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An Essay on the Psychological, Sociological, and Musical Roots of Beethoven's Concerto No. 4 in G, Opus 58, Together with a Project in Piano Performance

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An Essay on the Psychological, Sociological, and Musical Roots of
Beethoven's Concerto No. 4 in G, Opus 58, Together with a Project
in Piano Performance

A SENIOR PROJECT
The Honors Program
St. John's University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Distinction "All College Honors"
and the Degree Bachelor of Arts
In the Department of Music

by
Marc Jaros
May 16, 1992

Integral to understanding this Fourth Piano Concerto is an elucidation of Beethoven's self, his society and the historical context of this musical form. These rather broad aspects, Beethoven's psyche, culture, and musical style, funnel into an analysis of the work, opus fifty-eight. This method will imitate the piece's creation: an amalgamation of composer and his musical times bestowed life to this enduring work of art.

Although historians have no direct psychological assessment of Beethoven, much of his deep psychic life has been revealed in his letters. In perhaps the most famous of these letters addressed to his brothers to be opened up after his death, Beethoven bemoans the realization that his impending deafness is chronic. He wrote this letter, now known as the Heiligenstadt Testament, in the fall of 1802:

I must live almost alone like one who has been banished, I can mix with society only as much as true necessity demands. If I approach near to people a hot terror seizes upon me and I fear being exposed to the danger that my condition might be noticed. Thus has it been during the last six months which I have spent in the country...what a humiliation for me when someone standing next to me heard a flute in the distance and I heard nothing, or someone heard a shepherd singing and again I heard nothing. Such incidents drove me almost to despair, a little more of that and I would have ended my life-- it was only my art that held me back. Ah, it seemed to me impossible to leave the world until I had brought forth all that I felt was within me....Oh Providence-- grant me at last but one day of pure joy-- it is so long since real joy echoed in my heart....(Thayer, 304-306).

Ironically, Beethoven's deafness coincided with the beginning of his most creative period thusfar, the period during which he wrote the G major concerto (Grout, 628). Evidence from his compositional sketchbooks reveals that he started formulating

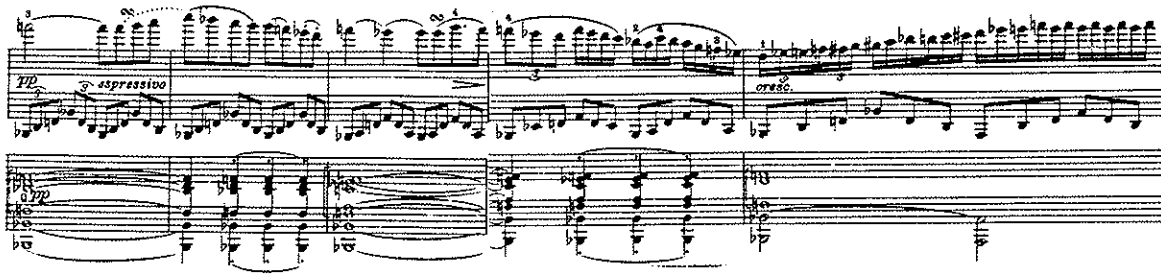
ideas and themes of the work as early as 1804 (Johnston). How could Beethoven compose this particularly light and exquisite work (critic David Johnston calls it 'the serenest, the most chaste, the most modest of the series', *ibid*) in the midst of such personal suffering? A hastily-made correlation between composer's inner turmoil and outer compositional expression needs refinement.

Beethoven conceived an existential notion of suffering: "We finite beings, who are the embodiment of an infinite spirit, are born to suffer both pain and joy; one might almost say that the best of us attain joy through suffering" (Martin, 37). Beethoven's belief in the necessity of suffering rings of twentieth-century philosopher Albert Camus' influential Myth of Sisyphus. Punished by the gods, Sisyphus is condemned to roll a boulder up a gigantic hill, only to have it fall back down again. Met with the similar absurdity of his impending deafness, Beethoven braced himself with the indomitable mettle of the human spirit.

It is also fair to say Beethoven assimilated the Christian essence of redemption: "Man cannot avoid suffering, and in this respect his strength must stand the test, that is to say, he must endure without complaining and feel his worthlessness and then again achieve his perfection, that perfection which the Almighty will then bestow upon him" (Martin, 38). Part of Beethoven's quietude probably stems from his belief 'he must endure without complaining' (a notion vehemently rejected by twentieth-century Expressionists). Certainly one must admit that

Beethoven's few moments of idyllic beauty are greatly outnumbered by great violence. Beethoven, if you will, did a lot of 'complaining.' Nonetheless, those moments of delicate beauty reflected a divine benevolence for Beethoven. The remaining roots of Beethoven's quiet moments are sown in the blissful hope that someday the terror of existence and deafness will pass.

I think that the most beautiful aspects of this whole concerto are the completely unexpected moments of bliss. Most notable in the first movement is the theme in measures 105-108:



I must emphatically point out that these peaceful moments come only as the result of much that is violent, loud and profane. Beethoven rightly said 'the best of us obtain joy through suffering.'

Many have pointed out that all great works of art, as reflections of the human condition, inevitably deal with suffering. Many critics believe Beethoven's enduring success has depended on his musical conceptions of cosmic pain. Professor James Martin of Cornell College writes, "An experience of suffering, pure and profound, enters as an integral part into Beethoven's greatest work that gives that work its unique place in the minds and hearts of men [and women]" (Martin, 42). Anyone exposed to Beethoven's music cannot help but be moved. If not by

the philosophical response, the sheer volume and violence will at least speak on some primitive level.

Performers of Beethoven's music become acutely aware of the nature of suffering when they set out to learn a piece of substance. Although all performances require some level of difficulty, Beethoven's works can be particularly grueling. After Beethoven privately premiered it in 1807, he looked for another pianist for the public performance. The pianist he chose, Ferdinand Ries, begged to play the Third Concerto instead. Characteristically, Beethoven ran him out in a rage, and picked another brilliant young pianist, Friedrich Stein, to fill his place. The young pianist couldn't learn the piece, so Beethoven had Ries play the Third Concerto anyway. Beethoven only gave Stein five days to learn the piece (Johnston).

The implicit performance in this thesis gives me a chance to explore these very issues. It is not enough just to write about this work. To understand it requires learning and playing it. James Martin, professor of piano, writes, "We must be careful, for we are mistaken if we think "academic" knowledge (in the narrowest sense of the term) is enough. In fact, it is less than half. The pianist who struggles with the musical realization of the work learns dimensions theoretical analysis can never approach" (Martin, 38). This type of struggle can even lead one to contemplate suffering on a metaphysical level. Martin writes, "The purpose of difficulty in Beethoven's music is to experience in the most vital of ways what it is to be human" (Martin, 42).

In addition, performing the work puts us in physical touch with Beethoven himself. While playing, we recreate his same pianistic gestures (Martin, 38). No amount of analysis can so intimately put us back in touch with Beethoven. Now the whole notion of artistic recreation becomes clearer.

While reflecting on the role of suffering in Beethoven's music, I have suggested a relationship between its role in the composer's life, its appearance in the music and its relevance in the performance. I continue with a psychological investigation for the origins of Beethoven's music since Beethoven himself is of little help: "You ask me whence I take my ideas? That I cannot say with any degree of certainty: they come to me uninvited, directly or indirectly" (Thayer, 851-852).

The great musicologist Max Graf sees the middle movement of the concerto as battleground of the Ego's attempt to placate the unconscious Id: "The inflexible unison of the string orchestra, confronted by the mild tones of the pleading, entreating piano, speak for themselves: they are the pictures of a battle between menacing forces of the soul and gentle supplications, between violence and lament" (Graf, 140). The score demonstrates:

The image shows a musical score for piano and strings. The top system is for the piano (I) and is marked "Andante con moto." It features a solo section for the right hand, marked "SOLO." and "molto cantabile." The bottom system is for the strings and is marked "Andante con moto." It features a tutti section for the strings, marked "TUTTI. f. e." and "staccato." The score is in 2/4 time and G major.

Perhaps one prefers a Jungian interpretation over this very Freudian one. Many, the most notable of whom was Franz Liszt, have conjured up the mythological archetypes of Orpheus' sweet singing pacifying the raging Furies. Orpheus, the Ego, has to assert himself to keep the Furies under control. Graf writes, "More and more the stirring song expands in the music" (140). Heavy trills and chromatic scales tell this part:

due e poi
tre corde

tr

a 8 corde

(m.s.)

cresc. sin. al.

ff

Eventually, Orpheus wins out. Max Graf writes, "More and more the hard, inexorable, inflexible tones are repressed, until the mood becomes quite peaceful, only the sweet song of the soul is heard and finally the droning--now powerless--sounds quite shadowy from the depth" (Graf, 140). Here is the end of the piece:

p

pp

Segue il Rondo.

Segue il Rondo.

Graf not only argues that this piece reflects the tensions within Beethoven's soul, but that all of his music does. He writes, "Time and again Beethoven's music portrayed this psychic development of the taming and formation of wild strength that emanated from the unconscious" (Graf, 140). Beethoven's entire output consist of variations on this theme.

Not only does Beethoven's music reflect the conflicts and suffering of the self, but also, it reflects the basic *Weltanschauung* of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Europe. The French Revolution signalled a wave of great societal change (Grout, 625). The Enlightenment taught that each individual had certain inalienable rights. Now individuals rejected the static notions of the past and were ready to change the present *by themselves*.

The old Europe, characterized by aristocrats and peasants both fated to live out their destiny, was fading fast. Characterized by a Newtonian world-view, the old way of life saw the future as an inevitable unfolding of events, all based on a preconceived and constant set of rules. Bach's fugues, concertos, arias and inventions all necessarily unfolded out of single germs of organic material (Greene, 7). The great English musicologist, Sir Donald Tovey noticed this nature of pre-Classical polyphony:

"Still, the great thing to bear in mind is that the themes of the old polyphonic movement, if there are more than one, flow one into the other. The movement grows without ever showing impressive preparation for the advent of something new; and its surprises, many though they may be to a sympathetic listener, are never much connected with new themes or indeed with anything we do not seem to have known from the first" (Tovey, 15).

Filled with a middle class ready to take their future into their own hands, the new Europe emerged. Hegel's (1770-1831) main point in Lectures on the Philosophy of History(1822-25) was to describe a history created by people, free from the mechanics of a causal nature above human control. This new freedom revealed itself in the new sonata-allegro form (including the concerto) popular among the increasing middle class of Vienna, Leipzig, Paris and London. Sonata-allegro form was an aural expression of a Hegelian *Weltanschauung*: people saw themselves capable of new thematic change, unfettered by the old historical expositions.

In the sonata form, "There will always be a vivid impression of opposition of ideas, and of change as well as development" (Tovey, 15). The sonata-allegro form described a future that "felt like a fresh occurrence, and not one that happens by logical or mechanical necessity [a future] unlike the future in Newtonian temporality" (Greene, 18). Tovey explained that, given an excerpt from a piece of polyphony, a trained musician couldn't tell whether it came from the beginning, end, or middle of the work. On the other hand, if this same musician were given an excerpt from a Beethoven sonata, he or she could tell where it came from due to its dramatic metamorphoses (Tovey, 14).

Of the Classical composers, Beethoven was the most developed. Indeed, since he bridged the gap into Romanticism, he was one of the last. In terms of changing and developing, he wrote more in tune with society's changing view of temporality than Mozart. In his defense, it must be noted that Mozart wrote

plaintive, sorrowful lines with contrasting agitated sections; the slow movement of the d minor piano concerto illustrates this. Naturally, Beethoven greatly admired this work--he learned much from Mozart. Unlike Beethoven, in this work Mozart intends, "...these contrasts of mood [to be] in harmonic balance. Mozart did not have the slightest intention of portraying a progressive psychic development and the pacification of a mental conflict. He had experienced a change of moods, rather than a psychic struggle of the moods" (Graf, 141). Beethoven not only reached into the minds of his contemporaries and expressed their new philosophy, he reached into their souls and described their new moods.

As mentioned, the sonata-allegro form is closely related to the Classical concerto. Certainly this has not always been the case: concerto form grew into an instrument reflecting societal change right along with the sonata-allegro form since they are of the same essence. The concerto has always had unique virtues, and they should be noted before analysis of the opus fifty-eight.

The great Viennese musicologist Edward Hanslick wrote that the piano concerto was the greatest orchestral form. He believed "that this form is composed for the largest unit of musical sound, the orchestra, as well as for the instrument with the most unlimited means, the piano" (Guenther, 4). Tovey, too, raises the concerto to a metaphysical level:

"Nothing in human life and history is much more thrilling or of more ancient and universal experience than the antithesis of the individual and the crowd, an antithesis which is familiar in

every degree, from flat opposition to harmonious reconciliation, and with every contrast and blending of emotion, and which has been of no less universal prominence in works of art than life. Now the concerto forms express this antithesis with all possible force and delicacy" (Tovey, 6-7).

Implicit in Tovey's last sentence is the evolution of the concerto, a subject integral to this topic. By definition, a concerto is a combination of sonorous elements, first popular in mid-seventeenth century choral and orchestral compositions (Berry, 228). Tovey notes that the two elements must be opposed and unequal (Tovey, 6). In the Baroque, the smaller or solo group is called the concertino, and the larger group the ripieno, from the Italian, "full". The ripieno was also known as the concerto grosso (large ensemble), but later the entire genre became known as concerto grosso (Berry, 228). Giuseppe Torelli's (1658-1709) Opus 8 Violin Concertos contained compact ritornellos that smoothly alternated with solo figurations, a significant evolution in concerto form (Grout, 474). Antonio Vivaldi's (1678-1741) format of a slow movement encapsulated by two fast movements later became a standard (Greene, 233).

Carl Phillip Emanuael Bach (1714-1788) and his brother, Johann Christian (1735-1782) greatly influenced the classical concerto by adherence to a standard thematic form (Berry, 228). The following diagram illustrates the thematic and tonal structure of this mid-seventeenth concerto: (Rosen, 69). R refers to Ritornello, or returning orchestral parts, while S indicates Solo entrances.

VOICE	R	S	R	S	R	S	R
KEY	I	I-V	V	-vi	I	I	I

The Classical concerto also traces its origins to the aria. The aria, though a vocal form, also juxtaposes solo against orchestra. Bach's main concerto form was based on the vocal aria (Tovey, 11). Scarlatti and Handel's use of aria influenced the later development of concerto form. In fact "...if we could understand a beautiful Handel aria so as to have some idea, however incomplete, of that wherein it differs from his hack-work, then we may hope to understand a Beethoven concerto (Tovey, 8-9). In the eighteenth century, alternation of tutti and solo virtually became a form of sonata style (Rosen, 69).

Many characteristics have become standard for each movement of the concerto. The first movement makes extensive use of ritornello and solo. Ritornello, as mentioned, refers to the returning orchestral part. It comes from the Italian *ritornare*, "to return, reappear". As mentioned, Giuseppe Torelli made standard use of the ritornello. Usually it appears three or four times, as in J.C. Bach's concertos (Berry, 107-8). The ritornello usually summed up the primary material of the movement (Tovey, 15). The solo sections of the first movement began as displays of virtuosic flair, as in Vivaldi's violin concertos (Berry, 230). Later, as homophonic Classic styles crept in, the solo became more and more a vehicle for thematic development (ibid, 230). Indulgent technical flourishes survived in the cadenza, almost always present in the first movement (Berry, 232).

Since the second movement of the Beethoven Fourth is so short, I will skip to the rondo form of the final movement. The rondo is a generic term that describes a recurring refrain, much like a ritornello (Greene, 150). It has its original roots in the courtly love ballads of the twelfth-century troubadours and trouvères. The form may be illustrated: A B a A a b A B [where capital letters refer to refrains] (Grout, 84). Rameau and Couperin used a slightly different, but related form in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: A B A C A (Greene, 152). The sonata-rondo, basically the form of the concerto's rondo movement, this time including tonal structure, was a slight development: (ibid, 158).

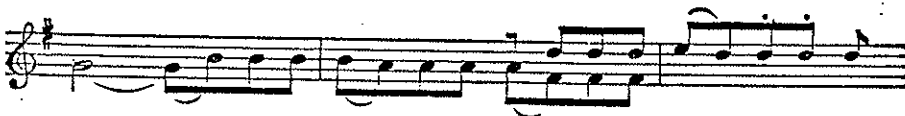
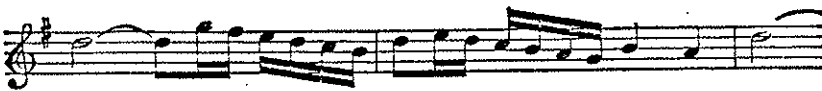
A	B	A	C	A	B'	A
I	V	I	I	I	I	I
		(III)	(IV, VI)			

This historical overview has prepared us to finally analyze the Fourth Concerto. Beginning with the first movement, one finds many curious points of interest right off. The opening statement by the piano predicts Beethoven's most famous rhythmic pattern in his Fifth symphony (Layton, 116). The opening piano statement is most unconventional. Mozart began his Eb concerto with the piano assisting the orchestra, but never used this technique again: (Greene, 240).

The image shows the beginning of the first movement of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto. It consists of two staves. The top staff is for the piano solo (Klavier Solo) and the bottom staff is for the orchestra (Klavier Orchester). Both are marked 'Allegro'. The piano solo part begins with a series of eighth notes in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The orchestra part begins with a similar rhythmic pattern. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'f' (forte).

Why did Beethoven begin in this unconventional way? Note that the response to the opening statement is in the bright, distant key of B. He could have opened with wind instruments, but, "...that would have been too heavy and clumsy for the soft murmur of the strings that was to follow. Not strings; that would have spoiled the point. It had to...introduce the murmur as a contrast and yet as part of itself" (Truscott). The piano is the most viable choice to open the work.

Next, the orchestra has a big section (sixty-eight bars) all by itself. It introduces the following themes: (Tovey, 76).



Note the harmonic sensitivity the second theme in measure 29. It seems to be in the key of a minor, then in C at measure 33, then in G at measure 37 (Layton, 118).

The solo resumes at measure 74, in the rhythmic motive of the opening statement (Tovey, 77):



The orchestra ritornello comes back at measure 89, followed by a similar reply by the piano in measure 93. The orchestra keeps the rhythmic integrity of the initial motive beginning at measure 97 (ibid, 77).

After a strange but beautiful modulation to Bb in measure 105,



a progression beginning with a secondary leading tone of A (vii /ii) eventually leads to a theme not in the opening tutti, an orchestral interlude in the dominant in m. 119. Beethoven most likely borrowed this theme from Mozart's A major concerto K.

488: (Layton, 118).

143 Allegro
Mozart K 488 Vln. I
p

119 Beethoven Vln. I
p sf sf dim.

In the second ritornello, Beethoven moves through most of the themes introduced in the first ritornello. Figure #2 appears in d minor in m. 134 and is picked up in variation by the piano in m. 142. Figure #3 shows up in the orchestra in m. 146., while figure #4 appears in m. 157. Figure #5 appears in m. 180, and figure #6 in m. 188 (Tovey, 78).

The development begins when the piano enters at the close of the ritornello in m. 192. A new figure at m. 196

modulates to energetic arpeggiation at m. 204. Underneath, the orchestra works out the theme started in m. 196 (ibid, 79).

Soon after Beethoven moves to the most remote key possible, c# minor at m. 227. Shortly he moves back to G at m.

239, but it doesn't sound like the tonic due to all of the key changes (Layton, 118).

The opening rhythmic motive appears in the orchestra at m. 248. Shortly thereafter, the piano proudly announces the recapitulation at m. 253 (Tovey, 79).

A beautiful theme in m. 275, based on m. 105-108, leads into the rest of the recapitulation. This entire transposed section ends at m. 346 with the cadenza, the most played one written by Beethoven himself (ibid, 80).

Beethoven begins the ending delicately, always moving higher and higher (ibid, 80). Dramatic scale-work lowers the tessatura. Piano and orchestra gloriously end in a fortissimo.

As mentioned, I will skip further analysis of the second movement, since I have already covered it. The most successful analysis should remain as a psychological one.

I move to the final rondo movement. Tovey declares of this movement, "The finale breaks in, pianissimo, with an intensely lively theme in that prosaic daylight by which Beethoven loves to test the reality of his sublimest visions" (Tovey, 81). Beethoven used this theme in the Prisoners' Chorus of his opera, *Fidelio*. We trace the composition of both works to about the same period. Stretch your tolerance a bit, and find the similar opening theme in the chorus, "O Welche Lust":

The image shows a musical score for the Chorus of Prisoners, titled "O Welche Lust". The score is written for four vocal parts: Tenor I (Ten. I.), Tenor II (Ten. II.), Bass I, and Bass II. The lyrics are in German and English. The German lyrics are: "O welche Lust! Oh, was eine Lust! In der Freiheit!" and the English translation is: "Oh, what a joy! Oh, what a joy! In re-". The score includes a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). The music is in a major key, with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The score is written in a standard musical notation with a treble clef for the Tenors and a bass clef for the Basses. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words in German and some in English. The score is a snippet of the full piece, showing the beginning of the chorus.

The opening of the finale is strongly rooted in the subdominant, C Major:

Rondo.
Vivace.

Rondo.
Vivace
TUTTI

pp

A countertheme appears at m. 25:

dolce

p

1 Viol.

The orchestra takes over at m. 32. At m. 45, the piano plays a transitional theme:

45
SOLO

SOLO

Next, the dominant of D, V/V is set up in m. 57 and continued in

triplets in m. 68:

This leads into a beautiful second theme at m. 80. Formerly, we had the A section of the rondo, and this begins the B section. This beautiful melody intends to repeat at m. 89, but breaks off into intricate orchestral polyphony from m. 95-109:

Arpeggios in the dominant in m. 110 lead to triplets in V7/IV in m. 134:

The A section of the rondo returns in the orchestra in m. 160. It continues with very little variation to section C at m. 216. Here we are in Eb, and move in arpeggios from Eb to Bb.

Finally we get back to the dominant at m. 272:

Musical score for measures 272-298. The top staff is marked '(martellato)' and 'arco'. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes. The bottom staff shows a bass line with some rests and notes.

This section leads us chromatically to that beautiful second theme at at 299:

Musical score for measures 299-328. The top staff is marked 'dimin.' and 'dolce'. The bottom staff is marked 'Vol. arco' and 'pizz.'. The music features a melodic line with slurs and a bass line with arpeggiated figures.

Arpeggios in the tonic in 329 lead to Eb triplets in m. 353:

Musical score for measures 329-352. The top staff is marked 'ff'. The bottom staff is marked 'ff' and 'pizz.'. The music features a melodic line with slurs and a bass line with arpeggiated figures.

Finally, we come back to the A section of the rondo, in slightly different form, at m. 416.

Musical score for measures 416-445. The top staff is marked '(p)'. The bottom staff is marked 'pp' and 'pizz.'. The music features a melodic line with slurs and a bass line with arpeggiated figures.

The transition theme at m. 439 leads to the coda at m. 453 which begins in the extremely distant key of F#

The B section of the rondo comes back in F# in m. 459:

and comes back again in C in m. 467. From here the cellos play this second theme in G (m. 475). This leads to the short cadenza beginning in m. 499. In m. 519, the clarinets begin a variation on the first theme. At m. 529, the piano sets itself in canon with the clarinets to this same theme:

At the Presto in m. 554, the tessatura floats up high as in the first movement:

The orchestra states the final A theme of the rondo in m. 568. Orchestra and piano build to a smashing climax.

Having completed the most focused task, it becomes necessary to reflect on how all these many divergent factors about Ludwig van Beethoven and his society focused upon this concerto. Usually, the type of psychological, philosophical, and musicological generalizations I have used are frowned upon in academia due to their overextensive nature. However, I am confident enough in the cohesiveness of this structure to present it as a whole. Also, to my great satisfaction, academia is becoming more cross-disciplinary every day. In conclusion, I have traced elements of Beethoven's psychological and sociological world to the concerto form, and have ended with a formal analysis of his great Fourth Piano Concerto. All that remains is for me to perform this piece, certainly a most vital aspect of this project.

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Lecture Recital

A Lecture: "Psychological, Sociological and Musical Aspects of Prokofiev's Sonata No. 2 in d minor and Beethoven's Concerto No. 4 in G Major". This lecture is based on my Honors Thesis, and will serve as its defense.

A Performance: **Prokofiev:** Sonata No. 2, Op. 14 Allegro, ma non troppo

Beethoven: Concerto No. 4, Op. 58 Allegro moderato

A Discussion: The Honors Committee will begin by addressing questions about the Thesis. After, the audience is invited to participate by asking questions or adding thoughts on the lecture.

I wish to thank Fr. Bob for his support and patience. Fr. Bob, your personal example as a gifted musician and mentor will remain with me forever.

AN ESSAY ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL, AND MUSICAL
ROOTS OF BEETHOVEN'S CONCERTO NO. 4 IN G, OP. 58, TOGETHER WITH A
PROJECT IN PIANO PERFORMANCE

Approved by:

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Associate Professor of Music

Department Reader Lynne Walker

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Department Reader Gabriel Dewese, O.S.B.

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