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Journal of the Society for American Music / Volume 9 / Issue 03 / August 2015, pp 360 - 363
DOI: 10.1017/S1752196315000243, Published online: 11 August 2015

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S1752196315000243

How to cite this article:

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extent possible, I believe even the composer himself might have approved of this edition.

Christopher Bruhn


I always imagined Beethoven as a messy-haired, frowning savant, shaking his fist towards the heavens between fits of inspired creativity. My impression was not prompted by a specific encounter with a Beethoven symphony or sonata—indeed, with my band background, I am fairly confident I never played a work by Beethoven until my undergraduate studies. Rather, my image of Beethoven was based upon portrayals of the composer and his music in film, popular music, and other cultural production. In Beethoven in America, Michael Broyles explores such conceptualizations of Beethoven in the United States, from his American premiere in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1805—a performance of a “grand overture by Beethoven,” most likely referring to the first movement of his first symphony—to the Beethoven Skeleton Automatic Watch by Steinhausen, advertised in the Skymall catalog with the phrase “We found Beethoven’s immortal beloved! And now it belongs on your wrist”1 (334–45). A fully comprehensive study on such a large topic is impossible, so Broyles divides his approach between a chronological history of the performance and reception of Beethoven’s works in the nineteenth century and a more thematic exploration of Beethoven’s place in U.S. culture in the twentieth century. In doing so, he illuminates how Beethoven has been molded to fit a number of different narratives, ranging from Transcendentalism to the Black Power movement to the star-crossed lover depicted in the film Immortal Beloved (1994).

Broyles divides his text into four parts, composed of three chapters each, which are, for the most part, chronological. In the first part, “Arrival and Sacralization,” he traces the earliest known performances of Beethoven’s works on U.S. soil. He also examines how nineteenth-century critics came to understand Beethoven as a musical hero set on a pedestal both figuratively, as in the writings of Margaret Fuller and John Sullivan Dwight, and literally, as in the old Boston Music Hall’s large statue of the composer looming over the stage. Broyles also argues that nineteenth-century critics’ declaration of Beethoven’s musical language as being exceedingly masculine “broke gender barriers” in American music performance by

“contradict[ing] prevailing nineteenth-century thought that held that certain spheres of activity belonged to men and others to women. . . . Music belonged to women’s sphere” (64–65). Broyles closes the opening section with a particularly intriguing chapter on Beethoven’s “Deification and Spiritualization,” which includes an account of the composer’s significance to American spiritualists. Here, the author examines Beethoven’s relationship to the occult, including numerology, celestial influences, and even David Tame’s astrologically informed answer to the question of “how a man of such lofty, sublime music could also be such an explosive, violent, temperamental, and disagreeable person”: these behaviors are to be expected from “a Sagittarian” (87–88).

The second part, “Science, Scholars, and Critics,” covers Beethoven’s significance to the academy during the twentieth century, including avant-garde composers such as George Antheil and Edgar Varèse, the early-music movement, the incorporation of sketch studies in Beethoven research, and New Musicology, including the work of Susan McClary and Lawrence Kramer. Here, Broyles explores a number of other conceptualizations of Beethoven that stand apart from the Romantic one described above. For modernists, Beethoven became a figure “more attuned to the modern, urban, scientifically oriented technical world,” and so he evolved into “Beethoven the classicist” (97–98). For postmodernists, Beethoven came to embody Western values, providing grounds for criticism. Susan McClary’s famous reading of the Ninth Symphony provides one such example, in which she considers Beethoven’s music as representative of “the patriarchal-macho Western tonal structure” (141). Broyles additionally examines a number of other modernist and postmodernist reactions to Beethoven, and in doing so demonstrates the fluidity of our conceptualization of Beethoven, even within the academy.

In the third part of the book Broyles turns to “Beethoven and the Dramatic Arts,” which addresses Beethoven’s music in film and Beethoven as a character on stage and screen. In the chapter “Beethoven on the Silver Screen,” the author utilizes Hollywood as a “barometer of the Beethoven image in America throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first” (168). Here one again finds a number of different Beethovens, ranging from the tragic figure depicted in Un Grand Amour de Beethoven (1936) to the sexualized “Don Juan figure” (180–81) of Immortal Beloved (1993). Broyles also includes a lengthy discussion of Five Easy Pieces (1970), in which one character “may be read as a portrayal of Beethoven, but his presence is so shrouded that the connection is only suggested” (196). Broyles argues that the film’s protagonist, Bobby Eroica Dupea (played by Jack Nicholson), embodies Beethoven’s “anger and egocentrism,” qualities that negatively affect the other characters in the film (209). This reading examines the Beethoven character as a sort of anti-hero standing in contrast to the innumerable idealized constructions of the composer. Broyles’s argument is thought-provoking, but Dupea’s placement in this specific chapter, “Beethoven on the Silver Screen,” suggests that he is Beethoven reincarnated, which is a bit of a stretch. I was surprised that Broyles offers no

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mention of the 1992 children’s film *Beethoven* and its sequels, *Beethoven’s 2nd* (1993), *3rd* (2000), and *4th* (2001), in this chapter, and he makes only passing mention of it elsewhere in the book. In these movies a gigantic, temperamental St. Bernard named for the composer gradually earns a place as a beloved member of the home. While this kitsch example may constitute low-hanging fruit, it seems to me that the connections between Beethoven the composer and Beethoven the dog merit at least a brief discussion. Broyles subsequently discusses “Beethoven’s Music in Film,” which offers a multitude of alternative considerations of the Beethoven image, including ironic uses of Beethoven’s music, such as that in *Die Hard* (1988) and in Stanley Kubrik’s *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). In the latter film a young man with the same “anger and egocentrism” as Beethoven and Dupea—alongside a tendency towards “ultraviolence”—is drawn to Beethoven’s music, particularly the Ninth Symphony. Broyles asserts that this musical association is largely ironic but is quick to acknowledge that other authors, “such as Robert Griepenkerl and Susan McClary, have heard in the Ninth Symphony representations of violence” (227).

In the final part of the book, “Beyond Classicism: Beethoven in American Society and Culture,” Broyles dedicates an entire chapter to a particularly fascinating construction of the Beethoven character: the “Beethoven Was Black” movement, which can be traced to Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s 1907 proposal that Beethoven may have had African ancestors. This theory was then expanded by Joel A. Rogers in the 1940s and championed by Malcolm X and Doug Cass in the 1960s. Broyles concludes that, although it is not beyond the realm of possibility that Beethoven had Moorish ancestry, the assertion was largely political, aimed to provoke controversy and garner attention. In the remaining two chapters Broyles pulls out all the stops, attempting to cover as many examples of Beethoven in American popular culture as possible. Here, the author again demonstrates the flexibility of the Beethoven character. For instance, he reads Chuck Berry’s “Roll Over Beethoven” (and other artists’ subsequent covers of the song) as proclaiming rock ‘n’ roll a legitimate art form equal to the classical canon. In this case, Beethoven represents the highbrow society that rejected rock ‘n’ roll as a valuable musical art form. Broyles also discusses the use of Beethoven as a marketing tool. In the United States during the early nineteenth century, many publishers combined two popular trends, Beethoven and the waltz, and released “Beethoven waltzes,” most of which were not connected with the composer in any way. Along these same lines, the author discusses a neighborhood in Maryland called “Symphony Village,” in which each style of house is named for a composer. The “Beethoven” is the largest of these dwellings, reinforcing the author’s position that “Beethoven’s association with the most gigantic is almost certainly a statement about how Beethoven is perceived within the broader framework of American culture” (333). These final two chapters include far too many instances of Beethoven’s presence in American society to summarize here, but the sheer quantity of examples included successfully demonstrates the extent to which Beethoven has been appropriated to fit a vast number of needs.

*Beethoven in America*’s central issue is the tension between comprehensiveness and clarity. In the opening chapters, Broyles does an exceptional job of highlighting the trends and themes connecting different conceptualizations of Beethoven, keeping the connective materials at the forefront of the reader’s mind. However,
in later chapters, and particularly in “Beethoven’s Music in Film,” “Beethoven in the Theater,” “Beethoven in Popular Music,” and “Beethoven Everywhere,” the author’s pace is somewhat frantic as he attempts to include every Beethoven reference possible, and the themes that evolved so clearly through the book’s earlier chapters become lost. The book also lacks notated musical examples. That is a small matter, given the familiarity of many of the works discussed, but in a few instances musical notation would have added clarity, such as when Broyles asserts that the word “Beethoven” is a better rhythmic fit for Chuck Berry’s lyrics than “Brahms” (302).

Despite these issues, *Beethoven in America* is a remarkable addition to recent scholarship. Broyles demonstrates that there are still many new ways to consider even the most established musical figures, and he does so in a text that is accessible to readers regardless of their musical background. The author succeeds in presenting an astonishingly diverse set of examples, ranging from the library to *YouTube*. In his introduction, Broyles writes that “[t]here is no one-theory-fits-all approach, no single way to approach such a disparate collection of materials, except to sort through them and wait for the evidence to speak” (9). *Beethoven in America* has a voice, presenting readers with a nuanced analysis of the cultural impact of a musical giant who may share some qualities with the “messy-haired, frowning savant,” but who is also much more complex.

John McCluskey


Conductor, pianist, and author Joel Sachs has had a long history of involvement with the music of Henry Cowell. He is co-director of the new music group Continuum, which released some of the first recordings of Cowell’s chamber music. In the 1980s, Cowell’s widow, Sidney Robertson Cowell, gave him exclusive access to the composer’s personal papers at the New York Public Library, a collection that remained closed to the public until 2000. Sachs’s task in writing the authorized biography was enormous. A polymath, Cowell wore many hats during his life and career, the connections between his different initiatives were rich and complex, and he had numerous associates and friends in the musical, artistic, and intellectual worlds. The number of documents and other sources at Sachs’s disposal was thus immense and daunting. His diligence in establishing a comprehensive, clear picture of Cowell’s complex life, as well as his intimate knowledge of Cowell’s music and the many key figures in his life, is apparent throughout this authoritative, sixty-one chapter biography. His decision to focus primarily on Cowell’s life, rather than his music, does not exclude insightful discussion of the creative ideas and impulses that influenced Cowell’s oeuvre. Sachs draws from many histories—individual, institutional, local,