very well, and I was pleasantly surprised when the whole audience rose to sing the National Anthem, many of them with the desired pompousness. “Ludwig van Kagel” came naturally out of the chaos of the previous section and gradually obtained the melancholic and reflective character I wanted it to have. In “Quarreltet”, I believe that my argument with the other pianist and its building up occurred very naturally, while the music retained its peaceful character almost until the end. As for “Ludwig (a)van(t) garde”, I was told by members of the audience that it really sounded like a pseudo-avant-garde piano piece, and I was very content that my intention came across clearly; also, hearing the recording I was satisfied that the opening motive from the Fifth Symphony was well prepared but not predictable. Finally, “I am not human yet”, like “Ludwig in love”, also sounded like a mixture between parody and homage; but unlike the latter, this one turned out to be slightly more of a tribute to Beethoven’s sufferings rather than a caricature of Beethoven’s self-pity; and this was the way I wanted to end my realisation of *Ludwig van*: since the whole performance was intentionally light and humorous, I wanted its end to be solemn and reflective.

Overall I felt that my aspirations for this performance were accomplished. Firstly, it was an entertaining performance which at the same time challenged issues of Beethoven’s reception. The problems of the performance of Beethoven’s music were addressed, both in the initial video of the practising musicians and their struggle to play like Beethoven would, and in “Rage over a lost page turner” where I tried to perform his music as if I did not know anything about it. The myth around his love life and his always being rejected was parodied in “Ludwig in love”. The popular belief that he was a revolutionary was deconstructed in “Queentet”. The image of Beethoven as a divine, god-like creature was rejected in “Quarreltet”. And his misery, but also the pompousness of his self-pitying statements, were parodied in “I am not human yet”. Thus, like the film *Ludwig van*, my realisation of the score addressed major issues of how we see Beethoven, and reflected on how much of what we believe about him is actually true. Of course, I did not try to give answers to such questions through my realisation: what I considered important was to ask the questions and make the audience reflect on the myths we all have in our minds around Beethoven.

Furthermore, I believe that I managed to make Beethoven's music sound like music of today, of course in the way I see music of today – it would anyway have been impossible to produce an objective view of such a wide concept. For example, "Ludwig van Alberti" had some minimalist aspects, in that it was all built on a four-note motive subjected to gradual change. "Ludwig (a)van(t) garde" imitated the sound of piano music of the 1960s and 1970s, viewed in retrospect, some decades after that time. "Ludwig in love" had pop music and musical theatre elements, both in its "composition" and in the way it was performed, and its amateur-style performance alluded to the talent shows of our time, in which amateurism is projected and idealised. There were aspects of free improvisation in "Ludwig van Kagel", although the notes were actually given. And of course, my realisation of *Ludwig van* was a performance of instrumental theatre. Thus, although all music played during the performance was by Beethoven, it did sound as if it was composed in the last few years, as Kagel himself intended it to sound. Moreover, there were aspects in this performance which were characteristic of the time in which it took place, as well as aspects of my personality and the personalities of the other performers. I felt that by experimenting with Beethoven's music and by using it to create new sounds, I brought this music closer to myself, and – I hope – closer to today's audiences.

Finally, although I did not use Kagel's score but for one section, I was faithful both to its main instruction – to only use music composed by Beethoven – and to Kagel's spirit. I started the performance with a video with a very clear reference to Kagel's film. As I claimed earlier, I addressed many of the issues with which he deals in the film. I included aspects of instrumental theatre, which is Kagel's own concept. The ambiguity between parody and homage is something that exists also in his work, and arguably one of the aspects which made *Ludwig van* such a controversial work. But most importantly, I believe I followed Kagel's spirit by experimenting with the material in my own ways and feeling free with it. As I have argued earlier, I believe the most important task that *Ludwig van* sets to the performer, is to act as a composer: to be creative, to take responsibilities and to make decisions. And I am satisfied with the way I tackled this challenge.

## Conclusions

Kagel's *Ludwig van* is a unique work of art, one that takes a number of different forms and creates a number of controversies. It is a film that reported on Beethoven's misuse by his own admirers, while these same admirers accused the film of being disrespectful towards Beethoven. It is also a score that Kagel generated, but which used only collages of Beethoven's music, without a single note not written by Beethoven himself. Moreover, it is a score by Kagel with the subtitle "Homage *by* Beethoven" instead of "Homage *to* Beethoven", as would be expected. It is also a recording of the score, made by Kagel, in which he does not make use of the score or his own instructions for its performance at all. Apart from these, it is a work that is re-composed every time it is performed: every single performance of the score is different, not only in terms of the musical material used and the order in which it is presented, but also in terms of the ways of processing the material, the degree of control or indeterminacy applied to the final result, the instrumentation and the duration of the performance.

The main goal of this dissertation has been to study all these different forms and to investigate all the oxymora that *Ludwig van* seems to create, in order to understand the work in depth and to approach Kagel's ideas behind it. Through analysing the film and its most important topics, examining the score and its connection to philosophical and artistic movements of its time, and reviewing Kagel's and others' realisations of the score, I aimed to capture the spirit of the work, so that, eventually, I would be able to realise it myself. By doing this, I would have the opportunity to examine *Ludwig van* once more, from a different perspective: that of the performer. I would face the performance problems that arise from this work and I would find my own ways of dealing with them, trying at the same time to be in accordance with Kagel's intentions.

I believe that my research on the film was crucial to my understanding of the whole concept of *Ludwig van* and my realisation of it. First of all, because the film was the first form in which *Ludwig van* came into being: had it not existed, the score would never have appeared, at least not in the form it appeared. Secondly, because all the problems of Beethoven's reception that Kagel detected are to be identified in the film and, more importantly, they are all still relevant in the present day, at least in my

opinion; thus, they can become a source of inspiration for a realisation of *Ludwig van* at the time of writing. Thirdly, Kagel's ironic approach towards Beethoven and his reception, combined with his love for the composer, which is also apparent in the film, is something that, in my opinion, should be present in every realisation of *Ludwig van* which claims to take into account Kagel's concept of it. Finally, the music of the film demonstrates some of the ways in which Kagel manipulates Beethoven's music, both through collage and, more frequently, through inventive instrumentation and unconventional performance.

My research on the score was also invaluable to my realisation of *Ludwig van*. Examining the score and its instructions made me reflect on how free musicians can be when performing a work that does not impose any strict rules on them, but leaves them room for creativity. Some of the answers to my speculation on the limits of this freedom came when I investigated the work's associations to artistic movements and philosophical theories of the time. By revealing its postmodern nature and dealing with the questions of intellectual authority it raises, I established the fact that the distinctions between the roles of performer and composer in this work are quite loose, and that the performer is expected to take an active part in the composition – or *synthesis*, in the sense of combining particles into a whole – of its realisation. This belief was strengthened through comparing *Ludwig van* with other experimental works and establishing that its indeterminacy is not a way of avoiding subjectivity, but a way of trusting the performer's creativity. Moreover, it was further supported through my examination of Kagel's recording and other performances of *Ludwig van*. The recording, as well as Kagel's notes on it, proved that Kagel did not follow his own instructions when realising it; on the contrary, he re-composed *Ludwig van*, leaving no room for doubt as to how much freedom this work allows. Furthermore, Kagel's recording and the other realisations which I studied, from Tharaud's recording to reviews or reports of live performances, gave me more ideas on ways in which Beethoven's music can be disassembled and reassembled for a realisation of *Ludwig van*.

All these helped me immensely to prepare myself to take up the role of performer-composer needed for my realisations of this work, so that I could examine it also from the perspective of the musician apart from that of the researcher. My first

realisation gave me the experience of organising such a performance, of taking up responsibilities and making decisions that are normally part of the composer's role. It also gave me the opportunity to realise my ideas and to see how they sound, as well as what impact they have on the musicians and the audience. Finally, it was my first experience in staging a work of instrumental theatre – since I chose to include theatrical elements in *Ludwig van* – and to reflect on the issue of direction that arose.

Consequently, in my next realisation of *Ludwig van* I was able to use both the knowledge I had acquired through my research and the experience I had gained through the first realisation. At the same time, I allowed more of my personal creativity into it, as I believe to be Kagel's desire. In the end, for every realisation of *Ludwig van* the intellectual authorship is divided among three parties: Beethoven, Kagel and the performer(s). In my final realisation I aimed to combine my love for Beethoven and my knowledge of his music, with my understanding of Kagel's approach to Beethoven, and ultimately with my own approach to both composers. Thus, this realisation was the final product of the present dissertation, as it would not be possible without it.

This is certainly not to imply that my final realisation was definitive in any sense: Kagel's *Ludwig van* can be interpreted in innumerable different ways, and what I offered was one that expressed me, at this time, under the present circumstances. This realisation may have been the final product of my research, but, whereas in my dissertation I attempted to find the truth regarding Kagel's concept and intentions, in my realisation I did not aim to interpret the work in "the right way". This would contradict the findings of my own research: in *Ludwig van*, there is no eternal truth to look for, no author's message to interpret, no essence of the work to grasp, no real Beethoven to get to: the grand narratives of modernism are irrelevant here. It is an invitation for the performers to find their own ephemeral truth, to express their own intentions, to create rather than decipher a meaning, to invent their own Beethoven. Instead of trying to find the "real" Beethoven behind all the misconceptions about him that the myth has created, Kagel proposes that the "real" Beethoven is the one that is relevant to us, if only because this is the only way to bring him back to life. Defying the utopia of "authentic" performance and avoiding an objective tribute to a Beethoven we cannot really discern, with *Ludwig van* he proposes a subjective love declaration to our own Beethoven.

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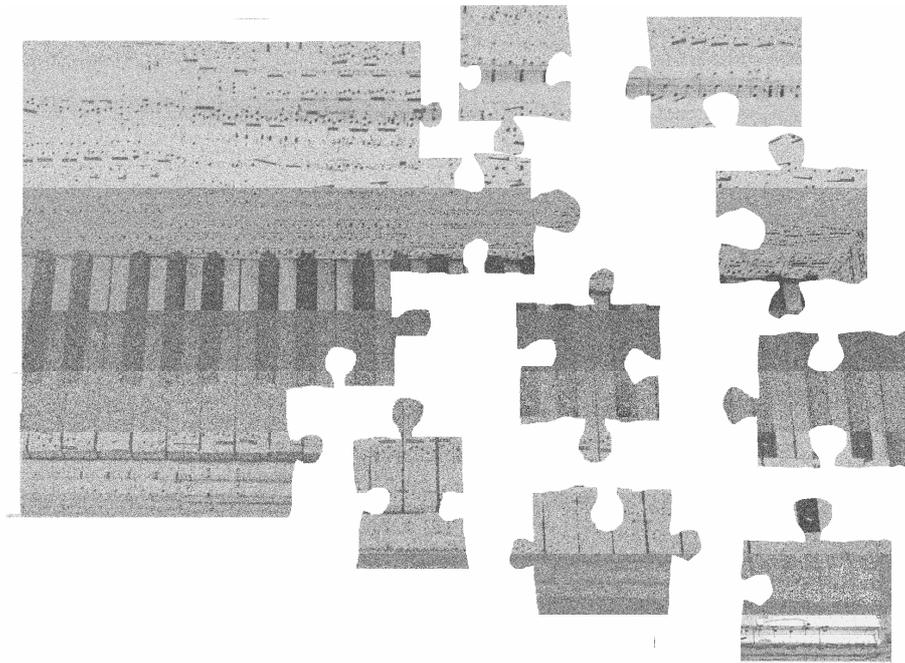
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## Appendix I

### Programme notes for May 2009 realisation

#### PhD Upgrade Recital

Nikos Stavlas



Friday, the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May  
Recital Room  
Goldsmiths College

## PROGRAMME

Ludwig van Beethoven

*Elf Neue Bagatellen*, op. 119 (1820-1822)

Nikos Stavlas, piano

Mauricio Kagel

*MM51, Ein Stück Filmmusik für Klavier* (1976)

Nikos Stavlas, piano

Mauricio Kagel

*Ludwig van* (1970)

Barbara Barros and Erik Dippenaar, violins  
Polly Hewett and Ben Havas, cello  
Kristin Sofroniou, melodica  
Beatrix Graf, clarinet  
Michalis Angelakis, baritone  
Andriana Minou and Nikos Stavlas, piano

### ***Elf Neue Bagatellen*, op. 119**

Although it was François Couperin who was the first to name a piece *Bagatelle*, the term is mainly associated with Beethoven, whose three sets of *Bagatellen*, op.33, op.119 and op.126 are considered a very significant part of his work. The term actually means an unimportant thing, a trifle, and Beethoven seems to have considered them as exactly that, since he used to refer to them as *Kleinigkeiten* (trifles). However, regardless of their light character, they can be argued to be truly experimental and innovative piano pieces.

The *Eleven New Bagatelles*, op.119, were composed between 1820 and 1822. It seems that Beethoven had problems trying to get them published: Peters rejected them, saying that “Beethoven should think it beneath his dignity to waste his time on such trifles, which anyone could write”. It can be argued that the first six are quite independent of each other, whereas the last five, which are also much shorter, belong together, as a smaller set within the set.

Nikos Stavlas

## **MM 51**

Rather as in Schoenberg's *Accompaniment to a cinematographic scene*, the theme of this piano piece is the threat of unspoken fears and dangers. But in contrast to Schoenberg's orchestral composition, which is written in the autonomous musical language of expressionism, the present piece uses only stereotyped formulae, drawn from the kind of commercial music familiar to every viewer. Be deliberately rejecting a current "contemporary" style, I tried a different starting point for a problem that allows for contrasting solutions and realisations.

Already with the first chords of the piece, the listener might recognize that repertoire of acoustic anecdotes which is readily dissociable from the illustration of moving pictures. But the relationship of this music with the representations of disturbing situations – which are only vaguely, rather than precisely, etched in the listener's mind – permits a collage-like treatment of various music scenes. And thus, from dramatic situations of disparate origin, a particular, renovated mental image can be created.

Mauricio Kagel

### ***Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven***

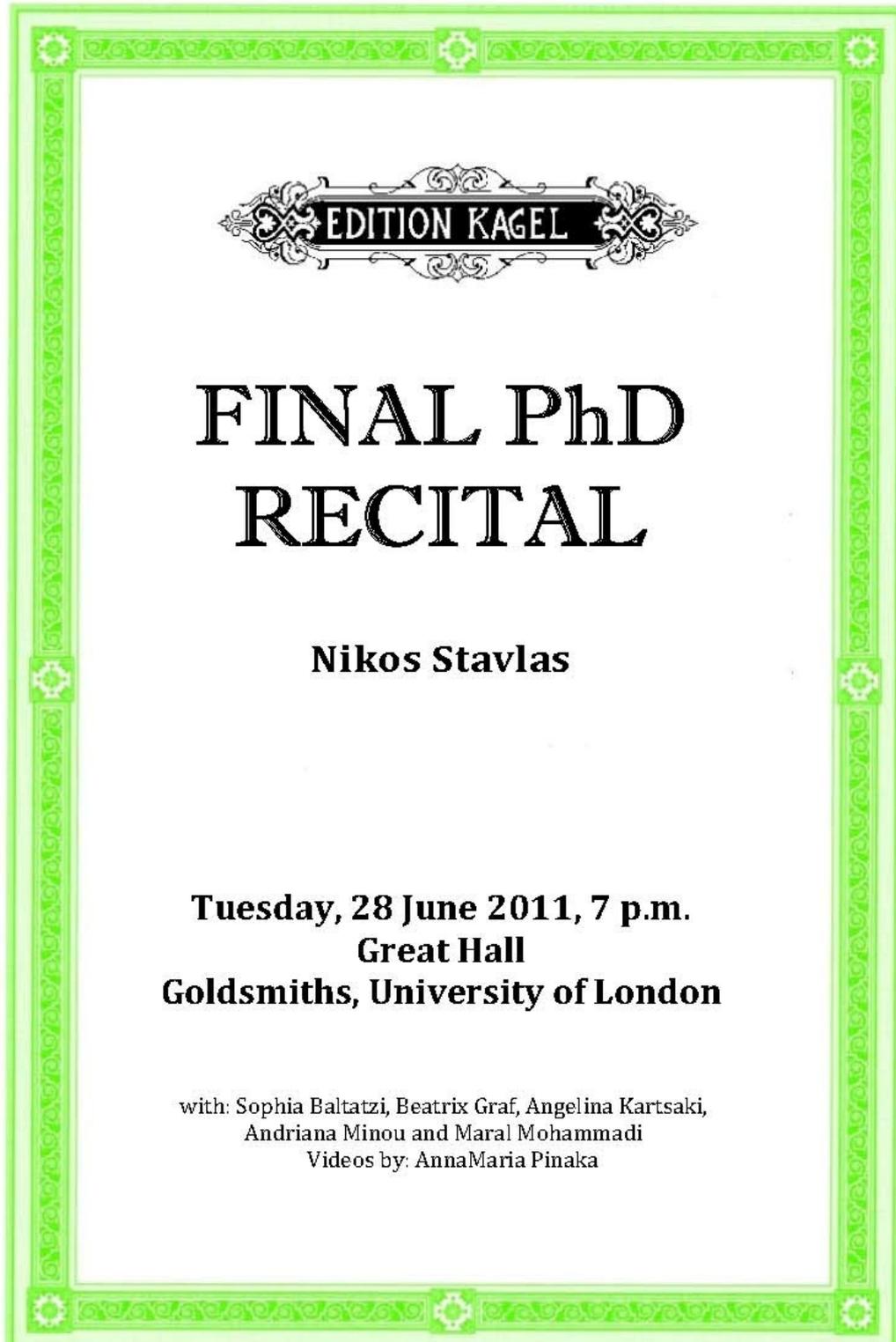
The first version of Kagel's *Ludwig van* was a film with the subtitle *Ein Bericht* (A Report), made in 1969 as a commission from the German WDR in order to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Beethoven's birth. In it Beethoven is shown arriving in Bonn in 1969 to visit the house of his childhood, a fake Beethovenhaus constructed for the purposes of the film. In the music room of this house, all the surfaces are covered by pages of Beethoven's music. It is from this room that the score *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven* (Homage by Beethoven) is derived: the score is nothing else than photographs of its surfaces. The result is a collage of different fragments of Beethoven's work, or, rather, a meta-collage, as Kagel puts it. As for the performance instructions, the only unbreakable rule is that every single note used has to be by Beethoven; the way of combining the material is entirely up to the performers. They actually have to re-compose Beethoven's music. Thus, the piece becomes actually "a contribution by Beethoven to contemporary music", in Kagel's own words.

In Kagel's recording of *Ludwig van*, the structure of the piece is derived from Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*, op. 120. Following his example, and in order to avoid an unstructured succession of quotations, I based my realisation of the piece on the form of the *Eleven New Bagatelles*, op. 119. The result is eleven new New Bagatelles, in which the tonal material was composed by Beethoven, the overall idea was conceived by Kagel, the structure was conceived by myself, and the re-construction, re-composition and, finally, the realisation, were made by Andriana, Barbara, Beatrix, Ben, Erik, Kristin, Michalis, Polly and myself. Thus, one of Kagel's main intentions, "the abolition of intellectual ownership" is accomplished.

Nikos Stavlas

Special thanks to Andriana, Barbara, Beatrix, Ben, Erik, Kristin, Michalis, Polly for their invaluable help in realising this project  
and to Keith Potter and Andrew Zolinsky for their support and guidance

**Appendix II**  
**Programme notes for June 2011 realisation**



  
**EDITION KAGEL**

**FINAL PhD  
RECITAL**

**Nikos Stavlas**

**Tuesday, 28 June 2011, 7 p.m.**  
**Great Hall**  
**Goldsmiths, University of London**

with: Sophia Baltatzi, Beatrix Graf, Angelina Kartsaki,  
Andriana Minou and Maral Mohammadi  
Videos by: AnnaMaria Pinaka

## PROGRAMME

Ludwig van Beethoven  
Rondo op.51 no.1 in C major (1796-1797)

Mauricio Kagel  
*À deux mains* (1995), Impromptu for piano

Mauricio Kagel  
*Ragtime-Waltz*, from *Rrrrrrr...* (1982)

Mauricio Kagel  
*MM51*, Ein Stück Filmmusik für Klavier (1976)

## INTERVAL

Mauricio Kagel  
*Ludwig van* (1970)  
Opening credits  
End credits  
Rage over a lost page-turner  
Ludwig in love  
Ludwig van Alberti  
Queentet  
Ludwig van Kagel  
Quarreltet  
Ludwig (a)van(t) garde  
I am not human yet

with Sophia Baltatzi, Beatrix Graf, Angelina Kartsaki, Andriana Minou,  
Maral Mohammadi  
Ludwig van Beethoven, texts  
Andriana Minou and Nikos Stavlas, text selection and collage  
AnnaMaria Pinaka, videos

Ludwig van Beethoven  
Sonata op.109 (1820)  
- Vivace ma non troppo – Adagio espressivo  
- Prestissimo  
- Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo

Special thanks to  
Keith Potter and Andrew Zolinsky for their precious guidance,  
Kristin Sofroniou and Stella Parlavantza for their participation in the video shoot,  
Ella, Isobel, Jessica, Kate and Rosamund for lending their voices to Bettina,  
my friends and family for their invaluable help and support.

### **Beethoven, Rondo op.51 no.1 in C major**

Contrary to what the opus number suggests, this rondo was composed quite early in the composer's life, along with his first set of piano sonatas (op.2). It is in five-part rondo form (ABACA), where both the episodes appear early within the piece, and the last appearance of the main theme is much longer and more adventurous than the previous two. The theme is a simple and delicate melody, marked dolce, which is somehow reminiscent of Mozart. The first episode is much more elaborate, moving from the quaver-rhythm of the theme to a continuous series of semiquavers and modulating to the key of G major. After a brief return of the theme the second episode is introduced in the dramatic key of C minor, developing the syncopated rhythm which already exists in the theme. The final recapitulation is delayed by an unexpected occurrence of the theme in A flat major and followed by a modulation to the distant key of D flat major and a small cadenza-like episode which leads to the final cadence.

### **Kagel, *Á deux mains*, impromptu for piano (1995)**

Perhaps my innate doubt whether the term "musical improvisation" ever can be realised in such a way that one in fact can speak of "improvised" music was also one reason to compose this piece. Apparently, my intellectual nonrelation to the pure doctrine of improvisation – if such a thing does indeed exist – often leads me to occupy myself with forms finding their legitimate perfection in the design of the musical impromptu. Thus, the impromptu is an example of that still living genre in which one tries to limit the arbitrary creation of music by confining to a thematic model in order to make the same even more changeable and complex. The new forming of the moment in particular seems to me to be important because it can lead precisely to the emphasis of the unforeseen, to surprising modulations. The foil of spontaneity thus becomes more credible for the listener.

"*Á deux mains*", a commissioned work for the Second International Umberto Micheli Piano Competition in Milan, was my first veritable morceau de concours. It is my wish that the pianists who perform this piece play it precisely and just as capriciously, extravagantly and just as glassily, as if this music would flow first at this moment, unexpectedly and presently through their fingers: in promptu.

Mauricio Kagel

### **Kagel, *Ragtime-Waltz from Rrrrrrr...* (1982)**

*Rrrrrrr...*, a "radio fantasy", consists of 41 autonomous pieces for different instruments or ensembles, all of which begin with the letter R, and most of which refer to musical genres taken from a music dictionary. According to Kagel, "When I began to think about this work, I imagined d'Alembert hard at work on the enormous task of writing his encyclopedia, drooping with fatigue over the pages of his manuscript covered with articles that all began with the letter R. The exact meanings of his definitions would be blurred in his semi-slumber, in a rather anti-scientific way, which would lead to all sorts of combinations and associations from the most logical to the most eccentric. I had only to modify this idea a little in order to be able to hear my own knowledge – in Diderot's sense of the word – and thus make the project possible. I replaced the general knowledge encyclopedia with a pocket music dictionary, and immediately found myself among infinitely multiplying fields, from rigorous semantics to the distant areas of musicology as a poetic art."

*Ragtime-Waltz*, originally for organ, is a combination between the syncopated rhythm of the African- American ragtime genre and the triple meter of the European Waltz; as most ragtime pieces are in duple or quadruple meter, we would be tempted to

think that it was Kagel's idea to bring the two genres together; however, it seems that the ragtime waltz existed long before Kagel's radio fantasy. This piece consists of an entirely tonal waltz-like left-hand accompaniment in the key of B minor and a highly chromatic and syncopated right-hand melody which does not seem to belong to any tonal centre and clashes with the left-hand chords in very interesting ways.

### **Kagel, *MM51***

Rather as in Schoenberg's *Accompaniment to a cinematographic scene*, the theme of this piano piece is the threat of unspoken fears and dangers. But in contrast to Schoenberg's orchestral composition, which is written in the autonomous musical language of expressionism, the present piece uses only stereotyped formulae, drawn from the kind of commercial music familiar to every viewer. By deliberately rejecting a current "contemporary" style, I tried a different starting point for a problem that allows for contrasting solutions and realisations.

Already with the first chords of the piece, the listener might recognize that repertoire of acoustic anecdotes which is readily dissociable from the illustration of moving pictures. But the relationship of this music with the representations of disturbing situations – which are only vaguely, rather than precisely, etched in the listener's mind – permits a collage-like treatment of various music scenes. And thus, from dramatic situations of disparate origin, a particular, renovated mental image can be created.

Mauricio Kagel

### **Kagel, *Ludwig van***

The first version of Kagel's *Ludwig van* was a film with the subtitle *Ein Bericht* (A Report), made in 1969 as a commission from the German WDR in order to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Beethoven's birth. In it Beethoven is shown arriving in Bonn in 1969 to visit the house of his childhood, a fake Beethovenhaus constructed for the purposes of the film. In the music room of this house, all the surfaces are covered by pages of Beethoven's music. It is from this room that the score *Ludwig van: Hommage von Beethoven* (Homage by Beethoven) is derived: the score is nothing else than photographs of its surfaces. The result is a collage of different fragments of Beethoven's work, or, rather, a meta-collage, as Kagel puts it. As for the performance instructions, the only unbreakable rule is that all the material used has to be by Beethoven; the way of combining this material is entirely up to the performers. They actually have to re-compose Beethoven's music. Thus, the piece becomes actually "a contribution by Beethoven to contemporary music", in Kagel's own words.

For today's realisation of *Ludwig van* I decided to include some quotations from Beethoven's letters, apart from the quotations from his music. I believe this agrees with Kagel's concept of *Ludwig van* for three reasons. The first is that Beethoven's letters, like his music, are part of his output as an author, and therefore incorporating them into *Ludwig van* is not against Kagel's instructions. The second is that it will add to a musical performance the theatrical element which is so common in Kagel's work – Kagel himself has included a collage of Brahms' letters in another of his canon-related works, *Variationen ohne Fuge*. The third reason is that Beethoven's letters have contributed to a large extent to our perception of him and the myth around his personality, which is the main issue which is raised and parodied through the film *Ludwig van*; therefore, by including extracts of them into my realisation of the composition *Ludwig van*, I will be able to comment on the same issues that brought *Ludwig van* into being.

### **Beethoven, Sonata op.109**

Kagel's concept of *Ludwig van*, apart from giving the performer the freedom to play Beethoven's music in unconventional ways and to be creative with it, gives them, as well as the audience, another opportunity: to listen to Beethoven in different ways, to hear his music free from its cultural connotations and from the composer's myth. I decided to end this recital with one of my favourite Beethoven works because I believe that both for me and for the audience it will be a different experience to go back to Beethoven after the adventure of *Ludwig van*.

The sonata is one of the last piano works of Beethoven, written in 1820 and dedicated to Maximiliane Brentano, daughter of his friend Antonie Brentano. Its overall form is very unusual, since the fastest movement is the second, while the final movement, which is also by far the longest, is an *Andante* with variations.

The first movement is in sonata form, but the two main subjects are not only different in character, but also in tempo and length: the first one is only eight bars long, in tempo *Vivace ma non troppo*, and consists of a simple sequence of broken chords, whereas the second is *Adagio espressivo*, comprising a very rich chordal harmony and cadenza-like arpeggios. After a very brief development section and the recapitulation, the two subjects are reconciled near the end of the movement in a chorale that combines the tempo of the first subject with the chordal texture of the second.

The *Prestissimo* follows directly, as Beethoven indicates that the pedal should be held down between the last chord of the first movement and the opening of the second. This is also in sonata form, although here there is very little contrast between the first and the second subject. The texture of this movement is largely polyphonic and its character is stormy and dramatic.

The last movement consists of a serene and cantabile theme in a sarabande-like rhythm and a set of six variations, all very diverse in character and tempo. The first one seems to foresee the romantic piano waltz; the second is a delicate and quite *moto perpetuo*; the third variation turns to a much faster duple meter and includes virtuosic runs for both hands; the fourth returns to a slower tempo and is scored for two to four voices with constant use of imitation; the fifth variation, an *Allegro, ma non troppo* is also very contrapuntal, although of a much more energetic character. Finally, the last variation starts with what sounds like a reoccurrence of the theme with a pedal note B repeated in crotchets; gradually the repetitions of this note become faster and faster, until it develops into a continuous trill, typical of Beethoven's late piano works. The sonata ends with a tranquil and contemplative last appearance of the theme, almost unaltered. This movement, in the same way as tonight's recital, returns to the familiar, but a familiar which sounds different after the transformations it has been through.

## Appendix III

### Texts used in June 2011 realisation

#### ii. “End credits”

Angelina:

Send an answer soon, as soon as possible, very quickly, as quickly as possible, with utmost haste.

Sofi: I hope to hear good news from you very soon, not allegro time, but veloce prestissimo.

A: Answer me in English if you have happy news to give me, in French if the news is bad.

S: Now farewell my good fellow. I wish you open bowels and convenience.

A: Adieu, Adieu, dearest; your last letter lay on my heart for a whole night, and comforted me.

S: Adieu, if the moon shines this evening as brightly as the sun in daytime, you will see the smallest of small beings at your house. Great Heavens, how I love you!

A: Farewell and continue to love your friend and brother.

S: Fare right well; be glad that you are more fortunate than other poor mortals.

A: Farewell – think of my dream and of myself.

S: Farewell, and do not kiss your wife too often.

A: Till then farewell, dear worthy Countess.

S: Adieu, Baron Ba...

A: ron

S: ron

A: nor

S: orn

A: rno

S: onr

Andriana: Adieu, Heaven watch over you

Nikos: Adieu, the devil take you

(simultaneously)

Angelina & Sofi: In most hasty haste,

S: Votre tres-obeissant Serviteur,

A: Your Excellence’s great admirer,

S: Your Imperial Highness’s most obedient,

A: Your sincerest friend and deaf brother,

S: Your faithful until death,

A: Your worshipper,

S: Your true father,

A: Your friend,

S: Your primus and ultimus,

A: Your etc.,

S: etc.,

A: etc.,

S: Louis von  
A: Ludwig van  
A&S: Beethoven

Andriana & Nikos: Where are my blankets?  
(postscript spoken simultaneously after the end of the music)

#### iv. “Ludwig in love”

Angelina.-Sofi:  
Ever mine...  
Ever thine...

Nikos: I have a migraine  
fly to my arms again  
don't let my poor heart bleed  
it is only you I need

A.-S.: On the day that we met  
you made me forget  
you made me forget  
that till then i was dead

N: It is not that dreadful colic  
that makes me melancholic  
I wouldn't mind my constipation  
if I had your consolation

A.-S. Day and night I cough and cough  
but don't let that put you off  
I don't think I would be deaf  
if you were my treble clef

#### vi. “Queentet”

Kings and princes can certainly create professors, privy councillors and titles, and hang on ribbons of various orders, but they cannot create great men, master-minds which tower above the rabble; this is beyond them. They are mad on Chinese porcelain, hence there is need for indulgence ; for intellect has lost the whip-hand. I don't want to play to these silly folk, who never get over that mania, nor write at public cost any stupid stuff for princes. When two such as I and Goethe meet together, these grand gentlemen are forced to note what greatness, in such as we are, means. Yesterday on the way home we met the whole Imperial family. We saw them from afar approaching, and Goethe slipped away from me, and stood on one side. Say what I would, I could not induce him to advance another step, so I pushed my hat on my head, buttoned up my overcoat, and went, into the thickest of the crowd – princes and sycophants drew up in a line; Duke Rudolph took off my hat, after the Empress had first greeted me. Persons of rank know

me. To my great amusement I saw the procession defile past Goethe. Hat in hand, he stood at the side, deeply bowing.

### viii. “Quar(rel)tet”

Andriana:

But, you do really love me a little, do you not?

Nikos: I give you my word of honour.

A: Mmm... I cannot tell you what ideas come to my head...

N: But this must be better rehearsed. I cannot hear my music being murdered.

A: But... love demands everything, and rightly so...

N: My heart, as always, beats tenderly for you. But just now I cannot satisfy you...

A: Oh infamous disgrace, is there not a spark of manhood in you?

N: Please do not forget to address me as chief capellmeister.

A: Alright. My very CHEAP capellmeister!

N: (snob) I never answer insults. Emotion is only for women.

A: Oh really? (pause) You are a big swine!

N: (ironic and arrogant) Well, seems like the fair sex likes this...

A: (angry) I like a tree more than a man. You should be exiled to Siberia!

N: And you should be harpooned among the whales in the Northern Waters!

A: (shocked) You stupid fool!

N: You unparalleled fault!

A: You ridiculous virtuoso!

N: You utter failure!

A: You ass!

N: You dog!

A: You pathétique!

N: Aaa... The devil take you!

A: The devil take YOU! (she slaps him and leaves angrily)

### x. Self-pity monologue

Great deal of misery.

The weather is so divinely beautiful – and who knows whether it will be so tomorrow? It may rain tomorrow and perhaps heavily, or it may not, either is disadvantageous to me.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of 1241 lives this poor, persecuted, despised Austrian musician. I am sick of this place, tired of it.

Times are bad, our treasury is empty, our income low.

...attacks of colic, a cough, worse pains in my head than I have ever had, impaired digestion... terrible cold, vomiting, constipation, I spit a good deal of blood, my stomach has become very weak... I have been unable to write a single note ... The primal cause of it is the state of my bowels. But my poverty compels me to write every day. I unfortunately can only live by my writing.

The noblest part of me, my sense of hearing, has become very weak. Yet it is not possible for me to say to men: speak louder, shout, for I am deaf. How can I declare the weakness of a sense which in me ought to be more acute than in others?

At times I was on the point of putting an end to my life – *art* alone restrained my hand. Oh! It seemed as if I could not quit this earth until I had produced all I felt within me. Apollo and the muses will not yet hand me over to the Scythe Man, for I still owe them much; and before my departure to the Elysian Fields I must finish what the spirit suggests to me and commands me to finish. It is to me as if I had only written a few notes. So I continue this wretched life... For I may truly say that my life is a wretched one.

I am compelled to live as an exile.  
I cannot love anything that is not beautiful – otherwise I should love myself.  
I cannot do it ... although my name is still Beethoven.

No other man could have accomplished the task as I have done and yet I feel in me a void which cannot be filled.

Pity my fate.

I am not human yet.

I sometimes think I shall have a stroke of apoplexy.

Yet there will be no necessity to have me put into the lunatics' tower.  
I joyfully hasten to meet death.  
I shall soon be myself again  
Silentium. There is no other way.