Beethovens Werkstatt on the test bench

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The research project *Beethovens Werkstatt* studies sketches and manuscripts of Ludwig van Beethoven by combining methods of genetic criticism and digital edition.[1] It is a project located at the Beethoven-Haus Bonn and the Department of Musicology Detmold/Paderborn, and is funded by the Academy of Sciences and Literature Mainz. It started in 2014. In the first of its five modules, which lasted until 2016, the project focussed on the description of Beethoven's revision processes in several manuscripts of different genres. Several tools to show various layers of the compositional process as well as a reconstruction of a piece's chronology have been developed in the project. Additionally, a terminological base was formed with a glossary, which is still constantly refined. The project's *VideApp*[2] is an example of an open access-web application which was developed during the first module. It combines a digital presentation of the composer's manuscript via MEI-data (representing the musical text) with SVG-shapes (marking the content of the document itself). Additionally, the *VideApp* gives a description of the sources, an overview of current research and a detailed analysis of textual genesis and of compositional chronology – not only verbally but also in a synoptic visualization of the source, its transcription and corresponding MEI-data. The different methods and forms of representation which were worked out in this way should be transferable both to other compositions and other composers.

In my master thesis I probe whether *Beethovens Werkstatt* can keep the promise of the *VideApp'*s transferability by studying Beethoven's *Flohlied* op. 75, no. 3. The song's autograph (D-BNba NE 220) was presumed to be lost; for this reason, it could not be taken into account for the 'Beethoven Gesamtausgabe' in 1990. Only in 1998 the manuscript was bought from private hands and brought to the public with a facsimile edition by Helga Lühning, who explains that the manuscript is probably an autograph transcription which served as engraver's model.[3] On different levels, Beethoven did his typical corrections like

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[1] https://www.beethovens-werkstatt.de

[2] Recently the project decided to name allaweb application which are developed during the modules *VideApp*. Tifferent suffixes specify the modules focuses'. ,he suffix 'Var''referrers to the first module's focus.

[3] See Lühning 1999: 37

cancellations, overwriting, and he used different writing media and jump marks, all of which were described by Lühning. Figure 1 gives an exemplary impression of the manuscript.
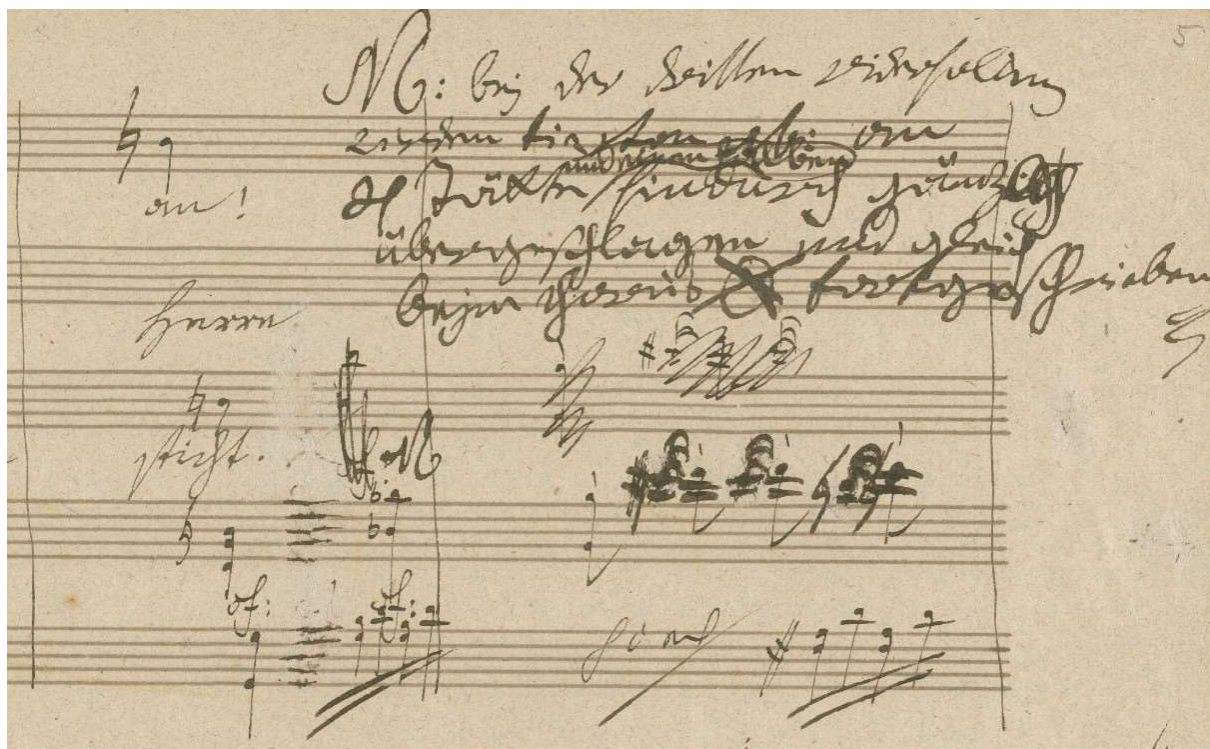

Figure 1: Beethoven op. 75, no. 3 Flohlied. Autograph D-BNba NE 220, p. 5

In my own approach I describe the source verbally and analyse some parts in which the writing flow was interrupted and modifications were added.[4] The analysis does not include technical examinations of the paper, but only a scriptural analysis trying to discuss the chronology of Beethoven's entries. For this purpose, I discussed the following questions:

- Are there musical reasons for explaining a modification, referring to harmonic, melodic or rhythmic aspects?
- Are there non-musical reasons which explain a modification, for example additional hints for a copyist?

In reconstructing the compositional chronology I use the same methods as the *VideApp*. Besides a verbal description of the piece's scriptural state, I modelled its text in MEI and generated SVG-shapes by tracing the manuscript's digitization on a graphic tablet. The results help to understand the compositional process of Beethoven's *Flohlied*, but also

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[4] *Beethovens Werkstatt* calls such areas 'Textnarben' (i.e. 'textual scars').

approve the *VideApp*'s transferability and verify generally that the *VideApp* can show those compositional processes adequately and where improvements should be made in order to facilitate a better understanding of the genetic processes. During that work, it became apparent that the *VideApp* is sufficiently mature to render data following its general expectations. However, there is rather poor support to obtain that data: The documentation lacks details on how the data should be structured exactly, so that a user sometimes has to resort on a trial-and-error approach. Also, there is very little software support along the way. In essence, the *VideApp* is still clearly a prototype, and as such fails to match expectations of being a widely usable product as it stands – which admittedly has never been claimed by its authors. Besides the discussion of the *Flohlied* itself, I will therefore identify limitations of the current software, especially with regard to re-using it with custom data, and propose simple revisions and additions, which may still make a big difference for an average user with less access to the original developers.

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