

# THE NEWLY DISCOVERED AUTOGRAPH OF BEETHOVEN'S *RONDO A CAPRICCIO*, OP. 129<sup>1</sup>

By ERICH HERTZMANN

BEETHOVEN'S *Rondo à Capriccio* for piano (better known as *The Rage over the Lost Penny*) has been popular for decades—the *pièce de résistance*, in fact, on the program of many a young pianist. But little attention has ever been paid to the fact that no autograph of it was known. The manuscript has recently turned up, not in the showcase of a public library or a museum, but more surprisingly as a personal possession treasured by the owner and a small circle of friends and connoisseurs.

The existence of the autograph was first disclosed in an article by Otto E. Albrecht.<sup>2</sup> The autograph is owned by Mrs. Eugene Allen Noble of Providence, R. I., to whom I am greatly indebted for letting me examine the precious manuscript.<sup>3</sup> A facsimile of the page containing the beginning of the Rondo was reproduced along with that article.<sup>4</sup> The careful reader will find to his amazement that the facsimile page does not agree with the current editions, including the one in the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* of Beethoven's works.

The Noble manuscript reveals important facts previously unknown about the composition. A minuté comparison between the autograph and the printed editions, which are all based on Anton Diabelli's first publication (1828), shows numerous discrepancies, such as the omission of whole measures, the supplying of accompaniments wherever missing, and false readings and misinterpretations of the musical text. Worst of all, Diabelli concealed the fact that the composition was unfinished, and de-

<sup>1</sup> This paper was read before the Greater New York Chapter of the American Musicological Society Dec. 28, 1945.

<sup>2</sup> *Adventures and Discoveries of a Manuscript Hunter in The Musical Quarterly*, XXXI (1945), 495. Concerning this manuscript, Dr. Albrecht recorded little more than its existence.

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately I could not learn more about the history of the autograph than that it has been in the possession of Mrs. Noble for the last twenty years.

<sup>4</sup> Facing p. 496.

ceived the public with the remark: "This *Capriccio*, which was found completed in L. v. Beethoven's estate, has in the manuscript the following title, *The Rage over the Lost Penny, Vented in a Caprice*."<sup>5</sup> All evidence proves beyond doubt that the Diabelli publication of the *Rondo à Capriccio* is an arrangement prepared after the composer's death—moreover, an arrangement made by someone not painstaking enough to preserve Beethoven's intentions.

In addition, the autograph settles the problem of the date of the composition. Beethoven scholars, in heated controversies, assigned the work to various periods between the composer's youth and his last years, although a critical study of the form and style of the piece could by itself have answered that question perfectly well. Thanks to the newly discovered holograph, I find that the style of the handwriting as well as the sketches on its last page make possible a more exact dating. In fact, this question can be settled once and for all. The span of more than thirty years within which Beethoven scholars variously dated the composition can now be reduced to three.

The manuscript contains four single leaves, size 25 x 32 cm, which may have originally formed two double leaves. It is not unlikely that it was at one time part of a notebook, from which these leaves were torn. In its present state it is badly trimmed on the left-hand side and at the top of the pages. Because of the trimmed edges the leaves are loose, and are now held together by two stitched-in threads. Otherwise the autograph is well preserved. One of the leaves has the watermark "RFM" or possibly "RFA". Each page contains sixteen staves. Of the eight pages of the manuscript the *Rondo à Capriccio* itself is found on pages 2 to 7, while page 1 contains sketches for the Rondo and page 8 extraneous sketch material.

The ink shades range from a dark to a light brown, the lighter shades being perhaps caused by dipping the pen only when dry.<sup>6</sup> As a rule the main melodic line, obviously written first, appears

<sup>5</sup> Footnote in the first edition.

<sup>6</sup> I am indebted to Mr. Robert Hill, a manuscript expert of the New York Public Library, for this information.

more regularly in darker ink, whereas the accompaniment figures and later corrections have a fainter coloring. Most interesting is the correction—to be exact, the double version—of the last rondo return: the composer superimposed on the chordal variation of the theme in dark ink a figured variation in fainter ink, unfortunately without making it clear which one of the two should be used.<sup>7</sup> Both versions are given in Ex. 1, mm. 3-4, 7, 11-12, 15-16, in the systems marked “Autograph” (the bracketed numbers refer to the measure numbers in all current editions).

Ex. 1.  
Edition

Autograph

378[368]

Apart from occasional blurs—due to ink spots or corrections by Beethoven—the handwriting offers comparatively little difficulty in reading. Much of the manuscript is so neatly written that some observers believed it a forgery. There is, however, no doubt that this is an authentic holograph of Beethoven, even though it is not signed by him.

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<sup>7</sup> The way Beethoven crammed the sixteenth notes into too small a space lends support to the assumption that the figured variation was the later version.

The general appearance of the handwriting is convincing proof that the *Rondo à Capriccio* is a work of Beethoven's youth.<sup>8</sup> Here are all the peculiarities characteristic of his writing between his arrival in Vienna (1792) and the turn of the century. First, there is the way he marked the braces for the system: a double stroke through the two staves with little dashes pointing in opposite directions from the upper and lower staves.<sup>9</sup> To my knowledge he discarded this habit of bracing the staves about 1800 and substituted a single line curling at the top and bottom.<sup>10</sup> Very characteristic, too, are the figures in the time signature, which are identical with those pointed out by Max Unger as samples of Beethoven's early writing.<sup>11</sup>

Other youthful idiosyncrasies appear—for example, his peculiar way of writing the clefs and flat and sharp signs. Most characteristic is the vigorous curve of the beams that connect eighth- and sixteenth-notes, particularly when the stems point upward; in the later years the beams became thinner and straighter. All these observations leave no doubt that the Noble manuscript stems from before 1800. On the other hand, it cannot have been written during his Bonn period, i.e. before 1792—as is obvious to anyone who has ever seen autographs, or reproductions of them, from that period.<sup>12</sup>

These conclusions regarding the time of composition are confirmed by an examination of the sketches on the last page. The

<sup>8</sup> Little research has been done on the changes Beethoven's handwriting underwent during his lifetime. Gustav Nottebohm, the greatest authority in this field, never published his observations in comprehensive form, although he gave important hints throughout his diverse writings. The best monograph on Beethoven's handwriting in general is Max Unger's *Beethovens Handschrift* (Vol. 4 of *Veröffentlichungen des Beethovenhauses in Bonn*, Bonn, 1926). I am confident that a detailed comparative study of the Beethoven autographs that are at present inaccessible, will facilitate a more exact dating of his works.

<sup>9</sup> This form of brace is used in the Rondo part of the manuscript throughout and also in the 2nd and 5th systems of the front page. See the reproduction facing p. 177 of this article.

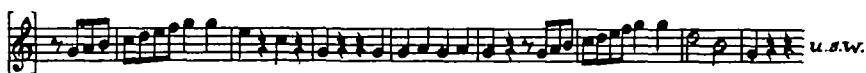
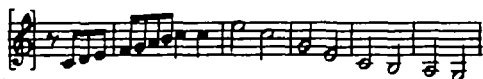
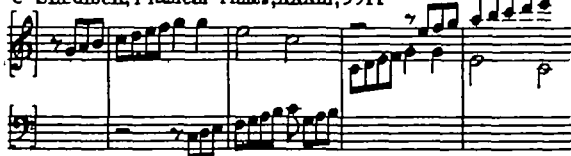
<sup>10</sup> Cf. the facsimile edition of the Piano Sonata Op. 26, published by E. Prieger, Bonn, 1895.

<sup>11</sup> Unger, *op. cit.*, p. 13. Cf. the facsimile reproduction (see footnote 4) with the reproduction of a page from the Trio, Op. 3, in *The Musical Quarterly*, XIII (1927), opposite p. 261.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. the facsimile pages of the *Ritterballett* in *Der Junge Beethoven* by Ludwig Schieder-mair, Leipzig, 1925, between pp. 388-389, or those in *La Jeunesse de Beethoven* by J.-G. Prod'homme, Paris, 1927, between pp. 208-209.

material on this page—including, as it does, ideas related to the finale of the First Symphony and the first movement of the C major Piano Concerto—makes it possible to narrow down still further the period in which the work must have been written. Sketches with similar material<sup>13</sup> were published by Nottebohm<sup>14</sup> and J. S. Shedlock.<sup>15</sup>

## Ex 2 Nottebohm Sketches

A. Beethoven's *Studien*, p. 202B. *Zweite Beethoveniana*, p. 228C. Shedlock, *Musical Times*, XXXIII, 591f

<sup>13</sup> Other sketches of the same subject matter can be found in the famous Kafka *Notirungsbuch* (London, British Museum, Add. 29,801), which contains on detached leaves—the fact that they are detached makes it difficult to draw conclusions regarding chronology—most interesting material pertaining to works written between 1785 and 1800. J. S. Shedlock gave a summary account of its contents (with numerous excerpts) in a series of articles published under the title *Beethoven's Sketch Books* in *The Musical Times*, Vols. XXXIII-XXXV (1892-94).

<sup>14</sup> Nottebohm, *Beethoven's Studien*, Leipzig and Winterthur, 1873, pp. 202-203; *Zweite Beethoveniana*, Leipzig, 1887, pp. 228-229.

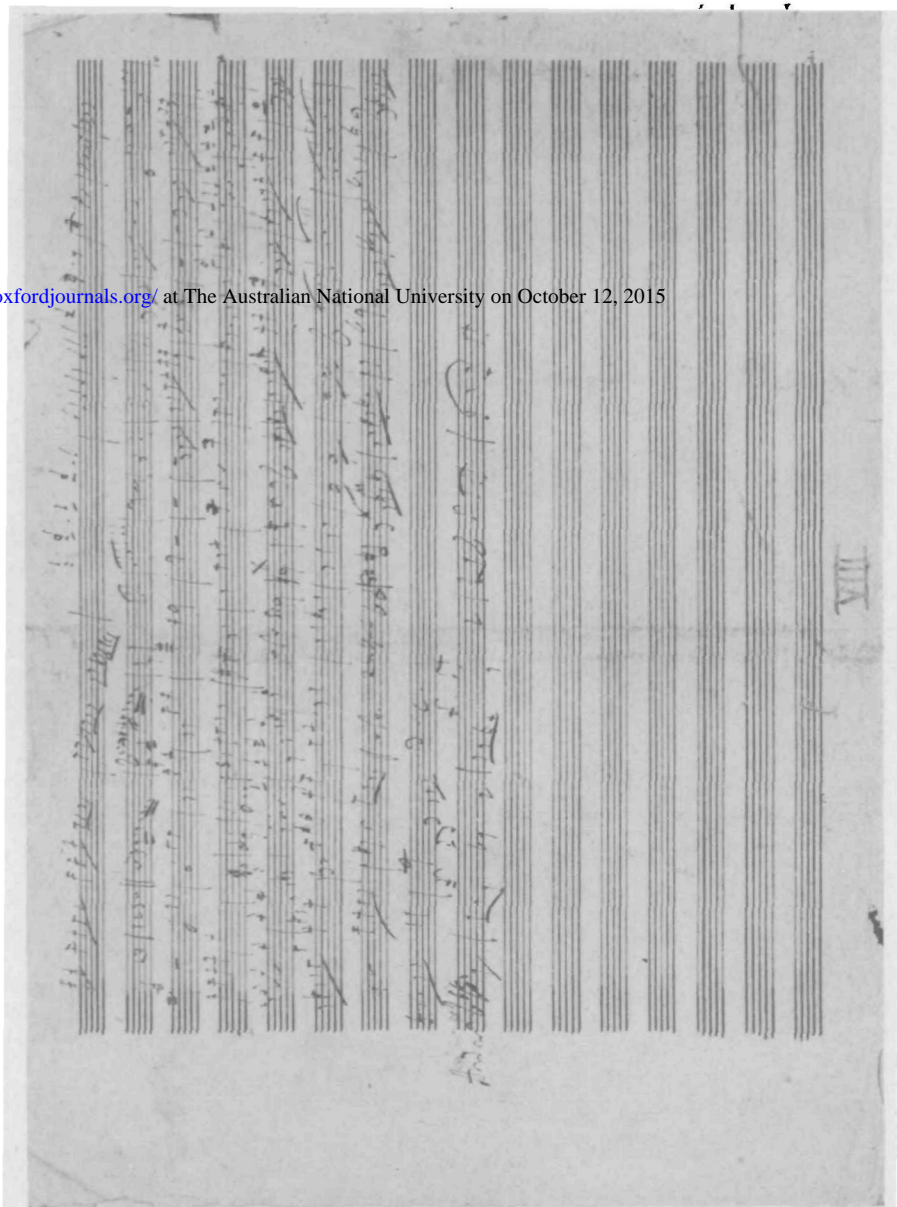
<sup>15</sup> *The Musical Times*, XXXIII (1892), 531. Since Nottebohm was the first to discover sketches with this material and since the Shedlock examples are mere supplements, I shall call all these sketches *Nottebohm Sketches*.

Nottebohm, in his *Beethoven's Studien* (1873), identified them as preliminary studies for the finale of the First Symphony. A few years later, however, he changed his opinion, partly on the strength of new sketches, and said that all of these sketches belonged to the first movement of an unfinished symphony in C major, preceding the First Symphony.<sup>16</sup> Although this is a moot question, the Noble sketches bring more evidence to support the hypothesis of an "unfinished symphony". The material is altogether different from that of the finale of the First Symphony except for the initial run, which is identical and is used similarly in both instances.

### Ex 3 Noble Sketches

The image shows seven staves of musical notation, labeled [Staff 1] through [Staff 7]. The notation is handwritten and includes various rhythmic patterns, accidentals, and dynamic markings. The staves are arranged vertically, with [Staff 1] at the top and [Staff 7] at the bottom. The notation is in a single system, with each staff containing a line of music. The music appears to be a sketch for a symphony, with various rhythmic patterns and accidentals. The staves are labeled [Staff 1] through [Staff 7].

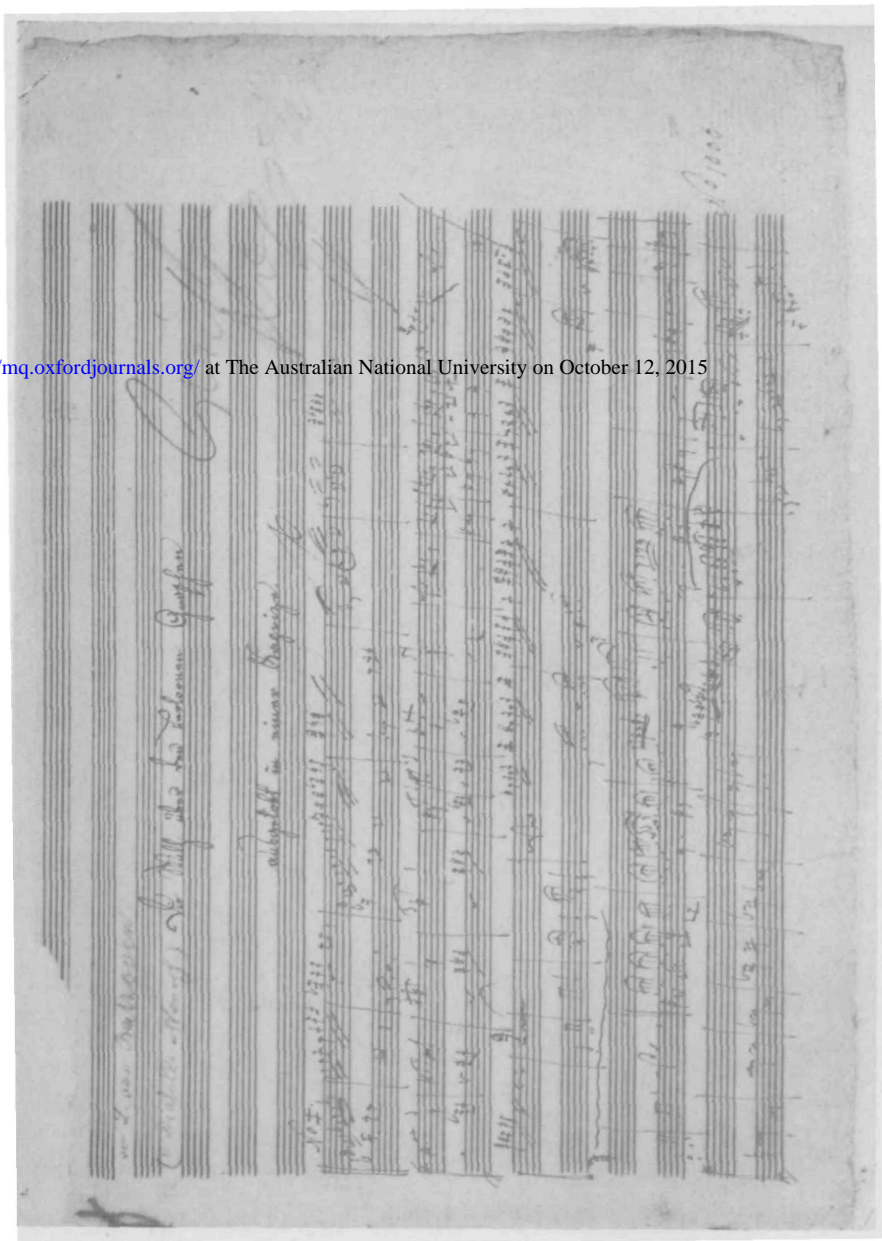
<sup>16</sup> Other writers, among them Shedlock (*op. cit.*, XXXIII, 332) and Thayer-Riemann (*Ludwig van Beethovens Leben*, Leipzig, 1922, II, 107) concurred with the latter opinion.



Last Page of the Noble Manuscript, showing sketches for a symphonic movement. (See Ex. 3, p. 176f.)

(By Courtesy of Mrs. Eugene A. Noble)

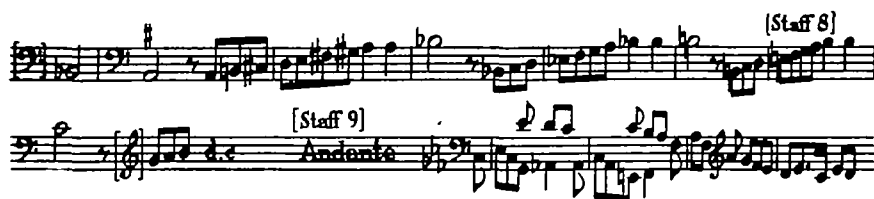




First Page of the Noble Manuscript, showing Beethoven's sketches for the *Rondo à Capriccio*. (See Exx. 5-8, p. 189f.)

(By Courtesy of Mrs. Eugene A. Noble)





In the middle of Staff 1 appears what one might call a second theme in G major, which—despite its seeming familiarity—I was unable to identify. Staves 2-7 contain the outline of an exposition for a C major movement. A few measures in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time, probably intended for a slow introduction, are followed by the main subject, the theme with the initial run, whose design and treatment bear so much resemblance to the finale of the First Symphony.<sup>17</sup> (The second theme on Staves 4-5 seems to be derived from the one on Staff 1.) Of the development section, starting with “*2ter Theil*”, only seven measures are sketched, leading into the recapitulation, which is simply indicated by the first three notes of the theme and a *da capo* sign.

The Nottebohm sketches show that Beethoven experimented with the theme and tested it for its usefulness in a stretto arrangement; the sketches of the Noble manuscript show that he had also been working on a composition plan for a whole movement built around this very theme.

If Beethoven did not carry out this plan as sketched in the Noble manuscript, at least he made good use of the musical material. Besides working with the initial motive extensively in the finale of his First Symphony, Beethoven turned to it repeatedly in other compositions of the same period. It appears as an ostinato figure in one of the piano variations on *Une fièvre brûlante*, for which Nottebohm<sup>18</sup> found sketches dating from 1796; in the coda of the variations of the quartet Op. 18, No. 5, as a regular countersubject, which goes back to a sketch dating from 1794 or 1795;<sup>19</sup> and most prominently in the opening

<sup>17</sup> Cf. bars 86-89 with the end of the 5th staff of the Noble sketches (Ex. 3).

<sup>18</sup> See Nottebohm, *Zweite Beethoveniana*, p. 30. The composition was published in 1798.

<sup>19</sup> See Nottebohm, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

movement of the C major Piano Concerto.<sup>20</sup> Between this concerto and the symphonic sketches there is not just a casual relation of thematic material. The contrapuntal use of the initial motive as found in the Nottebohm sketches occurs again in the concerto. The relationship becomes even more conspicuous in the Noble manuscript, where the octave leaps, one of the basic motives in the concerto, now appear as part of the plan for the "unfinished symphony". (See Staves 2 and 3 of Ex. 3.)

It is only by way of the more extensive sketch material revealed in this manuscript that one comes to perceive the close relation between the First Symphony and the concerto. So curious a community of ideas might be explained as resulting from a habit-pattern such as all composers fall into at times.

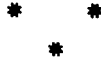
There is an exact date for the first performance of the concerto. Beethoven himself played it in Prague in 1798.<sup>21</sup> Since the Noble sketches contain material related to the concerto (in part to material not otherwise used except in the concerto), and since these sketches form the back page of the Rondo, the Rondo must have been written while the concerto was still in an embryonic stage, i.e. before the 1798 performance. It is inconceivable that Beethoven would have made sketches for a work after he had already performed it.

Furthermore, the Nottebohm sketches, showing attempts to formulate the symphonic theme with the initial run, were found on the same page with the most advanced counterpoint exercises written under the direction of Albrechtsberger. Since Beethoven stopped taking lessons with Albrechtsberger in the middle of 1795, these sketches cannot have been made after, nor much before, that date. The Noble manuscript, however, contains a plan for a whole movement based on the theme as already formulated in the Nottebohm sketches. Therefore, the Noble sketches must have been written after, or at the same time as, the Nottebohm sketches. This line of reasoning leads to the con-

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the last part of Ex. 2B with mm. 23-27 of the concerto.

<sup>21</sup> According to Tomaschek, quoted in Friedrich Kerst, *Die Erinnerungen an Beethoven*, Stuttgart, 1913, I, 31 f.

clusion that the *Rondo à Capriccio* was written between 1795 and 1798.



Why did many Beethoven experts believe that the *Rondo* came from the composer's late period? Only the older writers considered it an early work. Of Beethoven's personal friends Carl Czerny alone mentioned it: in his memoirs<sup>22</sup> he called it a "Jugendarbeit". Wilhelm von Lenz never missed an occasion to speak of the *Rondo* in deprecatory terms: "... from the earliest period and without interest"; or "... as to style, if style there be, it belongs not quite to Beethoven's first, not quite to his second manner of composition".<sup>23</sup> Without commenting further on the work Adolf B. Marx said, "... from an early period".<sup>24</sup>

Curiously, all later writers insist that the piece is a work of Beethoven's maturity. Whereas Nottebohm and Thayer in their catalogues refused to date the composition, Hans von Bülow, their contemporary, stated flatly in 1872 that it came from Beethoven's "latest creative period".<sup>25</sup> Carried away by his enthusiasm for the piece, he saw in it certain style characteristics which he thought supported his argument, but which actually point unmistakably to an early phase in the composer's development. All Bülow's ammunition can be turned against him.

"The choice of the major mode of the relative minor key" in the third rondo episode, referred to by Bülow in support of his thesis, can be found in the first movement of Op. 10, No. 2, where a false reprise of the theme in D major precedes the recapitulation proper in F major. The harmonic shift from E major to E-flat major before the last return of the rondo theme, considered by Bülow characteristic of Beethoven's late period,

<sup>22</sup> Czerny's *Memoirs* were published in the *Jahresberichte der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde*, 1869-70, and reprinted in Kerst, *op. cit.*, I, 39 ff. The *Rondo à Capriccio* is mentioned on p. 59.

<sup>23</sup> Wilhelm von Lenz, *Critischer Catalog sämtlicher Werke Ludwig van Beethovens*, Hamburg, 1860, III, 301. *Id. Beethoven et ses trois styles*, St. Petersburg, 1852, p. 191.

<sup>24</sup> Adolf Bernhard Marx, *L. van Beethoven*, Berlin, 1863 (2nd ed.), II, 378.

<sup>25</sup> Hans von Bülow's edition of the *Rondo* in *Beethovens Werke für Pianoforte solo von op. 53 an*, Stuttgart, 1872, II, 222 ff.

has its perfect counterpart in the last return of the rondo finale of Op. 7, with a rather romantic effect in both cases. "The independence of the several parts of these melodic and rhythmic imitations" can hardly have been much of a problem for a composer who had gone through Albrechtsberger's course of strict counterpoint. As a matter of fact, there are examples of polyphonic writing in Beethoven's early works that are even more striking, such as the finale of Op. 10, No. 2.

Beethoven scholars have respected the awe-inspiring authority of the great pianist. The Thayer-Riemann biography says of the Rondo:

No sketches for this piece are extant, and, as far as we know, no letters refer to it. Thus no information is available as to its date of origin. . . . Czerny labeled it "from his youth"; it is, however, questionable whether he was well informed regarding this matter. The simple, lively theme might well have originated in his earlier period; but the freedom of form, the variation of the theme with its bold harmonies, as well as some other traits seem to point to a later period. . . . It is hard to believe that Beethoven would have left unpublished for years or decades a piece so perfect, so lovingly worked out, so completely finished.<sup>26</sup>

This reasoning led Thayer-Riemann to place the work among the compositions of 1823.

More modern writers also followed Bülow's ideas—Theodor Veidl, for one, who said in 1929: "The exuberant and incredibly spirited rondo is as characteristic of the later Beethoven as one of his last quartets. In any case we should not disregard it if we want an accurate picture of Beethoven's last creative period."<sup>27</sup>

The inclination to place the Rondo in Beethoven's late period may be explained by its having been found in his estate; it was thus one of those posthumous works that are likely to be considered examples of a composer's most mature style. To be sure, the "proof" always rests on so-called "stylistic considerations", but it often turns out to be a rationalization of a point of view preconditioned by the very fact of posthumous publication.

We are quite well informed about the auction of Beethoven's

<sup>26</sup> Thayer-Riemann, *op. cit.*, IV (1907), 479.

<sup>27</sup> Theodor Veidl, *Der Musikalische Humor bei Beethoven*, Leipzig, 1929, p. 3.

effects on November 5 and 6, 1827. In a report in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* (Leipzig)<sup>28</sup> its Vienna correspondent mentioned that most of the forty unknown works then auctioned stemmed from Beethoven's youth. He said in particular: "Herr Diabelli's partner bought, among other items, at a relatively high price Beethoven's last work . . . furthermore a solo caprice, and a rondo for piano and orchestra."

The reprinted catalogue gives us fuller information.<sup>29</sup> The items bought by Diabelli's partner, C. A. Spina, were:

Item No.		Estimated		Sold	
		Fl.	Kr.	Fl.	Kr.
173	Fragment of a new violin quintet of November 1826, the composer's last work.	10	—	30	30
177	Rondo for pianoforte and orchestra, unknown.	10	—	20	—
183	Lied, unknown	1	—	3	50
185	<i>Leichte Caprice</i> for pianoforte, unknown	1	—	20	30

All these works were tinkered with by Diabelli himself or his associates before he published them. Item 173 he arranged for piano and published in 1840 under the title *Letzter musikalischer Gedanke*.<sup>30</sup> Carl Czerny arranged Item 177 for publication in 1828.<sup>31</sup> Item 183, the lied *An Laura*, Diabelli arranged as a piano piece and published, in an edition after 1828, as a twelfth bagatelle added to the previous eleven *Novvelles Bagatelles* of 1823.<sup>32</sup> Item 185, our *Rondo à Capriccio*, he published in 1828; this too was an arrangement, as will be proved. Apparently Diabelli was well aware of the commercial possibilities of this piece, for though it was estimated at only 1 Fl., he was willing to pay twenty times as much.

<sup>28</sup> XXX (1828), cols. 27-30.

<sup>29</sup> In Theodor von Frimmel, *Beethoven Studien*, Munich, 1906, II, 186 ff.

<sup>30</sup> Nottebohm, *Thematisches Verzeichniss . . .*, Leipzig, 1868, p. 153.

<sup>31</sup> The manuscript of this rondo was discovered in the last years of the 19th century and discussed by Mandyczewski in his article *Beethoven's Rondo in B für Pianoforte und Orchester*, in *Sammelbände der internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, I (1900), 295-306. This is, in all probability, the older finale of Beethoven's concerto in B-flat. Mandyczewski tried to minimize Czerny's additions, but, to judge from the musical quotations in the article, the autograph was in such an incomplete state that much work was left to Czerny.

<sup>32</sup> The discovery of the source for this 12th Bagatelle was an ingenious stroke on the part of Nottebohm (see *Beethoveniana*, Leipzig and Winterthur, 1872, pp. 45-46) and came from his finding a mere sketch of the song then, i.e. 1872, not yet known. Georg Kinsky in *Musikhistorisches Museum von Wilhelm Heyer*, Cologne, 1916, listed the autograph of the song and published it in the *Musikbeilage*, p. 3.

Diabelli's publication of the *Rondo à Capriccio* is based on the unfinished version in the Noble manuscript. This is not an assumption, but can be conclusively proved. The title *The Rage over the Lost Penny*, which Diabelli printed in a footnote, can be found on the front page of the manuscript, although not in Beethoven's handwriting.<sup>33</sup> On the same page, however, is an inscription by the composer in a faded pencil scrawl: *Leichte Kaprice*, which happens to be the title given in the auction catalogue. A collation of the musical texts of the printed edition and the autograph removes any possible doubt that the unknown editor worked from the Noble manuscript.

A comparison of the first episode (m. 25 ff.) in any edition of the Rondo with the one on the manuscript page reproduced in the October 1945 issue of *The Musical Quarterly* discloses the fact that all editors omitted an eight-measure period. These eight measures are absolutely indispensable for reasons of balance and therefore cannot have been omitted intentionally. It is logical to suppose that the omission was due rather to an oversight on the part of the first editor, a supposition strongly corroborated by the fact that in the manuscript the ending of the third system is identical with that of the fourth. This coincidence evidently caused the editor, or perhaps the copyist, to skip the entire line that contains the missing eight measures.

Further comparisons of manuscript and edition show that in several instances where the reading is difficult the editor did not take the trouble to reason out Beethoven's intentions, which always make better sense than the editor's guesses. Mis-readings in the edition occur always where the Noble manuscript is least clear. The word "*bis*", for example, squeezed in and hardly legible, was twice overlooked. Accidentals, when obscure in the manuscript, were misinterpreted in the edition (e.g. a natural sign construed as a flat).

The most striking evidence of the relation between this autograph and the printed version is contained in the original editor's additions made necessary by the unfinished state of the

<sup>33</sup> Albrecht, *op. cit.* He claims that the handwriting is Schindler's.

composition. The left-hand part is not written in at important places, and filling-in notes, sometimes most essential for harmonic clarity, are left out. Expression marks are completely lacking. Usually Beethoven was most painstaking about such marks. In one instance, mentioned on page 173 above, Beethoven had not made up his mind which of two versions to use. Worst of all, while composing he even forgot in which key he was writing. With such a state of affairs the editor was naturally obliged to do a bit of composing himself. That he worked from this unfinished manuscript can be demonstrated from the poor quality of the patchwork that appears in the edition wherever there are gaps in the Noble manuscript.

Ex 4<sup>260</sup>[252]

Small notes spurious

Such lapses could not conceivably be ascribed to a composer of Beethoven's standards. Beethoven would never have resorted to the inane accompaniment figures with which the editor filled in a gap. They are not only un-Beethovenian; they are musically poor. (Note the inept dominant seventh in mm. 3, 4, and 7 of Ex. 4.) In the case of the two versions of the same passages (Ex. 1), the editor chose a compromise which is not only hard to play, but does not show enough effort to carry out Beethoven's intentions (see the staves marked "Edition" in the example).

All the above evidence establishes this fact: the Noble manuscript is the autograph that was auctioned after Beethoven's death, sold to Diabelli, and prepared for publication by an anonymous editor.

It is unlikely that the identity of this editor will ever be known, since the publisher had every reason to conceal him. It should be remembered that Diabelli tried to make the musical world believe that the piece was found in *finished* form after the composer's death. There is good enough reason to suspect.



Diabelli himself, who, after having paid a nice sum for it, was interested in making money with the piece. Now and then he had tried his hand at composing and loved to tamper with the works of the great masters.<sup>34</sup>

Another "suspect" is Carl Czerny. He was Beethoven's favorite arranger for piano transcriptions of orchestral and chamber works. He was also the anonymous editor of Beethoven's unfinished B-flat Rondo for Piano and Orchestra, posthumously published by Diabelli. Czerny, Beethoven's friend of long standing, and of his pupils the one most familiar with the master's style, emerges as the most likely editor of the *Rondo à Capriccio*.

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Music historians who studied the structure of the work were at a loss to account for its curious organization.<sup>35</sup> Maybe the title Beethoven gave it can throw some light on its peculiarity. The penciled inscription *Leichte Kaprice* was not its original title. It was an afterthought, probably added many years later, to judge by the handwriting. Beethoven's original title was *Alla ingharese. quasi un capriccio*.<sup>36</sup>

*Alla ingharese* stands for *Rondo all' ongarese*, one of the favorite forms of composition in the late 18th century. Haydn, Dittersdorf, Pleyel, and Hummel wrote pieces in the Hungarian gypsy fashion.<sup>37</sup> The two best known are the finale of the pianoforte concerto in D (1784) and the finale of the G major Trio (1795), both by Haydn. Just at the time when the *Rondo à Capriccio* must have been written, Beethoven made several trips to Hungary. In 1794 he accompanied Haydn to Eszterháza. In 1796 he visited Pozsony (now Bratislava), then a Hungarian

<sup>34</sup> Diabelli's tinkering with posthumous Schubert songs is well known. See also Kinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>35</sup> Carl Pieper (*Musikalische Analyse*, Cologne, 1925, p. 157) considered it a "little sonata form". Rudolf von Tobel (*Die Formenwelt der Klassischen Instrumentalmusik*, Bern and Leipzig, 1938, p. 128) interpreted it in the light of a bona fide rondo. He even speaks of a fourth and fifth couplet.

<sup>36</sup> The word *ingharese*, of course, does not exist. Haydn's String Quartet Op. 53, No. 2, contains an *Allegretto alla zingarese*. Perhaps Beethoven fused *ongarese* with *zingarese* and thus came out with *ingharese*.

<sup>37</sup> See Georg Schünemann, *Ungarische Motive in der deutschen Musik*, in *Ungarische Jahrbücher*, IV (1924), 67 ff.

city. It is not accidental, then, that several Beethoven works of that period show Hungarian influence. The rondo finale of the C major Concerto is a perfect example, particularly the A minor episode.

Compared with this concerto, Beethoven's *Rondo à Capriccio* shows few Hungarian characteristics. But, curiously enough, it is related to Haydn's *Rondo all' ongarese*, the finale of the popular G major Trio of 1795, which did make use of original Hungarian dances.<sup>38</sup> The figuration as well as the rhythmic distribution in the accompaniment is similar. The periodicity of phrases in both pieces follows the pattern of Hungarian dances, i.e. eight-measure phrases often dynamically contrasted by a regular alternation of *piano* and *forte*.<sup>39</sup> True, such a contrast was not indicated by Beethoven, who gave no dynamic signs at all. But dynamic contrast is implied in the nature of the theme and also in its accompaniment, which Beethoven changed from three-note chords to four-note chords at two-bar intervals. Played with alternations of two measures *piano* and two measures *forte*, the theme sounds less monotonous and takes on a more Hungarian flavor.

The first part of the work (through m. 133 [125]) is modeled after the finale of Haydn's Trio.<sup>40</sup> Each of the episodes, like Haydn's, is made up of eight-measure periods, sometimes with repeat marks. Graph No. 1 shows a simplicity of structure that is rather rare in Beethoven.<sup>41</sup> He obviously intended to write a simple *rondo all' ongarese* of the type of the Haydn Trio, or, for that matter, one even simpler; he went so far as to write "*fine*" at the end of the theme to save himself the trouble of writing out

<sup>38</sup> See Ervin Major, *Ungarische Tanzmelodien in Haydn's Bearbeitung*, in *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, XI (1929), 601 ff.

<sup>39</sup> See *Beylage* to the anonymous article *Abhandlungen über die Nationaltänze der Ungarn*, in *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, Leipzig, II (1800), col. 610 ff.

<sup>40</sup> The fact that Haydn's Trio was not written before 1795 may be additional evidence that Beethoven did not write his Rondo before 1795.

<sup>41</sup> The finale of the Trio for 2 Oboes and English Horn, Op. 87 (1794), has such a simple structure.

the last return.<sup>42</sup> One looks in vain for the *da capo* sign which would justify the *fine*; evidently Beethoven changed his mind.

GRAPH No. I<sup>43</sup>

THEME (24)		24 [24] <i>fine</i>
A 8 a b a b' V I	A' 8 a' b a' c	A 8 a b a b' V I
G _____ c _____		V of G _____
E MINOR EPISODE (16) [8] 8 V I → V of (G)	40 [32]	THEME (24) A A' A G c G 64 [56]
G MINOR EPISODE (24)   : 8 :   : 8 :   8 a b a b theme preparation g B <sup>b</sup> B <sup>b</sup> g E <sup>b</sup> → V of (G)	88 [80]	THEME (24) A A' A slightly varied G c G 112 [104]
E MAJOR EPISODE (21)		133 [125]
: 8 :   : 8 :		bridge
V I		→ V of (G)
E _____		

Beginning with m. 134 [126], the piece ceases to be a simple rondo. Here the technique of composition changes completely. Instead of the originally intended *da capo* there is a new version of the theme which ushers in a long and elaborate development section constantly concerned with the initial motive. At the end of this development section (m. 259 [251]) Beethoven starts a second development section, as long and as elaborate as the first, again introduced by a variation of the theme. The formal relationship of the two developments can be seen in Graph No. II. Even the coda is another development, similarly introduced by a varied presentation of the theme, and this third development again concentrates on the initial motive.

<sup>42</sup> The only examples of *da capo* rondos I could find in Beethoven are the finales of two Duos for Clarinet and Bassoon which, although not dated, must be very early works.

<sup>43</sup> Capital letters mean major mode, small letters minor mode.

GRAPH No. II

THEME (24) <sup>157</sup> [149]			FIRST DEVELOPMENT (102)							<sup>259</sup> [251]
A	A'	A	12	20	22	10	24	6	8	
new accompaniment			b dev- eloped	A A' A in A <sup>b</sup>	a dev- eloped	cad- enza	A A' A in B <sup>b</sup>	a dev- eloped	cad- enza	
G	c	G	G → A <sup>b</sup> f A <sup>b</sup> A <sup>b</sup> → V of — B <sup>b</sup> g B <sup>b</sup> → V of (G) —							
THEME (24) <sup>283</sup> [275]			SECOND DEVELOPMENT (94) (92)							<sup>377</sup> [367]
A	A'	A	12	20	24	4	34 [32]			
varied			b dev- eloped	free fig- ur- ation	a dev- eloped	cad- enza	a dev- eloped			
G	c	G	G → V of A <sup>b</sup> → V of (G) — chromatic							
THEME (24) <sup>401</sup> [391]			DEVELOPMENTAL CODA (47)							<sup>448</sup> [438]
A	A'	A	10	8	12		17			
varied			A' dev- eloped	cadenza preparation based on $\frac{3}{2}$	cadenza A in stretto		b over pedalpoint			
G	c	G	G —————							

The composition as a whole thus falls into two parts, the simple rondo and the development sections. Such a break in the piece probably gave Beethoven the idea of adding to the title *quasi un capriccio* in order to explain the second half. It looks as though he made the addition as an afterthought, when he saw how things were going with the piece. And this may account for the strange punctuation in the title: *Alla ingharena* is followed by a period.

Why did Beethoven think that *quasi un capriccio* would explain the curious construction of this composition? Obviously, there was no better name for such a free, informal structure; the term *capriccio* as well as *fantasia* had been used for centuries as a convenient title for any such experimental work. In 1789 Haydn offered his publisher Artaria a capriccio whose "rarity" and "special treatment" should, he claimed, justify his asking

twenty-four ducats for it.<sup>44</sup> The "special treatment" means monothematic treatment: the main theme is used throughout, either in its integral form or in a developmental style. This piece, which Beethoven, Haydn's pupil, must have known, may have suggested the title *Capriccio* for his own composition. In fact, the *Rondo à Capriccio* had Haydn for its godfather in more ways than one.

Unlike the *Fantasias* of C.P.E. Bach, Beethoven's "capriccio", as well as Haydn's, was the proving ground for developmental experiments. The procedure of hounding a motive to death, found in all three developments (including the coda), obsessed Beethoven in most of his works of the later '90's. In his Opus 18, No. 1, Beethoven repeated the main motive of the first movement 104 times. In the first version of this movement<sup>45</sup> he used it 130 times. This technique of making the most of a single musical idea by different lightings, by tossing it from one voice to another, by exhausting all its possibilities, was exactly the technique he later developed to such perfection in his Fifth Symphony. The second part of the *Rondo à Capriccio* was an early experimental study in this very technique.



By adding this study in developmental techniques to a piece originally designed as a simple rondo, Beethoven ended up with a hybrid which he hoped to justify in part by the title *Alla ingharese. quasi un capriccio*. But he must have been aware of the inconsistency in the form. That he intended at one time to revise it seems to be indicated by a set of sketches written on the front page of the Noble manuscript.<sup>46</sup> To find on the first page of a manuscript sketches containing alternate versions of

<sup>44</sup> See F. Pohl, *Joseph Haydn*, Berlin, 1875, II, 236. It was published by Artaria under the title *Fantasia* (C major) in order to distinguish it from the older *Capriccio* (G major) of 1765. This *Fantasia* was, by the way, published by Longman and Broderip, London, under the title *Caprice*. See J. P. Larsen, *Die Haydn Überlieferung*, Copenhagen, 1939, p. 201.

<sup>45</sup> This version appeared as Vol. 2 of *Veröffentlichungen des Beethovenhauses in Bonn*, 1922.

<sup>46</sup> See facsimile reproduction facing p. 177.

passages that come later in the body of the work is curious and disconcerting. It can possibly be explained by assuming that after the music was completely drafted the composer began to make changes in it. On the other hand there is still the possibility that these "revisions" may refer to an older version which was lost, but had originally formed a part of the manuscript.

Ex 5  
"No. 1"

[System 1]

[System 2]

Ex 6 Sketch for mm. 230 [222]–237 [229]

[System 2]

Ex 7 Sketch for mm. 244 [236]–277 [269]

[System 2]

[System 3]

(Continued on following page)

Ex. 8 Sketch for mm. 296[288] – 319[307]

In these sketches the reader will find two indications, “No. I” and “No. 1000”, (see Exx. 5 and 8) frequently used by Beethoven as symbols for insertions or changes. “No. 1000” has no cor-



responding symbol in the composition, a fact that supports the possibility of an older version to which it might refer. "No. 1", indicating an insertion, reappears at its proper place (m. 212 [204]), which suggests the conjecture that this sketch (Ex. 5) was written after the Noble version of the work was finished.

There are two more sketches of alternative versions (Exx. 6 and 7), which present the same ambiguous picture. Which of the versions is better, the one in the composition itself or the one in sketch form, is a question that can hardly be answered conclusively. Beethoven jotted down these sketches in such a hasty stenographic fashion that too much is left to the imagination.



Apparently Beethoven realized that the *Rondo à Capriccio*, in the version of the Noble manuscript, was not beyond the stage of revision. But the sketches show changes only in details. "No. 1" is merely an insertion of a few extra bars of the same material. Now there must have been some reason why Beethoven did not tackle the larger problem of working over the whole into a more convincing form, as he did in other instances, for example the above-mentioned string quartet Op. 18, No. 1. Beethoven wrote to his friend, Amenda, who had received the early version of the quartet as a farewell present: "Don't let anybody see the quartet because I have altered it completely. I have only now learned how to write a string quartet properly."<sup>47</sup> While he took pains to improve the quartet he never bothered to shape the *Rondo* into a more balanced form.

Why did Beethoven neglect to do so? I should like to offer a hypothesis to explain this seeming carelessness on his part. In the '90's Beethoven could not make a living out of his works alone. He had to earn a livelihood as a pianist, and soon became one of the outstanding pianists of his time. At first he achieved a reputation in the musical circles of Viennese aristocracy. He

<sup>47</sup> In a letter of June 1, 1801. Thayer-Riemann, *op. cit.*, II, 270. According to Alfred Kalischer (*Beethovens Sämtliche Briefe*, Berlin and Leipzig, 1906, I, 46), this letter, important in many aspects, should be dated June 1, 1800.

played at musicales in the homes of Baron van Swieten, Prince Lichnowsky, Court Councillor Klüpfell, and Baron Browne, before he gave public performances in 1795. After that he even made concert tours. Not everyone liked his playing, but all agreed that his improvisations surpassed those of all other pianists, including Mozart. The audiences were spellbound. Reports from the '90's are numerous and extravagant in their praise of his "*freie Phantasie*". In 1799 the correspondent of the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* (Leipzig)<sup>48</sup> reported from Vienna: "It is indeed extraordinary with what ease and at the same time skill Beethoven is able not merely to vary a given theme by figuration (a stunt of many a virtuoso), but really to develop it on the spot."

Carl Czerny, in his memoirs,<sup>49</sup> has given more detailed information about these improvisations. He distinguished three types. Two of them, a "free variation form" and a "mixed genre—*à la potpourri*", he disposed of briefly. A third type, based on the "form of the first movement or rondo finale of a sonata", he discussed at some length:

After the introduction of a second theme [*Mittelmelodie*] in a related key, etc., Beethoven brought the first section to a close. In the second section he abandoned himself freely, using however the main motive all the time and in all sorts of combinations. In allegro movements the whole performance was enlivened by bravura passages which were even more difficult than those to be found in his printed works.

Most of this description fits our *Rondo à Capriccio* amazingly well. In the second part of the composition Beethoven does nothing but elaborate his main motive in exactly the fashion Czerny described. The "bravura passages" are there too in the cadenzas which, as they stand, are probably mere approximations of what Beethoven actually played. (Free improvisation of cadenzas was still at that time expected of any virtuoso pianist.) For Beethoven must have played this composition. He could not, however, play it as it stands; but it did serve as a useful framework. On the other hand, since it answers Czerny's de-

<sup>48</sup> I, col. 525.

<sup>49</sup> See footnote 22.

scription, it is logical to assume that we have here an example of Beethoven's improvisations.

If this is an improvisation—which, as such, would fit into Czerny's third category—why did Beethoven take the trouble to write it down at all? He once made a personal memorandum in a sketch book:<sup>50</sup> “Strictly speaking, you improvise only when you pay no attention to what you play. That is also the best and truest way to improvise in public—to abandon yourself to whatever comes into your head.” Is this not an indirect admission that, whenever he could, Beethoven carefully planned his famed *freie Phantasien*? For when Beethoven writes “strictly speaking” (*eigentlich*), he usually implies that what follows should be done but isn't. The *Rondo à Capriccio* may have been a provisional notation on which he based improvisations.

Even the sketches afford more corroborative evidence for the hypothesis that Beethoven used the piece for improvisations. The alternate versions found in the sketches are not noticeable improvements, but may have been useful variants for *ex tempore* performances. One of the sketches, as a matter of fact, contains a modulatory plan with only the bass given (Ex. 8). The rest was left perhaps to the inspiration of the moment.

As long as Beethoven was the acclaimed improviser-pianist he was not interested in getting the *Rondo* into shape for publication. Quite the contrary: he was probably interested in withholding it from publication. He even withheld finished piano compositions while he was making a living as a pianist, because he wanted to retain the sole rights of performance. On December 15, 1800, he offered Hofmeister and Kühnel: “A concerto for pianoforte which I do not consider one of my best—just like another one which will be published by Mollo—because I am still keeping the better ones for myself until I make a concert tour. However it should not by any means disgrace you to print it.”<sup>51</sup> And in a letter to Breitkopf & Härtel dated April 22, 1801, Beethoven said: “One of my first concertos which for ob-

<sup>50</sup> No. 215 of the Heyer Museum catalogue. See Kinsky, *op. cit.*

<sup>51</sup> Thayer-Riemann, *op. cit.*, II, 181.

vious reasons does not belong to my best works will be published by Mollo; although composed later, it still does not measure up to my best concertos. . . . Musical policy requires me to keep the best concertos for myself for a while."<sup>52</sup>

At that time, Beethoven had composed his third piano concerto (the one in C minor), the autograph of which bears the date 1800; it was not published until 1804. The *Rondo à Capriccio*, however, he not only withheld; he never released it for publication. He withheld it so long that he outgrew it.

After he had arrived at a more mature style he became dissatisfied with compositions of the '90's. His anxiety about the first version of the quartet and his disparagement of the first and second piano concertos have already been mentioned. In the case of his song *Adelaide*, he expressed himself even more strongly in a letter of 1800 to the poet, Friedrich von Matthison: "I send you the Adelaide with diffidence. You yourself know what a change a few years produce in an artist who is constantly advancing. The greater the progress he makes in his art, the less do his older works satisfy him."<sup>53</sup> His dislike for the Septet, Op. 20, led him to the devastating statement, "In those days I did not know how to compose."<sup>54</sup>

The *Rondo à Capriccio* cannot have pleased Beethoven after he attained maturity. The form must have seemed a misconception to him who, even in his earlier works, had shown such a keen sense of proportion and formal design. The style, a manifestation of his *Sturm und Drang* period, had become obsolete for the composer of the *Eroica* and the *Waldstein Sonata*. With so many greater tasks ahead of him Beethoven was no longer interested in the little rondo—the "*Leichte Kaprice*" as he later slightly called it. For all we know, he even concealed its manuscript from the eyes of his later friends and kept it locked up in his drawer, where the administrators of his will found it. To succeeding generations *The Rage over the Lost Penny* has

<sup>52</sup> Thayer-Riemann, *op. cit.*, II, 240.

<sup>53</sup> Thayer-Riemann, *op. cit.*, II, 26.

<sup>54</sup> A remark Beethoven made to C. Potter in 1817. Quoted in Kerst, *op. cit.*, I, 232.

always had an immediate appeal as an effective, entertaining, and not too difficult show piece. It will undoubtedly continue to appear on programs—in a form, I hope, more faithful to the intentions of the composer.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> A new edition of the work based on the Noble manuscript is in preparation.