

2022

“The Bonn Master-Baker Gottfried Fischer’s Reminiscences of Beethoven’s Youth” [Des Bonner Bäckermeisters Gottfried Fischer Aufzeichnungen über Beethovens Jugend]. Translated into English, with Editorial Commentary and Notes.

Susan Cooper
susan.cooper3@virgin.net

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/beethovenjournal>



Part of the [Musicology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cooper, Susan (2022) "“The Bonn Master-Baker Gottfried Fischer’s Reminiscences of Beethoven’s Youth” [Des Bonner Bäckermeisters Gottfried Fischer Aufzeichnungen über Beethovens Jugend]. Translated into English, with Editorial Commentary and Notes.," *The Beethoven Journal*: Vol. 35 , Article 3.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/beethovenjournal/vol35/iss1/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Beethoven Journal by an authorized editor of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

**“The Bonn Master-Baker Gottfried Fischer’s Reminiscences of Beethoven’s Youth”
[Des Bonner Bäckermeisters Gottfried Fischer Aufzeichnungen über Beethovens
Jugend]. Translated into English, with Editorial Commentary and Notes.**

Acknowledgements

Susan Cooper's English translation and commentary of the reminiscences of Ludwig van Beethoven's youth by Gottfried Fischer (1780–1864) and Cäcilia Fischer (1762–1845). The reminiscences provide colorful details of daily life in the Beethoven household, including Beethoven's earliest schooling, and social and family life in Bonn.

“The Bonn Master-Baker Gottfried Fischer’s
Reminiscences of Beethoven’s Youth” [Des
Bonner Bäckermeisters Gottfried Fischer
Aufzeichnungen über Beethovens Jugend]

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH, WITH EDITORIAL COMMENTARY AND
NOTES, BY SUSAN COOPER

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

The Fischer manuscripts comprise an *Entwurf* (rough sketch)—D-BNba BH 173, 2—and a *Reinschrift* (fair copy)—D-BNba BH 173, 1.¹ The rough sketch (containing some material not included in the fair copy, and not yet fully transcribed and edited) was commenced c. 1838 by Gottfried Fischer (July 21, 1780 to February 23, 1864), youngest child of the family who were landlords to Beethoven’s parents and grandparents—

I would like to express my warmest thanks to Erica Buurman, Director of the Ira F. Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies in San José, for undertaking the publication of this project and supporting it so enthusiastically; to both Erica Buurman and Paul Ellison, Lecturer in Music at the San José State University, I am deeply indebted for their meticulous editing of the script and for their many helpful suggestions, searching questions, and corrections of my oversights. Barry Cooper, Professor of Music at the University of Manchester, generously took the time to read through several versions of the script and offered many helpful and perceptive comments and suggestions, and expert advice; for this, and his enthusiastic support throughout, I am deeply grateful. Without the work of numerous past and present scholars—named in the footnotes and introduction—this undertaking would have been difficult, if not impossible; in particular, I am indebted to the late Beethoven scholar Joseph Schmidt-Görg for his pioneering transcription and editing of the original Fischer manuscript. I am grateful to the Beethoven-Haus in Bonn for making that manuscript so readily available online. Finally, I would like to thank all those at the Beethoven Center, San José State University and bepress responsible for the professional production of this publication.

¹ D-BNba = Bonn, Beethoven-Haus. The two Fischer manuscripts can now be found together on the Beethoven-Haus website (www.beethoven.de). Although two separate physical entities, they are treated as a single entity in the digital version: the first 70 digital pages constitute the *Reinschrift* (D-BNba BH 173, 1), and the remainder the *Entwurf* (D-BNba BH 173, 2).

Beethoven living in the Fischer house for around ten years from c. 1775. Comprised in these sources are the recollections of Gottfried and, more particularly, his older sister Cäcilia (1762–1845), who, along with their two late brothers, had known the Beethoven family intimately through growing up in their close proximity. The fair copy was completed in the 1850s. Fischer's recollections were documented at a time of growing interest in Beethoven in his native city, with the publication of the Wegeler-Ries biographical notices (1838)², with the planning of the Beethoven memorial (finally unveiled in 1845) and with debates regarding Beethoven's birth-house.

Even Fischer's later fair copy, written in Bonn dialect, is less a carefully-ordered account than a series of vivid vignettes, lists, and notes, often in random order, with some repetitions, some confusions, and also some surprising omissions. Although Fischer's syntax is loose and pleonastic, often needing adjustment to form a fluent and coherent narrative, his descriptions and insight into character are perceptive, vivid and detailed, varying, as occasion demands, from the deeply poignant to the colorfully comic. Details of Beethoven's earliest schooling, not known from other sources, are vivified in the touching portrait of the good old teacher Ruppert and his fellow-teachers and musicians. To Fischer is owed the detailed description of Rovantini's attractive and devout character, and the deep grief occasioned by his untimely death—a grief which probably haunted Beethoven for his entire life. To Fischer is owed most of the knowledge about the colorfully eccentric Tobias Pfeifer; the emphasis on Beethoven's indebtedness for his outstanding teaching—though contested by some—concur with Wegeler's more compressed assessment of Pfeifer. From Fischer is derived the detailed knowledge about Beethoven's mother's generous, wise, but suffering personality, her restraining but gentle influence on her husband, and the details of her daily life. But for Fischer, the more genial side of Beethoven's father Johann's character would be unknown. So too would the very close bonds between the Fischer and Beethoven families in that Rovantini wished to marry Fischer's older sister Cäcilia,

² Franz Gerhard Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries, *Biographische Notizen über Ludwig van Beethoven* (Koblenz: Bädeker, 1838) (hereafter WR). See also the English translation: Franz Gerhard Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries, *Remembering Beethoven*, trans. Frederick Noonan (London: André Deutsch, 1988). All cited page numbers are from the 1838 original.

and she him, prior to his tragic death. Fischer's extensive descriptions of Beethoven's formative years, character, background and contacts are an invaluable source of information.

Although Fischer offers detailed information on many of the Beethoven family's contacts, and lists many more of varying importance, his choices sometimes seem idiosyncratic. Notable absences include Franz Gerhard Wegeler, all the Breuning family, and Babette Koch. Central though these contacts were, during the height of the Fischers' acquaintance with the Beethovens, Ludwig probably met them mainly outside his own home. Although Wegeler clearly visited the family home, since he speaks warmly and admiringly of Beethoven's gentle, pious, and noble mother,³ and also, by his own assertion, knew Beethoven from 1782,⁴ he was probably not a regular visitor there until the Beethovens had moved out of the Fischer house. Clearly these lasting friendships developed mainly at the Breunings' house, where Helene von Breuning became like a second mother to Beethoven, and he gave piano lessons to the children Eleonore and Lorenz. Likewise, his relations with the Koch family evidently centered around the circle of intellectuals, artists and musicians gathered by Babette's mother at her restaurant "zum Zehrgarten"; here Beethoven reportedly fell in love with the beautiful, gifted daughter Babette. Information on these comes from Wegeler and Gerhard von Breuning.⁵ However, Fischer's non-mention of Neefe other than in a bare list of visitors—though considered by some to be a serious omission—may actually support the view that Neefe was considerably less important than often assumed, especially on consideration of other contemporary evidence (further discussed in the editorial footnotes).

The first transcription of Fischer's fair copy—to which this English translation is indebted—was made in Joseph Schmidt-Görg's meticulous and scholarly edition.⁶ Occasional checks have been made

³ WR, 8.

⁴ WR, xi.

⁵ On the Breunings see WR, 9-11, 18 ff. and Gerhard von Breuning, *Aus dem Schwarzspanierhause* (Vienna: Rosner, 1874), 7 ff. (hereafter BrSchw); for Babette Koch see BrSchw, 14 and Max Braubach, ed. *Die Stammbücher Beethovens und der Babette Koch* (Bonn: Verlag des Beethovenhauses, 1970), passim.

⁶ Joseph Schmidt-Görg, ed., *Des Bonner Bäckermeisters Gottfried Fischer Aufzeichnungen über Beethovens Jugend* (Bonn: Beethoven-Haus, 1971) (hereafter SG). In addition to separately-cited references, Schmidt-Görg employed the following sources: Gustav

against Fischer's fair-copy original where the transcription seemed problematic, but Schmidt-Görg has always proved correct. Much of the historical information in the footnotes to this translation draws (as a summary, not a direct translation) on Schmidt-Görg; this and all other sources are acknowledged. A more recent, lavishly illustrated German edition of Fischer's text was edited by Margot Wetzstein⁷—notable for expanded topographical and historical information on electoral Bonn referenced in its footnotes; however, Schmidt-Görg remains a gold standard for concise, clear and scholarly presentation. Footnotes to the present translation aim to present sufficient brief information to clarify Fischer's context, while offering more detailed comparison with other contemporary sources for persons more central to Beethoven studies, especially where other relevant information is little-known, obscure, or misleading; recent research and conclusions are included here. Inconsistencies and errors, by Fischer or others, are explained as far as possible.

Although some extracts from Fischer are available in standardised German,⁸ and Anna Fischer has made a complete modernized but rather loose German version for the Beethoven-Haus website,⁹ there are no existing translations into English beyond brief quotations in various biographies. Even the English-language Thayer-

Bereths, "Die Musikpflege am kurtrierischen Hofe zu Koblenz-Ehrenbreitstein," *Beiträge zur Mittelrheinischen Musikgeschichte* 5 (1964); Max Braubach, *Kurköln: Gestalten und Ereignisse aus zwei Jahrhunderten rheinischer Geschichte* (Münster: Achendorff, 1949); Max Braubach, "Die Mitglieder der Hofmusik unter den vier letzten Kurfürsten von Köln," *Colloquium Amicorum, Joseph Schmidt-Görg zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Siegfried Kross and Hans Schmidt (Bonn: Beethoven-Haus, 1967); Theodor Anton Henseler, "Das musikalische Bonn im 19. Jahrhundert," *Bonner Geschichtsblätter*, XIII (1959); German Hubert Christian Maaßen, *Geschichte der Pfarreien des Dekanates Bonn*, 2 vols. (Cologne and Bonn: Bachem, 1894-1899).

⁷ Margot Wetzstein, ed. *Familie Beethoven im kurfürstlichen Bonn: Neuauflage nach den Aufzeichnungen des Bonner Bäckermeisters Gottfried Fischer* (Bonn: Beethoven-Haus, 2006) (hereafter Wetzstein, *Familie Beethoven*).

⁸ Alexander Wheelock Thayer, rev. Hermann Deiters and Hugo Riemann, *Ludwig van Beethovens Leben*, 5 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1907-23), 1:Appendix VII—hereafter cited as TDR; Ludwig Schiedermaier, *Der junge Beethoven* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1925), *passim*.

⁹ Anna Fischer, trans., *Familie Beethoven im kurfürstlichen Bonn: Die Aufzeichnungen des Bonner Bäckermeisters Gottfried Fischer*, Beethoven-Haus, www.beethoven.de.

Forbes cites virtually nothing of Fischer.¹⁰ The present translation aims to fill this gap, particularly for English-speaking scholars for whom Fischer's original, or even Thayer's extracts, are problematic.

Fischer's original is rendered as faithfully as possible, using idiomatic English in appropriate register, while his irregularities of syntax are rectified and his pleonasms reduced. Ambiguities arising from Fischer's accident and syntax are addressed: these include extensive omission of case-endings and plural-endings, ignoring sequence of tenses, and a somewhat loose interchangeability of indicative and subjunctive. Most of these are clarifiable from the context, but any remaining ambiguities are addressed in the footnotes. Fischer's broader structure, including repetitions of subject-matter, is retained. For clarity, Fischer's custom of referring to a married woman by her maiden-name followed by the formula "genannt + [husband's surname] + s" —normal in his era and milieu—has been changed to the modern practice of using the woman's married surname, followed by (née ...). Also, Fischer's "Clavier," the standard German term for any keyboard instrument, is consistently translated as "piano," although "harpsichord" or "clavichord" may sometimes be intended. All English translations in the footnotes are by the present translator and editor.

¹⁰ Elliot Forbes, ed., *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).

THE BONN MASTER-BAKER GOTTFRIED FISCHER'S REMINISCENCES OF BEETHOVEN'S YOUTH

The house which formerly had “In der Stadt München”¹¹ painted on its sign, the Fischer House in Bonn, Rheinstrasse no. 934, that very house, according to accurate testimonies—still available old records—was inherited by one son after another up to the present 5th generation, under the name Fischer, master-baker.

The great, great-grandfather was Hermann Fischer. The great-grandfather Johann Fischer and his wife Katharina Engels had a child, a son, Johann Georg Fischer. In 1689 these three endured together in their cellar the complete bombardment of Bonn.¹² The father of Katharina Engels, Heinrich Engels, was architect to the cathedral chapter in Cologne; of this there is still an extant record. After the bombardment Heinrich Engels rebuilt the house for his son-in-law. The grandfather Johann Georg Fischer, master-baker, and his wife Maria Cäcilia, née Trimborn, had a child, a son, Theodor Fischer.

In the time of Elector Clemens August, in the years from 1724,¹³ in the said house, lived the court Kapellmeister and good singer Ludwig van Beethoven¹⁴ with his wife. They had a child, a son, Johann van

¹¹ In topographical records of Bonn up to the end of the electoral era the house-name was “Zum Walfisch” (Josef Dietz, “Topographie der Stadt Bonn vom Mittelalter bis zum Ende der Kurfürstlichen Zeit,” *Bonner Geschichtsblätter*, vols. 16 and 17 (1962–63) – hereafter Dietz). This was probably later changed (see SG, n. 1).

¹² The siege of Bonn occurred between July and October 1689 during the Nine Years’ War against Louis XIV of France and his allies, which included the electorate of Cologne. The forces of the elector of Brandenburg and the Dutch Republic advanced against Bonn, causing extensive ruin. Bonn surrendered on October 10, 1689.

¹³ The year is erroneous if referring to Ludwig van Beethoven the elder – see next note. However, since Elector Clemens August acceded in 1724, it may refer to the period of his electorship.

¹⁴ Beethoven’s grandfather (also known by the French form Louis van Beethoven) came from Mechelen to Bonn in 1733 and is not definitely recorded as living in the Fischer house until 1760. Fischer cites his name as “Mariga Joseph Balluinesius Lutwikus van Beethoven” – evidently conflating his name with that of his wife, Maria Josepha Poll (whose name is also recorded as Boll, Ball, Pal, etc.; marriage 1733) – for whom see: Joseph Schmidt-Görg, *Beethoven: die Geschichte seiner Familie* (Bonn: Beethoven-Haus, 1964) (hereafter SG²), 54, 57, 81–85, etc. Recent research proves that she was baptised in Châtelet (near Charleroi) on February 13, 1713, the daughter of Albert Sebastian Ball (a regimental trumpeter) and Maria Bernhardina Mengal. Her

Beethoven. They lived as tenants on the second floor,¹⁵ inhabiting six rooms—two large rooms facing the street and four facing the courtyard. In the middle was the kitchen, two locked cellars and a locked storeroom, and a small room for the maid.

A life-size portrait of Herr Hofkapellmeister Ludwig van Beethoven hung in a gilded frame in the middle of the room on the left towards the street, where it stood opposite his piano to the right.¹⁶ [He was portrayed] sitting on a stool, with fur, a gown, coat with miniature serpent embellishment, a velvet fur cap with golden tassel, and a scroll of musical notes in his right hand.

Johann Fischer, who also endured the bombardment, but not on account of this, received from the succeeding elector, Joseph Clemens, for himself and for his posterity, an exemption from the town-watch and from billeting. And with this it was expressly stated that no others might lay claim to this exemption, which was given to him alone.

Elector Joseph Clemens [conferred this exemption] with his own hand, Bonn, November 19, 1717, with his seal and signature. This is still available to show, *an object of remembrance* [Andenken].¹⁷

mother's family were from Châtelet, but her father may have had roots in Bonn—where the family moved in 1715—see Theo Molberg, "Beethovens Großmutter wurde in Châtelet geboren", *Die Laterne: Bonner Familienkunde* 48, no. 2 (2021): 247–55.

¹⁵ Fischer's numbering of floors of a house corresponds with British usage but differs from American usage. Thus, throughout the translation "first floor" is equivalent to American "second floor", "second floor" to American "third floor", etc.

¹⁶ Cf. WR, 8. Wegeler speaks of the warm, intimate relationship between Beethoven and this grandfather, of whom he always retained vivid memories. His grandfather's portrait, by Leopold Radoux, was specially taken for Beethoven from Bonn to Vienna—at his request to his friend Wegeler—and treasured by Beethoven until his death: see letter BB-65; A-51 (June 29, 1801). The editions of the Beethoven letters, referenced by the ciphers BB- and A-, are: Sieghard Brandenburg, ed., *Ludwig van Beethoven: Briefwechsel Gesamtausgabe*, 7 vols. (Munich: Henle, 1996–98); Emily Anderson, trans. and ed., *The Letters of Beethoven*, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1961).

¹⁷ The document (D-BNba, BH 173, 9) states (translated): Joseph Clemens (Cologne, Archbishop), [electoral certificate for Johann Fischer and all his heirs concerning exemption from the town watch and billeting], Bonn, November 19, 1717.

The term "Andenken", used repeatedly, underlined, by Fischer, and evidently intended for emphasis, apparently conveys an object or matter of remembrance or recollection, or a memento, whether physical or mental. It is translated, according to context, as "an object/objects/matter of/for remembrance". Although the referents of Fischer's "Andenken" vary and can be deduced only from the context, the translations are kept as self-consistent as feasible.

Katharina (née Engels) died, fortified with the salvific rites of the Holy Catholic Church, on October 12, 1702, aged seventy-one. Her husband Johann Fischer died, fortified with the salvific rites of the Holy Catholic Church, on March 26, 1724, aged seventy-four.¹⁸

SEQUEL

Elector Clemens August held his induction on May 3, 1725.¹⁹ He ruled for thirty-six years. The said elector, at his own expense, sent a young man of his territory, who had an exceptionally beautiful voice—Raaff,²⁰ of the village of Holzem in the parish of Villip in the department of Gudenau (about a quarter of an hour's distance from Villip)—to Berlin, to the king's great music-director of the time, Salomon,²¹ to be instructed there in music and song and composition. Thereafter by this means a

¹⁸ The dates and ages given here for Katharina Engels and Johann Fischer seem improbable. Katharina Engels' husband and son were both Johann Fischer, therefore it seems probable that two generations have been confused here. A similar conclusion, positing an extra generation, is reached by Wetzstein, *Familie Beethoven*, 8, nn. 25–26; Wetzstein gives extensive family trees (forbears and descendants) of Gottfried Fischer) on pp. 134–142 and 143–145.

¹⁹ The correct date was May 15, 1724 (SG, n. 8).

²⁰ Anton Raaff (b. 1714, Gelsdorf; d. 1797, Munich) Bonn court chapel tenor, 1736–49; famed and successful in Munich, Italy, Vienna, Portugal, Spain, Mannheim, etc. (studied in Munich and Bologna); collaborated with Metastasio, Mozart, etc. In 1743 in Holzem (parish of Villip, Gudenau) he founded a chapel to St John Nepomuk (SG, n. 9; TDR 1:32).

²¹ Johann Peter Salomon (1745–1815), violinist in the Bonn court chapel (1758–65); from 1765 in Rheinsberg, as Kapellmeister to Prince Heinrich of Prussia; from 1781 until his death in London, there becoming a renowned conductor and impresario, responsible for bringing Haydn to England in 1790–91 and 1794–95. Salomon, his father Philipp, and his two daughters, all court chapel musicians, were all very close to the Beethovens (SG, n. 10). Salomon later helped Beethoven find a London publisher (see Peter Clive, *Beethoven and his World: A Biographical Dictionary* [Oxford: OUP, 2001] [hereafter PC], and letters BB-809, A-544). He was indirectly responsible for Beethoven's first receiving Bach's *Das wohltemperirte Clavier* in his ninth year via Nikolaus Simrock, to whom he gave a copy (see Simrock's letter to Gottfried Weber, March 23, 1828, reproduced in Klaus Martin Kopitz and Rainer Cadenbach, ed., *Beethoven aus der Sicht seiner Zeitgenossen*, 2 vols. (Munich: Henle, 2009) (hereafter KC), 2:907–908)—an honor wrongly claimed for Neefe. Salomon, as violinist and conductor, could not have taught Raaff in singing as Fischer claims—also chronologically impossible. SG, n. 10 surmises that Fischer confused Raaff with Salomon's pupil Rovantini (see n. 35). (Berlin/Bologna also confused?).

world-famous art-singer Raaff arose, who at the time had no equal nor ever met his match.

The said elector made a little journey to the town of Ehrenbreitstein by Koblenz; he had a stroke there and died on February 4, 1761.²² His body was conveyed by ship from Ehrenbreitstein down the Rhine, and in the evening brought by torchlight procession into the palace [to lie in state], until everything for his burial was arranged and completed, and he could be buried with high ceremony.

THE STATURE OF THE COURT KAPELLMEISTER [BEETHOVEN'S GRANDFATHER]

He was a tall, handsome man with elongated face, broad forehead, round nose, big, large eyes, large red cheeks, and a very serious face. He was a very respectable man in his dealings, a thoroughly good man,²³ his wife a quiet, good woman; she was, however, so strongly addicted to drink—from which he had endured so many secret sufferings—that he later finally made the decision to commit her to an institution in Cologne, where she also died.²⁴ Our elders might well have known her name and provenance, but who at the time thought to enquire regarding her origins? Thus, these remained unknown to us.

TRADITION

The court Kapellmeister originated from Ghent in Belgium.²⁵

When Elector Clemens August of Cologne was once at the seminary in Liège he came to know and observed Ludwig van

²² Elector Clemens August, en route for Munich, stopped at the palace of the elector of Trier in Ehrenbreitstein on February 5, 1761. Although indisposed before arrival, he danced there with the elector's sister, Baroness von Waldersdorff, but fell unconscious and died the next day (SG, n. 11).

²³ Wegeler (WR, 8), however, describes the Kapellmeister as a small, powerful man with very lively eyes, a highly-esteemed artist.

²⁴ Because the Kapellmeister's wife, Maria Josepha Poll, was committed to an institution in Cologne, and since Fischer knew nothing of her provenance, Schmidt-Görg (who despite extensive research on Beethoven's family found no further details of her parentage) concludes (SG, n. 13) that she was not from Bonn. See n. 14 concerning her origins in Châtelet.

²⁵ The Kapellmeister originated not from Ghent, where he had no known forebears, but from Mechelen (SG, n. 14).

Beethoven [the elder] as a good musician and singer, whereupon he later took him on at his court chapel as court Kapellmeister. The son of the court Kapellmeister, Johann van Beethoven,²⁶ was introduced by his father at an early stage to the piano and singing; thus he was later engaged as a court tenor.

Court Kapellmeister van Beethoven had standing resources—two wine cellars. Whether the parents of the Kapellmeister were merchants who dealt in wine, or his wife's parents were wine-dealers, that he could deal with wine and with his master-barrel-maker, or whether it was that he knew how to make his standing resources profitable, on account of this business Kapellmeister Beethoven made acquaintance with the court cellar-clerk Johann Baum, so that he probably drew on him for advice about his wine. He also learnt from court cellar-clerk Baum, and had the local places shown to him where good and durable wine-producing vines grew. He sold his wine to the Netherlands; there he had his connoisseurs, merchants who bought his wine from him, and so, in a good year, he again took in new wine.

Johann van Beethoven also from an early age was skilled at wine-tasting. But he was also, at the right time, a good wine-drinker: then he was bright and cheerful, had his fill, but had no bad drunken outlook.

Johann Georg Fischer had stables built in his yard; these had a gate-entrance on the Giergasse. Elector Clemens August was fond of hunting and had his *par force* hunting-horses stabled for rent at Fischer's stables.²⁷ When the elector later had a court stable built for himself, he relocated his horses, and then Elector Clemens August gave Fischer as tenants an upper-master-stonemason from Saxony, man and wife without children; he lived facing the courtyard and had the stables used as a workplace for marble-work. The marble, which came along the Rhine, was conveyed to the stables; the Heilige Stiege²⁸ on the Kreuzberg

²⁶ Born 1740; died December 18, 1792.

²⁷ Fischer's word is "Proförß". *Par force* hunting is a type of coursing hunt, popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which the pack of hounds was accompanied on horseback.

²⁸ The *Heilige Stiege* of the pilgrimage church on the Kreuzberg hill in Bonn, fashioned for Elector Clemens August by Balthasar Neumann and consecrated in 1751, are modelled on the Scala sancta in Rome, said to be the stairs which Christ ascended to encounter Pontius Pilate. The foundation-stone was laid on July 18, 1746.

and the stairs for the Röttgen palace,²⁹ made of marble, were prepared there and conveyed from there to their location. The masonry saws were said to have kept going all week, day and night, Sundays not excluded. Johann van Beethoven and Theodor Fischer, boys both in the same class,³⁰ together watched the workers in the workplace and on the Kreuzberg and on the Röttgen Palace. *A matter of remembrance.*

Electeur Clemens August had wanted, for the good of the Bonn townspeople, to erect in the Poppelsdorfer Allee a fair of the Frankfurt type. He actually set it up, with everything implemented and no costs spared, but it did not turn out well, owing to the few buyers on the first day—such that the sellers did not expect to receive their expenses back from it. The good elector, who regretted this, had four carriages hitched up with four horses each, the coachman, and on all the front horses two riders sitting, who were to ride up to the Poppelsdorfer fair, to approach the stalls together and reverse together, to cause all possible damage to the stalls, and act as if the horses were hot-tempered, skittish, or wanted to play the master with them; they were also not to be bothered about the damage: of these things they were instructed beforehand, and also to take good care that no person be harmed by coach or horses, but to ride with coach and horses over the glassware and porcelain. The elector himself was said to have sat hidden in one coach, so that no-one could see him, but he could see everything, and reportedly saw and heard the cries for help, and rejoiced that his aims were met. When the elector thought that he had earned his day's reward, and that everything had been well-achieved, he went away.³¹

The tradesmen lamented among themselves and said that this was an unlucky place for them, ruining the sellers—and who would make good their damages? “If we had stayed at home,” they said, “in the evening in the inns there would have been much for talking and laughing over.” The next morning the elector let the news go out to the sellers that, regarding the damaged articles, they should bring their bills

²⁹ Schloss Herzogsfreude Röttgen, built by Elector Clemens August, 1753–55, as a hunting-lodge for his *par force* hunts.

³⁰ Hardly possible, since Theodor Fischer was at least eight years older than Johann van Beethoven (SG, n. 22).

³¹ This anecdote, one of many circulated about Clemens August, concerns an event which happened not in the Poppelsdorfer Allee but in the annual market in Pützchen (SG, n. 22).

to an agreed place, and then everything would be refunded and nothing subtracted.

The next day the elector himself went and bought goods from the fair³² for his entire palace, from the greatest to the least, and even for those in his employment. Also, there was no haggling over prices there. The sellers, who expected a bad outcome, finally had a good outcome. But when the elector realised that he had not achieved his good intentions, he had the fair suspended after a year. On this occasion the upper-master-stonemason received as a gift from the elector a golden tobacco-box set with jewels, and his wife a complete length of East Indian silk for a new gown, and his assistants also received goods from the fair. *Objects of remembrance.*

At the same time there lived in the house, on the first floor, a court singer, a single lady, Antonia Gottwalditz;³³ she was from Bohemia and died in the house. As an object of remembrance she presented to Frau Fischer her beautiful prayer-book, and her hand-inscription is still present in it. *An object of remembrance.*

The Beethovens' maid had through carelessness shaken wood ash onto their store; it had caught fire. Johann Georg Fischer had by chance, at ten o'clock in the evening, still to attend to something in the grain-store, which was three floors up. As he went up, his little dog sprang repeatedly up in front of him; when he was up above, he smelt smoke, and thought, as was usually the case, that the wind was blowing in the upper storeroom from the neighboring building's chimneys into the roof window. He had to open two doors; he opened the first door straight ahead. To the left, facing the courtyard, was the Beethovens' storeroom door; the little dog scratched repeatedly with his paws at the door and did not want to follow him. He thought that the dog was tracking mice, and that it was as if the poor animal were trying to say, "Open up here." He felt for the lock, and the key was still there; he opened it. Then a thick fume came towards him. He sprang inside, scrabbled around in the darkness with his feet, and encountered at the courtyard window a heap of ashes which, nearly in full glow, would soon have burst into flames.

³² "Goods from the fair" is used to translate Fischer's "Kermesse" – apparently derived from the Dutch "Kermesse," referring to a church's patronal festival, but applied to any fair or festival, and, by extension, to goods sold there.

³³ Probably Judith Gottwald (SG, nn. 25 and 47; TDR, 1:444, n. 3), court singer from 1759–63.

They immediately forestalled this with water, otherwise during the night a huge and inextinguishable conflagration could have arisen, because the buildings behind all overhung right next to each other, where it would have proved difficult to bring water up. A hollow of nearly two foot-widths had blasted³⁴ through the floor right up to the balcony. *A matter of remembrance.* Kapellmeister Beethoven immediately sacked his maid.

On July 18, 1746, Elector Clemens August laid the foundation-stone on the Kreuzberg. By 1751 everything was in place, so the work then ceased.

In 1752 Johann Georg Fischer had part of the stables in his courtyard demolished, and at Giergasse no. 950 he had built instead a new rear-building, a stone house with thirteen rooms, two stores and side-exit.

The first inhabitant of the new house was Herr Wilhelm Klütsch, a rich son of Brühl; he was only just married, for he was a big, handsome young man. He had been offered service in the Electoral Bodyguard, as quartermaster. He had taken on the service as an honorary position, whereby he attended just the main feasts as an honorary member. Herr Klütsch was also a great music-lover and played the piano. With the grandfather, Herr Hofkapellmeister Ludwig van Beethoven, and with his son—still a boy—Johann van Beethoven, who lived just opposite him, he became a close friend, so that they visited each other reciprocally, and had great fun. Thereafter the friendship was still maintained by Johann van Beethoven and his children. Herr Quartermaster Wilhelm Klütsch later had accorded to him a share in the porcelain-factory at Poppelsdorf, leased to him by Herr von Bongardt for a very cheap rent. He settled in there and continually extended the said factory through his foremen.

Herr Quartermaster Wilhelm Klütsch happily entertained as friends those whom he cherished, and could do it well. When it was his birthday or his wife's birthday or Carnival, or various other feasts, he often invited along the Court Kapellmeister Ludwig van Beethoven, and

³⁴ Fischer's word, transcribed by Schmidt-Görg as "gesprännt" (= "gesprengt"), is transcribed "gebrannt" (i.e., "burnt") for Anna Fischer's modern German version. Examination of Fischer's manuscript confirms Schmidt-Görg's transcription.

later his son Johann van Beethoven, and Johann's son Ludwig van Beethoven, and their cousin the court musician Herr Franz Rovantini.³⁵

Herr Klütsch had three beautiful daughters, who in later years often still related stories of the Beethovens—how in their youth they enjoyed many an innocent joy. *Matters of remembrance.*

The porcelain-factory at Poppelsdorf by Bonn was the property of Herr von Bongardt. The daughter of the Court gardener Lenné,³⁶ Johanna Maria, who, when Herr von Bongardt visited his factory, had to check things for him, was then in his service for attendance and housework. Herr von Bongardt had a son, a silent but somewhat retarded person, whose pleasure it was, when he was in the factory, to watch the workers very silently while they were working. Herr von Bongardt wanted to make a written agreement with the daughter of Court gardener Lenné: if she were to accommodate and serve his son and the son's assistant, at Herr von Bongardt's expense, for as long as the son should live, then, on his death, the whole factory with house, courtyard, garden, and all its appurtenances would become and remain her property. She did not want to resolve for this; she believed that she could throw away her luck through this scheme. She afterwards married a rich son of Brühl, Wilhelm Klütsch. After the marriage they moved to the Fischers' new building, the rear-house, Giergasse no. 950, for two years as tenants. In the third year they moved out: Herr Klütsch received from Herr von Bongardt for a very cheap rent the Poppelsdorf factory, where he moved in, and had the factory operated for several years through his foremen.

The three beautiful Klütsch daughters used to tell the Fischers: "We liked going to Herr van Beethoven: they invited [us] so that we got to see Herr Franz Rovantini, to speak with him." Herr Franz Rovantini was such a good-looking and gifted man, and so beloved in his nature

³⁵ Franz Georg Rovantini (written by Fischer as "Ruffvangtini" — b. May 7, 1757, Ehrenbreitstein; d. September 9, 1781, Bonn). His parents were Anna Margarethe Daubach and Johann Konrad Rovantini (for the relationship to Beethoven see nn. 48-49). An accomplished violinist, he entered the Bonn court orchestra in 1771, studying from 1773-75 with Johann Peter Salomon (see n. 21), music-director to Prince Heinrich of Prussia (brother of Frederick the Great) in Rheinsberg.

³⁶ The Freiherr von Bongardt owned the Poppelsdorf porcelain-factory from 1777-98 (SG, n. 28); the court gardener Lenné lived at the "Alter Zoll" (old tollgate), Bonn, and was later director-general of the Prussian Gardens (SG, n. 29).

and in his dealings, that they could never have forgotten him. Herr Ludwig van Beethoven was at that time still young.

The Court Kapellmeister van Beethoven once, in the lower house, incidentally remarked: "There are really three Johanns standing together as in a clover leaf: the apprentice lad is Johann the muncher, who is always seen gobbling; and the lad in the house is Johann the chatterbox," and he pointed at his son. "That is Johann the runner: just run, just run, you will even some day run to your end." Johann van Beethoven had a volatile spirit: he often at times made little excursions, to Cologne, Deutz, Andernach, Koblenz, Ehrenbreitstein, and who knows where else? This he did when he knew that his father was going away for one or two or three or four days. He sought too to land in freedom. What kind and where, no-one then knew!

A CONUNDRUM

The boys in the house, the son of the house Theodor Fischer and Johann van Beethoven, were both in the same class. Theodor Fischer had a zither, upon which, from one zither-master, he had learnt zither-playing, music, and singing from the notation. Johann van Beethoven could do this too; both often sometimes played one after the other on the zither, both with music-making from the notation. Each thought he could do it better than the other, so they sang whatever songs best pleased them—repeatedly new songs, so they had to practise repeatedly—hunting songs, wedding songs, etc., according to the bet. Finally both had progressed so far, that what they thought between themselves they finally spoke out. For both were self-sufficient and both intended to seek a bride for himself and marry: "We're sailing now into the realms of love. Yet where may the landing be for us both, O where? May we both just land well! Are you to be first or I? That is still a conundrum for us both. Only time will tell."

The same zither was shown to gentlemen from outside the locality who visited the "Beethoven Committee."³⁷ It is still in existence, *an object of remembrance*, and still in good condition. Johann van Beethoven said that the zither was good, and had a beautiful, sustained tone. Theodor Fischer knew this too.

³⁷ Fischer uses this designation, "Beethoven Comitait," for the earlier dwelling of the Beethovens in his house (SG, n. 33).

Of the two aforesaid zither-players, namely, the son Theodor Fischer and the son Johann van Beethoven, one or other had to be first.

Who and where must be confirmed. The zither-playing son Theodor Fischer was first, soon coming to land. And where? It must be confirmed that it was in Villip.

Theodor Fischer's mother had a brother—a juror named Sibert Trimborn—in the former department of Gudenau in the village of Villip, three hours distant from Bonn. In Ersdorf, near Tomberg, four hours distant from Bonn, were two orphaned children on their property, knightly estate of the Freiadeliger³⁸ Bühler, a son and a daughter. The son was Carl Joseph Rheindorf and the daughter Maria Susanna Katharina Rheindorf. The estate was leased; both children had already been put to school in Münstereifel, the son to a grammar school, and the daughter to a boarding school of the tertiary nuns³⁹ of that time, where she was able to learn much.

For the two children two furnished rooms and their care were reserved by the leaseholder on the estate; there on feast-days and school holidays they were provided for.

The two aforesaid children had in Villip their dead mother's still-living sister, who was married to the office-administrator Tevelich in the former department of Gudenau in Villip. Because of continuing grief for their dead parents, they no longer went to their estate in Ersdorf, but both went instead to their uncle the office-administrator Tevelich in Villip, where they were accommodated just as if by their parents.

The son of the house Theodor Fischer also went on feast-days and holidays to his uncle, the juror in Villip, Sibert Trimborn. The juror sometimes took his sister's son, Theodor Fischer, with him to the office-administrator Tevelich. In this way Theodor Fischer became very friendly with the son Rheindorf and his sister, who were both self-sufficient. Thus, eventually, the Rheindorf daughter, with the assent of her uncle Tevelich and his wife, became Theodor Fischer's bride. Thus too the wedding celebrations were held in the house of the office-administrator Tevelich in Villip, and the wedding ceremony held in the church of the same parish.

The marriage happened on June 24, 1761 in the former department of Gudenau in Villip at the house of office-administrator

³⁸ A title of nobility.

³⁹ They were third-order Franciscan nuns (SG, n. 35).

Tevelich. His wife was the bride's late mother's own sister. Theodor Fischer, the bridegroom, was thirty-one years old, and Maria Susanna Katharina Rheindorf, the bride, was aged twenty-two.

Since Herr Hofkapellmeister Ludwig van Beethoven lived in the Fischer house, he was, as was fitting, invited by the son of the house Theodor Fischer to give the bride and bridegroom the honor of being present at the marriage ceremony at the church in Villip and at the wedding celebrations.

When Herr Hofkapellmeister van Beethoven shed tears at the marriage of this young couple and he was later asked about it, he replied that, seeing the young married couple, he had thought about his own wedding and place of marriage, that it had moved him greatly, and that he took great personal interest.

As the wedding celebrations lasted four days and the Herr Hofkapellmeister struck up the wedding songs with several of his musicians, dancing did not take place, but only instrumental playing and singing. At the conclusion, on the fourth day, the assembled guests gathered on the Eichgo,⁴⁰ formerly named Meilon, where Herr Hofkapellmeister Ludwig van Beethoven had arranged music-making *for a remembrance*. Upon the return to Bonn, Rheinstrasse no. 934, four days of wedding celebration were also held. Herr Hofkapellmeister Ludwig van Beethoven afterwards avowed that he had experienced many joys at this wedding.

When Frau Fischer had moved into the Fischer house, Theodor Fischer and his wife were both invited by Herr Hofkapellmeister Ludwig van Beethoven to visit him. They recounted⁴¹ how they paid their first visit. Everything was so beautiful and proper, had been well appointed with precious objects, the six rooms provided with beautiful furniture, many paintings and cupboards, a cupboard with silver-

⁴⁰ This was probably the name of a meadow, "Eichgau," now not identifiable (SG, n. 37).

⁴¹ In this section Fischer veers between using subjunctive and indicative. One of the subjunctives, "das mann hätt könne durch ein Rinnk ziegen" (i.e. "...hätte können durch einen Ring ziehen") is conditional; the others indicate reported speech. Characteristically, Fischer gives no main verb of reported speech "said that", etc.), but these have been inserted in the translation. Where Fischer switches to the indicative, the implication is that things were always so, independent of personal recollection—but Fischer probably employed these shifts not deliberately but instinctively or even carelessly.

service, a cupboard with fine gilded porcelain and glassware, [and] a stock of the finest linen which could have been pulled through a ring; and they recounted that the most trifling articles all shone like silver. They said too that they both received great honor from Herr Hofkapellmeister Ludwig van Beethoven.

Regarding the aforementioned married couple Fischer, they had nine children from their marriage, of whom five died young.

The first child, Maria Cäcilia Fischer, was born on April 12, 1762. Her grandmother, Maria Cäcilia Fischer (née Trimborn), was her godmother.

A son, Carl Joseph Fischer, completed grammar school and learning the merchant's trade. On his completing the apprenticeship, an illness befell him, and he died in 1795, single, aged twenty-two.

A son, Johann Peter Fischer, was master-baker in the house. He died in 1810, single, aged thirty-nine.

The last child, a son, *Gottfried Fischer*, born on July 21, 1780, was master-baker in the house – *the describer of Ludwig van Beethoven's youth and acquaintances*.

The parents-in-law of Frau Fischer once happened to remark to her that Herr Hofkapellmeister Ludwig van Beethoven and his wife, to judge from all their appearance and conduct, must have been of good descent and upbringing.

When Cäcilia Fischer was just starting to grow up, the Court Kapellmeister was well-disposed towards her as the first child. At times, in the lower house, he would take her on his arm, take her up to his room, place her on his knee, play with her for a while, and then give her confectionery and send her down again with the maid. When she could run by herself, he would take her upstairs with him by the hand. Once the Kapellmeister came downstairs and gave her such a wide-eyed look that she was afraid, so she ran immediately to her mother. Her mother asked, "Why this fear? The Herr Kapellmeister wants to play with you a little. Go with him from here at once, and give your little right-hand to the Herr Kapellmeister and say nicely, 'Good morning, Herr Hofkapellmeister.'" This she then had to do.

At the same time as the Hofkapellmeister, there lived in the house, on the first floor, a Court singer, a Fräulein Antonia Gottwalditz⁴²

⁴² See n. 33—Judith Gottwald is described almost identically several pages back.

from Bohemia; she died in the house a single lady. She presented to Frau [Fischer] as an object of remembrance her beautiful prayer-book, *an object of remembrance* still present inscribed in her own hand.

Of the two aforementioned zither-players, Johann van Beethoven also came to land. And where? That must now be shown! Answer: in Ehrenbreitstein by Koblenz, as must be confirmed. An exalted enigma,⁴³ a conundrum, must finally be solved. When Johann van Beethoven set his beloved in person before the Court Kapellmeister his father, he said that this was his intention, on which he insisted, and which he would not give up, and that she was to become his bride. But, because she did not seem suitable, not important enough to his father, the Herr Hofkapellmeister now just let it go completely, with the remonstrance that he wanted nothing more to do with it.

This notwithstanding, she was a beautiful, slender person, on whom no-one could bring any reproach, and she came from an upright, virtuous, middle-class lineage; she could show this through her old official records; she had attended noble society, whereby she had received a good education and formation—and could show this through good, reliable evidence.

When his father the Herr Hofkapellmeister had enquired after her, and learnt that she had formerly been a chambermaid,⁴⁴ he was so very much against it that he said to him: "This I would never have believed of you, never expected that you would have sunk so low." But what could he do? It was his son's intention, and he insisted on it, so the father had to let it happen. His father reportedly said to him: "You just do as you wish, and I too will do as I wish, and so I'll leave to you here the entire living quarters, and move out."⁴⁵ And Herr Hofkapellmeister

⁴³ "Sinnbild."

⁴⁴ No other evidence exists for this: seemingly a mistake by the Kapellmeister. Her father was a high-ranking official in the Ehrenbreitstein court of the elector of Trier, overseeing the kitchens. On her mother's side there were councillors, senators, and other important officials. There were also at least eight priests or religious in her generation or those immediately preceding (see SG², *passim*)—including her brother, Johann Peter Keverich, a Carmelite priest. Thus, the entire family was clearly well-educated, cultured, and devout.

⁴⁵ Any implication that the Fischer house was the first marital home of Johann van Beethoven and his wife, or the composer's birthplace, is contradicted by Wegeler's evidence (WR, 6), specifically stating that Beethoven's birthplace was almost certainly

van Beethoven moved to the Kölnstrasse, next to the present post-office, the former old Gudenauer Hof, the second house, at no. 387.⁴⁶ From there the Herr Hofkapellmeister moved out again, to beside the Rhine—since the Beethovens loved the Rhine—to the old Bornheimer Hof, no. 971, on the Belderbergerstrasse, adjoining the Rheinstrasse. Herr Hofkapellmeister Ludwig van Beethoven also died there, in 1773, when Cäcilia Fischer was eleven years old. She said that she still well knew the grandfather, Herr Ludwig van Beethoven, when he was on the Belderberg.

HERR JOHANN VAN BEETHOVEN'S STATURE

He was of medium height, had an elongated face, broad forehead, a round nose, broad shoulders, serious eyes, some pockmarks on the face, and a thin pigtail as his hairstyle.

MADAME VAN BEETHOVEN'S STATURE

She was quite tall, had an elongated face, pale complexion, a somewhat aquiline nose, was lean and had serious eyes. Cäcilia Fischer used to say that she could never remember seeing Madame van Beethoven laughing, she was always serious.

JOHANN VAN BEETHOVEN, COURT TENOR, son of the Court Kapellmeister, was married in the old St Remigius parish church in Bonn on November 12, 1767 to Anna Maria Magdalena Keverich,⁴⁷ [now] named Beethoven,

the Bonngasse no. 515, since neighbors were customarily used as baptismal sponsors. Beethoven's brother Ludwig Maria's sponsor lived at no. 514 and his at no. 516.

⁴⁶ The older Louis van Beethoven's dwelling-places were as follows: (1) the old Jesuiten-Gymnasium in the Wenzelgasse, 1738–60; (2) the Rheingasse, 1760–68; (3) the old Posthaltere, Bonngasse no. 386, 1768–73 (according to Dietz). Fischer's claim that he moved to the old Bornheimer Hof on the Belderberg is dubious (SG, n. 39).

⁴⁷ She was by then widow of Johann Laym (also spelt "Leym"), chamberlain to the elector of Trier, having borne a son, Johann Peter Anton, who died in infancy. The child was evidently named after her brother, Johann Peter Keverich (also spelt "Kewerich"), who became a Carmelite priest, Pater (Father) Hubertus Keverich, last prior of the Carmel of Koblenz at the time of its suppression by invading French Revolutionary troops in 1803. Information on him appears in SG², passim, and in Helmut Prößler, "Johann Peter Kewerich (1734–1807)," *Beethovens Beziehungen zu Koblenz und Ehrenbreitstein* (Koblenz: Deinhard-Stiftung, 1975), 33–36.

a native of Ehrenbreitstein. An exalted emblem, an enigma. May it finally be solved!

Johann's father-in-law was Heinrich Keverich; his mother-in-law Anna Clara Westorff.

After the wedding they travelled by a coach bound for Koblenz into Ehrenbreitstein, to show her relatives there that they were married. They spent three days among her relatives, and then returned to Bonn. There their acquaintances everywhere congratulated them and wished that God might grant them happiness and blessings in their married state. But there was never any talk of Herr Johann van Beethoven's wedding, for his father seemed somewhat antithetical towards his bride, but in the main he could not object or adduce anything at all. Madame van Beethoven used to say that for her part she could still have had a good wedding, but then her father-in-law, out of intractability, would not have attended it. For that reason the marriage was hurriedly arranged.

Madame van Beethoven had two sisters.⁴⁸ One was named Madame Herberger; her husband was a confectioner. She was a widow, who continued the confectionery business through assistants, and resided in Ehrenbreitstein. She was a wealthy lady, who had a son, Franz Herberger, in the service of Herr von Weichs, chief master of the hunt, in Bonn. Madame Herberger came every year in May or June to visit the Beethovens, staying there for some days. Before coming she would send beautiful and valuable presents to her brother-in-law Herr Beethoven and to Madame Beethoven. She was a good lady.

Madame van Beethoven had a sister⁴⁹ who had married a certain Anselm Rovantini; he was medical doctor to a regiment. According to

⁴⁸ These were not sisters but cousins (SG, n. 41): Maria Gertrud (who married the Ehrenbreitstein confectioner Johann Jakob Herberger) and Anna Margarethe, the daughters of Maria Magdalena Daubach, née Westorff (sister of Maria Magdalena Keverich's mother, Anna Clara, née Westorff). All Maria Magdalena's siblings, except her eldest brother Johann Peter ("Pater Hubertus") had died young.

⁴⁹ Not a sister but a cousin (see previous note), Anna Margarethe Daubach, who married Johann Konrad Rovantini (d. 1766) (SG, nn. 41 and 42). The husband was not, as Fischer states, called "Anselm," nor a medical doctor, but a violinist of the Trier elector's court, and later in the Bonn court—a profession followed by their eldest son, Franz Georg Rovantini (1757–1781), who became Beethoven's violin teacher. Two of Franz Georg's younger brothers were medical doctors—hence

the assertion of three sons the family had formerly lived in Koblenz.⁵⁰ Both parents had died young, leaving behind three sons and a daughter.

One son, Franz Rovantini, was a court musician at the court of Elector Maximilian Friedrich in Bonn. A son, Pertus,⁵¹ was a surgeon. Another son, Johann Nikolaus Rovantini,⁵² was a medical doctor in Würzburg. A daughter, Anna Maria Magdalena Rovantini,⁵³ was governess in Rotterdam in Holland to a rich lady, a widow, who had a small daughter named Koge. Further description of her will follow. Madame van Beethoven was her godmother and aunt.⁵⁴ The Beethovens often visited the children of the aforementioned sisters of Madame van

Fischer's confusion—and a sister, Anna Maria Magdalena (b. 1755), was a governess in Rotterdam.

⁵⁰ The family actually lived first in Ehrenbreitstein (where the two elder children were born), then Koblenz, before moving to Bonn (SG, n. 42).

⁵¹ Hubert Jakob Rovantini (b. 1761). Maria Magdalena Keverich was his godmother (SG, n. 42).

⁵² Born in 1759.

⁵³ Anna Maria Magdalena Rovantini later planned to marry Peter Louis ten Oever, but she died in 1786 before the marriage could take place. She bore him a daughter, Jeanette Rovantini (born in 1785 or 1786), who later wrote to Beethoven (letter BB-319, February 23, 1808) to establish contact, explain the circumstances of her birth and enquire whether any of her Rovantini relatives or her putative father was still alive. However, Beethoven could not have received the letter before 1823: in a Conversation Book entry, BK_h, 3:165 (of April 6–7, 1823) he (Beethoven) writes “+ an Rovantini”. This can be proved to relate to Jeanette's letter (see Brandenburg's introductory editorial note to BB-319). Although the Conversation Book editors' note 441 fails to establish which Rovantini is the subject (but refers to SG², 106 ff., 159—which does not elucidate the entry), postmarks and marginal notes on Jeanette's letter BB-319 show that it was redirected several times—as clarified by Brandenburg's introductory editorial note (cited *supra*). One of Beethoven's marginal notes on the letter (p. 2, where she describes herself as twenty-two-years-old) states “also jezt 37 Jahr. alt.” This indicates that he wrote the note in 1823; it is therefore related to the Conversation Book entry of April 1823. Another of Beethoven's marginal notes (on p. 3) states “an Rovantini in würzburg”. Brandenburg surmises that this refers to Anna Maria Magdalena's brother Johann Nikolaus (the doctor in Würzburg), or one of his descendants. No reply from Beethoven survives, but the Conversation Book entry (clearly a “to do” list) and his marginal notes on the letter indicate that he must have written one. Schmidt-Görg was unaware of Jeanette, of the date of Anna Maria Magdalena's death, or of BB-319. (Conversation Book entries, designated BK_h, are edited in Karl-Heinz Köhler and others, ed., *Ludwig van Beethovens Konversationshefte*, 11 vols. (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1968–2001)).

⁵⁴ This is another mistake. Her godmother was her grandmother, Maria Magdalena Daubach (SG², 234, n. 95).

Beethoven.⁵⁵ Cäcilia Fischer knew them well and was very friendly with them.

ABOUT THE ABOVEMENTIONED MARRIED COUPLE JOHANN VAN BEETHOVEN

On 2nd April 1769 they had their first son, Ludwig Maria van Beethoven, who died [in infancy].⁵⁶

On December 17, 1770,⁵⁷ they had Ludwig van Beethoven, afterwards a composer. The Court Kapellmeister Ludwig van Beethoven was his godfather, and Anna Gertrud Baum his godmother. In 1774 they had Kaspar van Beethoven. In 1776 they had Nikolaus van Beethoven, who also died early. Kaspar van Beethoven died on January 17, 1848, with which the Beethoven name died out completely.

Cäcilia Fischer, almost eight years old, knew Ludwig van Beethoven as a child in her house, she often kept him company, and they were afterwards childhood friends. Ludwig van Beethoven had as a child a defect with which he was long afflicted,⁵⁸ his mother perhaps had not willingly liked to speak out about it, but, as it persisted for so long, she asked Frau Fischer whether she could not give her some good advice

⁵⁵ The sentence could equally mean that the said children of Madame van Beethoven's sister often visited the Beethovens. ("Von Madamm Beethoven besagte Schwesternen Kinder haben Beethoven oft besucht").

⁵⁶ The names and dates of baptism and death of Beethoven's younger siblings are: Kaspar Anton Karl (b. April 8, 1774, d. November 15, 1815); Nikolaus Johann (b. October 2, 1776, d. January 12, 1848); Anna Maria Franziska (b. February 23, 1779, d. February 27, 1779); Franz Georg (b. January 17, 1781, d. August 16, 1783); Maria Margarethe Josepha (b. May 5, 1786, d. November 26, 1787) (SG, n. 43). Fischer confuses Kaspar Karl's date of death with Nikolaus Johann's. He also overlooks Kaspar Karl's son Karl. The naming of two of the siblings (Anna Maria Franziska and Franz Georg) after Franz Rovantini (who was their godfather—see PC) indicates his closeness to the family.

⁵⁷ December 17 was the date of the baptism. Because the baptism was the first of the day, and baptism was normally within twenty-four hours of birth, it is now generally accepted that Beethoven's birthday was December 16. Some documentary evidence also supports this (see Barry Cooper, *Beethoven* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 3, n. 2). Fischer's confusion over some details of Beethoven's siblings is corrected in n. 56. Cäcilia Fischer, described in the next paragraph as "almost eight," was actually over eight (b. April 12, 1762).

⁵⁸ SG, n. 44 suggests that the problem was bed-wetting. Various other embarrassing problems are also possible.

about it. Frau Fischer told her that she had once received good advice on this, but she had never yet—God be thanked!—needed to make use of it. She said to her, “If you make use of it, maybe it could help him.” She did so, employed the advice, and it helped him well.

When there were three of the Beethoven children, they were taken on sunny days by the maids or household-helpers to the Rhine or the Palace Gardens, onto the sandy soil, where they played with other children who were there, and then had to assemble again at the proper time. When the weather was adverse, the Beethoven children played at the Fischers’ house. The Fischers’ sons, Carl Joseph and Johann Peter, who were their easy-going young mates, played there; children from the neighborhood who had permission also played there. They had a swing there on which they used to play. The children brought toys with them and had innocent fun there with these.

Cäcilia Fischer once related that, when Johann van Beethoven received visitors—and they were not much free of these—and so he wished the children, because of their disturbance, out of the way, the maid would thereupon bring them into the lower house and sit them on the bare stone floor and then pursue her own agenda. The children then crawled on hands and knees towards the house door. Because of the cold Nikolaus [Johann] Beethoven suffered a festering sore on his head. From this he sustained associated damage, which could always be well seen.

Frau Fischer told Madame van Beethoven that her maid gave such indifferent attention to her children, that if she did not frequently pay attention to them and supervise them, they might suffer some mishap at the house door on account of the massive dangers from the Rhine. Madame Beethoven agreed with Frau Fischer, but with that she let it rest.

The Beethoven children were not delicately brought-up: they were often handed over to the maids. Their father was very strict with them. When the children were with their equals, they could amuse themselves peacefully for a long time. Ludwig van Beethoven was later minded to be carried piggyback or backwards: this was often his delight, and then he could really laugh.

When Johann van Beethoven’s father the Court Kapellmeister died in 1773 at no. 971, Belderberg—which adjoins the Rheinstrasse—Cäcilia Fischer was eleven years old. She said that she [then] still knew the Hofkapellmeister Ludwig van Beethoven well.

Johann van Beethoven was his only son, the inheritor of his estate. When he examined his father's business books, which he had not come across previously, he found many earlier and later claims still standing open in the books—from vintners who had loaned money and vintners who had received advance payment for their wine but had not delivered it. Johann van Beethoven approached the vintners and showed proof of this. At this the vintners demanded that he show them their signature. This he could not do, so they denied that they were in debt to him and could file an oath for him on this. He bewailed this to Theodor Fischer: "I contended so hard with the vintners over this but achieved nothing. If I had summoned them for an oath, they would have sworn to me [as they had indicated], and then I would have had⁵⁹ the [legal] fees too. I often thought to myself that it would come to this. In this respect my father was his own man; he always kept to his word and dealt only in verbal conditions, not written ones. When the vintners came about a matter, they knew his good side, they would bring a good, fresh pat of butter and good mature cheese; for this he was grateful, lending them money and giving advance payment for their wine, and so I am in this terrible mess."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Fischer uses here the indicative "hatte," where the conditional subjunctive "hätte" would have been expected: perhaps a careless or vivid colloquialism.

⁶⁰ Fischer's account demonstrates the serious financial problems inherited by Johann van Beethoven through his father's naïve lack of business acumen. Beethoven, who adored this grandfather, also inherited his rather other-worldly but problematic unconcern for money, relying for business dealings on his more worldly-wise brothers Kaspar Karl and Nikolaus Johann. Cf. WR, 35–36, where Wegeler refers to Seyfried's opinion: "Beethoven knew neither ambition nor extravagance, and considered the actual worth of money ever so little—he considered it only as a means for procuring indispensably necessary requirements—and only in the last years did traces of an anxious frugality appear, without however compromising his in-born inclination to good deeds." Beethoven also resembled his grandfather in honoring his word: in letter BB-1773; A-1260 (January 23, 1824) to R. G. Kiesewetter, he writes, regarding the Ninth Symphony, that he had to hasten to keep his word. Others noted the importance to Beethoven of this obligation, for instance, Franz Xaver Glöggel wrote in the *Musikalische Zeitung für die oestereichischen Staaten*, Linz, 1, no. 15 (November 15, 1812): 117 (KC, 1:353; cf. TDR, 3:344–345): "We were comforted over the pleasure now lacking only by the promise left behind by him, a man who scrupulously keeps his word [der rechtlich Wort hält], that he would again honor us with a visit and give a concert then."

Beethoven's blood-cousin Herr Franz Rovantini and Herr Christoff Brandt,⁶¹ both court musicians, were both sent by Elector Maximilian Friedrich, out of special favor and at his own expense, to Berlin and to Dresden in Saxony too, to further their musical training. They subsequently returned to Bonn, to the aforesaid elector's court chapel, bringing him much renown.

When, because of the excessive rushing and disturbance which often occurred through the children or the maids, the houseowner Fischer had to speak seriously to Madame Beethoven on account of the house rules, she was both suddenly heated and argumentative. However, when this had passed and they had thought it over, Madame Beethoven and Herr Beethoven would come straightaway to Herr Fischer—a commendable, beautiful custom; they would acknowledge their fault, acknowledge what had come about through their maids and children, would both offer Meister Fischer their sincere apologies.⁶² And thus both sides were content, everything was forgotten and made good.

Madame van Beethoven was a clever woman. On high and low she could bestow subtle, clever, modest answers and speech; for this she was greatly loved and esteemed. She busied herself with sewing and knitting. The couple both led an upright, peaceful marriage; every quarter they paid their rent, provided their daily bread, and so on. She was a homely, good woman, and knew how to give and also to take, as befitting every honest-thinking person.

The court tenor Johann van Beethoven fulfilled his duties scrupulously. To the sons and daughters of the local English, French, and imperial envoys, to the sons and daughters of the nobility and also of respected citizens he gave piano and singing lessons. Often he had more to do than he was able. He also often received gifts besides: many

⁶¹ Christoff Hermann Joseph Brandt was a violinist and tenor in the Bonn court chapel (SG, n. 45).

⁶² This picture of Maria Magdalena van Beethoven differs superficially from Wegeler's, e.g. (WR, 8): "He happily spoke to his boyhood friends of his grandfather and his devout and gentle mother [fromme und sanfte Mutter], whom he loved far more than his strict father." While Fischer suggests a less perfect character, as opposed to the gentle, pious woman portrayed by Wegeler, the two are not incompatible. The mother's daily life and sufferings would inevitably have caused stress-related aberrations. That she had the self-discipline to admit her faults and apologise, getting her wayward husband to do likewise, bespeaks a woman of deep fortitude and humility, living out her profound Catholic faith.

were offered him. In this way his household could subsist well. The envoys were very attached to Johann van Beethoven: they gave permission to their stewards and butlers that when he was short of wine, if he were just to send a message to the steward, the butlers were to bring him whole quantities of wine into the house. However, with this permission Johann van Beethoven also needed restraint.

At various times during her work or when she had to cradle infants, Cäcilia Fischer would sing songs which she had previously learnt at school and also ones that she had heard sung in church. Johann van Beethoven spoke to her as follows: "If you would take my good advice, you've got a strong chest for singing high or low, so I'd like to make an outstanding singer out of you, and I don't want any fee for it. And your name is fitting. As you know, St. Cecilia is patron of us musicians, and every year in the Court Chapel we mark her day with a musical Solemn High Mass." She replied: "If my parents allow it." So he said, "I'll take it up now with them both." Theodor Fischer said to him: "Young girls are very changeable. It's not good for them to give up. Soon they've decided one thing, then another." [Nevertheless,] Herr Beethoven first guided her in reading music and all this required. Gradually he taught her to sing from the music and then to accompany herself on the piano. Herr Beethoven was completely satisfied with this, and she subsequently advanced so far that she was able to sing the songs from the music and play them note-perfect on the piano. And when subsequently the point was reached of performing songs which were difficult both to sing and play, she went on repeating them until she could sing and play them correctly. Cäcilia Fischer once reflected about lady singers and observed to Herr Beethoven that whenever she had advanced so far in accordance with his intentions that she was fully trained, then she would have to travel the world, "and on the travels more will be demanded than the mother-tongue, otherwise people will be cheated. And if I were to achieve a great deal on these travels and then from all my exertions become ill in a foreign country and die, what would I have gained then from all my achievements? I knew well the two beautiful young sisters, Salomon's daughters,⁶³ who so often visited

⁶³ These singers were daughters of Philipp Salomon (c. 1720–1780), oboist and violinist from 1765–80 in the electoral court chapel, and sisters of Johann Peter Salomon (see nn. 21, 35): alto Anna Jacobina (court chapel singer from 1765–74, pupil

Herr Beethoven here, and my mother told me too about the young Frau Gottwalditz who used to live in our house and the young Frau Haffertons⁶⁴ from Bonn. All four were court singers and because of their many exertions died so young. That could happen to me too." Herr Beethoven responded: "According to the delusion that you've got into your mind, all lady singers would die, and I would rightly be in trouble. And even if some die, there are nevertheless still some here." She replied: "I don't want to be an outstanding singer. I enjoy listening to music and song. But I also take pleasure in housework and handiwork. With that one remains healthy and strong and doesn't need to travel." Herr Beethoven retorted, "Then I want to know why I taught you in vain and brought you so far! However, if ladies or gentlemen were here, and you here too, and I were to ask you, then you must again sing and play your songs for me." "Oh yes, Herr Beethoven, then I'll gladly do that too," she said, "but, if I'm not in practice, I'll forget it." Herr Beethoven retorted, "What one learns young, one doesn't forget so easily." This she then often did for her own as well as others' enjoyment.

When Ludwig van Beethoven was a little older, he went to the teacher Herr Huppert⁶⁵ at the elementary school in house no. 1091, Neustrasse, the street adjoining the Rheinstrasse; he also later went to the Cathedral School.⁶⁶ According to his father's assertion he did not

of Johann van Beethoven) and soprano Anna Maria (court chapel singer until 1774) (see SG, n. 45, and PC).

⁶⁴ See n. 33 for Judith Gottwald. Frau Haffertons is court chapel singer (from 1780–89) Helene Johanna Averdonk, alto (1760–89). She performed along with Johann van Beethoven (her teacher) and the young Ludwig at a concert on March 26, 1778 in Cologne (see also TDR, 1:65, 130; SG, n. 48). She was sister to Severin Anton Averdonk (1768–1817), librettist for Beethoven's *Joseph Cantata* (WoO 87, composed 1790) (see PC).

⁶⁵ The teacher's name was Ruppert (or Ropertz), at address 890, Neugasse (now Rathausgasse) (SG, n. 49).

⁶⁶ I.e. the Münsterschule. Wegeler also mentions Beethoven's grounding in Latin, etc. (WR, 9): "he learnt reading, writing, numeracy and a little Latin in a public school" — the Tirocinium, or preparatory "Lateinschule," whose regime fellow-pupil and future president of the Koblenz regional court, Joseph Wurzer, (KC, 2:1106-1107; TDR, 1:131-132) describes: "All instruction at the Tirocinium was confined to the first foundations of Latin and of the Catechism.... We... had to... get as far as our First Holy Communion and demonstrate by an oral and written exam that we could fluently translate into German, and analyse, Cornelius Nepos [Roman historian]." Yet, both writers suggest that Beethoven was mediocre at this stage. Wurzer states that there was little sign of his later genius. For Wegeler Beethoven's general education was

learn much at school. This is why the father sat him at such an early age at the piano and compelled him harshly.

It is reported that Cäcilia Fischer witnessed how his father led him to the piano, and how he had to stand and play on a little bench. This was also seen by our Herr Oberbürgermeister Windeck in Bonn and reported in a feuilleton to the *Kölnische Zeitung* No. 191, of July 15, 1838.⁶⁷ He attested that he saw Ludwig van Beethoven at the piano in his room in the Fischer house standing on his little bench, playing and shedding tears. Herr Oberbürgermeister Windeck also attests that in the courtyard of the Fischer house he played on a swing there with Ludwig van Beethoven when they were both still boys. *Objects of remembrance.*

Later on, Ludwig van Beethoven often used to speak about his elementary school and the old teacher Herr Huppert [Ruppert] and would often laugh and ponder over it: "Herr Huppert [Ruppert] the teacher, probably to give us children some fun, allowed action-play; in this an old musician called Koemönch played on the bass, and a musician called Hoeppege played the violin. Then Herr Huppert [Ruppert] the teacher sang with power and fervor the song 'Herr Pastorum gens bigatum,'⁶⁸ etc. Even though we children still didn't

neither conspicuously neglected nor particularly good, but his father expected him to help educate his siblings. However, Bernhard Joseph Mäurer's *Erinnerungen an Beethoven* (KC, 2:570) report Beethoven's year-long tuition in Latin (in or after 1780) from Johann Joseph Zambona, whereby he could translate Cicero's letters after only six weeks.

⁶⁷ The article with Windeck's and Cäcilia's witness was written by Hennes in the Supplement (feuilleton) no. 196 of 1838. Wegeler adds his own witness in suppl. 210 of 1838 of the same newspaper (cited, TDR, 1:129; these two articles and the question of Beethoven's birth-house appear in TDR, 1:474–84; also see SG, n. 50).

⁶⁸ This title, evidently Latin, makes little sense. Were Fischer's wording correct, the song would be a macaronic, meaning "Lord of shepherds, a race [nominative or possibly vocative] + [verb from next line] + [accusative masculine or neuter noun from next line] + stamped with a two-horsed chariot [from the adjective "bigatus", which usually refers to a coin design]". This is clearly implausible; Thayer (Alexander Wheelock Thayer, *Ludwig van Beethovens Leben*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Ferdinand Schneider, 1866-1879), 1:338 (hereafter Thayer 1866); NB, not in TDR) suggests a possible correct reading: "O pastorum gens beata." Such a title suggests a possible origin in the liturgical drama of the medieval church, such as within a local variant of the widely disseminated *Officium pastorum* for Christmas Day. Such music, liturgical in origin, gradually became popularized. A song of this title was evidently well-known in the Salzburg region in the early eighteenth century, since it is cited, as if well-known to all the listeners, in a sermon preached for the rebuilding and reconsecration of the

understand a word of Latin, the good old teacher Herr Huppert [Ruppert] still thought that it was wonderful what he had achieved with it. We children now listened in utmost silence and seriousness and with great attentiveness. After this drama had ended, we children went home in good spirits, and yet no-one knew what it meant, other than to say: ‘We’ve had action-play.’”

Ludwig van Beethoven also received daily lessons on the violin. He was once playing *extempore* when his father happened to come in and say: “Now why are you scraping this bit of stupidity all over the place again? You know that I can’t stand it. Scrape from the music, otherwise your scraping won’t be much use.”

When Johann van Beethoven happened to have visitors and Ludwig came into the room, he would usually roam around the piano and grasp at it with his right hand. Then his father would say, “What, are you tinkling there again? Go away, or I’ll clip your ear.”

Finally, when his father heard him playing the violin, he became vigilant: he was again playing *extempore* according to his own inclination. His father then came in and said: “Aren’t you stopping at all

Church of the Immaculate Conception (Pfarrkirche zu Mariä Unbefleckte Empfängnis) in Flachau in 1722 (published 1723 and dedicated to Franz Anton von Harrach, prince archbishop of Salzburg), and entitled: “*Sittliche Schäfferey, bey der...neu erbaut, fundirt und consecirten Vicariat-Gotts-Haus in der Flachau* [presented through a short church-consecration homily by Franz Kerndl, Dean and Parish Priest at Werffen, given on September 8, 1722]”. The reference to the song is as follows: “O Lust! Still! Ich höre schon die gemüths-verzückende Schäfer-music durch Berg und Thal klingen und also singen:

O pastorum gens beata!
Quibus laeta rident prata!
 Ich sags und bleib darbey.
 Ich lieb die Schäfferey!”

(“O delight! Silence! I already hear the soul-enrapturing shepherds’ music resounding through mountain and valley and singing thus: ‘O blessed race of shepherds, with whom the happy meadows laugh! I say, and stand by it, I love the shepherds’ work’”).

Fischer’s enchanting vignette, of young children encouraged to act out their faith through music and song, is presented through Cäcilia’s recollection of Beethoven’s words. How widely this song was known is unclear, but the old teacher’s touching, vivid, nostalgic fervor for the familiar customs and vivified faith of his youth is suggested. That this little musical drama profoundly impressed Beethoven and his fellow-pupils is also clear. If the song was particularly local to the Salzburg region, it suggests that Ruppert originally came from there.

after all I've been saying?" The boy played again and said to his father, "Isn't that beautiful, then?" His father responded: "That's something else altogether, it's just from your head. You're not ready for that yet. Concentrate your efforts on the violin and the piano, quickly get a proper grasp of the notes. That is of more concern. When you've reached that point, then you can and must work sufficiently from your head too. But for now don't bother with that, you're not there yet."

Ludwig van Beethoven afterwards also received daily lessons on the viola.⁶⁹

In 1776 Madame van Beethoven was persuaded by the court musician Brandt that she might to her advantage move to his house at Neugasse no. 992: it was nearer to the court, nearer to the church, nearer to the market. For Herr Johann van Beethoven it wasn't right at all; he said to his wife: "You'll see, there isn't room enough in the house for our household. And at the back of the house, overlooking the Franciscans' walls, it's a gloomy view. In the old house you'll see what we've achieved by being a stone's throw nearer."

In 1777 on the night of Candlemas [i.e., February 2]⁷⁰ the terrible conflagration of the Court Palace broke out. It seemed almost inextinguishable and twenty-one people perished in it. In the bell-tower among the rear-houses in the Stockenstrasse its glockenspiel had just about played out its little piece when the tower collapsed in a heap of ashes. Herr Johann van Beethoven then came to Meister Fischer, complaining: "The Court Musician Brandt has really double-crossed us, Stockenstrasse is standing in great danger, we can't and won't delay any longer." To their good luck their former apartment, which was again set up for letting, was still standing empty, so with the Master's agreement—as was necessary—the Beethovens with all their household, and helped by many assistants, moved back into the Fischer house in great haste. The Beethoven children were happy, and said, "It's good

⁶⁹ Beethoven received violin and viola lessons first from Franz Rovantini and then from Franz Ries. In the electoral court Chapel he contributed as organist and viola-player (SG, n. 51).

⁷⁰ This fire was actually on January 15, 1777. Court Councillor Emanuel Joseph von Breuning was among those who died, heroically attempting to save vital court papers. His grandson, Gerhard von Breuning, son of Beethoven's childhood friend Stephan von Breuning, describes this fire, in greater detail and dated accurately (BrSchw, 4–5). Both Breuning's and Fischer's accounts focus on aspects affecting their own family and circle, but Breuning's is of broader interest.

that we're here again. There's water enough in the Rhine for extinguishing fires."

When Ludwig van Beethoven was a little older, he was often dirty and negligent. Cäcilia Fischer would say to him: "How dirty you look again. You should conduct yourself more properly." He would retort, "What does that matter? When I'm a gentleman that won't affect me any more." So Cäcilia Fischer used to say to him, "You must get used now to being a little more proper, then you'll pass for a gentleman."

When Ludwig van Beethoven had made good progress from his father's lessons at the piano and felt that he had got beyond note-learning, believing that his piano-playing was quite masterly, he felt emboldened and inclined to play the organ and take lessons. So he joined with Brother Willibald⁷¹ for a trial at the local Franciscan house in Bonn: a proficient master who was also well-acquainted with Beethoven's father, Johann. With the permission of the father guardian, Brother Willibald very compliantly took him on, gave him instruction, and schooled him in church ritual. He made such good progress that Brother Willibald could often make good use of him as his assistant, and he was well liked and esteemed by him.

The organ now in the "Dietkirche"⁷² of St Peter and the same organ-bench on which Ludwig van Beethoven often sat are still present there. *An object of remembrance.*

Ludwig van Beethoven once asked Brother Willibald how it had come about, since he was such a good master in music, that he had entered the solitary life. He told him how it had happened: there was a gentleman in Cologne, a merchant, who had signed himself Mirrefeld or Mirrebach.⁷³ He had an ocean-ship on the seas which every year sailed to India. On his instructions wares were bought there and brought to Amsterdam. The master himself had never yet joined the voyage. He now wanted to join on a voyage to India. He was a music-lover and sought good musicians — whom he would remunerate well at the end of

⁷¹ Br. Willibald Koch was expert in the organ, widely sought and respected for his wide-ranging knowledge of organ-building and performance, as documents cited by Thayer prove (TDR, 1:455, n. 1).

⁷² A "Dietkirche" is a church of the people. This church was the oldest in Bonn after the Münster (SG, n. 52).

⁷³ Fischer renders these names "Mirrefelt oder Mirrebag" — presumably a dialect spelling of standard German names.

the voyage—so that, with the long voyage and fine weather, he could enjoy some entertainment. Herr Willibald also accompanied him on this voyage, and they set sail. Sometime later, at night, he said they were attacked by pirates, whereupon they resisted so well with pickaxes, pikes, loaded rifles, pistols, and swords that the pirates had to retreat in shame. Those on board recommended saying nothing to the master. Herr Willibald had reflected “If only you were still on terra firma!” Sometime later that they were again attacked at night, but they were so much more experienced at defence that these pirates were again overcome by them, and they remained free thereafter. Later on, such a great storm arose during the night that they all thought it was their last hour. Thereupon Herr Willibald made a vow to himself: if God allowed him to return to dry land, he would enter a cloister to thank God perpetually for the deliverance. “So through this I’ve found my true vocation, and I’m totally happy with it.” He said the steersman himself had declared and believed that this voyage would be his last. But they had said nothing about it to the master, although he himself had also experienced it and said that it must have been a great storm. The crew left it at that and mentioned it no more to him.

As Ludwig van Beethoven subsequently became more adventurous on the organ, he wanted very much to play on a bigger organ, so he did a trial at the local Minorite church in Bonn too.⁷⁴ He also became so friendly with the organist that he got himself firmly appointed there to play the organ at the 6 a.m. Holy Mass each morning. The same organ-bench at which Ludwig van Beethoven often sat is still present there. *An object of remembrance.*

In the Minorite cloister there was a Father Hanzmann,⁷⁵ who was also a good organist, and who also played the organ whenever he wished. When the Beethovens held a concert in the house Fr. Hanzmann always turned up. Ludwig van Beethoven could not stand him and said

⁷⁴ The Minorite community was dissolved in 1802, and the church has become the present Remigiuskirche. Its organ-keyboard mentioned below by Fischer is now in the Beethoven-Haus, Bonn (SG, n. 55).

⁷⁵ Father Hanzmann later forsook his spiritual calling, married, and became a judge in the Bonn Tribunal of the French Revolutionary occupiers (TDR, 1:455, n. 2; SG, n. 56). Beethoven’s contrasting attitudes towards Fr. Hanzmann and Br. Willibald is striking, suggesting an early religious prescience which remained with him for the rest of his life: outspokenly critical of those who betrayed their religious calling, he was generous in admiration for those pursuing it faithfully.

to Cäcilia Fischer: "That monk who always turns up here, he could just as well stay in his cloister and should pray his breviary instead."

Frau Fischer's only and still last-living little daughter, Cäcilia Fischer, had thick long hair, which her mother could make into thick, broad braids. She always dressed her with clean, neat, middle-class decency, for she was still an innocent young girl. The Beethovens' regular visitors, it was said, would, in going through the lower house, stare hard at her, and she, as an innocent young girl, often became angry at this and would say that no-one should have seen her. This also often happened to her at the Beethovens' apartment: when there were foreign gentlemen there, they would stare hard at her. Once it happened with the English envoy's private tutor Facius, who had three sons and a daughter, who often visited Herr Beethoven.⁷⁶ Other gentlemen were there too. They stared so hard at her, and one of Facius' sons said that Cäcilia Fischer had something amorous in her face. As an innocent young girl she could not yet grasp this, became angry and said, "Why are you looking so hard at me? I haven't stolen anything from you." They all laughed so heartily at this, perhaps at her naïveté. This they would often later tell her.

One morning Cäcilia Fischer went to Herr Johann van Beethoven with her neck bandaged. He asked, "Cäcilia, what's wrong with you?" She replied, "I've got such a bad neck that I can't swallow." He said, "Oh, then your uvula has slipped, nothing more than that. I'll help you then. Sit down, take off your little hood." He gripped her by the vertebrae and pulled her by the hair. Then she screamed and said, "That hurts." He replied, "But you've been helped again. You shouldn't omit this. Now you'll be able to swallow again." She told us: "I ran to my mother and said: 'Herr Beethoven is a good doctor. He's lifted my uvula and I can swallow again.' My mother replied, 'Well, go to Herr Beethoven and pass on thanks from your mother too. You owe Herr Beethoven great gratitude for this.'"

Herr Johann van Beethoven gave no lessons in the house, except for three pupils from the neighborhood, namely Nikolaus Veit, August

⁷⁶ Johann Facius was not with the English ambassador, but, from the early 1780s, a Russian agent in Bonn. The sons were musical, and the family was known to the organist Neefe. (SG, n. 57; TDR, 1:100, n. 2).

Kunz, and Fräulein Gazanello Josepha⁷⁷—for piano and singing, when the court tenor held lessons. Nikolaus Veit later became organist at the old St Remigius parish in Bonn. On account of his outstandingly good playing he was summoned to Cologne, remained living there and died there. Nikolaus Veit was previously the chief teacher of the son of old Mombauer⁷⁸ and brought him to a very advanced level. Mombauer became organist in the Bonn Münster church and was often summoned to Cologne when they held major concerts. Ludwig van Beethoven wanted to take old Mombauer's son with him to Vienna, because he too had great talent in music, but he did not have courage enough to travel with him.

August Kunz betook himself to Maastricht and in his time had a music-shop there. By all general accounts he was a good keyboard-player and a good organist. During the years of French occupation August Kunz once gave a concert on the Minorite church organ in Bonn, for which he received great renown and praise. It may have been granted him at the time because he was a son of Bonn, but after that it was completely forbidden to give any further concert on a church organ.

When the two aforesaid men visited Bonn, they each time visited the house at no. 934, Rheinstrasse, to see the houseowner Meister Fischer, and we then conversed as still in recent times with the daughter of the house Cäcilia Fischer and her brother Gottfried Fischer, as at present, about the delights that they used to have with the Beethovens. And they were still grateful to Herr Johann van Beethoven for his good teaching, and the grand-master Ludwig van Beethoven, who, it is true, was still at the time under tuition, though further on than they were, and who, however, when he could, always assisted them in their learning. *Matter of remembrance.*

Cäcilia Fischer gave testimony on Johann van Beethoven's late relative Madame Herberger the confectioner, a wealthy and kind-hearted lady from the town of Ehrenbreitstein opposite Koblenz, the aunt of the Beethovens' children. When she visited Bonn, usually in May or June, to have a change of surroundings there, she brought a half of

⁷⁷ Nikolaus Veit, pianist and organist, was later musically active in Cologne. August Kunz, pianist and organist, was later a music-dealer in Maastricht. Maria Josepha Gazanello was a soprano (1783–84) in the Bonn court chapel (SG, nn. 58, 59).

⁷⁸ Franz Joseph Mombauer (or Mompour), 1782–1841, became organist at St Remigius, Bonn, and a composer (SG, n. 60).

veal and a half-lamb in two baskets, a basket of mixed wheat and rye bread from the Oberland, and a basket of all sorts of expensive confectionery and tarts as a gift. The Beethoven children and the Fischer children thus without exception received confectionery as a gift from Madame Herberger, and each child also received two wads of money, and so the children were all very pleased. Madame Herberger had a child, a son, who was in the service of Herr von Weichs, chief master of the hunt, in Bonn. Upon her arrival she eagerly arranged to be announced to him as soon as possible. When he came to his mother at Herr van Beethoven's apartment she would say, "O my dear son Franz, you're still fit and well, but you're becoming very fat." He would say, "Yes, but I have many frustrations; others become thin through frustrations, but I become fat, and I don't like this." "My son Franz," she replied, "just be patient. You know that good care is taken of you, and I take care of you every day. With God's help things will turn out right for you." Madame Herberger received good service, for she was accustomed to fine living.

When Ludwig van Beethoven heard a lady singing, whose voice was not good, he said, "Just listen, Cäcilia Fischer. How that woman's vomiting. She wants to get up so high. Look, she's stuck. She thinks she's amazing, how beautifully she sings, but I'd much rather she kept quiet."

Johann van Beethoven, when he had to sing in the Court Chapel, had the custom of taking in the morning a fresh raw egg and sucking it out, or two plums: he gave the advice that this was good for singing.

Annually on St. Mary Magdalen's day Madame van Beethoven's birthday and name-day were splendidly celebrated. The music-stands were brought from the court chapel and placed in both rooms facing the street, on left and right. And in the room where the portrait of the grandfather hung a baldacchino was erected, prepared with beautiful decoration and beautiful flowers, laurel branches and leaf-work. The evening before, Madame van Beethoven was asked to go in good time to bed; until 10 p.m. everything progressed in the greatest silence and everything was made ready.

Now the day's mood began, and Madame van Beethoven was woken up. She had to get dressed, and she was then led to the baldacchino and seated upon a beautiful, decorated seat. Glorious music now began, resounding in the whole neighborhood. Everything that had been organised at sleeping-time was now again made bright and warm.

After the music had ended, they set the table, ate, and drank. When heads quickly became merry and they were in the mood for dancing, they took off their shoes and danced in stockinged feet so as to cause no disturbance in the house. At last the day was thus ended and concluded. Herr Lux,⁷⁹ an outstanding, famed actor at court, had at various times, on Madame van Beethoven's name-day, in her honor, sung to music, as a soloist, songs whose text he had written and set. *Objects of remembrance.*

Herr Johann van Beethoven, during a thunderstorm, liked looking through his street-facing window to see how it would end. Likewise Klein, a court fishmonger who lived just opposite him, liked watching the storm. Both were good neighbors and good drinking-companions. At this time Herr Johann van Beethoven often called to him through his fist: "Toot, toot, toot, toot." That was as much as to say, "You've drunk well!" Then the fishmonger would call back through his fist, "What do you want, you note-cruncher?" Herr Johann van Beethoven would again often call through his fist: "Toot, toot, toot, toot!" The fishmonger would then respond, "What do you want, you scrounging musician?" But this happened genteelly, so that no-one noticed. In this way they both often had fun for a short time. But Cäcilia Fischer was an eye-witness.

When Johann van Beethoven received his monthly salary or payment from his pupils, he had fun when he came home and his wife was sitting in the room. He would then shake the money into her lap and say, "Now, wife, keep house with this." She would then give him money for a bottle of wine and say: "One should not let men go away so empty, for who could have the heart to do that?" He would then say, "Yes, so empty!" She would reply, "Yes, so empty, but I know you would rather have a full glass than an empty one." "Yes," he said, "the wife is right; what's more, she's right, and she continues to be right."

Herr Johann van Beethoven, however, was a serious man, but when he was in good humor and the little daughter of the house, Cäcilia Fischer, was with him, he would tease her and say in fun, "Cäcilia, our patroness of music, I like you. You must give me a kiss." She refused

⁷⁹ Joseph Lux (1757–1818), actor and musician, bass singer, and viola-player in the court orchestra (1789–94) (SG, n. 92; TDR, 1:240). Thayer (Thayer 1866, 1:342 n. 1) assumes a confusion as he did not reside in Bonn until 1788, when the Beethovens were no longer in the Fischer House. But, travelling with theater troupes from the early 1780s, he probably performed there.

and would not do this. She said, "I'm no kissing-girl. You've got a wife for sure. Kiss her, not me." Herr Johann van Beethoven retorted, "You're a naughty little witch. You know well how to answer back, but I'll still have my fun with you!"

Once, long afterwards, he was teasing her again. She eluded him; he lost his balance against the stove, and the stove with its flame, along with its pipe, fell out of the wall into the room. Then Cäcilia began laughing and clapped with both her hands; so he too had to laugh.

Almost immediately a student named Steinmüller came in, a jurist, with his sword at his side.⁸⁰ He asked Herr Beethoven, "What's going on here? The stove, with its flame and pipe, are lying in the room. How did that happen?" Herr Beethoven replied, "It's little Cäcilia Fischer's fault, and this has been the outcome for me." At this none of them could stop laughing. Herr Steinmüller quipped, "That's what happens when men want to kiss young girls: the stove, fire and pipe fall out of the wall into the room. Now, Herr Beethoven, you can take care in future." Herr Beethoven replied, "That's a good lesson for me." They had so much fun over this, and he was so often teased, that he said himself, "That was a costly lesson for me, only to kiss where it's wanted." Madame van Beethoven herself said to Cäcilia, "That was quite right. That's as it should always be."

In Bonn there was a middle-aged man named Stumpf,⁸¹ who had earlier mastered both music and composition, and was supposed as a result, according to the common phrase, to have lost his wits. He habitually went through the town with a conductor's baton in his right hand and in his left a roll of music-paper. He said not a word when he entered the lower house at the Rheinstrasse no. 934, expected by no-one. He would beat with his stick on the table there, and point up towards the Beethoven dwelling, as if to give to understand that musicians were there too. Then, still saying nothing, he would beat time upon the notes with his baton. Ludwig van Beethoven would often laugh at this, and sometimes say: "We can see from this how it may turn out for musicians."

⁸⁰ Possibly Johann Steinmüller, who on September 13, 1784, wrote an extortive letter to the minister von Belderbusch's nephew, claiming to be a former court violinist. However, he is not mentioned in the court calendars (SG, n. 61).

⁸¹ "Stommb" in Fischer's script: a common name in Bonn, with several instances in the court chapel lists (SG, n. 62).

This one's already gone mad through music. How may it yet turn out for us?"

It seemed as if something had been sensed by this witless musician: when he went outside and was on the street he would point to the Beethovens' quarters and beat the time with his baton upon the notes before departing. If one assumes the common proverb that children and fools often indicate the truth, his constant pointing up to Beethoven—where he had been unable to reach out—would have meant that Ludwig van Beethoven was still to turn out as a great man, and that much was yet to be spoken about him. That is to be guessed regarding him, Stumpf.

Cäcilia Fischer often became weary of this and said, "He always has to come here too, into our house. No-one sees him going into another house. He always has to come here too, into our house when no-one's expecting it. And he comes and beats roughly with his stick on the table in the lower house. Then people become really alarmed, but he doesn't say a word. And if he's asked about something, he never answers.

The three sons of Herr Johann van Beethoven, namely, Ludwig, Kaspar [Kaspar Karl] and Nikolaus [Nikolaus Johann] used to be very careful about the honor of their parents.⁸² When their father, through being in his usual company, had had a little too much to drink—something which didn't often happen—and his sons perceived this, all three were immediately anxious and, in the most delicate way, so as not to cause a stir, sought to bring their father quietly back home. They coaxed him with, "Oh, Daddy, Daddy!" He even allowed this to be said to him. He didn't have any aggressive drunkenness in him but was merry and cheerful, and so we were hardly aware of it in our house.

On the morning of St. Cecilia's Day Herr Johann van Beethoven and Madame van Beethoven would come to Cäcilia Fischer and congratulate her on her name-day and birthday, saying, "God be praised that we've again witnessed this day when with a musical High Mass we

⁸² Fischer's ensuing account largely coincides with Gerhard von Breuning's (BrSchw, 12–13). Breuning's father, Stephan, actively supported Beethoven when his father was drunk: he portrays a more aggressive Johann, constantly liable to fall foul of the law, with Beethoven and his friends regularly mediating with the patrol. Probably both accounts are broadly correct, but Johann clearly became more aggressively drunk by the time of Beethoven's acquaintance with the Breunings, and especially after being bereaved.

solemnly celebrate in the court chapel the feast of St. Cecilia, our patroness of music." At this Johann van Beethoven gave the usual lyric poem:

Long live Cecilia⁸³ with her companions, eleven thousand musicians!
The angels too anoint themselves for this. We lead a spiritual life but
are still merry besides. In the heavenly cellar there grows Muskateller,
and the angels bake the bread, so none of us goes short.—Long live
Cäcilia Fischer!

And in a similar way Johann van Beethoven and Madame van Beethoven were mutually congratulated by Theodor Fischer and Frau Fischer on their name-days and birthdays. Later on, a good liqueur or wine from those at hand, and whatever was suitable, was presented and drunk. In the evening the musicians gathered at Stockenstrasse no. 2 in the courtyard of the court footman Heuser,⁸⁴ a vintner's. There the musicians made merry, and the day was thus concluded. At this time the three Beethoven sons were anxious to accompany their father safely home.

Since Ludwig van Beethoven now felt that he had been raised in prestige by his father, he thought that he stood equal with him in music. And his brother Kaspar [Kaspar Karl],⁸⁵ who was also at school, made quite good progress there and became well-versed in the knowledge of medicinal herbs, so as in time to be taken on as an apothecary's apprentice; both had the spirit and the desire. If these two could both play a boys' big trick, they could both have great fun and laugh heartily about it, and Ludwig could customarily arch his back crookedly.

Frau Fischer at that time kept hens but lamented: "I feed them well. I used to get many eggs but now I get few!" She started taking watchful care about everything but no-one could be found, until by chance, when she was not expecting it, she came into the courtyard and saw that Ludwig van Beethoven had slipped through the gate into the

⁸³ The English spelling "Cecilia" is used here when St. Cecilia is addressed. Where the subject is Cäcilia Fischer, the standard German spelling is used. Fischer in fact spells both as "Cicilia."

⁸⁴ The chancery messenger Heuser lived at no. 2, Stockenstrasse, named "zum Kaiser" (SG, n. 63).

⁸⁵ The brother who studied to be an apothecary was Nikolaus Johann, not Kaspar Karl.

henhouse. Frau Fischer exclaimed, "Hey, Ludwig, what are you doing there?" He replied, "My brother Kaspar has thrown my handkerchief in there. And I want to fetch it out again." Frau Fischer responded, "Yes, that may well be why I get so few eggs!" Ludwig retorted, "Oh, Frau Fischer, the hens often mislay the eggs, but when they find them once again, they're all the more happy. It's said there are foxes too that come for the eggs." Frau Fischer replied, "I think you too are one of those sly foxes. What will become of you?" Ludwig responded, "Oh, Heaven knows. As you said yourself, I'm a note-fox up till now." "Yes, and an egg-fox too," said Frau Fischer. Then both ran off like rogues and laughed. Frau Fischer had to laugh as well. She could not blame them any further for what was a boys' prank.

The three Beethoven sons, when still boys, often teased me and said, "Listen, Gottfried, your father is a fisher." I replied, "He isn't a fisher, he's a baker and bakes little bread rolls." They persisted: "Listen, Gottfried, your father goes fishing at night, and bakes the fish." "No," I replied, "my father is a baker, not a fisher; my mother does the fish-baking in the kitchen, not my father." "But listen, Gottfried," they said, "you and your father are both fishers. When you grow up, you'll have to catch fish too at night and bake them." "No," said I, "when I grow up I'd be a baker, not a fisher." They just wouldn't stop and that exasperated me, so I ran after them and hit out at them. They then laughed and said, "There's the second old master-baker Fischer. He won't let anything rest, he's asserting his right." And what I innocently said then I've also since set down. I was the master-baker Fischer in Bonn, where the old Bonn citizens still praise my former bakery.

One early summer morning a cock flew out of another courtyard and landed on the roof of the Fischers' rear-building. Ludwig's father and mother were sleeping in a street-facing room. The three Beethoven boys were sleeping in a courtyard-facing room. Ludwig immediately saw the cock. The Fischer boys, who were also sleeping in a courtyard-facing room, had also seen it. They were watching in silence to see how the fun would end. Ludwig said, "That cock looks like a plump young knight to me, it's even got small spurs. Look, look how willingly the cock recommends itself to us! If I could grab it...I'll soon strike it a blow." Ludwig and Kaspar [Kaspar Karl] came creeping into the courtyard, enticed and coaxed the cock with bread until they'd grabbed it. Then they held onto its neck so that it couldn't cry out, and ran upstairs to

their store laughing. They then, presumably, agreed with the maid that she would prepare the cock when their father and mother were out.

The next day the son of the house Johann Peter Fischer said to Ludwig, “The cock must have been musical too. I heard it singing from the treetop, it sang with an alto voice.” They laughed, and Ludwig said, “I was soon tired of the alto voice by the time he was well roasted. We devoured him in our storeroom. But you won’t say anything about it to our Mom or Dad, will you? Otherwise we three boys would have to go running from the house.” Johann Peter Fischer replied, “Oh, what does the cock matter to me? It could have stayed in its courtyard!” Ludwig observed that there used to be a law that one could legally keep whatever beast one found in the early morning that had run into one’s house or flown into the courtyard. “It’s right too,” he said, “that people should take better care of their livestock, for great misfortunes can occur through them.”

Since Ludwig van Beethoven now felt that he had been raised in prestige by his father, he thought that he stood equal with him in music. Johann van Beethoven’s son Ludwig in his lessons executed the piano music so well and made such swift progress that at last he could play perfectly whatever his father placed before him, and his father could not advance him any further. His father thought that he might perhaps have the talent for learning musical composition. He put this to the test and obtained an elderly master called Santerrini,⁸⁶ who taught his son for a time. Johann van Beethoven did not think much of “Santerrini”, had no confidence in him, and didn’t think that this was the right man, or one from whom his son could learn much. He wanted a change and turned to the director of the local Bonn theater, Grossmann,⁸⁷ from Saxony, with whom he was intimately friendly. Grossmann knew the musicians and composers, and procured a composer for him, a preacher’s son from Saxony, named Pfeifer. He styled himself “Herr Music-Director de Past

⁸⁶ Thayer (TDR, 1:459, n. 1) considers “Santerrini” a mistake for the elderly van der Eeden—Beethoven’s teacher during part of his residence at the Fischer house. However, in “Die Mittheilungen über das Bonner Theater,” *Reichardt’s Theaterkalender*, 1780 (see TDR, 1:78) “Santorini” is listed as a member of Grossmann’s theater troupe in Bonn.

⁸⁷ Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Grossmann (1746–1796), from Saxony, a central figure of Bonn’s cultural life, set up there a stage for drama, singspiel, operetta, and musical drama. The electoral court orchestra accompanied these performances. He introduced many musicians to Bonn, including Pfeifer and Neefe (SG, n. 91).

Pfeifer",⁸⁸ was aged twenty-eight years, and a young, handsome man. He was with the Beethovens for board and lodging. He took on Ludwig van Beethoven for instruction, and when he had been teaching him for some time and Beethoven had absorbed the teaching, Pfeifer said to his father that he perceived that his son was assimilating it well, and had found that he had a good grasp; so he said that he too would do his best, whatever was in his power. With this master Beethoven made good daily progress. Johann van Beethoven used to express his view on this, that this Pfeifer was an exceptional musician and composer, and his son was lucky to learn so much from him. Ludwig van Beethoven himself, while still alive, often reportedly declared of him that this Pfeifer was his chief teacher; from him he had received his all.

Cäcilia Fischer once came to the Beethoven apartment when Herr Director Pfeifer was also there. Pfeifer said, "She is the little daughter of the house; I already know her name from the Beethovens: Cäcilia Fischer." She replied, "Yes, Herr Director Pfeifer." Johann van Beethoven said, "This girl should be thrashed!" Herr Director Pfeifer asked, "Why so, then?" He replied, "She has a strong chest for singing high or low. For a good time I introduced her first to learning notation, then to singing from the music and so to accompanying herself at the piano. She progressed so far in this that she could sing the songs and play them on the piano note-perfect. But I should not have taken so much trouble to make a distinguished singer of her, all free of charge. She pondered on it and became deluded, saying that she didn't want to travel and on her travels in a foreign land become ill and die there from her exertions. She adduced four lady court-singers who were well-known to her and who had died very young from their exertions. She thought this might happen to her, and stood by her decision. She said she also enjoyed housework and handiwork; with these there was no need to travel, and one remained healthy and strong." Herr Director Pfeifer retorted, "Then you've not done well in this. Now take my good

⁸⁸ Tobias Friedrich Pfeifer (whose first name Fischer spells "de Past"), a tenor, oboist, and pianist from Thuringia, was in Bonn with Grossmann's theater troupe (1779–80) and taught Beethoven. In 1789 he was dismissed from the troupe for poor performance but continued working freelance, settling in Düsseldorf (SG, n. 64; TDR, 1:80-81). Fischer's praise of him (below) concurs with Wegeler's view that Pfeifer was the teacher most eliciting Beethoven's gratitude: Beethoven even sent him money from Vienna at time of need (WR, 11). Fischer's contrasting ignoring of Neefe likewise endorses Wegeler (see n. 138 below).

advice. I too, without payment, will get her to progress further at piano and singing, and when I've made an outstanding singer of her, she'll become my wife and I'll take her with me to Saxony." Cäcilia Fischer said "Many thanks" to Herr Director Pfeifer, but continued holding fast to her intention. Herr Director Pfeifer informed Cäcilia Fischer, "You're not going to bypass me so easily, but you must sing and play your songs again to me too." This she did, and Herr Director Pfeifer, himself convinced, exclaimed, "Pity about your good talent!" At various times he reportedly reminded her about his offer but she held fast to her intention. Johann van Beethoven used to say to Gottfried Fischer that his parents had only one little daughter, and they would always, as long as they lived, want to keep her with them, whatever might happen.

Every year before Christmas Herr Johann van Beethoven had a hefty pig slaughtered, and then the court master-baker Asbach would make sausages for Madame van Beethoven—which he could do extremely well; then Madame van Beethoven would send the houseowner Fischer a sample of her sausages, and likewise Frau Fischer would reciprocally send Madame van Beethoven a sample of her sausages.

At Christmas in the court chapel at midnight when the elector as archbishop offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, from 11 p.m. to 12 midnight the male musicians and the female court singers had to show their greatest energy and activity in the prince's court chapel.

All the court nobility, along with those in their service, would then appear in the court chapel in all their finery, and the elector's bodyguard would stand on both sides on parade. The whole regiment at the Court would stand in parade from the Koblenzer Tor [Koblenz Gate] right up to the court chapel. After the First Gospel, and half-way through the Holy Mass, and after the Last Gospel they had on the cue to fire three times, and the cannons on the wall had to respond.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Before the reforms of the Catholic liturgy following the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) the "First Gospel" referred to the gospel of the day (Luke 2:1-14 for Christmas Midnight Mass), while "Last Gospel" was the beginning of St. John's Gospel (1:1–14), read at the end of each Mass.

The cannons fired half-way through the Holy Mass ("halbe Heilige Mees") did not occur at a precise time-division but at the transition-point between the first part of the Mass (the Mass of the Catechumens, now more commonly called the Liturgy of the Word) and the second part, from the Offertory onwards, known as the Mass of the Faithful. Thus, the firings marked both the Incarnation of Christ as represented

It was often very cold at that time. When the celebration of Mass had ended and Herr van Beethoven with his family and others besides returned home, the court master-baker, Asbach, was then also present with them. Then, in accordance with an old custom, fresh sausages were roasted, and warm wine, punch, and coffee prepared. Everyone ate and drank, and celebrated the coming day in this way, so ending the festivities.

Herr Music-Director Tobias Pfeifer had some peculiar caprices: he would habitually in the middle of the night go up and down in the room—perhaps for reflecting on music—in heavy boots, which were the fashion at the time. Meister Fischer, who slept underneath him, sent to Herr Director Pfeifer, asking if he would kindly take off his boots; he would rather that he put on slippers, because he was being disturbed at night in his sleep. Pfeifer sent to Meister Fischer, replying, “O yes, by all means!” But he now took one boot off while leaving the other on. Fischer gave up on saying anything more. Later, one morning, he threw his barber, Triputt, all the way down the stairs. It was thought he had broken his neck and legs. Fischer asked what was going on. The barber Triputt shouted to him, “You’re a right musical fool! You can have your hair done by anyone you like, but never again me! One does one’s best, but he always manages to find some fault.” Anyway, Triputt was a rude man and perhaps he had seemed rude to Pfeifer too, so that he became overwrought. At the Beethoven apartment all was now silent, and they took another barber named Henseler.

When Herr Director Pfeifer went out, sometimes, in passing through the lower house, he came upon Cäcilia Fischer when she was on infant-cradling duty. He declared: “I’ll help you a bit with the cradling.” He asked her, “Is it a boy or a girl?” She replied, “That’s my little brother, Gottfried. Oh, but cradling, please, that’s no work for you.” Then he said to her, “You’re going to come to us again for a bit.”⁹⁰ Cäcilia replied: “If my mother allows it, and if you’re blowing the flute too.” He

through the reading of Scripture, and the introduction of the most sacred part of the Mass, in which Christ becomes incarnate on the altar. Although this particular custom of firing cannons was apparently local to Bonn, it was a sign of the universal rejoicing at the coming of Christmas after the end of Advent, a season of fasting when, for instance, organs were universally silent.

⁹⁰ Fischer uses the third person, “sie wird”—usually employed (particularly of men in the military) for addressing subordinates.

retorted, “Oh, the flute! The instrument doesn’t interest me much, because one’s blowing out one’s good breath for others. That certainly can’t please me.”

Herr Director Pfeifer seldom played the flute, or he had to be asked very pressingly to do so. But when he played on it and Ludwig accompanied it with variations on the piano,⁹¹ then the people in the street listened, all attention, and praised the beautiful music.

Herr Director Pfeifer went out little and also required little company; for the greater part he was occupied in thinking about music.

Herr Director Pfeifer was once ill for some days in the house. The Beethovens provided every possible help and care for him, did everything possible to please him, for they thought very highly of Pfeifer, and he was also worth it; besides, in his relations with them he was a good man, and in this could not be criticised. The Beethovens’ maid once complained: “During his illness Herr Director Pfeifer has given me a lot to do. I’ll certainly remember him. Before his illness and after his illness too, he was often still giving orders late in the evening, when other people would go earlier to bed. I had to make coffee for him then, and fetch him wine, beer and brandy. And then I think he drinks them all, one after the other. But it doesn’t do him any harm. You couldn’t say that he would be found drunk—he was always in his right mind, quiet and peaceable.” *Matter of remembrance.*

Cäcilia Fischer once went to Herr van Beethoven’s apartment. Herr Ludwig was alone in the room, at his note-writing. She exclaimed, “Oh, you’re always to be found at your notes—you’re a real note-muncher!” He replied, “You’ve said well. If I didn’t munch them, then I’d have to swallow them whole—but they’re often difficult to digest.” She responded, “Well you must chew them well, then they can be easily digested.” He replied, “Yes, all well said! Hens must lay eggs!” She exclaimed, “Yes, and now you’re on about the eggs again, you fox! I would have thought you would have forgotten that long ago.” He had to laugh so much at that, that he exclaimed: “Yes, if I just think about

⁹¹ Thayer (Thayer 1866, 1:345 n. 1) mentions in this context Beethoven’s Sonata for Piano and Flute in B-flat from his Bonn period, (Alexander Wheelock Thayer, *Chronologisches Verzeichniss der Werke Ludwig van Beethoven’s* (Berlin: Ferdinand Schneider, 1865) No. 21, 10; (“Anhang 4” in LvBWV 2014, 2:679);—NB, shown not to be authentic: see Barry Cooper, “New Light on some Beethoven Works of Doubtful Authenticity,” *Ad Parnassum* 17, no. 34 (2019): 77–101 at 82–84.

that little bit of fun, and it comes to mind, I always just have to laugh at it—it does me good! When you're young, you play all sorts of amazing tricks. I'll tell you about it now. My brother Kaspar [Kaspar Karl] and I often used to watch Frau Fischer unnoticed, when she was coming energetically into the courtyard, wanting to fetch the eggs from the hens' nests—but there would be nothing there but the nest. 'Oh no!' she would say. 'We feed them well and the hens are clucking, yet we don't get any eggs. This is the work of witches, something isn't right.' As we usually say, 'The bird scuppers the goal.'"

Cäcilia Fischer once came to Herr Director Pfeifer, who exclaimed, "Here comes my dear girl! She must become my wife!" She retorted, "If this is true, then it's not a lie. When you see it, your eyes are open. My father says that musicians are rather good-for-nothing people." He laughed and said, "Yes, but you mustn't regard us like this. Not one of us can be good-for-nothing, because, when we work for a quarter of an hour, that's worth more than when others work for a whole year! I love you, you'll become my wife, I'll take you with me to Saxony. You've already adopted our Saxon dialect very well, compared with other girls from Bonn. I like this in you."

Herr Director Pfeifer went out, and later came in again. He looked around the lower house for a little, then posed a quirky question to Frau Fischer, who was standing there, but she answered him well. He said, "Look, Frau Fischer, a spider has made a web on your little shrine to the Mother of God. I thought that spiders had too much reverence for her shrine, and that they wouldn't do that." Frau Fischer replied, "Herr Director Pfeifer, the spiders act according to their nature and build their masterpiece. In this way they want to bring honor and joy to the Christ Child and Our Lady. And that puts us both to shame." Herr Director Pfeifer laughed and paced around, saying, "Frau Fischer, you well know how to answer me, and that satisfies me, but I won't question you further." Meanwhile, Frau Fischer thought, "I'd better watch out from now on." It was hot summer weather, so the spiders had made their webs early.

In the year 1784 there was a great and frightening flood from the Rhine. The Fischers and those living on the first floor all hauled their household goods, as a precaution, into the storeroom. The water came up so far that the Rhine had already penetrated four feet high into the lower house, putting all the residents of the house into great anxiety and

fear. Madame van Beethoven, who lived in the house, whispered, “Be brave! Why are you so afraid here? What is it about this high water, then? You people are just not so used to it here. As for us in Ehrenbreitstein, we often have high water, but we don’t make a fuss.” All was good now, until the water, five feet high, rose to the first floor, and from there again right up to the Beethoven apartment on the second floor, right up to the top stair, and remained at that level. At that even Madame van Beethoven grew anxious and said, “I wouldn’t have expected that.” The Beethovens and the other residents hauled their best belongings all in a complete shambles into the storeroom. Madame van Beethoven now directed: “We’ll leave our belongings here while the Rhine is penetrating. No, we don’t want all to lose our lives in the water here, we won’t wait any longer, we should try to find shelter in the town.” Frau Fischer with her children also tried to find shelter. But now there was no escape route from the house available except by setting a tall ladder against the Beethoven dwelling down to the courtyard. By this everyone had to climb down, with the children being carried. There, through both courtyards and through the Fischers’ rear-house at no. 950, Giergasse, Meister Fischer had laid out planks along the ground, so that all could pass through with dry feet. The Beethoven family went to no. 9, Stockenstrasse, “zur goldenen Kette,” to a musician, Philipart,⁹² who lived there as a tenant. He cleared out one of his rooms for the Beethovens, until the Rhine receded and they could thus again return dry-foot through the Fischers’ rear-house into their apartment. Frau Fischer and her children had found good accommodation in the Sternstrasse with a young lady. Meister Fischer, however, was absolutely not to be persuaded by others to leave the house. He said that no way would he leave his house, he now just wanted to bide his time there. Meister Fischer, who from his upper storeroom had watched the icy current breaking through, said that the hair on his head had stood upright as he watched how the houses on the other side fared, and when he reflected on the misfortunes that the Rhine had caused at that time.

After the penetration of the Rhine flood, most of the water gradually disappeared, but it remained in the lower house for some days. Afterwards, as the three cellars, the bakehouse and the lower house were full of mud and sludge, Fischer had them cleaned out, the

⁹² Joseph Philipart (b. c. 1755) was a violinist in the court chapel (1778–94) (SG, n. 67).

walls all swept and dried out. On his baking-oven lay four feet of wet mud. This he had removed, and had it strewn with dry, rough sand. He now wished to return his oven to use, and had it fired up for two twenty-four-hour periods with heavy bundles of wood. He expected to bake an oven-produced rye bread, but at the end of the baking time the bread was useless and they had to give it to the pigs. They made another attempt and again fired it up for a few hours, this time achieving success. But Meister Fischer still had many struggles ahead. Herr Theater-Director Grossmann again visited the Beethovens. He said to Meister Fischer, "What a great alteration, how different it looks now, what great damage the water has caused you! And that poor little creature the canary-bird, that whistled a lovely little song—it's still hanging there in its cage, drowned as well! Why then didn't you save the bird?" Meister Fischer replied, "I wanted to get out over the floors, but the water had reached me, so I had to get myself out of the room, or I would have drowned. There was still so much to save but no time for it—the water level was so high, higher than I've ever experienced before." Ludwig and Kaspar [Kaspar Karl] van Beethoven often spoke of the year 1784. *Matter of remembrance.* There is verification.

The daughter of Herr Office-Administrator Tevelich and the wife of Herr Rheindorf in Ersdorf, both close relatives of Meister Fischer's wife, both visited the Fischers' house in Bonn around this time; it was just on Madame van Beethoven's name-day, the feast of St. Mary Magdalen. Madame van Beethoven, hearing about this visit, and being well-acquainted with these two Fischer relatives, came down immediately and invited these two, along with the Fischers, to come up and celebrate her name-day with her; several more gathered there were also making merry. *Matter of remembrance.*

As previously mentioned, the Beethovens' cousin Herr Franz Rovantini and Herr Christoff Brandt, both court musicians and both single, were sent by Elector Maximilian Friedrich, at his own expense, to Berlin and to Dresden in Saxony to further their musical training. They returned to Bonn, to his court chapel, as outstanding musicians, bringing the elector great renown. Rovantini, who was previously well-known in Bonn, became even more well-known now. Outside the house he received many music-pupils, with the exception of those to whom he

gave lessons in the house.⁹³ Upon Herr Franz Rovantini's return, Johann van Beethoven again took him, his wife's sister's son, into his home with board and lodging.

When these three came to agreement, Ludwig played the piano, Herr Director Tobias Pfeifer played the flute, and Rovantini varied the music with his violin. The music was then so beautiful that the people in the street remained standing at the house and praised the beautiful music, saying that one could indeed listen to it day and night. When Rovantini on occasion had time, and Ludwig was playing, he varied the music with his violin. This truly delighted Ludwig, because Rovantini could play so outstandingly well and so beautifully.

Herr Franz Rovantini used to say to Cäcilia Fischer, "Now, by way of news I just want to show you all my former girl-pupils, all upright and honest, from Berlin and from Dresden in Saxony, whose head-and-shoulders portraits in ink I had copied and framed, and described with forename and surname. I was very friendly with the mothers of all the girls: I called them my Mamma. And it grieved us all when I announced my imminent departure. But it was with the consciousness that I left the girls all still just as upright and honest [as before] when I had to part from them."⁹⁴ Herr Franz Rovantini often continued speaking and relating much about Berlin and Potsdam and Dresden in Saxony, what he had seen there and what he found noteworthy.

When Herr Music-Director Tobias Pfeifer realised that he had done his best for Ludwig van Beethoven, as he had both promised

⁹³ Fischer's phrase is "erhielt er ville Schullare in der Musik außer dem Hauß, mit Ausnahm, welche im Haußstunde gab." This is grammatically clumsy and ambiguous. While the interpretation given here seems most probable, it could mean "...and occasionally gave lessons in the house."

⁹⁴ This testimony on Rovantini's chastity and purity clearly made a deep and character-forming impression on Beethoven, who testified repeatedly to his own chastity and purity of character. For instance, he writes to Paul and Marie Bigot: "Besides, it is one of my first principles never to stand in other than friendly relationship with another man's wife. Never by such a relationship [as you suggest] would I fill my breast with distrust against her who may one day share my fate with me—and so taint for myself the most beautiful, the purest life....Dear Bigot, dear Marie, never, never will you find me ignoble. From childhood onwards I learnt to love virtue—and all that is beautiful and good." (letter BB-273; A-139, 6 March 1807). Beethoven also chose as friends those who were conspicuously upright and chaste, e.g., Carl Bernard (cf. BKh, 1:263 [fols. 73r-73v; mid-Feb 1820]).

previously and fulfilled, and that Ludwig in his turn had made good use of it, Pfeifer himself now had to try all the more to extend his skills. He now took leave of Herr Johann van Beethoven and Madame van Beethoven, and from Meister Fischer, Frau Fischer, and Cäcilia Fischer. At this Herr Beethoven, Madame van Beethoven and Ludwig all shook hands with him and profusely thanked and honored him, saying that, next to God, they still, and into the future, owed him lasting credit for being Ludwig van Beethoven's chief master, from whom he had received his all. *A matter of remembrance.*

On November 15, 1840, in aid of the Beethoven monument, Herr Music-Director Steifensand⁹⁵ and Herr Music-Director Rietz gave a concert at the Bonn Lesegesellschaft [reading society]. The following month, on December 2, they both came to the Fischer house at Rheinstrasse no. 934 and visited the Beethoven establishment, conferring with the Fischers about Beethoven. When I happened to mention Herr Music-Director Tobias Pfeifer, Herr Steifensand said, "You remind me now of a lady in Düsseldorf, with whom I was very friendly. She used to tell me a lot about Herr Music-Director Tobias Pfeifer, and said she had been very friendly with him. However, she is dead. She said that he had been a proficient and distinguished composer of his time; he had also died in Düsseldorf."

Herr Franz Rovantini had long since known Cäcilia Fischer well and was friendly with her. According to his former habit, when he came into the lower house and saw Cäcilia Fischer with her back turned, not expecting anything, Herr Rovantini would come tiptoeing to her and raise her with both arms up into the air. She would say, "Here's a sign that our Herr Rovantini is here again!" He did the same thing on his return from his travels, and Cäcilia Fischer exclaimed, "I thought, Herr Rovantini, that from your foreign travels you would have forgotten that altogether!" He replied, "Oh no, I haven't yet forgotten my old habit!" Cäcilia Fischer exclaimed, "But I'm no longer as light as I once was!" He retorted, "But I'm stronger now than I was before!"

It could not really be said that Ludwig van Beethoven placed much store on companions or company. Only when he was thinking about music, and had to be busy alone, did he take on a completely

⁹⁵ The cellist Steifensand (Fischer's "Streifensand") from Düsseldorf, with Julius Rietz (1812–77) performed Beethoven's Cello Sonata, Op. 69, in Bonn in 1840 so perfectly as to move the old Franz Ries to tears (SG, nn. 68, 69).

different aspect, commanding much respect. They were his happiest hours when he was freed from his parents' company. It was seldom the case, however, that his family were really all out and that he was left alone. However, in such peace and quiet, he perhaps appreciated what he had achieved through his reflections. Subsequently, Ludwig van Beethoven made such good progress that already, in his twelfth year, he had made his debut as a composer, and in his fifteenth year he was appointed second organist. In accordance with his rank he carried his ceremonial sword at his left side when he entered the court chapel with his father and his cousin Herr Franz Rovantini.

COURT MUSICIANS IN CEREMONIAL DRESS: LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Sea-green frockcoat; short green trousers with buckle; white or black silk stockings; shoes with black bow; white silk waistcoat with floral pattern and folding pockets with silk, the waistcoat edged with genuine gold cord; hair styled with curls and pigtail; he carried his folding hat under his left arm and his ceremonial sword, on a silver belt, at his left side.

STATURE AT THE TIME OF HERR LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Of short, stocky build, broad-shouldered, with a short neck, large head, round nose, dark-brown facial complexion, he always had a somewhat forward-bending gait.

In the house, in his boyhood, he used to be called "the Spaniard." His barber was Herr Triputt and subsequently Herr Henseler.

INCIDENTAL EVENTS INDICATED BY STILL EXTANT AND SEARCHABLE PRINTED DEATH RECORDS

The housewife Cäcilia Clara Fischer, née Trimborn, died on November 19, 1769, aged sixty-eight.

Ludwig van Beethoven, born on December 17, 1770.⁹⁶

Daughter-in-law of the first-named, housewife Maria Susanna Katharina Fischer, née Rheindorf, died July 15, 1826, aged eighty-six.

⁹⁶ This was the date of his baptism, not his birth, which was probably December 16. (See n. 57, above).

Ludwig van Beethoven died in Vienna on March 26, 1827, aged fifty-six.

Madame van Beethoven died in 1788.⁹⁷

Frau Fischer's sister-in-law, Frau Rheindorf in Ersdorf, died in 1788, as indicated by her extant death certificate; she was friendly with Madame van Beethoven. Frau Rheindorf, along with the daughter of Herr Office-Administrator Tevelich from Villip had often celebrated Madame van Beethoven's name-day with her in the Fischer house. *A matter of remembrance.*

Johann van Beethoven, Herr Ludwig van Beethoven's father, died in 1792. He had associated with Mozart.

Mozart, the first Grand-Master, died on December 17, 1791.⁹⁸

Ludwig van Beethoven, born on December 17, 1770, subsequently died in Vienna, as the second Grand-Master.

It seems as if all these incidental events agree harmoniously with Beethoven's symphonies, but I don't know. Ladies and gentlemen, I leave it to you.

HERR MOMBAUER, HERR JOHANN VAN BEETHOVEN'S PIANO-TUNER

The last Mombauer to die in Bonn was father to this Mombauer. Herr Mombauer was a single, handsome young man. The Beethovens' maid, Maria Katharina, also a beautiful young lady, was often sent to order Herr Mombauer to tune the Beethovens' piano. In this way she rather fell in love with Herr Mombauer. The other musicians who were often at the Beethovens' home teased her all the more and said, "Maria Katharina, Herr Mombauer is a handsome single man. You must get him onto your side and then you'll become a beautiful lady of music and get beautiful clothes and be a beautiful Madame!" For the Beethovens this was disadvantageous. She often remained with Herr Mombauer beyond the allotted time, making the Beethovens very annoyed. Once nearly all of the Beethovens were out. Only Ludwig van Beethoven, alone in his room, was playing or composing. The said maid had earlier been instructed by Herr van Beethoven to fetch Herr Mombauer to tune his piano. The maid had placed a roast on the fire in the kitchen. She

⁹⁷ This date is incorrect. Maria Magdalena van Beethoven died on July 17, 1787.

⁹⁸ Mozart actually died on December 5, 1791 (cf. SG, n. 71).

hurriedly cleaned herself up a little, just as she did every time. If she could get hold of a dress or coat of Madame van Beethoven's in the evening without her knowledge, she would apply her makeup. The maid now asked Herr Ludwig if he could keep an eye on the roast in the kitchen. Perhaps Herr Ludwig, in the middle of his work, did not understand this, paid no attention, or didn't want to understand. The maid ran hurriedly over to Herr Mombauer, staying out a long time. After a time there was a strong burning smell, but Herr Ludwig did not immediately take any notice. But when it spread further, he perhaps thought, "It's not to be endured here. What's happening, then?" He went to the kitchen and looked round: the roast was burnt. He thought, "What will come of this?" He then ran down to Cäcilia Fischer and exclaimed, "That stupid vain bitch has gone to Herr Mombauer again, she's stayed out for an eternity! I didn't know anything about any roast, and now it's all burnt! Cäcilia Fischer, just come up quickly and have a look!" She ran up quickly, wanted to remove the cooking-pan fast, and burnt her hand. Ludwig exclaimed, "That's the second catastrophe now, thanks to that vain bitch! I'll put some ink on it for you—that's very good. But what would you advise here?" She replied, "Quick, another pan and more butter! Completely remove what's burnt and set it all up again. But I'll give the bitch a right panning, so she'll long remember it!" After the meal Cäcilia Fischer asked Herr Ludwig how it had gone. He said it had gone well: "At the meal they said it was too well roasted. Still, it went well. But if I didn't have you, good advice would be costly. For what heed do I give to cooking-pans? But, Cäcilia, how is your hand looking? I do hope it will get properly better and heal. I owe you the greatest gratitude and favor."

The Beethovens' maid, Maria Katharina, was very stubborn. Whatever she did she wanted to do hurriedly and alone. This pleased Madame van Beethoven, but Cäcilia Fischer had often witnessed how it all went awry. However, she didn't like to report any of it to Madame van Beethoven, thinking, "Still, in time this will come to light of its own accord." Once—a frosty time in winter—the maid had hurriedly washed out a basket of hankies and carried them in the basket to her storeroom and set them down, intending to hang them up, but she immediately ran downstairs, completely forgetting the hankies and not giving them another thought. Later, Herr Beethoven requested clean hankies. The maid replied, "Yes, Sir, I've still got them in the storeroom. I'll fetch them

down and smooth them out now." She wanted to fetch them, but they lay in the basket twisted and frozen together. She became anxious, opened up a hanky and ran, greatly embarrassed, to Fräulein Schwalb on the first floor, exclaiming that she had completely forgotten the hankies and begging for some good advice. She opened one out and replied, "What a shame that such beautiful, expensive East Indian hankies are all spoilt and rotten! Madame van Beethoven will give you your marching orders!" – and that is just what she did.

During the Beethovens' era the last elector, Maximilian Franz, transferred the musician Herr Ignaz Willmann,⁹⁹ his two sons and two daughters to Bonn. Willmann, born in Saxony, was still in the pay of the emperor in Vienna. Herr Willmann rented from Meister Fischer the entire rear-house, Giergasse no. 950, occupying thirteen rooms and with a cook and chambermaid in his service. His daughters were known as "Kabinett singers":¹⁰⁰ they did not sing in public unless the elector should have ordered for them to sing in an opera or small room

⁹⁹ Johann Ignaz Willmann (1739–1815) violinist in the Bonn court orchestra, 1767–74, then sporadically visited Vienna until his death; his son, cellist Max Franz Ludwig (1767–1813), played in Schikaneder's company. Ignaz Willmann's first wife, Maria Elisabeth Erstmansdorffer, died in 1789; in 1793 he married court soprano Marianne de Tribolet (SG, n. 73; see also PC on Ignaz Willmann and Magdalena Willmann). A daughter of Ignaz Willmann's second marriage, Maria Anna Magdalena (Caroline) Willmann (1796–1860), a successful singer, sometimes performed in Vienna. She was much admired by Beethoven's close friend Joseph Carl Bernard, whom Beethoven teased about this partiality (letter BB-1306 (A-983), June 9, 1819); she is mentioned between February 1818 and December 1819 in the Conversation Books (BK_h, 1:62; BK_h, 1:76; BK_h, 1:125. Nothing came of these encounters.

¹⁰⁰ Ignaz Willmann's daughter Walburga (1769–1835), a concert pianist, was appointed *virtuosa di camera* at the Bonn court theater (see PC). Her professional designation perhaps influenced Fischer's confused information about her and her sister Magdalena as chamber singers.

In 1797 in Vienna Walburga married Franz Xaver Huber, librettist for Beethoven's oratorio *Christus am Ölberge* (1802–3). How Beethoven became acquainted with Huber is not known, but a possibility is that Walburga, knowing Beethoven well from Bonn days, may have introduced the two men.

Walburga's sister Magdalena (1771–1802), a distinguished soprano at the court chapel in Bonn, was much admired by Beethoven, who supposedly proposed marriage to her after encountering her again as a successful singer in Vienna (TDR, 2:132, 318). Thayer wrongly designates Magdalena a daughter of Max. He states that his information (unflattering to Beethoven) about Beethoven's marriage proposal came from her younger sister still living in 1860. This may have been Caroline (see above), daughter of Ignaz Willmann's second marriage.

[Kabinet]. Their singing was accompanied by Herr Willmann and his sons, by Ludwig van Beethoven and by Herr Franz Rovantini. Herr Johann van Beethoven and Ludwig van Beethoven praised the musicianship of Herr Willmann and his sons and said that his daughters were genuine singers. Herr Willmann was a widower, and his sons and daughters were single. They were a fine, highly-esteemed family. *A matter of remembrance.*

In winter at the Fischers' rear-house, Giergasse no. 950, the approach to the street, which descended steeply, was made quite difficult. When Herr Willmann's daughters were ordered by the elector to sing in an opera, they both came, accompanied by their maids with lanterns, through both courtyards into the lower house—underneath where the Beethovens lived—into a room with the Fischers, and waited there until the court coach called for them. On returning they got out of the coach in the same way. The Willmann daughters invited Cäcilia Fischer: "You must come with us now!" She exclaimed, "What, as I am now?" They replied, "Yes, that's completely in order. You can sit in the theater to the side, and then you can listen to everything very well." She objected, "Please pardon me, I'm not suitably dressed. It would be improper. And I've had the honor of hearing you at various times." They replied, "That's true, but what's to come is something completely different!"

Herr Beethoven made music on the right-hand side in the Fischer house, no. 934, Rheinstrasse, while Herr Willmann made music on the left-hand side in the Fischer rear-house, Giergasse no. 950.

A CONUNDRUM

At the time no-one yet knew from the right-hand side, and no-one yet knew from the left-hand side: that the great world-famous composer Herr Ludwig van Beethoven sat in their midst. This is the riddle that posterity has now solved. The Fräuleins Willmann, or father or sons, may have reflected on this, if they lived to see it, that he truly sat in their midst.

The Fischer son Johann Peter happened to be with the two Willmann sons, when some gentlemen arrived who were presumably known to them. They spoke of this and that, and about music. One gentleman asked one of the Willmann sons if he could display his

masterpiece: on the violin he could imitate and reenact all instruments and the sound they made. He naturally complied so well with their urgent request that all were amazed. Johann Peter Fischer remarked that to all appearances the violin was of little value. Herr Willmann junior replied that in Vienna he was once offered 2000 Imperial Guilders for the violin, but, for as long as he lived, the violin was not for sale for any money. One of the Willmann sons died in the house. When the last elector left Bonn on account of the French, Herr Willmann was, as the saying goes, summoned to London. Old Herr Willmann was of medium height, a fine man, but with a somewhat pockmarked face. *A matter of remembrance.*

In this final period, when the Elector Maximilian Franz left Bonn because of the French, Herr Willmann, with his family, was summoned to London.

In this period annually on May 1 in the Bonn court chapel Saint Florian,¹⁰¹ venerated as intercessor and protector against fires and conflagrations, had an eight-day-long devotion offered to him there. The court musicians solemnly celebrated and concluded the first and last day of that devotion with music and song.

In winter 1777, when the great conflagration of the palace occurred, in which twenty-one people perished and which to everyone seemed inextinguishable, St. Florian's chapel remained unscathed by the fire.¹⁰² *A matter of remembrance.*

Every year too the eight-day Bornhofen devotion was held in the Poppelsdorf palace chapel in honor of Our Lady of Sorrows.¹⁰³ The court musicians solemnly celebrated and concluded the first and last day of that devotion with music and song. If the weather was bad, coaches were ordered for conveying and returning the court musicians.

¹⁰¹ St Florian, born c. 250, commander in the Roman army, was responsible for organising fire-fighting brigades. He was martyred in Austria c. 304 for refusing to renounce his Christian faith. He is patron saint of firefighters. His feast-day is 4 May, but the extended period of devotion may have reflected Bonn's vulnerability to conflagrations.

¹⁰² Gerhard von Breuning (BrSchw, 5) also describes the flames as receding at St. Florian's Chapel, leaving it unscathed.

¹⁰³ The Bornhofer Bruderschaft zu Ehren der Schmerzhaften Mutter, at the time based in the Franciscan Church in Bonn, held an annual pilgrimage in September to the pilgrimage-place Bornhofen, near Koblenz (SG, n. 74).

On occasion the young noble gentlemen and ladies organised comedy for their pleasure in the Poppeldorf palace, in a room adapted for this; some musicians were booked in advance. The Herren Johann and Ludwig van Beethoven and Franz Rovantini were among those who had to make music there. Herr Ludwig van Beethoven often related that the noble gentlemen and ladies had played their roles very well.

One morning Ludwig van Beethoven was in his courtyard-facing bedroom, lying by the window, his head in both hands, staring earnestly and fixedly at a stain. Cäcilia Fischer came through the courtyard and asked him what the matter was. Receiving no reply, she remarked, "It's an off-day for you if there's no reply!" She later asked him again what this meant: "No reply is its own reply." "Oh no," he said, "that's not so. Please excuse me. I was busy there in deep, beautiful thought, so couldn't let myself be disturbed. That's the cause."

When the talk was of Herr Franz Rovantini, the Beethovens' maid would tell the Fischers—since she knew him well—that he was a very devout and good man, and no reproach could be cast against him. She said that he offered up his morning and evening prayers, kneeling in silence with outstretched arms.

On the floor below lived the single Fräulein Schwalb, a religious tertiary, who subsisted on her interest, and occupied herself with her work and prayer. She too spoke at times of Herr Franz Rovantini, saying that he was a good and devout man, and she had often seen him early in the morning at the devotions in the Münster church where he offered up his prayers in an exemplary manner; in this way too he kept good regulation of his day. Frau Fischer replied, "We too have long since known well that the Rovantinis—the sons and beautiful daughter—Herr Beethoven's close relatives, whom he often visited, were likeable and well-brought-up."

STORIES FROM PAST TIMES

Fräulein Schwalb lamented to Frau Fischer that, although she had enough subsistence from her land, house and garden, and could live well from this, what they sent her was always the worst: "And so, I have no enjoyment from what I receive and have. The wine is often undrinkable, and the vinegar more water than vinegar—and similarly with other things. I now realise clearly that if one has no manager, they

do as they please." Fräulein Schwalb received visits from a polite, much sought-after man from the country. The Fischers thought he could be an acquaintance or relative, but thought no more of it. Some while later Fräulein Schwalb came to Frau Fischer and said that she had not yet taken any vows on her single state, and was still free to do as she wished. She said that this countryman, Heinz, who visited her, had entreated her to marry him—which she too felt compelled to do. She married him and had a little daughter. The husband died not long after. She married a second man: there were no children, and he too died. She married a third man, who also died. The daughter grew up to become such a beautiful, good, virtuous girl that the people of Dottendorf and Friesdorf said that there was never so beautiful a girl as this. Herr Johann van Beethoven and Madame van Beethoven were amazed at so rapid a change in Fräulein Schwalb—to have outlived three husbands so far. They later learnt that the beautiful girl had got married in Kessenich, and that she suffered so much in her first childbed that she became delirious and died.

Herr Franz Rovantini was very busy with the lessons he had to give. To the youngest von Gruben daughter, a Fräulein Walburga,¹⁰⁴ he gave lessons as an exception in her own house. He instructed her to such an advanced stage on her favorite instrument the violin that she could play everything along with him to distinction. Sometimes the von Gruben sons and daughters held concerts in their house, which the Herren Johann van Beethoven, Ludwig van Beethoven and Franz Rovantini also attended. One of the von Gruben sons later became a district-councillor [Landrat], and another became Archbishop in Westphalia, in Paderborn, Hildesheim and Osnabrück. In 1795 the holy sacrament of Confirmation was administered by the Lord Archbishop von Gruben in the old St Remigius parish church in Bonn, and to this all the outlying villages of Bonn were also invited. At the time I myself was at school, and we school-pupils had the beautiful opportunity to receive the grace of the holy sacrament of Confirmation—still a beautiful, unforgettable *matter of remembrance*.

The elector of Cologne had to reside for a quarter-year in Westphalia, in Münster, its capital city—so the court chapel was free and

¹⁰⁴ Walburga, daughter of Privy Councillor [Hofrat] von Gruben, was named among the foremost pianists of Bonn in Neefe's report for *Cramers Magazin* for 1787 (SG, n. 76).

the musicians had a vacation.¹⁰⁵ At this time the Herren Johann and Ludwig van Beethoven and Franz Rovantini, who through their music-making were very friendly with music-lovers, now, as was customary every year, had to visit them. If they lingered a little, letters would arrive. Those they visited all possessed pianos. They did not make these visits for payment—for Herr van Beethoven’s character would not tolerate this—but for mutual enjoyment. They had already been booked in advance for Herr von Dalwigk in Flammerheim,¹⁰⁶ one of the finest gentlemen at the Bonn court. He had an unmarried daughter, also very beautiful. With these two they stayed a while, for Dalwigk and his daughter were also great music-lovers.

During this time, when Madame van Beethoven was for a while freed from her menfolk, she bought in supplies before the winter. As she was now a little more free from turmoil, Cäcilia Fischer, when she had leave, would go to her with her handiwork, for she was now in such a lonely state when freed for a time from her menfolk. Cäcilia would remark that she was now a grass widow. She would answer, “Yes, but you’re a fine one! You’re right, but this is right for me. I like to be freed for a while from the great commotion of the men. I can recover now for a while in peace. That’s very pleasant for me.” Cäcilia Fischer said that she was knitting such beautiful, fine nightcaps—the latest fashion. “They could please me very well!” she said. “But, between ourselves, half a dozen for Herr —. He’s an important man. If, by chance, an important matter occurs, this man can sort out a lot. We need friends like this. Everything has its reason.” “Yes, you’re right! —its reason!”

From Flammerheim the three musicians went to the parish priest Olef in Sürst.¹⁰⁷ Johann van Beethoven was friendly with him from his student days; he enjoyed associating with him because he was cheerful, and a music-lover. At this time it was the fieldfare-hunting season. This was Herr Johann van Beethoven’s favorite dish. They were received with great honor.

¹⁰⁵ SG, n. 77 places this in summer 1781, when the elector was in Westphalia — although Rovantini died in September 1781. Some of the visits mentioned may have occurred in different years.

¹⁰⁶ Friedrich Wilhelm Freiherr von Dalwigk (1749–1814) was an electoral chamberlain (SG, n. 77).

¹⁰⁷ This parish priest cannot be identified: a confusion of names is likely (SG, n. 78).

From there they went to the parish priest Dick in the parish of Odendorf.¹⁰⁸ He was brother-in-law to Frau Fischer and a music-lover. They were honorably received by him too.

After this they went to Oberdrees to visit the property-owner Herr Dick, who was also a brother-in-law to Frau Fischer. There too they received an honorable welcome.

They then went to Ahrweiler to visit the Lord Mayor Herr Schopp and his brother the apothecary Schopp. These were music-lovers who also gave them honorable welcome.¹⁰⁹

After this they went to Ersdorf, to Herr Rheindorf, a property-owner and brother of Herr Beethoven's landlady. Here Herr Beethoven passed on greetings from Bonn from Meister Fischer, his wife, sons, and daughter, with the message that, God be thanked, they were all still healthy and well. Herr Rheindorf's son was later parish priest in Ersdorf for many years.¹¹⁰ He too was a great music-lover. The deeds of the parish priest Rheindorf, what he provided, what he did for music, are still extant in his church. Here in Ersdorf, on account of Herr Beethoven's long acquaintance, they were well-received and accorded great honor.

From there they went to Schloss Röttgen to the old head-forester, Herr Ostler, whose son was also a music-lover. Here Herr van Beethoven was still well-known from his study years. They were all well received, and much honor was given them. From Röttgen they travelled to Poppelsdorf, calling on Herr Klütsch at the porcelain-factory. Since he was a music-lover they were again well received and given much honor.

When Herr van Beethoven, Herr Ludwig and Herr Rovantini returned to Bonn, they brought a greeting from the brother-in-law Herr Rheindorf in Ersdorf and his wife, sons, and daughters. The Fischers asked how the journey had gone. They replied, "Very well. We enjoyed it greatly. And we've been cordially and urgently invited to go again next year, if God grants that we're still here."

¹⁰⁸ Hilger Joseph Dick was parish priest in Odendorf from 1767 to 1810; his brother Wilhelm Heinrich Dick was a landowner and village mayor in Oberdrees; their sister Anna Gudula had married into the Fischer family (SG, n. 79).

¹⁰⁹ Matthias Schopp was mayor of Ahrweiler from 1779 (SG, n. 78).

¹¹⁰ Wilhelm Heinrich Rheindorf was parish priest in Ersdorf from 1805–1839 (SG, n. 81).

Herr van Beethoven had scarcely returned when a letter arrived from the property-owner Herr von Meinertzhagen from Niederkassel,¹¹¹ inviting them to come. They often stayed there for fourteen days. There was table-company there every day, with several gentlemen and Bonn Regimental officers present. Herr von Meinertzhagen was also a great music-lover and connoisseur. He had often, at the Fischer house, Rheinstrasse no. 934, visited the young Ludwig van Beethoven, finding a unique joy in him, that a boy still so young could compose such beautiful pieces. “What will become of him in time?” he asked. “I believe he will become a man such as has never yet existed or been witnessed before.” — as indeed happened. Herr Ludwig once related that in the morning when Herr von Meinertzhagen was sitting in his dressing-gown, his barber had to handle the powdering so precisely that no speck of powder was uselessly lost. He remarked, “In this respect it seems to me that he was so exacting about powder, yet powder is not at all expensive. But in eating and drinking he made nothing of the cost. Herr von Meinertzhagen was a good man, he believed in living and letting live.”

From Herr von Meinertzhagen they crossed the Rhine to the judges in Hennef, where there were also music-lovers, and where they were well received and given honor. They then went on to Bensberg¹¹² to the palace and the resident lord. He too was a music-lover, and they were well received there. After this they went to Siegburg by Bonn in the Siebengebirge and visited the most reverend prelate of the Abbey.¹¹³ Here they were very well received and were accorded honor. Here they concluded their travelling for the year.

¹¹¹ Abraham von Meinertzhagen was a councillor and district-treasurer in Kleve. The family estate was in Oberkassel, not Niederkassel (SG, n. 83).

¹¹² Herr Monreaux was castellan at Bensberg from 1780-90 (SG, n. 84).

¹¹³ A Benedictine abbey. Beethoven clearly also played the organ in Siegburg, either on this or another visit: a manuscript from Siegburg reads, “Moderato, wird vor dem Alleluja gespielt von L. von Pethoven.” This refers to the style of improvised organ interlude [preludieren] of which Beethoven later made use in his *Missa Solemnis* (see Warren Kirkendale, “New roads to old ideas in Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*”, *Musical Quarterly* 56 [1970]: 665–701, at 688). Doubtlessly, Beethoven also played the organ at the churches of the parish priests visited on this extended journey. Gerhard von Breuning (BrSchw, 7) also states that Beethoven was often invited to play the organ at the church of Breuning’s great-uncle, Canon Johann Philipp von Breuning, in Kerpen.

Christian Vogelsang, son of my next-door neighbor Vogelsang,¹¹⁴ proprietor of a wine-bar, once told Fischer, "I still think about the old musician Johann van Beethoven. The musicians had a house in the town, no. 2, where they went to drink wine. Unusually, during the hot days of summer, Herr Johann van Beethoven came to us and said, 'Quickly, give me a bottle of wine and a bottle of fresh spring water!' He then drank alternately a glass of wine and one of water, then paced up and down through the house and the courtyard until both bottles were emptied." The Fischers had nine windows on the left overlooking the neighbors' courtyard. By chance, Madame van Beethoven looked out of her kitchen window into the courtyard. She saw him and said, "Among other things, I can see my Beethoven there going up and down through house and courtyard!" She challenged him: "What a convenient thing it is to have a wine-bar next door!" He retorted, "Yes, my love, and it's also convenient when you need to call your husband, and he's nearby! Please forgive me, it's such hot weather, and I was very thirsty." She answered, "I grant that, but often too it's thirst without summer heat!" He said, "You're right! I'll grant you that too." She announced, "I think it's soon time to eat." He replied, "Don't worry, I'll come right away."

Madame van Beethoven once told Cäcilia Fischer that her cousin,¹¹⁵ Herr Franz Rovantini, had confided that he was very attached to Cäcilia, and that among all those girls whom he had known previously, none pleased him as much as the maiden Cäcilia Fischer. If he knew that he had received her parents' consent, he would want to marry her. But Madame van Beethoven advised Cäcilia Fischer, "However, if you should want to take my advice, stay single. This way you'll truly have the most peaceful, beautiful, and enjoyable life, if you know how to treasure it. For, what is marriage?—a little joy, but afterwards a chain of suffering. Anyway, you're still young." Cäcilia Fischer replied, "So long as my parents are still alive, I wouldn't determine on thoughts of marriage." "You do well in that too," Madame van Beethoven replied.

Madame van Beethoven once remarked that so many young people often get married frivolously, indifferently or imprudently. "If many, of either sex, really knew what lay ahead of them, then one would

¹¹⁴ At no. 935, Rheinstrasse (SG, n. 86).

¹¹⁵ Fischer here correctly describes the relationship: he is her cousin once-removed. Above she is called his aunt.

not look at the other. Even if a virtuous, well-reasoning, prudent married couple come together and persevere, they still face so much suffering; they could have no idea of this in the single state.” She used to say too, “One should weep when a girl is born into the world: she is a true slave! True, though, there must be suffering on this earth: without suffering there is no struggle; without struggle, no victory; without victory, no crown.”¹¹⁶ In his youth Ludwig van Beethoven had overheard his mother’s advice, and it may have had an effect on his future, for, although, as was said, he had women acquaintances, he never married. Or perhaps, with many marriages, he witnessed both their beginning and their end. Or maybe he also realised that his fiery jealousy¹¹⁷ and temperament were not suited to it. Or he may never have forgotten his late mother’s advice but often still kept it in mind, so that he remained single. And Cäcilia Fischer too, who was Beethoven’s mutual friend from their youth, also remained single—as if agreeing in harmony with him in his symphonic composition.

When Cäcilia Fischer had leave and Madame van Beethoven was free of visitors and at her work of knitting or sewing, she would visit her, bringing work of her own. On these occasions Madame van Beethoven might tell of her journeys: there had been many of these, and they had experienced both joy but often also deadly danger both on water and land. Through these she gave Cäcilia both good advice and gentle warning, which afterwards made a deep impression on her, for Madame van Beethoven, as a girl, had travelled far and wide with the foremost company, and had seen and experienced a great deal; through this she could impart sound advice to young people, which they still often remembered in the time following, and which still greatly affected them as a grateful *matter of remembrance*.

Madame van Beethoven would tell Cäcilia Fischer that she had once travelled from Koblenz to Bonn; in the ship were several upright people who held various conversations about suffering and misfortune.

¹¹⁶ While Fischer focuses on Maria Magdalena van Beethoven’s aversion to marriage as later influencing her son, her philosophy on the value of suffering, a profoundly Christian outlook, informed his attitude to life and creativity even more fundamentally—cf, e.g., his letter BB-2258; A-1552 (February 18, 1827), to Nikolaus Zmeskall von Domanowecz, on the value of suffering.

¹¹⁷ Fischer here uses the word “Eifersucht”, which seems not particularly applicable to Beethoven’s temperament. Possibly he intended “Ehrgeiz” (ambition), which would be more appropriate.

There had been one person of note who always seemed silent, serious and sad; she looked as if she were herself suffering. When this lady had listened to so many sufferings and fates, she too began to speak: "Mine is a still greater misfortune; I believe that there could be none greater." They questioned her eagerly, but she hesitated to confide it. She said, "True, I am far from home..." Out of suffering she could not conceal it but had to profess publicly that this suffering derived solely from her two children. Could there be any suffering greater than hers? They all took great pity on this lady, who lamented that she now had no sleep, constant grief, and it would result in her experiencing imminent death. Madame van Beethoven said that she had not been able to forget this poor lady, and exclaimed, "Yet, on this account, may the children of all parents be protected against such great misfortune!"

At this time an illness known as white dysentery had occurred in Bonn. This was very contagious and even attacked big, young and strong people, who died from it. Herr Franz Rovantini also contracted the white dysentery, which became very prevalent, and was also ill for some days. He was provided in good time with protective measures, in that Herr Beethoven had all possible medical help and care administered to him. When Madame van Beethoven visited him at 6 o'clock in the morning he was peaceful. When she visited him at 8 o'clock he was awake. She asked him, "O my Franz, dearest of all to my heart, are you not a little better yet?" "Oh, no, my dear Aunt! Strangely, I had a mysterious dream last night. I saw my catafalque, the candles and the cross: I shall soon die!"¹¹⁸ Madame van Beethoven whispered to him just to have courage and take comfort: "Dreaming comes from weakness. We can't place any confidence in it." She added that they had to drive out the thought. The Fischers asked Madame van Beethoven how Herr Franz Rovantini was feeling. She replied, "It's always the same. There's still nothing more to report. We just have to wait and see now."

While Cäcilia Fischer, before the meal, was sharpening a knife against the stairs, it seemed to her as if someone were grasping her from behind; she was very frightened, turned round immediately but saw none. She immediately told her mother that this had happened to her in such a way as she would never forget. After the meal the maid came down from Herr van Beethoven and delivered to the Fischers the

¹¹⁸ Cf. Gerhard von Breuning's account of his grandfather's premonition of death in the 1777 fire (BrSchw, 3–4).

message that “our dear Herr Franz Rovantini fell asleep in the Lord at midday.” To all the Beethovens, all those who lived in the house and all his friends and acquaintances from Bonn all offered their deepest condolences. Herr Franz Rovantini was accompanied to the grave and given the last honors by the reverend parish priest of St. Remigius parish, and by several other clergy, professors, fine citizenry and the entire court chapel, to the accompaniment of beautiful funeral music.¹¹⁹

It had been Herr Franz Rovantini’s custom, when going up or downstairs and if Cäcilia Fischer was standing there in the lower house with her back turned, that, as a joke, he would look towards her without her noticing and lift her up from behind. Of this prologue to his death, which had been so clearly shown to her on that stair,¹²⁰ she herself was the witness and could truthfully attest to it. Herr Franz Rovantini, bachelor, was an exemplarily beautiful person, highly gifted in music, deeply religious, highly esteemed and loved by all. According to the testimony too of other girls in the neighborhood who knew him only by sight, they all loved him. All the Beethovens and the Fischers could not in any way forget the death of Herr Franz Rovantini. Cäcilia Fischer used to say that if she were bereft of her parents and Herr Franz Rovantini were still single, she would have married no-one but him.

Madame van Beethoven immediately wrote a letter to her kinswoman Fräulein Anna Maria Magdalena Rovantini in Holland, who was in service there in Rotterdam, to tell of the death of her brother Herr Franz Rovantini, the court musician in Bonn. Anna Maria Magdalena

¹¹⁹ Franz Rovantini died on September 9, 1781. His loss clearly deeply affected all the Beethoven family, and is perhaps reflected in Beethoven’s *Dressler Variations*, WoO 63, in C minor, which have the character of a funeral march, except for the final, major key variation, which, through rising scales, assumes the character of resurrection and ascent to heaven (as in the “Et ascendit” of the *Missa solemnis*) (see Cooper, *Beethoven*, 7–8). That Beethoven also followed Rovantini’s example in holiness is attested by a court document from the guardianship dispute over his nephew Karl, which states, in Karl’s reported words, that Beethoven prayed with him every morning and evening. (Landrecht court document, December 11, 1818—see TDR, 4:550–51).

¹²⁰ Fischer is alluding to the incident, described above, when around the time of Rovantini’s death, Cäcilia received a premonition through the sensation of someone grasping her from behind on the stair, only to find no-one there.

Rovantini was the daughter of Madame van Beethoven's sister,¹²¹ and she was her godmother.

Anna Maria Magdalena Rovantini was governess in Rotterdam in Holland to a rich lady, a widow, who had a small daughter named Koge. The lady was referred to as "Mevrouw." Anna Maria Magdalena Rovantini was so deeply affected by the news from Bonn of the death of her brother Herr Franz Rovantini that she grieved over it for a long time. She had a deep longing to go to Bonn once more and, for her peace of mind and as a last memory, to see before her eyes the resting place of her late brother Herr Franz Rovantini.

She discussed with Mevrouw and her little daughter Koge whether she might make a little journey to the Rhineland and Bonn and see the beautiful sights of Bonn and the Siebengebirge, mentioning that she had in Bonn a close relative, a musician in the service of the elector of Cologne in his court chapel; this would give her great joy. Mevrouw, her daughter Koge and the governess all three arrived at the Fischer house, no. 934, by coach. For a month they were well received by Herr Beethoven. When they had recovered a little from the journey, Mevrouw, her daughter Koge, and her governess, accompanied by Herr van Beethoven or Madame van Beethoven or Herr Ludwig van Beethoven, went about on foot during fine weather, first looking into the palace garden and the palace, then on to the "Alter Zoll," to see its beautiful view onto the Rhine and onto the Siebengebirge. Then they saw the beautiful "Koblenzer Tor" and from there went on to the Poppelsdorfer Schloss and viewed the palace gardens. They also viewed the sights all round Bonn.

For outside Bonn, Mevrouw always had a coach ordered, in which they travelled to the Kreuzberg and the Röttgen hunting-lodge which had been built for Elector Clemens August, and so, back and forth, to the Brühler Schloss and gardens, to Rossdorf and the acid fountain, and to the Godesberg. They visited too the sights on this side of the Rhine as well as on the other side, and so to Rheineck, Andernach and the Laacher See. Then to Koblenz, where they got out to view everything properly on foot. From there in the evening they were back in Bonn, at their own front door.

¹²¹ "Sister" is Fischer's mistake for a cousin-relationship. See nn. 48-49 for correct relationship.

Fräulein Anna Maria Magdalena Rovantini, the governess, visited Meister Fischer, Frau Fischer, Cäcilia Fischer, and the sons, saying that earlier on, from Koblenz, she had visited her uncle, Herr van Beethoven and the families in the Fischer house, and they had returned the visits. She hoped they were all still fit and well. The Fischers marvelled that she was now such a grown-up, beautiful lady. She answered that people grew up from childhood and that Holland, a huge country, had nurtured her to be big and strong. “But for long I had a great longing,” she continued, “to be able to visit in Bonn again—my uncle Herr van Beethoven, the families and my still good acquaintances.” She could not at all forget the death of her dear brother Franz Rovantini of blessed memory, and the dream before his death, as their kinswoman Madame van Beethoven had described to her, was constantly in her consciousness, as was the premonition from this time which Cäcilia Fischer had revealed to her. The governess asserted, “I never believed in witches and ghosts, but, as for the premonition, this often comes before me.” Cäcilia Fischer told her too that she could not at all forget her brother, Herr Franz Rovantini, and that also, if she were to be bereft of her parents, and he were still single, she would have married none but him. She said, “This would have been a great joy for me, if we had both lived to see it. But the decree came from above that he should die single. We must both submit to God’s will.”

After the evening meal, when it suited Mevrouw, they held a little musical concert. The court’s master-baker Asbach, who was very friendly with Herr van Beethoven, often visited. Without Mevrouw’s knowledge he became very friendly with the governess, who was a fine figure of a woman. Every day, through his sister, he sent her the finest bakery-ware, to show that he was the court’s master-baker. He was firmly resolved to marry her and did a great deal to please her. The Fräulein governess often excused herself with Herr Asbach: she had enough to eat at her uncle Herr Beethoven’s house, this from Herr Asbach was superfluous, and he might save himself the trouble. When Mevrouw shortly wanted to return home, the court master-baker Asbach’s marriage plans came to naught. Mevrouw could not at all do without her governess, for she too knew what a treasure she had in her. Mevrouw said to the Beethovens that beautiful Bonn and the beautiful sights had completely captivated her, she had found great pleasure in

them, she would never regret the journey to Bonn and would often still think about it.

When Mevrouw had decided on the day of their desired departure, Herr and Madame van Beethoven and Herr Ludwig van Beethoven were now delegated to travel with her to Rotterdam in Holland. Johann van Beethoven was unable, but Madame van Beethoven and Herr Ludwig van Beethoven agreed, so the five of them set off.¹²²

Herr Ludwig van Beethoven had decided to give a concert every so often in Holland. There they believed that he would make a good sum of money for himself. They stayed away for a long time.

When Madame van Beethoven and Herr Ludwig van Beethoven arrived back in Bonn, the Fischers asked if they were still both fit and well. "Well, yes," they replied, "God be praised, we're both still fit and well!" "How did the journey to Holland go, then?" they persisted. Herr Ludwig replied, "The Dutch, they're penny-pinchers! They love money too much. I'll never go again to Holland!" Madame van Beethoven and Herr Ludwig van Beethoven added that, as for Mevrouw, she had given them every possible honor and delight: this they had to admit.

Madame van Beethoven and Herr Ludwig van Beethoven later related from their journey to Holland the news that opposite Mevrouw lived a rich young man who had been married for scarcely a year. For his pleasure the man kept in his own house a large ape. One morning their firstborn infant had disappeared from the cradle, and there had been the greatest anguish in the house. They sent messages out everywhere to get information, but in vain. They had gone on searching for nearly the whole day, but found nothing, could not find the child. Madame van Beethoven, Herr Ludwig and Mevrouw, as neighbors in the same house, joined in the search, right up to the storeroom. After all

¹²² SG, n. 87 places this journey shortly after Rovantini's death. However, Fischer mentions the sister's lengthy grieving before seeking leave to visit Bonn. Cooper places the journey to Bonn and return to Rotterdam in late 1783 (Cooper, *Beethoven*, 12). The proof is a document, "Alb-3", of November 26, 1783 (in: Theodore Albrecht, trans. and ed., *Letters to Beethoven and Other Correspondence*, 3 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 1:no. 3), detailing expenses, including a payment to Beethoven, at Prince Willem V's court in Rotterdam. An incident on this journey, not reported by Fischer, is described in a report by a widow Karth, who in her childhood had overheard Beethoven's mother speaking of having to cradle Ludwig's feet in her lap during this journey because of the excessive cold (TDR, 1:145).

the searching it was asked in the evening whether anyone had looked out of the storeroom window. The answer was no, so they all went once more to the storeroom, looked out of the window, and saw that, between a neighbor's two rear-buildings, which could not be seen from the street-side, the ape was sitting on a gully and holding the child so carefully, acting as if it wanted to swaddle the child.¹²³ Madame van Beethoven, terrified, said that she could not watch this any longer, but ran downstairs, thinking that this could not end without disaster. However, when the man who cared for the ape, and knew it well, enticed it and showed it food, it brought back the child completely unharmed. The ape had escaped from its den and in all the fright no-one had thought of the ape. The owner now immediately got rid of it. Madame van Beethoven and Herr Ludwig van Beethoven were eye-witnesses, but said that if someone else had told them this, they would not have believed it—but they were both eye-witnesses in Rotterdam.

In the electoral era, at Stockenstrasse no. 2, there lived a man named Heuser, a court lackey, who had a wine-tavern. Here the people of the court and the court musicians would go to drink wine. Earlier on, some of Herr Johann van Beethoven's opponents had purposefully agreed here ... to serve what they knew was his favorite dish. The court chapel musicians, who had to agree how the comic trick would end up, had already, earlier on, gone to the said house. There they drank and ordered food *ad libitum*. They spoke to Johann van Beethoven, who was later also there drinking: "There's still a half-portion ... ready there" Herr Johann van Beethoven requested some, tasted it, and said he was enjoying it. ... When he had eaten up and savoured the half-portion, ... they began to laugh all round him. He solemnly asked them what it meant. They told him He was horrified at this and went straight out, and so ... that he thought that he had received his death.¹²⁴

This had greatly offended Herr Johann van Beethoven, and he later told Meister Fischer the story of how they had treated him. Those who were there may well believe that no-one knows anything about it

¹²³ The ape's behaviour suggests it was female. Grammatical rules of gender require masculine pronouns ("er", etc.) for the ape (der Affe), but the translation uses neuter pronouns throughout, thus reflecting the biological uncertainty.

¹²⁴ The lacunae are in the original manuscript. In Anna Fischer's imaginative modern German version, Johann van Beethoven was told that he was eating fieldfares, but was told later that it was a rat, at which he vomited. (See also TDR, 1:470).

any more. I think, too, that none of them is still around. If, by chance, there are others still living who were there too, they can read about it here.

Herr Johann van Beethoven's son Ludwig had made such extraordinary progress in his instruction in music and composition, so that both believed that in time he would become a great man; on this Johann van Beethoven would have been able to place great hopes for his old age. Consequently, perhaps he was envied for this by many who were no good themselves.

Since Herr Ludwig van Beethoven day by day made such good progress in music and composition, and sold his compositions to foreign gentlemen, this was thus, of necessity, reported far and wide. Thus too, those who had visited him reported to others that this boy, still so young, was already emerging as a composer. As a result too, so many far-flung foreign music-lovers came to visit him out of curiosity and confirmed it. Strangers came too with a request for Herr Ludwig van Beethoven: they would like to hear him play in a little concert. So Herr Johann van Beethoven, when possible, had musicians booked and organised in his room. The gentlemen may have paid him well—we're not sure. Meister Fischer, realising that the disturbance from the strangers with their coming and going was getting ever greater, spoke to Herr Johann van Beethoven: "All the disturbance from the strangers wouldn't bother me if I weren't a baker, as there's the night for resting. But, because I'm a baker, I have to get up at 1 a.m. and bake, and during the day go to sleep from one o'clock to four in the afternoon; because of the disturbance, though, I can't sleep at all. I can't survive this, I would just become ill. Herr van Beethoven, I'm sorry to have to say this to you, but you must look around for another lodging." He moved out in 1785, but stayed in the Rheinstrasse, at house no. 939 on the left, the fifth house away from the Fischer house.

At the time Meister and Frau Fischer's bedroom was on the first floor, at the third window on the right facing the street. In the corner stood their bed. Ludwig van Beethoven's room was in the corresponding position on the second floor. In the corner stood his piano, directly over the Fischers' bed. For this reason Meister Fischer deserved great sympathy for being unable to sleep. And because of this, in the common phrase, their side did not get out of bed well, and, again, Herr Ludwig van Beethoven could be thanked for that. If he were still

alive, and this were told him, he might well laugh over it and say, "I couldn't at all blame you for this at the time, Meister Fischer! You were quite right!"

Herr Johann van Beethoven's lodging consisted of six rooms: two large rooms facing the street, with, between them, a door for opening when they held a grand concert, plus two exit-doors; four rooms facing the courtyard; on the upper-floor a room for the maid, a kitchen in the middle, a closed storeroom and cellar. The Beethovens' lodging could not so easily be let out again. It was necessary to wait, because the lodging was let as a whole. If it were divided up, then two families would need to use the same kitchen. This would cause frequent strife. Fischer did not take in anyone: he must have made enquiries for the right tenant, but, failing this, he preferred to leave it empty.

On the third floor were two large rooms facing the street: the granary and an adjoining room. Above this was a second large, high storeroom and another room. From the second large high storeroom there was a beautiful view over the Rhine, and on the other side a view over the Siebengebirge, and immediately onto the "Alter Zoll." In the storeroom were two telescopes, one small and one large. With these one could see seven hours wide [i.e. seven astronomical hour angles, or 105 degrees]. *This was Herr Ludwig van Beethoven's great delight, for the Beethovens loved the Rhine.*

On the first floor were two rooms facing the street, five rooms facing the courtyard, two kitchens, a cleared basement and two rooms and the kitchen, and next to this the bakery, lying three steps further down. Within this, seven steps down, was a cellar. Facing the street were two cellars. There was a cleared courtyard with two outbuildings. Between the two courtyards was a wall with a door, which led into the courtyard of the former Fischer rear-house, Giergasse no. 950. This contained seventeen rooms, a kitchen and, in the courtyard, an outbuilding. There were two large storerooms, from which there was also a beautiful view over the Rhine and the Siebengebirge. There was a cellar facing the street and a locked side-exit.

The former Fischer house, Rheinstrasse no. 934, was one of the highest houses in Bonn. In 1850 the new house-owner partly broke away the frontage of the two storerooms and also the entire old house-front, to build a new one, no higher than the floor of the former lower

storeroom. However, of the old house-front there have been many illustrations—still to be seen for sale in all bookshops.

Cäcilia Fischer used to say that, in the time of her youth, when Herr Johann van Beethoven lived with them, she had enjoyed much innocent joy and pleasure, and although those days had now long ago vanished, she had often been able to imagine them as if still present. Meister Theodor Fischer's children may well say that they were born and brought up under Beethoven's music. Cäcilia Fischer said that she too was a lover of music and song; that, true, in their house they used to have to endure much disturbance, much coming and going, but, as a young girl, she thought that it had to be so. She said that when Herr Johann van Beethoven moved out, all was then quiet in the house, and she became sad, but, when he moved back, she became happy and thought that it would be merry again. She used to say that, without flattering herself, Herr Johann van Beethoven, Madame van Beethoven and Herr Ludwig van Beethoven had always liked her, and if she happened to encounter Herr Ludwig van Beethoven at his work, he would still not be weary of her, but accommodating. But in this too she would have shown modesty.

Cäcilia Fischer used to say, truthfully, that her mother had once in their house, at Herr Johann van Beethoven's apartment, attended a baptism party. This is how it came to light: her mother's bridal outfit was thick damask silk, Pompadour-red,¹²⁵ with silver flowers, and white jacket of thick damask with little fine blue flowers. The garments had become old-fashioned; it was Shrove Tuesday, and her son Gottfried wanted to put the outfit on for the ball. His mother said, "I wouldn't want to take away your youthful pleasure, but there aren't yet any marks on the clothes, as I've worn them only three times: at my wedding, then when I attended a baptism party at Herr Johann van Beethoven's apartment in our house, and, last, when I attended another baptism party with my next-door neighbor Vogelsang, the wine-tavern owner. If you go to the ball in that outfit, they will envy you and make marks on it, and then, in my eyes, it's of no further value!" While I tried it on, unfazed, a beautiful mirror fell to the floor, breaking in two. My mother, laughing, said, "The first disaster is already here, and a second

¹²⁵ Fischer's spelling is "Bommpatur roht." Despite its name, the color (varying between pink-red, purple-red and brown-red) apparently originated in England in the 1750s and had little connection with Louis XIV's fashionable mistress.

will soon follow." My courage was then shattered, I took off the outfit, and let it go at that. As a safeguard, my mother gave the outfit to Holy Church, to be adapted as Mass vestments.¹²⁶

Herr Johann van Beethoven's moving out was short-lived, his lodging was still empty and he discussed it extensively with Meister Fischer. He said, "I don't have room in my house. We can't stay there any longer. We've lived for so many years in your house, and both of us were boyhood friends there. I loved the Rhine. I must die there. We must be together again. Also, I've considered that I could go and make music in the rooms at court." Fischer replied, "I've thought about it too. No, it wouldn't work. I could not demand this of you. At court the rooms are for living in, not for music-making. Music needs space, and not to be confined." It continued thus for about a year, and then Herr Johann van Beethoven moved back into the Fischer house.

Madame Falkenstein, née Fräulein Gertraut Merckenich, whose former ancestral home, Rheinstrasse no. 936, was the second of the houses adjoining the Fischer house, no. 934, testified with her signature, on November 16, 1838, how she frequently visited the Fischer house, and how she and Cäcilia Fischer, as daughters of neighbors, were girlhood friends; also that she knew Ludwig van Beethoven well when he was a child in the Fischer house, and his grandfather too. She said that there used to be so much music-making by Johann van Beethoven that when he moved out of the Fischer house, they commented between themselves, "So, now we have peace for once!" This, however, did not last long, and Herr Johann van Beethoven moved back into the Fischer house. They then remarked, "Now the music spectacle is starting again!"

On various occasions Herr Johann van Beethoven would visit Meister Fischer on a Sunday evening and tell him the latest news. He related once, "Herr Beckenkamp¹²⁷ was a good painter and good art-connoisseur. His wife Veronika was a court singer. The couple were

¹²⁶ Although this incident may seem superstitious, the donation was deeply devout: it was the eve of Lent, the Church's chief penitential season: for prayer, self-denial, charitable acts, and avoidance of sin. Frau Fischer saw the broken mirror as a warning against vanity: giving such a prized possession to the Church for Mass fulfilled all the Lenten injunctions.

¹²⁷ Johann Peter Beckenkamp was an actor and painter, his wife Veronika a court chapel soprano (1785–94); they rented Sternstrasse no. 3 from 1790. Beethoven's mother was godmother to their son Wilhelm Ferdinand (October 24, 1786). As Veronika was from Koblenz, she may have known her since childhood (SG, n. 88).

childless. Herr Beckenkamp once had a piece of good fortune: someone must have given him a tip-off beforehand. Not far from Bonn, in the country, he found in a storeroom at a large farmstead a very old, magnificent painting. The farmer neither knew nor cared about it, and so he bought it from him and sold it in Vienna. He received so much for it that he gained a lifelong income for himself and his wife. Herr Beckenkamp and his wife now moved from Bonn to Vienna to make use of their income there." The two men would entertain each other with this or that piece of news or reminiscence when perhaps the conversation would turn to Johann's son Ludwig. At this Johann van Beethoven would repeatedly utter: "In my son Ludwig I now have my only joy. He's progressing so well in music and composition that he'll be regarded by all with amazement. My Ludwig, my Ludwig, I know it! In time he'll become a great man in the world. Those of us gathered here, and now witnessing it, remember my words!" His good father Herr Johann van Beethoven's former prediction did indeed come true. This prediction was truly witnessed by the daughter of the house Cäcilia Fischer, still alive at the time (she died on May 23, 1845, aged eighty-three) and by her brother Gottfried Fischer, aged seventy-seven and still living—God be praised!—the narrator of Ludwig van Beethoven's youth and family history. These two—God be praised!—actually witnessed and noted it, just as it could be read in the newspapers, in the last years of French rule, that such splendid compositions by Herr Ludwig van Beethoven were so highly and universally praised.

At this same time my father Theodor Fischer used to think too that Herr Ludwig van Beethoven would indeed in time become a great man, thought that he could indeed become one such as many others claimed. On this account I once asked the gentlemen visiting the Beethovens' lodging, who were also composers, how it was that Herr Ludwig van Beethoven was so praised to the skies. "What!" they replied. "To praise him to the skies!" They asked if I couldn't express myself more highly to them, "for he composed such music as reached from earth to heaven. Indeed, the more often this music was played, the more and more beautiful it became. And in his songs it was boundless: he speaks there with a universal purpose on the whole of life. For this reason he must be a man who indeed experienced the world, who will say, 'On what level can you speak with me?'" They said that such a man as Ludwig van Beethoven was would never come again; for he had

indeed everything—he had had the last word. Otherwise he would not have achieved all that he did achieve. And how could there come such another? Upon this verdict more people came to agree.

Herr Johann van Beethoven and Madame van Beethoven loved the Rhine and the beautiful view of the Rhine and the Siebengebirge from the Fischers' storeroom. At the time their living-accommodation was suitable for their music; they had space in the house and many conveniences. As Johann van Beethoven repeatedly expressed, elsewhere in the town could not please him; in the Fischer house he was completely content and just so attached to it when he was sharing in the house. And the reason for his opinion could all the more be that in this house he and Theodor Fischer were together as boyhood friends. This is proven in that Herr Johann van Beethoven three times moved back into the house after moving out.

Within the two Fischer buildings some eminent people once also lived, namely Jakob Schmitz, first privy-councillor of the electoral court, plus court councillors, customs officials, painters, bodyguards, etc. But none were so attracted to the house as were the Beethoven families—from the grandfather, Hofkapellmeister Ludwig van Beethoven, up to the grandson, Herr Ludwig van Beethoven the composer, as was known to all the former old citizens of Bonn.

Johann van Beethoven's last move out of the house was on May 15, 1788.¹²⁸ The cause was an imminent war with the French, whereby he thought that the elector could lose his territory, and he thus lose his position. So he decided out of honesty to cut back in good time, for he would find renting the dwelling too difficult. Meister Fischer had discussed with Herr van Beethoven whether to divide up the apartment, but the shared kitchen would often cause discord, with two tenants, and so he realised that it could not work.

When Herr Johann van Beethoven made his final move from the Fischer house, an engineer-officer, Dupuis, serving in the Bonn

¹²⁸ The ms. originally had the year 1780, corrected to 1788—both incorrect. Maria Magdalena van Beethoven died in July 1787. By then the family had moved to the Wenzelgasse (TDR, 1:470, n. 1). The French Revolution occurred in 1789, and the French troops (after occupying the lower Rhineland) overran Bonn only in 1794—forcing Elector Maximilian Franz to flee to Vienna. Thus, Fischer's reason, that Johann anticipated war with the French, is improbable. Fischer probably conflated several different events.

Regiment and living five hours distant from Bonn in Flammersheim, rented the Beethoven apartment from Meister Fischer. One day later Herr Director Grossmann came, wanting to rent the Beethoven apartment. Meister Fischer said, "I'm very sorry, Herr Director Grossmann. If only I'd known! I'll write to him to see if I can dissuade him from renting." Dupuis replied that he had rented the apartment and also wanted to move in. Fischer wrote fourteen days later to Dupuis, asking whether he wanted to move into the apartment or not. Dupuis wrote back, asking what Fischer would do if he didn't move in or pay his rent. Fischer enquired of people in Flammersheim about Dupuis. He had the reply that all Dupuis's property had been sold off. The cunning Dupuis had caused Fischer great harm. The two letters from Dupuis are still extant.

Meister Fischer told Herr van Beethoven, "Your last move out will harm me too." Herr van Beethoven moved to Wenzelgasse, no. 476. The year that they moved there, Madame van Beethoven died.¹²⁹ After her death Herr Johann van Beethoven had her clothes sold to the brokers, who then displayed the items of clothing for sale in the marketplace. Cäcilia Fischer, wanting to buy something at the market in the morning, saw beautiful clothes there which were quite familiar to her. She enquired and received the answer: "From the late Madame van Beethoven." Very saddened at this, Cäcilia Fischer brought the sad news to her parents. In 1792 Herr Johann van Beethoven lay sick in the same house, suffering from hydrothorax, and died that year, aged sixty-three.¹³⁰ Theodor Fischer also lay sick from consumption and died in 1794, aged sixty-five. 1792 was an unforgettable year.

When Elector Maximilian Franz departed, lost his territory, and went to Münster in Westphalia, a sad point in time arrived: Bonn, once great, was completely battered. All the nobility emigrated from Bonn. As a result, many houses and dwelling-places stood empty.

¹²⁹ Beethoven was deeply affected by his dearly-loved mother's death (on July 17, 1787). On 15 September 1787 he wrote to Joseph Wilhelm von Schaden (BB-3; A-1): "She was to me so good a mother, so deserving of love, my best friend. O, who was happier than I when I could still utter the sweet name of mother, and it was heard. And to whom can I say it now?" His attitude contrasts sharply with his father's almost brutally unsentimental attitude, as described by Fischer.

¹³⁰ He died on December 18, 1792, actually aged fifty-two.

Now was also the time of parting of the three Beethoven sons. Elector Maximilian Franz charged Count Waldstein with providing for Herr Ludwig van Beethoven in Vienna.¹³¹ Kaspar van Beethoven became an apothecary. Johann Nikolaus van Beethoven reportedly went to France, there to join a regimental choir.¹³²

The court musician Herr Johann Goldberg,¹³³ bachelor, travelled after Herr Ludwig van Beethoven to Vienna, but on the way became ill and died. His sorrowing mother, the widow Goldberg, lamented this, her sorrowful event, to Cäcilia Fischer, when she brought her the news.

Herr Theater-Director Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Grossmann and his wife, Karolina Sophia Augusta (née Hartmann) were foremost and intimate friends to Herr Johann van Beethoven. Herr Grossmann, who knew the musicians and good composers in Saxony, provided for Ludwig van Beethoven a good composer, music-director Tobias Pfeifer, a preacher[’s son] from Saxony; for this Herr Johann van Beethoven and his son Herr Ludwig van Beethoven owed great gratitude. May my readers therefore not take it ill that I simply describe at the end something about Herr Grossmann and his wife, who are well-deserving.

Here the friends in question, who in their day would often visit at the home of Herr Johann van Beethoven and his son Ludwig van

¹³¹ Count Ferdinand Waldstein (1762–1823), in Bonn from 1788 (subsequently in England and Vienna) was, as Fischer indicates, a particularly important early patron; he signed Beethoven’s *Stammbuch* on his 1792 departure for Vienna with the hope that he would “receive Mozart’s spirit from Haydn’s hands” (see SG, n. 89 and PC). Wegeler (WR, 14) names him Beethoven’s earliest and most important patron—stimulating his musical development—financially responsible for Beethoven’s 1792 journey to Vienna. To him was dedicated the Op. 53 piano sonata (1803–4).

¹³² Again Fischer confuses the careers of the two brothers (see n. 85). Kaspar Karl was proficient on several instruments, gave music lessons, and assisted Beethoven in negotiating with publishers. He was a clerk in the Department of Finance, having moved to Vienna in 1794. Neither brother went to France.

¹³³ Johann Goldberg, Bonn court violinist (1777–94). He was still employed in Bonn in 1794, according to the court calendars, and engaged for the theater in Münster around the time of Beethoven’s departure for Vienna (SG, n. 90). Thayer (TDR, 1:471, n. 3) suspects either a substitution of names (without surmising who might have been substituted for Goldberg) or that the journey in question was some years after Beethoven’s settling in Vienna. The latter possibility seems more likely as Cäcilia Fischer’s memory was generally reliable, and the circumstances of the mother’s bereavement appear authentic.

Beethoven, and who knew the Fischers well, are all recorded by name by the Fischer brother, Gottfried Fischer:

- Herr Theater-Director Grossmann and his wife.
- Herr Lux,¹³⁴ the highly renowned actor.
- Herr Simrock,¹³⁵ court musician, and his wife.
- The old Madame Eichhoff; her son.
- Herr Eichhoff,¹³⁶ formerly assessor in Paris, and latterly supervising controller [Ober Controlleur] of the entire River Rhine, visiting when he was courting his beloved, a court singer.

¹³⁴ For Joseph Lux see n. 79.

¹³⁵ Nikolaus Simrock (1751–1832), horn-player in the court orchestra and music publisher, remained a friend and correspondent of Beethoven throughout his life, as did his son Peter Joseph, who continued the publishing business. (See also nn. 21, 138 for Simrock's introducing Beethoven to Bach).

¹³⁶ Johann Joseph Eichhoff (1762–1827), engineer and expert on the Rhine (general-director of Rhine Navigation from 1811), mayor of Bonn in 1801, later under-prefect, was a founder-member of the Bonn Lesegesellschaft, as were Nikolaus Simrock and Franz Ries. A friend of Beethoven from his Bonn days, he wrote in Beethoven's *Stammbuch* (friendship book compiled on Beethoven's departure from Bonn in 1792) of his hope for Beethoven's return. Later a delegate at the Vienna Congress, owing to his expertise, he visited Beethoven in Vienna on March 27, 1815, to commission a portrait for the Lesegesellschaft, as is clear from a minute written by the then-chairman Johann Heinrich Crevelt on May 6, 1815, stating: "Herr Eichhoff, who, it is reported, has returned a short while ago from Vienna, has given Herr Crevelt the news that the famous composer van Beethoven, our fellow-countryman, wishes to bestow on the Association his painted portrait; meanwhile, until the painting is completed, he has given his portrait in copper-engraving to Herr Eichhoff...." Thus, Beethoven meanwhile gave a copy of the 1814 Höfel engraving to Eichhoff for the Lesegesellschaft and also one for Wegeler, as is clear from comments made by him on a letter sent him by Beethoven on September 29, 1816, hoping that Wegeler had received the portrait (WR, 48). Wegeler's note 2 to this letter states of the portrait's personal inscription and provenance (translated): "'For my friend Wegeler. Vienna, March 27, 1815. Ludwig van Beethoven.' Our mutual friend, the General-Director of the Rhine Customs Duty, Herr Eichhoff, had brought it for me with him from the Congress"). Brandenburg publishes this letter as BB-979 (A-661) without mentioning the Eichhoff connection. No subsequent news of the commissioned oil painting surfaced, yet Kopitz implausibly surmised that the Schimon portrait was that commissioned (Klaus Martin Kopitz, "Das Beethoven-Porträt von Ferdinand Schimon: Ein 1815 für die Bonner Lesegesellschaft entstandenes Bildnis?," *Beiträge zu Biographie und Schaffensprozess bei Beethoven*. Rainer Cadenbach zum Gedenken, ed. Jürgen May [Bonn: Beethoven-Haus, 2011], 73–88).

- Herr Robson, later a magistrate in Bonn, visiting when he was courting his beloved, a court singer, sister of the abovementioned singer; they were néés Grau.¹³⁷
- Herr Neefe,¹³⁸ first court organist, and his wife.

¹³⁷ Of the two Grau sisters, Eva (soprano, court singer) married Johann Joseph Eichhoff in 1782. Her sister, Anna Gertrud Robson, alto, was a court singer from 1775–94.

¹³⁸ Christian Gottlob Neefe, a Protestant from Chemnitz, came to Bonn in 1779 with Grossmann and was court organist from 1782, remaining with the court chapel until 1794. Although—by Thayer onwards (see TDR, 1:148)—widely considered Beethoven’s most significant teacher, including by Schmidt-Görg (SG, n. 91), he was probably a more minor influence than assumed: he was mainly important for being a rather better composer than any of Beethoven’s other Bonn teachers and is still considered by some to be a significant influence (see, e.g., Kris Worsley, “Investigating the Influence of Christian Gottlob Neefe on the Music of Ludwig van Beethoven” (PhD. diss., University of Manchester, 2005) He possibly furthered Beethoven’s familiarity with Bach (see Neefe’s claims for this and for giving Beethoven some guidance in thoroughbass in “Nachricht von der churfürstlich-cöllnischen Hofcap zu Bonn und andern Tonkünstlern daselbst,” *Magazin der Musik*, ed. Carl Friedrich Cramer, 1, no. 1 (March 2, 1783): 377–400, at 394–95; KC, 2:616–17): a claim undermined by Nikolaus Simrock’s more authentic claim to have introduced Beethoven earlier on to Bach’s *Das wohltemperirte Clavier* (see n. 21). Neefe was probably at least as much indebted to Beethoven as Beethoven to him. Well-instructed by Br. Willibald Koch, he could have supported the insecure Neefe in Catholic liturgical music and practice: Neefe had many enemies at court—probably continuously—(the second memorandum on the court musicians following the Elector Maximilian Friedrich’s death in 1784 criticises Neefe both for his “Calvinist religion” and for indifferent organ-playing, while advocating the young Beethoven’s promotion to court organist (see TDR, 1:191, entries 13, 14). Ill-feeling towards Neefe was not merely from religious intolerance: as head of the Illuminati in Bonn he was intensely disliked by fellow-members for his pride, imperiousness, and indiscretion (see Sieghard Brandenburg, “Beethovens politische Erfahrungen in Bonn,” in *Beethoven zwischen Revolution und Restaurierung*, ed. Helga Lühning and Sieghard Brandenburg (Bonn: Beethoven-Haus, 1989), 3–50, at 9–10.) Notably, Fischer does not mention Neefe as a teacher, but merely a guest in the hospitable Beethoven home—which could suggest that any significant contact between Beethoven and Neefe was at court. However, the meticulous Wegeler, Beethoven’s close friend, concurs with Fischer’s marginalisation of Neefe (WR, 11 ff.), stating that Neefe had little influence on Beethoven, who complained of Neefe’s harsh criticism of his compositions. Wegeler, like Fischer, singles out Pfeifer as a far more influential teacher. Wegeler knew Neefe quite well through shared intellectual activities, such as membership of the Bonn Lesegesellschaft. Neefe was also often absent from Bonn on summer tours, and so had little time for teaching. Everything known about Neefe’s instructing Beethoven actually originates from Neefe himself, including a fragmentary letter

- The Herr Count Anton von Belderbusch,¹³⁹ earlier still a pageboy at court.
- Herr Mattioli, court music-director, and his wife, the distinguished ballet-dancer.¹⁴⁰
- Herr von Meinertzhagen, treasurer at Oberkassel-am-Rhein, by Bonn.
- Herr Eiländer,¹⁴¹ later a notary in Bonn.
- Herr Erhard¹⁴² and his wife.
- The widow Madame Keilholz and her two daughters, court actresses.¹⁴³
- Herr Josephi, amateur actor, and his two daughters.¹⁴⁴ He was reportedly an English count.
- Herr Stronzki, court actor.
- Herr Steinmüller, jurist.
- Herr Windeck, later notary, finally Oberbürgermeister of Bonn.

from Beethoven thanking Neefe for his advice and promising him participation if Beethoven subsequently became a great man (BB-6; A-6, dated by Brandenburg between late October 1792 and October 26, 1793, —but probably earlier—quoted in “Musikalische Nachrichten aus Bonn,” *Berlinische Musikalische Zeitung* [BMZ] 39 [October 26, 1793]: 153); the letter is quoted, apparently without Neefe’s knowledge, by the editor of the *BMZ*, who evidently saw the letter. Its early date and means of transmission has recently been demonstrated (see Jos van der Zanden, “Beethoven and Neefe: A Reappraisal,” *Music and Letters* 102, no. 1 (2021): 30–53.

¹³⁹ There were two Counts Belderbusch, uncle and nephew: Kaspar Anton Belderbusch (1822–1884), Elector Maximilian Friedrich’s most powerful minister, who had in his youth been a page at court; and Anton Maria Carl von Belderbusch (1758–1820), who in 1802 married Babette Koch (formerly Beethoven’s close friend in their youth). Fischer could have meant either of these, but his description favors the uncle.

¹⁴⁰ Gaetano Mattioli, member of the court chapel 1775–84, and court music-director. His wife was the dancer Isabella Barbieri (SG, n. 100).

¹⁴¹ Peter Joseph Eiländer (1767–1831), notary from 1800, in 1792 made an entry in Beethoven’s farewell Stammbuch. (SG, n. 94).

¹⁴² An actor listed in *Reichardt’s Theaterkalender-Bonn-1780* as a member of Grossmann’s theater troupe (TDR, 1:78).

¹⁴³ Christine Magdalena Elisabeth Keilholz and her sister Dorothea were singers in the Bonn court chapel. They both also participated in plays and opera at the new Bonn court theater, opened in 1789 (SG, n. 95).

¹⁴⁴ Fischer writes the name as “Josefe”: probably Josephi, an actor listed, along with his wife and one daughter, in *Reichardt’s Theaterkalender-Bonn-1780* as a member of Grossmann’s theater troupe (TDR, 1:78).

- Herr Beckenkamp, painter, and his wife, the court singer.
- Herr Facius, the English envoy's private tutor.
- Herr Lucchesi,¹⁴⁵ court Kapellmeister, with his wife, two sons and a daughter.
- Herr Wilhelm Klütsch, quartermaster of the elector's bodyguard, and his three daughters.
- Fräulein Ratemacher from Koblenz.
- Herr Ludwig Simonetti,¹⁴⁶ court tenor.
- Herr Mayer,¹⁴⁷ the jeweller, and his wife; his son, the painter, and his wife, who was blind, though one could not see it in her.
- Herr Spenner,¹⁴⁸ belt-maker.
- Herr Mattioli and his wife.
- Herr Vincenz Asbach, court master-baker.
- Herr Delombre, court tenor, and his wife, court singer.¹⁴⁹
- Fräulein Averdonk, court singer.
- Fräulein Neuer,¹⁵⁰ court singer.
- Herr Johann Goldberg, court musician.
- Herr Spitzeder,¹⁵¹ court actor and beautiful, much-loved singer.
- Herr Christoff Brandt, court musician, who married the sister of Madame Grossmann.
- Herr Pokorni,¹⁵² court musician.
- Herr Haveck,¹⁵³ court musician.

¹⁴⁵ Andrea Lucchesi (1741–1801), court Kapellmeister in Bonn from 1774 to 1794, successor in the post to Beethoven's grandfather (SG, n. 96; see also PC).

¹⁴⁶ At the court chapel in 1790–94 (SG, n. 97).

¹⁴⁷ In 1765 Mayer lived at the "Haus zur kleinen Blume" in the Bonn Market-Place (SG, n. 98).

¹⁴⁸ Belt-maker Clemens Spenner lived in the Wenzelgasse (SG, n. 99).

¹⁴⁹ Christian Hubert Delombre was a tenor in the court chapel (1778–94). In 1774 he married the court singer Schwachhofer (SG, n. 101).

¹⁵⁰ Susanna Neuer, soprano in the court chapel (1774–94) (SG, n. 102).

¹⁵¹ Johann Spitzeder, bass in the court chapel (1790–94) and actor at the court theater (SG, n. 103).

¹⁵² Thomas Pokorni, double-bass-player in the court chapel (1790–94) (SG, n. 104).

¹⁵³ Ernst Haveck, viola-player in the court chapel (1756–94) (SG, n. 105).

- Herr Georg Welsch and his brother Herr Joseph Welsch,¹⁵⁴ court musicians.
- August Kunz, pianist and organist; later music-publisher in Maastricht.
- Herr Nikolaus Veit, pianist and organist in Bonn; latterly appointed to Cologne, where he died.
- Herr Franz Ries,¹⁵⁵ court musician, last-surviving of all the musicians, who had the honor of being present at the three-day-long Great Festival, and the monument and Great Concert. *An object of remembrance*¹⁵⁶

In later life Johann van Beethoven wore on working-days a brown overcoat, round hood, and thin pigtail. If chancing to meet me on the street, he would ask, "Gottfried, where were you?" I would reply, "I've just come out of school, Herr van Beethoven." Then he would say, "Learn well, then. Then you can become something. Greet your father

¹⁵⁴ Georg Welsch, bassoonist and Joseph Welsch, oboist in the court chapel (both 1789–94) (SG, n. 106).

¹⁵⁵ Franz Ries, 1755–1846, violinist: a close and supportive friend of Beethoven from his Bonn days, and father of his piano-pupil and biographer Ferdinand Ries. In the elector's service from 1774 to 1778 and from 1780; in Vienna from 1778 to 1780; Konzertmeister in Bonn from 1791. Also an active Enlightenment thinker, he was a founder-member of the Bonn Lesegesellschaft. He was extremely supportive of the young Beethoven and generous to the whole family. Gerhard von Breuning (BrSchw, 9) records that Beethoven, along with the young Stephan von Breuning, Gerhard's father, received violin lessons from Franz Ries (? after Rovantini's death). Ferdinand Ries describes his own arrival in Vienna with a letter of introduction from his father Franz (WR, 75). Beethoven, busy completing his oratorio *Christus am Oelberge*, asked the younger Ries to mention in replying that he, Beethoven, could not forget Franz Ries's kindness when his mother died. Ferdinand Ries explains that his father supported the entire Beethoven family when they were in greatest need. Beethoven repaid that kindness by generously giving extensive piano lessons to the son—a thing he rarely did. Franz Ries lived to see the unveiling of Beethoven's statue and associated festivities in Bonn in 1845.

¹⁵⁶ In the manuscript, p. 70, the word "Andenken", underlined (translated here as "an object of remembrance"), is written on the line immediately below the description of Franz Ries. Although it could refer either to the preceding or the following section, Fischer's established habit in the use of "Andenken" suggests the former. It is positioned closer to the preceding than the following section. It refers, possibly, to the entire list, and not just to Franz Ries.

Theodor Fischer from me, and your mother!" And I would reply, "My greetings too to you and yours, Herr van Beethoven! Adieu!"