I, Eliana Maria Murphy, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in Piano.

It is entitled:
An Analytical Comparison of the Variation Movement from Ludwig van Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in E Major, Op. 109 to Johann Sebastian Bach’s Aria mit verschieden Veränderungen, BWV 988 (“Goldberg Variations”)

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An Analytical Comparison of the Variation Movement from Ludwig van Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in E Major, Op. 109 to Johann Sebastian Bach’s Aria mit verschiedenen Veränderungen, BWV 988 ("Goldberg Variations")

A document submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in the Keyboard Studies Division of the College-Conservatory of Music by Eliana Maria Murphy

BM, University of Colorado-Boulder, 2003
MM, University of Colorado-Boulder, 2005

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Abstract

The correlations between J. S. Bach’s *Aria mit verschiedenen Veränderungen*, BWV 988 (“Goldberg Variations”) (1741) and the variation movement of Ludwig van Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in E Major, Op. 109 (1820) may not be apparent at a cursory glance, yet upon closer examination, some striking parallels emerge. This document compares relevant excerpts of J. S. Bach’s “Goldberg Variations” and Beethoven’s Op. 109 variation movement, offering evidence that Beethoven indeed did use the “Goldberg Variations” as the inspiration for his musical invention in Op. 109’s last movement.

While there is no proof that Beethoven ever heard a performance or read through a score of the “Goldberg Variations,” much circumstantial evidence points to the conclusion that he had several opportunities to do so. In the first chapter, I explore how Beethoven’s exposure to Bach’s music influenced his development as a composer, especially in his last compositional period. Special emphasis is given to the role that Gottfried, Baron van Swieten played in introducing Beethoven to many of Bach’s scores. The second chapter describes many possible connections between the two works, including the following: 1. Many editions of the “Goldberg Variations” had been published by the time Beethoven was composing Op. 109, meaning that Bach’s work was more accessible than many of the composer’s other works; 2. Beethoven could have encountered the score in the libraries of Swieten or the composer’s patron Archduke Rudolph; 3. Johann Philipp Kirnberger’s theory text *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes in der Musik* (1773/77), a book Beethoven owned, includes two brief excerpts of the “Goldberg Variations”; 4. Carl Czerny, a member of Beethoven’s inner circle, claimed that he had
been familiar with the “Goldberg Variations” during the time that Beethoven composed Op. 109; and 5. Scholars have noted the similarities between the “Goldberg Variations” and other works by Beethoven, especially Op. 120, the “Diabelli Variations.”

In the third chapter I summarize the compositional history and form of the “Goldberg Variations” and Op. 109. The majority of score analysis occurs in the fourth chapter, where I present related excerpts of Op. 109 and the “Goldberg Variations” including not only those discussed by previous scholars but also ones left previously unnoticed or summarily acknowledged by other authors. Finally, in the fifth chapter, I explore unexamined connections between the “Goldberg Variations” and Beethoven’s sketches for the Op. 109 variation movement by juxtaposing excerpts of both and providing analytic comparisons, thus shining new light on the correlations between these two works.
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¹ An abbreviation of Soli Deo Gloria (glory to God alone) written by J. S. Bach at the beginning of many of his musical manuscripts.
previously performed) in Professor Weinstock’s class and suddenly the similarities of the
two works jumped out at me, leading me to explore the topic of this document. For that
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Introduction

Purpose of Study

The correlations between J. S. Bach’s *Aria mit verschiedenen Veränderungen*, BWV 988 (hereafter “Goldberg Variations”) (1741) and the variation movement of Ludwig van Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in E Major, Op. 109 (1820) may not be apparent at a cursory glance, yet upon closer examination, some striking parallels emerge. I will disclose underlying connections between the two works, not only by discussing Beethoven’s probable knowledge of the “Goldberg Variations” but also by comparing relevant portions of the score to J. S. Bach’s variations to the score and sketches for Beethoven’s Op. 109 variation movement.

Several scholars have written about the connection between Bach’s “Goldberg Variations” and Beethoven’s “Diabelli Variations,” but few have written more than a few sentences about the “Goldberg Variations” and Op. 109. The only major discussion of the two works is by Martin Zenck,¹ and aside from several internet essays, precious little scholarly writing in English exists on the topic. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, no other scholar has attempted to compare the Op. 109 variation sketches with the “Goldberg Variations,” meaning that this study will fill a gap in the Beethoven literature. I have compared J. S. Bach’s “Goldberg Variations” and the score and sketches for Beethoven’s Op. 109 variation movement to demonstrate that Beethoven indeed did use the “Goldberg Variations” as the inspiration for his musical invention in Op. 109’s third movement.

Literature Review

In researching this document, I have relied extensively on the writings of three leading Beethoven scholars: William Kinderman, Nicholas Marston, and Martin Zenck. Both Zenck\(^2\) and Kinderman\(^3\) have intensively studied the effect that Johann Sebastian Bach’s music had on Beethoven’s compositions. Marston has not focused his attention on that area, but instead has spent much time analyzing Beethoven’s Piano Sonata Op. 109, including transcribing the sketches for that sonata.\(^4\) The work of all three scholars helped to lay the groundwork for this document.

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The most authoritative study to date analyzing the “Goldberg Variations” and Op. 109 is found in a section of Zenck’s *Die Bach-Rezeption des späten Beethoven: zum Verhältnis von Musikhistoriographie und Rezeptionsgeschichtsschreibung der “Klassik.”* Additional books mentioning the topic include Wilfrid Mellers’s *Beethoven and the Voice of God* and Donald Francis Tovey’s *Essays in Musical Analysis: Chamber Music.* Moreover, the pianist András Schiff has spoken of connections between the pieces as part of a lecture on the Op. 109 sonata. Other musicians who have discussed the parallels between the two pieces in a less formal manner on the internet include Igor Kriz, Robert Silverman, Nathan Carterette, Matthew Saunders, and Christopher Taylor. (An interesting subset of my studies involved the connections between Beethoven’s “Diabelli Variations” and the “Goldberg Variations,” since many authors writing on that topic offered supporting evidence for my document’s thesis, such as Zenck, Arnold Münster, Walter Schenkman, and Stephen Rumph.)

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5 Zenck, *Die Bach-Rezeption des späten Beethoven.*


Before discussing the connections between the two works, it was necessary to learn more about Bach’s influence on Beethoven, and for this I found the following authors very helpful: Donald W. MacArdle, Ernst Fritz Schmid, Elinore Barber, Yo Tomita, Elaine Sisman, and Hans-Josef Irmen. For biographical aspects of Beethoven’s life, I turned to Alexander Wheelock Thayer’s indispensable Beethoven biography and volumes of Beethoven’s letters edited by Kalischer and Anderson, as well as writings by Kinderman, Lewis Lockwood, and the controversial Anton Schindler.

In my further studies on the compositional history and form of the “Goldberg Variations,” Peter Williams’s *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* and David Schulenberg’s *The Keyboard Music of J. S. Bach* were particularly helpful. In conclusion, to acquire information about the compositional history and sketches for Op. 109, I depended on the work of William Meredith, Barry Cooper, and William Drabkin, as well as *The Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 6, no. 3 (1975): 3–10; Stephen Rumph, *Beethoven after Napoleon: Political Romanticism in the Late Works* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004).


Methodology

To provide historical context for my argument, I first present a general history of Beethoven’s reception of Bach’s compositional legacy. Then, I focus on the many arguments in support of my thesis that Beethoven would have had several opportunities to access the “Goldberg Variations.” This is followed by analysis of the history and form of both the “Goldberg Variations” and Op. 109. Subsequently, I examine in depth the parallels between the two works, often juxtaposing excerpts from the score of the “Goldberg Variations” with the score and sketches for Op. 109 to highlight similarities of form, texture, harmony, rhythm, and ornamentation. Occasionally, I use brackets or Roman numeral chord labeling to make these affinities clear. Finally, a brief epilogue allows the reader to discern the place of this study within Beethoven research.

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Chapter One

Beethoven and Bach

In defining the relationship between Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) and Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827), scholar William Kinderman unhesitatingly declares, “There is no other composer for whom the influence of Bach was more important than for Beethoven.”\(^1\) In contrast, Beethoven’s student Ferdinand Ries (1784–1838), wrote, “Of all composers, Beethoven valued most highly Mozart and Handel, then [Johann] S. Bach. Whenever I found him with music in his hand or lying on his desk it was surely compositions of these heroes.”\(^2\) The real truth as to Bach’s importance to Beethoven likely lies somewhere in the middle. Bach had been very influential to Beethoven’s development as a musician and composer, especially during his third-style period, albeit, as Ries points out, other composers were quite significant to him as well. Because of the focus of this document, I will confine myself to considering Bach’s influence alone, and set aside discussion of other composers’ significance to Beethoven. In this way I will lay the groundwork for my discussion of the influence of J. S. Bach’s “Goldberg Variations” on Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in E Major, Op. 109.

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Admiration and Study of Bach

One need look no further than Beethoven’s own words to glimpse Bach’s importance in his life. According to Karl Gottfried Freudenberg, Beethoven said of Bach: “His name ought not to be Bach [brook], but Ocean [Ozean], because of his infinite and inexhaustible wealth of combinations and harmonies. He was the ideal of an organist.”3 In an 1801 letter concerning his plan to raise funds to assist Bach’s impoverished daughter, Regina Susanna Bach (1742–1809), Beethoven named her “daughter of the immortal god of harmony.”4 As part of a conversation book discussion with Andreas Stumpff (1769–1846) in 1824, Beethoven agreed that Bach, though dead, could live again, but “only if he is studied and for that we have no time.”5 (Whether Beethoven’s use of the word “we” refers specifically to himself and Stumpff, or generally to musicians of the time is unclear.) Furthermore, in another conversation book entry he opined, “Portraits of Handel, Bach, Gluck, Mozart, and Haydn in my room. They can promote my capacity for endurance.”6

Beethoven’s acquaintance with Bach’s music began while he was yet a youth, when his teacher Christian Gottlob Neefe (1748–1798) introduced him to most of The Well-Tempered Clavier (unpublished until 1801). Much later in life, Beethoven still

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3 Ibid., 366.


enjoyed playing the work. In an announcement in Johann Baptist Cramer’s (1771–1858) *Magazin der Musik* on March 2, 1783 (probably written by Neefe himself), we read of the young Beethoven: “He plays chiefly The Well Tempered Clavier of Sebastian Bach, which Herr Neefe has put into his hands. Whoever knows this collection of preludes and fugues in all the keys—which might almost be called the *non plus ultra* of our art—will know what this means.” (Whether Neefe was actually the first to place *The Well-Tempered Clavier* in Beethoven’s hands is uncertain, since the publisher Nikolaus Simrock (1751–1832) claimed that he presented it to Beethoven when he was nine and that the composer worked on them “every day with all his might.”) After Beethoven’s study with Haydn, his counterpoint studies in 1794–1795 with Bach enthusiast Johann Georg Albrechtsberger may have introduced him to some other of Bach’s works.

Beethoven traveled to Leipzig and Berlin in 1796, assisted by Karl Alois, Prince Lichnowsky (1761–1814), a friend of Forkel and a collector of Bach manuscripts, who lamented the fact that the newer generation of musicians was not appreciative of the music of Bach and George Frideric Handel (1685–1759). One can only guess which

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pieces by Bach Beethoven may have encountered in Leipzig, Bach’s residence from 1723 to 1750.

A key figure who familiarized Beethoven with many of Bach’s works (likely including the “Goldberg Variations”) was the musical connoisseur Gottfried, Baron van Swieten (1733–1803); according to Beethoven biographer Alexander Thayer (1817–1897), to Swieten “is due the credit of having founded in Vienna a taste for Handel’s oratorios and Bach’s organ and pianoforte music, thus adding a new element to the music there.”\(^1\)\(^2\) If one wonders why Swieten deserves special notice among Beethoven’s mentors, Andreas Holschneider claimed: “The private music collection of Gottfried van Swieten, the prefect of the library in Vienna, deserves special interest, because it can be considered as the most important cue for the tradition of the German Baroque music within the Viennese classics….Beethoven’s knowledge of Bach’s music goes—according to Schindler’s information—back in large part to the Bach manuscripts in Swieten’s library.”\(^1\)\(^3\) In the words of Anton Schindler (1795–1864), Beethoven’s student and amanuensis: “The evening gatherings at Swieten’s home had a marked effect on Beethoven, for it was here that he first became acquainted with the music of Handel and Bach. He generally had to stay long after the other guests had departed, for his elderly

12 Thayer, *Life of Beethoven*, 158. Many of the key figures in Beethoven’s life who introduced him to Bach’s music were Freemasons (Illuminati): Neefe, Lichnowsky, Swieten, et al. Whether it is relevant to this topic or not is questionable, as Freemasonry was common among key intellectuals of Beethoven’s day. For more information, see Irmen, “Beethoven, Bach und die Illuminaten.”

13 “die private Musiksammlung Gottfried van Swietens, des Präfekten der Hofbibliothek in Wien, spezielles Interesse; denn sie kann als wichtigste Queue für die Überlieferung der deutschen Barock-musik an die Wiener Klassiker gelten….Auch Beethovens Kenntnis Bachscher Musik geht — nach Schindlers Angaben — zum großen Teil auf die Bach-Handschriften in Swieten Bibliothek zurück.” Andreas Holschneider, “Die musikalische Bibliothek Gottfried van Swietens,” in *Bericht über den internationalen musikwissenschaftlichen Kongreß, Kassel 1962*, ed. Martin Just and Georg Reighert (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1963), 175. Translations are supplied by the author of this thesis, unless otherwise noted. In most cases, the original text is reproduced in the footnotes.
host was musically insatiable and would not let the young pianist go until he had ‘blessed the evening’ with several Bach fugues.”\textsuperscript{14} (Schindler is not always a reliable witness; for example, his words above are contradicted by the fact that Beethoven was acquainted with Bach’s \textit{The Well-Tempered Clavier} from his youth. However, based on the evidence of other Beethoven contemporaries, Swieten was highly influential in greatly increasing knowledge of Bach’s works in Vienna among the musical intelligentsia.)

No less a figure than Mozart wrote: “I go every Sunday at twelve o’clock to the Baron van Swieten, where nothing is played but Handel and Bach. I am collecting at the moment the fugues of Bach—not only of Sebastian, but also of [Carl Philip] Emanuel and [Wilhelm] Friedemann.”\textsuperscript{15} Speaking of Beethoven, Abbé Joseph Gelinek (1758–1825) noted that “also that His Excellency Baron van Swieten had earnestly recommended the study of counterpoint and frequently inquired of him how far he had advanced in his studies.”\textsuperscript{16} According to Josef Weigl (1766–1846): “Every Sunday at twelve noon there was music at his [Swieten’s] residence. Only compositions by Bach, Handel, Graun, and others among the oldest and most famous masters were performed.

\textsuperscript{14} Schindler, \textit{Beethoven as I Knew Him}, 49. Further evidence for Beethoven being a frequent visitor at Swieten’s can be found in a note from the baron: “Herr Beethoven, Altergasse 24, care of Prince Lichnowsky. If you have no other engagement, I should like to have you at my house next Wednesday with your nightcap in your bag. Please reply immediately, Swieten.” Ibid.


Mozart accompanied at the fortepiano. Salieri, Starzer, Teiber, and the baron sang.”

(Inspired by these concerts, Beethoven would later host his own Sunday musical matinees for friends and would include music of Bach and Handel, among others.) The value that Swieten placed on Bach’s music can be further seen in his personal comments in the first volume of the Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung (1799):

> I belong, as far as music is concerned, to a generation that considered it necessary to study an art form thoroughly and systematically before attempting to practice it. I find in such a conviction food for the spirit and for the heart, and I return to it for strength every time I am oppressed by new evidence of decadence in the arts. My principal comforters at such times are Handel and the Bachs and those few great men of our own day who, taking these as their masters, follow resolutely in the same quest for greatness and truth.

One might wonder how Swieten was able to access so much of J. S. Bach’s music, until one considers his interactions with various members of Bach’s circle. When the baron was the Austrian ambassador to Berlin in the 1770s, the city was the “leading centre of Bach promotion,” whose inhabitants included Bach’s son Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, and Bach’s pupils Johann Friedrich Agricola and Johann Philipp Kirnberger.

While in Berlin, Swieten commissioned Bach’s son Carl Philip Emmanuel Bach to write six Symphonies for String Orchestra (1773), H. 657–662, and later in return the composer

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dedicated to Swieten the third set of keyboard Sonaten für Kenner und Liebhaber (1781). When Baron van Swieten returned to Vienna in 1777 as Director of the Imperial Library, he is reported to have brought along a large number of J. S. Bach’s manuscripts, one of which may very well have been a copy of the “Goldberg Variations.”

A key part of this growing movement in the nineteenth century to rediscover and value music of the past was the printing press. The invention of the movable music type by Johann Gottlieb Emmanuel Breitkopf (1719–1794) in 1750 had allowed music to be distributed much more widely than in previous times, giving Beethoven access to the works of many composers.

In a letter to the publisher Franz Anton Hoffmeister (1754–1812) of the publishing house Hoffmeister & Kühnel in 1801, Beethoven wrote: “Your purpose to publish the works of Sebastian Bach is something which does good to my heart which beats only for the lofty and magnificent art of this patriarch of harmony, and I hope soon to see them in vigorous sale. I hope as soon as golden peace has been declared to be helpful in many ways, especially if you offer the works for subscription.” Later that year, he again wrote to Hoffmeister, requesting, “Put me down as subscriber to Johann

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24 Ibid., 12.
25 Thayer, Life of Beethoven, 268.
Sebastian Bach’s works, [and] also [put down] Prince Lichnowsky.” After receiving scores for Bach motets published by Breitkopf and Härtel, Beethoven sent this message: “I thank you heartily for the beautiful things of Sebastian Bach, I will keep and study them [original emphasis]. If any more follow, do please let me have them also.”

He also requested the firm to send him all the scores they owned by J. S. Bach (in addition to those by Haydn, Mozart, and C. P. E. Bach), including the scores for the Mass in B Minor, BWV 232, and the newly published The Well-Tempered Clavier. (Afterwards, he also asked the publisher Hans Georg Nägeli (1773–1836) for the score to Bach’s mass.)

Beethoven would also have been able to encounter works of Bach in the Œuvres complètes de Jean Sebastien Bach (1800) published by the Bureau de Musique in Leipzig (one of Beethoven’s publishers and a partnership of Hoffmeister & Kühnel), Johann Philipp Kirnberger’s Die Kunst des Reinen Satzes (1793), and Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg’s Abhandlung von der Fuge (1801).

According to Schindler, Beethoven’s possessions at the time of his death included multiple keyboard scores by J. S. Bach: The Well-Tempered Clavier, three volumes of the Clavierübung; the Inventions, BWV 772–786; the Sinfonias, BWV 787–801; and a Toccata in D Minor (unknown BWV no.). Schindler’s claim would seem to be verified

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26 Beethoven, Beethoven’s Letters, 27.
27 Ibid., 46.
28 Ibid., 90, 110–11.
29 Ibid., 330.
31 Schindler, Beethoven as I Knew Him, 380, 394, n. 314. Schindler does not specify which three volumes of the Clavierübung Beethoven owned, so at first glance one might think that there is a possibility that one of the volumes might be Clavierübung IV, which we know as the “Goldberg Variations.” But this is disproven by the fact that it was not listed as Clavierübung IV on either the original title page or in
by the fact that when he died his own library included such Bach scores as Book I of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, the Inventions and Sinfonias, a Toccata in D Minor, and Partitas Nos. 2, 4, and 5, with “many annotations in Beethoven’s hand.”

Bach’s Influence in Beethoven’s Compositions

In the minds of numerous scholars, Beethoven’s compositions are a “direct continuation of the Bachian legacy,” and this may have been because of a “conscious attempt” of his to match Bach’s great compositional heritage. William Kinderman sums up the thoughts of many when he writes, “The fusion of Bach’s solidity and continuity with the dramatic contrasts and discontinuities of the classic style gives Beethoven’s art a unique variety and strength.” Some may argue that Beethoven could have been influenced by any number of German composers of fugues, but since he is known to have revered Bach, who may be considered to bring out the best of the German school of fugal writing, it is reasonable to propose that Bach’s pieces were the primary influence on

Bach’s Obituary. The custom of naming the “Goldberg Variations” as *Clavierübung IV* came from the Bach Society 1852 edition (BG vol. III) which grouped the “Goldberg Variations” with *Clavierübung I, II, and III*. According to Bach scholar Peter Williams, the “Goldberg Variations” may have been informally labeled “Part IV” by hand on copies before then. Williams, *The Goldberg Variations*, 7. See also Andreas Jacob, “Ordnungsprinzipien in Johann Sebastian Bachs Klavierübung,” *Jahrbuch des Staatlichen Instituts für Musikforschung Preußischer Kulturbesitz* 1 (1994): 150–51; Rolf Dammann, *Johann Sebastian Bach’s “Goldberg-Variationen”* (Mainz: Schott Mainz, 1986), 267.


Beethoven in this form. (Contrapuntally, Beethoven was not only inspired by Bach but by Handel as well, but because of the confines of this paper I will focus on Bach’s significance alone.)

The presence of fugal writing and strict counterpoint in Beethoven’s works is one of the reasons most scholars hear Bach’s influence. That Beethoven, in common with many other composers, admired Bach’s skill in writing fugues and canons is obvious from the fact that he transcribed for string quartet the Fugue No. 24 in B Minor from The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book II; copied by hand in 1810 the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, BWV 903; owned parts (in his own hand) to Die Kunst der Fuge; and composed a canon on the theme B-A-C-H. He did not limit himself to copying Bach fugues, but also performing them. Beethoven’s student Carl Czerny (1791–1857), when editing a volume of The Well-Tempered Clavier for publication in 1837, claimed he was influenced by “the clear recollection I have of the way in which I have heard many of the fugues played by Beethoven.” According to Thayer, “From Bach’s preludes and fugues, which he [Beethoven] was also to play a great deal later in life, he not only

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40 Thayer, Life of Beethoven, 1068.

41 Barber, “Beethoven on Bach,” 8.

derived considerable instruction, but he found, as is evidenced in many of his later works…a pattern for imitation.”

When composing fugally, Beethoven felt it important to not merely imitate old models, but to also speak in his own compositional voice: “It is no challenge to write a fugue; in my student days I wrote dozens of them. But fantasy must also receive its due, and nowadays a different and really poetic aspect must be brought to the venerable form.” He was gifted in being able to intertwine “the techniques of strict fugue with free imagination.” Though Beethoven included fugal writing in works from throughout his life, the fugal influence was most noticeable after 1810, and in his sonatas after 1814 during his third style period he used “expanded contrapuntal dimension.”

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43 Thayer, *Life of Beethoven*, 66–67. Thayer goes on to write, “In general, however, his [Beethoven’s] model was not Bach but Mozart.” This does not necessarily negate Bach’s influence on Beethoven, but rather states the obvious truth that Beethoven’s work is overall in a more Classical style, rather than a Baroque one.


45 “die Techniken der strengen Fuge mit der freien Fantasie…” Kinderman, “Rückblick nach vom,” 143.

46 Kinderman, “Bachian Affinities,” 89.

47 Ibid., 89–90.
Examples of fugal writing in Beethoven’s works are too plentiful to mention more than a few here, but I will consider some of the most prominent ones, especially those found in the late piano sonatas, such as the fugue that appears as the last movement of Op. 101 (1816) (see Example 1.1).

Beethoven’s Op. 106 (1817–18) has a Bach “reminiscent” moment in the slow introduction to the fourth movement fugal finale;\textsuperscript{48} moreover, Czerny claimed that a performer could play that finale properly only “if he has previously well studied many other fugues by Bach, Handel, etc.”\textsuperscript{49} (see Example 1.2).

Example 1.2 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 106, IV, mm. 349–54.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example1.2.png}
\end{figure}


Meanwhile, Op. 110 (1821) contains two fugues in its third-movement finale, based on a subject and its inversion, respectively (cf., Examples 1.3 and 1.4).\textsuperscript{50}

Example 1.3 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 110, III, mm. 27–37.

\begin{music}
\begin{music_score}
\begin{music_staff}
\begin{music_timeline}
\begin{music_staff}
\textbf{FUGA.}
\textit{Allegro ma non troppo.}
\end{music_staff}
\end{music_timeline}
\end{music_staff}
\end{music_score}
\end{music}

Example 1.4 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 110, III, mm. 137–49.

\begin{music}
\begin{music_score}
\begin{music_staff}
\begin{music_timeline}
\begin{music_staff}
\textit{L'istesso tempo della Fuga.}
\textit{pol a pol di nuovo vivente}
\textit{Nicht und noch wieder auflebend.}
\end{music_staff}
\end{music_timeline}
\end{music_staff}
\end{music_score}
\end{music}

\textsuperscript{50} For an excellent discussion of Beethoven’s use of fugue in Opp. 106 and 110, see Kinderman, “Bachian Affinities,” 94–100.
Op. 111 (1821–22) includes a fugato style, such as that found at the beginning of the development of the first movement (see Example 1.5).  

Example 1.5 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 111, I, mm. 72–81.

As discussed by Ludwig Finscher, the String Quartets in B-Flat Major, Op. 130 (1825–26), C-sharp Minor, Op. 131 (1826) and the *Grosse Fugue*, Op. 133 (1825–26) all have fugal elements even though they are stylistically very different (see Example 1.6).  

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Many other examples of Bach-like writing that are not strictly fugal abound in Beethoven’s late works (for example, the Bach-like recitative style appears in sections of Op. 110 (see Example 1.7)), as I will discuss in Op. 109.
Certain scholars see Beethoven’s skill in synthesizing some of the best aspects of the Baroque and Classical styles as placing him among the ranks of the preeminent composers. Speaking of the Classical era in general, Charles Rosen wrote that it “could not produce a major style of its own until it had reabsorbed (partly transformed and partly misunderstood) the work of Handel and Sebastian Bach.” Matthew Charles Dirst posits, “Beethoven is a superior composer because he evolved a highly personal style that adopts the Festigkeit of Bach while adapting it to a radical new context shaped by the drama inherent in the Classical style.” Finally, William Kinderman claims, “In summary it can be said that it was possible for Beethoven to unite the music of the classical period, as it was taken from Haydn and Mozart to completion, with another, older tradition… especially embodied through the work of Sebastian Bach.” From these and other scholarly opinions, it is clear that Bach’s works had a tremendous effect on Beethoven’s compositional output, especially in his third style period.


Chapter Two
Beethoven and the “Goldberg Variations”

Evidence for Beethoven’s Encountering the “Goldberg Variations”

If one knew that Beethoven owned a copy of the “Goldberg Variations,” it would make this study’s premise that much easier to prove. Nevertheless, lacking this proof, one can yet accrue confirmation from several sources that make it probable that Beethoven owned, or at least had access to, a copy of the “Goldberg Variations.” According to Walter Schenkman, “While there is no hard evidence showing that Beethoven was familiar with the Goldberg, the score itself appears to have been easily accessible in Beethoven’s day,”¹ and Martin Zenck suggests that it was a “very well-known work” in Beethoven’s time.² Lewis Lockwood declares it “highly probable” that Beethoven knew the “Goldberg Variations,”³ while Wilfrid Mellers thinks that Beethoven “probably knew” them.⁴ Although “we have no evidence that Beethoven possessed a copy of the work,” in Arnold Münster’s assessment, “one can probably assume with high probability that Beethoven knew the Goldberg Variations; a conclusive answer to this important question, however, is not currently possible.”⁵


⁵ “haben wir keinen Anhaltspunkt dafür, daß Beethoven ein Exemplar des Werkes besessen…kann man wohl mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit annehmen, daß Beethoven the Goldberg-Variationen gekannt hat,
From a slightly different perspective, Pianist András Schiff states: “Beethoven must have known the ‘Goldberg Variations’ intimately well, although there is no evidence to this. Bach’s music was not known and not performed in Beethoven’s time. If somebody wanted to know Bach, one had to go to a library or to private collections, great collectors and music lovers who had manuscripts or first editions of Bach, and Beethoven must have seen this somewhere, because the structure of the final movement of Op. 109 is obviously modeled after the ‘Goldberg Variations.’”6 (Schiff’s claim must be qualified by the fact that Bach’s works were not performed in public concerts at the time, but in private concerts held in the homes of wealthy amateurs and patrons.) In any case, the “Goldberg Variations” would have been accessible in a private rather than public setting, either through “privately circulated manuscript copies,”7 printed editions, or performances. Therefore, serious musicians of Beethoven’s circle could plausibly have had access to a manuscript copy or recent edition.

By the time Beethoven was composing Op. 109, the “Goldberg Variations” already had a wide and varied publication history, making it probable that Beethoven could have encountered any one of a number of different editions. The first was the original printing during Bach’s lifetime by Balthasar Schmid of Nuremberg in 1741.8 Much later, Johann Breitkopf included the “Goldberg Variations” in his 1770 catalog of


music he offered for sale. Then, the Vienna publisher Johann Traeg, who had been in a “close business relationship” with Beethoven since 1796, listed the “Goldberg Variations” in his catalog of 1799. Subsequently, the “Goldberg Variations” were published in a two-volume edition by Hoffmeister in 1803 in Vienna where Beethoven lived, followed by a reissue by Hoffmeister’s partner Ambrosius Kühnel under the firm titled the “Bureau de Musique” in Leipzig in 1804 or 1806 as volumes twelve and thirteen of the series titled “Exercices pour le clavecin” by Bach. (As mentioned above, Beethoven urged Hoffmeister more than once to send him all the music he was publishing by Bach, and he subscribed to the 1801–1806 Leipzig series of the complete works of Bach.) Finally, in 1809 the publisher Hans Georg Nägeli published an edition of the “Goldberg Variations” in Zurich at the same time as he was in communication with Beethoven concerning the publication of his Sonatas Op. 31. Unfortunately, and perhaps surprisingly, none of these editions is claimed to have been in Beethoven’s possession at the time of his death. Zenck explains the omission in this manner: “On the

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9 Ibid., 94.


12 Schenkman, “Rethinking Diabelli’s ‘Waltz,’” 12.


15 Ibid., 30–31. According to Walter Schenkman, there is a possibility it may have been a pirated edition. Schenkman, “Rethinking Diabelli’s ‘Waltz,’” 12.

16 As mentioned in Chapter One, even though Anton Schindler claimed that Beethoven owned three volumes of the Clavierübung, this most likely did not include the “Goldberg Variations,” as the first and early editions were never labeled Clavierübung IV. Schindler, Beethoven as I Knew Him, 380.
one hand, the estate is only a rough overview of what Beethoven has owned, and on the
other, books of Bach’s output may be gone as well as lost.”

Even if Beethoven may not have owned a manuscript copy or print edition of the
“Goldberg Variations” himself, he feasibly could have encountered them in the
possessions of a wealthy patron such as Baron van Swieten or the Archduke Rudolph,
whose libraries held “numerous works of Bach.” I have already discussed Swieten’s
influence on Beethoven, but Archduke Rudolph’s case requires further commentary.
Zenck claims that the Archduke had two copies of the “Goldberg Variations” in his
library, the Hoffmeister and Nägeli editions, which Beethoven could have borrowed.
That Beethoven did research on Bach’s works in that library (including the “Goldberg
Variations,” in all likelihood) is evident from a letter he wrote to the Archduke on July
29, 1819:

I heard with deep regret of Y. R. H.’s [Your Royal Highness’s] recent
indisposition, and having received no further reliable information on the subject, I
am extremely uneasy. I went to Vienna to search in Y. R. H.’s library for what
was most suitable to me. The chief object must be to hit off our idea at once, and
in accordance with a high class of art, unless the object in view should require
different and more practical treatment. On this point the ancient composers offer
the best examples, as most of these possess real artistic value (though among them
the German Handel and Sebastian Bach can alone lay claim to genius); but
freedom and progress are our true aim in the world of art, just as in the great
creation at large; and if we moderns are not so far advanced as our forefathers in

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17 Zenck, “Bach der Progressive,” 29. In addition to Swieten’s intellectual circle, another possible
source of transmission could have been through Beethoven’s teacher Neefe. Rolf Dammann, Johann
Sebastian Bach’s “Goldberg-Variationen” (Mainz: Schott Mainz, 1986), 267.

18 “Es ist aber möglich, daß Beethoven sie in der Sammlung des Barons van Swieten oder der des
Erzherzogs Rudolph, die beide zahlreiche Werke Bachs enthielten, kennengelernt hat.” Münster,
Beethovens Diabelli-Variationen, 212–13. In my opinion, Swieten could have obtained a copy of the
“Goldberg Variations” from C. P. E. Bach.

solidity, still the refinement of our ideas has contributed in many ways to their enlargement.

One source where Beethoven almost certainly would have encountered an excerpt of the “Goldberg Variations” was Johann Philipp Kirnberger’s theory text *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes in der Musik (The Art of Strict Composition in Music)* (1773/77), which includes two brief excerpts from the “Goldberg Variations.” *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes* was also republished in Vienna (1793) during Beethoven’s early years there. He studied this text to further his compositional training between 1800 and 1810 and also used it in teaching as well. Included in the text were the first sixteen measures of the ground bass of the theme with the following description: “On the following ground bass of an aria are thirty variations, of which the canons are all in consistent intervals, in 2nds, 3rds, 4ths, 5ths, 6ths, 7ths, 8ths and 9ths, and even a four-part regular fugue.”

Further indications that the “Goldberg Variations” were known by musicians of Beethoven’s time were that they also appeared in Sir John Hawkins’s (1719–1789) *History of Music* (London, 1776), which included the aria, as well as the first and ninth

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21 Zenck, “Bach der Progressive,” 31–32. In my opinion, Beethoven’s teacher Albrechtsberger may have introduced him to *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes* in the early 1790s, since “in spirit, he follows Kirnberger, who in *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes*, Part I (1777), taught chords, progressions, and modulation, and then presented simple counterpoint first in four, then in three, then two voices....” Thomas Christensen, ed., *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, The Cambridge History of Music 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 582–84.


variations. Moreover, Bach biographer Nikolaus Forkel used the “Goldberg Variations” as a model for imitation by writing his own variations on the theme. Not only were the “Goldberg Variations” discussed in books on music theory, composition, and history, but also in books on aesthetics as well. The German writer E. T. A. Hoffmann gave the “Goldberg Variations” a prominent role in his 1810 work Kreisleriana where it was performed by the primary character, Johannes Kreisler, and Beethoven’s works also appeared in other Kreisler essays. We know that Beethoven was aware of Hoffman’s writings as a music critic because he thanked him for some reviews of his compositions,


25 Williams, The Goldberg Variations, 94.


27 “I shall leave figures and notes behind, and with true relish, like a recovered invalid who cannot stop telling people how he has suffered, I shall record here in full detail the hellish torture of today’s tea party. Not for myself alone, of course; but for all those who may occasionally find pleasure and edification here in my copy of Johann Sebastian Bach’s keyboard variations published by Nägeli in Zurich, who find my figures at the end of the thirtieth variation, and who, guided by the Latin VERTE in big letters (I will write it in as soon as this account of my grievances is finished), turn the page and read. They will immediately divine the true state of affairs….

But then the baron, my Titus-headed tenor, comes up to me and says ‘Ah, my excellent Kapellmeister, I gather you improvise fantasies quite divinely; oh do fantasise something for us, just a little, I beg you!’ I reply somewhat coolly that my fantasy has all dried up today. But while we are talking, some devil in the guise of a dandy with two waistcoats has nosed out the Bach variations under my hat in the adjoining room…and demands that I rattle through them. I decline, whereupon they all fall on me in protest. Right, I think to myself, you can listen and burst with boredom. I get down to work. During Variation Three several ladies retire, followed by some Titus-heads. Because their teacher is playing, the Miss Röderleins hold out until Variation Twelve, though not without distress. Variation Fifteen puts the two-waistcoat man to flight. Out of exaggerated courtesy the baron remains until Variation Thirty, consuming large amounts of the punch which Gottlieb has placed on the piano for me. I would now be happy to stop, but this Variation Thirty, the theme, urges me irresistibly onward. The quarto pages suddenly expand to an elephant-folio, containing a thousand imitations and elaborations of the theme which I am forced to play. The notes come to life and flutter and dance around me; electric sparks flow through my finger-tips into the keys; the spirit generating them overtakes my thoughts. The whole room is filled by a thick fog, in which the candles burn more and more dimly; now a nose appears, now a pair of eyes, but then they immediately disappear again. So it is that I continue sitting alone with my Sebastian Bach, with Gottlieb waiting upon me like a spirítu familiari. I drink.” E. T. A. Hoffmann, E. T. A. Hoffmann’s Musical Writings: Kreisleriana; The Poet and the Composer; Music Criticism, ed. David Charlton, trans. Martyn Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 81, 84–85.
making this yet another connection to the “Goldberg Variations,” which one should not overlook.\textsuperscript{28}

Beethoven’s pupil Czerny provides use with several clues that the composer likely knew the “Goldberg Variations.” When Czerny mentioned that the third movement of Op. 109 was in the style of Bach, he very well may have been thinking of the “Goldberg Variations.”\textsuperscript{29} Moreover, when C. F. Peters reissued the “Goldberg Variations” in Leipzig in 1840, Czerny was in charge of re-fingering the edition.\textsuperscript{30} Walter Schenkman thinks it is significant that Czerny edited the work, because in the preface, Czerny said he had been intimate with the “Goldberg Variations” “for over thirty years,” and he meanwhile had also been a close acquaintance of Beethoven’s.\textsuperscript{31} Furthermore, in his instructions on improvising, Czerny designated the “Goldberg Variations” as role models for Beethoven’s Opp. 35 and 120.\textsuperscript{32}

Czerny is not the only one to find connections between Beethoven’s compositions and the “Goldberg Variations.” Günter Hartmann claims that the thirty “Eroica Variations,” Op. 35 are linked to the “Goldberg Variations.”\textsuperscript{33} Speaking of the slow movement of the Archduke Trio, Op. 97, Stephen Rumph writes that it “seems to pay

\begin{thebibliography}{9}

\bibitem{30} Williams, \textit{The Goldberg Variations}, 95.

\bibitem{31} Schenkman, “Rethinking Diabelli’s ‘Waltz,’” 12–13.

\bibitem{32} Zenck, “Rezeption von Geschichte,” 73–74.

\end{thebibliography}
tribute to the *Goldberg Variations*, with a sarabande theme whose intact return and systematic diminution foreshadow the finale of the Piano Sonata in E major, Op. 109.\textsuperscript{34} Moreover, Elaine Sisman connects the slow movement of Op. 101 to the “Goldberg Variations’” twenty-fifth variation (cf., Examples 2.1 and 2.2).\textsuperscript{35} However, the work by Beethoven which scholars have spent the most time comparing to the “Goldberg Variations” is none other than the “Diabelli Variations.”

Example 2.1 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 25, mm. 21–24.


\textsuperscript{34} Stephen Rumph, *Beethoven after Napoleon: Political Romanticism in the Late Works* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 257, n. 11.

The “Goldberg Variations” and the “Diabelli Variations”

At first, discussion of the “Diabelli Variations,” Op. 120 may seem a digression from the topic at hand, but it provides important supporting evidence to the claim that Beethoven knew the “Goldberg Variations” and used them as compositional inspiration for more than one work. The “Diabelli Variations” and Op. 109 are directly related in terms of their period, for Beethoven started composing the “Diabelli Variations” before the Opp. 109–111 sonata set and finished them after the set was complete. By early 1820, Beethoven had composed the first nineteen “Diabelli Variations” before he began Op. 109. According to Rumph, Beethoven “composed Op. 109 while working on the Diabelli Variations, whose homage to Bach seems to extend beyond the Goldberg Variations to *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.” The affinity between Op. 109 and the “Diabelli Variations” even extends to Beethoven’s having worked on sketches for the variation set in the same Wittgenstein Sketchbook SV 154 (folios 3v–9r, 11r) at the same time as some sketches for the first movement of Op. 109 (these Op. 109 sketches can be found in sketch folios J–M, or Grasnick 20b, folios 3–6, which are leaves that scholars believe were originally part of the Wittgenstein sketchbook). Because of the “Diabelli

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37 Ibid.
38 Rumph, *Beethoven after Napoleon*, 114.
39 Douglas P. Johnson, Alan Tyson, and Robert Winter, *The Beethoven Sketchbooks: History, Reconstruction, Inventory*, ed. by Douglas Johnson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 256–58. Some of the “Diabelli Variation” sketches from Wittgenstein SV 154 are also believe to be missing from the original sketchbook and can be found in Paris Ms 77, pages 5–8.
Variations’” compositional proximity to Op. 109, any association of the “Goldberg Variations” with the “Diabelli Variations” is relevant to the discussion at hand.40

From the time of their publication to the present, the “Diabelli Variations” have been compared to the “Goldberg Variations,” as can be seen in Anton Diabelli’s (1781–1858) publication announcement, which reads “a great and important masterpiece worthy to be ranked with the imperishable creations of the old Classics….All these variations… will entitle the work to a place beside Sebastian Bach’s masterpiece in the same form [i.e., the ‘Goldberg Variations’].”41 The fact that the man who commissioned the variations that bear his name compares them to a set of Bach’s variations seems to indicate that there are indeed some connections between the works.42 Kinderman agrees: “Whether Beethoven was aware of the Goldberg Variations is not recorded, but the notice of the publication of Op. 120 by Diabelli already suggests the comparability of works….And similarities in the melody and the structure suggest Beethoven’s knowledge of Bach’s Goldberg Variations, although the relationship of the two works can be thought less an imitation than an homage to Bach.”43 Zenck claims that the “Goldberg


41 Donald Francis Tovey, Essays in Musical Analysis: Chamber Music, vol. 7, Essays in Musical Analysis (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), 124. There is a possibility that Diabelli was referring to the Canonic Variations on “Von Himmel Hoch,” but the sources I have read emphasize the “Goldberg Variations” as the ones to which Diabelli referred.


Variations” were a “model” (*Muster*) for the “Diabelli Variations,” and Ludwig Finscher believes they are “closely related,” and Donald Francis Tovey claims that Beethoven knew the “Goldberg Variations,” and they influenced the “Diabelli Variations.” In Wilfrid Mellers’s opinion, “The parallel with the Goldberg Variations is close…the relationship between the two sets of variations complements that between the B minor Mass [BWV 232 by J. S. Bach] and the Missa Solemnis.” Within his book on the “Diabelli Variations,” Arnold Münster compares and contrasts the two works multiple times.

The correlations between the “Diabelli Variations” and “Goldberg Variations” do not remain at the level of generalities, but often include specifics. Rolf Dammann thinks that the 3/4 rhythm of the waltz theme of the “Diabelli Variations” is related to the 3/4 rhythm of the “Goldberg Variations” sarabande theme. Zenck points out similarities between Bach’s Var. 11 and Beethoven’s Var. 27, while Tovey compares Bach’s Var. 25 and Beethoven’s Var. 28. “An imitation of the ornamented minor

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46 Tovey, *Chamber Music*, 74–75.


50 Zenck, “Rezeption von Geschichte,” 73.

51 Tovey, *Chamber Music*, 131.
variation of the Goldberg,” is how Rosen describes “Diabelli” Var. 31,52 corroborated by Zenck, who thinks that Beethoven’s Var. 31 and Bach’s Var. 13 and 25 are related, mentioning an “explicit reference to Bach”53 (cf., Examples 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5). As further proof, Kinderman believes that based on the “melodic and textural similarities” of Beethoven’s Var. 31 to the “Goldberg Variations,” “it is difficult not to assume Beethoven’s familiarity with the Goldberg Variations,”54 and he refers to Var. 31 as “an elaborate aria reminiscent of the decorated minor variation of Bach’s Goldberg set.”55

Example 2.3 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 13, mm. 28–32.


Example 2.4 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 25, mm. 30–33.

Example 2.5 Ludwig van Beethoven, “Diabelli Variations,” Var. 31.
Finally, speaking of “Diabelli” Var. 33, Tovey postulates:

It is profoundly characteristic of the way in which (as Diabelli himself seems partly to have grasped) this work develops and enlarges the great aesthetic principles of balance and climax embodied in the ‘Goldberg’ Variations, that it ends quietly. The freedom necessary for an ordinary climax on modern lines was secured already in the great fugue, placed, as it was, in a foreign key; and now Beethoven, like Bach, rounds off his work by a peaceful return home—a home that seems far removed from those stormy experiences through which alone such ethereal calm can be attained.\textsuperscript{56}

Thus, through exploring scholars’ opinions coupling the “Goldberg Variations” with Beethoven’s “Diabelli Variations,” we can conclude that he was indeed familiar with the “Goldberg Variations” and found them worthy material inspiration for several of his works, including the variation movement of Op. 109.

\textsuperscript{56} Tovey, \textit{Chamber Music}, 133.
Chapter Three

Compositional History

Prior to beginning a discussion of the specific thematic connections between Beethoven’s Piano Sonata, Op. 109 and Bach’s “Goldberg Variations,” I will discuss the historical background and form of both works.

History of the “Goldberg Variations”

In Nikolaus Forkel’s 1802 biography of J. S. Bach, he explains the origins of the “Goldberg Variations” through the following anecdote:

We owe them to Count Kaiserling [also spelled Keyserlingk], formerly Russian Ambassador at the Saxon Electoral Court, who frequently visited Leipzig with Goldberg, already mentioned among Bach’s pupils. The Count was a great invalid and suffered from insomnia. Goldberg lived in the Ambassador’s house, and slept in an adjoining room, to be ready to play to him when he was wakeful. One day the Count asked Bach to write for Goldberg some Clavier music of a soothing and cheerful character, that would relieve the tedium of sleepless nights. Bach thought a set of Variations most likely to fulfil the Count’s needs, though, on account of the recurrence of the same basic harmony throughout, it was a form to which he had hitherto paid little attention. […] The Count always called them “my Variations” and was never weary of hearing them. For long afterwards, when he could not sleep, he would say, “Play me one of my Variations, Goldberg.” Perhaps Bach was never so well rewarded for any composition as for this. The Count gave him a golden goblet containing one hundred louis d’ors, though, as a work of art, Bach would not have been overpaid had the present been a thousand times as large. It may be observed, that in the engraved copy of the Variations there are serious mistakes, which the composer has corrected in his own copy.¹

Whether or not this story is factual is unclear; what we do know is that in Dresden, in 1741, Hermann Carl, Reichsgraf von Keyserlingk hired the fourteen-year-old Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, who was a pupil of J. S. Bach. It is possible that the aria may have been composed years before the rest of the work, as it appears in the Anna Magdalena Bach Book (1725) as No. 26, Aria in G Major, but this is a matter of debate. David Schulenberg explains: “Anna Magdalena Bach’s copy of the aria in the 1725 Clavier-Büchlein was once assumed to date from long before the variations and thus to constitute evidence that the aria, like other pieces in the manuscript, had been borrowed from another, anonymous composer, possibly French. But the handwriting is now thought to date from near the time of the work’s publication, and thus has no bearing on the authorship of the aria.”

As to when Bach penned the remainder of the “Goldberg Variations,” Peter Williams thinks they were probably composed in 1739–40 for Bach’s son Wilhelm Friedemann and later given as a gift to the count. They were published in 1741, titled “Keyboard Practice, consisting of an aria with diverse variations for the two-manual

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2 Ibid., 119, n. 239.

3 David Schulenberg, The Keyboard Music of J. S. Bach, rev. 2nd ed. (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 373. According to Frederick Neumann, a few scholars think that Bach did not write it himself. Fredrick Neumann, “Bach: Progressive or Conservative,” in New Essays on Performance Practice, ed. George J. Buelow, Studies in Music Series 108 (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989), 195–219. Erwin Bodky points out the surprising similarities between Bach’s Aria and certain variations with a Ground by Henry Purcell and wonders if it was a “germ” for Bach’s work. Erwin Bodky, The Interpretation of Bach’s Keyboard Works (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 328–29. Yet Bowman believes “it is good enough to have been written by him [Bach].” David Bowman, “Corelli, Couperin, Bach,” Music Teacher 76, no. 3 (1997): 28. For the intents and purposes of this paper, I will not engage in this debate, since I believe it is irrelevant. The Aria was published as part of the variations in Bach’s name, and I think that Beethoven would have accepted it as having been composed by Bach, and in emulating the Aria in Op. 109, he may have been paying homage to Bach.


5 Ibid., 7, 28.
harpsichord,” and dedicated to music-lovers.⁶ It is now considered to be Part IV of Bach’s *Clavierübung* series,⁷ although the title page does not include the term “Clavierübung.” The other parts of this series include I. the Six Partitas (1726–1731); II. the Italian Concerto and French Overture (1735); and III. the German Organ Mass (1739).⁸

**Formal Structure of the “Goldberg Variations”**

For the purposes of this study, I will present an overview of the formal structure of the “Goldberg Variations.” The intricacies of the “Goldberg Variations” have been the subject of much scholarly investigation and discussion—historical, theoretical, numerological, and even esoteric; much of this is beyond the topic of this document, so I will confine myself to details which seem to relate to Beethoven’s Piano Sonata, Op. 109.

The “Goldberg Variations” comprise an aria and thirty variations, with a *da capo* return of the aria at the end, forming a total of thirty-two movements (see Example 3.1).

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⁶ “Clavier Übung bestehend in einer Aria mit verschiedenen Veraenderungen vors Clavicimbal mit 2 Manualen…” “Music-lovers” in German is “Liebhabern.”


Many scholars believe the aria, or theme of the variations, stems from the passacaglia\(^9\) or chaconne (ciaccona),\(^{10}\) which were variations over descending ground-bass patterns characteristic of the Baroque era. A comparison of a typical passacaglia bass line to a harmonic reduction of the “Goldberg Variations” highlights the similarities between the two (cf., Examples 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4).

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Example 3.2 Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Cento partite* (1637), Bass Line.\(^{11}\)

Example 3.3 Johann Kaspar Kerll, Passacaglia for harpsichord (c. 1670), Bass Line.\(^{12}\)

Ex. 3.4 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Aria Bass Line, mm. 1–8.

The harmonic pattern and outline of the bass remain constant throughout the variations, but the melodic material shows Bach utilizing his creative freedom.

In addition to a general resemblance to the *passacaglia* and *chaconne* ground-bass patterns, Williams also believes the “Goldberg Variations” may be linked to the following musical predecessors: 1. Johann Christoph Bach (J. S. Bach’s first cousin once removed, who lived 1642–1703), *Sarabande. Duodecies variat*. (12 Variations); 2. George Frideric Handel, Chaconne from Suite in G Major, HWV 442 and 435 (1733); 3. Gottlieb Muffat (1690–1770), Ciacona from *Componimenti musicali* (1739); 4. Henry Purcell (1659–1695), Ground in Gamut, Z 645; and 5. Purcell, “Let each gallant heart,”

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\(^{12}\) Ibid. Used with permission.
Moreover, David Bowman notes its similarities to François Couperin’s *Les Sentimentes*, the “second sarabande in the first suite (ordre) of Couperin’s first book of harpsichord pieces published in 1713.” Finally, Barry Cooper and Erica Buurman believe that Wolfgang Ebner’s (1612–65) “Ferdinand Variations” (1648) are also related to the “Goldberg Variations.” Regardless of whether there is a case of influence between any of these pieces and the “Goldberg Variations,” Bach was probably honoring the music of the past as he composed them. At the same time, Bach was also featuring characteristics of the new style galant in the theme of the “Goldberg Variations”:

1. melody plus accompaniment, 2. diatonic harmony, 3. slow harmonic rhythm, 4. ornamentation of the melody with appoggiaturas, and 5. periodic phrasing.

Bach made every third variation (Variations 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24, and 27) a canon at increasing intervals (i.e. unison, major second, major third, perfect fourth, perfect fifth, minor sixth, major seventh, octave, and major ninth). Variation 30 fractures the structural mold, as it is not the expected canon at the tenth but rather a quodlibet, contrapuntally incorporating five German popular tunes of Bach’s time. Interspersed between the canonic variations are the other variations which can be classified in various ways: free variations, duet variations, dance variations, and technical

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16 As mentioned before, the variations are on the harmonic pattern and outline of the bass, meaning that the canonic parts are not variations on the original melody.
variations.\textsuperscript{17} In addition to dividing into units of three marked by the canons, the variations also neatly divide into two parts, with Variation 16 acting as the opening of the second half of the work; its dotted rhythms and rapid scales imitate an orchestral French Overture, commonly used as an introductory movement in the Baroque era. Within the second half of the “Goldberg Variations,” Bach gradually builds up the technical brilliance of the work, including some of his most dazzling displays before the entrance of the light-hearted quodlibet and the final return of the serene theme.

Genesis of Op. 109

Thayer neatly packages the history of Op. 109 in a few sentences: “The Sonata in E belongs unquestionably to the year 1820. The first theme of the first movement is found in the Conversation Book of April; the work was sketched in part before he began the Benedictus of the Missa Solemnis, in part while he was at work on this section, the Credo, the Agnus Dei, and the Bagatelles [Op. 119, Nos. 7–11] for Starke. It was dedicated to Maximiliane Brentano, and published in November, 1821, by Schlesinger in Berlin.”\textsuperscript{18} Notwithstanding this compact explanation, the history of the sonata appears to be a bit more complicated than Thayer thought.

Many scholars agree that Beethoven first conceived the first movement of Op. 109 as an independent piece in 1820, and only later did he decide to add more movements to make it into a sonata.\textsuperscript{19} However, they differ on exactly when and why

\textsuperscript{17} Schulenberg, \textit{The Keyboard Music of J. S. Bach}, 370–88.


Beethoven composed the work. William Meredith provides a detailed description of when the sonata was composed, especially the first movement, based on sketchbooks, letters, and conversation books. He estimates that Beethoven may have started working on the first movement as early as February 1820 and decided to make it part of a sonata in April 1820. However, Nicholas Marston claims that Beethoven did not begin work on Op. 109 until March 1820. In the opinions of Douglas Johnson, Alan Tyson, and Robert Winter, “Beethoven had conceived this Sonata by April 1820, for the opening motive was entered in a conversation book at some point between the eleventh and thirteenth of that month….This is conveniently contemporary with a letter to him from the publisher Adolf Martin Schlesinger (1769–1838), written on 11 April and requesting Sonatas…work on the Sonata could have begun as early as March.” Barry Cooper places the beginning of Beethoven’s work on the sonata not earlier than April, with the impetus being Schlesinger’s commission. It is probable that from April onwards Beethoven was conceptualizing the Op. 109 Sonata as being part of a set of three

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(Opp. 109, 110, and 111), since he responded to Schlesinger, “Hence a work consisting of three sonatas would cost 120 ducats….”

Beethoven continued work on Op. 109 into the summer of 1820. Meredith maintains that he devoted time to the second and third movements in June, but he doubts that the sonata was finished by the end of the month, even though Beethoven claimed this in a letter. According to Marston, most likely Beethoven began work on the third movement in mid-June 1820. Johnson, Tyson, and Winter claim, “The center of the sketchbook [Artaria 195], pages 35–78, is filled by the second and third movements of the Sonata in E major, Opus 109.” (The Artaria sketchbook will become important in this study when I compare Beethoven’s Op. 109 sketches to the “Goldberg Variations.”)

Much like dating the beginning of Beethoven’s work on Op. 109, determining the completion of the sonata is also a bit nebulous. He wrote to Schlesinger on September 20, 1820:

Only persistently poor health has prevented me from finishing sooner the proofreading of the copies of the songs [Op. 108]…—Everything will go more quickly in the case of the three sonatas—The first is quite ready save for correcting the copy [“‘bis zur Korrektur’—he presumably meant the copyist’s score to be sent as a Stichvorlage”]28, and I am working uninterruptedly at the other two—My health is completely restored and I will make every effort to fulfill my obligations to you as soon as possible.29


28 Ibid.

29 Beethoven, The Letters of Beethoven, 1033.
Albeit Beethoven claimed that the first sonata was “quite ready,” some scholars believe that he was overestimating the completion of Op. 109. According to Johnson, Tyson, and Winter, “There is indirect evidence that he was exaggerating his progress, however, for he goes on in the same letter to claim that he was ‘working uninterruptedly on the other two [sonatas],’ that is, on Opus 110 and Opus 111, though the earliest surviving sketches for Opus 110 were made nearly a year later, in the summer of 1821.”  

Marston suggests that Beethoven may have basically finished the entire sonata by late September of 1820. He may or may not have completed the Op. 109 sketches by September, but it is “safe to say” that he did not write any more sketches after December 1820. (Work on the sonata was much slower than Beethoven had originally projected, as he had planned to complete not only Op. 109, but also Opp. 110 and 111 by the end of September.)

Months passed before Beethoven wrote the following letter to Schlesinger on March 7, 1821, concerning the title and dedication of Op. 109:

But as to the sonata [Op. 109] which you must have received a long time ago, I request that you add the following title, together with the dedication, namely,

Sonata for the Hammerklavier
Composed and dedicated to
Fräulein Maximiliane Brentano
By Ludwig von Beethoven
Opus 109

Would you agree to add the year as well? I have often wanted this but no publisher would do it. The other two sonatas will soon follow….  

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Finally, in November 1821, Balthasar Schmid published the sonata (as to when the autograph score was completed, it is undated).  

Form of Op. 109

In discussing the form of Op. 109, we should remember that in Beethoven’s last three piano sonatas, Opp. 109, 110, and 111, he showed a “radical departure, above all in his later music, from the conventional number and sequence of movements…also his challenge to the autonomy of the individual movement itself.” Unlike the typical three-movement Classical sonatas of Haydn or Mozart, which place the structural weight of the piece on the first movement, Op. 109’s first two movements are a structural path leading us to the apotheosis of the third movement. Because of this document’s emphasis on Op. 109’s third movement connection to the “Goldberg Variations,” I will only touch lightly on the form of the first two movements.

Like the first movements of most sonatas, the first movement of Op. 109 follows some large-scale sonata-form principles, outlining the move from the tonic (E major) to the dominant (B major), but it differs drastically in other ways from Classical sonata form. First, parts of the form are truncated, with the exposition lasting only fifteen measures (with a primary theme of eight measures and a secondary theme of seven measures). Second, the primary theme texturally sounds almost as a prelude or

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introduction, consisting of arpeggiated chords over a descending bass line, whereas the secondary theme appears as a recitative or fantasy in style (see Example 3.5). These formal and textural ambiguities are hallmarks of Beethoven’s third style period.

Example 3.5 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, I, mm. 1–12.
In contrast to Op. 109’s first movement, the second movement is highly contrapuntal and rhythmic, reminiscent of J. S. Bach’s late style. In most three-movement Classical sonatas, the second movement would be slow, lyrical, and *piano*, but Beethoven labeled this movement *prestissimo* and *marcato*, with dramatic contrasts within a broad dynamic range (see Example 3.6).

Example 3.6 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, II, mm. 1–16.

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Its tonal structure follows typical sonata-allegro form, though of a somewhat condensed length and with intriguing harmonic features (see Example 3.7). This movement is in E minor, the parallel minor of the first movement’s tonic E major, rather than in a more typical A major (subdominant key) or C-sharp minor (relative minor) as Beethoven’s predecessors might have preferred.

Example 3.7 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, II, mm. 41–49.
The third movement of Op. 109 is a theme and six variations in the tonic E major, marked *Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung / Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo* (see Example 3.8). Beethoven used a theme and variations form as the last movement in only one other late sonata, Op. 111.38 Structurally, the third movement of Op. 109 is the “heart of the sonata”39 and is proportionally the weightiest of the three movements. Marston affirms: “Thus, the distinctively, Beethovenian end-weighted sonata design… might be thought almost endemic to the variation genre.”40

Example 3.8 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III, mm. 1–16.

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40 Marston, “‘The Sense of an Ending,’” 91.
The relationship of the third movement to the first two is closer than appears at first blush. Kevin Bazzana asserts, “The first and second movements as wholes act in a kind of thesis-antithesis relationship, to which the third movement’s song-like theme and variations act as a resolving synthesis both motivically and tonally.” Leaving out mention of the second movement, Marston claims, “It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that the third-movement theme is in a sense a recomposition of the first movement of op. 109.” As Zenck points out, all three movements are variations on same baseline—a descending scalar chaconne bass in first two, balanced with a rising scalar bass in the last movement (see Examples 3.9–3.11). (This is not a trifling connection, as I shall demonstrate in the next chapter.)


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As compared to Beethoven’s early years, when he composed many independent variation sets, in his late works, he preferred to place variations within a sonata, rather than writing stand-alone variations (the “Diabelli Variations” being the one notable exception), and Op. 109 fits within that pattern.\(^4\) In most variations, one sees “gradual increase in elaboration…proportional diminution of note values: the progressive increase in the surface rhythmic figuration created the effect of a gradual acceleration in tempo, and a real increase in the level of virtuosity, while the underlying harmonic rhythm remain[s] constant.”\(^4\) Op. 109’s third movement does not follow this pattern exactly, since the first variation is, if anything, more rhythmically static than the theme, but the second variation restores the pattern of increasing elaboration, almost as if it were the “true” first variation.\(^4\) Kinderman describes the variations thus: “In a sense, then, the variations concluding op. 109 embody two cycles of transformation: the first five variations recast the theme and develop its structure and character in a variety of expressive contexts, while the sixth initiates a new series of changes compressed into a single continuous process that is guided by the logical unfolding of rhythmic development.”\(^4\) In building up to reprise of the theme in the sixth and last variation, Beethoven places a fugue in the variation immediately preceding, a strategy that likewise worked well for him in the “Diabelli Variations.”\(^4\) Igor Kriz has described Op. 109 as

\(^4\) Marston, “‘The Sense of an Ending,’” 89.

\(^4\) Ibid., 90.

\(^4\) Ibid.


\(^4\) Marston, “‘The Sense of an Ending,’” 91.
“variations within variations within variations,”⁴⁹ and this is especially true of the last variation, which uses rhythmic diminution within the variation to continually develop the theme into a glorious climax, which then subsides into the written-out reprise of the theme (see Example 3.12).

Ex. 3.12 Op. 109, III, Var. 6, mm. 1–6.

Thus, one can recognize that the structural weight of the piece lies not only in the last movement, but in the last variation and reprise of the theme, sustaining the dramatic tension to the very close of Op. 109.

After surveying the history and form of Bach’s “Goldberg Variations” and Beethoven’s Op. 109, it is now time to probe the formal congruencies between them in the succeeding chapters. I will demonstrate that although these works initially may appear quite disparate, upon further investigation they share some striking parallels.

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Chapter Four

Analytical Comparison of Op. 109 with the “Goldberg Variations”

Comparison of Op. 109 to the “Goldberg Variations”: Structure

To better understand this chapter’s comparison of Ludwig van Beethoven’s Op. 109 with J. S. Bach’s “Goldberg Variations,” one must realize that it falls under the topic of Bach reception history. As described by Zenck, “Reception history […] pertains to instances where Bach’s works are no longer seen within the context of that tradition, but instead are, at least partly, fundamentally changed within the understanding and interpretation of a particular compositional and performing environment. The goal is not the reproduction—after all imaginary—of the original, but rather a transformation which always views Bach through the lens of new developments in music.”

In the practice of using music from earlier composers, Beethoven may have been imitating Bach himself in his later years. As mature composers, both Bach and Beethoven were able to successfully synthesize the styles of their day with new, fresh musical ideas that adumbrated the future. According to Kinderman: “An enhanced historical consciousness is characteristic of the later music of both composers […] What sustains the late style of these composers is no passive response to current trends but a strong conviction about artistic synthesis—*Kunstvereinigung*, in Beethoven’s phrase—whereby older artistic forms assume new shapes.” Elaine Sisman contends that Beethoven’s late style places great emphasis on memory and recollection, not only by recalling themes at

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the end of pieces, but also by recalling musical styles and ideas from past composers such as Bach and Handel. As discussed above, Bach was perhaps paying homage to music of the past when he composed the “Goldberg Variations.” In a similar manner, Beethoven honors past music by being “among later composers in whose keyboard works the echo of the Goldberg Variations may be found.”

Many commentators have noted the similarities between Op. 109 variations and the “Goldberg Variations,” going so far as to say they “could almost be called Beethoven’s Goldberg Variations.” In Christopher Taylor’s opinion, “The harmonies and rhythms of the theme along with correspondences between certain variations suggest that Bach’s Goldberg Variations must have been on Beethoven’s mind as he wrote.” Rumph declares, “The finale of Op. 109 itself pays no small tribute to the Goldberg Variations, with the four-square sarabande theme, the fluctuating meters and characters of the variations, and the return of the intact theme.” Both variation sets contain “pointillistic two-part harmony, canons, and a fughetta […] both alternate strict and free

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8 Stephen Rumph, Beethoven After Napoleon: Political Romanticism in the Late Works (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 114.
canonic imitation,”⁹ as well as including “copious use of imitative counterpoint.”¹⁰


Even with a cursory comparison of the two works, one noteworthy characteristic is obvious—both variation sets end with a reprise of the original theme.¹³ Often, variation sets do not return to the original theme, so the fact that both of these works end with a reprise is yet another similarity. (Marston names it “Beethoven’s only variation work to end with literal repeat of theme, save for the omission of the repeats and a few grace notes, and some added octave doublings.”¹⁴) In Matthew Saunders’s estimation, “Bringing the theme back at the end is a clear homage to the Goldberg Variations.”¹⁵ Schulenberg points out that the moment of the return of the “Goldberg” aria “inevitably reminds modern listeners of the da capo at the end of the variations in Beethoven’s piano sonata Op. 109. But no retransition prepares the return of the opening theme as in the Beethoven work....Although the [‘Goldberg’] aria reappears at the end, the variations do

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¹⁰ Silverman, “Beethoven Piano Sonatas.”


¹⁴ Marston, “‘The Sense of an Ending,’” 91.

not progressively move away from and then return to it (as they do in op. 109).”

Kinderman highlights the main difference between the returns of the themes: “In this context it is also worth noting that the return of the Sarabande in Op. 109, in contrast to Bach’s Goldberg Variations, has no literal da capo recapitulation.”

More than one musician has pondered the psychological and architectural qualities of the themes’ return. András Schiff states that in both Op. 109 and the “Goldberg Variations,” “the theme returns in great simplicity and completes a circle where beginning and end meet,” also claiming that in both works the theme represents a “wonderful homecoming.” Zenck describes it in this manner: “Concerning the demonstrated similarities between different variations of Opus 109 and the Goldberg Variations, there is the greatest affinity for both works in the respective resumption of the theme, the cyclical system of the whole, and of the symmetrical architecture of the form.” The “almost verbatim” restatement of the theme “allow[s] us a few extra moments to reflect on how many changes the themes and we have undergone since their

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initial occurrence.” Mellers surmises, “In any case the da capo of the aria, in both Bach
and Beethoven, sounds like a microcosm of the macrocosm, though in Beethoven the
process is more psychologically ‘inward.’”

Both sets of variations use the harmonic structure of the theme as a unifying
technique. Tovey’s comments on the harmonic groundwork of the “Goldberg
Variations” could, in certain ways, apply to Op. 109 as well: “Bach, in the Goldberg
Variations, by depriving himself of all resources that come from taking the melody of the
theme as a guiding principle, gained a complete independence in melodic matter which
enabled him to attain far more variety and expanse than would be possible in variations
that depend as frequently on the melodic surface of the theme as on its harmonies.”

However, Beethoven also used melodic material from his theme in the Op. 109
variations, whereas in Bach’s “Goldberg Variations,” no “material from the aria, other
than the bass, [has] recurred substantially in the variations.” The descending bass line
that appears in the “Goldberg Variations’” aria was in use until Beethoven’s time, and

20 Silverman, “Beethoven Piano Sonatas.”

220–21.

Variations by Bach; The Diabelli Variations by Beethoven; Symphonic Etudes in Form of Variations by
Schumann; Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel by Brahms” (MA thesis, University of California-

23 Donald Francis Tovey, *Essays in Musical Analysis: Chamber Music*, vol. 7, *Essays in Musical
Analysis* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), 126.


25 “L’aria iniziale segue un giro armonico standard, supportato da una figura del basso (una
gagliarda p secondo Alberto Basso), comunissima all’epoca e che resisterà addirittura fino a Beethoven.”
Emmanuele Ferrari, “Analisi musicale e giudizio critico,” *ANALISI, Rivista di Teoria e Pedagogia
the bass line of the Op. 109 Variations’ theme appears to be a modified inversion of that same bass line (cf., Examples 4.1 and 4.2).\footnote{Further connections between the two can be found in the first two movements of Op. 109, which also have a descending scalar bass line similar to the “Goldberg Variations”’ bass line, meaning that the bass line of the Op. 109 third movement variations not only is an inversion of the previous two movements (as discussed in Chapter Three) but also may be a loosely modified inversion of the “Goldberg Variations”’ bass line. Zenck speaks of the connections between the “Goldberg Variations” and the first and second movements of Op. 109. Zenck, \textit{Bach-Rezeption}, 220–22. In discussing the bass line of Op. 109’s movements, he was influenced by the sketch studies of Allen Forte, \textit{The Compositional Matrix: Analytic Studies of the Beethoven’s Sketches} (1961; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1974), 30, 57, 62 and 67.}


Comparison of Op. 109 to the “Goldberg Variations”: Themes

The similarities between the themes of the two variation sets are numerous—the first and most obvious being that they both are in a major key in 3/4 meter. In and of itself, this is merely a superficial resemblance, but when accounted with other correlating factors, it adds weight to the supposition that the “Goldberg Variations” inspired Beethoven’s Op. 109. Bach designated the “Goldberg Variations”’ theme as an “Aria,” which describes its song-like quality. Similarly, in Beethoven’s autograph of the third movement of Op. 109, he labeled it as “\textit{Gesang mit innigster Empfindung}”; again, with the word “\textit{Gesang},” a song-like quality is evoked. In the first edition of Op. 109, “\textit{Gesang}” (song) was changed to “\textit{Gesangvoll}” (song-full), but the vocal connection
remains. Might not this imply that he first was identifying his theme as a song much as the "Goldberg Variations" theme is an aria? Perhaps later he wished to play down the similarities between the two, but the musical connection remains. Kriz asserts that the theme of Op. 109 "immediately brings the Goldberg Variations to mind by the melody’s nature and ornamentation."

Both themes place the rhythmic stress on the second beat of the measure in the manner of a sarabande (see Example 4.3).


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Bach, in mastering the French suite as he had many other genres, had written many sarabandes, and the “Goldberg Variations”’ aria has the character of a “sublime, sarabande-like theme.”29 Williams describes aspects of the *sarabande tendre*, which he applies to the “Goldberg Variations”’ aria: “leisurely pulse, slow harmonic rhythm, harmonies made from the full triads, various emphases on the second beat of the bar, a singing melody, no upbeat.”30 Is this not directly applicable to the theme of the Op. 109 variations as well? Many scholars concur that the sarabande-like aspects of Op. 109 were inspired by the “Goldberg Variations.”31 (On a side note, the arpeggiated chords in Op. 109, III, mm. 5, 13, and 14 could be seen as a harkening back to the Baroque compositional practice of *style brisé*.32 In Bach’s aria, the left-hand part often consists of slowly broken chords, and in m. 11, the composer includes an arpeggiated chord in the right-hand part as well33) (cf., Examples 4.4 and 4.5).

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32 The first edition of Op. 109 has arpeggiated chords in the reprise, but according to one corrected manuscript, the reprise should not have arpeggiation. Fischer, “Eine neue Quelle,” 29.

In comparing the harmonic motion of the two themes, there are further similarities. The first measure of each theme is based on the tonic, followed by a move to the dominant. The next two measures use a first inversion chord with a dominant function (Bach uses vii\(^6\)/V, Beethoven uses V\(^6\)/V) to tonicize a dominant in the fourth measure. Both composers then proceed to change the dominant to a V\(^{4/2}\) chord, using a passing fourth scale degree eighth note in the bass to move to a I\(^6\) chord in the fifth measure. Moreover, the first eight measures of Beethoven’s theme employ a 2+2+4 phrase pattern,\(^{34}\) the same as the first eight measures of Bach’s aria (cf., Examples 4.6 and 4.7). Finally, both themes are thirty-two measures long.\(^{35}\)

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35 What is probably more than mere coincidence is that the “Goldberg Variations” consist of thirty-two divisions, if one counts the thirty variations and two appearances of the aria.
Example 4.6 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Aria, mm. 1–8.

Example 4.7 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III, Theme, mm. 1–8.
However, there are a few scholars who downplay the connection between the two works. Kinderman thinks there is only a “generalized” relation between the two themes,\(^\text{36}\) while Williams surmises that a connection is “doubtful,” since in Beethoven’s time there were other variations in circulation with sarabande themes, including ones by Handel (albeit, Williams does not specify to which of Handel’s works he is referring).\(^\text{37}\) There does seem to be a Handelian influence on the Op. 109 variations,\(^\text{38}\) with no less an authority than Czerny claiming that “the whole movement is in the style of Handel and Seb. Bach.”\(^\text{39}\) In Zenck’s opinion, Op. 109 is related to Handel’s Suite in E Major, HWV 430 (especially the fourth movement, a set of five variations on the tune “The Harmonious Blacksmith”), and the Sarabande from the E-minor Suite, HWV 438.\(^\text{40}\) From my point of view, this Handelian effect does not detract from the influence of the “Goldberg Variations” on Op. 109, but rather it enriches it; Handel’s influence does not preclude also that of Bach.

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\(^{36}\) Kinderman, “Bachian Affinities,” 88–89. He also thinks the theme may have ties to “Archduke” Trio in Bb Major, Op. 97 (1811).


Comparison of Op. 109 to the “Goldberg Variations”: Variations

Beethoven was “uniquely strict” in composing Op. 109, since all the variations are in the principal key of the theme and have the same proportions,\(^{41}\) much as Bach laid out the “Goldberg Variations.” Additionally, Bach picked genres without anacruses (sarabande, minuet, polonaise, gavotte, gigue) to use as some of the “Goldberg Variations,”\(^{42}\) and Beethoven similarly avoids upbeats in most of his Op. 109 variations. However, “unlike the Goldberg variations…each variation contain[s] a subtle transition to the next.”\(^{43}\) Another difference is that Beethoven includes varied reprises, meaning repetitions that are themselves variations (Vars. 2, 3, 5, and 6),\(^{44}\) whereas Bach’s repeats are identical on the page (yet Baroque keyboardists would have undoubtedly improvised ornaments to vary the repeats).

The overall layout of both sets of variations gradually builds to a brilliant climax using rhythmic diminution before the return of theme, which is the eventual goal of both the “Goldberg Variations” and Op. 109 (“Goldberg Variations” Vars. 29 and 30 are character variations, so they do not fit into the overall pattern of rhythmic diminution found in the second part of the set).\(^{45}\) Beethoven’s sixth variation, a double variation by continuous development,\(^{46}\) has a special role to play as it encapsulates the return of the

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\(^{41}\) Marston, “‘The Sense of an Ending,’” 91.


\(^{46}\) Tovey, *Beethoven’s Pianoforte Sonatas*, 254.
theme not once, but twice. The first return of the theme is transformed by “rhythmic acceleration,” before the second verbatim return of the theme, the “real” return in a sense. In addition, a fugal section appears in a position preceding the return of the theme, meaning that in the “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 30, the Quodlibet, is heard immediately before the return of the theme, whereas in Op. 109, Variation 5, a fughetta, is heard before the last variation.

OP. 109: VARIATION 1

The first variation of Op. 109 hearkens back to certain aspects of the “Goldberg Variations” theme, as the trills, turns, and appoggiaturas of Bach’s work are transformed by Beethoven into nineteenth-century ornaments fitting the piano’s resonance and almost adumbrating the ornamental style of Chopin. At times, the mostly stepwise motion of Bach’s ornaments becomes leaps of an octave or more in Beethoven’s melody. Leaps of this distance, while unidiomatic to the harpsichord, are suited to the piano, which can capture their resonance with the damper pedal, showing how Beethoven takes Bach’s ideas and employs them to capture the potential of his instrument. Note also that the descending stepwise motion in Beethoven’s melody hearkens back to the “Goldberg Variations” Aria (cf., Examples 4.8 and 4.9).

Example 4.8 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III, Var. 1, mm. 5–6.

Example 4.9 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Aria, mm. 1–8.
Certain affinities can also be detected between Beethoven’s Var. 1 and Bach’s Var. 13, in the shape of melodic turns and a descending two-note pattern interrupted by pauses (cf., Examples 4.10, 4.11, 4.12, and 4.13).

Example 4.10 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 13, mm. 1–2.

Example 4.11 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III, Var. 1, mm. 1–4.


Example 4.13 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III, Var. 1, mm. 16–18.
OP. 109: VARIATION 2

Beethoven’s Variation 2 melds aspects of Bach’s Vars. 14 and 29. These variations use sets of two or three notes alternated between the hands to create a monophonic melody which defines the harmony as well. This technique is one that Bach mastered in many works, such as his solo suites for cello. So it is only fitting that Beethoven, in Op. 109, Var. 2, pays tribute to Bach’s use of this style in his Var. 29\(^{48}\) (cf., Examples 4.14, 4.15, and 4.16).


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Alternating chords between hands a semitone apart appear in Op. 109, Var. 2 and in “Goldberg Variations” Var. 29 (cf., Examples 4.17 and 4.18).

Example 4.16 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 29, mm. 1–8.

A more tenuous connection might be found between the trills in Beethoven’s Var. 2 and Bach’s Var. 14 (cf., Examples 4.19 and 4.20).


Example 4.19 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III, Var. 2, mm. 9–12.
Op. 109: VARIATION 3

Op. 109’s third variation could be considered an “academic exercise” in the technique known as “double counterpoint,” or “invertible counterpoint.” According to Zenck, the vocal exchange and rhythmic diminution of subject are similar to that found in Handel’s Suite in E Major, HWV 430. I believe that thematically this variation is more closely related to Handel’s suite than to the “Goldberg Variations,” yet it contains some similar elements to the “Goldberg Variations.” Beethoven’s Var. 3 may have been inspired by Bach’s “bravura” Var. 1 in its use of invertible counterpoint, as well as Bach’s Var. 27 (cf., Examples 4.21 4.22, and 4.22). Other Bach variations which include modified invertible counterpoint are Vars. 14, 20, and 30 (the Quodlibet), suggesting that Beethoven may have observed this technique in the “Goldberg Variations” and may have wished to prove his facility in the same technique.

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50 Tovey, *Beethoven’s Pianoforte Sonatas*, 253.

Example 4.21 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 27, mm. 1–3 and 17–19.

OP. 109: VARIATION 4

Beethoven’s fourth variation is a “circular canonic variation” similar to Bach’s Var. 3, both in a pastoral sounding compound meter (Beethoven uses 9/8, Bach 12/8). Bach’s variation is a canon at the unison, the upper voices intertwining, alternating between sets of sixteenth notes, dotted quarter notes, and groupings of three eighth notes. Meanwhile, the bass line supports the upper voices by a steady stream of eighth and sixteenth notes. Beethoven does not compose a strict canon, but “free imitative polyphony” (at times expanding to four voices but mostly limiting himself to three as Bach does), making his voices intertwine and cross multiple times, in the manner of Bach’s canon. The part of Bach’s work most similar to Beethoven’s can be found in mm. 13–14, where Beethoven employs a motivic fragment of a repeated ascending scalar third found in all voices (cf., Examples 4.23, 4.24, and 4.25).


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55 Tovey, Beethoven’s Pianoforte Sonatas, 253.

Near the end of both of their variations (Beethoven’s Var. 4, and Bach’s Var. 3), each composer inserts descending scalar thirds as inversions of the ascending scalar thirds (cf., Examples 4.26 and 4.27).
Example 4.26 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 3, mm. 15–16.

Example 4.27 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III, Var. 4, m. 17.

Yet another connection appears in the contrary-motion scale patterns in Bach’s Var. 23 and Beethoven’s Var. 4 (cf., Examples 4.28 and 4.29).

Example 4.28 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 23, mm. 21–23.

Example 4.29 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III, Var. 4, mm. 16–17.
OP. 109: VARIATION 5

The fifth variation of Op. 109, a “Bachian fugato,”\textsuperscript{57} has ties to several of the “Goldberg Variations.” Kinderman perceives that “the fugal \textit{Alla breve} variation 5 shows a marked similarity with rhythmic variation 22 of the Goldberg Variations, especially at the beginning of the variation.”\textsuperscript{58} In Zenck’s assessment, both “Goldberg Variations” Var. 22 and Beethoven’s fifth variation have a stretto layering of the subject in fugato style.\textsuperscript{59} Note how both variations feature half notes tied across the bar line to quarter notes, followed by two eighth notes, and then two quarter notes (cf., Examples 4.30, 4.31, and 4.32).

\textsuperscript{57} Schiff, “Lecture Recital.” See also Zenck, \textit{Bach-Rezeption}, 231.

\textsuperscript{58} “die fugierte Alla-breve-Variation 5 zeigt eine ausgeprägte rhythmische Ähnlichkeit mit Variation 22 der Goldberg-Variationen auf, besonders zu Beginn der Variation.” Kinderman, “Rückblick,” 136–37.

\textsuperscript{59} Zenck, \textit{Bach-Rezeption}, 228–29.
Example 4.30 Opening Rhythms of J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 22 and Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III, Var. 5.\textsuperscript{60}

Bach
\begin{music}
\begin{ staffs }
  \addmeasure{1}{1}&&&\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr\Cr## 60 Ibid.
Another variation that is somewhat comparable is Bach’s Var. 18, which features similar rhythms and suspensions (see Example 4.33).

Example 4.33 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 18, mm. 1–8.
Later in Op. 109, Var. 5, a running eighth-note pattern in the bass could be considered “superficially reminiscent of the ‘Goldberg Variations’ Var. 10”\textsuperscript{61} (cf., Examples 4.34 and 4.35).


Example 4.35 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III, Var. 5, mm. 9–12.

An additional similarity between the “Goldberg Variations” and Op. 109 is the scales of parallel thirds and sixths found in the latter half of Bach’s Var. 23. Indeed, Williams rightly terms them “prophetic of later music”\textsuperscript{62} (cf., Examples 4.36, 4.37, and 4.38).


\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example4_36}
\end{figure}

Example 4.37 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 23, mm. 31–32.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example4_37}
\end{figure}

Example 4.38 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III, Var. 5, mm. 23–24.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example4_38}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{62} Williams, \textit{The Goldberg Variations}, 79.
The similarities between the trills in Bach’s Var. 28 and Beethoven’s Var. 6, and other late works of Beethoven, such as Op. 111, have been commented on by scholars and performers alike. Mellers observes, “Bach’s virtuosic keyboard techniques, especially in the use of trills, seem to be echoed in the exploratory pianism of the opus 109 variations.” (Along with Op. 109, III, Var. 3, this is another variation in which Beethoven owes not only a debt to Bach but also to Handel, but here Bach’s influence is even more pronounced.) Beethoven imitates Bach’s different permutations of the trill, such as placing the melody above or below the trill, or moving it up to a high treble register (cf., Examples 4.39, 4.40, 4.41, 4.42, 4.43, and 4.44).


Example 4.40 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III, Var. 6, mm. 6–8.


Example 4.42 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III, Var. 6, mm. 9–12.

One other of Bach’s variations that somewhat resembles Beethoven’s Var. 6 is Var. 26, because it displays a slow-moving melody decorated by rapid filigree-like figurations (see Example 4.45).


Summary of Similarities

One of these affinities, or even several, would not be grounds to conclude that Beethoven had been influenced by Bach’s “Goldberg Variations” in composing his Op. 109 variations. However, when one considers the number of commonalities between the two works, one can safely conclude that this was not mere coincidence, but Beethoven actively seeking to emulate Bach’s great work.

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Chapter Five

Comparison of the Op. 109 Sketches to the “Goldberg Variations”

Beethoven’s Sketch Process

The purpose of this chapter is to provide additional evidence that Beethoven was influenced by the “Goldberg Variations” when he composed the Op. 109 Variations. To the best of my knowledge, the comparisons made in this chapter between the Op. 109 sketches and the “Goldberg Variations” have not been discussed before and provide a fresh perspective on the topic. My analysis falls under the general heading of “sketch studies.” Beethoven scholars have debated the value of sketch studies and whether they fall best under the heading of biography or analysis, yet I concur with William Drabkin that sketch studies can have value in supporting analytical claims based on the completed score of a work. My analysis falls under the category of “suggestive” as described by Philip Gossett: “Sketches provide evidence for compositional intent with respect to relationships which, while present, we may have overlooked or undervalued.”

Since this study is not primarily a sketch study, I will provide only a brief overview of Beethoven’s sketch process as a background to my analysis. According to Barry Cooper, Beethoven would normally compose in the following manner:

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Often the genre of a new work would be determined by some commission he received from a patron or publisher. On other occasions he chose a particular genre of his own volition. Once the genre was chosen, a few brief ideas would be jotted down, fixing the key and something of the character of the work. The key signature normally appeared with the initial sketch, since this helped to define the work, but it was usually omitted from subsequent sketches once the key was established firmly in his mind. These preliminary sketches are normally referred to as concept sketches, although there is no precise definition of this term and it sometimes embraces any short new idea….Once the initial concepts were down on paper, Beethoven turned his attention to the form of the work or movement. If the movement was to have a regular form such as sonata form, there is generally no indication in the early stages, except perhaps for a word such as “Rondo” or “Minuet.” If he was planning some innovative form, however, as in the finale of the *Eroica*, he usually sketched a kind of synopsis of either the movement or the work (or sometimes a group of movements) at an early stage.\footnote{Barry Cooper, “The Compositional Act: Sketches and Autographs,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Beethoven*, ed. Glenn Stanley (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 37.}

Alan Tyson gives some more details concerning Beethoven’s compositional procedures:

Beethoven carried on working away in his sketchbook until he came to a point at which he felt he was ready and able to write out a formal score. This was the score that we call the autograph….Once he had committed himself to writing out the autograph he seems to have started at the beginning and carried on to the end. In general we probably underrate the amount of composing that Beethoven did within the autograph scores….Again and again when we examine the relation between the sketches for one of Beethoven’s compositions and the autograph of that work we wing the same thing: that Beethoven was prepared to cover a great many sheets of music paper with sketches, but that once he had started to write out the autograph he was determined to bring the work to fruition upon those very pages.\footnote{Alan Tyson, “Stages in the Composition of Beethoven’s Piano Trio, Op. 70, no. 1,” *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 97 (1970–71): 1–19.}

From these descriptions, we can see that the sketches were integral to Beethoven’s compositional process.

Schindler claimed of the majority of the late piano sonatas, “While composing music for the pianoforte, the master [Beethoven] would often go to the instrument and try
certain passages, especially those that might present special difficulties in performance.”\(^6\) Beethoven, in describing his typical compositional process, claimed he would “jot down certain ideas as I used to do, and when I have completed the whole in my head, everything is written down, but only once.”\(^7\) This is not to say that he never did preliminary sketches or continuity sketches, but the complete draft, also known as the holograph or autograph score, was normally only written down only once.\(^8\) Over his lifetime he generated “thousands of pages of sketches and drafts,”\(^9\) filled with ideas that he later either honed into finished compositions or discarded.

The Op. 109 Sketches

The two primary sketch sources for Op. 109 are known as Artaria 195 and the “Wittgenstein” sketchbook.\(^10\) In addition, Artaria 197 has a sketch for the sixth variation of Op. 109.\(^11\) In his book on the Op. 109 sonata, Marston offers the following details about the third movement sketches:

Sketches for the third movement theme occur on p. 36 [of Artaria 195] and the bottom three staves of p. 37, below early work on the second movement. The final sketch for the theme occurs on p. 53, interrupting the main sketching for the variations, which begins at the bottom of p. 50 and continues to p. 73. Further isolated variation sketches occur on pp. 36, 75, and 78….Two further manuscripts


contain sketches for the third-movement variations: Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Artaria 197 (SV 12), p. 1 contains a sketch for the last variation, and detailed drafts of variations 2 and 3 are to be found in Vienna, Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, A 47 (SV 277). In addition, the autograph of the third movement contains numerous revisions and corrections, particularly for variations 3 and 4.\(^{12}\)

Other sketches for the Op. 109 variations may yet exist, since “a pocket sketchbook for the last two movements of Opus 109, used during the summer months, has presumably been lost.”\(^ {13}\) Perhaps these sketches would provide us with more evidence that Op. 109 and the “Goldberg Variations” are related, but this is speculation. Fortunately for this analysis, the variation movement of Op. 109 is still “the most extensively documented movement in Artaria 195.”\(^ {14}\)

Before examining individual sketches, I will summarize the scholarship on Beethoven’s procedures in sketching out variations. According to Kinderman, “In composing a set of variations, Beethoven would often devise a considerable number of ideas for variations that could be further revised, discarded, transformed, combined, or tentatively grouped together into larger continuities.”\(^ {15}\) Elsewhere, Kinderman writes of Op. 109, “Many sketched variations were not used, and some early ideas can be found

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\(^{13}\) Johnson, Tyson, Winter, \textit{Beethoven Sketchbooks}, 374.


\(^{15}\) Kinderman, \textit{Artaria 195}, 82.
combined again in later completed variations.”\textsuperscript{16} William Meredith describes of the variation sketch process as follows:

Generally the process seems to have followed three steps. First Beethoven worked on the theme, if it was one that was being newly composed.\textemdash{}Very few sketches have survived for the Gesang of Opus 109.\textemdash{}The second stage proceeds in a particularly winsome and creative way. The method is simple. Beethoven would often draw all the necessary barlines of the variation before beginning sketching. All the sketches have incipits, but they are often blank till a decisive moment… Once the governing idea of the variation had been entered in the incipit, shorthand sufficed.\textemdash{}After he felt that enough material had been essayed for a set, he would begin to organize the material. There were at least three ways to proceed in this third stage. The easiest was simply to go through the sketches and number certain ones as a set. On occasion more than sequence of numbers is found, indicating later passes through the material. The proportion of variations used in the set to those rejected varies considerably from one work to another. For Opus 109… the number of ideas for variations not used far exceeds the number of ideas for variations he did select. A second method was to compile a sort of continuity draft of incipits. A third option was to recopy and revise the sketches considered most useful in another location.\textemdash{}The three approaches to organization were not mutually exclusive.\textsuperscript{17}

In this study, I will be analyzing small-scale sketches, which Lewis Lockwood defines as sketches “either for works in progress or those to be worked out in the future, for example, motifs, fragments, jottings, ‘concept sketches,’ and similar entries.”\textsuperscript{18}


\textsuperscript{17} William Rhea Meredith, “The Sources for Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in E Major, Opus 109” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1958), 378–79.

Concerning these sketches, “many are mostly fragmentary sketches of possible variations.”

Of the various authors who have studied the Op. 109 sketches in depth (Nicholas Marston, William Meredith, and William Kinderman), each has a slightly different approach to aspects such as transcribing of Beethoven’s original sketches, organizing the sketches into categories, and even in determining which sketches actually belong to Op. 109. Because of the brevity of this discussion, I will avoid going into detail about the differences. One aspect of Meredith’s approach is very helpful—his classification of the variation sketches into five categories:

1. Eighteen sketches for variations that were not used in the final set and that are shorter than eight measures
2. Seventeen sketches for variations not used in the final set that are longer than eight measures
3. Eight sketches for variations used in the final set (both short and long)
4. Nine sketches that were numbered as a set in Beethoven’s first organization of the material
5. Eight incipits for variations found in the continuity draft

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23 Meredith, “The Sources for Beethoven’s Piano Sonata,” 373. A continuity draft was a compositional stage in between individual sketches and an autograph copy, allowing Beethoven to see larger scale structure, but not locking him into the final details. According to Marston, Beethoven’s
Meredith goes on to give some more description concerning these classifications:

Only two of the eight incipits in group 5 and two of the sketches in group 4 are for variations included in the final set (two of the sketches in group 4 are included in group 3); forty-five of the fifty variation ideas (90%) are for variations not incorporated in the final set. Moreover, only four of the eight sketches for variations included in the final set are substantive. The group of sketches numbered as a set and the continuity draft for the movement are both quite distant from the final version.24

Thus, what this means for my analysis is that there are many variation sketches to choose from in analyzing the connections between the Goldberg’s and Op. 109—sketches that may offer new perspectives since they do not necessarily resemble the final variations.

Relation of the Op. 109 Sketches to the “Goldberg Variations”

My study is not meant to be exhaustive, rather, its purpose is to support to my primary thesis that Beethoven was influenced by the “Goldberg Variations” in composing the Op. 109 sonata. I will mostly be focusing on variation sketches that are dissimilar to the completed variations, since I have already analyzed the variations in Chapter Four. Instead, I will demonstrate that Beethoven probably had the “Goldberg Variations” in mind when composing the variation movement, even as he sketched variations that he eventually rejected. Marston writes, “What stands out particularly is the fact that during the most sustained period of activity, that represented by the sketching up to an including page 69, Beethoven was concerned less with writing variations than with establishing a coherent variation set; the character and details of individual members of the set seem to

24 Meredith, “The Sources for Beethoven’s Piano Sonata,” 373.
have been less important to him than the shape of the whole.” In my analysis, I will follow Marston, whom Weber-Bockholdt describes as “try[ing] to understand the sketches as potential answers that are almost equal footing with the shape of the finished work,” rather than treating them as wrong answers, in a sense.

To most musicians, Beethoven’s sketches appear nearly impossible to decipher. Kinderman explains the reason in this manner:

Since Beethoven was writing for himself alone, he could afford to be highly pragmatic and idiosyncratic. Much is assumed in the sketches. In addition to using a variety of abbreviations...he often omits whatever could be taken for granted or committed to memory as he wrote, sometimes quite rapidly, no doubt. Beethoven often leaves out clefs, meters, and key signatures, and sometimes rests, ties, accidentals, and ledger lines. Once a pattern is established, brace lines, dots, and other commonplaces of the musical language disappear for extended passages. There are often serious difficulties in even reading the right notes, since their placement can be ambiguous and imprecise. Surely Beethoven knew which notes he meant, but sometimes we can only guess.

Because of the sketches’ indecipherability in manuscript form, I have chosen to rely on Marston’s transcriptions of the Op. 109 variation sketches for my comparison with the “Goldberg Variations.”


In comparing the “Goldberg Variations” aria and Var. 1 to the sketch Artaria 195, p. 57, st. 1/2, all three consist of running sixteenth notes in the right hand supported by an eighth-note accompaniment (cf., Examples 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3).

Example 5.1 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Aria, mm. 28–30.

Example 5.2 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 1, mm. 9–12.

Example 5.3 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III Sketches: Artaria 195, p. 57, st. 1/2.²⁸

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²⁸ Sketch transcription by Nicholas Marston. Marston, Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in E, 173. Used with permission.
If we accept the premise that at times in these variations Beethoven was composing in a neo-Baroque style, one would not be surprise to find this in his sketches as well. Note how he integrates common Baroque textures and rhythms in the sketches, as in the following examples based on a pastoral-sounding compound meter (cf., Examples 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6).

Example 5.4 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 7, mm. 1–4.

Example 5.5 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 24, mm. 1–3.

Example 5.6 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III Sketches: Artaria 195, p. 57, st. 6/7.29

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29 Ibid. Used with permission.
In another sketch Beethoven emphasizes the same rhythmic pattern in the treble staff as the first variation of Bach’s “Goldberg Variations” (cf., Examples 5.7 and 5.8).

Example 5.7 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 1, mm. 5–7.

Example 5.8 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III Sketches: Artaria 195, p. 50, st. 16.\(^{30}\)

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 186. Used with permission.
The following sketch by Beethoven displays similar rhythms and texture to Bach’s twentieth variation, with triplet sixteenths in the right hand accompanied by a steady eighth-note pattern (cf., Examples 5.9 and 5.10).

Example 5.9 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 20, m. 13.

Example 5.10 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III Sketches: Artaria 195, p. 52, st. 4/5.31

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31 Ibid. Used with permission.
Beethoven emphasized trills in one of his sketches similar to Var. 14 and Var. 23 of the “Goldberg Variations” (cf., Examples 5.11 and 5.12).


Example 5.12 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III Sketches, Artaria 195, p. 53, st. 1/2.\footnote{Ibid., 187. Used with permission.}
In the next sketch, Beethoven employed a slower-moving right hand part over a lively triplet bass pattern similar to Bach’s Vars. 2 and 20 (cf., Examples 5.13, 5.14, and 5.15).

Example 5.13 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 11, mm. 13–16.


33 Ibid., 194. Used with permission.
Dotted rhythms and rapidly descending thirty-second notes appear in Beethoven’s next sketch, which might have been inspired by Bach’s Var. 16 (cf., Examples 5.16 and 5.17).

Example 5.16 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 16, mm. 8–11.

Example 5.17 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III Sketches: Artaria 195, p. 66, st. 4/5.\(^{34}\)

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\(^{34}\) Ibid. Used with permission.
This Beethoven sketch displays sixteenth-note patterns of ascending or descending sixths in the treble, similar to Var. 17 of the “Goldberg Variations” (cf., Examples 5.18 and 5.19).

Example 5.18 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 17, mm. 4–6.

Example 5.19 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III Sketches: Artaria 195, p. 68, st. 4/5 and 7/8.\footnote{Ibid., 196. Used with permission.}
In yet another sketch, Beethoven utilized thirty-second note descending scalar patterns as Bach had in his thirteenth variation (cf., Examples 5.20 and 5.21).


Example 5.21 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III Sketches: Artaria 195, p. 68, st. 10/11.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid. Used with permission.
Swiftly ascending scales in parallel tenths appear in one of Beethoven’s sketches similar to Bach’s Var. 23 (cf., Examples 5.22 and 5.23).

Example 5.22 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 23, mm. 3–8.

Example 5.23 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III Sketches: Artaria 195, p. 69, st. 6/7.37

The next Beethoven sketch excerpt draws upon two different elements from the “Goldberg Variations”—a descending two note “sigh” pattern found in Bach’s Var. 15 and a hocket-like texture of notes alternating between two hands, as found in Bach’s Var. 20 (cf., Examples 5.24, 5.25, and 5.26).

37 Ibid., 201. Used with permission.
Example 5.24 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 15, mm. 1 and 17.

Example 5.25 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 20, mm. 1–3.

Example 5.26 Ludwig van Beethoven, Op. 109, III Sketches: Artaria 195, p. 68–69, st. 15/16.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 204. Used with permission.
Finally, in this sketch, Beethoven inserted an ascending sixteenth-note pattern in tenths and thirds as Bach had done in Var. 17 (cf., Examples 5.27 and 5.28).

Example 5.27 J. S. Bach, “Goldberg Variations,” Var. 17, mm. 1–3.


These parallels between the sketches for Op. 109 and the “Goldberg Variations,” when considered with the published Op. 109 variation movement and Bach’s work, make an even stronger case for Beethoven having been influenced by Bach when he was composing Op. 109. I must reiterate that one correlation, or even several, would not be enough proof for my thesis, much as “one swallow does not a summer make,”40 but when examined together, the similarities between the two works indeed point to Beethoven’s emulation of Bach’s work. Beethoven’s weaving of elements of the “Goldberg Variations” into Op. 109 created an intensely satisfying work that is a masterpiece in its own right.

39 Ibid., 223. Used with permission.
40 Aristotle (384 BC–322 BC).
Chapter Six

Epilogue

Beethoven captured the imagination of his successors as few composers have, and the years after his death were marked by his compositional influence on composers such as Schubert, Liszt, R. Schumann, Brahms, and Mahler. A corresponding interest in Beethoven occurred among composers and authors such as Carl Czerny, Anton Schindler, Alexander Wheelock Thayer, and Gustav Nottebohm, who began the long tradition of Beethoven scholarship.¹ The sheer amount of research in existence is daunting, and the young scholar at times is hard pressed to find an area of discussion that has not already been repeatedly examined.

The influence of J. S. Bach’s compositional legacy on Beethoven’s music has been canvassed many times, and although my study summarizes some of the highlights of this research, it settles within a mostly unexplored niche of Beethoven/Bach studies, namely the connections between Beethoven’s Op. 109 Variations and Bach’s “Goldberg Variations.” By building upon Zenck’s work in this area,² a richer hue is added to the reader’s impression of both works.

My fifth chapter discussion of Beethoven’s sketches for Op. 109 fills a different role than that of the previous chapters. Beethoven sketch studies began with Thayer’s and


Nottebohm’s research published in the 1860s and 1870s and were decades later a subject of interest to scholars such as Heinrich Schenker (1868–1935) and his disciples,3 but they did not really come into full flower until the latter half of the twentieth century, when the sketches were the subject of much inquiry and debate.4 But now, interest in the sketches appears to be gradually tapering off, meaning that my work in this area is not forward-looking, but rather a retrospective glance at a heritage of scholarly inquiry into the compositional process of one of Western history’s greatest composers.

In writing this document, my hope is to have addressed a lacuna in Beethoven scholarship, specifically within the topic of Beethoven’s knowledge of Bach and the


inspiration for the Op. 109 variation movement. Thus, may a modest new leaf of knowledge sprout from the imposing trunk and deep roots of Beethoven scholarship.


