

Yearbook of the
Westfield Center for
Historical Keyboard Studies

Keyboard *Perspectives*

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Myth and Reality in Beethoven's
Hammerklavier Sonata, Opus 106

EDITED BY
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Keyboard Perspectives VII

The Yearbook of the Westfield Center for Historical Keyboard Studies 2014:

Myth and Reality in Beethoven's Hammerklavier Sonata, Opus 106

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Contributors

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Tom Beghin is internationally active as a performer and scholar. With classicist Sander Goldberg he co-edited *Haydn and the Performance of Rhetoric*, winner of the 2009 AMS Ruth Solie Award. His monograph *The Virtual Haydn: Paradox of a Twenty-First-Century Keyboardist* (University of Chicago Press, 2015) follows his monumental recording of the complete solo Haydn (Naxos 2009/11). An alumnus of the HIP doctoral program at Cornell University, he first taught at UCLA and since 2003 has been Associate Professor at McGill University. Currently on leave from McGill, he heads a research cluster at the Orpheus Institute in Ghent, Belgium, entitled “Declassifying the Classics.”

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Erin Helyard graduated in harpsichord performance from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music with first-class honors and the University Medal. He completed his master's in fortepiano performance and PhD in musicology with Tom Beghin at the Schulich School of Music, of McGill University. He was named the Westfield Concert Scholar on fortepiano for 2009–10, an initiative of the John Ernest Foundation. Erin was Lecturer in Historical Performance at the New Zealand School of Music in Wellington and is currently Lecturer in Music at the Australian National University in Canberra. Erin is highly active in reviving eighteenth-century operas in performance and score.

MICHAEL PECAK

Pianist Michael Pecak has performed to great acclaim throughout the United States and Europe on both historical and modern instruments. Having completed degrees at Northwestern (BM) and Indiana Universities (MM), Michael was a Fulbright Scholar in Warsaw, Poland, and a Graduate Fellow at Cornell University where he worked with Malcolm Bilson. He has been recognized by such organizations as the Chicago Chopin Society, the Kosciuszko Foundation Chopin Piano Competition, Early Music America, and the Historical Keyboard Society of North America. Michael is currently pursuing a DMus degree in fortepiano and historical performance practices at McGill University in the class of Tom Beghin.

TILMAN SKOWRONECK

Bremen-born Tilman Skowroneck studied harpsichord with Bob van Asperen, Anneke Uittenbosch, Ton Koopman, and Gustav Leonhardt; and fortepiano with Malcolm Bilson. Between 1991 and 2006 he was the harpsichordist and fortepianist in the Swedish baroque ensemble Corona Artis. With this group, he played an abundance of concert productions, and made several recordings. Today, Tilman works as a freelance musician, scholar, and translator. His book *Beethoven the Pianist* was published by Cambridge University Press in 2010. A second book about Viennese piano building in the early nineteenth century is in preparation.

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Eric J. Wang is a scholar and early keyboardist based in Los Angeles. He received his PhD in musicology in 2011 from the University of California, Los Angeles. His research interests include the cultural study of tuning and temperament, performance practice, rhetoric, and humor in music ranging from the seventeenth through early nineteenth centuries. He is currently preparing a book—an outgrowth of his dissertation—in which he examines changes in seventeenth-century tuning practices against the backdrop of an intellectual and philosophical landscape shattered by clashes between scholasticism, skepticism, and the rise of “modern” science.

Website

For this issue of *Keyboard Perspectives*, the accompanying CD that the reader has come to expect has been replaced by a website. Organized essay by essay, it contains sound and video files in conjunction with the musical examples already printed in this volume, as well as additional photographs. The reader's experience will be enriched by having ready access to the website.

Please visit:

<http://kp7.westfield.org/>

Preface

DURING THE PREPARATION OF THIS volume, something invasive happened to me. After packing what I had carefully decided would be my belongings for the next two years (going from Montreal, Canada to Ghent, Belgium, to start a researcher's position at the Orpheus Institute, on temporary leave from McGill), all of my luggage was stolen immediately upon arrival, including the handwritten notebook I had kept during thirteen weeks of teaching an intense graduate seminar at McGill University in Winter 2014. The seminar was on Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata, op. 106 and it was the "cradle" of the various essays that now make up this Westfield yearbook.

This is not a *captatio benevolentiae*. (Rhetorically speaking, it is inadvisable to try to arouse pity right off the bat anyway: it would be more proper to do so in the conclusion, after an already successful speech.) But I was recently struck by the analogy between my *no longer* having my notebook and the guest author David Chalmers's foreword to Andy Clark's *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action, and Cognitive Extension*.¹ Chalmers takes the example of his first iPhone and how after one month it has already started replacing some essential cognitive functions of his mind. "My iPhone is not my tool, or at least it is not wholly my tool. Parts of it have become parts of me." As willy-nilly participants in an increasingly technology-dominated world, we can relate. Chalmers's example anticipates the main thesis of Clark's book, that "extended cognition is a core cognitive process, not an add-on extra."²

Suddenly facing a *tabula rasa* when sitting down to write this preface brings home the importance we've attributed to objects just like my notebook for the study of someone like Beethoven—and in pre-digital terms it seems absolutely justified to think of a "notebook-and-pencil" as equally powerful a piece of technology as an iPad or an iPhone today.³ The notion of studying the "creative

¹ My thanks to Jonathan Impett for drawing my attention to this book.

² Andy Clark, *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action, and Cognitive Extension* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), x and 225.

³ Ironically, I would have preferred my iPad to have been stolen: its digital contents (with, among others, all PDF-readings of the *Hammerklavier* seminar) would have been relatively easy to replace, while the loss of my handwritten notebook feels dramatically ir retrievable.

process” of an individual mind (as opposed to the generic, rhetoric-driven understanding of artistic production in earlier times) has become almost synonymous with Beethoven studies. It is *Beethoven’s* cognitive mind we’re interested in, and we latch on to anything that has the potential of drawing us into the “core” of it. We study his sketches, manuscripts, notebooks, and are fascinated by his every squiggle, in pencil or ink, whether they represent a note or a word.

As the final item in this volume, Tilman Skowroneck (also my distinguished precursor as the guest-editor of *KP* 6) contributes a touching *In memoriam* to his father Martin, and relates how “in [Martin Skowroneck’s] mind, materials, tools, and constructions assumed a strong presence of their own.” “One could say,” Skowroneck Jr. continues, “that he ‘became’ whichever technical problem he was trying to solve.” Skowroneck’s account of his father is of someone who thought of tools the way others do pen and paper. Beethoven turned the act of keeping a notebook into a compositional method, also advising his students to constantly have one so as to jot down their emerging or developing ideas when away from the piano, as he himself was known to do during the long walks he took.⁴ But the powerful image of Beethoven as a “thinker” (one may recall here Max Klinger’s 1902 portrayal of Beethoven as a philosopher-god on his throne)⁵ may have blinded us to the tools that would have really mattered to him—the ones he both loved and hated at various periods in his life. I’m talking, of course (as might be expected in a journal addressed to keyboard enthusiasts), about his instruments, and not just in an *Urinstrument* sense (to compensate for a misguided unilateral belief in *Urtext*), but as “core” components of Beethoven’s artistic experimentation and creation.

The McGill seminar was built on a simple premise that has been presented in a previous volume of this yearbook: Beethoven received his 1817 Broadwood piano exactly three-quarters of the way through composing his *Hammerklavier* Sonata. This event resulted in a spectacular drop in tessitura *as the work pro-*

⁴ When he writes to Archduke Rudolph that “for the purpose [of jotting down your ideas in the form of sketches] you should have a small table beside the pianoforte,” we may be witnessing the transformation of a memory aid intended to help retain ideas when away from the piano to a *method* of sketching: “In this way not only is one’s imagination stimulated but one also learns to pin down immediately the most remote ideas.” Quoted from Susan Kagan, *Archduke Rudolph, Beethoven’s Patron, Pupil, and Friend* (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1988), 32.

⁵ For a reproduction of this marble statue and (more importantly) a contextualization of “Beethoven as philosopher” versus (say) “Haydn as orator,” see Mark Evan Bonds, “Rhetoric versus Truth: Listening to Haydn in the Age of Beethoven,” in *Haydn and the Performance of Rhetoric*, ed. Tom Beghin and Sander Goldberg (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 109–30.

gressed.⁶ Whereas movements one to three conform to the Viennese six-octave span from FF to f¹, the fourth movement (with its gigantic fugue) *drops down* to an English six-octave span from CC to c⁴. But what is arguably even more remarkable is that this crucial piece of material evidence (not just the span but the overall technology of a newly received piano) has remained absent in the vast Beethoven literature, whereas every dot and mark from Beethoven's pen, writing either music or words, has been scrutinized over and over.

Beethoven allegedly wrote opus 106 “for the pianist of the future.” Rather than automatically dismissing these words as myth (somewhat a reflex in today's scholarship and historically informed musicianship), it may be more useful to ask: what exactly in Opus 106 (here with a capital “O” to capture the then-emerging sense of the autonomy of a single “work”) spurred such an interest in myth or legend, both then and now? Bringing technology into the mix, every reader of this volume will understand that, *of course*, Beethoven could not have anticipated the design of the modern piano.⁷ To argue otherwise would be to give in to sweeping teleology—the argument would be simplistic and historiographically unacceptable. (Note the rehearsed emotion in what I just wrote: this is what HIP expects me to argue.) But would it be considered simplistic to argue that with opus 106 Beethoven somehow forced piano builders both in Vienna and London to adopt a six-and-a-half octave range as the new norm (which, indeed, they did)? Material evidence does not support this narrative (since in opus 106 we're dealing with two *distinct* six-octave spans), but human psychology very well might: the combination of withdrawing from the actual world (feeling isolated due to his deafness) and being on top of his game (as the most celebrated composer alive) may have led Beethoven to no longer allow commercial interests or questions of marketing to get in the way of his creativity—and this objectifying of artistic production may not have been all that far removed from reality anyway: Beethoven may not have owned one, but a number of Viennese pianos already had six-and-a-half octaves in 1818.

In our “historically informed” engagements with score, instrument, or “work,” then, where or *when* do we decide to draw the line? Do we zoom in on the actual

⁶ Tom Beghin, “Beethoven's Broadwood: A Construction Project,” Appendix 2 of Tilman Skowronek, “A Brit in Vienna: Beethoven's Broadwood Piano,” *Keyboard Perspectives* 5 (2012): 81–82, and Robert Giglio, “Reconstructing History: A Conversation with Chris Maene and Tom Beghin,” *Keyboard Perspectives* 6 (2013): 127–32.

⁷ In the title “Grosse Sonate für das Hammerklavier,” the symbiosis of sonata and instrument has become so powerful that the association has become one of *grosses Hammerklavier*, and then (why not?) the “grandest of all,” the nine-foot Steinway.

arrival of the Broadwood, when the sonata was about to take a spectacularly new turn? Or do we jump forward to March 3, 1819, when Beethoven sent the first two movements with an indication of the complete sonata's pending Viennese publication to its dedicatee Archduke Rudolph? ("Dedication" now also becomes a core element, "tangibly" anchoring itself in the musical material through the two opening themes of the first movement—"Vivat Rudolphus!" for the fanfare and "O Hoffnung" for the pleading response.)⁸ Or do we settle on March 19, 1819, when Beethoven sent a long list of errors to Ferdinand Ries in London to finalize the English publication (along with two notes that he wished to be added at the outset of the Adagio)? Or shall we allow collective consciousness of Beethoven's grand sonata to sink in for a while and wait until 1836, when Hector Berlioz proclaimed Franz Liszt the Oedipus who had solved the Riddle of the Sphinx? I confess to being reluctant to enter this realm of "reception," which would soon include a proliferating number of interpretations by pianists, each possibly more "legendary" than the other. Every instance of widening our scholarly-cognitive circle thus also raises an increasing number of "buts," as in, "*but* why do we even care about a London edition," or "*but* what then of Carl Czerny's performance in or before 1820 when *nota bene* Beethoven himself had been present?"

Clearly, a complex and multi-layered piece like opus 106 warranted a semester-long graduate seminar, and it now feels tremendously exciting to be presenting five polished essays that originated from it. Kristin Franseen opens by challenging the traditional view of opus 106 as some "breakthrough" in Beethoven's career and life, away from "a time of apparent loss of creative energy and psychological distress" (also known as Beethoven's "fallow period," dated 1813–1817), back on the road to creative recovery and the beginning of his Third Period.⁹ Building

⁸ The congratulatory exclamation ("Long live Rudolph!") is found set to music that is almost identical to the opening B-flat fanfare in an independent Beethoven sketch; "O Hoffnung," WoO 200 is the theme for an assignment of variations intended for his composition pupil Archduke Rudolph; see Birgit Lodes, "'Von Herzen – möge es wieder – zu Herzen gehn!': Zur Widmung von Beethovens *Missa sollemnis*," in *Altes im Neuen: Festschrift Theodor Göllner zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Bernd Edelmann and Manfred Hermann Schmid (Tutzing: H. Schneider, 1995), 295–306, and Kenneth Drake, *The Beethoven Sonatas and the Creative Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 270–74. In our seminar we quickly started referring to these moments as "the Vivat Rudolphus theme" and "the Hoffnung theme" (just as Beethoven intimates might have recognized them).

⁹ Joseph Kerman, Alan Tyson, with Scott G. Burnham, "The 'three periods,'" § 11 in "Beethoven, Ludwig van" *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40026pg11>; Lewis Lockwood, "The Years 1813–1817: A 'Fallow' Period in Beethoven's Career?," in *Beiträge zu Biographie und Schaffensprozess bei Beethoven*, ed. Jürgen May (Bonn: Verlag Beethoven-Haus Bonn, 2011), 89.

on work by Nicholas Mathew and Emily Dolan, Franseen instead stresses a continuation in what she recognizes in opus 106 as “machine-like fascinations” that harken back to Beethoven’s collaborations with the machine-inventing Johann Nepomuk Mälzel, notably their 1813 Wellington’s Victory, op. 91—a work traditionally viewed as having little or no artistic value. But to argue that a work like opus 106 exists *thanks to* opus 91 would be to belittle the latter again: refreshingly, Franseen reverses the relationship and claims that “even a ‘great’ work has technological elements lurking behind its scenes.”

Writing on the opening Allegro, Michael Pecak expands on a curious observation that he made early on during the seminar: “Over the course of this approximately twelve-minute-long movement, there are only two perfect authentic cadences.” Yet, its formal construction (as the analytical literature points out over and over) is surprisingly clear-cut. This paradox prompts Pecak to ask with even more urgency: “Why, then, does the first movement of opus 106 leave the listener feeling disoriented?” In his answer he contextualizes “frustration,” first by drawing from early twentieth-century theories of psychology (by Dol-lard et al.), then by trying to reconcile what Charles Rosen has described as a movement-long “dissonant sonority” (a clash of two semitones that results from a harmonic sequence in thirds) with recent theories of classical form by Hepokoski & Darcy and William Caplin (which, of course, depend explicitly on the interval of a fifth to allow cadences to leave their structural mark). A “difficult” process of delayed and unfulfilled expectation engages—or, indeed, “frustrates”—both pianist and listener.

Zoey Cochran takes us into the world of opera. Treading carefully (i.e., never quite claiming the discovery of a model for Beethoven’s third movement Adagio) she nonetheless offers the cavatina “Di tanti palpiti” of Rossini’s *Tancredi* (which premiered in Vienna in late 1816) as a powerful invitation to expand our notions of “vocality” from the realm of style (to describe certain textural or ornamental qualities in instrumental music) to that of form—thus not just as the topics “aria” or “hymn,” in reference to an inspiring analysis by Robert Hatten, but at the level of a *complete* bipartite aria, applicable to the Adagio as a whole. Cochran’s merging of Rossini’s cavatina and Beethoven’s Adagio suggests the persona of a singer-pianist who exploits the technologies of *una corda* and *tutte le corde* to convey two distinct ways of using her pianistic voice. Add to this the fact that 1817 spawned no less than ten variation sets by local pianists on “Di tanti palpiti,” all advertised in the Vienna *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (hereafter in the volume, *AmZ*), and the suggestion of Beethoven contributing his own dramatic

re-interpretation of an immensely popular aria to the Viennese musical scene becomes all the more intriguing.

There's irony, then, in how Hector Berlioz plays up the purely instrumental nature of Franz Liszt *alone* playing "Beethoven's grand sonata, this sublime poem," op. 106: "There was not a single small Italian cavatina, not some light flute concerto, not even a *buffa* duo, nothing that usually charms some amateurs." This seminal review of a seminal performance (at the salons of the Erard firm in 1836) provides the contents of Michael Turabian's essay, which cleverly splits Beethoven's (and Berlioz's) "future pianist" into two, reading into the first movement of opus 106 an imaginary competition between a Liszt-type and a Thalberg-type pianist. Moving backwards and forwards between 1836 and 1818, Turabian turns opus 106 into a sort of crystal ball—reality weaving in and out of myth in delightfully evocative ways.

The image of dual (but not *dueling*) pianists is also present in my essay when I suggest that the impetus for Beethoven's opus 106 may well have been to write a grand sonata not "for *four* hands" (like that by Ignaz Moscheles, op. 47, published in the same year) but "for *two* gigantic hands." If Turabian's essay deals with the future, then I bring the timeline as close to Beethoven's present as possible while exploring alternative ways of performing opus 106, both then and now. Taking my cue from early testimonies by a piano builder, a pianist, and a music publisher, I replace a single and unified view of opus 106 with more rhetorically driven accounts of "pianist vs. piano"—like that of "the battle with the back-check" (on the hit-or-miss single-note repetitions in the second Scherzo movement) or that of Beethoven receiving his new Broadwood piano, causing a physiological *and* compositional sense of "lopsidedness" ("middle F" suddenly becoming "middle C" for the Viennese pianist as she switches to the English instrument).

One essay that in the end did not make it into the volume but that inspired us all was by Katheryn Lawson, who offered a pedagogical spin on opus 106—at first sight surprising, given the sonata's stature as the pinnacle of professional pianism. But Lawson argued on the contrary that the new presence of Beethoven's nephew Carl in his life—and especially the activity of teaching the boy to play the piano (through etudes by John Baptist Cramer, among others)—may have kindled Beethoven's ambitions as a pedagogue—at the most grandiose level possibly generating in Beethoven's mind the long-term project of turning Carl into that "future pianist." As such, Lawson's work complements Franseen's in that it radically turns a traditional "negative" in Beethoven's biography (distractions

during arduous years of legal battles over a newly adopted boy) into a “positive.”¹⁰ Other seminar participants (whose work is not represented here for a variety of reasons, but who offered valuable contributions to the seminar) include Kelvin Chan (“Beyond the Classical Idiom: Romantic Piano Accompaniment in Beethoven’s Opus 106”), Byungchan Lee (“The Obsessive Return to Unfinished Business: The Interchange and Transcription of Ideas in Ludwig van Beethoven’s Piano Sonatas and String Quartets, and the Journey of the Grand B-flat”), and Mélisande McNabney (“The Trill in Beethoven’s Late Pianoforte Sonatas”).

Two scholars, Adrian Daub and James Q. Davies, emerged as allies in our thinking as the seminar progressed. Since their books (on four-hand piano playing and anatomies of performance in the nineteenth century respectively) had not been part of the seminar’s reading list, I invited my old student, friend, and colleague Erin Helyard (whose own writings on Clementi and the ideology of “difficulty” were part of our core-reading) to join the conversation, and he readily complied with a comparative review of these two remarkable new books.

Another comparative review of three relatively recent CD-releases, by Eric Wang, focuses on the aspect of meantone tuning. (I opted for *not* doing the obvious, which would have been to include a review of some new *Hammerklavier* recording.) Wang (who many years ago studied music theory and fortepiano performance with me at UCLA) has been a specialist in historical tuning and temperament, and his passion as a collector of, among others, harpsichord and organ recordings of the Baroque repertoire shows in what has grown into an almost “state-of-affairs” essay centered around recorded performances by Siegbert Rampe, Anreas Staier, and Mahan Esfahani.

Instead of the CD that readers have come to expect in the back of this book, an accompanying website may be found at <http://kp7.westfield.org/>, which we recommend keeping open or within reach throughout the reading—very much like Beethoven’s notebook would have been while he was composing. There are moments in the written text when access to the recorded materials is crucial to the argument of an author (notably Beghin and Wang): these moments are always explicitly indicated.

Musical examples that feature excerpts from opus 106 have been transcribed from the first edition by Artaria (1819).¹¹

¹⁰ Katheryn Lawson, “Opus 106 as Pedagogy? Beethoven’s Nephew, the Cramer Etudes, and Modes of Practicing in the Early Nineteenth Century” (unpublished manuscript, November 2, 2014).

¹¹ Facsimile by Tecla Editions, ed. Brian Jeffery (London: 1989); also available on the Digital Archives of the Beethoven-Haus Bonn, accessed April 3, 2015, http://www.beethoven-haus-bonn.de/sixcms/detail.php?template=startseite_digitaales_archiv_en.

I would like to thank, first and foremost, the participants of the McGill seminar, especially those who eventually became contributors to this volume. Everyone helped out: Kristin Franseen checked the bibliographic references for consistency; Zoey Cochran transcribed the musical examples; Michael Turabian assisted in tracking down certain images; and Michael Pecak helped coordinate the construction of the website. This whole production indeed became a “seminar” in its own right, and (I would hope) a most useful one. I, for one, will keep thinking back on this team effort with both immense gratitude and pride. I thank Annette Richards for her vision and for being an inspiring force to us all at Westfield; Evan Cortens for coasting us calmly and professionally through the typesetting; Imogen Brian for her meticulous and elegant copy-editing; and Ryan Frizzell for his skillful construction of the website.

Last but not least, I’d like to thank Andrew Willis. He initially introduced me to opus 106 on a Viennese historical piano (a six-and-half-octave one!) back when we were both studying at Cornell with Malcolm Bilson. I’ve been in awe of Andrew’s several performances of *Hammerklavier* (at the various occasions when the Cornell “group of seven” played the complete cycle of Beethoven Sonatas) and never thought I’d summon the energy to learn the piece myself. Andrew is represented through a few recorded excerpts on the website (with thanks to Patrick Peikert and Claves), and I very much look forward to playing with him a four-hand arrangement of the sonata by C. F. Ebers (Berlin: Maurice Westphal, 1834) at the upcoming 2015 Forte/Piano Westfield Festival.

– Tom Beghin
Ghent, March 20, 2015