

Genetic Analysis of Beethoven's Scherzi

Jens Dufner, Beethoven-Haus Bonn

Beethoven's scherzi have been the object of numerous studies, both in comprehensive treatments of his complete works, as well as in analyses of individual movements. The main focus of these studies has often been the formal characteristics of Beethoven's scherzi and their significance in music history. For example, much has been written on the five-part scherzi that can be found mainly in the middle period, as well as on the problems of repetition signs and their consequences for the performance and the final form of the movements.

This paper, too, deals with problems of repetition in Beethoven's scherzi. The perspective, however, is a different one, one that has often been neglected in the past, namely genetic analysis. My focus is less on the definitive, final structure of scherzo movements than on the creative process preceding these individual formal solutions. It is not by chance that the scherzo movements are the locus of formal reworking: Their short, periodic formal sections can be used like "building blocks," allowing multiple possibilities for combinations and for varying the proportions within the movement. It is thus not surprising that the repetition signs in Beethoven's scherzi prove strikingly often to be the result of the author's revisions: Many repeat signs and verbal instructions such as *da capo*, *dal segno* etc. were deleted, revised or added later by Beethoven after the movement was, in essence, already finished. Sometimes Beethoven even revised the repeat signs several times. The most prominent example is without doubt the third movement of the Fifth Symphony, which has often been the subject of heated and controversial debates about whether its structure is actually in three or five parts (most of these debates, however, don't focus on the genesis of the revisions but rather on the legitimacy of one or the other versions and on Beethoven's presumed final intentions). But it is not only the symphony in C minor which shows later revisions concerning the repeat signs—similar observation can be made in the sources of several other scherzo movements; some of the changes were made very late, even in the context of first performances. At times the manuscripts and printed sources mirror misunderstandings deriving from the interpretation of unclear, later revisions of repetition instructions in the source. But even they can illuminate the creative process.

On the basis of various scherzi (or minuets) by Beethoven from different musical genres, I will examine the genesis of these movements. The central focus of my paper will include both the repeated parts themselves, and the consequences of the revisions for the final form of the movement.