

BEETHOVEN, L. van: Canons and Musical Jokes

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[1] Lob auf den dicken Schuppanzigh, WoO 100, Hess 278 (1801) ('Praise to the fat Schuppanzigh')

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Schuppanzigh ist ein Lump.
Wer kennt ihn nicht,
den dicken Saueremagen,
den aufgeblasnen Eselskopf?
O Lump Schuppanzigh,
o Esel Schuppanzigh,
wir stimmen alle ein,
du bist der größte Esel,
o Esel, hi hi ha.

Schuppanzigh is a rascal
Who knows him not,
the fat sour-belly
the conceited donkey-head?
Oh rascal Schuppanzigh
Oh donkey Schuppanzigh
We all agree
that you are the biggest donkey
Oh donkey, ha ha ha

This song makes fun of the increasingly corpulent violinist, Ignaz Schuppanzigh, who gave Beethoven violin lessons and led the first performances of many of Beethoven's compositions, including the late string quartets.

[2] Graf, Graf, liebster Graf, WoO 101, Hess 279 (Autumn, 1802?)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Graf, Graf, liebster Graf,
bestes Schaf!

Count, Count, dear Count,
best sheep!

As written in a letter to his friend, Count Nikolaus Zmeskall von Domanovecz.

[3] Im Arm der Liebe ruht sich's wohl, WoO 159 (1795?)

Text: Hermann Wilhelm Franz Ueltzen (1759–1808)

Im Arm der Liebe ruht sich's wohl,
Im Schoß der Erde ruht sich's wohl,
Wo es auch sei, das ist der Müden einerlei.

In love's arm one rests well,
In the earth's bosom one rests well,
Wherever it may be, it is the same for the weary.

Perhaps an exercise for his counterpoint teacher, Albrechtsberger.

[4] Ewig dein, WoO 161 (probably 1810)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Ewig dein

Ever yours

[5] Freundschaft ist die Quelle wahrer Glückseligkeit, WoO 164 (1814)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Freundschaft ist die Quelle wahrer Glückseligkeit

Friendship is the source of true happiness

[6] Glück zum neuen Jahr!, WoO 165 (1815)

Text: probably Ludwig van Beethoven

Glück zum neuen Jahr!

Happy New Year!

Written for Baron Pasqualati, Beethoven's landlord in Vienna for over ten years.

[7] Kurz ist der Schmerz, WoO 163 (1813)

Text: Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805)

Kurz ist der Schmerz und ewig die Freude

Brief is the pain and lasting the joy.

The text is taken from Schiller's Jungfrau von Orleans ('The Maid of Orleans'). The work was written for Beethoven's pupil, Johann Friedrich Naue. The same text was used in 1815 in canon WoO 166 for Spohr.

[8] Brauchle, Linke, WoO 167, Hess 249 (probably 1815)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Written for Joseph Xaver Brauchle and Joseph Linke, music teachers to the children of Countess Erdödy.

[9] Das Schweigen, WoO 168, No. 1 (1815–16)

Text: Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803)

Lerne Schweigen, o Freund,
dem Silber gleicht die Rede,
aber zu rechter Zeit schweigen, ist lauter Gold

Learn to be silent, friend,
for speech is like silver,
but silence at the right time is pure gold

Written for the English musician Charles Neate, who spent the summer and winter of 1815 in Vienna and in Unterböbling, often in Beethoven's company.

[10] Das Reden, WoO 168, No. 2 (1815–16)

Text: Anonymous

Rede, wenn's um einen Freund dir gilt.
Rede, einer Schönen Schönes zu sagen.

Speak when you care for a friend.
Speak to say something beautiful to a beauty.

Written for Charles Neate.

[11] Ich küsse Sie, WoO 169, Hess 250 (1816)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Ich küsse Sie, drücke Sie an mein Herz!
Ich der Hauptmann, der Hauptmann

I kiss you, press you to my heart!
I am the captain, the captain

Written in a letter to the singer Anna Milder-Hauptmann, thanking her for her performances of Fidelio and proposing further collaboration.

[12] Ars longa, vita brevis, WoO 170, Hess 251 (1815/16)

Text: taken from the beginning of the Aphorisms by Hippocrates (460–370 BC)

Ars longa, vita brevis

Art is long, life short

Written for Johann Nepomuk Hummel.

[13] Michael HAYDN (1737–1806): Glück fehl' dir vor allem, MH 582 (1795)

(attrib. to L. van Beethoven as WoO 171, Hess 252, 1817)

Text: Anonymous

Glück fehl' dir vor allem,
Gesundheit auch niemalen

Above all may you lack
happiness and health in no way

A birthday greeting, attributed to Michael Haydn.

[14] Ich bitt' dich, schreib' mir die Es-Scala auf, WoO 172 (probably between 1813–16 and about 1824)

Text: probably Ludwig van Beethoven

Ich bitt' dich, schreib' mir die Es-Scala auf

Please write out for me the scale of E flat

The work was written for Vincent Haruschka, cellist and on the governing body of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, negotiating with Beethoven for a major composition.

[15] Hol Euch der Teufel! B'huť Euch Gott!, WoO 173, Hess 253 (1819)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Hol Euch der Teufel! B'huť Euch Gott!

The Devil take you! God guard you!

Written for the publisher Sigmund Anton Steiner and for Schuppanzigh.

[16] Glaube und hoffe, WoO 174 (1819)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Glaube und Hoffe!

Faith and Hope!

Written for Maurice Schlesinger, publisher.

[17]–[18] Sankt Petrus war ein Fels? – Bernardus war ein Sankt?, WoO 175, Hess 255 (1819–20)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Sankt Petrus war ein Fels? –
Bernardus war ein Sankt?

Bernard was a Saint?
St Peter was a rock? –

Text from a letter to Carl Peters, for Carl Peters and Carl Bernard.

[19] Bester Magistrat, Ihr friert!, WoO 177, Hess 257 (probably between 1818 and 1820)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Bester Magistrat, Ihr friert!

Dear Magistrate, you are freezing!

Presumably written at a time when Beethoven was involved with legal disputes over the guardianship of his nephew.

[20] Glück, Glück zum neuen Jahr!, WoO 176 (1819)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Glück zum neuen Jahr!

Happy New Year!

A New Year greeting to Countess Erdödy.

[21] Signor Abate!, WoO 178 (c. 1820)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Signor Abate! io sono ammalato
Santo Padre! vieni e datemi la benedizione
Hol' Sie der Teufel, wenn Sie nicht kommen!

Sir Priest! I am ill
Holy Father! Come and bless me
Damn you, if you don't come!

This was perhaps written for the Abbé Stadler.

[22] Seiner Kaiserlichen Hoheit! – Alles Gute, alles Schöne, WoO 179 (1820)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Seiner Kaiserlichen Hoheit!
den Erzherzog Rudolph!
dem geistlichen Fürsten!
Alles Gute! Alles Schöne!

To His Imperial Highness!
To Archduke Rudolph!
To the Church Prince!
All good wishes!

New Year greetings to Archduke Rudolph.

[23] Hoffmann, sei ja kein Hofmann, WoO 180 (1820)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Hoffmann, sei ja kein Hofmann
nein, nein, nein, ich heisse Hofmann
und bin kein Hoffmann

Hoffmann, not Hofmann
No, no, no, my name is Hofmann,
not Hoffmann

Pun on the name of E.T.A. Hoffmann.

[24] Gedenket heute an Baden!, WoO 181, No. 1 (1822)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Gedenket heute an Baden!

Remembering Baden today!

[25] Gehabt euch wohl, WoO 181, No. 2, Hess 258 (1822)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Gehabt euch wohl

Farewell

[26] Tugend ist kein leerer Name, WoO 181, No. 3, Hess 259 (1822)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Tugend ist kein leerer Name

Virtue is no empty name

[27] O Tobias!, WoO 182 (1821)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

O Tobias! Dominus Haslinger o! o! o!

O Tobias! Master Haslinger, O! O! O!

The text is taken from a letter to the publisher, Haslinger.

[28] Bester Herr Graf, Sie sind ein Schaf!, WoO 183, Hess 261 (1823/24)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Bester Herr Graf! Sie sind ein Schaf!

Dear Count, you are a sheep!

Written for Moritz Count Lichnowsky.

[29] Falstafferel, lass' dich sehen!, WoO 184, Hess 262 (1823)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Falstafferel, lass dich sehen!

Little Falstaff, let us see you!

The text is taken from a letter to Schuppanzigh.

[30] Edel sei der Mensch, hülfreich und gut, WoO 185 (1823)

Text: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832)

Edel sei der Mensch, hülfreich und gut, ja gut

Noble is man, helpful and good, yes good

Written for Louis Schlösser, violinist and composer, who met Beethoven in 1822.

[31] Te solo adoro, WoO 186 (2 June 1824)

Text: Pietro Metastasio (1698–1782)

Te solo adoro, mente infinita,
fonte di vita e di verità

I alone love you, infinite spirit,
source of life and truth

The text is taken from Metastasio's La Betulia liberata.

[32] Schwenke dich ohne Schwänke!, WoO 187 (1824)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Schwenke dich ohne Schwänke!

Pivot without shaking!

A pun on the name of Carl Schwencke, composer and pianist.

[33] Gott ist eine feste Burg, WoO 188, Hess 265 (1825)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Gott ist eine feste Burg

God is a firm stronghold

Written for Colonel von Düsterlohe.

[34] Doktor sperrt das Tor dem Tod, WoO 189, Hess 266 (1825)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Doktor sperrt das Tor dem Tod,
Note hilft euch aus der Not.

Doctor closes the door to death,
Notes help us out of pain.

Written for Beethoven's physician, Dr Anton Braunhofer, a homeopathic doctor.

[35] Ich war hier, Doktor, ich war hier, WoO 190, Hess 267 (1825)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Ich was hier, Doktor, ich war hier

I was here, Doctor, I was here

Also written for Dr Anton Braunhofer.

[36] Kühl, nicht lau, WoO 191 (1825)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Kühl, nicht lau

Cold, not warm

A pun on the name of Friedrich Kuhlau, a Danish flautist and composer, written after a convivial evening.

[37] Ars longa, vita brevis, WoO 192, Hess 268 (1825)

Text: Hippocrates (460–370 BC)

Ars longa, vita brevis

Art is long, life short

This work, also using the text 'Ars longa, vita brevis' ('Art is long, life short') was written for Sir George Smart, English conductor, who was representing the Royal Philharmonic Society.

[38] Ars longa, vita brevis, WoO 193, Hess 269 (possibly 1825)

Text: Hippocrates

Ars longa, vita brevis

Art is long, life short

[39] Si non per portas, WoO 194 (1825)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Si non per portas, per muros

If not through the doors, through the walls

Written for Maurice Schlesinger.

[40] Freu dich des Lebens, WoO 195 (1825)

Text: Johann Martin Usteri (1763–1827)

Freu Dich des Lebens!

Enjoy life!

Written for Theodore Molt, a visitor from Canada.

[41] Es muss sein!, WoO 196, Hess 270 (probably 1826)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Es muss sein, ja!
Heraus mit dem Beutel!

It must be, yes!
Out with the bag!

Ignaz Dembscher asked Beethoven for parts for the Op. 130 Quartet. His question, to which the answer was affirmative, provided a motif in the last of Beethoven's quartets, Op. 135.

[42] Da ist das Werk, WoO 197, Hess 271 (before 1826)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Da ist das Werk.
Sorgt um das Geld, sorgt!
Zwölf Dukaten!

There's the work.
Take care of the money!
Twelve ducats!

A sung reference to the giving of the four-hand version of the Grosse Fuge to his friend Holz, for delivery to the publisher, and to receive payment for it.

[43] Wir irren allesamt, WoO 198, Hess 280 (c. 1826)

Text: probably Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742–1799)

Wir irren allesamt, nur jeder irret anders

We all go astray, only each in his own way

Taken from a letter to Karl Holz.

[44] Ich bin der Herr von zu, WoO 199, Hess 281 (1814)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Ich bin der Herr von Zu;
Du bist der Herr von Von

I am the man for you;
you are the man for me

Written to Archduke Rudolph, c. November 1814.

[45] Ich bin bereit! – Amen, WoO 201, Hess 282 (after 1818)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Ich bin bereit! Ich bin bereit!

I am ready! I am ready!

The text is taken from a letter to Vincenz Haruschka in reply to a request from the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde for a major work for the Society.

[46] Das Schöne zum Guten, WoO 202, Hess 283 (1823)

Text: Friedrich von Matthisson (1761–1831)

Das Schöne zu dem Guten

Beauty to the good

Written for pianist Marie Pachler-Koschak.

[47] Das Schöne zu dem Guten, WoO 203, Hess 272 (1825)

Text: Friedrich von Matthisson

Das Schöne zu dem Guten

Beauty to the good

This version was written for Ludwig Rellstab, poet and writer on music.

[48] Karl HOLZ (1799–1858): Holz geigt die Quartette so (attrib. to L. van Beethoven as WoO 204, Hess 284) (1825)

Text: Ignaz Franz Castelli (1781–1862)

Holz, Holz, geigt die Quartette so,
als ob sie Kraut eintreten

Holz, Holz plays the quartet
as if he were stamping on a cabbage

A joke by Beethoven's nephew, Karl.

[49] Languisco e moro, Hess 229 (1803)

Text: Anonymous

Laguisco e moro
per te mio ben ch'adoro.
(Laguisco e moro)

I languish and I die,
for you, my love, whom I adore.
(I languish and I die.)

Italian word setting, formerly WoO 99.

[50]–[51] Te solo adoro, WoO 186 (2 June 1824)

Text: Pietro Metastasio

Te solo adoro, mente infinita,
fonte di vita e di verità

I alone love you, infinite spirit,
source of life and truth

The text is taken from Metastasio's La Betulia liberata.

[52] Herr Graf, ich komme zu fragen, Hess 276 (c. 1796–97)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Herr Graf, ich komme zu fragen,
wie Sie sich befinden
ob Sie recht gut geschlafen und angenehm geträumt,
oder ob Ihnen nichts betrübliches passiert ist.

Sir Count, I come to ask
how you are
if you have slept quite well and dreamed pleasantly,
or if nothing deplorable has happened to you.

To Nikolaus Zmeskall von Domanovecz.

[53] Esel aller Esel, WoO 227, Hess 277 (1826)

Text: Ludwig van Beethoven

Esel aller Esel Hi Ha

Ass to end all asses, heehaw!

Presumably for Schuppanzigh.

[54] Kurz ist der Schmerz, WoO 166 (1815)

Text: Friedrich von Schiller

Kurz ist der Schmerz
und ewig die Freude

Brief is the pain
and lasting the joy.

The text is from Schiller's Jungfrau von Orleans. This is the second version, written for Spohr.

English translation: Keith Anderson