Introduction

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In the history of Western music, no single figure has been as closely tied to the Enlightenment as Beethoven. The image of the composer in both musicological scholarship and the popular imagination is that of a liberal humanist who embodies ideals commonly associated with the Enlightenment – namely, freedom and humanity. In mythic terms, he is the Promethean hero, who defies the gods to free music for humankind. This image is a powerful cultural force since it connects two concepts of autonomy that remain highly influential. The first is musical autonomy: the aesthetic approach that assumes musical works can – indeed, should – generate meaning independent of their relationship to social practices and institutions. The second is human autonomy, commonly believed to be the driving force behind the political and social achievements of the Enlightenment.

This view of Beethoven, however, rests on a narrow vision of the Enlightenment that aggressively stresses secular humanism and political liberalism. In this conception, the light of science and reason has dispelled the darkness of religion and authoritarian regimes in the name of freedom and tolerance. These elements play a critical role in the underlying "grand narrative" of modern progress that has shaped the self-identity of the West for over two centuries. In the 1960s, this unitary and teleologically secular view was popularized in historical accounts of the Enlightenment by figures such as Peter Gay.[1]

In more recent decades, historians of the Enlightenment have called into question this narrative,[2] even if it still persists as an underlying, if often unacknowledged, plot in much scholarly work today.[3] The Enlightenment was, in truth, far from a unitary movement. It manifested itself differently

All translations in this introduction are by the authors, except where a published translation is cited.

[1] Gay, *Enlightenment*.

[2] See De Dijn, "Politics of Enlightenment"; and Barnett, *Enlightenment and Religion*, 1–10, for overviews of Enlightenment historiography since Gay's work. See also Bradley and Van Kley, introduction to *Religion and Politics in Enlightenment Europe*, esp. 2–3; and Edelstein, *Enlightenment*, esp. 2–6.

[3] For discussions of this issue, see Printy, "History and Church History," 259; Blanchard, *Synod of Pistoia*, 44n2; Lehner, *Catholic Enlightenment*, 1–13, esp. 2–3; Lehner, *On the Road*, 1–21, esp. 5–6; Sorkin, *Religious Enlightenment*, 1; and Beales, *Prosperity and Plunder*, 9.

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across the globe, and individual figures associated with its ideals differed significantly in their political and philosophical views. Suggestions of a more variegated and pluriform conception of the Enlightenment can be found in historical scholarship dating as far back as the 1980s,[4] but it has become more broadly accepted among historians of the Enlightenment in the past two decades.[5] The opening essay in our volume, by historian Shaun Blanchard (Chapter 1), provides a useful overview of the evolution of Enlightenment historiography over the last several decades, with a particular emphasis on the changing ways in which scholars conceive of the relationship between the Enlightenment and religion, especially Catholicism. A revised view of religion and the Enlightenment has indeed been one important consequence of the more complex definition of the Enlightenment that has emerged, even if it is by no means the only one. Far from being opposed to the Enlightenment, religion is now regarded by many scholars as a vital component of many strands of the Enlightenment. As David Sorkin has written in his influential book *The Religious Enlightenment* (2008), "contrary to the secular master narrative, the Enlightenment was not only compatible with religious belief but conducive to it. The Enlightenment made possible new iterations of faith. With the Enlightenment's advent, religion lost neither its place nor its authority in European society and culture. If we trace modern culture to the Enlightenment, its foundations were decidedly religious."[6]

What consequences would such revised views of the Enlightenment have for the way in which we understand Beethoven and his music? This is an issue we (the editors) have begun to explore in our previous work from both historical and philosophical perspectives,[7] but the question is of such importance for Beethoven scholarship – and, in some ways, for musicology more broadly – that it deserves further investigation and debate. This book is the result of an invitation we made to scholars to explore this issue with us. We brought together a group of interlocutors from various parts of the globe with diverse scholarly perspectives and spanning different generations, with the aim

[4] See, e.g., Beales, "Christians and 'Philosophes'"; and Beales, *Joseph II*, vol. 1.

[5] Notable sources in this regard include Sheehan, *Enlightenment Bible*; Edelstein, *Enlightenment*; and Sorkin, *Religious Enlightenment*. Jonathan Israel's influential tetralogy of histories of the Enlightenment – *Radical Enlightenment* (2001), *Enlightenment Contested* (2006), *A Revolution of the Mind* (2010), *Democratic Enlightenment* (2011) – can be understood as partially reviving Peter Gay's outlook by arguing that only certain "radical" strands of the Enlightenment were ultimately influential for the longer-term history of the West, but even so Israel takes for granted that the Enlightenment did exist in many different strands.

[6] Sorkin, *Religious Enlightenment*, 3.

[7] Chua, *Beethoven and Freedom*; Chong, *Catholic Beethoven*; and Chong, "Beethoven's Theologian."

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of breaking down the practical boundaries – national, linguistic, disciplinary – that can often block effective scholarly exchange and the dissemination of ideas. We are especially pleased that three of our contributors come from outside of music studies: Shaun Blanchard (historical theology), Peter Höyng (German studies), and Axel Körner (history). Our purpose was to create an open environment for a diversity of views that would align with a more pluriform understanding of the Enlightenment. To prevent our book from being a disconnected compilation of individual essays, we curated a series of conversations to share and discuss preliminary versions of the chapters in this volume in the hope that our collaboration would result in a coherent dialogue.

This process resulted in the presence of a number of common themes that tie together different contributions, notwithstanding the variety of topics covered by the authors. Unsurprisingly given its prominence in revisionist narratives concerning the Enlightenment, religion emerged as one of these themes. Anna Sanda explores sacred music practice in Bonn during Beethoven's youth (Chapter 6), while Jen-yen Chen investigates the mature Beethoven's use of historicist styles of sacred music (Chapter 11). Desmond Sheehan places the Gellert Lieder in the context of devotional practices of the era (Chapter 10). Axel Körner explains the links between Beethoven, his patron the Archduke Rudolph, and the Catholic Enlightenment in Bohemia (Chapter 12). Essays by Nicholas Chong (Chapter 3), Daniel K. L. Chua (Chapter 2), and Helmut Loos (Chapter 4) delve into the role of religion in the reception history of Beethoven's music during the nineteenth century.

These contributions illustrate that Catholicism was a prominent aspect of every sphere of the Beethoven's life – intellectually, politically, and culturally – reinforcing the perspective presented in Chong's recent monograph *The Catholic Beethoven*.[8] But to stress the importance of the Catholic religion for understanding Beethoven's historical context does not align comfortably with long-standing assumptions in Beethoven scholarship. Beethoven's unreliable secretary, Anton Schindler, whose biography is as fabricated as it is firsthand, derailed the issue early on by claiming that Beethoven was a deist (as Chong's essay in this volume explains). This misconception merely fueled the Enlightenment narrative in Beethoven scholarship, which often characterizes the composer as a religious nonconformist with unorthodox views ranging from pantheism to Eastern mysticism. To be clear, however, attempting to reframe Beethoven within a religious Enlightenment does not so much reposition him as an orthodox Catholic as defamiliarize our own assumptions by exploring what kind of

[8] Chong, *Catholic Beethoven*. See also Chong, "Beethoven's Theologian."

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Catholicism flourished in the Austrian Enlightenment. Clearly, a Beethoven who sets Protestant devotional literature to music, requests a German text for his Mass in C, and quotes extensively from Indian religious texts in his *Tagebuch* represents an unfamiliar Catholicism from our twenty-first-century perspective.

The political aspects of the Enlightenment constitute another theme connecting multiple essays in this volume. In addition to religious issues, Chong's essay on nineteenth-century Beethoven reception describes the political factors that helped encourage a particular conception of the Enlightenment to dominate biographies of the composer. Julia Ronge explains the importance of aristocratic court culture to Beethoven's early development (Chapter 5). Joanna Biermann delves into the political outlook of Beethoven's friend Nikolaus Simrock (Chapter 7). Two chapters focus on the radical cleric Eulogius Schneider but from different perspectives: Bruce MacIntyre addresses the impact of Schneider's ideas on Beethoven's *Joseph* Cantata (Chapter 8), while Peter Höyng uses Schneider's life story to illustrate the role of censorship in the Enlightenment (Chapter 9).

The chapters by Ronge, Sanda, Biermann, and Sheehan also draw attention to the Enlightenment's impact on social life, including political institutions, liturgical and devotional practices, and private associations such as the Lesegesellschaft in Bonn. To this group of essays may be added Birgit Lodes's contribution on Beethoven's participation in a particular culture of friendship that emerged in late Enlightenment Vienna (Chapter 13). In its focus on print literature, Sheehan's chapter addresses, too, the importance of material culture in the dissemination of knowledge during the Enlightenment (Chapter 10). These chapters constitute a helpful shift away from an excessive focus on ideas and events – especially political and religious ones – in the way the Enlightenment has been traditionally construed in Beethoven scholarship. Instead, we hope to pivot from the intellectual history of the Enlightenment – or various "Enlightenments" – to the everyday objects and practices that informed the local details of Beethoven's life. The Enlightenment is often seen as a state of mind: its story has been largely shaped by high-flying ideas. But the Enlightenment is not just an intellectual history to be read retrospectively with the hindsight of the present. Exploring its materials from a "ground-level" perspective can also speak volumes. Seemingly insignificant things in Beethoven's hands, such as books, mementos, clothing, instruments, and devotional items are not passive objects but objects with agency; they are what Bruno Latour's "Actor-Network-Theory" labels "actants," which interact with

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people and generate and mediate practices.[9] Latour's insights have been carried over to Enlightenment studies by William Warner and Clifford Siskin, for whom media – defined as "everything that intervenes, enables, supplements, or is simply in between" – takes precedence over the social. The Enlightenment becomes "an event in the history of mediation" explored through a particular way of applying tools and practices.[10] The objects Beethoven and his acquaintances collected, distributed, and used can reflect what might be described as the mundane epistemological structure of the Enlightenment: knowledge as a form of acquisition, self-curation, self-censorship, and religious practice.

The major themes of this volume cut across all three of its parts. The first part presents four essays (Blanchard, Chua, Chong, Loos) dealing with Enlightenment historiography and the role of Enlightenment narratives in Beethoven reception. The remaining chapters are divided simply into two parts based on whether they focus more on Beethoven's youth in Bonn (Ronge, Sanda, Biermann, MacIntyre, and Höyng) or his adult career in Vienna (Sheehan, Chen, Körner, and Lodes). The chapters on Bonn join other recent efforts to reevaluate – and, in some respects, to draw more attention to – Beethoven's upbringing in that city.[11] This issue is of particular relevance for "rethinking Beethoven and the Enlightenment," for in much of the Beethoven literature, Bonn has been depicted not merely as the composer's place of birth but also as the seedbed for Beethoven's Enlightenment credentials. But how enlightened was Bonn? Or rather, what kind of Enlightenment animated the city? Traditional scholarship around the "enlightened Beethoven" has often been based on circumstantial evidence taken from selected sources, then skewed to fit a presupposed narrative. Christian Gottlieb Neefe, for example, has frequently been singled out as having had an outsized influence on the young Beethoven, presumably because of his Masonic connections and politically progressive ideas as a prominent member of both the Illuminati and the Lesegesellschaft in Bonn. But this is guesswork, shaped by a tacit

[9] For a general introduction to "Actor-Network-Theory," see Latour, *Reassembling the Social*.

[10] Siskin and Warner, *This Is Enlightenment*, 5, 22. Other studies have similarly emphasized the material forms of Enlightenment knowledge over its content, such as Jonathan Sheehan's analysis of biblical translations "through the dispersive media of the Enlightenment" in *Enlightenment Bible*, 85; Birgit Tautz's hyperlocal literary history in *Translating the World*; and the Multigraph Collective's poetics of print in *Interacting with Print*.

[11] Notable examples include Lodes, Reisinger, and Wilson, *Beethoven und andere Hofmusiker*; Reisinger, Riepe, and Wilson, *Operatic Library of Elector Maximilian Franz*; Reisinger, *Musik machen, fördern, sammeln*; J. D. Wilson, "From the Chapel to the Theatre"; and Konrad, "Der 'Bonner' Beethoven."

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Enlightenment framework, based on a music teacher who was mostly absent during Beethoven's time in Bonn.[12] So, in general, perhaps we should be more agnostic. The claim that the young Beethoven was a card-carrying *Aufklärer* (a follower of the German Enlightenment) lacks sufficient nuance and in some respects even rests on evidence that is partial and ambiguous. If there is only a circumstantial context for this possibility, then what does this social and political network look like from a pluriform point of view? To reframe Beethoven this way defamiliarizes our own assumptions about *the* Enlightenment and can produce some surprisingly "unenlightened" results concerning freedom, autonomy, progress, and tolerance.

As will become apparent, to reevaluate the "enlightened Beethoven" – in terms of its origins as well as its political, religious, and social aspects – should encourage us to cast a skeptical eye on assumptions that are foundational for Beethoven scholarship. That said, while it is vital to challenge the conventional view of Beethoven and his music, our goal is not to overthrow current scholarship with a counternarrative that, in any case, would only reinforce the old narrative as its negative version.[13] We advocate a more open approach: the traditional narratives are not unsalvageable, but simply incomplete and insufficiently complex, often beholden to ideological beliefs that at times jar against simple facts. A sweeping tale of Enlightenment-as-freedom might still be told, but how, for instance, does this conception tally with the local details of Beethoven's life in Bonn and Vienna, which were conditioned by Catholic thought and practices under the reforms of Joseph II? Indeed, how does one integrate the image of the heroic Beethoven riding the anticlerical and antimonarchist wave of the French Revolution with an Enlightenment despot, such as Joseph II, who held both sovereign power and religious authority? Or more directly in terms of the Beethoven literature, how can a composer who explicitly championed "freedom and progress" in art call a functional liturgical piece, the *Missa solemnis*, his "greatest work"?[14]

[12] For two examples of the traditional view of Neefe as a political progressive who exerted a significant influence on the young Beethoven, see Kinderman, *Beethoven: A Political Artist*, 19; and Cooper, *Beethoven*, 6, 14. In contrast, Helmut Loos has shown that the radicalism of Neefe's political outlook has been exaggerated and even that he was probably a sincere Christian (Loos, "Christian Gottlob Neefe," 392–99, 402–3, 407). Moreover, Neefe may not even have had that close of a relationship with Beethoven (Loos, 389–91, 404–5). See also May, "Neefe als Teilhaber an Beethovens Ruhm."

[13] See Rumph, *Beethoven after Napoleon*; and Mathew, *Political Beethoven*.

[14] See Anderson no. 1079/*BGA* no. 1468; and Anderson no. 1270/*BGA* no. 1787: "Das größte Werk"; "mein größtes werk [*sic*]."

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To address such conundrums, we do not wish to arm Beethoven studies with new theories and introduce a tranche of new scholars. Instead, to facilitate constructive change, the volume aims to bring existing Beethoven scholars together to explore a thicker, multilayered description of Beethoven's historical context and the various Enlightenment currents that flowed through Bonn and Vienna at the turn of the nineteenth century, in which historical data that seemingly grate against the dominant narratives can be reevaluated once the old ideological grip is loosened. We aim to provide both a wider historical background congruent with current research outside Beethoven studies and a more detailed account of Beethoven's cultural milieu. Alongside this thick contextual mixture, the attention given in this volume to the reception history of the Enlightenment narrative of secularization and progress helps illuminate how the "heroic" Beethoven came into being. We need to see the issues from both temporal perspectives in order to undo the dominant narrative that has shaped so much Beethoven scholarship.

Most importantly, we aim to present a view of Beethoven that actively resists reductive dichotomies: traditional versus radical, religious versus secular. Such dichotomies, which often drive the grand Enlightenment narratives, flatten out the issues and fail to represent the nuances of the social, political, and intellectual climate during Beethoven's lifetime. Ultimately, we do not have to "choose" between a progressive or reactionary Beethoven. "Was Beethoven enlightened?" is not a binary question, but one that has complicated answers.

The stakes are high, for the traditional image of Beethoven as secular-liberal-humanist "hero" has become second nature, judging from how pervasive it is in textbooks, popular writings on music, and even specialized Beethoven scholarship. Among music scholars more generally, attention to the more complex, pluriform conception of the Enlightenment that we are engaging with has so far been extremely limited. A 2018 conference panel at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society in San Antonio, entitled "Rethinking the Enlightenment," constitutes a notable exception, but it focused narrowly on eighteenth-century French music.[15] A number of scholars specializing in Jewish music have recently explored the role of music in the Jewish Enlightenment in Berlin, which David Sorkin identifies as an important strand of the "religious Enlightenment" we have

[15] The description of the panel in the official conference program began: "Speaking of 'the Enlightenment' as a single historical entity has become increasingly problematic as scholars of French cultural life have recognized the diverse outlooks evolving in that time, some of which do not fit the supposed 'liberal' model of enlightened thinking."

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discussed (p. 2).[16] Studies of Catholic sacred music in eighteenth-century Austria, including by canonical composers such as Haydn and Mozart, have also engaged at least obliquely with the idea of a Catholic Enlightenment in their investigation of the musical impact of the "Josephinist" church reforms.[17] Our hope is not merely to build on this previous work by applying newer and more nuanced conceptions of the Enlightenment to Beethoven's music, but to go further by encouraging a reconsideration of how such conceptions might affect the historiography of Western music more broadly. Put simply, to question the "Enlightenment Beethoven" has repercussions, beyond Beethoven, for the way we frame the history of Western music. Change is always difficult, but it is time we take the challenge seriously in rethinking Beethoven and the Enlightenment.

[16] See, e.g., Cypess, "Music Historicism"; and the essays in Cypess and Sinkoff, *Sara Levy's World*. See also Sorkin, *Religious Enlightenment*, 165–213; and Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Religious Enlightenment*.

[17] See, e.g., Black, "Mozart and the Practice of Sacred Music"; Chen, "Catholic Sacred Music in Austria"; MacIntyre, *Viennese Concerted Mass*; and Pauly, "Reforms of Church Music." The Josephinist reforms are also discussed in Shaun Blanchard's essay in this volume, "Catholic Enlightenment in the Age of Beethoven" (Chapter 1).

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