

2014-1 Translation

1- Music means different things to different people and sometimes even different things to the same person at different moments of his life.

It might be poetic, philosophical, sensual, or mathematical, but in any case it must, in my view, have something to do with the soul of the human being.

Hence it is metaphysical; but the means of expression is purely and exclusively physical: sound.

I believe it is precisely this permanent coexistence of metaphysical message through physical means that is the strength of music.

(46) It is also the reason why when we try to describe music with words, all we can do is articulate our reactions to it, and not grasp music itself.

2- Beethoven's importance in music has been principally defined by the revolutionary nature of his compositions.

He freed music from hitherto prevailing conventions of harmony and structure.

Sometimes I feel in his late works a will to break all signs of continuity.

The music is abrupt and seemingly disconnected, as in the last piano sonata.

In musical expression, he did not feel restrained by the weight of convention.

(47) By all accounts he was a freethinking person, and a courageous one, and I find courage an essential quality for the understanding, let alone the performance, of his works.

3- This courageous attitude in fact becomes a requirement for the performers of Beethoven's music.

His compositions demand the performer to show courage, for example in the use of dynamics.

(48) Beethoven's habit of increasing the volume with an extreme intensity and then abruptly following it with a sudden soft passage was only rarely used by composers before him.

4- Beethoven was a deeply political man in the broadest sense of the word.

He was not interested in daily politics, but concerned with questions of moral behavior and the larger questions of right and wrong affecting the entire society.

(49) Especially significant was his view of freedom, which, for him, was associated with the rights and responsibilities of the individual: he advocated freedom of thought and of personal expression.

5- Beethoven's music tends to move from chaos to order as if order were an imperative of human existence.

For him, order does not result from forgetting or ignoring the disorders that plague our existence; order is a necessary development, an improvement that may lead to the Greek ideal of spiritual elevation.

It is not by chance that the Funeral March is not the last movement of the Eroica Symphony, but the second, so that suffering does not have the last word.

(50) One could interpret much of the work of Beethoven by saying that suffering is inevitable, but the courage to fight it renders life worth living.