**Beethovens Werkstatt on the Test Bench**

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**Abstract**

In my master thesis I am working on the analysis of scriptural problems, trying to discuss the chronology of Ludwig van Beethoven's entries in the autograph of his *Flohlied* op. 75, no. 3. This is in order to examine the efficiency of the so-called VideApp of the research project *Beethovens Werkstatt* which studies sketches and manuscripts of Beethoven by combining methods of genetic criticism and digital edition.

**Introduction**

The research project *Beethovens Werkstatt* studies sketches and manuscripts of Ludwig van Beethoven by combining methods of genetic criticism and digital edition. It is a joint project located at the Beethoven-Haus Bonn and the Department of Musicology Detmold/Paderborn, and is funded by the Academy of Sciences and Literature Mainz. It started in 2014. In the first of its five modules, which took until 2016, the project focussed on the description of Beethoven's revision processes in several manuscripts of different genres. Several tools to show various layers of the compositional process as well as a reconstruction of a piece's chronology have been developed in the project. Additionally, a terminological base was formed with a glossary, which is still constantly refined.

The project's so-called VideApp is an example of an open access-web application which was developed during the first module. It combines a digital presentation of the composer's manuscript via MEI-data (representing the musical text) with SVG-shapes (marking the content of the document itself). Additionally, the VideApp gives a description of the sources, an overview of current research and a detailed analysis of textual genesis and of compositional chronology – not only verbally but also in a synoptic visualization of the source, its transcription and corresponding MEI-data. The different methods and forms of representation which were worked out in this way should be transferable both to other compositions and other composers.

In my master thesis I probe whether *Beethovens Werkstatt* can keep the promise of the VideApp's transferability by studying Beethoven's *Flohlied* op. 75, no. 3. The song's autograph (D-BNba, NE 220) was presumed to be lost; for this reason, it could not be taken into account for the 'Beethoven Gesamtausgabe' in 1990. Only in 1998 the manuscript was bought from private hands and brought to the public with a facsimile edition by Helga Lühning, who explains that the manuscript is probably an autograph transcription which served as engraver's model [1, p. 37]. On different levels, Beethoven did his typical corrections like cancellations, overwriting, and he used different writing media and jump marks, all of which were described by Lühning in her edition. Figure 1 gives an exemplary impression of the manuscript.

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2 Recently the project decided to name all web applications which are developed during the modules VideApp. Different suffixes specify the modules focuses'. The suffix 'Var' refers to the first module's focus on Variants.
A scriptual analysis Beethoven’s Flohlied

Guiding questions and methods

In my own approach I describe the source verbally and analyse some parts in which the writing flow was interrupted and modifications were added – Beethoven’s Werkstatt calls such areas ‘Textnarben’ (i.e. ‘textual scars’). The analysis does not include technical examinations of the paper, but only a scriptural analysis trying to discuss the chronology of Beethoven’s entries. For this purpose, I discuss the following questions:

• Are there musical reasons for explaining a modification, referring to harmonic, melodic, rhythmic or lyric aspects?
• Are there non-musical reasons which explain a modification, for example additional hints for a copyist?
• Into which categories could we classify Beethoven’s entries?

In reconstructing the compositional chronology I use the same methods as the VideApp. Besides a verbal description of the piece’s scriptural state, I will model its text in MEI and generate SVG-shapes by tracing the manuscript’s digitization on a graphic tablet.

At the moment I am creating SVG-shapes by tracing each entry in the manuscript’s digital images with the aid of a graphic tablet. From this working process I am presenting now two examples of textual scars in Beethoven’s Flohlied which I examined already.

Two examples of textual scars

The first textual scar is located on the second page of the autograph. It belongs to the third strophe. In Kurrent script Beethoven wrote the word ge=stochen (which means biten [by a flea]). At the first syllable the letter G is written two times: once as a capital and once more as a small letter which can be seen in Figure 2.
A possible explanation could be that Beethoven started the word with a capital and stopped while realizing the word has to be written with a small letter. So, he corrected the capital into a small letter and continued writing the word. Another explanation is that Beethoven wrote the whole syllable starting with a small letter and changed it afterwards into a capital letter. In this way, Beethoven could have marked the begin of a new verse. The second hypothesis is more obvious because all new verses begin with a capital letter. Furthermore on the next page we find two more similar corrections. In general, Beethoven used the same orthography and punctuation as in the printed version of Goethe's poem which can be considered a reverence to the poet [1, p. 38].

The second textual scar is on the penultimate page in the piano part. In the bass voice Alberti basses are noted in four groups of semiquavers. According to the time signature of 2/4 two semiquaver groups are too much here. Beethoven cancelled the first and third group of semiquavers. To understand which kind of compositional problem Beethoven tried to solve here, it is necessary to have a look at the piano's upper part as well (see Figure 3).

The cancelled semiquavers are written directly below the right hand which is an indication that Beethoven cancelled the bass voice after having written both the upper and the bass voice. Probably he saw an error in the accompaniment, cancelled the semiquaver groups and set two new groups of semiquavers to correct the error. But what kind of error did Beethoven see? If the cancelled passage would sound simultaneously with the upper part, sharp dissonances would result not only within the piano part (e.g. b'' flat – b natural on the first beat) but also with the voice part (b' flat). Therefore it is helpful to have a look at the previous and the following measure in which the harmonies which are identical with the cancelled part of the bar shown above really sound consonant (see Figure 4 and 5).
In starting to write on a new page (with the bar in Figure 3), probably Beethoven was wrong about the correct place in which the harmonical phrase was to be repeated – which was actually only in the following measure (see Figure 5). This is a typical mistake in a copying process – so judging from this mistake it is most likely that Beethoven copied this song from an already existing draft or manuscript [1, p. 38].

**Conclusion**

The results of my master thesis, presented with the aid of the VideApp, help to understand the compositional process of Beethoven’s Flohlied, but also approve the VideApp’s transferability and verify generally that the VideApp can show those compositional processes adequately. At the same time my work hints at details where improvements should be made in order to facilitate a better understanding of the genetic processes. Besides the discussion of the Flohlied itself, I will identify limitations of the current software, especially with regard to re-using it with custom data, and propose simple revisions and additions, which may still make a big difference for an average user with less access to the original developers.

**Work cited**