

BEETHOVEN'S STRING QUARTETS **PERFORMANCE PERSPECTIVES**



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Foreword

This web-book is intended primarily for string students approaching the Beethoven string quartets in their formative studies. The following pages will attempt to guide the reader through some of the most often discussed dilemmas of interpretation in the Beethoven quartets and help students make informed decisions in their rehearsals. The materials here reflect the 25 years I have been rehearsing and performing these masterworks as a violinist in the Penderecki String Quartet. In the years 2021 and 2023, the Penderecki Quartet taught a course at Laurier University titled “Beethoven String Quartet Cycle: History, Analysis, Performance”. In this seminar we gave classes analyzing the structure, harmony, and history of these works. We also gave lecture recitals performing excerpts from all 16 quartets and discussing our rehearsal techniques and performance practise solutions. The lecture recital discussions are summarized in the “Performance Features” chapter herein. I am very grateful to the many wonderful students who attended these classes with such a shared passion and reverence for these quartets. They are: Ryan Lokan, Karis Rovillos, Rhiannon Carter, Dune Maharaj-Pompa, Elianna Van Raalte, Katie Crawford, Logan Lawson, Emma Dunbar, Sierra Olsthoorn, Isidora Kunovac, Boet Zondag, Erin Leung, Paula Kokot, Veda Hingert-McDonald, Natasha Zado, Shannon Lai, Justin Leckie, Shakoore Henson, Yvon Arseneault, Luisa Perez, Will Riis, Benjamin Lizon, Sam Domzella, Madeleine Lambert, Kyle Cornacchi, Jesse Howell, Nathan Hilton, Hazel Millar, Iris Wu, Kai Schulz Rousseau, and Asteria Liu.

CHAPTER 1

Performance Practice of Beethoven's String Quartets

Introduction

Rehearsing the Beethoven string quartets can be an intimidating process, where dilemmas of interpretation abound challenging the well-being of many an ensemble. Sometimes I look back and think that of all the composers, it is Beethoven that caused our biggest tensions and toughest debates in our rehearsals. I believe the reason is that in some ways we are set up to believe there is a 'right' way to perform Beethoven's music. For one thing there is a lot more information given to the performer than any other string quartet composer up to his time. We also perceive these quartets as masterworks of perfection – which in many ways they are! However, a group can easily slip into arguments over what is the 'right' tempo, the 'right' articulation, or the 'right' phrasing. All of this is amplified when we discover his indications that seem to innovate from classical convention. I am often reminded of this good relationship advice when we are rehearsing: Do you want to be right or do you want to be loved? This can come in handy in a Beethoven rehearsal! I think the other important introductory remark on this subject is to remind young quartets that style is of course not a science and we can gather lots of historical

information and study the score carefully, but style and interpretation need to be alive in the present – otherwise we are destined to become museum curators only. Finally, delight yourselves in the mess of grey that exists between the right decisions and the wrong decisions. Metaphysically speaking, it is in the grey that art tends to exist and thrive. Beethoven's pen marks can only point to where his passion lies. When we have emancipated the ideals of right and wrong, we are more bound to create space for a living dialogue in concerts, allowing the daring, spontaneous, vulnerable magic to emerge – what we believe Beethoven really cared about. Spend a moment studying Beethoven's manuscripts and you will see his constant re-workings of passages, showing him more focused on content (counterpoint, voicing, drama, narrative, timing, wit, irony) than on specifics of tempo, articulation, phrasing.

That said, here in these chapters are some helpful tools to deal with some of the more fundamental issues of performing the Beethoven string quartets.

Tempo and the Metronome:

Ferdinand Ries studied with Beethoven from 1801-1805 and became one of Beethoven's most trusted friends. The issue of tempo and rubato is remarked upon by Ries in this recollection:

In general [Beethoven] played his own compositions very much according to his humour, though he usually kept a very steady rhythm and only occasionally...very rarely, speeded up the tempo

*somewhat. At times he restrained the tempo in his crescendo with a ritardando, which had a beautiful and most striking effect. In playing he would give various passages...utterly inimitable expression.*¹

George Barth notes this quote of Ries reveals Beethoven's strong expression, his taste for clear dependable tempi, and his rare but effective ways of modifying tempi.

Carl Czerny was the first champion of Beethoven's piano works. Czerny memorized all of Beethoven's tempos from listening to him play and added metronome markings to many editions after Beethoven died. Czerny's musical focus centered on true tempo, tempo cohesion, tempo of the whole, and warned of the dangers of sentimentality and loss of cohesion with too much tempo fluctuation. This quote is a good summary of Czerny's position:

*There are still many who mistakenly believe that use of the metronome requires that its uniform pace be precisely followed throughout the whole piece without permitting feeling, let alone freedom...But [they] should by no means slavishly follow its beats and thereby thwart an occasional necessary ritenuto or accelerando.*²

1. Barth, *The Pianist as Orator*, 54

2. Barth, *The Pianist as Orator*, 58-59.

Czerny's Ritardando Rules

According to Czerny, a ritardando may be used:

- a) In passages that form a return to the main subject.
- b) On notes that lead up to a single small part of a cantabile line.
- c) On sustained notes that are to be struck with particular emphasis, and which are followed by shorter notes.
- d) During the transition to a new tempo, or to a movement wholly different from the preceding one.
- e) Immediately before a fermata.
- f) When a very lively passage, or some brilliant figure-work, gives way to a diminuendo introducing a short, delicate run.
- g) On ornaments consisting of a large number of quick notes which cannot be squeezed into the correct tempo.
- h) Occasionally in heavily marked passages, where a strong crescendo leads to a new movement or to the end of the piece.
- i) In very whimsical, capricious or fanciful movements, in order to highlight their character better.
- j) In almost every case where the composer has put *espressivo*.
- k) At the end of every long trill forming a halt and a cadence in diminuendo, as well as on gentle cadences in general.³

3. Barth, *The Pianist as Orator*, 85

Anton Schindler was violinist and became Beethoven's secretary in the 1820's. Schindler was also well aware of the issue of proper tempi in Beethoven's music. His approach was somewhat freer than Czerny. Schindler wrote at length about Beethoven's sense of tempo rubato, his expressive freedom especially in his late period, and the drama Beethoven brought to individual gestures. Schindler writes:

*All the pieces which I have heard Beethoven himself play were, with few exceptions, given without any constraint as to the rate of the time. He adopted a tempo-rubato in the proper sense of the term...without the slightest approach to caricature.*⁴

Needless to say, George Barth's chapter "Inflection: The Speaking Style Transformed" is a terrific resource for further study on this fascinating topic. Another helpful study is Marten Noorduin's exhaustive 2016 thesis "Beethoven's Tempo Indications". Here Noorduin charts a cross-examination of all of Beethoven's movement titles, meters, and metronome markings.

Damaged Metronome

Another important issue is the fact that many of Beethoven's fast tempo markings seem insanely fast. Schindler notes that Beethoven assigned metronome markings to only one piano sonata, the Op.106 *Hammerklavier*. These tempo markings are notoriously fast and uncharacteristic. And this is

4. Barth, *The Pianist as Orator*, 66

also true in the Op.18 quartets (especially the first movement of Op.18 No.6). There are many theories on this topic such as Beethoven was simply hearing the music in his head instead of in reality with real people playing (because he couldn't hear well.) Beethoven also didn't get to assigning metronome markings to these quartets until 1818 (16 years after he wrote them so his hearing was considerably worse if not depleted). The idea that Beethoven's metronome may have been damaged has been discussed by many scholars – especially considering the reality that many of Beethoven's markings are tremendously fast. The pianist Peter Stadlen regards that 66 out of a total of 135 important metronome markings by Beethoven are absurdly fast and thus possibly wrong. In 2013, a group of scientists and mathematicians conducted experiments on what would happen if Beethoven's Mälzel metronome fell from a table in an upright position. Their discovery is rather significant:

*For fast tempi, the damaged metronome will go slower than indicated by the factory calibration...but for slow tempi the damaged metronome always will go faster than predicted by calibrations.*⁵

So more explicitly, if Beethoven's metronome had been damaged it would have played slower in fast positions on the metronome and faster in slower positions on the metronome. So for example:

Beethoven's metronome says 144 = actually sounding at 120

Beethoven's metronome says 60 = actually sounding at 80

5. Forsen, Gray, Lindgren, Gray, "Was Something Wrong with Beethoven's Metronome?", 1151.

Ferdinand David and the Viotti School

There is not a lot of surviving information about Beethoven's own violin playing. He did play viola in the Court Orchestra in Bonn and he took violin lessons from Krumpholtz in Vienna in 1792. However, Beethoven's association with the string players of his time provides clues as to what he might have had in mind stylistically. Perhaps the most significant violinists Beethoven encountered in Vienna were Franz Clement, Rodolphe Kreutzer, George Bridgetower, Pierre Rode, and Louis Spohr. Many of these violinists were disciples of the Viotti School.

The principal stylistic characteristics of the Viotti school were frequent use of a broad *détaché* in fast movements, as well as *martelé* bow strokes, slurred staccato, extensively varied patterns of slurred and detached bowings, powerful tone, and highly expressive cantabile with prominent portamento (vocal slides). This style was part-in-parcel with the development of the new French bow designed by François Tourte with the help of Viotti. The Tourte model is what our modern bows are based on today. The main innovation here from Tourte in the 1780s is the concave shape providing strength for the upper half of the bow and the ability to produce strong accents in this part of the bow. Quite a revolution from the convex bows of the baroque era.

However, it is important to mention that outside of this group of Viotti school violinists was Franz Clement whose violin playing stood apart stylistically. Beethoven wrote his violin concerto with Clement's artistry in mind. Clement's playing was described thus:

“...an indescribable delicacy, neatness and elegance, and extremely delightful tenderness and cleanness in playing – not the marked, bold, powerful playing, the gripping, striking Adagio, the power of bow and tone which characterises the Rode/Viotti School.”⁶

Although none of the violinists directly connected with Beethoven left any editions or information about the bowing style or fingerings they would have used, we can look to the next generation of violinists for some clues.

Ferdinand David was a pupil of Louis Spohr. Spohr was one of the earliest champions of Beethoven’s Op.18 quartets as well as the violin sonatas. David’s editions of Beethoven’s sonatas, trios, string quartets and Violin Concerto are the earliest examples of fingered and bowed parts and are likely highly influenced by his mentorship with Spohr.

Ferdinand David’s editions of Beethoven reveal:

1. Dividing the bow in Beethoven’s impossibly long slurs was common practice. The long slurs seem to be more an indication of legato rather than a specific bowing.
2. Dots under slurs indicate portato rather than staccato.
3. Portamento is a common expressive device not to be overdone.

6. Clive Brown, *Performing Beethoven*, “Ferdinand David’s editions of Beethoven”, 119

4. *Una corda* (on one string) is a common colour effect and Beethoven even marks it (Op.59.3.iii; Op.127.iv).
5. Continuous vibrato is antithetical to what appears to have been a frequent use of open strings and harmonics found even on long sustained notes in David's editions. Methodologies of the time unanimously recommend a sparing use of vibrato.
6. On-the-string stroke in the upper-half is a striking feature of the French Viotti style that was different from Baroque springing bow in mid-lower half. David's bowings almost always favour this on-the-string style in fast passages (up to a certain speed).⁷

Op.18 Sources and Dots & Dashes

Beethoven's autograph manuscript of Op.18 has not survived.

What exists:

1. The first edition printed by T. Mollo and Co in Vienna in 1801 which Beethoven proof-read.
2. Manuscript parts (individual parts) from 1800 that were recently discovered in 1988.

The Bärenreiter Urtext score from 2007 blends the two above sources.

The Henle parts that most people play from date from 1963. And the Dover score is a replica of the Breitkopf and Härtel edition printed in 1862.

Essentially, the Bärenreiter Urtext score is probably the most authoritative

7. Clive Brown, *Performing Beethoven*, "Ferdinand David's editions of Beethoven", 122-149.

score when it comes to issues of articulation, dynamics.

Op.18 History of Sources

1801 T Mollo first edition proof read by Beethoven

1862 Breitkopf and Hartel edition based on Mollo

Dover score is an exact copy of Breitkopf

1963 Henle produces “Utext” parts that is widely used

1988 manuscript individual parts are discovered and

Bärenreiter produces a modern critical edition 2007

But mostly what differentiates the Bärenreiter Urtext from the Dover score is the issue of Punkte and Striche.

Punkte= dot and is seen as staccato dots throughout the Op.18 in the T Mollo ed.

Striche= dash and is seen as a staccato wedge (carrot) throughout Op.18 in the manuscript parts (in Beethoven’s hand).

For this reason, the Bärenreiter consistently has the *striche* marks (carrots) all over the staccato passages to reflect the manuscript. It is possible Beethoven thought of longer staccato strokes with the *striche*. In Beethoven’s Letter to Karl Holz in 1825 Beethoven gives firm instruction that *punkte* and *striche* are NOT the same. And there is further correspondence where Beethoven is seen to remove the dots from the first performance parts of 7th Symphony and replacing them with wedge. The only time he uses dots are under slurs to indicate portato (pulsing stroke).

The difference between dots and dashes has been studied extensively by the musicologist David Murphy who cites numerous sources including Leopold Mozart and Louis Spohr's treatises. (Remember Spohr worked with Beethoven and championed the Op.18).

Murphy concludes with this general guide:

Dash (Striche) can mean:

1. Marcato
2. accented staccato
3. an accent under a slur
4. lifted staccato
5. a simple detached (as opposed to a slurred) stroke

Dots (Punkte) can mean:

1. to separate notes in the same bow, and
2. to indicate spiccato, ("off the string" or "staccato leggiero" as Spohr calls it).

And quite interestingly, Murphy makes this final remark:

The **psychological difference** between a **staccato dot** and a **dash** is that the dot takes away duration of the note whereas the dash **adds significance to the note**.

Consulting Roger Donington's seminal compendium "The Interpretation of Early Music" (1963) we learn that:

At the end of the baroque period, the dot was beginning to be used to show a lighter, less abrupt staccato than the dash. Quantz and Leopold Mozart reflect this new tendency. In Louis Adam's Méthode de piano (Paris, 1804) the dash results in a $\frac{1}{4}$ of the value of the note to which it is applied and the dot results in $\frac{1}{2}$ value.⁸

Further on this topic, William Newman makes some important points. A few glances at Beethoven's manuscripts shows his "impetuosity in the heat and drive of creativity"⁹. He notes that Haydn's staccato markings are very clear whereas with Mozart and Beethoven the markings between *punte* and *stricht* are often indistinguishable. Studying Beethoven's penmanship, Newman remarks that Beethoven often drew his staccato signs in a graduated transition rather than a clear distinction from one sign to the other:

"he seemed to be bridging the signs in his notation as he drew dots, then small strokes, then gradually larger strokes, progressing from gentler to stronger tensions."¹⁰

In other words, our rehearsal discussions on the kinds of staccato we choose probably should be borne of character rather than of some notational exactitude!

8. Donington, *The Interpretation of Early Music*, 475

9. Newman, *Beethoven on Beethoven*, 139.

10. Newman, *Beethoven on Beethoven*, 144

Peters Editions of Late Beethoven Quartets

A warning to performers that although the Peters individual parts for late Beethoven have long been the only parts available, they are full of discrepancies to the manuscript.

A most dire case – and one that caused the Penderecki Quartet some wasted rehearsal – are the hairpins in the Op. 130 Cavatina. In the Peters parts the hairpin's apex is at the second beat of the bar in the violin 2, viola, and cello parts. But in the manuscript this hairpin clearly highlights the third beat of the bar coinciding with the first violin.

CHAPTER 2

Performance Features of Beethoven's String Quartets

Op.18 No.1

18.1.i – *Allegro con brio*

The opening of this string quartet represents one of the most famous problems of bowing and points to so many of the dilemmas players face in interpreting the Beethoven string quartets. The opening gesture feels like down bow music, but how do the players deal with the dots? Some quartets play this up bow. But forte at m.9 clearly demands down bow? However, m.1 is tonic and m.2 is dominant, so do we stress the dominant? Also notice violin 2 has sfz m.22 so this would be down bow.

This conundrum opens up several debates. In Classical style, the dominant harmony is the tension point and the tonic is the release. This basic relationship exists on a macro and micro level in music and one we look for in general when we are making phrasing decisions. But does this harmonic normalcy trump our phrasing stress points at all instances? Does a motive, such as the ubiquitous one in Op.18, No.1, have only one shape throughout the entire

movement? My general answer to both these questions is “no”, but the debate is worthwhile for us and has been important in justifying our intentions.

Notice in the first movement of Op.18.1 all the versions of the opening motive in the first 50 bars. This is an expansive quartet and the opening motive is developed throughout. In fact, the second theme is equally enjoyed thoroughly through all voices of the quartet. This second theme begins m.57. It is slippery, almost non-committed as a theme, the dominant is not established until m.59.

There is a hemiola that carries through a large part of this section beginning at m.78. In the recap, Beethoven moves to distant G flat major early on by m.190 and hangs on to the B flat in Vln1 to create a C6/5 m.208 to get to the second theme in tonic F. The second theme is at m.216.

18.1.ii – *Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato*

Opening reminds us of the D minor landscape of Mozart K.421.

How much pulsing should we hear in the opening? We want to be linear to match vln1. We must be mindful of balance – cello has main line m.14 which passes to violin 1 then v2 in the last bar of the page. Beethoven marks 138 to the eighth which feels a bit fast for this graveyard scene?

18.1.iii – *Scherzo: Allegro molto*

This is a super fast scherzo. It is the fastest “Menuet” in the Op.18 with barline at 112. 18.2=52; 18.3=100; 18.4=56; 18.5=76; 18.6=63. This reminds us of Beethoven’s 1st Symphony. It also stems from Haydn *gli scherzi* quartets of Op.33.

The Trio has a nifty Neapolitan going from C to D flat major m.90 and then a further surprise to D-6/4 from a chilling C# unison rise at m.122.

18.1.iv - *Allegro*

There is a fugue in the last movement at m.117. It curiously appears as something of a double fugue since the opening material is a secondary voice in simultaneous fugue with this new serious Bach-like subject beginning in the 1st violin. Notice there is a new theme introduced on m.137 and after some metrical dissonance we return back to the Bach subject in m.158. After a while at m.163 only the Bach-like subject remains and the running triplet 16ths are dropped. In other words, the Bach theme takes full prominence over the original material.

Op.18 No.2

18.2.i - *Allegro*

We like to stress the 7th of the V7 harmony in m.3 thus making a slight dim to m.4. This makes further sense with the grace note in the 1st violin.

While the 3rd measure has a baroque gesture to it, it is possible to consider an upper half bow treatment.

There is a curious alternation of quarter note and eighth note value to the last note of the gestures. We have wondered how this affects the phrasing.

Notice that part of the politeness of this *Kompliment* Quartet is the fact that

we have very neat 4x4 phrases. What happens at m.27 is diminution to 2 bar phrases leading to the second theme nicely in the dominant at m.36.

The theme moves towards the sfz as its goal. So in the variant of this theme at m.62 we likewise crescendo toward the end in a similar way.

Notice that there is a B minor diversion at m.51. B minor is the relative minor of the Dominant D major. It is interesting that there is a subterranean theme for couples introduced here that gets passed from vln1+2 to vln2+va.

There is a fugal section that makes up the development. We let this subject always be in the foreground and control the rate of the crescendo to the climax of this passage.

At the recap the 2nd violin has the 2nd theme so it needs to be highlighted.

The ending is the epitome of politeness and curtsy. The ending concludes with a few pauses of farewell and then a bow with a final restatement of the opening theme.

18.2.ii – *Adagio cantabile*

The Adagio features several florid and melismatic moments that, considering Czerzy's rules of ritardando, merit tempo freedom. The second Adagio especially is rococo in this way. We need to listen very carefully to each other's liberties.

The first violin has an opportunity for portamento in m.71 and in fact in Ferdinand David's editions a portamento is added.

Notice also that the moving line alternates between the voices in the final bars. We let the player with the moving line lead the gesture and we all follow.

18.2.iii – *Scherzo: Allegro*

There are articulation discrepancies in the opening figure of this movement. The Dover score is a replica of the Breitkopf and Hartel edition from 1862. The autograph manuscript score of Op.18 has not survived but in 1988 manuscript parts (individual parts) were discovered. We know that the first edition was printed by T Mollo in Vienna. And that this first edition was proofread by Beethoven. The Barenreiter score we work from negotiates between these two sources. What is weird here is the Henle parts from 1963 do not have slurring across three notes in this opening motive. But the Dover and Barenreiter do, so we have decided this is the best course of action for us.

You will notice that sometimes the motive slurs only two notes -especially in more active areas. This may be the cause of some dilemmas in editions on this point.

Notice also a very Beethoven moment at m.29. A sudden piano dynamic from fortissimo. This is also technically quite awkward for us to execute.

Also, the metronome marking here of 54 to the bar line is rather normal for a Minuet (although this is marked Scherzo Allegro). The baroque French

Minuet was thought to be at about 60 to the bar line because a healthy heart beats at this tempo. The Op.18 No.1 and 18.3 Scherzos are in the 100+ range.

Finally, draw your attention to the way we can regain tempo through the bridge material going from Trio back to Scherzo. Beethoven gives us connecting material to wind us back up to tempo and we usually need to because we take the Trio slower. He does this effect at the end of the Trio of 18.6 as well in the second ending.

18.2.iv – *Allegro molto, quasi Presto*

In the opening of the last movement, the cello naturally phrases to the third bar where the dominant lies. But we phrase to the second bar of the 1st violin response (m.6) because of the spicy E minor triad. Equally in m.14 the diminished quality of this chord with the C in the viola warrants an agogic lean. Later on, Beethoven puts sfz on the second bars of the motive. (m.22 and 26). The tempo marking is 92 to the bar line!

The development is a series of surprise keys that drop humorously from pause points. The first is the dominant D major that lands at its Neapolitan E flat (m.140). Then it finds a C major version at m.179. Then there is a prolonged dominant on D at m.203. This turns sneakily in to a D9th chord (m.215) giving a diminished quality until the next pause which is a V 4/2 of A flat Major (Neapolitan of G) m.235 and the wit continues as he turns the E flat dominant 7 into an E diminished (a favourite Beethoven harmonic trick!) and then moves to the dominant of the dominant (so then A7 to D7) to finally back to G home key at the recap (m.247).

Op.18 No.3

18.3.i - *Allegro*

The opening gesture should gravitate to the second bar as a 7th of the dominant - Beethoven later marks with cresc after m.27. In m.16 the second note lands on a diminished chord in forte. The harmony at m.7-9 is (V6/4, V7, I with E sharp appoggiatura) so the main stress is on the 6/4 in m.7 where the cello is on high A. Then the low A is less (it is a dominant 7 here). The appoggiatura is a secondary stress on the tonic m.9.

There is a theme here that is posing as the second theme in m.36 (line 4 p.43) but it is in the tonic D major and it is turned into its relative minor quickly (B minor), it is also the theme that gets developed in the development.

Another candidate for official second theme status is where the dominant gets derailed at m.62. It forces this pseudo second theme to be in C major which is easily turned into its relative minor (A minor) which is easily turned into A Major by m.76.

Notice also that there are dovetailing melodic lines m.90 and onward. The second ending is also identical to the opening. The listener doesn't know anything has changed until the D minor is heard in the 3rd bar of the development – we try to paint this by waiting for this chord rather than placing the downbeat of the 2nd ending.

The ensuing harmonies are spicy as Beethoven tries to get to B flat major.

Listen how the dominant seven in m.115 creates a rub in the next measure with the clash between E and F natural in the violins. Beethoven eventually tonicizes B flat major by m.122.

Talking about Neapolitan relationships, the E sharp in the 9th bar of the opening statement is a clue to the derailment of the dominant and to macro treatment of key areas. The second theme in the recap is in F Major (so essentially tonicizing E sharp) at m.199 and this theme appears finally again in the coda in E flat Major m.247(the Neapolitan of the tonic D).

18.3.ii – *Adagio cantabile*

We often come across gestures that are tempting to shape in a way that doesn't coincide with the underlying harmony. A case in point is m.13 in the Andante movement. One might think to rise up with the violin scale and descend from there. But listening to the harmony shows a progression in m.13-14 as I – V7 with an E natural rise in the viola to the dominant in 14. So we choose to phrase to the dominant. Beethoven also adds a grace note to hint at this stress.

A similar gesture later on has different harmonic needs. At m.62 the scale in the 2nd violin goes to a B flat V7 chord and resolves quite chillingly to C flat major to A flat minor and then to E flat minor by line 2.

Jumping back a bit in the movement, there is a range of characters in close succession that needs our attention to convey with conviction. At m.23 there is a cute coo-coo clock that needs to get a smile from the audience. It is followed rather severely by unison threat in m.30 and then we have a brief allusion to

the *Eroica marche funèbre* in the dotted rhythm of vln 1, vla, and cello. This all takes us to a warm-hearted lead back to the recapitulation at the *sul una corda*.

Mark Steinberg describes the coda of this movement as being a proto-type of the Cavatina of Op.130. The PSQ has also discussed where the coda actually begins. One might argue the coda begins at m.120 – whereas Steinberg focuses on the pp section beginning at m.135. To be sure this is an ending of extreme contrasts. Notice the syncopation here in the three inner voices and the chromatic worming of the cello taking the melody. The violin 1 is *beklemmt* with the broken sighs. I think the syncopations create a motion as though the movement of time is indifferent to the pathos of life.

18.3.iii – *Scherzo Allegro*

The chosen amount of ritardando into pauses can add variety on repetitions. Maximizing dynamics also adds variety. This tempo is fast. Bar line = 100 is way above a normal Menuet tempo. Notice E sharp in the cello line at m.20. That is one crazy clash!

18.3.iv – *Allegro molto, quasi Presto*

The opening of this movement presents conundrums galore. The Juilliard Quartet's early recording of this movement maximizes the metrical dissonance by displacing the bar line (ie. making a diminuendo of the triplet gestures and thereby obfuscating the metrical alignment).

And there may be some further reason to do as the Juilliards because we normally understand a dot at the end of a slur in Beethoven to mean diminuendo.

But Beethoven mostly solidifies the downbeat feel of this gesture especially at the climax at the end of the exposition. At m.108 you see the 1st violin reinforcing forte markings on the down beat. Also look at the very last bars of this movement (p.64) where the motive goes to the down beat in a full quarter note value. For these reasons we feel Beethoven intended the bar line to be heard in this opening gesture.

The phrasing of the opening also presents a problem. Should the gesture crescendo or decrescendo on the descending line? Perhaps a natural solution would be to just follow the topography.

But how does this play out later? If you look at the coda on at m.335 we need to decide to have either parallel motion or contrary motion (in terms of dynamics) between the violins and vla/vc. The violins descend while the lower voices ascend? Or should we all do the same shape? Perhaps a hint is that the violins finally ascend to an arrival fortissimo at m.351

A final point of contention is maintaining the triplet feeling so it doesn't sound like two 16ths and an eighth.

Op.18 No.4

18.4.i – *Allegro ma non tanto*

The character of C minor here depicts intense trauma in the opening 25 bars. The G major chord at m.25 is akin to the 5th Symphony with its abrupt halts. We hear suddenly A flat Major after G Major at m.26.

Notice the staccato in m.8 (it doesn't exist in Barenreiter or Henle, only at the recapitulation) and *fp* in m.20 (Dover has *fp* whereas Barenreiter and Henle has only piano on the downbeat).

The 2nd theme (m.34) is in the relative major, nicely following sonata form convention. Here we phrase to the turn. Notice some metrical dissonance at m.53 with the *sforzandi*. Also notice the articulation detail missing in the Dover score. The Barenreiter is consistent with no staccato markings in m.72 and 76.

The second theme reappears at m.158 in the tonic major (C Major). In the chord progression leading up to its arrival, the Neapolitan of the dominant appears in A flat major at m.152. Notice the chromatic rise in the 2nd violin from B, C, D flat, D, E flat, E, F, F sharp, G.

Interesting to note also that the coda at m.202 is in D flat Major, the Neapolitan of the tonic.

18.4.ii – *Andante scherzoso quasi Allegretto*

We have debated whether the opening gesture should be phrased to the first or second measure. It essentially begins with the dominant, so is this the stress? But be careful of your decision as it affects what happens in diminution to the one-to-the-bar at m.33 or the 2 bar intervals at m.94.

At the recapitulation there is a new drum theme we like to highlight at m.147 that passes through all voices. Fun!

18.4.iii – *Menuetto: Allegretto*

Here Beethoven gives us a slightly fast menuet at 84 to bar. But it feels a bit too fast for the Trio (which sounds like pre-Schubert) and note Beethoven wants the return to be faster still.

The menuet melody is similar to the first movement and the metrical dissonance with *sforzandi* add to the stormy character.

18.4.iv – *Allegro*

Here we have a Gypsy rondo in the style of Haydn's Trio No.39 with its *Rondo a l'Ongarese*. Haydn worked at the court of Esterhazy which is modern day Hungary.

There are numerous C minor/Major contrasts in this movement including a fun pastoral diversion in the tonic major at m.73. The Dover edition has this motive slurred but the Barenreiter score does not, so we do the Barenreiter bowing. It is important to relate the concluding gestures of the movement

accordingly.

The Prestissimo coda is a *Czardas* with off-beat accents. Again, it has major/minor (C+ in constant contrast in this fairy dust ending). It is resolved abruptly with a C Major finish as though slamming the door shut! Consider other endings in Op.18 – not to mention the sudden C sharp Major ending of Op.131.

Op.18 No.5

18.5.i – *Allegro*

The dynamics of the opening of this movement are immediately confusing. Is m.5 subito piano for vln1? Dynamics at the recapitulation at m.136 are curiously different.

This opening is delightful but more intense than Mozart's K.464 on which it is modelled.

The cleverness of the 6-bar insertion in the recap at m.151 shows the brilliance of Beethoven's craft.

18.5.ii – *Menuetto*

The Menuet of the 2nd movement is closer to a Mozartean character than Beethoven's faster Menuet. The tempo here is more leisurely at 76 to the bar. The first stanza is not repeated but rather the melody is given to the viola. One wonders what is happening harmonically with F double sharp at m.36.

The answer is that it is an applied diminished 7 to C sharp minor –the relative minor to the dominant (E). This then leads to “pounding on the door” at m.44 (where it was more polite knocking in Mozart’s K.646 analogous gesture). We like to show this intensity with three down bows!

18.5.iii – *Andante cantabile*

Observe in this movement the playful drum theme inspired by Mozart’s K.464. Note also how both Beethoven and Mozart use the final variation as an extended coda.

18.5.iv – *Allegro*

At m.36, the 2nd theme is inspired by Mozart’s whole note theme. In Beethoven’s version he presents a circle of 5ths which suggests we should play strong-weak on the V-I (m.37 strong, m.38 weak, m.39 strong, m.40 weak etc).

These long fifths also stem from the cello part at the opening of the movement. (m.4 and m.9)

The ensemble is very difficult at the end of this movement. The end has a long tonic from the 8 last bars. The ending is resigning in the way of K.464. Again, this is another quartet from op.18 without a rousing finish! (akin to: 18.2;18.3;18.5).

Op.18 No.6

18.6.i – *Allegro con brio*

Beethoven's tempo here is notoriously fast with the bar line at 80bpm. We have to super-anticipate the turns or we are late!

We have changed the bowing to the second theme (m.45) so many times! The question is, do we phrase to 1st or 2nd bar of this theme? We have also debated the character here. Notice there are no dots on this theme so it should be sung and not too detached. We tend to play this second theme slower than the opening tempo and then regain tempo gradually through m.68-80.

18.6.ii – *Adagio ma non troppo*

We are mindful of the 'non troppo' marking in this movement title. It comes off sounding more early Classical if it is not too slow. The melody has an obvious emphasis to m.2 where the V7 lies. We have debated whether m.35 should be more or less than m.36. The harmony has more tension in m.35 as a E flat minor, but the B flat chord in m.36 can lead into the lovely cascading gesture that descends from m.37 to m.39.

I prefer not to take time through the sforzandi at m.64. Just lead it straight into the rest as though cut off from feeling. The second violin has the lead voice in the final pizzicatos.

18.6.iii – *Scherzo, Allegro*

This delightful and cunning Scherzo has its challenges as to whether we feel the meter in 6/8 or 3/4. We tend to start in a 6/8 feel. Bars such as

12-15; 19-23; 33-36; and 39-48 have a more natural 3/4 meter groove. We don't overstate the metrical displacement in measures 38-48, but it is fun to tease it as though the bar line is off by one 8th note! Our musicologist friend Harald Krebs (University of Victoria) has written extensively on the metrical dissonance of this movement and his analysis has been very revealing to us.

The trio is very tricky for the first violin and we tend to take it slightly slower. Notice the lead-back to the menuet is akin to that in Op.18 No.2. This lead-back helps us to regain tempo.

18.6.iv – *La Malinconia, Allegretto quasi Allero*

The *Malinconia* is a kind of free-form fantasia, so we are not too strict with tempo. Sometimes we let the tempo move forward as we do in the last build at m.37.

The opening should sound like a march in slow motion – a reverie of lost war. The anti-hero lurks. The wayward harmonies in the fugato create the feeling of being lost in the abyss.

At the end of this movement (m.195) the *Adagio* makes two brief appearances breaking up the *Allegretto*. The narrative of this back and forth is intriguing. William Kinderman takes a convincing stab at comparing this to the narrative of Goethe's "Gretchen at the Spinning wheel" which depicts the distraught psychological state of Gretchen who, increasingly obsessed by her thoughts of Faust and by his kiss, breaks off her repetitive activity of spinning and only with difficulty is able to resume it. Similarly, the implied protagonist

in Beethoven's design becomes haunted by *La Malinconia* at this point and is made temporarily unable to sustain the German dance theme of the opening. Moreover, at m.271 the final stage reveals the slowed down *poco adagio* presentation of the dance which invites the listener to once more hear a transformational relationship between the *Malinconia* and the German dance.

Op.59 No.1

59.1.i – *Allegro*

At the opening of this quartet, one finds the cello theme to be rather stable over a first inversion tonic chord. The first violin however goes to an F in its second bar which is unstable over the V_{4/3}. Therefore, it should be coloured differently from the more stable whole note G two bars later.

For the 'leaping' theme (m.20), the phrasing should follow the should be stressed as it resolves to C+; and the half of 24 is d minor going to as stressed B diminished on the down beat of 25. So these stress points are different even though the note shapes look identical.

The horn melody (m.30) provides a release from the opening's perpetual motion of the eighth notes. Here then a bit of metric freedom suits this dolce passage and sense of release.

The "exotic antiphonal theme" (as Mark Steinberg calls it) (m.85) feels like it is rather outside of the normal pacing of this movement. We have debated

whether its character warrants a relaxation of tempo. Notice here the notes F and G from the opening is a feature. This dyad relationship essentially forms a structural link throughout the exposition and ending.

The development takes the eighth notes of the first theme and extends them in a dialogue with violin 1 and cello. We need to balance this dialogue so it is heard prominently. We have debated whether the tip-toeing rising notes in the upper three voices of m.128-129, 132-133 and 136-137 have a slight crescendo thereby dovetailing the descending cello and ushering in the new harmony at m.130, 134, and 138. We have also tried playing this passage where all voices follow the descent of the cello and make the subito fortes a tutti gesture. This section culminates in a tricky unison in E flat Major at m.140.

The 6/4 chord at m.152 is a familiar inversion used to signal an opera recitative. It has this function here with a long pedal and the slow chromatic rise of the cello. It befits a recitative-like freedom in the 1st violin.

When we get to the fugue at m.185 we phrase to the 5th note since later Beethoven puts a *sfz* on this note. We like to play this subject in a Bach style with no vibrato.

The climax is in the coda. This the first time the theme is heard in the root position of the tonic. It is fortissimo with off-beat sforzandi. Beethoven's bowing is strained at four notes to a bow – and perhaps this struggle befits the character. We have experimented with splitting this bowing at m.348 for more power.

59.1.ii – *Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando*

This movement may be understood as sonata form. With a collection of themes belonging to 1st group: m.1; m.4; m.23, m.39. 2nd group beginning in the dominant minor at m.115. (Some argue this movement is Menuet-Trio form and m.115 is where the Trio begins).

There is metrical play at m.54. We like to give it a bit of its own tempo to set it as a special elfin moment.

The completed melodic theme in its fortissimo version at m.101 has a *sfz* on the second beats. Should a similar emphasis exist in the pianissimo version at m.72?

Ferdinand David suggests a hooked bowing for the passage at m.185 that keeps the violins in the upper half of the bow and seems to honor the fact that Beethoven omits dots for the violins in the manuscript (p.10 of online manuscript). The GP (general pause) at m.171 marks the beginning of the development whereas the next GP (m.238) marks the recapitulation in this sonata form design. Notice the intensity of the writing leading up to this moment. Notice especially a fugato section in fortissimo of the monotone rhythm motive beginning in the cello at m.193 – we want to hear this passed around up through the quartet.

The section at m.216-231 presents a problem of groupings. The motive breaks down into four note groups. We naturally would stress the first of the four

notes – which works nicely in m.222 with the violins as a pair and then viola and cello as a pair alternating cleaning. But then Beethoven contracts this and the four note groups overlap by an eighth note between the violins and the viola/cello. This makes for either a double hemiola effect by m.227 or the quartet needs to favour one group shape for all. It could be that Beethoven wants this busy effect: the violins maintain their upper note stress in the group of 4 and the viola and cello maintain theirs as well thereby creating cumulative stresses per every eighth note.

Sonata form would cite m.239 as the best choice for the recapitulation even though this arrives in G flat major instead of the tonic B flat (we do get the tonic by the next fortissimo m.265). The 1st group of themes roll out in nicely in their original order and spacing here to create familiarity and relief after the intense climactic build of the development. Notice this recapitulation is graced with a brand-new melody in violin 2 and viola.

There is a canonic coda like section that sets off in the cello at m.404. The ending is full of wit and charm with a final note marked only one forte – a noble final punctuation.

59.1.iii – *Adagio molto e mesto*

The opening of this *Adagio molto e mesto* is marked *piano sotto voce* but at m.9 the cello has *espressivo* for their melody –so we need to show these different levels. *Morendo* is used twice – perhaps this dying away is intended to be more than just diminuendo. The second time *morendo* appears at m.16, it ends a section and then a canon builds to first forte heroic moment.

This soulful melody is finally shared and truncated in an overlapping way in m.57-63 just before the moment of transfiguration. At that point there is a *poco ritardando to a tempo*. We tend to let the tempo roll back savouring this incredible D flat Major moment, rather than a simple resuming of tempo. The D flat major is the Neapolitan to the dominant of F minor. Beethoven finds the C Major dominant at m.80

59.1.iv – *Thème russe, Allegro*

The extreme technical challenges of this movement gave cause to the first performers of this quartet to describe it as “unplayable”. The violin 1 passage in m.30 and the ensemble demands of the hocket writing at m.73-89 need careful rehearsing with the metronome. We have decided however that m.87 and 88 sound better a bit spread and that sets this complex rhythm more clearly and makes the unison scale sound like a culminating event.

Beethoven’s final tired-out statement of the Russian theme is an *Adagio ma non troppo*. It is marked 69 to the eighth note which is really slow! Also, the ensuing *perdendosi* (getting lost) probably deserves further *ritardando*.

Op.59 No.2

59.2.i – *Allegro*

This eerie opening has two statements of which the first is in the tonic E minor and second is its Neapolitan in F Major. We have debated whether the Neapolitan in m.6 should sound stronger or weaker than m.3. For variety, we

can alter this choice when we come back after the repeat. Then everyone is happy!

It is unclear if the collection of themes at m.13 make up a consequent part of the opening antecedent phrase. We wonder which line is the main line to be heard in the balance here. This problem exists also at m.21. Is the 1st violin the main line here or is it the 2nd violin?

We sometimes allow for elbow room in the tempo at the ‘tremor’ theme at m.49. It is hard to maintain exact tempo here. Voicing is key too – the moving lines need to be dominant. Notice also that Beethoven writes two slurred eighths throughout the syncopations (m.59). Is this his way of creating more anxiety? Why did he not write quarter notes? Notice that the second group of themes begins in G Major, the relative major to E minor (m.39). The 2nd group is in E major at the recapitulation (m.179).

At m.123 there is a slithery passage that is an extension of the 1c theme and here there seems to be slurring discrepancies in the scores. The Dover score has a very long slur over several bars. But the manuscript reveals more normal 6 notes to a bow groupings. Barenreiter presents this 6 note slurring as well so we have emended our parts accordingly. Right after this we hear an extended trill unison passage at the transition to the recap (akin to trill mania of the Waldstein sonata). In this trill unison we need to balance to the cello for the best sound. We also dip a bit dynamically part way through to create further excitement for the end of this sweeping gesture.

Again, we find the hocketing passages always present ensemble challenges and Beethoven doesn't shy from this effect at m.155-159. We need to be on our toes to keep this flow as seamless as possible. Shortly thereafter is a duel of the 'muscular' theme between the two violins – we need to sting the sforzandi so we can hear each other's lines.

The coda has a pastoral zephyr heard in violin 2 and viola that is striking in its appearance in this tense movement. It evokes the 6th Symphony and it is a fragment of the first theme. It is frustrating that Beethoven writes *sempre piu piano* here because we want to love it! It is short lived and is followed by the most intense syncopation section ending in fortissimo. This moves on to further drama in the 1st violin and the unison fortissimo statement of the theme appears for the first time at m.251 to conclude this movement.

59.2.ii – *Molto Adagio, Si tratta questo pezzo con molto di sentimento*

The Adagio tempo is marked at 60 to the quarter note and feels too fast.

The dotted rhythm at m.23 moves to a tenuto version so we try to hum this section in a more legato manner and drop the earlier staccato treatment. But by m.30 the military character demands a stronger articulation. Notice also the *mancando* (failing, weakening) is written over the dotted rhythm in the viola. We wonder if the heartbeat of this rhythm should remain firm in the main tempo?

The analogous section at m.79 is even more extended. Though it is marked only piano, the harmonic tensions are dramatic, so we play this section more

like mezzo-forte so we have more room to diminish to pianissimo. Also, the cello is marked *espressivo* here. This section is preceded by fog-horn signals – whole note A minor 6 chords. They seem like dire warnings, and we like them non-vibrato. These chords are akin to the B9 chords that put a halt to the syncopated mania at the end of the 1st movement. Notice the fussy notation in the cello at m.85. It exists in vln1 in m.8. Does it imply an exact strictness of rhythmic purpose?

59.2.iii – *Allegretto*

This ‘waltz of the marsh goblins’ feels fast with metronome at 69 to the bar line. We have tried to start slightly slower and accelerate imperceptibly, so that by the time we are forte in F major at m.17 we are closer to the 69 tempo.

The sempre staccato markings in the manuscript in the Maggiore section are a messy collection of dots and strokes. We have heard quartets sound like chickens pecking at the strings in this section but perhaps some variety of stroke is more musical for the counter melody to the Russian theme.

59.2.iv – *Finale, Presto*

The galloping nature of this movement seems to encourage a slight styling of the cantering rhythm towards a flicking of the eighth notes rather than an exact spread of even eighth notes. We let the motive gallop. This flicked pick-up theme becomes obsessive in this section beginning at m.89. Should we continue to style the eighth notes in a galloping way?

The ending is so fast we need to invert our bowing to dropped down-ups.

Edward Dushinberre from the Takacs Quartet confesses in his book to botching the coda of this finale that led to a train wreck. It is easy to do! We did the same thing once on stage and it feels terrible! Once you do it, you never do it again!!

Op.59 No.3

59.3.i – *Introduzione, Andante con moto*

In the Andante, we like to voice the violin 2 in m.7-11 and the viola leads the final four bars. We have also spent a great deal of time discussing tempo and maintaining tempo in this opening. *Andante con moto* suggests a tension of pulse rather than dreamy freedom. The tempo can be strict at 69 to the quarter note.

In the Allegro there are *sforzandi* at m.43-44 that are absent when repeated two bars later. Should we maintain these sfz? Also, should the tenuto marks at m.49-50 here qualify the phrasing stress in m.53-54? We believe the answer is generally yes.

The second group of themes arrive in G major (dominant) at m.77. Sometimes the tempo feels way too fast for this material – 88 to half note really cooks here. We can regain tempo easily from m.85 if we need. Notice how this second group to the end of the development comprises a great deal of dominant and tonic harmony, lending the work its approachable appeal that audiences have liked about it since its inception.

Another point of the Viotti school influence here would be the preponderance of staccato under slurs for the 1st violin at the opening of the exposition and the development.

59.3.ii – *Andante con moto quasi Allegretto*

The movement title here is a bit overloaded with intent: *Andante con moto quasi Allegretto*. The movement is positioned here as the “slow” movement, but Beethoven has something else in mind that requires a flowing tempo. Extensive cello pedals create a hypnotic, exotic effect. The opening melody is placed over pizzicatos on the dominant in the cello. The tonic in A minor is in its second inversion, but the dominant is heard in m.2 and in the second half of m.4. These dominant points would outline the natural pull to the phrasing.

59.3.iii – *Menuetto grazioso*

Mark Steinberg notes the unusual marking of *Menuetto* as an obvious nod to Mozart here. But also ‘grazioso’ is not a common marking for Beethoven. We try to bring out the graceful fluidity of this movement. Notice also the unusual marking *sul una corda* for violin 1.

The forte and muscular Trio has often seen us use upper half martelé strokes for the staccato, especially for violin 1.

The coda acts as a dark and mysterious version of the menuet – as though we are going around for the third time but through an ominous portal. It creates the perfect suspense for what is about to explode in the fugue.

59.3.iv – *Allegro molto*

The fugue is insanely fast at 84 to the bar line. It goes without saying that anticipating and not bunching after rests is key to success here. The close canonic writing such as at m.108 is especially challenging at high speed. The passage at m.78 works well in 5th position for violin 1. And the similar passage at m.291 can be in 8th position.

Op.74

74.i – *Poco Adagio*

The “Harp” quartet is one of my favourites to play and has a lot of Haydn-esque qualities to it we will discuss in Chapter 3. In the first movement, we take a little time into the 4th bar to show the E natural in the second violin thus revealing the diminished chord. There are a few appearances of the opening melody we highlight such as viola in m.7 and then the dialogue between violin1 and cello on line 3. We have debated whether the violin 1 should drop dynamic at cello entry or continue its chromatic path with inevitability. Probably a bit of both is the answer. The abrupt forte chords at m.13 and 17 find their resolution in the tonic forte of the allegro so we need to foreshadow this energy. Notice also the espressivo at m.11 – we should play more here than the *sotto voce* opening. We tend to do crescendo and diminuendo over two bars. See the darkening D flat here again.

We have debated the shape of the “harp” theme at m.39. Should the shape be strong/weak (in groups of 2 quarter notes) or groups of four quarter notes shared between two voices? At the leadback to the recapitulation, the extended

dominant 7 suggests each voice playing from their first note of their group (m.125). So each group from each voice is a diminuendo gesture.

This sort of my turn/your turn alternating is a feature of the development with violin 1 and cello in canon at 4 bar intervals to start (m.94), then at a 1 bar interval at m.102, and then half bar interval at m.109.

In the exposition there is a theme that sounds like an inversion of first theme at m.58. It appears with the 16th note theme from m.52 in an accompanying role so we need to turn the featured 16ths into something cooler here at m.58. The closing theme at m.70 is such vigorous fun! We have experimented with different bowings for this theme – with down bows on sforzandi.

In the coda, the 12 bars of diminished chords at m.221 end as soon as the second violin enters with the first theme. This C4/3 to an F6 is arresting in this context so we lighten the intensity. It culminates finally at m.240 with the tonic and V7 alternating in strength. Also, the violin lick is more playable with a few slurs added. Beethoven's manuscript here is really messy – as though Beethoven just set out ideas for the 1st violin. It is not without precedent that Beethoven relied on violinists to deal with slurring. Beethoven's Violin Concerto is a good example of Beethoven relying on violinists of the time to come up with their bowing solutions. The urtext of the concerto is almost void of any slurring bow patterns. There is also a similar passage in the Kreutzer sonata 1st movement at m. 210 which needs slurring/bowing solutions to deal with the string crossings.

74.ii – *Adagio ma non troppo*

When phrasing m.25, we like diminuendo to the crescendo point. Beethoven provides a turn with the appoggiatura here which should be stressed. The opening theme seems at once to have its closing version already by m.18 over a long A flat pedal in the cello. This closing/arresting theme returns more fully to set up the coda at m.131. The deep mesto that takes over in m.25 is cast in A flat minor. Notice the double sixteenths tied at m.30 and the intensity of C flat, B double flat, A double flat. What is Beethoven suggesting here? We believe he is thinking in C flat melodic minor!

The measures leading away from the section at m.58 are marked *espressivo*, but seem very lost and blur the sense of meter. Should we maintain the bar line in our gesturing of this passage? The sforzandi in the measures before are borne of the gestures in m.13, 14. But they are more emphatic in staccato here. The return of the opening theme at m.64 is now accompanied by triplets and probably should be played more richly than the opening version – though both are marked *cantabile*.

A golden world is evoked at m.87 in D flat major, the subdominant, with two presentations in violin 1 and cello. The violin acts as a descant to the cello at m.95. This dissolves into another pained A flat minor section focusing on the heavy 3rd beats. This is the climax and shows the importance of the D flat – C issue from the 1st movement.

The theme returns in a way that feels like variations – especially beginning m.123. Should the violin 1 highlight the theme within or should the new

counter melody of 2nd violin be displayed in foreground? It is possible to do a bit of both!

In the coda we stress the appoggiaturas bars: m.154, 156, 158. Again, it is the D flat–C dyad that is structurally so significant here.

74.iii – *Presto*

This is a Presto scherzo and trio form. With the tempo at a moderate 100 to the bar line. Consider in the context of the middle movements of:

18.1 allegro molto= 112

18.2 allegro =52

18.3 allegro= 100

18.4 andante quasi allegretto =56

18.5 menuetto= 76

18.6 allegro= 63

59.1 Allegretto vivace= 56

59.2 Allegretto= 69

59.3 Menuetto grazioso =38

95 Allegro assai vivace ma serio= 69

What is meant by forte *leggieramente*? We try to play brush stroke to reflect this marking. The passage at m.9 can be monotonous without shape. It returns so many times that we need to make an effort to alter the phrasing to keep it interesting.

Should we group this movement as 3/4 or 6/8? This tension between a division

of 2 and 3 in the measure is a feature of the movement and should be relished.

This 2 against 3 tension is blown up in the trio which is in 3/4 but Beethoven says imagine it is in 6/8! This probably has more to do with tempo because we play this section twice as fast. Beethoven's tempo indicates the dotted whole note at 100 bpm. We have debated whether the presto starts on the first or second bar of the Trio. The Guarneri Quartet follow the later idea, thereby emphasizing bar 2 in the cello as a down-beat rather than anacrusis. But it works out evenly if we begin squarely from m.1 so that we hear pulsing m.1,3,5 instead of 2,4,6. However, it makes the cantus firmus enter as an upbeat which can be confusing for the ear!

The Attacca into movement 4 is part of the fantasia element of this quartet which will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

74.iv – *Allegretto con Variazioni*

The theme emphasizes the 2nd beat and this metrical play characterizes many of the variations – especially variation 3 and 5 and of course the final Allegro flourish. In the 2nd part of variation 3 (m.69), the sfz land on beats one and two. In variation 5 there doesn't seem to always be sfz on the second beat for violin 1, but I think it is safe to say it is assumed (ie. m.104).

The other variations don't align as much with 2nd beat emphases. The second part of variation 2 has a bit of a second beat play.

Notice also the D flat pedal in the dreamy variation 6 (m.121). We have also

debated whether we should pause before new variations. Do pauses harm the intended metrical ambiguity? Perhaps the variations that have greater character change warrant more pause to set the new character. We have also noticed the change of articulation in m.16-18 seems consistent with the manuscript.

Op.95

95.i – *Allegro con brio*

The tempo is very fast at 92 to the half note. As Mark Steinberg says there is an economy here as if it was composed by Haydn on steroids. We like lots of up bows in the opening statement to give it velocity. However, when studying the manuscript we see these are *striche* (staccato wedge) markings and not *punkte* (staccato dot). The G flat major gesture in the 6th bar already feels like an exhale. The cello agitates with threatening gestures in m.10 and 12. We can regain tempo at m.16 if we need. The *non legato* at m.20 simply means not slurred like the previous measures. This is not a staccato marking. The second theme also feels like it needs a bit of relaxation – we can regain tempo at the forte m.34. Here we arrive at a bowing problem in the first violin. In the Dover score we see the triplets in the violin 1 matches the manuscript of simple 3 note slurs. But the Barenreiter score gives the first note of the triplet as separate *strichte* (one note separate and two slurred for every triplet). The Barenreiter is apparently a mix of the manuscript and the first edition of parts by Breikhofpt. The Dover score is based on the first Breitkopf score from 1835, some years after Beethoven's death. So it is rather unclear why there is a bowing discrepancy here. However, it seems to me that the the separated

1st note version in the Barenreiter score sounds better in this register on the violin. In any case, we arrange to be up bow into the silence at the end of m.39, making it feel unresolved.

95.ii – *Allegretto ma non troppo*

The opening dotted eights in the cello are something of an uber motive in this movement. They appear curiously alongside regular eights at m.23 and appear as normal eights ushering in the fugue at m.33. The return of this motive at m.65 is unmistakable and becomes a prolonged sequence for the cello. The recapitulation at m.112 is clear and the final group appearance at m.184 creates unity and completion.

In this movement there is most often melody accompanied by winding eighth notes, but the eighth notes themselves take over and become the main idea.

The fugue (m.35) has a forlorn quality and is quite chromatic. We phrase to the 4th bar. Notice the one bar delayed entry of the cello creates asymmetrical tension, and the dynamics of the 1st violin's subject are upsetting.

The fugue has a second round at m.78, this time with a distinctive counter subject in 16ths that gives the passage a cosmic dimension. It takes just the right staccato to create this feeling so it is not *agitato*! The fugue subjects become shortened and is ultimately compressed to two notes at its climax, bringing us to the recap at m.112.

95.iii – *Allegro assai vivace ma serio*

Metrical ambiguity is at play in this movement. Should the bar line be heard in the emphasis? M.5 and 6 suggest the second beat as an accent – not to mention the sforzandi in measures 17,18. We like to tease the bar line at m.31 so we are back to down beats, then third beat accents m.33,36.

We have also experimented with different combinations of hooked and separated bowings – some may say the hooked bowing creates more resonance and the separate more energy. Notice this is a great example of extreme bow articulation in the upper half of the bow – perfect for the Viotti school!

95.iv – *Larghetto espressivo*

This opening has the atmosphere of Egmont's prison. We like making the second bar a bit less which gives room for a long line in m.3,4. We highlight the B natural appoggiaturas and make a group gesture from the canonic passing of the dotted rhythm from the viola to vln2 to vln1 in m.5. Why did Beethoven write *Larghetto*? Perhaps he is suggesting a tempo that is resigning instead of yearning, something that is accepting fate. The eighth note is 56.

The articulation of the theme in the Allegretto creates unsettling feelings with the swell and staccato to the 3rd eighth of the bar (m.12). This articulation has a different guise in major (m.55) and the obsessing that ensues at m.59 onwards.

The extremes of expression are important at the end of this movement (m.110). Here we have a dramatic gesture of courage in the face of horror. This section

is marked only one forte (*sempre forte*) – reminiscent of Egmont’s last call to fight for independence. He is speaking strongly to his people about a truth – he doesn’t need to scream. This is followed by more feelings of resignation, and then suddenly, the Allegro – akin to the famous triumphant F major ascension that concludes Beethoven’s Egmont.

Op.127

127.i – *Maestoso*

The challenges of the opening are obviously rhythmic. We need to make the bar line make sense in the *Maestoso*, so that the dominant chords on off-beat *sforzandi* don’t sound like they are on the main beat. We need to subdivide carefully.

This opening is deceptively difficult because it is very easy to accent the staccato 8ths. We like to vibrate the dominant chords and not the tonic chords.

The other challenge of the opening is to make sure the second theme is well balanced – especially when it is handed to the second violin 9 measures after the 1st violin.

In the development, Beethoven develops three notes from the main 1a theme beginning at m.85 in the 1st violin. By m.97, the 3-note motive moves through all 4 voices. We want to hear this.

Then there is a 4-bar sequence at m.121-133 with an A diminished 7 chord,

B flat minor, to B diminished. We like to relax dynamically somewhat for the second sequence in B flat minor (m.125) to highlight the intensity of the diminished chords. Later on at m.147, there is another 4-measure sequence that needs shape. The last bar of each sequence announces the new harmony in the first violin. Should we phrase to the last bar of each unit? The scholar Birgit Lodes writes about how Beethoven slips into new harmonies to create flow and evade goal-oriented structure. The Brahmin influence on Beethoven will be discussed more in Chapter 3.

127.ii – *Adagio, ma non troppo e molto cantabile*

The late quartets were never assigned metronome markings, so we need to compare movement titles to get a sense of tempo. We do have one specific late Beethoven work with metronome markings and that is the Op.106 *Hammerklavier* that has an *Adagio sostenuto* marked at 92 to the eighth note. Therefore, this variation movement of Op.127 should be somewhere in that ballpark if not a bit faster with the *ma non troppo* qualifier of the *Adagio* in its title. Perhaps the entire movement can be played at 96 to the eighth note.

Finding the right tempo for the *Andante con moto* (m.39) is tricky too. If it's too fast, we sound like gerbils!

The *Adagio molto espressivo* in variation 3 (m.59) is the heart of the movement. We have debated this tempo a fair bit since Beethoven marks it in cut time. How does it relate to the opening tempo? Do we keep the 96 to the eighth here? Probably we *do* need to. Notice how eighth note becomes eighth note

into the next variation at Tempo 1 (m.76).

127.iii – *Scherzando vivace*

This movement is uniquely titled *Scherzando vivace*. What should the tempo be for this movement compared to other scherzo/minuet movements? It most closely resembles Op.95 and 18.4.ii titled *Allegro assai vivace ma serio* and *Andante scherzoso quasi allegretto* respectively.

Here is a list of the Beethoven quartets scherzo/minuet tempi:

18.1 allegro molto= 112

18.2 allegro =52

18.3 allegro= 100

18.4 Scherzo. Andante scherzoso quasi allegretto= 56

18.5 menuetto= 76

18.6 allegro= 63

59.1 Allegretto vivace= 56

59.2 Allegretto= 69

59.3 Menuetto grazioso =38

95 Allegro assai vivace ma serio= 69

If we choose to play the dotted rhythms here in Op.127 slightly slower than Op.95, does it allow for more hooked bowing patterns in Op.127?

Perhaps the hooked bowing choice for Op.127 benefits the major tonality and the dignified, cheerful character of this movement.

There is a tempo relationship issue in the Scherzando into the Presto where the quarter note becomes the bar line. We need to choose our initial tempo carefully or this Presto becomes unplayable!

There are recitative interruptions in the Scherzando sections occurring at the obsessive climax. What is the effect of these Allegro interruptions (m.70) and what does it allow Beethoven to do? We have debated this a fair bit in rehearsals because of the tempo marking. We tend to play these Allegro sections somewhat slower than the main tempo to give them this recitative poignancy. In this regard, quarter note does not equal quarter note over the bar line.

127.iv – *Finale*

It is rare for Beethoven to write ‘una corda’. This exists in the Menuetto of the Op.59 No.3. Here as well in Op.127, we see it in m.5 of the first violin to play the passage entirely on the G string. Most violinists don’t follow this marking at this point since it sounds a bit strained. But perhaps that is what Beethoven wanted?

At m.35, we have noticed that we all instinctively feel the emphasis belongs on the staccato note. This could be interpreted similarly as we do with the same marking in the last movement of Op.74. But here in Op.127 we clearly emphasize the bar line staccato rather than make a diminuendo to the staccato.

Notice also the hammered G opening here in m.1 (harkening the opening of the Grosse Fugue) and the pairs of semitones in the unison opening gesture

seem unrelated to the movement proper other than setting up a V7 to the E flat tonic.

The coda is very delicate and requires considerable rehearsal. The ensemble here must be perfect and the octaves pose intonation challenges. Notice how the opening melody is transformed here. The scales here need to accompany like floral garlands.

Op.130/133

130.i – *Adagio, ma non troppo*

The Allegro (m.15) begins on an upbeat but does the audience hear this as an anacrusis? Does the 2nd violin hunting call theme in m.15 sound as a down beat or a pickup to beat 3? We believe that the bar line should be understood in the phrasing here.

Notice how the second theme (m.55) is accompanied by the *uber* motive in the 2nd violin: the pair of semitones that is a feature of the opening and of the late quartets in general. We arrive at F Major, the dominant of B flat (tonic) at m.49. Notice how the chromaticism gets us to the dominant of the flat submediant: D flat (m.53) of G flat major (m.55). This area is extended where he gives us the key of G flat major (m.71) and stays there till the end of the exposition.

The development begins with a lot of false starts of the 1st theme and fragments of the lamenting opening. When it finally settles in D Major (m.104), we have

a lovely conversation of the opening hunting call now in 1st violin and the 2nd theme adorns a rapturous new coat in the cello. The 2nd violin has quick flashes of the 16th notes from the opening.

130.ii – *Presto*

Draw your attention to the unusual B flat minor key, the metric displacement of the trio section, and the recitative interruptions in the trio at m.50. Notice the brevity of this movement.

130.iii – *Andante con moto, ma non troppo*

In this remarkable movement, large sweeps of plenitude and good feeling balance the brevity and nervousness of the 2nd movement. While the opening lament of the first movement is alluded to initially, it settles very quickly into a delightful D flat major with few interruptions.

The musicologist Robert Hatten believes that the Presto conveys *dysphoria* and the Andante *euphoria* (unease vs contentment). And the euphoria is attained by different means of plenitude. On a compositional level, plenitude may be understood as the ultimate saturation of texture, or thematic fulfillment. This is a process that is different from Middle Period Beethoven of progressive energies and forceful breakthroughs. So *fulfillment* rather than *goal* is a way of differentiating Late and Middle style. Hatten suggest that the euphoric fulfillments are disrupted at the point we think they could go on forever. This is the tragedy of desire.

Notice the ending has several diversions that disrupt the plenitude. In fact,

there is a spectral echo of the 2nd movement in two of the chromatic descending passages at m.69 and m.81. The expressive 2nd theme (and plenitude) is not restored until m.85.

130.iv – *Allegro assai, Alla danza tedesca*

The *Alla danza tedesca* is a German waltz. Beethoven used a *tedesca* in his Op.79 piano sonata – here it is a *Presto alla tedesca* and it has a sophisticated feel to it. Haydn also wrote a *Ballo Tedesco* and there are some simple tedescas in Baroque music. The Tedesca of Op.130 has placement issues in the order of movements in this quartet (as does the final Grosse Fugue) in that Beethoven took the Tedesca from its original spot in Op.132 and transposed it to G major to work it into Op.130. Robert Hatten talks about how it is an expressive double of the Cavatina because the sighing hairpins in this dance connect it to the much deeper sighs of the Cavatina. Also the retrograde moment at m.129 is in his opinion a moment of introspection that prepares the *Beklemmt* of the Cavatina.

Performers should take care that the last note of the Tedesca doesn't sound like a downbeat as a result of a ritardando. The charm here is indeed the resolution on a weak beat.

130.v – *Cavatina*

The hairpins in the opening of this movement can be misleading. In the Dover score (somewhat) and the Peters parts (definitely!) it appears as though the hairpins in the lower voices peak at beat 2. But studying the manuscript it is rather clear that throughout the Cavatina, this hairpin highlights beat 3.

The *Beklemmt* section is undoubtedly one of the most significant sections in the entire cycle (though it looks rather inconspicuous in the manuscript!). If the word *Beklemmt* means stifling, stuffy, oppressive, heavy-hearted, then how should the quartet portray this in sound. Lots of vibrato, reserved, depressed? Schmuël Ashkenazi of the Vermeer plays this in a reserved way. Also, we like to descend into the abyss with trepidation, slowly and carefully from m.34 on (we find a tempo for the *Beklemmt* that is slightly slower).

133 – *Grosse Fuge*

Beethoven's original ending to Op.130 is easily the most coveted and widely discussed 741-measure fugue in the Classical canon! Here the main subject is announced in unison at the opening of the Overtura. At the Fuga proper the subject is in its double eighth note version in the viola and the 1st violin has a countersubject. Notice though that both lines are marked fortissimo throughout this section which is why some scholars talk about this being a double fugue with two equally important subjects heard simultaneously. This dynamic design is consistent at m.34 and 38. Except that by m.42 Beethoven stops putting ff in the countersubject. It is hard to balance both of these subjects but we believe Beethoven intended a double fugue.

At m.139 the texture changes significantly, but you can see the main subject has a new version in the viola line and the countersubject is understood in the triplets. Again, both lines are marked fortissimo.

The *Meno mosso* (m.159) is developed for the first time since it was introduced in the Overtura. Both the subject (m.167 viola) and countersubject (m.167

violin 2) are marked equally at *sempre pp*. We are in G flat major (this is getting to be a favourite key in the late style!)

This section ends with a jolt at the *Allegro molto e con brio* (m.233) and the subject is developed in a skipping-along version. The counter subject is much more minimal here just the D - Eflat - D in the violins.

The section from m.273 is quite an extended episode and starts to feel like it is spinning out of control until a big G flat pedal signalling a large statement of the subject tries to get order (it is the longest pedal we have had so far at m.371). The hysterical second violinist is hanging on for dear life while the crazy trills add considerable anxiety and mania. It finally finds a moment of reasoning at m.414 and stays relatively stable for a while. Here it is the countersubject that establishes itself as the main idea (a sense of recapitulation?) until the main subject returns at m.453 in fortissimo. It is important to relish the tripletized version of the countersubject at m.415 as opposed to its dotted 16th note version at m.30.

The *Meno mosso* returns at m.493 in a forte version followed by a bizarre moment of stasis that seems to relate to the subject with its semitone inflections but is some kind of super exhaling episode. This exhale becomes more and more unstable and by m.660 it is deflating entirely. A few brief flashes of the two other guises of the subject and countersubjects are heard 657-662. Followed by restatement of the original subject at fortissimo! A few quieting trills before the final wind up and the fugue ends as though in a sudden hurry. I believe the ending represents something of the anti-hero. There is no real

triumphant ending in Op.133, but rather it is as though Beethoven in futility slams the door shut.

Op.131

131.1 – *Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo*

Richard Wagner called this fugue the “the saddest thing ever said in notes”. This opening gesture is the very the essence of the molto espressivo Beethoven gives as part of the movement title. As such, we think the opening crescendo to the sfz is a very deep and significant gesture. Arnold Steinhardt from the Guarneri describes how he plays this opening:

“The character is mournful and melancholy and needs a purer timbre rather than a normal healthy tone. As the crescendo develops I increase the speed of the vibrato but not its width. The sfzando should emerge in a natural way and come with just the right degree of strength. It’s deeply expressive – very intense but not harsh – and when it arrives it’s not just a pinpoint, it must be spread out in time.”

When we start this fugue we are keenly aware of how we will play continuously all the way to the end of the quartet. This is a foreboding and magnificent prelude to all that is to come.

Notice that once the equalized four entries of the quartet appear, Beethoven then moves into some diminution in the first violin and cello beginning at m.21.

There is a lovely episode at m.66 that uses the last 6 notes of the fugue subject in a serene and sunny dialogue in A major. Sadness returns as it descends back to C # minor at m.83.

At m.99, there is a statement of the subject in augmentation in the cello that can be difficult to hear if we don't give the cello some space in the balance. Notice also the B sharps in the cello which is of course played with open C string, giving a very haunting colour to these diminished shudders here that threaten the attempts to conclude in C sharp major.

131.2 – *Allegro molto vivace*

The rise to the Neapolitan D major gives this movement an immediate lightness to it. It also has a folk quality to it that would be lost if we take the *molto vivace* too quickly. Notice that at the end of this section we then rise up to a repetition in E Major.

At the unharmonized octaves (m.175) and the following contrary motion section, you will notice the slurs are impossibly long. We stagger the bow changes here among the four of us as a solution. Also, since the crescendo is very long, we drop dynamic a bit right when we all join in unison in order to create room for a blended crescendo.

131.3 – *Allegro moderato*

This recitative movement is the shortest of the seven movements and it serves as a bridge to the fourth movement.

We are trying to get to A Major for the fourth movement and Beethoven closes the second movement in D Major. To get to A Major, Beethoven drops the D triad a third to B minor in the recitative, then moves to B $\flat$ for the violin cadenza and cadences in E Major - the dominant of the next movement in A Major. The movement sounds like recitative because “text” is delivered between strong swift chords (m.1,4, and m.11). It is interesting that the operatic character bestowed to the 1st violin is silenced in the final measure.

131.4 – *Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile*

This variation movement has tremendous scope much like the epic variations of the second movement of Op.127. Here though the variety of characters is more extreme from rustic to sublime. The opening theme is a wonderful dialogue between the two violins. The *molto cantabile* in the movement title seems to encourage us to play fuller in sound than the piano dolce that is indicated.

Variation 1 begins without a double bar line to announce it. One might not realize it is happening unless some score study takes place first. All variations are clearly 8 measures x 2 + 8 measures x 2.

Variation 1 finishes with running 32nd notes. This necessitates a choice of tempo from the beginning that makes sense here: perhaps $1/8 = 108$ bpm.

At the *Piu mosso* we relate the tempos as eighth note equals quarter note but a little faster at 126 bpm. The next Andante should be slower than the first Andante, so quarter note at 92 bpm works. Then the next Adagio the quarter equals the eighth but playing here a tad faster helps it not sound goofy – so c.100bpm. A straight conversion is possible at the next Allegro (This is a Guarneri Quartet solution). Another straight conversion is possible for the Adagio but a bit more flow at around 112 bpm helps. The next Allegrettos sound well at 112 bpm. In any case the variations sit best somewhere between 92 and 126 with the strangeness of the opening theme and variation 1 really being understood as a tempo in eighth notes. The Guarneri Quartet in their book discuss the problem of tempo relations in this movement and surmise that a common unit of beat/tempo between variations can create monotony so it's ok that there is this range. However, the relationships need to relate in an organic way so that it doesn't feel arbitrary.

The Adagio (m.187) represents a sublime state, reaching for heavens. For the dots under slurs we try to deliver this as though humming. It has a congregational, hymnal quality. It is marked *semplice* and *sotto voce*. Notice some ominous grumblings (m.195) in the cello should deliberately challenge the character. There is an extensive coda section beginning at m.220 that is quite fantastical and improvisatory. I would love to see a book comparing all the codas of Beethoven!

131.5 – *Presto*

Once again Beethoven writes a fast movement in quarter notes, in cut time (as he did in Op.74). He is also consistent throughout with no staccato markings

at the subito fortes – so most groups play this on the string. There is also a strange metrical design to the F#-B canon that begins at m.25. The easiest way to do this as a quartet is to move the bar line to be between the F# and the B (making the B the emphasis) rather than bouncing off an unheard downbeat.

The trio (m.66) has a *piacevole* (pleasant) theme followed by some super tricky hocketing at m.84. Then a rather bizarre outlining of “Ritmo di Quattro battute” is presented which Beethoven further complicates with his dynamic marking that confuses the grouping of four measures. Ultimately, I believe the dynamics rule the day and the audience will succumb to the tricks as this is teased out. There is also some pretty wild hocketing between 2nd violin and viola beginning at m.125.

The coda begins after the two attempts to have a third go at the trio. The coda is striking with its *sul ponticello* colour. This is an effect Beethoven uses for the first time in his string writing. Haydn only used it in his Symphony No.97. Schumann used it once or twice (his D minor violin sonata comes to mind). Brahms never used ponticello. Suffice to say it is a radical effect for Beethoven’s time. The effect however subsides and the heroism strengthens in E Major. The devastating G sharp chords signal the tragic return to doom and gloom.

131.6 – *Adagio quasi un poco andante*

Michael Tree the violist of the Guarneri Quartet makes a remarkable discovery about this movement. He notes how similar it sounds to the Jewish *Kol Nidre*. The *Kol Nidre* is one of the most beautiful and most peculiar prayers in all

of Jewish liturgy. On the Eve of Yom Kippur it captures the imagination of millions of Jews all over the world. The fact that the Eve of Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, is referred to as “*Kol Nidre*,” indicates its great significance. The prayer is a bit of a riddle to the Jewish faith because it has to do with the annulment of vows.

First, the chazzan/hazzan sings the prayer quietly, then louder, then increasingly louder, three times. There is a similar design in Beethoven’s movement of the voice repeating with greater intensity. Michael Tree also points out that in 1825 the Viennese Jewish community had asked Beethoven to provide a cantata for the dedication of a new synagogue – a project he contemplated but never carried out. Perhaps this was on Beethoven’s mind in Op.131.

131.7 – *Allegro*

Let’s begin at the end of this movement by addressing the meaning of the coda. The Guarneri Quartet draw attention to the problem of the last few bars at m.383. If you play them in tempo as written the last chords sound frivolous. As David Soyer says we cannot escape the suddenness of the ending. A titanic power is abruptly brought to a halt in a fierce kind of affirmation. The upper three instruments have 4-part chords that need some cushion of time. The pause over the final rest is awkward at best. There is inherently a sense of the anti-hero in late-Beethoven. Even the Grosse Fugue ends somewhat abruptly. In any case, Beethoven seems to not want an overly heroic finish to this work, even though it is tempting to fight his indications. Notice also the B sharp (open C string in cello) diminished shudders appear again here on line 2, as

well as the long lament line recalling the opening fugue. The depth of sorrow is an important element of this conclusion.

Just prior to this we have a hair-raising return of the D Major Neapolitan at m.329. It is possible here that the first violin will be more in control employing an upper-half martelé for the striche markings in measures 331-332.

Again, Beethoven's marking *Ritmo di due battute* at m.349 seems at odds with the phrasing since it makes more musical sense for the first violin and viola to phrase to m.350 and 352. Needless to say, the group of 2 measure units works out perfectly from m.349 to m.363, so maybe Beethoven wants these units to be heard thus.

Op.132

132.i – *Assai sostenuto*

This quartet plays a role in its trilogy as the hyper-sensitive middle work of Op.127 and Op.130 much in the way Op.59 No.2 is the introvert in its trilogy. The A minor main theme in the first movement is mirrored in the last movement and it is an unsettling theme.

What should the opening tempo *Assai sostenuto* be in cut-time? And how does it relate to the ensuing *Allegro*? It is followed rather soon by an *Adagio*. We believe the slower tempi can be thought of as half time of the *Allegro*. There is a lot of sharing of portions of the theme partitioned out through the

voices in the opening. We strive to highlight these occurrences.

There is a strong cadence on the tonic major at m.40 and a lighter theme (1b) is introduced. We try to give the staccato some levity for contrast.

Here at m.48 we have come to the 2nd theme in the submediant F Major. There is a phrasing decision to be made: should the second violin phrase to the dominant (m.49) or subdominant (m.51)?

Curiously, the first violin has dynamics that suggest phrasing to m.54. Notice again the *non ligato* is marked here and we prefer a longer brush stroke.

Soon thereafter we get a 2b theme where we choose to dovetail upper and lower voices, so that the quarter notes in *dolce* descend dynamically and the pastoral rising cello line crescendos.

Here we have arrived at the Development which seems to focus mostly on the 1a theme exclusively with a few new twists such as the C major wonderment at m.92. This is cut short at a fortissimo version of the opening *uber* motive with successive fortes instead of fortissimos. What does this mean? The Recap comes very early even though it is a recap at the dominant.

The recapitulation (m.121) plays out in very similar order with the Adagio interruption, the E major halting chords that usher in the 1b theme (m.151) and second theme in the mediant major of V = C major. This is followed by 2b in good order (m.172). The 2b section is extended here. The 2c obsession

theme (m.182) doesn't have *sforzandi* here as it did in the exposition at m.69. We should also acknowledge the dynamic difference from fortissimo in the exposition to now just forte here at m.182.

The coda begins arguably at m.195 and brings back 1a, 1b, 2a in tonic and dominant keys but is cut short by a 'codetta' in a striking Neapolitan of the dominant = F Major (with 7th), F in the Cello (m.232).

There is a lot of swirling of emotion of the 1a theme and a final expiring of the 1a – expiring of its dotted rhythm in particular at m.252. This is answered by a final trembling V-I-V-I-V-I finish. With some Vivaldi-like 1st violin bariolage.

132.ii – *Allegro, ma non tanto*

This is a German dance in $\frac{3}{4}$, a kind of a simple folk dance that doesn't need a lot of sophistication or rubato. The struggle with this second movement is the obsessiveness with the repetition of the main motive. It can be monotonous if the same phrase shape is presented without variety.

Sometimes we phrase the motive to the 2nd bar as in m.5-6. Sometimes Beethoven gives us dynamics to vary the motive like at m.27.

Other times we are in canon so we stress the down beat such as at m. 110.

We can also vary the opening four bars to be either two bar units or a four-bar phrase.

The trio has a pastoral character. The drones add much to this texture. The staccato at m.142 needs folk-like playfulness. The viola melody and 1st violin melody are boundless to the bar line in a child-like carefree way. There is a fist clenching interruption - like an angry parent - that reveals once again the moody character of this quartet. It is quite threatening but short-lived and we resume with the easy pastoral music. Some quartets insist the *L'istesso tempo* at m.218 refers to the bar line remaining the same creating a very fast tempo here. However, we prefer to keep the quarter note the same crossing into m.218.

132.iii – *Heiliger Dankgesang*

We like to differentiate between the *cantus firmus* (half notes) and *sotto voce* melody (quarter notes). We approach the *cantus firmus* with slow bow, no vibrato and we tend to do the opposite for the melody – freer bow and using vibrato that just gives it a bit of a lift.

The tempo relation from Adagio to Andante is curious. Is it quarter equals 8th? If so then the Andante gets a bit fast, so we purposefully slow down a tad right before the Andante. What about returning to Adagio? We need to remember not too slow!

The character at m.51 is rather perky but no staccato exists here. Violin 1 may wish to hook this bowing to give it linear flow, so it is not too vertical.

The final Molto Adagio (m.168) is marked *Mit innigster Empfindung* (notice that in the late style Beethoven uses German for his most personal markings!).

Here is perhaps the most intimate of the three Adagios in this movement.

132.iv – *Alla Marcia*

The March is a bit of a rude awakening much in the same way the Grosse Fuge jolts us out of the Cavatina. We know about how French military music influenced Beethoven, and perhaps this is a parody or whimsical laugh at a march. The dynamics make it funny. Also, there is a bit of a pile-up at m.15 as though the marching band is out of line.

The recitative insertion is akin to the recitative of the 9th Symphony. It is a striking moment to my graduate professor Richard Kramer who imagines the narrator is Beethoven trying to speak to us.

132.v – *Allegro appassionato*

As previously mentioned, the opening character of this final movement is related to the first movement's moodiness. In the development at m.124, the opening theme is compressed and extended in an intense sequential manner. We have debated whether the character here should be quirky or dire. There are many sforzandi and a mishmash of accents to be observed. The cello has a dynamic challenge sequentially with this long ascending line so the forte cannot be attained too soon. It all culminates with just the three notes of the motive surviving and it all dissolves into a floating recapitulation that begins indirectly at m.168 and the resumes more completely at m.176.

Op.135

135.1 – *Allegretto*

This wonderfully Haydn-esque quartet has all the early Classical conversational qualities to it. In the opening, the melody that passes through the upper three voices is difficult to balance, but we need to make it sound like one line m.4-10. F Major is a challenging key for a string quartet because the open C string of the cello is the 5th of the tonic and the root of the dominant, making the violins' open A and E strings sounding naturally sharp. We need to tune our strings with this in mind before beginning.

At m.25 there is a progression of fifths: V-I; VI-II; then the II goes to the dominant for the second theme at m.38. We need to decide how to stress these harmonies.

We have noticed quartets like the Hagen Quartet play on the string at m.89 and it creates quite a difference of character. We prefer a lighter stroke to suit the surrounding staccato activity.

The coda is very clever and Classical in the way the various motives now are heard in contrapuntal ways (m.163). It all culminates in a forte pile-up of the humorous three-note flip (m.174).

135.2 – *Vivace*

Is the A,G,F,G the melody in the 1st violin at the opening of this movement?

If so, is it the most important at m.25? The Hagen prefer a sustained legato in this movement. We have tended toward a more transparent texture so we can hear all the moving parts****.

The broken record freak-out section at m.143 is what scholars like Joseph Kerman highlight as an example of Beethoven's need to depict the terror of the extraordinary, the freakish, and the fear of spirits. We've seen this trope with the last movement of Op.131, as well as in the last movement of the 9th Symphony. Here in Op.135 Beethoven has written a passage that is awkward for the 1st violin with string crossings and leaps that fly by. Lukas Hagen adds some slurs to make it more playable and Daniel Ching of the Miro Quartet does all kinds of fancy bowings. I have experimented in this way but ultimately prefer all separate bowings.

135.3 – *Lento assai*

We haven't had a *Lento* yet in all the Beethoven quartets so perhaps the tempo should be slower than all the molto adagios we've had so far. So somewhere in the 60 bpm to the eighth-note range is an important starting point.

This is a variation movement and the cello gets the melody in variation 3 (m.33) after the *Piu lento*, and here the 1st violin is in canon. It is a new event to have the cello in this primary role and so it should be highlighted.

Notice the word *semplice* is used for this transcendent variation 4 (m.43). This gives it a yielding and selfless feeling of reverence to the Divine here. This reminds us of Beethoven's marking of *semplice* in variation 6 of Op.131.

Semplice for Beethoven is a sacred marking and seems to be transcendent for him.

135.4 – *Der schwer gefasste Entschluss*

Grave ma non troppo tratto means not too drawn out. However, this is also the first time we've had a *Grave* in Beethoven. He qualifies it with *non troppo tratto* as though he's worried about it already! The grave and humorous are almost in coexistence in this movement. See how easily he slips out of the second *Grave* section to bring the final carefree Allegro, here made even more charming with the pizzicato section. The final arco section can be effective as an on-the-string stroke in the upper-half of the bow. There are after all no staccato marking here.