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López-Íñiguez, G. (2019). **Musings on notations for cello in Beethoven's Kafka Miscellany**. *The Beethoven Journal*, 34(1), 22-27.

## Musings on Notations for Cello in Beethoven's Kafka Miscellany

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No composer was more assiduous than Beethoven during the Classical period in keeping records of his creative compositional process through sketches and drafts—something he did in a particularly methodical manner after the turn of the nineteenth century. Among his approximately 5,000 sketch leaves,<sup>1</sup> we find both known and unknown music. These leaves are spread among the *Grasnick*, the *Eroica*, and the *Wielhorski* sketchbooks, and the *Fischhof* and *Kafka* miscellanies, to mention a few.<sup>2</sup> In these materials, which were in Beethoven's possession until his death, we find a few complete works and notational jottings, as well as many fragments and incomplete passages for unfinished works. In the case of the unfinished sketches and fragments, we cannot be certain whether Beethoven ever intended to finish them or whether they were purposely left incomplete.

Of particular interest is the Kafka Miscellany (*Kafka-Skizzenbuch*, London Add. MS 29801, folios 39–162), which was acquired by the Artaria publishing house at the famous auction in Vienna in 1827,<sup>3</sup> just a few weeks after Beethoven's death. This is the largest and most important collection of the composer's early working materials, containing sketches dating from around 1786 to 1799.<sup>4</sup> This bundle of 124 leaves of different origins includes single gathered sheets and has made musicologists wonder for a long time about the chronology of the material included—something that is much simpler to determine in the properly bound sketchbooks used by Beethoven from 1798 onwards.<sup>5</sup>

It was the late Joseph Kerman who had the privilege and responsibility of acting as editor for the two volumes, including the facsimile of the manuscript (Add MS 29801) and its transcription and commentary,<sup>6</sup> as part of the Beethoven bicentenary

celebrations of 1970, undertaken by the trustees of the British Museum in cooperation with the Royal Musical Association.<sup>7</sup> Both the edition itself and several favorable reviews of the work he did for the Kafka Miscellany suggest that the effort required was enormous and carried out with high quality scholarship.<sup>8</sup> Kerman himself noted that his work, in cooperation with two assistants, was just a start to disentangling what was inside this particular manuscript, and he encouraged “further study of the sketches by musicians and scholars of varying temperaments and skills, with varying interests in mind.”<sup>9</sup>

Recently, I worked to revise the facsimile and transcription of the Kafka Miscellany at the British Library in London, where I was studying for performance purposes the sketch materials related to the piano and cello variations on Mozart’s “Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen,” Opus 66, as well as those related to the early piano and cello sonatas, Opus 5, no. 1 in F major and no. 2 in G minor.<sup>10</sup> These pieces are of particular interest because Beethoven’s compositions for piano and cello represent milestones in the cello literature. Neither Mozart nor Haydn had composed a sonata or sets of variations for that particular combination of instruments, even though during the eighteenth century, the cello had gradually come to be regarded as a solo instrument as well as an accompanying one. Beethoven’s Sonatas Opus 5 date from 1796 and represent some of the earliest works in this genre for this combination of instruments. They have characteristics that recall the cello’s past as a *basso continuo* instrument, but also look to its future—with idiomatic singing passages and new ways of expression that would be captured by cellists such as the Duport brothers, Jean-Pierre and Jean-Louis, Bernhard Romberg, or Anton Kraft. These sonatas were conceived during a tour that took Beethoven through Prague, Dresden, and Leipzig to Berlin and Potsdam. The astonishing cultural environment around the Prussian court, led by King Frederick William II and represented by his musicians, inspired Beethoven to write Opus 5, which he dedicated to the king (who thanked him with a gold snuffbox “suitable for presentation to ambassadors”).<sup>11</sup> Beethoven himself premiered this music alongside Jean-Pierre Duport in Berlin (though some sources explain that it might have been with the other brother, Jean-Louis).<sup>12</sup> The Opus 66 variations, perhaps commissioned by King Frederick William II, were conceived in Vienna right after the Opus 5 sonatas, while Beethoven enjoyed participating in the private cultural events in the residences of the nobility, being surrounded by not only patrons, nobles, and all sort of distinguished guests, but also by some of the greatest artists and thinkers of the time.

As a cellist who has performed Beethoven's entire *oeuvre* for piano and cello on period instruments, I was particularly struck by a few measures in folio 158<sup>v</sup> of the Kafka Miscellany where Kerman had concluded that a fragment found there was meant for piano and cello, transcribing it under the title "Variations on Mozart's 'Là ci darem la mano' for Violoncello and Piano (?)" (including the question mark as part of his title) on page 182 of the transcription volume of this particular edition. This was a truly exciting moment for me because, as a musician and Beethoven enthusiast, I could not imagine anything better than the possibility of an unknown piece for piano and cello by Beethoven being lost or hidden somewhere.



Figure 1a. Facsimile of page 158<sup>v</sup> of the autograph fragment (Add MS 29801) from Beethoven (reproduced courtesy of the British Museum Trustees)



Figure 1b. Transcription of the autograph fragment (F.308.n, page 182) by Joseph Kerman (reproduced courtesy of the British Museum Trustees)

This particular fragment is part of the separate leaves that Beethoven had in his possession before starting to use bound sketchbooks after 1798. According to Kerman, as part of Beethoven's Mozartean *raptus*<sup>13</sup> in his early years in Vienna, the fragment is based on the duet by Mozart's theme from Don Giovanni's "Là ci darem la mano."<sup>14</sup> Beethoven used the same theme in 1796, when composing the set of Variations in C major, WoO 28, for two oboes and English horn, published after his death and composed at the same time as the Grand Trio, Opus 87, for the same group of

instruments. This piece is considered one of the best works for chamber wind ensemble written by the composer, and was premiered at the end of 1797, though under the title of *Terzetto* and originally conceived by Beethoven as “Da ci la mano.”<sup>15</sup> The first performance was given by oboists Czerwenka, Reuter, and Teimer, at the Widows and Orphans Trust Fund concert in the National Court Theatre of Vienna.<sup>16</sup>

There are several issues to take into account when assigning these few measures in the Kafka Miscellany as a composition for piano and cello. One factor is the year or period in which these few measures were written down by the composer. For this, aspects such as the watermark, type of paper, and type of ink are crucial. Johnson, Tyson, and Winter concluded that the fragment on page 158<sup>v</sup> in the Kafka Miscellany were composed on sixteen-stave paper acquired in Vienna from northern Italian mills, which was used by Beethoven from 1795-99.<sup>17</sup> Thus the cello fragment dates from around the same time as Beethoven’s other groundbreaking works for cello and piano.

In the expanded Kinsky/Beethoven catalogue—which represents the most up-to-date knowledge in terms of identifying Beethoven’s works—these fragments on folio 158<sup>v</sup> are only mentioned in passing, under the heading of a seemingly more complete (but still unfinished) set of variations in A major (Unv 14) found in the *Fischhof* sketchbook in Berlin.<sup>18</sup> This fragment seems to be quite inconclusive but indicates it is for piano solo. Also, the entry in the catalogue notes that despite sharing the same key, meter, and tempo as the variations in the Kafka Miscellany, they are based on different themes. I have not come across anything else in recent scholarship that specifically mentions this piece, but if such a reference exists, it is likely to be a brief note in an article.

The measures in the Kafka fragment do not clearly specify for which instruments these fragments were meant, but it is unlikely that Beethoven (or anybody else at the time) would have conceived these fragments for any other bass instrument than the cello, such as the trombone or the bassoon. For instance, repertoire of similar standard for bassoon was composed later during the nineteenth century when it developed much more technically as an instrument (for instance, the Heckel and Buffet systems would have made possible to play these fragments fluently, but they both are of later origin). These measures were clearly not possible for trombone players at the time either due to the same reasons, and even with a modern trombone they would pose high technical demands for the performer.

In my experience as a cellist, these few measures clearly compare to Beethoven's Opus 5 and the Variations Opus 66. Compared with the few measures of Opus 66 in the same miscellany, the material is rather similar because: 1) there are only a fragments for both the piano and the cello; 2) these measures include certain rhythms and motives that fit the fingering and position change possibilities of the cello very easily (today and at the time), making this music clearly idiomatic; 3) the level of difficulty or virtuosity is also very similar to that found in all Beethoven's early compositions for the cello.

We might as well wonder if these were unfulfilled ideas later considered as memoranda for developing a bigger work, such as the WoO 28 version for two oboes and English horn, or whether they were truly intended as complete sets of variations for piano and cello, as many factors mentioned above seem to indicate. Alternatively, are these measures just more of Beethoven's hundreds of random ideas formulated as part of his compositional practice? Maybe a simple pencil-recorded moment of inspiration? Or did he actually compose the complete pieces as variations for piano and cello, but then withheld them purposely (as he frequently did) from a publisher during his lifetime?

Imagining that these fragments were truly meant for piano and cello, and considering the quantity of sketches and notational material by Beethoven that is still missing, we cannot know at the present moment if more leaves exist containing further development of this particular work. Nor can we determine whether there was ever a finished version of these earlier ideas containing the fourth set of variations for this particular partnership of instruments that were for some reason never published. We can only rely on additional research to explore the questions introduced in this article, or dream that perhaps somewhere someone possesses this treasure and may reveal it to the world someday. Or maybe, we should, as Donald Francis Tovey put it, "forget the sketches utterly, as Beethoven himself forgot them."<sup>19</sup> In any case, it is not my intention to adopt a critical, historical, or analytical orientation toward Beethoven's sketches in this particular case, but to raise curiosity among expert musicologists and Beethoven enthusiasts who might be tempted to tackle these few measures and enlighten us all.<sup>20</sup>

And to leave the reader even more curious, we also find in the Kafka Miscellany a sheet including cello scales and exercises with their corresponding fingerings that are clearly not in Beethoven's handwriting. First of all, it is interesting to analyze the value of those scales and exercises in relation to cello technique at the time. For instance, for

the key signatures given, the fingerings in the first two lines are following the common fingering patterns of the late eighteenth century. The scalar patterns in the last five measures of the second line follow eighteenth-century practice by shifting positions at the start of each measure. This same principle could be applied to the performance of Beethoven's early works for the cello, and is also found in the cello treatise by Duport.<sup>21</sup> Today's fingerings, by contrast, more commonly follow the patterns of cello technique and not necessarily the key signature or harmonic progression; the origins of this more modern fingering approach can already be traced in Jean Marie Raoul's *Méthode de violoncelle* (1797).<sup>22</sup>

As for the third line, there is no difference in how modern or period musicians would approach these chords, as there are no other alternatives. Regarding the fourth line in these exercises, three fingering options are given: the lower fingering pattern responds to an earlier tradition of playing scales,<sup>23</sup> whereas the two upper options represent later fingerings (similar to Raoul's), which could be used by modern players with the exception of the last three notes in the upper option which are played nowadays using the pattern 1-3-4 on the first string (A), and 1-2-3 is reserved only for the second string (D).

For the musical exercise in lines five and six, these fingerings are no different from what any cellist in the long nineteenth century or nowadays would use, except in the chromatic pattern at the end, where modern cellists would go for "economy" options to reduce the number of position changes (such as 1-2, 1-2 for the third and fourth measures of the sixth line), whereas here the focus is on the expressive aspects of chromaticism, regardless the technical comfort. But this particular example could also refer to the thinking at the time when chromatic half steps were narrower than diatonic half steps, as this was the transitional time shifting from the Baroque temperaments towards the equal temperament. The last exercise is simply an example of possible options for double stops played with the cello, no fingerings written, and therefore tells us little about contemporary performance practice.



Figure 2. Facsimile of cello scales exercises, not in Beethoven's hand, found in folio 109<sup>r</sup> of the Kafka Miscellany (Add MS 29801) (reproduced courtesy of the British Museum Trustees).

The technique represented in these exercises can be applied to Beethoven's cello works. For instance, in the cello variations WoO 46, we do find that the figures in measure 9 of Variation V are very similar to the exercises where such fingering patterns could be used. Modern cellists would change the position in the middle of the triplets, as shown in the upper fingerings in Example 3. But the cello exercises in Beethoven's hand suggest that, if possible, all three notes within the triplet should be played using one position, changing the position for the next group of three notes (shown in the lower fingerings in Example 2).



Example 2. Beethoven, Variations for Cello and Piano on "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen," Opus 66, m. 13.

Another example is found in Beethoven's Variations, Opus 66, in the theme (measure 13) where modern fingerings would start in fourth position on the D string and shift to first position after the fourth note (between A and G), as shown in the upper

fingering in Example 4. According to the patterns indicated in the Kafka exercises, however, this passage would begin in first position and make use of the open A string, as shown in the lower fingerings in Example 3.

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is in bass clef and the bottom staff is in treble clef. Both staves have a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The top staff has a slur over six notes with fingerings 4, 3, 3, 1, 4, 2 above them. The bottom staff has a slur over six notes with fingerings 2, 1, 1, 0, 4, 2 above them. Both staves have a 'cresc.' marking below the notes. The bottom staff has two additional notes below the main staff, one in the bass clef and one in the treble clef, both with a 'cresc.' marking below them.

*Example 3.* Beethoven, Variations for Cello and Piano on “Bi Männern, welche Liebe fühlen,” WoO 46, Variation V, m. 9.

To return to the Kafka sketch shown in Figure 1, the sixty-fourth notes on the first staff for the cello could also use the fingering patterns in the exercises, employing the same logic. However, in this particular case, the relationship is weaker as period instrumentalists could use different options apart from the suggested patterns in the exercises. In fact, there are several other places where we can apply the same logic behind these patterns in the early cello works by Beethoven, an example being measure 27 of the first movement of the G minor Sonata Opus. 5 No. 2.

The fingerings could help Beethoven picture strategies for when a cello player is obliged to change positions. He also clearly understood how shifts affect the musical expression, because even a well-executed shift is audible, and that aspect was important according to the aesthetics of that time. In any case, as an only source, these cello exercises are too limited to explain the fundamental fingering aesthetics for all Beethoven cello works, as they exemplify only a few of the many possibilities that a cellist could use.

It is also rather interesting to speculate about the possible author (most likely a cellist) who might have given this to the great composer, and what role the exercises had in the compositional process for his cello works. None of the options I came up with seem convincing enough to my understanding. There are a few cellists who could have written down these scales and exercises with fingering patterns for Beethoven, who could be cello virtuosos and composers such as Kraft or Jean-Louis Duport, but

also amateurs who collaborated with Beethoven too such as the Prussian king, Frederick William II, or his cello-playing friend Baron Ignaz von Gleichenstein (1788–1828).

A close study of Duport's treatise for fingering the cello, including twenty-one beautiful exercises, makes clear that these exercises were not given by the cellist-composer according to the technical resources, as he gives recommendations to leave the tradition behind and look towards more "modern" fingering patterns throughout.<sup>24</sup> Checking, in addition, his manuscript of the cello Concerto N. 6,<sup>25</sup> his handwriting seems neater than that found in the exercises, and his key signatures are completely different, especially for the C clef. Also symbols like flats and sharps do not look alike, and the measure numbers are more elaborate than the numbers given for the fingerings on the page in Beethoven's possession.

The page in question could have also been given to Beethoven by Gleichenstein, though he was very young at the time he settled in Vienna around 1800. Still, there is a possibility that he learnt the cello at an early age and gave these fingerings to Beethoven – after all, they are found in a sketch book which includes material from that very time. In the same way, it could have also been offered to Beethoven by Frederick William II, although it is difficult to imagine – in that society – a king writing down fingerings for a composer, despite strong friendship and admiration. In any case, it is hard to imagine that a composer such as Beethoven would have asked for advice from amateurs.

Another possibility could be Anton Kraft, who was Haydn's cellist at the Esterházy court, and for whom Haydn composed his D major Concerto. Beethoven knew Kraft in the 1790s when he gave chamber music performances at Prince Lichnowsky's, and Kraft apparently advised Beethoven on some of the cello writing in the Opus 1 trios.<sup>26</sup> I was unable to find autograph musical material in Kraft's hand to compare these page annotations with. The handwriting in his will,<sup>27</sup> where a few numbers are to be found, bears no resemblance to the page of scales and exercises, though it was signed in 1820 and handwriting can of course change as time passes. Considering that autograph materials by any of the cellists above is scarce or completely missing, Kraft is perhaps the best guess.

Nevertheless, it is clear that Beethoven was always in touch with and appreciated his cello players, including in later years Bernhard Romberg, and there might have been sessions where they worked together and wrote some things down so that Beethoven would know what is possible for the cello and how would it sound.

These fingering patterns give an impression that he wanted to know about the non-keyboard instruments he was composing for, and the possibilities for stylistic expression beyond the range of the instrument.

However, a more crucial aspect that might clarify why Beethoven had these exercises is that he was familiar with violin fingerings as he could play the instrument, and these exercises would have been enough for him to connect with his string playing knowledge and understand the whole logic behind cello fingerings. I therefore speculate that everything found in the cello exercises obviously helped Beethoven conceive what was possible in his early cello works. Therefore, these notations have a special relevance in understanding the cello technique underpinning the Opus 5 sonatas and the three sets of Variations (and of course, even the little sketch found on folio 158v if we assume it is for cello and piano). Any cellist approaching Beethoven seriously should be aware of this beyond studying published treatises of the time.

### **Biographical note**

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This article is framed within an artistic research project by the author, funded by Kone Foundation, Helsinki (2016–2018). I am also grateful to the British Library for kindly allowing the reproduction the images of the Kafka Miscellany.

<sup>1</sup> Estimation by Norbert Gertsch, *Beethoven's "unfinished" (compositions)* in Henle Verlag's blog, published on February 2, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.henle.de/blog/en/2015/02/02/beethoven's-unfinished-compositions/> (accessed July 11, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Kerman, "Sketchbooks in the British Museum" in *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 93 (1966): 77–96. For a detailed list of Beethoven's sketchbooks, see <http://www.bu.edu/beethovencenter/iv-publications-of-sketchbooks-f-facsimile-transcription-p-pocket/> (accessed July 11, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> The miscellany was named for composer Johann Nepomuk Kafka, who purchased it from Artaria then sold it to the British Museum in 1875. See Sieghard Brandenburg, "Die Beethoven-Autographen Johann Kafkas: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Sammelns von Musikhandschriften," in Martin Staehelin, ed., *Divertimento für Hermann J. Abs* (Bonn: Beethoven-Haus, 1981), 89–133. It had been previously surveyed by John South Shedlock, "Beethoven's Sketch Books" in *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 33, no. 592 (1892): 331–334; and by Gustav Nottebohm in *Beethoveniana*

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(Leipzig, J. Rieter-Bidermann, 1872): 37–44, and in *Zweite Beethoveniana* (Leipzig: Eusebius Mandyczewsky, 1887): 14–20, 138–45.

<sup>4</sup> Alan Tyson, “Beethoven’s ‘Kafka Sketchbook’” in *The Musical Times* 111, no. 1534 (1970). See also Barry Cooper, “The Ink in Beethoven’s ‘Kafka’ Sketch Miscellany,” *Music & Letters* 68, no. 4 (1987): 315–332.

<sup>5</sup> Douglas Johnson, Alan Tyson, and Robert Winter, *The Beethoven Sketchbooks: History, Reconstruction, Inventory* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1985).

<sup>6</sup> Ludwig van Beethoven, ed. Joseph Kerman, *Autograph miscellany from circa 1786 to 1799: British Museum Additional Manuscript 29801, ff. 39–162 (The Kafka Sketchbook)* (London: British Museum, 1970), 2 vols.

<sup>7</sup> As noted by Alan Tyson, “Beethoven’s ‘Kafka Sketchbook’” in *The Musical Times* 111, no. 1534 (1970).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 1194–1198. Paul Henry Lang, “Reviewed Work: Ludwig van Beethoven: Autograph Miscellany from circa 1786 to 1799. British Museum Additional Manuscript 29801, ff. 39–162. (The “Kafka Sketchbook”) by Joseph Kerman, Ludwig van Beethoven” in *The Musical Quarterly* 57 no. 2 (1970): 323–329. Richard Kramer, “Reviewed work: Ludwig van Beethoven. Autograph Miscellany from circa 1786–1799. British Museum Additional Manuscript 29801, ff. 39–162 (The “Kafka Sketchbook”) by Joseph Kerman” in *Notes, Second Series* 28 no. 1 (1970): 31–34.

<sup>9</sup> *Autograph Miscellany*, II: xviii.

<sup>10</sup> The sketches for Opus 66 are found on fol. 71r, and the sketches for Opus 5 are found on fols. 83r–v, 119v, and 142r–v.

<sup>11</sup> Franz Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries, *Remembering Beethoven* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1988), 97.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, David Watkin, “Beethoven and the Cello,” in *Performing Beethoven*, ed. Robin Stowell (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 195–204.

<sup>13</sup> In fact, composing works inspired by Mozart was something typical of Beethoven in his earlier compositional period. Thus, Beethoven composed four sets of variations on themes from operas by Mozart: one on “Se vuol ballare” from *La Nozze di Figaro* for piano and violin, another on “Là ci darem la mano” from *Don Giovanni* for two oboes and English horn, and two on “Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen” and “Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen” (the famous Pamina and Papageno duet) from *Die Zauberflöte* for piano and cello.

<sup>14</sup> This particular theme from “the opera of all operas,” Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, has attracted not only Beethoven, but also Chopin and Liszt. See Ecaterina Banciu, “The obsession with a theme: ‘Là ci darem la mano’ by Mozart” in *Musicology Papers* 25 no. 2 (2010): 31–51.

<sup>15</sup> Alexander Wheelock Thayer, Hermann Deiters, Hugo Riemann, *The Life of Ludwig van Beethoven* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3: 59 and 64.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander Wheelock Thayer, *Thayer’s Life of Beethoven*, rev. and ed. Elliot Forbes, 2 vols. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967), 1: 192 and 197.

<sup>17</sup> *The Beethoven Sketchbooks*.

<sup>18</sup> Georg Kinsky, Hans Halm, Kurt Dorfmueller, and others, eds., *Ludwig van Beethoven: Thematisch-bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis* (Munich: Henle, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> Donald Francis Tovey, *Concertos and Choral Works: Selections from Essays in Musical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 4–5.

<sup>20</sup> As described in Joseph Kerman, “Sketch studies” in *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 6, no. 2 (1982): 174–180.

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<sup>21</sup> Jean-Louis Duport, *Essai sur le doigté du violoncelle, et sur la conduit de l'archet* (Paris: Imbault, ca. 1805), Plate 296.

<sup>22</sup> Jean Marie Raoul, *Méthode de violoncelle contenant une nouvelle exposition des principes de cet instrument, ceux de l'étude de la double corde, l'art de conduire l'archet, et des leçons d'une difficulté progressive* (Paris: Pleyel, ca. 1797), Plate 477.

<sup>23</sup> Similar to, for example, those by Michel Corrette, *Méthode, Théorique et Pratique pour Apprendre en peu de temps le Violoncelle dans sa Perfection. Ensemble des Principes de Musique avec des Leçons a I et II, Violoncelles. La Division de la Corde pour placer s'il on veut dans les commencemens, des Lignes transversalles sur le Manche du Violoncelle. Plus une petite Méthode particuliere pour ceux qui jouient de la Viole, et qui veullent joüer du Violoncelle* (Paris: Chez l'auteur, 1741).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, note 27.

<sup>25</sup> This material can be viewed at

[http://ks4.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/d/d0/IMSLP166542-PMLP296785-Duport -  
\\_Fragment\\_from\\_Concerto\\_No6\\_\(vln1\\_vln2\\_vla\\_vc\)\\_parts.pdf](http://ks4.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/d/d0/IMSLP166542-PMLP296785-Duport_-_Fragment_from_Concerto_No6_(vln1_vln2_vla_vc)_parts.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> See Wegeler and Ries, *Remembering Beethoven*, 32.

<sup>27</sup> The final page of Kraft's testament including his signature can be consulted via <http://michaelorenz.blogspot.com/2014/07/anton-krafts-date-of-birth-and-his-wine.html> (accessed July 11, 2019).