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## Beethoven's 'Elise' Elisabeth Röckel: a forgotten love story and a famous piano piece

*This essay represents the first English study of Elisabeth Röckel's relationship with Beethoven and the question of whether she could have been his 'Elise'. It is a translated and expanded version of a contribution that the author published in German in 2015. A first short article on this subject appeared in 2009 in the German news magazine Der Spiegel vol.63 no.26 (22 June 2009), p.138, followed by a longer one by Simon Morgan for the French news agency AFP, which was published in many newspapers all over the world, including Africa and Asia. Two TV documentaries based on this theory were also produced: the first was realised by Kaoru Kawada and Yutaka Takimoto for the Japanese station Nihon TV, and was broadcast on 21 March 2010. The other one was directed by Axel Fuhrmann and Axel Brüggemann for the French-German cultural television network ARTE and first aired on 29 January 2012.*

THE POPULARITY of Beethoven's album leaf *Für Elise* WoO 59, composed on 27 April 1810, is not only due to its musical substance, but also to the title, which inspires the imagination, as it proves that the work had a concrete addressee – a woman, for whom, and none other, the romantic melancholic piece was written. Its enormous renown since the beginning of the 20th century also results from its easy playability. It has been included in almost every anthology of popular piano pieces for a long time, in French editions under the title *La lettre à Élise*.

Until recently musicology has dealt with the piece comparatively rarely, and least of all with the question of for whom it was written. Lately, however, several publications have pursued the question of its addressee, as well as its transmission. The impetus for this was given in 2010 by a small book by the author of this article,<sup>1</sup> followed by a study with new biographical sources about the presumed 'Elise' and her connections with Beethoven (2015).<sup>2</sup> Other researchers, including Michael Lorenz (2011), Rita Steblin (2014), Jürgen May (2014) and Christine Herzog (2019), published further articles on this topic. Although there is no overall agreement on all points, it is now sufficiently proven that in Beethoven's closest circle of friends there actually was a young woman named 'Elise': the singer Elisabeth Röckel (1793–1883), who was 17 years old when the piece was composed (see fig.1, overleaf).

She was a sister of the tenor Joseph August Röckel (1783–1870), who sang as Florestan in the premiere of the second version of *Fidelio* on 29 March 1806 at Vienna's Theater an der Wien. As Röckel told the Beethoven biographer Alexander Wheelock Thayer (1817–1897), the composer took 'a great liking' to him and gave 'special orders to his servant to admit him at all times, even in the morning when busy. It was agreed that, when Röckel was admitted, if he found Beethoven very much occupied he should pass through the room into the bed-chamber beyond.'<sup>3</sup> Röckel rendered outstanding service to Beethoven during the preparation of the concert on 22

1. Klaus Martin Kopitz: *Beethoven, Elisabeth Röckel und das Albumblatt 'Für Elise'* (Cologne, 2010).

2. Klaus Martin Kopitz: 'Beethovens "Elise" Elisabeth Röckel: neue Aspekte zur Entstehung

und Überlieferung des Klavierstücks WoO 59', in *Die Tonkunst* vol.9 no.1 (January 2015), pp.48–57.

3. Alexander Wheelock Thayer: *Ludwig van Beethovens Leben*, trans. Hermann Deiters, revised

and completed by Hugo Riemann, 5 vols (Leipzig, 1908–1917), vol.2, pp.508 & 565.

Fig. 1: Elisabeth Hummel, *née* Röckel, pencil drawing by Friedrich Pecht, 1845 (Düsseldorf, Goethe-Museum, KM 2873)



December 1808 at the unheated Theater an der Wien, during which several of Beethoven's works were premiered: the Fifth and Sixth symphonies, the Fourth Piano Concerto and the *Choral fantasy*.<sup>4</sup> In return for his efforts, Röckel was given an English dictionary by Beethoven as a present.<sup>5</sup>

Although Beethoven had strong feelings of affection for Röckel's sister, on 16 May 1813 she married Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778–1837). She accompanied him to Stuttgart in 1816, and in 1819 Hummel moved to Weimar, together 'with his very beautiful wife' ('mit seiner wunderschönen Frau'). This is how the writer Moritz Müller (1806–1886) described her,<sup>6</sup> and that may partly explain why Beethoven was so fascinated by her too.

Since the autograph is lost and the transmission is unclear, the addressee of the piece cannot be determined with absolute certainty. At any rate, however, it can be stated that the arguments in favour of Elisabeth Röckel have already found numerous and widespread supporters. Dave Saemann calls this thesis 'the most likely identification',<sup>7</sup> and Christine Herzog considers 'the chain of evidence by Kopitz for the most conclusive of all explanations'.<sup>8</sup> In addition, Elisabeth Röckel is ascribed a central role in the

4. See Klaus Martin Kopitz: 'Wer schrieb den Text zu Beethovens Chorphantasie? Ein unbekannter Bericht über die Uraufführung', in *Bonner Beethoven Studien* vol. 3 (2003), pp. 43–46.

5. Ludwig van Beethoven: *Briefwechsel Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Sieghard Brandenburg, 7 vols (Munich, 1996–1998), vol. 2, pp. 30–31.

6. Moritz Müller: 'Ein alter Musikmeister', in *Europa: Chronik der gebildeten Welt*

vol. 22 no. 37 (1873), cols 1153–60, here at col. 1158.

7. *Fanfare: The Magazine for Serious Record Collectors*

vol. 42 no. 1 (September/October 2018), p. 90.

8. Christine Herzog: 'Frau Capellmeisterin Hummel Ein

Weibchen allerliebste zu schauen', in *Manuskripte*, no. 9, ed. Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv (Weimar, 2019), pp. 58–74, here at p. 63.

composer's life in an extensive article dedicated to Beethoven in *Der Spiegel* in 2019.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, everyone may form their own opinion.

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There are three sources handed down concerning WoO 59, which also contain references to the dedicatee.

Source 1: A 16-bar sketch of the beginning, written down in the spring of 1808, between sketches for the Sixth Symphony, which is kept in the Berlin State Library.<sup>10</sup>

Source 2: A draft of the whole piece, kept in the Beethoven-Haus, Bonn,<sup>11</sup> which also contains notes on *Egmont* op.84, which premiered on 25 May 1810, and a sketch of the March WoO 19, the complete autograph of which is dated 3 August 1810.<sup>12</sup>

Source 3: The fair copy, with the title: 'For Elise on 27 April [1810], in memory, from L. v. Bthvn' ('Für Elise am 27 April zur Erinnerung von L. v. Bthvn'), which was discovered in 1865 by Beethoven researcher Ludwig Nohl (1831–1885), who was living in Munich at that time. According to Nohl, who published the piece in his book *Neue Briefe Beethovens*, it came 'from the estate of Mrs Therese von Droßdick, née Malfatti, who gave it to Miss Bredl in Munich'.<sup>13</sup> Since Beethoven's friend Therese Malfatti (1792–1851) had already passed away, Nohl asked her sister Anna von Gleichenstein, née Malfatti (1792–1869), the widow of Beethoven's friend Ignaz von Gleichenstein (1778–1828), about this mysterious 'Elise', but she could not tell him anything about her.

The first independent publication by Christian Friedrich Kahnt's (1823–1897) publishing house in Leipzig contained an authorisation that proves the draft was actually an autograph, and not a copy: 'I had Prof. Dr Nohl copy the little piano piece present here after Beethoven's original autographic manuscript and allow him any use and publication thereof. Munich July 14, 1865. Babeth Bredl'. ('Das vorstehende Klavierstückchen habe ich Herrn Prof. Dr. Nohl hier nach Beethovens eigenhändige[m] Originalmanuscript copiren lassen und gestatte ihm jedwede Verwendung und Publicirung desselben. München 14. July 1865. Babeth Bredl'.<sup>14</sup>)

9. Susanne Beyer: 'Ludwig der Größte', in *Der Spiegel* vol.73 no.49 (30 November, 2019), pp.114–122, here at pp.119 & 121–22.

10. Alan Tyson: 'A reconstruction of the Pastoral Symphony sketchbook', in *Beethoven studies* (New

York, 1974), pp.67–96, here at p.95.

11. See Ludwig van Beethoven: *Klavierstück a-Moll WoO 59: Für Elise*, with a facsimile of the manuscript BH 116, ed. Sieghard

Brandenburg (Bonn, 2002).

12. Kurt Dorf Müller, Norbert Gertsch & Julia Ronge: *Ludwig van Beethoven: thematisch-bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis*, 2 vols (Munich, 2014), vol.2, p.55.

13. Ludwig Nohl: *Neue Briefe Beethovens* (Stuttgart, 1867), pp.28–33.

14. Ludwig van Beethoven: *Für Elise: leichtes Clavierstück* (Leipzig, 1870), p.7.

Ex. 1: Beethoven: *Für Elise* WoO 59, beginning

Poco moto

pp E [L] [I] S E

IN 1923 Max Unger (1883–1959) doubted the dedication, since there were supposedly only two women named ‘Elise’ in Beethoven’s life: the poet Elise von der Recke (1754–1833) and the pianist Elise Müller (1782–1849) from Bremen, who, however, only met him in 1811 and 1820 respectively. Unger therefore believed that Nohl had misread the title, and that it reads ‘Therese’ instead of ‘Elise’.<sup>15</sup> Unger’s ‘Misreading Thesis’ was rarely questioned and adopted as a fact in academic literature for decades.

However, it is almost impossible that an influential Beethoven scholar like Nohl inadvertently decoded the name ‘Therese’ as ‘Elise’, the more so because he explicitly stated that the piece ‘was not written for Therese’. Moreover, examples of Beethoven’s notations of the names illustrate that ‘Already at first glance, you can see considerable differences between the two.’<sup>16</sup>

Beyond that, Beethoven apparently derived the main theme from the letters of the name E-L-I-S-E – already in the first sketch (source 1), exchanging the S (E♭ German ‘Es’) for its enharmonic equivalent D# (German ‘Dis’, see ex. 1, above).

Many composers used the letters of a name to create musical motifs, ranging from Johann Sebastian Bach (B-A-C-H) to John Cage (C-A-G-E). As the Viennese music journalist August Schmidt (1808–1891) reports, Beethoven also began his Goethe song *Der edle Mensch sei hilfreich und gut* WoO 151 with the notes G-E-D-H-E, in order to symbolise the name of the great poet in music.<sup>17</sup>

*Für Elise* was evidently ‘not written for Therese’. Instead, it can be considered proven ‘that Ludwig Nohl was not mistaken with the transcription of the dedication and the piano piece was actually dedicated to an Elise’.<sup>18</sup> Therese Malfatti is also out of the question, because Beethoven did not yet know her in 1808 (source 1), ‘for he had only been introduced into the

15. Max Unger: ‘Beethovens Klavierstück “Für Elise”’, in *Die Musik* vol. 15 no. 1 (February 1923), pp. 334–40, and id.: ‘Beethoven and Therese von [sic] Malfatti’, in *The Musical Quarterly* vol. 11 no. 1 (January 1925), pp. 63–72.

16. Jürgen May: ‘Eine Bagatelle und andere Kleinigkeiten: zur Überlieferung von Beethovens WoO 59 im Kontext der Beethoveniana aus

dem Besitz Therese von Drosdicks’, in *Bonner Beethoven-Studien* vol. 11 (2014), pp. 141–63, here at pp. 142–43.

17. *Beethoven aus der Sicht seiner Zeitgenossen*, edd. Klaus Martin Kopitz & Rainer Cadenbach, 2 vols (Munich, 2009), vol. 1, p. 269.

18. Michael Lorenz: ‘Die “Enttarnte Elise”’, in *Bonner Beethoven-Studien* vol. 9 (2011), pp. 169–90, here at p. 171.

Malfatti family by his friend Gleichenstein in late 1809, perhaps even only at the beginning of the following year'.<sup>19</sup>

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What can be gathered from the aforementioned sources regarding the search for the dedicatee?

Firstly, the woman we are looking for must be called 'Elise' (source 3) or 'Elisabeth', because 'in Vienna during the Vormärz, one didn't differentiate any more between the names Elisabeth and Elise, they were interchangeable and virtually identical'.<sup>20</sup>

Secondly, the woman seems to have been a close friend of the composer, who was presumably on first-name terms with her, because addressing someone with their first or even pet name and the omission of the surname were not at all common back then, and even less so in a written document, as for instance in a dedication.

Thirdly, the woman in question must have met Beethoven in 1808 at the latest (source 1), but was still friends with him in 1810 (sources 2 and 3). The fact that Beethoven needed two years to write the piece, which is a surprisingly long time for an allegedly casual piece, also shows that 'Elise' was not just a distant acquaintance.

Fourthly, the woman seems to have left Beethoven or at least told him about her pending departure from Vienna in April 1810, when the draft and the fair copy (sources 2 and 3) were written. This message has to be considered the stimulus, because of which he wrote the draft and, on 27 April 1810, the fair copy with the addition: 'in memory'.

When we consider these four criteria, we necessarily come to Elisabeth Röckel, the more so as she presumably was the only woman who had a close relationship to Beethoven during the years in question: his advances towards the widowed countess Josephine von Deym (1779–1821), *née* countess Brunsvik, were broken off in the autumn of 1807, 'due to pressure on the part of the Brunsvik family',<sup>21</sup> and Therese Malfatti, daughter of a merchant, did not meet Beethoven before the end of 1809.

19. Sieghard Brandenburg: *Der Freundeskreis der Familie Malfatti in Wien* (Bonn, 1985), p.43.

20. Lorenz: 'Die "Enttarnte Elise"', p.177.

21. La Mara: *Beethoven und die Brunsviks* (Leipzig, 1920), pp.62–63.

**I**N CONTRAST TO other female characters in his biography, Elisabeth Röckel came from a very humble background, but had a true artistic nature, and soon began a short, extremely successful stage career. After her marriage and her farewell from the Viennese stage, in about December 1813, dates this characteristic anecdote, which she told Ludwig Nohl around 1865. He writes, 'she explicitly remembers' that she was once with Hummel and Beethoven for dinner with the guitarist Mauro Giuliani (1781–1829), and that 'Beethoven, in the exuberance of his Rhenish temperament, didn't

stop to nudge and tease her, so that, eventually, she didn't know how to escape from him; he incessantly pinched her arm out of sheer affection'.<sup>22</sup>

As Elisabeth Röckel told the Mozart biographer Otto Jahn (1813–1869), she had 'plenty of opportunities to associate with Beethoven'. He writes: 'as an elderly matron, still winning through fresh grace, with pleasant warmth she spoke out on the luck to be respected by Beethoven and to have associated with him intimately. "Those who have seen him in a good mood, mentally inspired, and to whom he talked in such a spirit," she said with bright eyes, "can never forget the impression".'<sup>23</sup>

Beethoven's last days show in a touching way that he never forgot her either. On 6 March 1827 she came to Vienna again, together with her husband, accompanied as well by his student Ferdinand Hiller (1811–1885), who already knew that Hummel's wife 'had caught Beethoven's lively interest' as a young girl.<sup>24</sup> Hiller reports on Hummel's visit with Beethoven on 13 March:

Now he seemed to take it much to heart that he had not married. Already at our first visit he had joked about it with Hummel, whose wife he had known as a young and beautiful maiden. 'You are a lucky man,' he said to him now smilingly, 'you have a wife who takes care of you, who is in love with you – but poor me!' and he sighed heavily. He also begged Hummel to bring his wife to see him, she not having been able to persuade herself to see in his present state the man whom she had known at the zenith of his powers.

Elisabeth fulfilled the wish of the dying man on 20 March. On that day, Beethoven still believed in an impending recovery and said: 'Then too, he would visit Madame Hummel'. When she called on Beethoven for the last time on 23 March, an almost intimate scene occurred: 'His handkerchief not being conveniently at hand, Hummel's wife took her fine cambric handkerchief and dried his face several times. Never shall I forget the grateful glance with which his broken eye looked upon her.'<sup>25</sup> As a farewell, she cut a curl from his hair and got his last quill, with which he had drawn his codicil few hours before.

She had the relics framed on 6 February 1877, together with other memorabilia, and wrote a certificate of authenticity for every piece. She noted on the quill 'that, with this quill, Beethoven had written his last words, the letter of thanks to Schott'.<sup>26</sup> In the centre are two bay leaves, which she described on the back of the frame: '2 bay leaves from one of the 3 wreaths, which I put in Beethoven's tomb at his funeral in Vienna'.<sup>27</sup>

22. Nohl: *Neue Briefe Beethovens*, pp.73–74. Giuliani and Hummel were among the musicians in the two concerts by Johann Nepomuk Mälzel (1772–1838), in which Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and *Wellington's victory* were heard for the first time on 8 & 12 December 1813. Both artists are mentioned in the review of the *Wiener Zeitung* (no.198, 20 December 1813, p.1205), as well as in Beethoven's draft of a note of thanks which he wrote shortly afterwards (Berlin State Library, Mus. ms. autogr. Beethoven 35,9). It can be assumed that the dinner took place during this period.

23. Otto Jahn: 'Ein Brief Beethovens', in *Die Grenzboten* vol.26 no.1 (1867), pp.100–05, here at p.101.

24. Ferdinand Hiller: 'Lehrjahre in Weimar', in id.: *Künstlerleben* (Cologne, 1880), pp.1–39, here at p.4.

25. Ferdinand Hiller: 'Aus den letzten Tagen L. van Beethoven's', in id.: *Aus dem Tonleben unserer Zeit: Gelegentliches* (Leipzig, 1871), pp.69–179, here at p.177. Hiller gave a copy of his book with a handwritten dedication to Elisabeth Hummel, which is now in the Goethe-Museum Düsseldorf, KM 2683,

English translation in *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, ed. Elliot Forbes (Princeton, 1964), pp.1046–47.

26. Karl Benyovszky: *J.N. Hummel, der Mensch und*

*Künstler* (Bratislava, 1934), pp.154–55. The mentioned letter is supposed to refer to a consignment of wine from the Schott publishing house, which, however, didn't arrive until 24 March 1827.

27. William Meredith: 'New acquisitions (Summer 2012): the Yvonne Hummel Collection', in *The Beethoven Journal* vol.27 no.2 (Winter 2012), pp.74–79.

Three months after the death of Elisabeth, in the summer of 1883, the Irish pianist Bettina Walker (1837–1893) came to Weimar to study with Franz Liszt. During this time she lived in the Hummel house, Marienstraße 8, together with two grand-daughters of Elisabeth, Johanna (1842–1927) and Auguste Hummel (1844–1918), for a couple of weeks, and wrote in her memoirs:

There was a lock of Beethoven's hair, cut from his head by the wife of Hummel, who, with her husband, visited him three or four days before his death. There was also a lock of Goethe's hair; and both of these were enclosed in glass frames, and hung on the wall like pictures. Another of these frames contained the last pen Beethoven's fingers had ever grasped; for on the same occasion when Hummel's wife had asked him for a lock of his hair, she had also begged leave to carry away a pen which was lying on the bed, and Beethoven, who knew he was dying, put it himself into her hand; and, as long as she lived, it was one of her most precious and valued relics.<sup>28</sup>

Since 2012 the souvenirs have been in the possession of the Beethoven Center at San José State University.

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As Beethoven's secretary Anton Schindler (1795–1864) conveys, Elisabeth then had a decisive influence on Hummel's participation in Schindler's charity concert on 7 April 1827. After he had refused at first, Elisabeth explained to a disheartened Schindler: 'I have so much respect for Beethoven's memory that I will not permit this. Let my husband be; I promise you that he will play for you.'<sup>29</sup>

Schindler also mentions the event in a letter to the music critic Ludwig Bischoff (1794–1867):

During the days between Beethoven's passing and my concert at the Theater in der Josefstadt, Mrs Hummel ostensibly proved how deeply her erstwhile love to Beethoven was rooted and still lives in her. This forthcoming concert and what had been mutually negotiated about it at Beethoven's deathbed gave me the opportunity to listen to an explanation of that woman to her husband, which was uniquely characteristic for them both.<sup>30</sup>

Two days after Schindler's concert, Hummel and his wife started the homeward journey.

**E**LISABETH RÖCKEL was born on 15 March 1793 in Neunburg vorm Wald in the house of her parents – today's 'Sämmerhaus' on Hauptstraße<sup>31</sup> – and christened 'Maria Eva', presumably after her godmother, a certain Maria Eva Grueber.<sup>32</sup> Her parents were the hosier Joseph Röckel (1759–1827) and his wife Elisabeth Röckel, *née* Diemand (1756–1840).

28. Bettina Walker: *My musical experiences*, 2nd ed. (London & New York, 1892), p.93.

29. Gerhard von Breuning: *Aus dem Schwarzschanerhause* (Vienna, 1874), pp.49–50; English translation in Gerhard von Breuning: *Memories of Beethoven*, ed. Maynard Solomon (Cambridge, 1992), p.56.

30. Daniel Brenner: *Anton Schindler und sein Einfluss auf die Beethoven-Biographik* (Bonn, 2013), p.335.

31. Karl-Heinz Probst: 'Beethoven verehrte Neunburgerin', in *Mittelbayerische Zeitung* no.216 (18 September 2013), p.39.

32. Regensburg, Bischöfliches Zentralarchiv, register of Neunburg vorm Wald, vol.5, p.207, no.89.

The adolescent couldn't accustom herself to her Christian names and later called herself 'Elisabeth' after her mother. The christening of her son Eduard (1814–1892) on 9 May 1814, at which she registered diplomatically as 'Maria Eva Elise' [!],<sup>33</sup> is significant evidence. However, did she already introduce herself as 'Elise' or 'Elisabeth', when she first met Beethoven in 1808?

This question can be affirmed by a conscription sheet of the Theater an der Wien, built by Emanuel Schikaneder (1751–1812).<sup>34</sup> It goes back to the 'Conscriptions-und-Recrutirungs-Patent', which Francis II decreed on 25 October 1804, and which required that every resident of the monarchy be registered on an 'Aufnahmsbogen'.<sup>35</sup> The order was made for an intended population census and subsequent registration of conscripts for the army.<sup>36</sup>

From the beginning of 1803 Beethoven lodged in the Theater an der Wien and wrote *Fidelio*. From the mentioned 'Aufnahms-Bogen im Jahre 1805', it can be concluded that at that time he no longer lived in the theatre and had apparently already moved to the flat at 1239 Mülkerbastei.

However, the sheet lists 12 other residents, among them Anna Milder-Hauptmann (1785–1838) and her family. The singer, who debuted on 9 April 1803 in the Theater an der Wien, certainly still had her flat there, when she performed the title role in *Fidelio* on 20 November 1805 and on 29 March 1806. Alongside, there are recorded: 'Jos Rökel', born '1781' [sic], 'kk Schauspieler ledig' and 'Elis [!] Rökel', born '1793', 'in d Kost', i.e. as subtenant. Both were written by the same hand, implying that they both probably moved into one of the other flats at the same time. After the contradictory statement of Joseph August Röckel, her parents sent Elisabeth to him in Vienna in '1807 or 8', 'when she was only 12 years old'.<sup>37</sup> If the latter was true, however, she actually would have come to Vienna in 1805, shortly after her brother. The notation 'Elis' doesn't necessarily have to be an abbreviation of 'Elise' – the unknown writer would have had space for an 'e' – but definitely for 'Elisabeth'. Already at that time, such a change of name was not uncommon. Just think of Schikaneder, who was christened 'Johann Joseph', but opted for the more tuneful name 'Emanuel'.

A close friendship developed between Anna Milder and Elisabeth Röckel. When the celebrated singer, who was engaged in Berlin from 1816, guested

33. Vienna, Cathedral Parish St Stephan, baptismal register, vol.106, fol.139.

34. Vienna, Stadt- und Landesarchiv, conscription sheet Laimgrube 26/7; see Rita Steblin: 'Who was Beethoven's "Elise"? A new solution to the mystery', in *The Musical Times* vol.155 no. 1927 (Summer 2014), pp.3–39, here at p.8. The article primarily deals with the singer Elise Barenfeld and finally raises the question if the then 13-year-old also

could have been Beethoven's "Elise", because of her name. There is, however, no evidence for an acquaintance with the composer.

35. *Sr. k. k. Majestät Franz des Zweyten politische Gesetze und Verordnungen für die Oester-*

*reichischen, Böhmischen und Galizischen Erbländer: auf allerhöchsten Befehl, und unter Aufsicht der höchsten Hofstellen herausgegeben*, vol. 23 (Vienna, 1807), pp.3–131.

36. See also Rita Steblin:

'Beethoven's name in Viennese conscription records', in *The Beethoven Journal* vol.24 no.1 (Summer 2009), pp.4–13.

37. Thayer: *Ludwig van Beethovens Leben*, vol.3, p.130.



Fig.2: Anna Milder-Hauptmann: letter to 'Frau Kapellmeisterin Elise Hummel', 1830 (Düsseldorf, Goethe-Museum, KM 2364)

in Weimar in October 1830, she even stayed with Elisabeth. Back in Berlin, she wrote to 'Mrs. music director Elise [!] Hummel' ('Frau Kapellmeisterin Elise [!] Hummel') on 27 October (see fig.2, above):

My gracious friend! I cannot forbear informing you about our happy arrival. Thank God I have found my relatives healthy. My sister sends her warmest regards to all of you. Again I must thank you and your dear husband most sincerely for the friendly accommodation in your home. May destiny preserve him for you for a long time to come, and to the delight of all artists. You won't believe how much I am pleased by your happy position in your domesticity. There is probably no one who can sympathise more than me.

She signed the four-page letter, in which she also asks for some compositions for herself, with: 'Your old friend Anna Milder' ('Deine alte Freundin Anna Milder').<sup>38</sup>

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Had Elisabeth Röckel left Vienna in the spring of 1810, or more accurately: could Beethoven have come to know that she intended to? Could that have been shortly before 27 April 1810?

Elisabeth Röckel received her first engagement through Franz von Holbein (1779–1855), who was appointed as theatre poet and director of the court theatre to Vienna in 1808. He then brought her and her brother to Bamberg, when he found a new field of work there. He especially appreciated Elisabeth very much and writes in his memoirs: 'Miss Röckel, a beginner distinguished by youth, beauty, voice and musical education, was soon able to assert herself as the first singer.'<sup>39</sup>

He mentions that he was just guesting in Nuremberg, when he received a letter from the physician Adalbert Friedrich Marcus (1753–1816) from Bamberg, who invited him to Bamberg 'to perform guest roles there and to take over the direction'. He arrived there with his spouse Marie Renner (1775–1824) at the end of March 1810.<sup>40</sup> Marcus called on Holbein on the day of his arrival and led him to the theatre, where Holbein unexpectedly met his old friend, the writer ETA Hoffmann (1776–1822), who immediately asked: 'I am engaged?' The answer was succinct: 'that goes without saying!'

38. Düsseldorf, Goethe-Museum, KM 2364.

39. Franz von Holbein: *Deutsches Bühnenwesen* (Vienna, 1853), p.39.

40. *Intelligenzblatt des Mainkreises, und Bamberger wochentlicher Anzeiger* no.28 (6 April, 1810), p.280: 'Angekommene Fremde vom 20. bis 31. März. [...] Im Bamberger Hofe: [...] Hr. v. Holbein, Hoftheater-Dichter v. Wien. Mad. Renner, Schauspieler v. Wien'. The lists of arrivals are not complete, the arrival of the Röckel siblings was not registered.

On 1 April Holbein debuted in his own drama *Leonidas, König der Spartaner*; on 24 April he completed his guest appearance<sup>41</sup> and on 24 June he signed the contract as artistic director.<sup>42</sup>

Therefore, by the middle of March 1810, Holbein had already received the offer to take over the direction of the Bamberg theatre. He accepted it on the day of his arrival and immediately engaged ETA Hoffmann as music director. In the following days, Holbein had probably also thought about the rest of the ensemble and asked the Röckel siblings to follow him to Bamberg. The fact that Elisabeth didn't hesitate for very long was now, in a manner of speaking, commented on by Beethoven on 27 April with the album leaf *Für Elise*. The dates fit together and explain each other.

It would certainly be helpful for our argumentation if the alleged 'Elise' had directly left the town shortly afterward. That, however, was hardly possible, because for this purpose, one had first to apply for a passport.<sup>43</sup> Also, it would not have been reasonable before the signing of the contract, which probably only arrived in June or July. Besides, Joseph August Röckel still had engagements in Vienna, so that his sister probably also postponed the departure to Bamberg until he performed as Don Ottavio in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at the Theater an der Wien for the last time on 15 September.

The Bamberg theatre opened on 30 September, and on 15 October the 17-year-old Elisabeth Röckel made her debut as Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, the opera which inspired ETA Hoffmann to write his short novel *Don Juan*.<sup>44</sup> In May 1811 she guested in Prague with her brother<sup>45</sup> and afterwards unexpectedly returned to Vienna.

There, on 8 July 1811, they both debuted in Joseph Weigl's opera *Die Schweizerfamilie* in the Theater am Kärntnertor, Elisabeth in the role of Emmeline, which was originally developed for her friend Anna Milder.

Elisabeth received a contract with the Theater am Kärntnertor that guaranteed her an annual salary of 2,500 gulden.<sup>46</sup> Walther Brauneis, long-time Secretary General of the Beethoven Society of Vienna, was kind enough to search for it in the Austrian State Archives. However, the local theatre records hardly contain any contracts with individual singers.

In addition to the registration as 'Elis Rökel' in the conscription sheet of the Theater an der Wien, there is a second, relatively early document

41. Bamberg, State Library, HV.Msc.67, *Theater-Journale vom Jahre 1802–1814*, fol.14.

42. Rudolf Köppler: *E.T.A. Hoffmann am Bamberger Theater* (Bamberg, 1929), p.35.

43. The Röckel siblings are not listed in the passport protocols of 1810; see

Vienna, Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Konstitutionsamt, B 4, *Passprotokolle* and B 5, *Passprotokolle Index* (conveyed by Susanne Pils).

44. See also Fritz Felzmann: 'Die Sängerin Elisabeth Röckel: "Donna Anna" in Hoffmanns "Don Juan":

Persönlichkeit und Familie', in *Mitteilungen der E.T.A. Hoffmann-Gesellschaft* no.21 (1975), pp.27–37.

45. *Thalia* vol.2 no.49 (19 June 1811), p.194.

46. Max Johann Seidel: *Biographische Notizen aus*

*dem Leben des am 17<sup>ten</sup> October 1837 verstorbenen Großherzoglich-Sachsen-Weimarschen Kapellmeister und Ritter mehrerer Orden: Johann Nepomuk Hummel, ersten Klavierspieler seiner Zeit*; manuscript in Düsseldorf, Goethe-Museum, KM 2317.

which proves her change of name. It concerns the christening of her niece Eva Elisabeth, at which ‘Elisabetha Roekl Actrice Viennae’ is mentioned as godmother on 9 June 1812 in Neunburg.<sup>47</sup> We owe this reference to the journalist Karl-Heinz Probst from Neunburg.

Further noteworthy sources, in which she is called ‘Elisabeth’, are: the probate proceedings of her father, who died on 30 July 1827 in Vienna, with the signature of her mother (‘Elisabeth’),<sup>48</sup> two songs by her nephew August Röckel (1814–1876), the later friend of Richard Wagner, written in Weimar on 19 November 1834 (‘for the name day of his beloved aunt Elisabeth Hummel’),<sup>49</sup> the Hummel biography, written by the actor Max Johann Seidel (1790–1855) from Weimar in 1837/38 (‘Elisabethe’), the records of Otto Jahn, who talked to her in Weimar in 1855 (‘Elisabeth’),<sup>50</sup> the stories of her brother, who was interviewed by Thayer in Bath in 1861 (‘Elisabeth’),<sup>51</sup> her gravestone on the Historical Cemetery in Weimar (‘Elisabet’) as well as the obituaries cited below (‘Elisabeth’). From about 1817 on, she also used the name ‘Betty’ occasionally, likewise derived from ‘Elisabeth’.

Johann Nepomuk Hummel calls his wife ‘Maria Eva Elisabetha’ in his testament, written on 10 June 1826.<sup>52</sup> She herself only used her Christian names ‘Maria Eva’ in a request for pension that she addressed to the Tonkünstler-Societät in Vienna on 24 October 1837.<sup>53</sup> Hummel had been a member of this society, so that she was entitled to a widow’s pension after his death. It is feasible that for once she signed such an important document with her ‘correct’ name.

**I**N 1840 the public for the first time heard from Anton Schindler that Beethoven and Hummel ‘had once been in love with the same lady; but Hummel was, and continued to be, the favoured suitor, because he had an appointment, and had not the misfortune to be hard of hearing.’<sup>54</sup> Shortly before his death, Schindler told Ludwig Nohl that Elisabeth Röckel ‘has probably felt affection for Beethoven; but as he had no permanent position and also his hearing was already heavily impaired, in a reasonable girl’s manner, she preferred the healthy and already employed music director Hummel to him.’<sup>55</sup>

47. Regensburg, Bischöfliches Zentralarchiv, register of Neunburg vorm Wald, vol.6, p.144, no.102. On 9 June 1812 Elisabeth Röckel sang as Emma in Gaspare Spontini’s *Milton* in the Theater am Kärntnertor, thus was not present at the celebration.

48. Vienna, Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Mag. ZG, A 2, 4232/1827; see Lorenz: ‘Die “Enttarrte Elise”’, p.176.

49. Düsseldorf, Goethe-Museum, KM 1130.

50. Jahn: ‘Ein Brief Beethovens’, p.101.

51. Thayer: *Ludwig van Beethovens Leben*, vol.3, pp.130 & 224.

52. Düsseldorf, Goethe-

Museum, KM 2218.

53. Vienna, Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Haydn-Verein, A 3/2; see Lorenz: ‘Die “Enttarrte Elise”’, pp.174–75.

54. Anton Schindler: *Biographie von Ludwig van Beethoven* (Münster, 1840),

p.78; English translation in *The life of Beethoven*, ed. Ignaz Moscheles, 2 vols (London, 1841), vol.1, p.127.

55. Ludwig Nohl: ‘Beethovens Tod: Eine documentarische Chronik’, in id.: *Musikalisches Skizzenbuch* (Munich, 1866), pp.209–312, here at p.277.

In fact, these were half-truths: it was Hummel who didn't have a steady income, when he married Elisabeth Röckel, while she did, just as did Beethoven, for whom three of his sponsors had founded a pension in 1809. However, he probably didn't know more about this delicate story than what he had learned from Elisabeth's statements during the days after Beethoven's death. Basically, his conclusions are likely to be true, namely that Beethoven felt more than friendship for Elisabeth, perhaps even wanted to marry her. This is also indicated by Beethoven's lament towards Hummel on 13 March 1827, that he regretted – with regard to his wife – not having married (her himself).

Indeed, there were wedding plans in spring 1810. Concerning these, we know that on 2 May Beethoven asked his boyhood friend Franz Gerhard Wegeler (1765–1848) from Bonn for a copy of his baptismal certificate, and that on 11 August Stephan von Breuning (1774–1827) wrote to Wegeler that Beethoven's marriage plans had shattered.<sup>56</sup> This failed plan probably referred to Therese Malfatti, but the close succession of the dates is quite striking: on 27 April 1810 Beethoven was forced to bid Elisabeth farewell, as she was moving to Bamberg, and on 2 May he wanted to marry Therese. Would he have rather married Elisabeth, and not Therese, and did he only opt for Therese when Elisabeth was no longer at his disposal? In an obituary of Elisabeth, it says explicitly: 'Among her admirers was also Beethoven.'<sup>57</sup> Another obituary emphasises that 'Beethoven showed affection to the charming and talented young artist', but also 'that the rejection by Elisabeth Röckel hit Beethoven very hard'.<sup>58</sup>

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In summary, we see that Elisabeth Röckel meets the criteria mentioned at the beginning without exception.

Firstly, she was christened 'Maria Eva', but already called herself 'Elisabeth' or just 'Elise' in 1805 – a popular short form of that name at that time.

Secondly, she was close friends with Beethoven, who maybe even wanted to marry her. Given her youth, it is also feasible that he was apparently on first-name terms with her, as the fair copy (source 3) suggests.

Thirdly, she kept company with Beethoven not only between 1808 and 1810 but later as well.

Fourthly, she probably told Beethoven about her upcoming engagement in Bamberg in the middle of April 1810, and thereby provided the impetus for the composition of the piece.

It is certainly a problem that all the different sources do not mention in which year Elisabeth met Beethoven first. But when Hiller said the

56. *Beethoven aus der Sicht seiner Zeitgenossen*, vol.1, p.125.

57. *Weimarer Zeitung* no.54 (6 March 1883), p.[2].

58. *Der Klavier-Lehrer* vol.6 no.6 (15 March 1883), p.78. The title page mentions Ferdinand Hiller as contributor, who is maybe also the author of the obituary.

composer knew her ‘as a young and beautiful maiden’, it is at least true that she was between 14 and 17 years old during that time. On the other hand his feelings for her – and for Therese Malfatti – were likely to be weakened at the end of May 1810 after two other, more mature, women came into his life and moved him deeply: Bettina Brentano (1785–1859) and her sister-in-law Antonie (1780–1869), who was then living in Vienna. On 11 March 1811 Antonie wrote to Bettina: ‘Beethoven became for me one of the dearest people’, and further: ‘He visits me often, almost daily’.<sup>59</sup> When Elisabeth came back from Bamberg one month later there was no chance that Beethoven could be her ‘admirer’ again, as it was told in her first obituary. It is clear that he admired her before her departure. How little he knew about her in later years, is shown by his letter to Joseph von Varena, in Graz from 6 April 1813, in which he recommended ‘Mr Röckel and his sister’ because of their ‘musical talents’ for the theatre in Graz.<sup>60</sup> Why should Elisabeth go to Graz, a few weeks before her marriage with Hummel? (Of course, Beethoven learned about her marriage when he saw her again in December 1813 at the aforementioned dinner at Mauro Giuliani’s, but probably even earlier.)

**B**ABETTE BREDL, in whose property Nohl discovered the album leaf, was born on 1 December 1792 in Sendling near Munich and christened ‘Barbara’.<sup>61</sup> Her parents were Heinrich Predl [*sic*], ‘builder on the Löwenhof’, and his wife Franziska Hohenleitner. The Löwenhof estate was located at the road fork of the highways from Munich to Wolfratshausen and Weilheim. A castle also belonging to the property was demolished in 1856.

On 30 December 1816, in Munich, she gave birth to an illegitimate son, the pianist and composer Joseph Rudolph Schachner (1816–1896).<sup>62</sup> He lived in Vienna between 1836 and 1852 and there became friends with Therese von Droßdick, *née* Malfatti, who stipulated on 12 February 1850 in a codicil that she bequeathed Schachner her grand piano ‘alongside all music’.<sup>63</sup> Barbara Bredl also made a will on 9 November 1859, in which she calls herself a ‘former teacher at the St Peter parish school’ and appointed her ‘extramarital son Josef Rudolph Schachner, musician and composer’ the sole heir.<sup>64</sup> Finally, she lived at 15 Salvatorstraße. There, on 22 December 1880, ‘Barbara Bredl, unmarried, retired teacher (“Arbeitslehrerin”), 88 years old, Catholic by religion, residing in Munich, born in Sendling near Munich’, died.<sup>65</sup>

59. Klaus Martin Kopitz: ‘Antonie Brentano in Wien (1809–1812): neue Quellen zur Problematik “Unsterbliche Geliebte”’, in *Bonner Beethoven-Studien* vol.2 (2001), pp.115–45, here at p.128.

60. Beethoven: *Briefwechsel*, vol.2, p.355.

61. Munich, archive of the archdiocese of Munich and Freising, register MM II, St Margaret, vol.396, baptismal records 1792, p.67: see May: ‘Eine Bagatelle’, p.149.

62. Munich, archive of the archdiocese of Munich and Freising, register no.19, parish Unsere Liebe Frau, baptismal records 1810–18,

p.347; see May: ‘Eine Bagatelle’, pp.147–48.

63. Vienna, Stadt- und Landesarchiv, LGR Testament 1121/1844: see

Lorenz: ‘Enttarnte Elise’, p.180–82.

64. Munich, Stadtarchiv, Munich District Court Ia, NR 1880/2346: see Lorenz:

‘Enttarnte Elise’, p.185–89.

65. Munich, Standesamt I, death certificate no.7987: see Lorenz: ‘Enttarnte Elise’, p.185–86.

This information makes clear how the autograph of WoO 59 came into her possession: via her son, the friend of Therese Malfatti.

oOo

Yet, how could the sheet have come to Therese Malfatti? Shouldn't the composer have handed it to 'Elise' herself, for whom it was written? It is at most possible that Therese discovered the autograph in Beethoven's apartment during a visit and – for whatever reason – seized it with the tacit acceptance of the composer. However, this would imply that she actually visited Beethoven every now and then, for which there is no indication in his correspondence. On top of that, Beethoven's relationship to Therese Malfatti was too short for such an intimate relationship to develop. It is indicative that he was no longer invited to the Malfatti family by the end of May, after the refusal of his proposal of marriage.<sup>66</sup>

Therefore, we have to assume that he naturally gave the piano piece to 'Elise', who, however, loaned it to Therese Malfatti later but never retrieved it. It is perfectly conceivable that the two met, especially when Elisabeth Röckel was engaged by the Theater am Kärntnertor and enjoyed great popularity in Vienna. Hummel, whom she first met at a private concert in 1812, was also a welcome guest in the salons of Vienna.

It is also known that Therese Malfatti – or her sister Anna – not only played the piano, but also the guitar very well, so that in May 1810 Beethoven sent Therese one of his songs 'transcribed for guitar' ('für Gitarre übersezt').<sup>67</sup> But a better composer for guitar was Hummel, who was friends with Mauro Giuliani, and created 'real' works for this instrument. He self-published some of them in a series that he called 'Répertoire de Musique pour les Dames', including the *Potpourri* for piano and guitar op.53.<sup>68</sup> If Therese wanted to buy these pieces she had to visit Hummel and his wife – in their apartment 'auf der Brandstatt neben dem Stern Nr.671 im dritten Stock'.<sup>69</sup> A little later Hummel composed his op.71, an original and witty set of variations on the French song *La sentinelle*, for voice, piano, violin, 'gitarre concertant' and cello ad libitum. Before it appeared in print in 1815, the work was performed often and 'with much applause' in private concerts by Hummel, Giuliani and the violinist Joseph Mayseder (1789–1863).<sup>70</sup> It is not known for which singer Hummel composed the piece, but maybe it was his wife. And is it not conceivable that Therese attended one of these concerts and talked to Elisabeth about Beethoven, their mutual acquaintance? After all, Vienna's musical world was not very big in those years.

66. Beethoven: *Briefwechsel*, vol.2, p.125.

67. *ibid.*, p.122.

68. Dieter Zimmerschied: *Thematisches Verzeichnis der Werke von Johann Nepomuk Hummel* (Hofheim am Taunus, 1971), p.83.

69. *Wiener Zeitung* no.67

(5 June 1813), *Allgemeines Intelligenzblatt*, p.984.

70. *Wiener Zeitung* no.157 (6 June 1815), p.619; see also

Zimmerschied: *Thematisches Verzeichnis*, p.111.

Elisabeth Hummel and her husband also possessed copies of the *Cantata on the death of Emperor Joseph II* WoO 87 and the *Cantata on the Accession of Emperor Leopold II* WoO 88, both written in 1790 in Bonn. Beethoven probably had them made for his prospective teacher Joseph Haydn, when the latter came to Bonn at the end of the year. Wegeler reports: ‘on this occasion, Beethoven presented him a [*sic*] cantata, to which was paid special attention by Haydn, who encouraged the author to continuous studies.’<sup>71</sup>

Haydn presumably took the compositions along to Vienna because, shortly after, they passed into the possession of his friend Joseph du Beyne de Malchamps (1717–1803), who held ‘musical performances’ in his house.<sup>72</sup> When du Beyne died on 13 March 1803 in Vienna, Beethoven’s cantatas were found in his estate, which was sold on 21 April 1813.<sup>73</sup> It was Hummel, who acquired them a few days before he married Elisabeth Röckel. After Beethoven’s estate had been sold at an auction in Vienna on 5 November 1827, much of which was purchased by Beethoven’s publisher and friend Tobias Haslinger (1787–1842), Hummel wrote to Haslinger on 22 November: ‘I, too, still own some vocal works by Beethoven, which, to my knowledge, no one else has.’<sup>74</sup> Here he must be referring to the cantatas. In 1884, one year after Elisabeth’s death, they were sold by the auction house List & Francke in Leipzig.<sup>75</sup> Today they belong to the Austrian National Library.

This relatively well documented story of a different ‘manuscript migration’, with Beethoven and Elisabeth Röckel among the protagonists, illustrates how autographs of his works changed hands even during his lifetime.

Furthermore, Elisabeth’s estate included five copies revised by Beethoven himself: of the wind sextet op.71, vocal trio op.116, *Elegischer Gesang* op.118, *Leonore* Overture no.1 op.138 and Triumphal March for *Tarpeja* WoO 2a.<sup>76</sup> Hummel had presumably received some of them via his son Eduard (1814–1892), who served an apprenticeship with Haslinger from 1832 to 1834.

These Beethoveniana make it clear that Hummel probably never considered Beethoven a rival. Schindler’s statement, that the two had had a ‘common passion for a girl’,<sup>77</sup> and thus – more or less at the same time – had

71. Franz Gerhard Wegeler & Ferdinand Ries: *Biographische Notizen über Ludwig van Beethoven* (Koblenz, 1838), p.16. The date of Haydn’s first encounter with Beethoven is disputed, but it is verified that Haydn came to Bonn during his first journey to England. This is proven by his entry in the guestbook of the local Reading Society on Saturday, 25 December 1790 (original in Bonn, Lese- und Erholungsgesellschaft). His biographer Dies adds: ‘He arrived there on a Saturday’ [!]; see Albert Christoph Dies: *Biographische Nachrichten von Joseph Haydn* (Vienna, 1810), p.78.

72. See Carl Ferdinand Pohl: *Joseph Haydn*, 3 vols (Leipzig, 1878–1927), vol.2, p.150, and Herbert Vogt: ‘Aus Mozarts Umkreis: der Baron du Beyne’, in *Musica Conservata: Günter Brosche zum 60. Geburtstag* (Tutzing, 1999), pp.467–71.

73. The Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna has a specimen of the auction catalogue.

74. Johann Nepomuk Hummel: *Briefe: Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Volkmar von Pechstaedt (Göttingen, forthcoming). I sincerely thank the editor of the volume for the advance notice.

75. List & Francke: catalogue, no.164, *Nachgelassene Sammlungen der Herren Joh. Nepomuk Hummel († 1837) in Weimar und Dr. Hermann Zopff in Leipzig, Gesang-lehrer und Musikschriststeller* (Leipzig, 1884), nos.1094–95.

76. Dorf Müller, Gertsch & Ronge: *Ludwig van Beethoven*, vol.1, p.397, and List & Francke, catalogue, no.164 & nos 2265–68.

77. Anton Schindler: *Biographie von Ludwig van*

*Beethoven*, 3rd, reworked and expanded edition, 2 vols. (Münster, 1860), vol.1, p.190; English translation in Anton Schindler: *Beethoven as I knew him*, ed. Donald W. MacArdle (Chapel Hill, 1966), p.167.

been rivals for her favour, is most questionable, the more so because, after Beethoven's 'farewell' with the piano piece WoO 59, three years passed until Elisabeth's marriage. A friend of the family, the Weimar actor Eduard Genast (1797–1866), even reported that Hummel was something of a patron for Beethoven: 'After Hummel died, his wife found, in a secret drawer of his desk, Beethoven's letters of thanks, whom Hummel supported until his death.'<sup>78</sup>

It is still astonishing that her relationship to Beethoven was ignored by Max Unger and other researchers. Mark Kroll, the author of a modern biography about Hummel, even gives reasons for the assumption: 'Perhaps the relationship of Beethoven and Elisabeth Röckel was not as platonic as Mrs. Hummel would have us believe.'<sup>79</sup>

oOo

Jürgen May was able to prove that the estate of Rudolph Schachner is largely completely preserved. In 1940 Schachner's daughter handed over a part to the Public Library of Munich; in 1943/44 she entrusted Gustav Lörincz de Baranyai (1886–1977), a painter from Munich and admirer of Beethoven, with the rest, who passed it to the Bavarian State Library between 1974 and 1977. It also contains copies of Beethoven songs from the holding of Therese Malfatti. What is missing are Therese's letters to Schachner, which, due to his final will, were put in his coffin. May suspects that he had literally also taken *Für Elise* 'to the grave'.<sup>80</sup> However, its absence in Schachner's estate also allows an alternative explanation.

For Nohl's book *Neue Briefe Beethovens*, Elisabeth Hummel provided him with a letter from Beethoven and the canon 'Ars longa, vita brevis' WoO 170, dedicated to Hummel.<sup>81</sup> It also contains her souvenirs of the composer. If Nohl didn't send her a specimen copy, she must at least have read it. What may she have thought when she found *Für Elise* there? Would it not have been natural to ask Nohl for the return of the original, particularly as he grants that it was 'not written for Therese'? Incidentally, he generally refers to Elisabeth as 'Frau Hummel', and had not asked about her first name. This may explain why it did not occur to him who Beethoven's 'Elise' was.

Hummel's estate also seems to be completely preserved.<sup>82</sup> Most of it came to the British Library in 1884,<sup>83</sup> another part to the Goethe-Museum in 1975.<sup>84</sup> Some especially memorable pieces were only recently made public: in the

78. Eduard Genast: *Aus dem Tagebuche eines alten Schauspielers*, 4 vols (Leipzig, 1862–66), vol.3, p.12.

79. Mark Kroll: *Johann Nepomuk Hummel: a musician's life and world* (Lanham, 2007), p.67.

80. May: 'Eine Bagatelle', p.163.

81. Nohl: *Neue Briefe Beethovens*, pp.73–74 & 106.

82. Regine Zeller (Düsseldorf) and Manfred Kanngießer (Weimar) helped me with the following overview.

83. The 'Hummel manuscripts' comprise 42 vols (Add. MS 71199–71240) and 71 supplement-vols (Add. MS 32169–32239).

84. For the transmission of this part see Jörn Göres, ed.: *Johann Nepomuk Hummel und Eisenstadt* (Eisenstadt, 1978), pp.6–8.



FIDM Museum in Los Angeles,<sup>85</sup> the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra<sup>86</sup> and the Beethoven Center in San José. Other pieces are still in private hands.

I SHOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT AGAIN that Beethoven's relationship with Elisabeth Röckel was hardly mentioned in the previous Beethoven literature up to now. Her name is missing in almost all books about the composer. Only in connection with his last days was she named on various occasions. The first one who paid closer attention to her was Mark Kroll in his Hummel biography in 2007. Perhaps my little contribution can make it clear that she deserves to be recognised for the important role she played in the life of the composer – regardless of whether he wrote WoO 59 for her.

To the followers of the Malfatti thesis belongs my dear and honoured colleague Barry Cooper. In contrast to many other researchers Cooper never believed that Nohl misread the name on the autograph and already noticed 20 years ago that 'Therese' and 'Elise' 'look quite different in Beethoven's handwriting'. His explanation for the fact that the piece was found in Therese's estate is 'that Beethoven used "Elise" as a kind of pet name for Therese'. He further argues that the composer 'had good reason for not putting Therese's actual name on the manuscript, and for omitting the year. He had suffered considerable embarrassment with his previous beloved when Lichnowsky had spotted Josephine's name on "An die Hoffnung" [op.32] in 1805, although fortunately the prince had been discreet about his observation.' Beethoven writes about that in a letter to countess Josephine von Deym.<sup>87</sup> Cooper comes to the conclusion: 'thus Beethoven would have wanted to avoid a repetition, by disguising the identity of the woman and substituting some name similar to Therese; "Elise" was ideal, since it sounded suitable poetic (it is sometimes used as the name of the beloved in songs, e.g. Beethoven's "Schilderung eines Mädchens" [WoO 107]).'<sup>88</sup> He recently returned to the question again, adding: 'Elise was a common name for a beloved in poetic and similar works at the time.'<sup>89</sup>

Perhaps, but it is a questionable explanation. In 1810 the name 'Elise' meant for Beethoven Elisabeth Röckel, who was not only called 'Elise' by *Fidelio* actor Anna Milder-Hauptmann, but apparently by the composer himself. Is it really conceivable that Beethoven called two young ladies at the same time by the same name?

Apart from that there is no evidence for it. In his only surviving letter to Therese Malfatti from May 1810, he addressed her with 'Dear Therese'

85. Since 2008 the museum has Johann Nepomuk Hummel's court uniform, which he wore as concertmaster in Eisenstadt, given as a present by Yvonne Hummel.

86. There is a piano from Hummel's estate, built in 1790, which Yvonne Hummel gave to the orchestra of her home town in 2010.

87. Beethoven: *Briefwechsel*, vol.1, pp.250–51.

88. Barry Cooper: *Beethoven* (Oxford, 2000), p.193.

hoven's "Elise": an alternative solution', in *The Musical Times* vol.155 no.1929 (Winter 2014),

89. Barry Cooper: 'Beet-

pp.3–5. It is a response to the article by Rita Steblin in vol.155 no.1927 (Summer 2014).

90. Beethoven: *Briefwechsel*, vol.2, pp.122–23.

91. Dorf Müller, Gertsch, & Ronge: *Ludwig van Beethoven*, vol.1, p.475. See also Rita Steblin's response with the same arguments in *The Musical Times* vol.155 no.1929 (Winter 2014), p.5–6.

92. Ludwig Nohl: 'Ungedruckte Briefe Beethoven's', in *Westermann's Illustrierte Deutsche Monatshefte* vol.19 no.15 (December 1865), pp.306–13, here at p.306. The article contains 34 letters, most of them to Gleichenstein.

('Verehrte Therese') and shortened her name to 'T.'<sup>90</sup> In addition, found on the copy of the song *Mignon* op.75 no.1, which was discovered in her estate, are his personal notes, which read: 'the author has ventured to draw notice to the improvements to this song made by Miss Therese' ('Die Verschönerung der Fräulein Therese in diesem Lied hat der Autor gewag[t] an das Tageslicht zu befördern').<sup>91</sup>

As a supplement to the references quoted above, Ludwig Nohl acknowledged explicitly: *Für Elise* 'was not written for Therese'. Of course, he could not rely on Therese himself, but on her surviving sister and closest confidante Anna, who was probably present during all the visits of Beethoven and Anna's later husband Ignaz von Gleichenstein to her parents' house. Nohl visited Anna von Gleichenstein in 1865 in her home in Freiburg im Breisgau, where she showed him numerous letters of Beethoven, which he published shortly afterwards. She told him also that Beethoven gave her sister Therese piano lessons, 'fell in love with her and aspired to marry her. But his friend Gleichenstein stopped him for good reason' [!] ('Davon hielt ihn jedoch mit gutem Fug sein Freund Gleichenstein zurück').<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, Therese's friend Rudolph Schachner – maybe even his mother – categorically denied that Therese Malfatti was the dedicatee – or could have been. Such a simple, clear and unequivocal statement by several contemporaries of the composer probably has to be accepted as a fact; that is – the truth.

*Translated by Antonie Klenner*