

## OPEN FORUM

### *Concerning the Review of the Urtext Edition of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony*

Jonathan Del Mar

**T**he new edition of the nine Beethoven symphonies has of course been quite a major task, so it is with some eagerness that I have been looking forward to a considered, professional reaction from the world of musicology. Unfortunately, David Levy's review in *Beethoven Forum* ("Urtext or Performing Edition?" 9/2, pp. 225–32) of the *Urtext* edition of the Ninth is something of a different animal. I find myself somewhat bemused at the unremitting attack that Professor Levy directs at me, and indeed to the extent to which it is purely subjective (such as the imputation that my edition is responsible for "new—and quite possibly false—traditions" [p.232]) it is unanswerable; but to those substantive points that he makes, I am delighted to have this opportunity of answering.

Much of the problem with the review is that Professor Levy starts off with a theoretical and linguistically pure definition of the word *Urtext* that has no meaning within the terms of reference of the desirability of producing a responsible performing edition. Indeed, it is frankly utopian: "All the pitches, dynamics, rhythms, and articulations . . . *authoritatively* transmit the composer's true intentions" (p.228). Professor Levy then finds time and again that my edition does not match that definition; and indeed, at one point he gives the game away by himself conceding that no performing edition can possibly match it: "an *Urtext* edition . . . ought not also serve as a performing edition" (p.228)—so that I am then bound to ask him: pray, what kind of edition would he like performers to play from? I come from the performing world, and so my definition of an *Urtext* edition is as follows: an edition that thoroughly and exhaustively examines all the source material in order to present that text which, *nach bestem Wissen*, comes as near as possible to the

composer's final intentions. (In the case of Bruckner, for example, one might have to modify the last phrase—but for most purposes, that covers it.) And though this definition is of course entirely different from Professor Levy's, the fact remains that performers—for whom my editions are of course intended—universally understand an *Urtext* edition as being precisely this.

Otherwise, Professor Levy makes two points of real substance, both minor, but interesting enough to be worth exploring in some detail. His remaining comments can then be dealt with relatively simply. The first is the matter of the *ben marcato* in movt. I, mm. 64–65. This is quite a complicated one, and the facts are these. In source **A** Beethoven wrote *ben marcato* above the flutes, below the horns, and between timpani and violin I. He then saw that in m. 64, the flutes are tied back, so they obviously couldn't "mark" that half-note A. So he deleted *ben marcato* in the flutes and instead wrote it a measure later. But all this shows that he obviously wanted the *ben marcato* to apply to the motif A (half note), G, F, E, D (eighths). So we can now say that of timpani and violin I he wants it in violin I rather than timpani. This is supported by the lack of any *ben marcato* above the trumpets; had he wanted it in timpani, he surely would have wanted it in trumpets as well, but in fact he didn't mark it there. Beethoven was not like some other composers such as Schubert or Weber, who frequently wrote dynamics or articulation in far fewer staves than they were assumed to apply to; he was much more precise and in principle wrote indications in every staff to which he intended them to apply. The only question remains as to why, then, he wrote *ben marcato* in m. 64, violin I, not m. 63; this we cannot answer, but still the above solution fits the facts better than any other.

Now I turn to the next source, **C**, copied from **A**. The copyist has faithfully copied Beethoven's *ben marcato* in m. 64 (horns), but unfortunately left out the one in m. 65 (flutes) and gave the m. 64 (violin I) one to trumpets and timpani instead. So Beethoven added it in m. 65 (flutes)—and oboes, too, for good measure—and in m. 64, violin I. No, true, he didn't delete it in trumpets and timpani; but if you think about what Beethoven, that crusty, temperamental stickler, was up to, it is clear that he was making sure the thing was *marcato* enough. For him to start thinking about where the marking might be (on the contrary) superfluous was, at this point and with the vast task of correction in front of him, just one mind-process too many. Maybe he saw it in trumpet and timpani and thought "well, OK" (but only "maybe"—this is too conjectural for an *Urtext*)—more likely, perhaps, his attention was suddenly diverted to the missing staccatos in m. 64, viola, and his concentration leapt to that. There were only a certain number of hours in the day, after all.

So we're not talking about "layout" or "using space efficiently," at all. We're talking about which instruments, and which measures, Beethoven wanted *marcato*. If you

like, you can argue that I should have moved *ben marcato* in violin I from m.64 to m.63 on basis horns; that would certainly be a serious discussion, but as I say, it's a minor point.

The other point is the matter of the staccato (or not) in movt. I, mm.106–07, which is particularly interesting as it concerns the nuts and bolts of the preparation of a sensible edition, how one reconciles all the inevitable inconsistencies in authentic manuscripts and presents them in a way that is at least reasonably consistent and comprehensible, yet at the same time also faithful to the composer's intention as transmitted in those sources.

Let's start off with a basic principle. If we turn to the scherzo, m.10, we see a passage of staccato quarters starting in violin II. In **A** Beethoven marks in the staccato *Striche* as far as m. 14. Measures 15 onward have no *Striche*. To take Professor Levy absolutely literally (and I am aware that this may be unfair), he maintains that where the notes appear "*ohne Striche*, the assumption is that a different kind of articulation is to be applied" (p.228). Clearly in the case of movt. II, m.15, this makes no sense whatever; Beethoven starts you off, then assumes you've got the message that it's all staccato. Presumably Professor Levy would agree with this, and indeed he used the phrase I quoted in the context of "a parallel passage," which is not the context of movt. II, mm.10–15. But is movt. I, mm.106–07 a "parallel passage"? I would say no; it's the continuation of mm.102–03, and having given you staccato in mm.102–03, Beethoven (and I equally) can legitimately and reasonably assume that intelligent musicians will understand mm.106–07 (where the staccato is missing in all authentic sources, not merely "an important primary source," as Professor Levy says) to be naturally played *simile*, exactly as in movt. II, mm.15*ff*. But later, the genuine parallel passage does indeed come round, in mm.369–70 and mm.373–74. And indeed, here Beethoven gave rather less staccato than he had done in mm.102–07, so, exactly as Professor Levy would wish me to, I supply the remainder in editorial square brackets so that the two places (mm.102–07 and its parallel mm.369–74) match.

But I find Professor Levy's suggestion that I should add all the rest editorially, as "indicating that a performer in Beethoven's day would have recognized the parallelism" (p.228), an extremely worrying one, in a wider sense. It is far too subjective for the kind of objective, definitive edition for which I am striving, and one which, if such indulgences are permitted to be followed, would result in all kinds of dangerous assumptions and accretions. It is precisely this sort of edition that performers want to get away from. They want to know what Beethoven wrote and then shape their own interpretation from that; they absolutely do not want to see what some editor thinks "a performer in Beethoven's day would have recognized."

Since there are two places where Professor Levy takes me to task for restoring in my edition what Beethoven indisputably wrote, this point brings me on to the whole question of how far we should accept what Beethoven wrote, however bizarre (though even then it would not, *pace* Professor Levy, rate as “inauthentic”), or whether it is better to say, on various grounds, that some other text is preferable. My standpoint is this: where I as a sensible musician have to judge that the reading in the authentic sources is *inconceivable* (no less)—and especially where I can show how the error could well have arisen—I will present the more likely text. But if it is conceivable, I have a duty to stick to what Beethoven wrote. So despite all published analytical studies—which inevitably were based on the text they had in front of them—I restore Beethoven’s D in movt. I, m.81. Sorry: if we subsequently find that the analysts’ text was faulty, their studies will have to be rewritten. That is quite simply inevitable, and to argue that we must print a text that accords with previously published analytical studies is obviously putting the cart before the horse. Professor Levy’s conjecture that Beethoven might have been “thinking ahead to the . . . recapitulation” (p.229) when he wrote just the middle note of the flute’s three notes in mm.81–82, then by an extraordinary coincidence make exactly the same mental switch when writing the middle note of the oboe’s phrase, is far-fetched, to say the least. No: I rest my case on the fact that all sources have D here, and in **A** Beethoven wrote this note twice. If it is conceivably possible, I have to print what Beethoven wrote. That is the bottom line, and that is my responsibility.

The other passage Professor Levy cannot accept is that of the horns’ ties in movt. IV, mm.532–40. I must emphasize that contrary to the impression he gives, these ties in **A** are *additional* to all the other ties in these measures; there is absolutely no question of their being errors for other “correct” ties. Of course, after “a span of nearly 175 measures” (p.230) it’s startling; that’s why it’s so interesting! What is the point of looking at all the sources afresh in order to determine what Beethoven wrote, if every time you find something unexpected, puzzling, or merely unfamiliar, you reject it and retain the old text, lamely putting editorial brackets around it? You have to get rid of all your preconceptions, approach the text anew, and judge from scratch whether Beethoven could possibly have meant what he is now, for the first time, telling you that he wrote. And these ties are not in “Del Mar’s primary sources” (p.230)—there is nothing Del Mar about it; these are the primary sources for the work. But if one were to be playful, the question “Which reading, then, belongs in the *Urtext*?” (p.230) could be answered thus: “The one that’s *Ur* of course!”—i.e., the one in **A**, which is what (in this case) we print. This would seem to fit even the most austere definition of *Urtext* admirably.

So why did I not indulge in a lengthy explanation of what Beethoven could possibly have meant by these ties, as Professor Levy demands that I should have? The answer is that my entire philosophy is that the edition should be as objective as possible. I am nobody; the reader does not want me, he wants Beethoven. My own personal, subjective views on or explanations of these ties (not “slurs”) are of no consequence. I reckon that’s the job of the analysts and musicologists! But actually, if I really am asked for my views, I think—having lived with this extraordinary passage for seven years—I can now offer an explanation. I think that Beethoven needed to effect a transition between the obsessive rhythms of the fugato, endlessly eighth-quarter, eighth-quarter, eighth-quarter, to the broader, more legato sweep of the big D-major *Freude* chorus. He needed somehow to disintegrate that furious energy. And so we have this conversation between the horns and the woodwinds. Horns (mindlessly, going on as if an endless machine): eighth-quarter, eighth-quarter. Woodwinds: “Nein, nein, Freunde; nicht mehr diese Töne—wir wollen doch etwas angenehmere anstimmen!” The Horns are calmed a bit (mm.532–33), but the *moto perpetuo* breaks in again (m.534), so the woodwinds plead, more dolefully, “Bitte . . . bitte,” and gradually the horns get the message that it’s to be more legato (for Beethoven breaks up the pattern in two different ways: in the four-measure phrase, mm.531–34, he joins the second and third, in the next four-measure phrase, mm.537–40, he joins instead the second and fourth)—and then the woodwinds finally have the confidence to strike up the fully legato *Freude* chorus. But this is only a preliminary attempt; I make no claim that it is anything other than an entirely subjective and personal reaction.

One odd place, where Professor Levy suggests I have unfortunately “failed to catch a significant error” (p.229), is movt. I, m.312. Here I can only reply that Professor Levy has misunderstood something. There is no error; there is a revision in **C**, where Beethoven alters the text he had in **A** to the one we know now (and which I print), but even this has no bearing on the shift from F# to F $\natural$ , which in all cases and all versions is (as he says) on the second half of the second beat. Here there is no dispute, no alteration, and therefore no conversation to be had. But written “beneath the score” in **A** is not an “ossia”—it’s the Vers. I, double bass part, all of which Beethoven deleted in **C**.

Finally, to the metronome marks. Regarding the trio, Peter Stadlen realized subsequent to his original 1967 article “Beethoven and the Metronome” that he had been wrong about the correct note value being the whole note, and put this to rights in his *Soundings* article of 1982 (vol.9, pp.38–73). The whole note cannot possibly be correct, and it is amazing that so many conductors (even including such distinguished names as Gardiner and Heereweghe) are still seduced by it. Certain-

ly it is correct to leave the metronome mark blank at this point, because no correct authentic one survives. (Despite what Professor Levy says, I have never said that the “ill-fated” metronome mark is correct; I only say it’s authentic. On the contrary, I specifically say “it cannot be correct.”) But this is not at all the same as saying that the field is clear for any interpretation, however bizarre. It has been shown quite conclusively that the whole-note metronome mark was no more than a fault in late copies of **E**; so that it is quite extraordinary how many conductors continue to play the entire trio at a breakneck speed, which can have no possible musical sense, piously claiming authenticity as they do so. Just one further point will be made here, which I insist is not subjective, but objective: at this double bar the tempo relationship absolutely has to be old dotted half = new half. For the arguments, see Schenker’s book on the Ninth Symphony (1992 translation, p.170). Of course, Professor Levy would really like me to “address the broader issue” (p.231) and set down my own personal views; but I insist that within the ethic of an *Urtext* edition that is not my job, which is purely to determine what the text is.

Turning to the Turkish March in the finale, Professor Levy accuses me of printing a “patently inauthentic note value” (p.232) in the score. Surely he must realize that the original, most authentic source (the conversation book) is ambiguous with regard to note value. (Since I discuss this source in detail, it is extraordinary that Professor Levy accuses me of “cit[ing] no ‘authentic’ source” [p.231].) Then, in m.432 Beethoven specifically stipulates *sempre l’istesso tempo*. As a sensible musician I can only conclude that dotted quarter = 84 is actually inconceivable for the whole section (mm.331–594), and this is therefore one of those places where if I, as a responsible editor, have to judge that an authentic reading is inconceivable—and especially since I can show how the error could well have arisen—I have a duty to present the more likely text.

Just a few small matters remain. Professor Levy discusses Dieter Rexroth’s “commentary that accompanies his recent edition of the Ninth Symphony” (p.226). Unfortunately, Professor Levy seems to have overlooked the fact that only the “Einführung und Analyse” is by Rexroth; the edition doesn’t even purport to be by him, and indeed his score is simply a reprint of the Philharmonia miniature score, with not one single alteration or correction to that 1923 text. It is therefore hardly surprising that Rexroth’s list of sources is both incomplete and faulty in respect of those he does mention: **E** and **P** do not descend from Beethoven; we know he had no hand in correcting them, and their readings, insofar as they differ from their *Vorlagen*, are in all cases inauthentic.

I am aware that the tone of Bärenreiter’s publicity brochure has ruffled feathers in certain quarters, and yes, I agree it is very pushy in the way in which it seeks to

market, to *sell*, the edition aggressively. But I will stand by the substance of what it claims to this extent: that our edition is definitely closer to Beethoven's intentions than any other. And I will also stand by another claim, despite Professor Levy's accusation to the contrary: that for anyone who wishes to interpret the sources in a different way, and choose alternative readings, I have indeed supplied all the evidence.

Clearly you could say of any new edition that it may start to create new traditions for performances of that work. If Professor Levy is saying that our score of the Ninth Symphony is so widely performed that it is beginning to be seen as definitive—which in a sense is another way of saying the same thing—then perhaps I should take this as a compliment, i.e., as a measure of its acceptance by the musical performing world. I'm not too confident that that's what was meant, but I look forward to discussing the matter further with Professor Levy one day—over a nice bottle of wine, perhaps.

### **Response by David B. Levy**

I thank Jonathan Del Mar for the stalwart defense and explanation of the editorial decisions that governed the Bärenreiter *Urtext* edition of the Ninth Symphony. I admire his desire to be as objective as possible by removing himself from the picture in the service of presenting to us the "true" unvarnished Beethoven. Emblematic of our differences is his assertion that the new edition comes "definitely closer to Beethoven's intentions than any other." While this may be true in general, I saw myself obliged, as critic, to call into question the few passages cited in my review. For purposes of this response, however, I focus solely on the question of the relationship between textual fidelity and intention.

I quite agree with Del Mar that, lacking an eye or ear witness to the contrary, what is found written in sources **A** and **C** must claim primacy in any edition deserving the title of "Urtext." While Beethoven often railed against errors perpetrated by his copyists and publishers, he was himself far from the most reliable of proofreaders. I freely confess that my objection to the flute and oboe D in m.81 of the first movement and the unexpected ties in the horns in the finale flies in the face of *prima facie* evidence. I also agree with Del Mar that analytical theories ought to be based on evidence in the text, and not vice versa. Where we differ, I think, is in my entertaining the possibility that Beethoven may have gotten things wrong—Del Mar suggests as much where metronome indications are concerned—and that the "authoritative" sources, therefore, may be in error. Indeed, in a work as immense as the Ninth Symphony (and there are many other examples, large and small,

from his *œuvre*), the written evidence cannot always be accepted blindly as proof of intentionality. As Sieghard Brandenburg points out in his study of the structure of the scherzo of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (three parts versus five parts), text and intention are not always one and the same. "If we ask what is the 'final version'—the 'Fassung letzter Hand'—one must answer that it is the three-part version," Brandenburg concludes. But he hastens to add that the "one that corresponds to Beethoven's artistic intentions, however, is in five parts."<sup>1</sup> Ought one in a performance situation follow text or intention? How can we know the difference? Can an edition offer us a choice? (Del Mar's critical commentary for the Fifth Symphony explores this dilemma in great depth.)

The question of metronome markings as expressions of intentionality *in toto* also needs to be examined. I took the term "ill fated" regarding the trio of the scherzo (mm.412ff) from Del Mar's own critical commentary, where he argues against the number 116 based on the assumption that a *stringendo* from dotted half note = 116 to half note = 116 cannot be correct because it defies "musical sense." As Del Mar knows, the *stringendo* and its subsequent point of arrival ( $\frac{3}{4}$  or  $\frac{3}{2}$ ? *Presto* or *Prestissimo*?) caused the composer much consternation. Ought not the "musical sense" of the word "Presto" be called in question as much as the number itself?

Del Mar also concludes that the dotted quarter = 84 for the Turkish March is "inconceivable" for the whole section of mm.331–594. I agree in principle that it ought not be maintained for the entire passage, but still hold that Beethoven may have meant that it should begin at the slower speed. But when Beethoven indicates a metronome marking, is it sensible that any performer assume that Beethoven would adhere to that tempo strictly? Roger Norrington (with his recording of the Ninth for EMI) is, to the best of my knowledge, the only conductor who has tried to do so. For this he has been severely taken to task by critics, most notably Richard Taruskin.<sup>2</sup> But as Czerny and many other contemporaries of Beethoven attested, Beethoven himself advocated flexible speeds. Beethoven endorsed the metronome because it provided a modicum of assurance that performances of his music over which he would have no control ("inauthentic" ones!) would be reasonably close to what he had in mind. As history has proven, he was sadly mistaken on this point.

Del Mar is right to recognize that I object to the aggressive way in which Bären-

1. Sieghard Brandenburg, "Once Again: On the Question of the Repeat of the Scherzo and Trio in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony," in *Beethoven Essays: Studies in Honor of Elliot Forbes*, ed. Lewis Lockwood and Phyllis Benjamin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Department of Music, 1984), pp.146–98 (quote, p. 198).

2. Richard Taruskin, "Resisting the Ninth," *19cm 12* (1989), 241–56.



reiter has marketed the *Urtext* edition. My basic objection is this: its advertising implies—misleadingly—that all textual ambiguities have been removed, thus freeing conductors to offer the “real” Beethoven (whatever that may be) to audiences. Is it not possible that those poor nineteenth-century “inauthentic” redactors got it right after all?

I again congratulate Del Mar and Bärenreiter for a splendid achievement. My involvement as advisor to Andreas Delfs and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, which is using the new *Urtext* as it traverses all nine Beethoven symphonies during its 2002–03 season, is causing everyone involved in the project (including myself) to rethink carefully a whole host of issues—text included. The beauty and greatness of Beethoven’s symphonies, of course, is that there is never a “last word.” I thank the editors of *Beethoven Forum* for the opportunity to debate some of these questions in public. It helps us to realize that these pieces somehow still matter. Let the discussion continue, even as new sources come to light. As for Mr. Del Mar’s kind invitation, shall we make it over a nice glass of Tokay? I think Beethoven might approve.

*Editor’s note:* Interviews with Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Roy Goodman, and Sir Charles Mackerras from the basis of Leigh Aspin’s article, “Conducting the Del Mar edition of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony,” scheduled to appear in the next issue of *Beethoven Forum* (10:2).