

BEETHOVEN'S PROMETHEAN CONCERTO IN C MINOR
W_oO

A FOUR MOVEMENT MUSIC DRAMA
BASED ON LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN:
THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE MUSIC

SCORE

by

Ludwig Van Beethoven

Libretto

By

Cindi Sansone-Braff

38 Clinton Avenue
East Patchogue, NY 11772
cindisansonebraff@gmail.com
631-879-3287
Member of the Dramatists Guild

“Our collective prayer for inner and outer peace.
From the heart, B. May it return to the heart.”

Dona Nobis Pacem

BEETHOVEN'S PROMETHEAN CONCERTO in C MINOR WoOACT I: **OVERTURE****FIRST MOVEMENT**

SCENE ONE ... Late afternoon, August 6, 1826.

SCENE TWO ... A moment later.

SCENE THREE ... Immediately following the previous scene.

SCENE FOUR ... A moment later.

SCENE FIVE ... A few moments later.

SECOND MOVEMENT

SCENE SIX ... A moment later.

SCENE SEVEN ... A moment later.

SCENE EIGHT ... Immediately following the last scene, the sun is setting.

SCENE NINE ... A moment later.

SCENE TEN ... A moment later.

SCENE ELEVEN ... A moment later.

SCENE TWELVE ... A moment later.

SCENE THIRTEEN ... A moment later, twilight.

SCENE FOURTEEN ... A moment later, nightfall.

THE END OF ACT I**INTERMEZZO**

ACT II:

THIRD MOVEMENT

SCENE ONE ... The middle of the same endless night.

SCENE TWO ... A moment later.

SCENE THREE ... A moment later.

FOURTH MOVEMENT

SCENE FOUR ... A moment later, dawn is breaking.

CODA

THE END

CAST OF CHARACTERS

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN ... The MASTER is 56 years old and gravely ill. A little more than seven months from this day, all of Vienna would watch The Master's funeral procession making its way through their streets. He is short, of stocky build with broad shoulders that his oversized head appears to rest on, almost neckless in appearance. He once had a dark complexion, but it has turned ruddy with time. It's also pockmarked, and he has a cleft chin. He has a wild mane of shoulder-length grey, almost white hair, and he has a beard, unkempt, not as if he purposely grew it, but that it grew of its own accord like grey weeds sprouting here and there. He most definitely makes the appearance of the classic Byronic hero. He is dressed in a long, worn black topcoat, which almost reaches his ankles. It is several sizes too large for him, giving the impression of a Dracula cape, and the upturned collar only adds to the vampiric aura. He is wearing a black top hat somewhat misshapen from having been sat on one too many times. To the undiscerning eye, he looks like a madman, a phantom, a vagabond. Still, as he speaks and opens up, we see his magnitude, charisma, energy, super-human gifts and grace, and ultimately his indisputable genius despite his clumsiness.

RECORDED VOICE OF BEETHOVEN

KARL ... BEETHOVEN's twenty-year-old nephew

CHORUS

EGYPTIAN DANCER

JOSEPHINE ... BEETHOVEN's Immortal Beloved, who appears as an apparition at the end of the play.

MUSIC

Note: The playwright has public-domain recorded music for this play. If you would like to use this music, you can request it from her.

OVERTURE

The Creatures of Prometheus, op. 43

LEITMOTIFS

BEETHOVEN ... *The Creatures of Prometheus*, op. 43

KARL ... (“Turkish March”) from the *Ruins of Athens*, op. 113

JOSEPHINE ... “An die Hoffnung,” op. 32

STEPHEN VON BREUNING ... Violin Concerto in D major, op. 61

BEETHOVEN’S BROTHERS ... Piano Concerto No. 5 (“Emperor”) op. 73, Adagio

BEETHOVEN’S MOTHER ... Piano Sonata No. 14 in C Sharp Minor, op. 27, No. 2, (“Moonlight”) First Movement, Adagio sostenuto

BEETHOVEN’S FATHER ... Last Movement, Piano Sonata No. 14 in C Sharp Minor, op. 27, (“Moonlight”)

ACT I

FIRST MOVEMENT

Scene One

Symphony No. 6, F Major, op. 68 (“Pastoral”) Movement II

Scene Two

Symphony No. 5, C Minor, op. 67, First Movement

Scene Three

Symphony No. 5, C Minor, op. 67, First Movement abruptly ends.

Extended Leitmotif for KARL

Scene Four

Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN

Leitmotif for KARL

“Alle die herrscher darf ich gruben” from *der glorreiche Augenblick*, op. 136

Symphony No. 3, E Flat Major, op. 55, Movement I, Measure 65

Scene Five

Symphony No. 5, Third Movement, Measure 71

(“Rasumovsky”) string quartet op. 59, No. 3 in C Major, Movement IV: Allegro molto

SECOND MOVEMENT

Scene Six

Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN

Leitmotif for KARL

‘Wellington’s Victory’ (“Battle Symphony”) op. 91, “The Battle of Allegro; Meno allegro”

Leonore No. 2, op. 72a

Leitmotif for STEPHEN VON BREUNING

Leitmotif for KARL

Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN’S BROTHERS

Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN’S MOTHER

Leitmotif for JOSEPHINE

Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN

Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN’S FATHER

Scene Seven

Unfinished Tenth Symphony

Scene Eight

Kyrie from *Missa solennis* op.123 in D

Scene Nine

Leitmotif for KARL

Leitmotif for JOSEPHINE

Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, (Andante con moto,) op. 58

Scene Ten

Leitmotif for KARL

Scene Eleven

Piano Trio D Major, op. 70, No. 1, (“Ghost”) Largo assai ed espressivo.

Scene Twelve

Credo from *Missa solemnis*

Scene Thirteen

Symphony No. 2, in D Major, op. 36, Fourth Movement

Leitmotif for Karl

Leitmotif for JOSEPHINE

Leitmotif for KARL

Piano Sonata No. 17, in D Minor, op. 33 No. 2, (“Tempest”) Allegretto

Scene Fourteen

Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN

String quartet, op. 18, No. 4 in C Minor, the Finale, Allegro

Leitmotif for JOSEPHINE

The second movement of Sonata No. 17 in D Minor, op. 31, No. 2, Adagio

END OF ACT I

INTERMEZZO

The second movement of the Third Symphony ES-Major, op. 5 (“Eroica.”)

MUSIC

ACT II

THIRD MOVEMENT

Scene One

The second movement of the Seventh Symphony in A Major, op. 92

Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN's MOTHER

Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN's FATHER

Leitmotif for JOSEPHINE

Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN's BROTHERS

Leitmotif for KARL

The second movement of the Seventh Symphony in A Major, op. 92

Scene Two

Fading away from the second movement of the Seventh Symphony in A Major, op. 92

Leitmotif for KARL

Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN's MOTHER

Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN's FATHER

Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN's MOTHER

Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN's FATHER

Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN's BROTHERS

Scene Three

“An die ferne Geliebe.” op. 98

FOURTH MOVEMENT

Scene Four

Leitmotif for Karl

First Movement of the Sonata for Piano No. 23, in F Minor, op. 57, (“Appassionata”)

Leitmotif for JOSEPHINE

Piano Sonata No. 31 in A flat Major, op. 110, Fuga: Allegro ma non troppo

Fourth Movement, Allegro from the Sixth Symphony, F Major, Op. 68, (“Pastoral”)

String Quartet, op. 130 in B flat Major, (“Cavatina”) Adagio molto expressive

First Movement of op. 125, (“Choral”) the Ninth Symphony; Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso

Leitmotif for JOSEPHINE

Leitmotif for STEPHEN VON BREUNING

Leitmotif for KARL

Agnus Dei from *Missa solennis*

CODA

Leitmotif for JOSEPHINE

Sonata No. 29 in B flat Major, op. 106, third Movement: Adagio sostenuto, (“Hammerklavier”)

THE END

Cindi Sansone-Braff
38 Clinton Avenue
East Patchogue, NY 11772
631-475-4266
cindisansonebraff@gmail.com

BEETHOVEN'S PROMETHEAN CONCERTO IN C MINOR WoO

**A FOUR MOVEMENT MUSIC DRAMA BASED ON LUDWIG VAN
BEETHOVEN: THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE MUSIC**

SCORE

BY

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

LIBRETTO

BY

CINDI SANSONE-BRAFF

The scene takes place on a hilltop site known as the ruins of Rauhenstein Castle in the quiet Helenenthal Valley near Baden in Austria. Since antiquity, people have come to Baden to enjoy the comfort and healing properties of sulfuric thermal baths. BEETHOVEN spent fifteen summers in this serene spa town. Amidst this scenic splendor, BEETHOVEN was inspired to write his ("Pastoral") Symphony and much of the Ninth Symphony and the *Missa solemnis*. Moreover, this whole legendary band of forested hills in the Vienna Woods was a beloved spot where BEETHOVEN came seeking solace and comfort in the beauty of nature.

Time: The action begins late afternoon on August 6, 1826, and continues through dusk, darkness, until the dawn of a new day. Earlier on this fateful morning, BEETHOVEN's nephew, KARL (BEETHOVEN was his legal guardian at the time), had climbed up to the ruins of Rauhenstein and tried to kill himself.

This play is a multidisciplinary piece combining music, narrative, poetry, dance, drama, puppetry, sculpture, and painting in the set design. It's meant to bring to life Wagner's ideal of *gesamtkunstwerk*. Ideally, the set would be capable of transforming itself to reflect BEETHOVEN's ever-changing moods and visions. Thus, we will move back and forth from an idyllic vision of the world to a grotesque, surrealistic vision of hell on earth. The lighting director could create some of these changing visions with the way light and shadows play on objects and by using computer graphics. Because the play takes place from daylight through sunset, from dusk through darkness to dawn, this

moving from light through darkness and back to light will have a similar effect on BEETHOVEN's moods and visions.

The set will represent a landscapists' vision of the world along the lines of Lucas Cranach and Albrecht Altdorfer, who helped open the Austrians' eyes to the beauty of their natural surroundings. The trees (high elms), shrubs, bushes, green foliage, and wildflowers used for the forest should also be works of art – not realistic representations of trees, but trees as sculpted by an artist out of paper mache or clay or carved out of wood or welded from metal. Ideally, these idyllic, sculpted trees and flowers would be able to ascend and descend from the rafters, whereas the grotesque black trees, shrubs, bushes, and foliage that represent Dante's Inferno's vision of "The woods of the suicides" would appear to arise from beneath the earth like a page right out of a giant pop-up book.

The ruins must also be works of art. The largest of the ruins will be UPSTAGE. Although this is a ruin of a castle circa the 14th century, it could easily have been an ancient Greek or Roman ruin since the architecture was influenced by antiquity. What remains are three attached arches with six columns reminiscent of an ancient Doric temple or a Roman amphitheater like the Colosseum in Rome, built circa 80 AD. These three ruined portals are used for the CHORUS to ENTER and EXIT through. There should be other smaller ruins throughout, including an almost intact bridge. In the distance, we can see other wooded, rolling hills. DOWNSTAGE are two ruins of marble statues that were probably replicas of some Fourth Century BC bronze Greek sculptures. One statue depicts a man and the other a woman. Their bodies are partially draped; their heads, faces, and torsos are still intact, but each is missing a limb.

A section of the set will be elevated and represent a memory corner. Some of the action takes place here. If the actor portraying BEETHOVEN can play the piano, there will be a piano in this corner.

NOTE: All the music used in this piece is BEETHOVEN's. Whether to use a live orchestra or part of an orchestra, or recorded music, or perhaps some live and some recorded music will be determined by the resources of each theatre.

NOTE: The setting described above is ideal, but it is possible to stage this production with a simple set. In this case, the lighting effects would mirror the changing moods of this piece.

Throughout the play, we will hear the RECORDED VOICE OF BEETHOVEN. This voice will come from speakers placed strategically in the theatre. Because of the isolation that his deafness caused, BEETHOVEN tended to have conversations with himself, and this back and forth dialogue represents that aspect of his being.

OVERTURE

As the audience is filling the theatre, the set is in BLACKOUT, and **the overture from The Creatures of Prometheus, op. 43, begins.** When the overture is finished (about five minutes), the lights come up only on the DOWNSTAGE area of the set, and we see the ruins of the two marble statues. The rest of the set is still in BLACKOUT.

FIRST MOVEMENT

ACT I

SCENE ONE

(LATE AFTERNOON, AUGUST 6, 1826)

(“PASTORAL”)

The music softly begins from Movement II, Andante molto moto, “By the Stream” (Afternoon and early evening) from **BEETHOVEN’s Symphony No. 6 F Major, Op. 68 (“Pastoral”).** The lights on the set now mirror the late afternoon summer sun. The set is in its idyllic form, reflecting the serene feeling of the music. The audience will drink in the beauty of BEETHOVEN’s music and the beauty of the set. The following quote from BEETHOVEN must be spoken with the music like another voice during the richly polyphonic cadence material.

BEETHOVEN’s RECORDED VOICE

Almighty One, in the woods, I am blessed
Happy everyone in the woods. Every tree
Speaks through thee, O God! What glory in
The woodland! On the heights is peace –
Peace to serve him.

When the music fades out after a few moments, there should be some beautiful nature sounds like gently murmuring brooks, soft wind, rustling trees, and birds singing (yellowhammers, quails, nightingales, and cuckoos) since these are the birds that BEETHOVEN claimed composed the (“Pastoral”) with him.

ACT I**SCENE TWO****(LATE AFTERNOON)****(THE WOODS OF THE SUICIDES)**

Suddenly the lighting changes as if a huge black cloud just crossed over the sun. There is a profound moment of silence and then the almost loud sound of **the 1st Movement; Allegro Con Brio from the Symphony No. 5, C Minor op. 67.**

After the initial da da da dumm, da da da dumm, the music grows quieter, and we hear the sound of a horse-drawn carriage racing towards us. The hoofbeat rhythm is in the characteristic short, short, short, long rhythm of the Fifth Symphony. This section should have a fugue-like quality and a dark feeling that fate has knocked – the wolf is at the door. It is a classic Beethovenian moment when life is about to catapult us – God knows where, and there’s nothing we can do to stop it.

The horse-drawn carriage sound stops, as does the Fifth Symphony.

Right before the audience’s eyes, the set transforms itself from the idyllic vision of the opening with the beautiful trees ascending through the rafters and the green foliage and flowers wilting and dying. Then the Dante’s Inferno, set with the black trees and black foliage, appears to rise out of hell itself. The HARPIES, flying puppets make to look like birds with human faces, descend upon the black trees, and as they feast upon the branches, the branches bleed. The human faces of the HARPIES are copies of BEETHOVEN's life mask that Franz Klein made of him in 1813 with its characteristic scowl.

ACT I

SCENE THREE

(A MOMENT LATER)

(HAUNTING VISIONS)

A screen or veil slowly descends from the rafters. **We hear the leitmotif for KARL: The Turkish March from *The Ruins of Athens*, op. 113.**

The following dream sequence enacted behind a screen is, in essence, what BEETHOVEN is imagining as he is racing in a coach on the way to the ruins. All we see is a silhouette of BEETHOVEN's nephew's suicide attempt. Karl is taller and thinner than his uncle, and he appears fashionably dressed circa early 1820s Vienna.

We see only a shadow figure of Karl leaning against one of the ruins. He removes his top hat and puts it on top of one of the ruins.

He begins marching like a soldier to his leitmotif. The music continues beyond the leitmotif for about 40 seconds. He has a pistol in his left hand. He continues his choreographed march. He aims the pistol at his left temple. He pulls the trigger, and the gun goes off.

Holding the left side of his head, he stumbles off of the stage.

BEETHOVEN

(Offstage scream) No, Karl, no! (pause) No ...

ACT I**SCENE FOUR****(A MOMENT LATER)****(BEETHOVEN'S OPENING ARIA)**

The set is still in BLACKOUT. We hear the 20-second introduction to the overture from *The Creatures of Prometheus*, Op. 43. (Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN.) For a moment, there will be silence before we hear BEETHOVEN's rantings. We don't see BEETHOVEN, but we hear his recorded voice shouting from OFFSTAGE. We never hear the coachman's voice since he is talking at a normal level and cannot be heard from afar the way BEETHOVEN can.

RECORDED VOICE

(Once again, we hear KARL's leitmotif.) (BEETHOVEN screams over it:) Why, Karl, why? (Pause) Why? (The leitmotif ends, and BEETHOVEN slams the carriage door shut, but it flies open, and we hear him slam it two more times, pause, slam it again, and then it finally stays shut.) No, don't wait for me. I said, don't wait. Driver, are you deaf or just dumb? I said, no, no, no (Pause), no!!! Damn you! What? When will I – what? Come down the mount? (He begins laughing his maniacal laughter, which is truly a mixture of irony, pain, sarcasm, and disillusionment.) When I am transfigured, of course! Drinking, you say? Have I been drinking? Yes, sir, I have been drinking. And, I will continue to drink 'till I am good and drunk, drunk (Pause), drunk. To hell with my doctor's orders! To hell with my stinking liver! To hell with my volcanic gut! May it spew my innards all over this hellhole like one of Napoleon's infamous cannons. *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*. Viva Enlightenment – Emperor Napoleon! **(For twenty seconds or so, "Alle die herrscher darf ich gruben" from *der glorreiche Augenblick*, op. 136 plays.** BEETHOVEN wrote this for the Congress of Vienna in 1814 to celebrate Napoleon's defeat.) Oh, how I've come to hate that wretched piece! What a fool I was – letting those pompous windbags prune and cut the text like it was a French garden. Excuse me? Coachman, you say you don't understand me? That's not new news. No one understands me! Now – go. You master of asses. You Charon! Take your twin nags and go to hell for all I care. Just leave me – alone. Pardon? You said you want me to go – where? I don't hear well. Deaf as a dead man. Did you say you want me to go – home? Home? (He laughs, but it sounds more like he is crying.) I have no home. I am a gypsy, a gentleman of the road, a vagabond. Home? At best, I run a boarding house for *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* alias – my servants. Home? I head an insane asylum for my good-for-nothing nephew who'd rather blow his brains out than deal with his senile uncle. Truth be told, the infamous Beethoven, the creator of so many immortal works, owns no home. He's not only deaf as a doormat and stubborn as a mule – he's damn near-poor as a church mouse. And so, this so-called Master takes orders from

“The Landlords.” That is ‘till I say, “The hell with you,” storm out, and find myself quite homeless once again. (Imitating the sound of a woman’s voice) “Herr Beethoven, you are no musical genius to me, just another rotten tenant; that’s what you are! You flood the place when you bathe and clatter on your untuned pianos like some crazed animal. And, to top it all off, you scribble on my shutters like an imbecile ... why people come for miles just to see your chicken scratch. It’s a disgrace; that’s what it is!” Come again, sir? You want me to – what? Pay you? Ha! Money. It’s always about money, isn’t it? Well, how much do I owe you? Speak up, you braying ass. (Pause) How much? I must be hearing things. Here. Write the amount – here – in this notebook. Good Heavens! I heard you right the first time. You swindler. You swine. You snake in the grass. Why Judas sold Jesus for less than that. Take it. (We hear the sound of coins falling and being thrown.) Take all of it. What use have I for money – now – at the hour of my death? Let them bury me in that “Field of Blood” up there. If “Potter’s Field” was good enough for Mozart, surely it’s good enough for me! (He takes his cane and bangs it on the coach four times in the short, short, short, long rhythm of the Fifth Symphony, and the horses begin whinnying and bucking.) Good riddance! (He throws his notebook at the coach. Then he begins picking up rocks and throwing them, and we hear them smashing against the coach. We now hear theme five (The transition passage) (Measure 65) from Symphony No. 3 (“Eroica”) in E Flat Major, op. 55, Movement 1, with its distinctly “hoofbeat” rhythm as the coach races away.) Heathen! Take that and that and that! To hell with you! To hell with the world! May the devil ride the whole lot of you! (Long Pause) Now, B., go fetch that damn notebook. You’ve got sketches for your Tenth Symphony in there.

(ENTER BEETHOVEN)

BEETHOVEN

Not to mention some highly treasonable things as well. Surely, the authorities will hang me by nightfall if they get ahold of it! (A ringing, buzzing, roaring sound is heard. BEETHOVEN screams at the top of his lungs.) Stop! How’s a man to think with all those bats and bees and bells besieging my brain?

RECORDED VOICE

Indeed, the next stop is the madhouse! (We hear him huffing and puffing and then plopping down.)

BEETHOVEN

Rest. I must rest. Yes, Dear God, your most humble servant needs rest.

BEETHOVEN removes his topcoat. He is wearing worn-out clothes circa the 19th century – trousers, jacket, vest, white high collar shirt with a cravat. There are holes in the elbows of his shirt. He takes his handkerchief, spits into it, and then wipes his sweating brow. A moment later, he begins coughing, then spitting up blood.)

RECORDED VOICE

Why don't you draw some hieroglyphics, B? That always relaxes you. (BEETHOVEN opens his notebook and begins drawing for a moment.) Imagine the beautiful statue of the goddess Isis bearing the inscription that you love so much.

BEETHOVEN

“I AM EVERYTHING THAT IS, THAT WAS, AND THAT SHALL BE. NO MORTAL HAS LIFTED MY VEIL.”

ACT I**SCENE FIVE****(A FEW MOMENTS LATER)****HELL ON EARTH**

Lights come up on the set. It's still in the Danté-esque hell on earth version. This part should play like a fuga per canonem. The subject being "Hell on Earth." The first voice we hear is French horns, blaring and barking like rabid dogs, from **Symphony No. 5, Third Movement, scherzo, "Allegro," Phrase 2b, measure 71. This is where the C minor key and the rhythms of the so-called fate motive have returned with all their dark, tragic force of despair.** The second voice we hear is BEETHOVEN's recorded voice, and the third one is BEETHOVEN's live voice, and so forth.

RECORDED VOICE

O, God, it's hot! I must be at the gates of hell proper itself. Why I do believe off in the distance, I hear the howling of Cerberus. (He howls like a wild animal.) Off on the horizon, I see the realms of Pluto and the engraved portals forewarning: "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here." Ah, yes, Dante, you and I, brothers in exile, left to wander this earth all alone. O, Woe is me, all right. (The ("Rasumovsky") string quartet op. 59, No. 3 in C Major, Movement IV: Allegro molto begins. We hear the beauty of the music for a moment before it abruptly cuts off.) Oh, what's the use? No one understood that piece either.

BEETHOVEN

Schuppanzigh, you, fat pig! You double ass! During rehearsals, even you cared nothing for the spirit that spoke to me! You only worried about your wretched fiddle! To hell with you! To hell with all musicians! Praise be to God; I can't hear what those organ grinders can't play! I hear the music here, in my heart, where it matters. As for the audience – a pox on the Viennese! They have no understanding of what true Art is. Rossini and all the other Italian-innies are their new heroes. Bel canto! (We hear BEETHOVEN clear his throat and spit.) My shit stinks less than that!

RECORDED VOICE

Why let it bother you, B.? The Austrians' taste knows from nothing but brown beer, sausages –

BEETHOVEN

– and ice cream! (The music abruptly stops.)

SECOND MOVEMENT

ACT I

SCENE SIX

(A MOMENT LATER)

(The Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN)

BEETHOVEN

I say it's high time the world knew – I make music for me ... for my maker ... for mankind to come. What weighs heavy on my heart must come out, and that – and that alone – is why I have written.

RECORDED VOICE

You are the “Generalissimus” of High Art! Accursed by those troops who have deserted you and your noble cause!

(BEETHOVEN laughs heartily.)

RECORDED VOICE

If you starved to death up here and vultures feasted upon your remains, who would even care? (Leitmotif for KARL, (“The Turkish March”)) Your nephew? No! He never wants to see you again. Never! Never! Never! (pause) Never!

BEETHOVEN

(BEETHOVEN begins singing the rhythms of The Turkish March (KARL's leitmotif) while marching around using his cane like a rifle imitating a soldier.)

So, you want to be a soldier, Karl? But you say, “My uncle won't let me.” Be my guest. (He wipes his sweating brow with the blood-soaked handkerchief and blood smears across his forehead.) If you want your brains blown from here to Kingdom Come, do it for some noble cause – in the name of God or revolution! Not just to get even with me! **(We now hear “Wellington's Victory,” op. 91, The Battle Allegro; Meno allegro. We listen to the battle sounds for about thirty seconds. BEETHOVEN yells over the music.)** Napoleon fell from grace, and I arose from the

BEETHOVEN (cont'd)

dead – deified. “Wellington’s Victory” is Beethoven’s greatest work!” My magnum opus? God forbid! *The Battle Symphony* – nothing but music for the moment. Crucify me for using my art for some greater good! Hang me for helping our wounded soldiers! Flog me for prostituting my music for the masses! God knows, when the war-weary, Viennese spirit beckoned, I answered their prayers. Yet I should have known – the masses are turncoats! Traitors! False brothers destined to betray you before the cock crows. (The music stops, and he collapses down.) Deserters and devils, the whole lot of them!

RECORDED VOICE

A wife. If you’d only taken a wife, B., at least she’d be on your side. Then you could be like Fidelio singing the praises of conjugal love at the end of your opera. *Leonore* and –

BEETHOVEN

(BEETHOVEN screams out the two macho-sounding E-flat chords that serve as the introduction to Symphony No. 3 ES-Major, op. 55 (“Eroica”).

RECORDED VOICE

– (“Eroica”) – blessed be your twin creations! To think, your Third Symphony was conceived as a tribute to Napoleon. And your one and only opera – a gift to Josephine –

BEETHOVEN

(BEETHOVEN’S LEONORE ARIA)

(Leonore No. 2, Op. 72a, the second overture to Fidelio begins.) – newly widowed and big with child – her fourth! How swiftly she gave birth! How quickly Napoleon moved to abolish the old order! As for me, I struggled with *Leonore*, the brazen child of my spirit, who proved to be the most difficult of all to bring forth into this world. God ... how I worked my fingers to the bone on that overture. And my reward – the curtain rose, and *Leonore* No. 2 was accompanied by blood-curdling screams and the rat-a-tat-tat of the French army marching through Vienna. Libertarians, my ass! A pack of rabid dogs was more like it! My audiences ran for their lives – with Josephine leading the pack! It was hard to know what the countess feared more – Napoleon’s army or my love. How badly mistaken I was about the two of them! And yet, with the whole world upside down, we went on playing – to empty houses – or worse – to a theatre packed with French officers. Buffoons in uniforms! Evil Pizarroes, the whole gang of them! Band this. Censor that. Change the name. *Leonore. Fidelio.* A rose is a rose by any other name, you jackasses! Imagine those French pawns expecting me to create art while being led by the nose. Well, I let them have it! In no uncertain terms, I told those blockheads, “Beethoven’s nobody’s puppet! Guillotine me if you will but leave my opera alone!”

RECORDED VOICE

B., the gorbellied critics were, by far, your worst enemies!

BEETHOVEN

“Doesn’t Beethoven realize the woodwinds can’t play that?” “He needs to quicken the libretto.” “Revise the text.” “Revise it again.” “It’s too this!” “No, it’s too that!” Omit this. Abridge that. Add this. Revise the score – again and again, and again (pause) and again!

RECORDED VOICE

An Italian style opera –

BEETHOVEN

– written in German ...

RECORDED VOICE

– about a French subject ...

BEETHOVEN

– set in Spain ...

RECORDED VOICE

– ‘tis no wonder the whole bloody mess left you with nothing but diarrhea, double deafness, and debts!

The overture to *Leonore* fades into the ringing, roaring, whistling and buzzing sound in BEETHOVEN’s ears. BEETHOVEN covers his ears, and in a moment, it mercifully stops. The leitmotif for STEPHEN VON BREUNING begins: Violin Concerto in D Major, op. 61, “Allegro non troppo,” about three minutes and ten seconds into the piece when the music takes on a very macho military sound.)

BEETHOVEN

Had Stephen not stepped in to revise the whole damned libretto, God knows what would have become of it. Stephen! That’s who I need now. He’ll know what I, as a father, should do.

RECORDED VOICE

Ab initio, the Von Breunings were dead set against you taking wholly to yourself, Karl. **(KARL's leitmotif.)** Time and time again, they warned you, "The child needs his mother."

BEETHOVEN

I truly believed I could be both mother and father to him! **(Leitmotif for his BROTHERS, Piano Concerto No. 5. ("EMPEROR") Op. 19, Adagio, about a minute and a half into the piece where the piano begins.)** God knows I had been that to his father. I regarded K. as my own child. I ignored all gossip, all pettiness for the sake of that holy cause.

RECORDED VOICE

Perhaps, if you'd had a wife to help you ...

BEETHOVEN

Damn you! To be alone like this – was never my choice, nor was it ever my fault. People say, "He hates women. Why just look at what he did to Karl's mother. Shame on him for dragging that poor woman in and out of court for five years! The nerve of him to think he had the right to take her own child away!" Hate women? Me? Never? I adore them. I have worshipped in their temple. Viewed them as great works of art ... Goddesses, earth mothers, nymphs, Bacchantes. **(Leitmotif for his mother. This is the first theme (about twenty seconds of the Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-Sharp Minor, op. 27, No. 2 ("Moonlight) First Movement, Adagio sostenuto.)** Oh, they'll say, "He took the advice of his mother, who drummed into his head, "Never marry! You listen to me! Never marry! Never! Never! Never!" God knows, had I been a noble v-o-n Beethoven and not a Belgium v-a-n Beethoven; I'd have bitten that bullet all right! Dear God in heaven, was she ever more than a chimera? A she-ghost, haunting the very hollows of my heart? **(He recites the first stanza from "An Die Hoffnung" op. 32, while the music plays Josephine's leitmotif.)**

Joyously joining together in blessed nights
With tender caresses softly erasing
The torment of a gentle soul
Ah, hope! Lift me with strength ...

(BEETHOVEN screams at the top of his lungs in absolute agony)
Josephine!

RECORDED VOICE

The whores in the *Heirmarket* would miss you more than she ever did. But take heart, B. Surely, the police would miss you. Who would those treacherous dogs arrest as a vagrant if you stopped roaming their padlocked streets?

BEETHOVEN

And, dear, dear, Prince Metternich ... our beloved despot. He would cry for me, as well!

RECORDED VOICE

In a heartbeat, that tyrant would have his Secret Police assassinate you –

BEETHOVEN

– if he thought he could get away with it.

RECORDED VOICE

(Whispering) Herr Beethoven, one must remember not to speak too loudly –

BEETHOVEN

– or the police will give you lodging for the night.

RECORDED VOICE

Perhaps, your fans would miss you?

BEETHOVEN

They've all forsaken me.

RECORDED VOICE

Your fellow musicians?

BEETHOVEN

They don't even play my symphonies anymore. Too long. Too loud. Too this ... too that.

RECORDED VOICE

Why play your solo pieces when they can play their own watered-down little ditties?

BEETHOVEN

(The Creatures of Prometheus, op. 43 begins playing beyond the part that is BEETHOVEN's leitmotif and continues for about 20 seconds. (He begins conducting that piece of music for a moment.) Oh, the gods, give me courage. Apollo, once upon a time, I truly believed you'd made me one of the immortals. Wrong again. Even in this lifetime, no one cares for me anymore.

RECORDED VOICE

Why they mock and scorn you. (Imitating a woman's voice) "Herr Beethoven's completely insane. We have often seen him walking around in public talking to himself!"

BEETHOVEN

The best kind of dialogue for a deaf man! (He walks close to the audience.) Communication with others becomes a dizzying game of "Pass the Damn Notebook." (He extends his notebook toward an audience member.) You write. I read. I respond. Repeat. You write. I read. I respond. Again, and again, and again until I can't stand the crazy conversational carousel another second and scream at the top of my lungs to make it stop!

RECORDED VOICE

And so ... they call you a madman ... a raving maniac.

BEETHOVEN

(Imitating a woman's voice) "Why Herr Beethoven's so crazed he even tells people he's the bastard son of the King of Prussia." You fools! **(The leitmotif for his FATHER begins. This is the first theme of the last Movement, Presto agitato, from the Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp Minor, op. 27, No. 2 ("Moonlight")).** It continues playing as he rants.) I made that up so they'd stop asking about my real father – the King of the Bacchanalia! (Again, imitating a woman's voice.) "And money. He's absolutely obsessed with it."

RECORDED VOICE

Wrong! One has to have money to obsess about.

BEETHOVEN

Money! I have none! When inflation wasn't bleeding me dry, the currency changes put me in the poorhouse. Not to mention, my nephew and his needs and the custody battle nearly bankrupting me. And the coming and going of my patrons – the princes. Royal pains in my ass, all of them! In a nutshell, I'm left with virtually nothing. **(The music abruptly ends.)**

ACT I**SCENE SEVEN****(A MOMENT LATER)****(THE MUSE)**

Suddenly a musical thought occurs to BEETHOVEN, and a transformation occurs in his whole being so that he looks angelic, godlike, and larger-than-life. The set changes back to the idyllic one. He frantically begins searching through his jacket pockets. He takes from one pocket a mangled double lorgnette; then continues looking for a sharpened pencil and a scrap of paper. (The pencils he used were very thick.) He sifts through many crumpled pages, dropping this and that before he finds the one he's been looking for. While holding his lorgnette with his left hand, he writes some notes with his right hand. Then he begins humming several bars of his unfinished Tenth Symphony. He crumples that paper putting it back in a pocket, then looks for another; then again scribbles some notes as he continues humming. He had most definitely planned on finishing this work, for he had stated his intention just eight days before his death. In October 1988, Barry Cooper first performed a reconstructed version of this based on some 350 bars of sketches. This score is published by Universal Edition, London, and various renditions of this can be heard on YouTube. He continues frantically writing and humming. He begins chewing on his lead pencil.

RECORDED VOICE

How you dread the beginning of long works!

BEETHOVEN

Yes, and rightfully so! For whenever I endeavor to express my exalted emotions in music – I stop myself, convinced that no one born of flesh shall ever create anything worthy of the heavenly images above. (He puts his writing away and lies on the ground looking up toward the heavens.) Then I contemplate God's sky in wonder, and I feel my spirit rise to the constellations – toward that primal source from which all creations flow. Music must first come from above, mix alchemically with the human heart and soul, lest it remains nothing but notes, body without spirit – noise!

ACT I

SCENE EIGHT

(THIS SCENE BLENDS SEAMLESSLY INTO THE PREVIOUS ONE)

(KYRIE)

Beethoven is still lying on the ground with his eyes closed.

We hear the orchestral beginning of the Kyrie from *Missa solennis*, op. 123 in D. Through the archways of the ruins, ENTER THE CHORUS. They are wearing sleeved, full-length chitons, making them look like ancient Greek priests and priestesses. They arrange themselves on the stage behind BEETHOVEN just in time to begin the vocals.

They begin singing the Kyrie for about three and a half minutes. Then the Kyrie will continue, but ever so softly, like the sound of some far-off heavenly choir.

RECORDED VOICE

God, the Father? Should I pray directly to you? Or should I petition the Son or the Holy Ghost? Never before have I felt a need for an intermediary. But now, at the hour of death, I'm not so brazen. Not so cocksure. Should I offer burnt offerings to Pan, or Zeus, perhaps to Bacchus, or Isis or Anubis? How can I make you hear the supplications of Thy most humble servant? Answer my prayers. Show me the way.

BEETHOVEN sits up and looks up into the woods, toward the west, where the sun is setting. The sun shines through the forest in such a miraculous way that a huge cross of light blazes through.
Once again, BEETHOVEN falls to his knees.

BEETHOVEN

(BEETHOVEN'S ARIA- TO GOD)

God, you are eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent. I have all but forgotten how to pray down upon my knees. Pray formally. Is that why my life is in shambles? Because I am a fallen Catholic? Because I have worshipped you in the temple of nature and not in a manmade church? Because I have practiced my own brand of mishmash religion, taking a little from the East, some things from the West, some things from the past, some things from days yet to come? Surely you must realize that everything I composed was a prayer for you – for all mankind. It wasn't just about – me. When I was a young fool and fame

BEETHOVEN (cont'd)

and fortune seemed all too fantastic. Perhaps then, I was a musical usurer in Art, caring only to enrich myself. But that feeling was short-lived. Before long, I had no ears to hear the praise heaped upon me. I could no longer drink in the thunderous applause or lose myself in idle gibble-gabble. With all due humility, My Lord, I state that I was one of the greatest pianists, not just in my day but for all times. They said, "He plays like no one else!" (He laughs) God's blessing bestowed upon the self-taught – absolute originality! Surely you must remember how my playing could terrify whole audiences with its power! Move grown men to tears. And to think – I made it up as I went along. But all that's gone. Disappeared without a trace like melting snow ... like vanishing fog ... like everything I've ever held dear to me – gone! Dear Lord, I do know why you wanted me married to my composition. Why you'd allow no adulteress to compete for my affections. Why you wanted me to concentrate on creating pieces that would last for all times, not just for today. Why you taketh away my power to hear the tumultuous, yet all too tempting, cacophony of this earth. You forced me to turn my ear inward and beyond to hear Your divine orchestra ... Your heavenly choir ... Your voice. My deafness and my isolation were blessings, after all. More evidence of your mysterious ways.

(The Kyrie fades away as the CHORUS EXITS)

ACT I**SCENE NINE****(A MOMENT LATER)****(WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?)**

There is absolute silence now. No music. No nature sounds. BEETHOVEN looks over at one of the ruins, and it is covered with blood – his nephew’s blood. He also sees Karl’s top hat that he left on top of one of the ruins. Suddenly the set turns back into the hell on earth mode. BEETHOVEN walks over to the bloodstained ruin. Touching it, he realizes it’s still wet. He mixes some of Karl’s blood with his own and then wipes some of the mixture on his wrists like the stigmata of Christ. Then he picks up Karl’s top hat.

BEETHOVEN

(We hear the leitmotif for KARL.) Karl, did I fail you the way she failed me?
(We hear the leitmotif for Josephine, and then that goes right into the Piano Concerto No. 4 in G, Andante con moto, op. 58. The orchestra begins playing with all its fury, and when the piano plays alone, we hear BEETHOVEN speak again.) I never betrayed you, Josephine. I never forsook you, though you denied me time and time again. I never broke my vow of silence, not even now, when you are no more. I am a man of my word, and I will carry our secret to the grave and beyond. **(The orchestra plays again. When the piano resumes, BEETHOVEN speaks again. He falls to his knees.)**
 Dear Lord, how many times in this wretched life have I been brought to my knees? O, God, look down upon me and do not let it continue like this much longer. Dear God, hear me. **(When the Andante con moto finishes, Beethoven holds his cane behind himself as if he is crucified. Looking up to the heavens, he picks up his cane, screams, and waves it like a baton in syncopation with his words.)** O, where art thou – my muse, my genie, my angel, my all? If I am indeed in Hell, where is my Virgil, my Beatrice, my Josephine to guide my way? (He falls to his knees and begins crying.)

ACT I

SCENE TEN

(A MOMENT LATER)

(MIND MIRAGE)

ENTER KARL

BEETHOVEN is still on bended knee, leaning on his cane, eyes closed, head bent in prayer.

Once again, we see the enactment of KARL's suicide attempt. **The leitmotif for KARL is heard but continues playing so that we hear more of the ("Turkish March") from *The Ruins of Athens*, about 40 seconds.**

This time KARL acts like a clown miming the actions of a soldier in an opera buffa. He appears to be mocking BEETHOVEN as he marches around the stage, appearing drunk. He has a pistol in his hand and aims it at himself and the audience. Finally, he mimes great laughter before aiming the pistol at this head. **The ("Turkish March") ends.**

KARL

(Mimicking the short, short, short, long rhythm of the first theme from the Fifth Symphony) Bang, bang, bang – bang! (KARL flees.)

BEETHOVEN

(BEETHOVEN looks up and shouts.) No, Karl, no – (Pause) No!

ACT I**SCENE ELEVEN****A MOMENT LATER****(BEETHOVEN'S ARIA OF APPARITIONS)**

We hear the Piano Trio in D Major, op. 70, No. 1, ("Ghost") – Largo assai ed espressivo. For a moment, BEETHOVEN sits, closes his eyes, and with his hands appears to be conducting the piece. But it is not in the grandiose, dramatic way he would conduct a live orchestra. It is in a gentle, almost meditative way that he conducts his imaginary orchestra. When he begins speaking, he punctuates his words by waving his arms more forcibly as if he were, now, conducting his own voice. The Italian musical terms for tempo and volume denote what BEETHOVEN's voice is to do.

BEETHOVEN

(Grave) (Pianississimo) Haunted. (Fortississimo) Haunted! (Pianissimo) I am a haunted man. For brief moments I may soar like an angel in the sphere of my Art – still, the low spirits of this earth manage to drag me down again. (Mezzo) (Accelerando) If it's not a few notes boozing about my head, it's a fragment from the past – a drunken slap, (Fortississimo) a reprimand ... the sound of doors slamming ... the roar of boxed ears. My dear mother's voice crying out in the dark of night, "Johann, no, please, no, (Pause) no!" (Fortepiano) (Andante) As often as the wind whirls, so do the sounds whirl about me. (Crescendo) And so, too, does it whirl deep in my very soul – the shame. Shame that shadows me ... nameless guilt that stalks. Thoughts like ... thunderstorms. Thoughts like ... tempests. No! Thoughts – like tornadoes. (Pianississimo.) Even she is but a phantom that haunts the very depths of my soul. Time and time and time again, I waxed my ears so as not to hear her Sirens' song – still I hear it here (Pointing to his heart). Always, always I hear it here. (Mezzo) Torturous, by far more torturous, are the visions. Fantastic images – flashing ... flickering now and again, then flaring full force. Ah, yes, that is what really plagues me, drives me to distraction. (He takes a slug of booze.) Drives me to drink. (Pianississimo.) And now ... my Karl. Add that monstrous moment to all the rest. Peace. Dear Lord – peace. Must I wait for the grave to find that?

RECORDED VOICE

B., Pray as Brother Willibald taught you.

BEETHOVEN

(He falls to his knees and begins to pray The Nicene Creed.) “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible...”

ACT I

SCENE TWELVE

(A MOMENT LATER)

(Missa solemnis – Credo in Unum Deum)

BEETHOVEN is still on his knees praying, but he is mumbling the words, and we can't hear him. Then he collapses, his face toward the sky. From now until the end of ACT ONE, the lighting reflects the darkening sky as the day gives way to night. By the end of ACT ONE, darkness will descend.

THE CHORUS begins softly singing the Credo from Missa solemnis, while the set slowly changes back to the idyllic one.

ENTER THE CHORUS through the three archways of the ruins. They are still wearing the sleeved, full-length chitons. Their singing grows steadily louder as they arrange themselves on the stage behind BEETHOVEN.

BEETHOVEN stands up. He begins conducting the Credo. BEETHOVEN's method of conducting was entirely unique, and he could easily lead the orchestra astray with his larger-than-life, idiosyncratic gestures. For instance, to suggest a diminuendo, he would crouch lower and lower. To connote a crescendo, he'd rise up on his tippy toes and wave his arms around like some gigantic pre-historic bird. But if the musicians got it right and his beloved creation was brought to life, his face would light up with pure joy and delight.

The Credo comes to a cadence after about two minutes and fifteen seconds.

THE CHORUS begins EXITING as they continue singing, but their voices fade as the set changes back to hell on earth. By the time the set transforms, the CHORUS has completely disappeared.

ACT I

SCENE THIRTEEN

A MOMENT LATER

TWILIGHT

Beethoven has just finished conducting the Credo. He sits on the bench. He wipes his sweat. He starts holding his stomach and rocking back and forth in pain. Beethoven begins moaning. He takes a drink from the flask. **Symphony No. 2, in D Major, op. 36 Allegro molto, the opening theme from Fourth movement, begins and plays for about 23 seconds.** This is the music he wrote to represent the sounds of his volcanic gut.

(Beethoven continues to moan in pain.)

BEETHOVEN

(**Leitmotif for Karl plays.**) (He screams over the leitmotif.) How dare you tell everyone, “He doesn’t understand how I feel!” (**The buzzing, ringing sounds begin.**) The hell, I don’t! (Beethoven reaches over to his overcoat and takes out a pistol. He stares at it.) My uncle knows nothing about love. Damn you, Karl! My music! Listen to my music!

RECORDED VOICE

(**The leitmotif for Josephine begins.**) You are remembering the countess. How she loved you – yet married the old count. The old coot drops dead, so she runs back to you. Before long, her gypsy soul cries out for freedom! No! Her damned noble blood hungered for an even grander title! Off she went – gallivanting around Europe! Giving birth out-out-of-wedlock – then joining in Holy Matrimony – with the Baron that begot the bastard.

(BEETHOVEN’S ARIA – TO THE INGRATES)

BEETHOVEN

(Covers his ears and screams) Stop! Stop! Stop! (Pause) Stop! (**The leitmotif for Karl**) (He aims the pistol at his head.) “To be or not to be?” That, my dear nephew, is always the question.” (Beethoven puts the pistol down and reaches over to his coat to get a letter.) (**“Tempest” Allegretto, Piano sonata No. 17 in D Minor, op. 31 No. 2 begins playing.**) I’ve never shown this to anyone, but this afternoon I was going to read it to you. But, no! You’d have none of me! How you

BEETHOVEN (cont'd)

cursed your tongue out at me! You sounded just like your mother – the Queen of the Night. What a sight you were ...your pighead wrapped in bloody bandages ... lying there in your mother's arms like she was the Blessed Virgin and you – her only begotten son. I ought to go back to that slut's house and kick down the door. Let the witch call the damn police. It's not me who's going to jail, whoreson – it's you. So, you were ashamed of me. I embarrass you all the time? You were sick of my constant checking on you. Sick of my henchmen, Holz, following you around. You were "weary of imprisonment with me." (Screaming) Imprisonment? I ought to box your blasphemous ears! Just think of all the time and money I wasted in court to keep you from that harlot you call, "Mother." (Screaming) And this is how you thank me? My heart bleeds for all the music not created because of – you! Lost forever! You're no better than your father, or your ass of an uncle, for that matter. Ingrates! When I was younger than you, I became the breadwinner and wet nurse to that pair of guttersnipes! Don't think, for a minute, that I didn't want to crumble under the weight of all that. But I didn't, did I? I did what I had to do. As for you, false son, you couldn't even handle your damn school exams! Yet you have the nerve to tell that fat-assed police magistrate that I tormented you! Did you bother to tell that civil servant how much you tortured me? We'll see just how fast you weary of life under constant police surveillance. You heard what those uniformed buffoons said, "Under Austrian code, attempted suicide is a crime against the church." Damn the church! It's a crime against God! Against your father! Against me. To hell with the Catholic church!

(The ("Tempest") ends)

ACT I**SCENE FOURTEEN****(A MOMENT LATER)****BEETHOVEN's leitmotif plays and continues playing throughout the following aria.)**

BEETHOVEN

(BEETHOVEN'S PROMETHEAN ARIA)

(BEETHOVEN holds KARL's top hat in one hand and begins waving the envelope with his other hand.) I wrote this when I was a little older than you. I imagined myself – Plutarch – writing one of his letter essays. Perhaps, I will destroy it. Let them make a god of me! Still, when I'm six feet under, I want the world to know the truth. To know the real me. The man who lived and loved and cried and suffered like all mortal men. I was no son of God. No nobleman's child. I was a man who did what he was destined to do. My biographers, (He laughs at the idea of that) the scholars, the great academics ... God forbid that snake, my swindling secretary, Schindler, should attempt such a thing. That will be a great work of fiction, I'm sure! He'll cast himself as my right arm, my Lord and Savior – instead of another thorn in my side! Oh, to hell with Schindler, that sycophant! All my other biographers will argue and write long-winded essays pondering why I wrote FOR MY BROTHERS CARL yet left a big blank where your uncle's name should be. Was he crazy? No, I was not crazy! I simply refused to acknowledge the name “my brother the chemist” began using. His middle name. My father's name. Consider it a great blessing that your grandfather, the tyrant, the second-rate tenor, drank himself to death long before you were born. Your uncle – alias “my pseudo-brother,” “my brother Cain,” “my brother the brain eater” – might just as well call himself Judas as Johann. So long as there is a breath in this body, I'll never call him – that. Never conjure up all the ghastly memories that name brings forth. I left all that behind in Bonn and never looked back. In Vienna, I created a new Beethoven. Better a bastard son of a king, than a genuine son of Satan. (He stares at the letter.) Heiligenstadt and hopelessness. I went there (pointing off in the distance), yonder, not of my own accord, but following the advice of my Doctor. “Stay through the fall, Ludwig. The quiet, the seclusion, the rest will do wonders for your hearing.” Dr. Schmidt, kind as you were, your advice – brought me to the brink of despair.

(The Creatures of Prometheus ends.)

BEETHOVEN

(BEETHOVEN'S HEILIGENSTADT TESTAMENT)

(We hear the string quartet, Op. 18, No. 4 in C Minor, the Finale, Allegro.) Day after abridging day, night after elongating night, I stayed – in exile – in that ramshackle spook house. In daymares, Mozart's spirit walked the floors humming his Masonic Funeral music. In nightmares, Haydn called me "an Atheist" and scolded me for my continual mistakes in counterpoint. "Get out of here, you old fool. Drop dead, Papa Haydn! I will not make mere musical skeletons for you or for anyone else!" In my mind's ear, yes, dear God, yes, in my mind's ear, I can still hear that quartet. (We listen for a moment to the music, enjoying it with BEETHOVEN.) Through my music, I can spiral back through time. The century has not yet turned. I am not old. I am not deaf. She is not dead. Yes ... yes, for a flash, all that was good can be good again. I am no longer surrounded by ruins. I am once more on the third floor of the house on St. Peter's Place. I am no longer disgusted with myself, with my lot, no! I am quite smitten with myself for having just completed such a splendid quartet! Bravo Beethoven! (He begins talking rapidly, almost hyperventilating to keep up with the quick pace of the music.) I'm drenched with sweat from laboring with my C Minor quartet all morning. I baptize my steamy head with a pitcher of ice water, put my feet on my desk, close my eyes, and imagine that piece being played by a band of gypsies. What fun I had envisioning three beautiful gypsy girls dancing around me. (For a moment, we listen to the music.) A moment later, I hear three cackling women. Hungarian accents. They have heavy Hungarian accents! I open my eyes and laugh aloud, picturing them dressed not as they were – impeccably – in the latest fashions of the times but in some gypsy garb. They look at me like I'm quite mad, which makes me laugh all the more. Finally, the old shrew speaks. (Imitating a woman's voice with a heavy Hungarian accent) "It is my deepest desire, Herr Beethoven, that you give my daughters, Countess Therese and Countess Josephine, pianoforte lessons during the few weeks we are in Vienna." Behind my back, that nervy wench arranged for her daughter's marriage. It didn't matter that the old coot was old enough to be Josephine's father. It didn't matter that her daughter didn't love him ... that she was falling in love with me, and I with her. What counted was that he was a count! But he turned out to be a poor one. Oh, the best-laid plans, hah! Why did you stay with him, Josephine? Even your mother said, "Get out!" So, why stay? Because of vows? Vows based on what? Love? No! For the sake of the children? Hypocrisy! Your false marriage, coupled with my all too real deafness, brought me to the brink of suicide.

The second movement of Sonata No. 17 in D Minor, op. 31, No. 2, Adagio begins.) BEETHOVEN takes out his double lorgnette and begins reading the letter. There is barely enough daylight left to read by.) (This is a public domain version of BEETHOVEN's Heiligenstadt letter.)

1-14-31

BEETHOVEN

TO MY BROTHERS CARL AND _____ BEETHOVEN.

Heiligenstadt, Oct. 6, 1802.

Oh! Ye who think or declare me to be hostile, morose, and misanthropical, how unjust you are, and how little you know the secret cause of what appears thus to you! My heart and mind were ever from childhood prone to the most tender feelings of affection, and I was always disposed to accomplish something great. But you must remember that six years ago, I was attacked by an incurable malady, aggravated by unskilful physicians, deluded from year to year, too, by the hope of relief, and at length forced to the conviction of a *lasting affliction* (the cure of which may go on for years, and perhaps, after all, prove impracticable). Born with a passionate and excitable temperament, keenly susceptible to the pleasures of society, I was yet obliged early in life to isolate myself, and to pass my existence in solitude. If I at any time resolved to surmount all this, oh! how cruelly was I again repelled by the experience, sadder than ever, of my defective hearing!--and yet I found it impossible to say to others: Speak louder; shout! for I am deaf! Alas! how could I proclaim the deficiency of a sense which ought to have been more perfect with me than with other men, – a sense which I once possessed in the highest perfection, to an extent, indeed, that few of my profession ever enjoyed! Alas, I cannot do this! Forgive me, therefore, when you see me withdraw from you with whom I would so gladly mingle. My misfortune is doubly severe from causing me to be misunderstood. No longer can I enjoy recreation in social intercourse, refined conversation, or mutual outpourings of thought. Completely isolated, I only enter society when compelled to do so. I must live like an exile. In company, I am assailed by the most painful apprehensions, from the dread of being exposed to the risk of my condition being observed. What humiliation when any one beside me heard a flute in the far distance, while I heard *nothing*, or when others heard *a shepherd singing*, and I still heard *nothing*! Such things brought me to the verge of desperation, and wellnigh caused me to put an end to my life. *Art! art* alone, deterred me. Ah! how could I possibly quit the world before bringing forth all that I felt it was my vocation to produce? And thus I spared this miserable life – so utterly miserable that any sudden change may reduce me at any moment from my best condition into the worst. It is decreed that I must now choose *Patience* for my guide! This I have done. I hope the resolve will not fail me, steadfastly to persevere till it may please the inexorable Fates to cut the thread of my life. Perhaps I may get better, perhaps not. I am prepared for either. Constrained to become a philosopher in my twenty-eighth year. This is no slight trial, and more severe on an artist than on any one else. God looks into my heart, He searches it, and knows that love for man and feelings of benevolence have their abode there! Oh! ye who may one day read this, think that you have done me injustice, and let anyone similarly afflicted be consoled by finding one like himself, who, in defiance of all the obstacles of Nature, has done all in his power to be included in the ranks of estimable artists and men. (Darkness has descended.) (BEETHOVEN takes another letter from his coat pocket)

RECORDED VOICE

Four days later, you wrote again to your brothers another letter: Thus, then, I take leave of you, and with sadness too. The fond hope I brought with me here, of being to a certain degree cured, now utterly forsakes me. As autumn leaves fall and wither, so are my hopes blighted. Almost as I came, I depart. Even the lofty courage that so often animated me in the lovely days of summer is gone forever. O Providence! vouchsafe me one day of pure felicity! How long have I been estranged from the glad echo of true joy! When! O my God! When shall I again feel it in the temple of Nature and of man? – never? Ah! that would be too hard! (He guzzles down a lot of booze, then picks up a pistol and aims it at his head.)

BEETHOVEN

To be or not to be? Yes, yes, a thousand times yes, that is always the question. (His right hand is on the trigger. He stumbles. BEETHOVEN slowly falls to the ground. Blacking out in a drunken stupor, his right arm hits the ground, and the pistol fires.)

END OF ACT I

INTERMEZZO

(As the audience exits during the intermission the 2nd Movement of the Third Symphony ES-Major, op. 5 (“Eroica”) plays.)

ACT II

THIRD MOVEMENT

ACT II

SCENE ONE

(THE MIDDLE OF THE SAME ENDLESS NIGHT)

“THE KINGDOM OF THE DEAD”

The Death Knell Sounds three times and the 2nd Movement of the Seventh Symphony in A Major, op. 92 begins.

AT CURTAIN, the set is in the hell on earth mode. Dense fog has moved in.

BEETHOVEN is still passed out in the same spot, and the pistol is still beside him.

This is a dream sequence.

There are white veils streaming down from the rafters with black hieroglyphs on them. BEETHOVEN was very fond of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing, and he often drew hieroglyphs and was well aware of their symbolic meanings. For the hieroglyphs, the set designer can use The Book of the Dead but be sure to include the human form of the Eye of Horus, the Ka, the Ankh, the Lotus, the Serpent, the Falcon, the Phoenix, and the Soul Bird flying through the underworld. OFFSTAGE fans are blowing the veils.

Several CHORUS MEMBERS ENTER and walk through the veils for “THE DANCE OF DEATH.” They are wearing the traditional robes of ancient Egypt worn by both sexes called *kalasiris*, complete with Egyptian collars. Other CHORUS MEMBERS are carrying tombstones.

One CHORUS MEMBER is carrying a book, *Book of the Dead*, which houses the names of BEETHOVEN’s dearly departed, and walks over to the memory corner.

KARL ENTERS carrying a tombstone.

The CHORUS MEMBERS and KARL arranged themselves around the sleeping BEETHOVEN.

ENTER an EGYPTIAN DANCER. She has large gold wings. She dances for a few minutes.

When she finishes dancing, the CHORUS MEMBER with the *Book of the Dead* begins reading.

CHORUS MEMBER

(Reading the names of the dead that have impacted the Maestro's life)

Beloved Grandfather Ludwig Van Beethoven (1712-1773)

Beloved Mother Maria Magdalena Van Beethoven (1746-1787)

Drunken Father Johann Van Beethoven (1739-1792)

Beloved Brother Casper Anton Carl Van Beethoven (1774-1815), father of Karl.

Unknown Older Brother Ludwig Maria Van Beethoven (Born April 1769 and died six days later)

Beloved Baby Sister Anna Maria Franziska Van Beethoven (Born February 1779 and died four days later)

Beloved Baby Brother Franz Georg Van Beethoven (1781-1783)

Beloved Baby Sister Maria Margaretha Josepha Van Beethoven (1786-1787)

The Immortal Beloved, Countess Josephine Deym-Stackelberg, nee Brunswick. (1779-1821)

(The funeral music is still playing, and the death knell sounds as THE CHORUS MEMBERS EXIT unseen behind BEETHOVEN. KARL steps over the sleeping BEETHOVEN on his way offstage. BEETHOVEN wakes up startled by his dream.)

ACT II**SCENE TWO****(A MOMENT LATER)****“IN MEMORIAM”**

(The Funeral March fades away. BEETHOVEN awakens, startled. He begins looking around to get his bearings, but the dense fog makes this task even more difficult. Suddenly, he remembers the where and why of it all.)

(BEETHOVEN’S MELANCHOLIC ARIA)

BEETHOVEN

(Leitmotif for Karl) (Sobbing) Karl, Karl, my dearest, dearest Karl. You are not dead. No, not you. *Momento, Domine, famulorum, farmularumque tuarum*, Karl. My nephew, no, no, my son! You say you hated how I treated your mother, but did she give me any choice? O Lord, thou canst see into my very heart. God! God, my refuge, my rock, thou knowest had it been possible for me to do that which I must, without offending the widow, I would have done so. (He begins coughing and spitting before gaining his composure. He takes a swig of booze.) Karl, by the grace of God, you are still with me, but all the others ... all the others ... long gone.

(The leitmotif for his MOTHER plays beyond the leitmotif.)

(For a moment, BEETHOVEN lies back down, looking up at the stars that can be seen for brief moments as the fog floats by, looking like dancing ghosts. Occasionally, THE MAESTRO moves his fingers as if he is playing the piano.)

(Moaning) Mother ... my most blessed, blessed mother. It seems like an eternity since I could utter the sweet name “Mother” and hear your kind and loving voice in return. (We see a fleeting, phantom-like version of his MOTHER.) Mercifully, you still live in the silent images evoked by the power of imagination. (The phantom-like version of his MOTHER appears and dances to the “Adagio sostenuto” for a moment. BEETHOVEN gets up and appears to chase after the ghost of his Mother.) Had I only known how ill you really were! (The phantom-like version of his MOTHER and the “Adagio sostenuto” fades away.) **(His FATHER’s leitmotif, the stormy Last Movement, “Presto Agitato” from (“MOONLIGHT”) plays beyond the leitmotif)**

(BEETHOVEN jumps up and begins pacing around with his cane in hand. Now and then, he stops and raises his cane and rails and rages like a madman.) God, how old was I really back then? Fifteen? Seventeen? Damn, you, Papa! You lied so much about my age – even I lost count. I had to be a prodigy. A boy wonder. Bigger than Mozart!

RECORDED VOICE

But he never let you be a child. Beating and berating you in private.

BEETHOVEN

(Taking on a pompous stance, he mocks his father.) Exalting and eulogizing me in public. Behind closed doors, forcing me to practice 'till my fingers bled and my heart wept. And still, he'd smack my hands with a stick and scream in my ears, "You are an ingrate! An imbecile! A son of a bitch!"

RECORDED VOICE

Remember the Fourth Commandment, B.

BEETHOVEN

I must have been all of seventeen when, all alone, I set out for Vienna. Oh, God, what a sorry sight I was! Allow me to introduce myself, Ludwig Van Beethoven, the bewigged and bony bumpkin from Bonn! (He laughs at the ancient memory of himself.)

RECORDED VOICE

After all the planning and preparation, two short weeks in Vienna was all providence permitted.

BEETHOVEN

Ah, but what a grand two weeks it was! Meeting Emperor Joseph –

RECORDED VOICE

– Performing for Mozart –

BEETHOVEN

And knowing in my heart ... I had given him something to talk about. (Death-knell sounds) Ah, Wolfgang, what a shame you died before I had a chance to really study with you.

RECORDED VOICE

Instead, you did hard time with Papa Haydn! (Death-knell ends.)

BEETHOVEN

When the letter from Father came, I thought all hell must have frozen over for him to write me.

RECORDED VOICE

“Hurry home. Mother is dying, and the children are driving me mad.” **(The Presto Agitato ends.)**

(BEETHOVEN’S ARIA – A PRAYER FOR HIS MOTHER)

If the actor portraying BEETHOVEN can play the piano, he will walk over to the memory corner where the piano is. He will play the first two minutes of (“Moonlight”) and then continue playing while the RECORDED VOICE says the following monologue. If the actor cannot play the piano, then BEETHOVEN’s MOTHER’s leitmotif begins, and BEETHOVEN will deliver the monologue live.

BEETHOVEN or RECORDED VOICE

Memories ... haunting memories. It seemed like an eternity as I traveled back to you. Once home, I couldn’t bear to watch you writhe in pain ... witness your delirium ... hear you ask over and over again, “*How is Franz?*” **(Imitating his MOTHER)** “*Did Franz eat his breakfast?*” I couldn’t bear to tell you – your precious son was long dead and buried. In your delusions, or was it in the comfort of your dying dreams that he still lived, still played in the kitchen, still crawled into your bed at night, still called for his mama. How could I put you through those dark days of his dying again? I couldn’t. I wouldn’t. I didn’t. And, so, I lied. Lied a thousand times over the course of those wasting away weeks. “*Franz is doing fine.*” “*Oh, yes, he has his appetite back.*” “*Yes, he asks for you.*” “*Why can’t I bring him to you?*” “*The doctor says we can’t risk him catching consumption, now can we?*” “*Yes, yes, we both know how frail he is.*” “*Papa, how is Papa?*” “*Fine. Just fine.*” “*Is he drinking?*” “*Oh, no. He knows he must be strong for the sake of the children.*” “*How is the baby Margareth?*” “*She’s doing fine too.*” Fine. God knows she wasn’t fine. Four months later, the death knell sounded again. This time for you, my dear, beloved baby sister. Margareth, I swear you died of a broken heart. There was no consoling you. Motherless, you refused to eat, to sleep, to live. Day after day, you lay helpless, staring into the great nothingness. Night after night, you screamed and cried and raged, but there was nothing, absolutely nothing I could do for you. Helpless. I was utterly helpless to save you ... to save our mother or to save our father from himself. **(The “Adagio sostenuto” ends.)**

RECORDED VOICE

That first, short trip to Vienna yielded nothing but death, debts, and despair.

BEETHOVEN

(We hear the leitmotif for his FATHER.) Oh, God, what a cross I carried back then. Babying and bullying and bailing out my father. **(Leitmotif for BEETHOVEN's BROTHERS ("EMPEROR") begins and plays straight through to the end of the scene.)** Little more than a child myself, yet, forced to father and mother my two brothers. Endure is all I could do. Endure and mourn and grieve. All alone, I bore the anger. I bore the shame and the poverty and the grief 'till I could bear to hear no more of my brothers' weeping, my father's rantings, and the bill collectors banging at the door. Life is loss after loss after loss. More than any man can bear. **(Picking up the pistol)** Had it not been for my Art, I would have ended it all then. But ... I swore ... swore someday, I would make music that would make people forget their woes and their weeping ... make them feel this god-awful life was somehow worth living ... make them find the will to go on even when all hope was gone. And now I cannot even hear my own music, except, here **(Pointing the pistols at his heart)** in the bloody alleys of my heart. Tell me, who can I lean on? Who can I turn to for solace? With whom can I share my tears?

BEETHOVEN collapses down, staring into his flask. He takes a huge slug from it. He knows he has asked a question for which the universe can give no easy answer. He looks up at the sky, which is now totally starless, for the fog has obscured everything. ("Emperor") ends.)

ACT II

SCENE THREE

(A MOMENT LATER)

“TO MY FARAWAY BELOVED”

(A CHORUS MEMBER sings, “An die ferne Geliebte,” op. 98 (April 1816) (TO MY FARAWAY BELOVED.) THE CHORUS MEMBER is singing in English part one of a six-part song cycle. The words were by Alois Jeitteles, music by BEETHOVEN. This is my translation of Mr. Jeitteles’s German lyrics. There are other versions, but they may be subjected to copyright. If you prefer to use one of those, then you must obtain the proper copyright permission.

CHORUS MEMBER

Song 1: On the hill I sit, staring

On the hill I sit, staring
Into the cloudy blue skyscape,
Towards the faraway field
Where I first met my beloved.

Now we are so far apart,
Immense valley and hill come
Between us and our peace,
Our happiness and our heartbreak.

Ah, you cannot see the gaze
That is racing so lovingly towards you,
And my sighs, they disappear
In the expanse that parts us.

Will nothing ever again reach you?
Nothing be love’s courier?
I wish to sing, sing songs,
That reveal to you, my torment!

For a love song transcends
Any time and any space,
And a heart that loves may embrace
What a loving heart deems holy.

FOURTH MOVEMENT

ACT II

SCENE FOUR

(A MOMENT LATER)

(THE (“APPASSIONATA”) ARIA)

(We hear KARL’s leitmotif. BEETHOVEN begins playing with the pistol. Then we hear the First Movement of the Sonata for Piano No. 23 in F minor, op. 57, (“Appassionata.”))

BEETHOVEN

(He puts the pistol up to his temple.) Why, Karl, why? (Pause) Why? Because of me? O, good God in heaven, say it isn’t so! (He places the pistol down onto his lap.) True, for some time, I have been at my wit’s end over you! Yes, yes, we all know I may have lost my temper now and again over your abominable ingratitude ... over your wretched way of life. Lord knows it seems you were trying to kill me before my time! As God is my witness, it was not for me that I fretted. NO! It was for you my heart bled. I wanted you to be an artist or a scholar, to live a higher life, and not to sink down into utter vulgarity. I tried to do my best for you, and upon this, I can appear before the mightiest of all judges. You know in your heart that I always sought the highest of counsel in my dealings with you ... Why, just recently, when Friedrich Wieck came to visit, much of our conversation revolved around you. When I began telling him how you could lie right to my face, he insisted that I must stand by my guns. “Be firm with the boy.” According to him, his daughter, Clara, is a prodigy. Heaven help the little girl. She’s barely seven, and he drills her to death on my piano pieces. God forgive me for that! (Taking on a pompous stance and arrogant voice) “Someday, my Clara will play your (“Appassionata”) the way it was meant to be played.” Clara, Clara, Clara – he’s totally obsessed with her. I tried to tell him to allow the child to sometimes be just that – a child. But he’s determined to make her – a great virtuoso. I told him, in no uncertain terms, that a great virtuoso is not made. “A great virtuoso is born! Yes, yes, no doubt we can help those that are gifted, but we cannot bestow the gift itself. God-given.” He laughed at that! Pompous ass! No wonder his Clara, Clara, Clara pretended to be deaf, refusing to talk ‘till she was four. There’s no talking to him anyway. If the child can indeed play as well as he says, I bet she was never deaf at all, just smart enough to turn a deaf ear to that old windbag! God, an hour in a room with that braggart, and I was suffocating. A walk. I needed to go for a walk. To that, he agreed! Insisting that he, like me, enjoys a good afternoon walk. He always takes his Clara, Clara, Clara along. I

BEETHOVEN (cont'd)

was hoping the fresh air might unbutton him a bit. Get him to open up about his divorce ... about his ex-wife, Marianne. But, I'm afraid the man had nothing good to say about her, or his colleague, the man she ran off with. I said, "Friedrich, you must take some responsibility for all this. Why, you left Marianne alone too much with Adolph. You can never trust a woman with her male piano teacher. I bet, at one time, your Marianne had been a student of yours?" Wieck merely shook his head in acknowledgment. "So, you see, Friedrich, music is truly a dangerous thing! Most of my lessons of the heart were learned at the piano bench by teaching pretty countesses to play, or more accurately, by not teaching them to play!" Wieck almost burst an artery. "Brava, Marianne," I said to myself. How brave she must be to say, "To hell with convention!" Ah, what joy to proclaim, "Let them think what they think, for we know what we know!" So many of the women I have known over the years have been like Marianne ... passionate creatures bridled by arranged marriages. Marriages of convenience made by families and busybodies based on status or money, or both. "Love," I shouted. "Where does love fit into this equation?" Love is the only reason one should marry. Love and companionship." Wieck had a fit right there on the street – screaming how he had gotten even with her. "I took the children. They are, after all, my property." "Children are not chattel." I raged back at him. "Why, you are not a father. You are a slave owner! A feudal Lord! A tyrant! It takes great courage to follow your heart," My soul wept for Marianne. Heavenly Father, if it is your will, as it is mine, make my music guide Clara back to her mother. If that should happen, I shan't have lived in vain. **(He aims the pistol at his head and "Appassionata") fades away.)**

RECORDED VOICE

A half-decade ago, had it not been for your Karl, for your being his guardian, for your absolute belief in the sacredness of that duty, you would have – **(There is a moment of silence before we hear the sound of the death knell then the leitmotif for JOSEPHINE.)**

BEETHOVEN

(BEETHOVEN'S TIME AFTER TIME ARIA)

So long as you walked this wretched earth, my heart held out ... had hope ... but all that died with you. **(The Piano Sonata No. 31 in A-flat Major, op. 110, Fuga: Allegro ma non troppo begins.)** (Fortississimo) Josephine ... again and again and again, you devastated me ... your infamous da capo al coda. Damn you! Time after time after time – you abandoned me, and I plunged – headfirst – into that bottomless abyss. **(Pianississimo)** Over and over and over again, I managed to claw my way back to the light

BEETHOVEN (cont'd)

of day, and time and time again, you'd return just long enough to push me back off that precipice. (BEETHOVEN puts the pistol down. We see off in the distance lightning.) (Pianissimo) You were but six months in the grave, and I, having been interred alive, was still digging out. I wept and wept and wept as I watched the leaves, so recently aglow with flaming colors, crumbling, crumbling, crumbling, whirling like dervishes round and round in one last delirious *danse macabre*. (Adagio) (Pianissimo) To me, the fall has always been awake, a time to bid farewell, get blind drunk, and weep. Ashes to ashes ... dust to dust. (Andante) After much too much Rhine wine, I miraculously passed out, only to be revived by a knock so ominous I thought, surely, it must be – the Angel of Death, yet, it was only your brother. Still, a chill went up and down my spine at the very sight of him. (Crescendo) Franz looked like some supernatural being, ghostlike – something right out of Hamlet, ashen and demon-possessed, to hell with the wretched muddy roads, to hell with the cold driving rain, and the dire warnings not to travel that night. (Pianissimo) (This part begins when the fugue is interrupted by the return of the Gesang – the lamenting, exhaustive sorrowing song.) “Therese said, ‘I must get these to you.’ She couldn’t bring herself to destroy them, and yet, she feared the consequences should they get into the wrong hands.” (BEETHOVEN takes three letters from his jacket pocket.) (Accelerando) I took one look at these. I had not seen them in nearly a decade, yet, I knew exactly what they were. I feared touching them, lest they crumble before me like a trio of fallen leaves. (Fortississimo) “Where did you get these?” (Pianississimo) Franz said something, but suddenly, I couldn’t hear him. (Fortississimo) You and my damned hearing, two birds of a feather – you came, you went without warning, whenever you pleased, leaving me time and time again in that black hole. “Write it down, damn it!” Write it down!” (Pianissimo) Why was I shouting? He was not the deaf one! “We found these beside our sister the day she died. Therese said, ‘You must give them to Luigi. Beethoven must know how Pepi really felt. He must know how she suffered. How their love went on and on and on ... How Josephine longed for him even to the end.’” Then he tore out the page, tossed it into the fire, and was gone. (Pianississimo) Like a phantom. Like my hearing. Like you!

(Piano Sonata No. 31, op. 110 ends, and the Fourth Movement; Allegro from the Symphony No. 6 F Major, Op. 68 (“Pastorale”) begins. It’s raining, and he puts his coat over his head like a makeshift tent.) (Andante)

Again, I began drinking, and I kept on drinking and drinking and drinking. Then I threw on my old topcoat, shoved these letters in my pocket, and began walking. Nothing felt real. Everything was dark ... dark as death. My feet were cold, blistering, and drenched. My teeth were chattering. Still, I could not stop myself from walking. (Crescendo) 1812, 1821, 1812, 1821, 1812, hammered in my head. 1821 – engraved upon your tombstone. (Pianissimo) (Holding the letters dear to his heart) 1812 – carved upon my heart. Like an answer to my prayers, you had returned once more. You were through with the Baron! I was awestruck. I was frightened. Financially, it had not been a good year for me or for you, or for the rest of Austria for that matter! (Crescendo) There would be your four children, plus the Baron’s bastard to support, not to mention you, my beloved, whose

BEETHOVEN (cont'd)

exalted tastes ran extravagantly. Could I really afford six more mouths to feed? Could you truly bear to lose your titles? Perhaps even your children? Questions! Questions! Questions! Damn it to hell – love – wasn't that supposed to be – the answer? (The music has reached the part where the storm recedes, the rain has washed away the fog, and dawn is breaking. BEETHOVEN watches the sunrise for a moment. Finally, he finds the courage to read the letters.) (The (“Pastoral”) ends.)

(The String Quartet, op. 130 in B-flat Major (“Cavatina”) (Adagio motto espressivo) begins.) s

BEETHOVEN

(Adagio expressive, molto appassionato is how BEETHOVEN must read the *Immortal Beloved Letters*.)

Morning, 6th July

My Angel! my all! my second Self!

Only a few words to-day, written with a pencil (with thine). My residence will not be definitely fixed before to-morrow. What a ruinous waste of time!—Why this deep sorrow where Necessity speaks? Can our love exist otherwise than by sacrifices, than by our not expecting anything?—Alas! Look into the beauties of Nature, and calm thy mind for what must be endured. Love demands all, and with perfect right, and thus *I feel towards thee and thou towards me*, only though forgettest so easily that I have to live *for myself and for thee*--were we perfectly united, thou wouldst feel this trial as little as I do.

We shall probably soon see each other again. I cannot communicate to thee to-day the reflections I have been making, during the last few days, on my life—were our hearts ever near to one another, I should make none such. My heart is full of much that I have to say to thee. Ah! there are moments in which I feel that language is absolutely nothing. Take courage! Continue to be my true, my only treasure, my All, as I am thine. The gods must send the rest—that which is ordained to be, and shall be for us.

Thy Faithful LUDWIG.

(He puts the first letter carefully away, takes out the second one, and begins reading it.)

Monday Morning, 6th July

BEETHOVEN (cont'd)

Thou grievest—thou—the dearest of all beings!—I have just learned that the letters must be sent off very early. Mondays and Thursdays are the only days on which the post goes to K--,-- Thou grieves! Ah! where I am, there thou art with me—what a life!!! Whereas now!!! without thee—persecuted at times by the kindness of others, a kindness which I neither deserve nor wish to deserve. Servility from man to his fellow-creature pains me; and, when I consider myself in relation to the universe, what am I? what is he who is called the greatest? And yet even here is displayed the Divine in man!—I weep when I think that thou wilt probably receive no tidings of me before Saturday. However much thou mayest love me, I love thee more fervently till—never hide thy feelings from me— Good night! As a patient here, I must now go to rest. Ah, God! So near—itself!—

(He puts that letter away carefully, takes out a third letter, and reads it.)

7th July

Good Morning!

Even before I rise, my thoughts throng to thee, my immortal beloved, at times with joy then again mournfully, waiting to hear if fate be favourable to us. I can only live entirely with thee, or not at all. Yes! I am resolved to wander apart from thee until the moment shall arrive when I may fly into thine arms, may feel my home in thee, and send my soul encompassed by thine into the world of spirits. Yes, alas! It must be so! Thou wilt be prepared, for thou knowest my faithfulness. Never can another possess my heart; never, never. Oh, God! Why must I fly from what is so dear to me?— and yet my life in V----- is, as at present, a sorrowful one. Thy love made me at once the happiest and the most miserable of men. At my age, I require a uniformity, an evenness of life; and can this be possible in our relations?—Angel?—I have just heard that the post goes out every day; and must stop that thou mayest receive this letter soon—Be calm; only by calmly viewing our existence can we attain our aim of passing our lives together. Be calm; love me—to-day—yesterday—what longing. What tears for thee—for thee—for thee—my Life! My All! Farewell! Oh! Continue to love me-never misjudge the faithful heart of thy lover.

Ever thine

Ever mine

Ever ours

(The (“Cavatina”) ends.)

RECORDED VOICE

There is no pain so great as the memory of joy that can never be revisited.

BEETHOVEN

In writing my music, I'd often ask, "What if two people fell passionately in love, it must be, yes, it must be, and yet they tell themselves, no ... no, it cannot be. What happens to that love when it burrows underground?" What is it – to know where the key to the universe is, to know where the love you've always wanted is, and to know, so long as you walk this earth, you can never have it again? What is it? It is pain without end. (He begins crying again.)

RECORDED VOICE

(BEETHOVEN'S CREATION ARIA)

Still, B., contained within that pain is pure joy ... knowing for one moment – you and she basked in the presence of the divine, witnessing all that is sacred and holy and eternal.

(The First Movement of op. 125, the Ninth Symphony ("Choral"), Allegro ma non Troppo, un poco maestoso begins.)

It was as if the whole universe opened up before me, and I could feel every emotion under the sun. I could feel the chaos – the order, the absolute rightness – the wrongness, the rapture – the pain, and O, God, the longing – the agony! Such bliss – such sorrow! The oneness – the separation – the salvation – the damnation, the hello – the goodbye, the commitment – the betrayal, the joining – the splitting, the crucifixion – the resurrection, the wanting – the not wanting, the moving toward – the rushing away, the innocence – the guilt, the moment of truth – the lies, the courage – and the cowardice. The continual contradictions of light and darkness ... of laughter and tears, compassion – cruelty, rejoicing – remorse – the rebellion – the surrender, the clear sight – the blindness, the music, and the deafening silence that echoed from here to hell and back. And, yes, damn it, I knew even as I wrote these letters that I was filled with all the selfsame doubts and fears that she had. Even then, I knew – I could never forget the love, and yet, I knew in my heart of hearts – that all we were ever going to have was – that one clandestine day of passion. One moment when time stood still. One sizzling summer afternoon – to have and to hold – now and forevermore.

BEETHOVEN

Nine months later, on the 8th of April, 1813, Minona was born. I went to Josephine demanding to know if Minona were my daughter.

RECORDED VOICE

(Mimicking Josephine's voice.) "I really don't know whose child she is."

BEETHOVEN

“What the hell does that mean?”

RECORDED VOICE

You were like a madman.

BEETHOVEN

“You were still sleeping with your husband when you came to me?”

RECORDED VOICE

She would not answer you!

BEETHOVEN

“I am beginning to think that she’s Satan’s daughter incarnate.”

RECORDED VOICE

(Imitating JOSEPHINE’S voice) “She is the bastard child of the Kind of Prussia for all I know!”

BEETHOVEN

She made me swear on my mother’s grave that I would never come for Minona. We vowed to carry our secret till death and beyond –to protect Minona and the other children, to save our reputations – to preserve her precious titles.

RECORDED VOICE

Titles! Fifty years from now, no one will remember her Count or her Baron. You offered her your immortal name –

BEETHOVEN

– and she turned it down! (Carefully putting the letters back into his coat pockets.) The night that Franz returned these letters to me, I went into a trance. I walked and walked and walked.

RECORDED VOICE

You wanted to fall off the face of the earth.

(ENTER A MALE AND FEMALE CHORUS MEMBER walking arm in arm.)

BEETHOVEN

Hours and hours later, dazed and spent, I stopped strangers on the street to ask for directions. “I’m Beethoven. I seem to have lost my way.” Everyone just laughed at me or said asinine things, like –

FEMALE CHORUS MEMBER

(In a larger than life, loud, mocking voice) I’m Marie Antoinette; I seem to have lost my head.

BEETHOVEN

Or –

MALE CHORUS MEMBER

I’m Napoleon; I seem to have lost my Empire.

BEETHOVEN

(Poking them with his cane and scaring them off) Everyone, the jester! Everyone, the fool! Enraged, I began banging on house windows and doors. Before long, those village idiots had me thrown in jail! “I’m Beethoven,” I shouted. The arresting arch ass shouted back, “You are not Beethoven ... you are a tramp!” Hour after hour, I sat in solitary confinement, proclaiming my innocence and my identity. Totally spent, I screamed at the top of my lungs these heartrending words from Florestan’s Aria: “Oh, heaven, such bleak darkness. What dreadful nothingness.”

And then, just as my Florestan had witnessed a vision of his Leonore like an angel coming to rescue him ... **(Leitmotif for JOSEPHINE)**

(JOSEPHINE ENTERS OFF IN THE MEMORY CORNER. She is carrying a journal and wearing a 19th-century wedding gown and a veil with a crown of roses and myrtles.)

BEETHOVEN

... I saw my beloved Josephine.

(JOSEPHINE reaches out to him, but they cannot reach each other.)

RECORDED VOICE

Enough, B. Enough already! Stop torturing yourself! The past is gone. Deal with what is. Go home! Face what you must face. **(Leitmotif for STEPHEN VON BREUNING, the Violin Concerto in D Major, op. 61, Allegro non Troppo.)**

BEETHOVEN

What can I say to my Karl ... to make him –want – to live? God knows it was my Art, my music, that saved me.

RECORDED VOICE

Karl is no artist –

BEETHOVEN

... nor will he ever be one ... not now ... not ever.

RECORDED VOICE

You must speak to him man to man. Heart to heart.

BEETHOVEN

I will tell him so long as we have one good deed left in us, then it is our sacred duty to live!

RECORDED VOICE

Go to Stephen.

BEETHOVEN

I saw his wife on the Glacis right before I came here. I asked her, “Have you heard the news? Why my Karl shot himself! There is still hope he will survive, but what about me? He has brought such shame upon me!”

RECORDED VOICE

(Leitmotif Karl) Your nephew always admired Stephen for being a court councilor in the war department and all.

BEETHOVEN

To Karl – that means something grand. As for me, his guardian, I only make music. Who cares! Real men make war!

RECORDED VOICE

Stephen will help get your nephew into the army. That is what Karl says he wants. Perhaps he can avoid going to jail then.

BEETHOVEN

The jail or the army? Same difference. God save you, Karl! God save us all!
(BEETHOVEN begins gathering his possessions, brushing himself off, readying himself to head home.)

(We hear the Agnus Dei from *Missa solennis* with the trumpets and drums blaring out a militaristic rhythm.)

(Then we hear the OFFSTAGE voices of the CHORUS joining in to sing the Agnus Dei.)

RECORDED VOICE

B., remember when three Great Hymns from *Missa solennis* were performed along with the premiere of your Ninth? Why, you couldn't even hear the audience's applause.

BEETHOVEN

Who needed their applause! I heard God's praise from on high – Bravo, Beethoven! Bravo! (He looks up to the heavens.) My beloved *Missa solennis* – from the heart, may it return to the heart! I grieve knowing I shan't live long enough to witness a complete performance of my High Mass, and I shall long be rotted in the grave before God hears the collective voice of mankind sing, "*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.*"

(BEETHOVEN EXITS.)

(JOSEPHINE remains onstage.)

(THE CHORUS ENTERS singing the Agnus Dei arranging themselves around the stage.)

(When the Agnus Dei ends, THE CHORUS EXITS)

(JOSEPHINE is alone onstage.)

CODA

(Josephine Leitmotif into The (“Hammerklavier”) Piano Sonata No. 29 in B-flat Major, op. 106, Third Movement: Adagio sostenuto begins.)

JOSEPHINE

(She opens the journal and begins reading.) I wrote this, my Dearest B., after your unexpected visit on the 8th of April 1818, Minona’s fifth birthday. Regretfully I never sent these words to you. God knows I should have.

Language fails me ... how do I find the words to describe the unfathomable musings of the soul? You ... B., blessed with your musical notes, have discovered an all-embracing way to do so. As for me, I can only express myself in phrases ... pauses ... bits and pieces, and only on those fleeting occasions – like today, when I find the inner peace to do so. Tearing myself away from the earthly prison surrounding me – in those precious solitary moments – our weary souls commune – silently... secretly... serenely... always off in the shadows – only there – do you and I – we – still exist.

I would not have scribbled these words today had I not hoped to honor your request ... your deepest desire – your heartfelt wish. Oh, your surprise appearance aroused such ethereal feelings in me ... so deep and tender that mere words cannot do them justice.

None of us truly has the ability to comprehend why we do what we do – say – act upon or deny. When we were as one, the Almighty was in the breast of each of us. The stars and heaven above were also a part of each of us – but once thrust apart ... broken, and unhinged, we continually spiraled downward into darkness. Today we stood – eye to eye – heartbeat to heartbeat – breath to breath witnessing what we had – individually – separately – collectively ... annihilated.

Happy? Sadly, you are not. Etherized ... embalmed ... empty, and longing, you have been living in a perpetual state of sorrow. The Book of Life that houses our remembrances often reveals itself to you – sometimes in stark black and white – often in varying shades of gray ... now and again in flaming colors, and you have often perused this book ... studied it ... judged it ... dissected it piece by piece – with God as your

witness – you have drawn from all of those scarred memories – creating jewel after jewel after jewel – gifting these precious gems to the world.

To become one with each other – we must first become one with the Almighty. This endless longing for oneness – is the only truth – all else – worthless – formless – nothingness. Thankfully, we are heading toward the sacred resting place where eternal union can be possible. Why, I ask myself over and over again – hasn't my very essence – my immortal soul – utterly and completely manifested itself to you? I fathom that our spirit's shortcoming is that it cannot.

(The (“Hammerklavier”) continues to play as the lights on the set fade to BLACKOUT.)

THE END