

## Stefan Zweig and Beethoven manuscripts

Special exhibition in the Beethoven House, Bonn  
May 13<sup>th</sup> to October 4<sup>th</sup> 2015



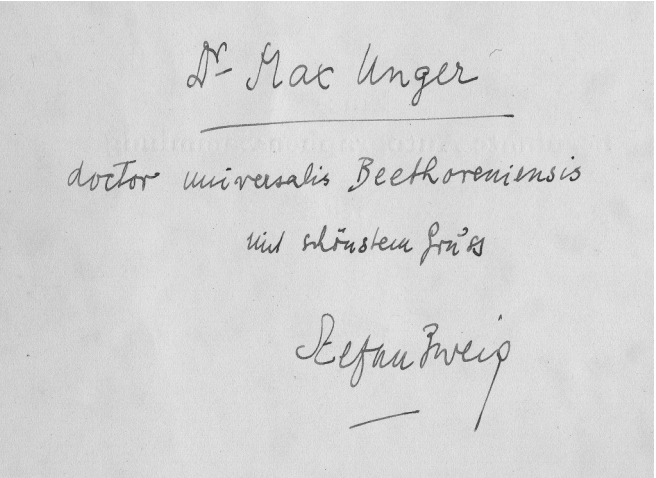
Stefan Zweig, about 1935

Stefan Zweig was not only one of the most read authors of his time but also a connoisseur of autograph manuscripts. He himself brought together an exceptional collection of original manuscripts of writers and composers. He was convinced that a deeper understanding of an artistic work requires knowledge of the process of its creation. He therefore concentrated on manuscripts that came into being during that process, those that might be termed working manuscripts.

Zweig built up an impressive set of connections to collectors, research workers, antiquarian book sellers and auction houses such that he was informed of offers in good time. Recently surfaced documents, which also form the main thread of the exhibition, show that Stefan Zweig made a substantial contribution to the putting together of the Bodmer Collection, given to the Beethoven House in the will of Hans Conrad Bodmer. Bodmer, of Zurich, was perhaps the most important collector of Beethoven manuscripts and other items connected with Beethoven. To the musicologist Max Unger, Bodmer's most valued advisor and one of the leading Beethoven researchers of the time, Zweig mentioned in 1932 that "the existence of such a superb specialist collection demands that as much as possible go into it." In 1954 Bodmer bequeathed in turn his complete collection to the Beethoven House. In 1933 Zweig wrote resignedly to Max Unger: "I will probably leave off collecting altogether, I have enough to do collecting myself." Then, in the mid 1930s, with the political situation as it was, he parted with his whole collection, except for a few items.

(Room 7, showcase 1:) Max Unger, the freelance Beethoven researcher and music critic, presented a huge number of publications on numerous Beethoven subjects between 1909 and 1959. He also published many Beethoven letters that

had not previously been published. In Zweig's opinion, Unger knew "simply everything about Beethoven", praising him with the words "there is no specialist as perfect and at the same time as kindly as he." In the copy, sent to Unger, of the catalogue of the sale in which he disposed of a large part of his collection in 1936, Zweig wrote the following dedication: "Dr. Max Unger / doctor universalis Beethoveniensis / with the kindest of greetings / Stefan Zweig". The photo shows Zweig in his mid-twenties. Zweig was very interested in the Bodmer collection, as his first and lengthiest letter already shows: "I have a certain feeling for the idea of the collection which reaches beyond the individual; the existence of such a superb specialist collection demands that as much as possible go into it [...]. I have always been disposed



Dedication to Max Unger

towards museums and today the Bodmer Collection may already be considered as a museum in itself." Zweig asked Unger for "a well-documented history of Beethoven autographs. That means the prices and items in the first [estate] auction, secondly, what has happened to the most important items since then, thirdly, where the most important autographs – scores and letters – now are." Zweig's notation in the *Chronologisches Verzeichnis der Werke Beethovens* (Chronological list of Beethoven's work) by Alexander Wheelock Thayer emphasizes information given by Thayer regarding the auction of Beethoven's musical estate. That auction took place six months after the composer's death.

(Showcase 2:) At first, Zweig and Bodmer were rivals. For instance, Zweig would gladly have owned the original

manuscript of the March from the second version of *Fidelio*, mentioned in the letter shown here but was prevented by Bodmer who carried it off to Zurich in 1927. Bodmer's persistent activity as a collector coupled with the maintenance of a consistent anonymity explain Zweig's complaint to Romain Rolland in 1929: "They [the Beethoven manuscripts] are becoming devilish rare because some moneybags in Zurich buys them at any price (Bodmer had paid 23000 Marks for the eleven pages of *Fidelio*)." In the resumé of his life of more than ten years later – *Die Welt von Gestern* (The world of yesterday) – Zweig wrote of himself even then as "opponent and auction rival of one of the richest men in Switzerland" who "was putting together a Beethoven treasure beyond compare." This made the moments of happiness even greater when Zweig did manage to make an acquisition. In 1933, for instance, he was able to buy a sheet of a sketch for Beethoven's music for Goethe's tragedy *Egmont* for a good price because Bodmer did not bid. Zweig made a catalogue card for each of his new acquisitions. Not long afterwards Bodmer in turn acquired a sketch sheet with sketches for the overture *Ungarns erster Wohltäter* (Hungary's first benefactor) op. 117 at an inexpensive price because its contents were not recognized; it was Zweig who, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 1933, drew Unger's attention to this manuscript.

(Showcase 3:) Even the Beethoven House, of which Bodmer became Patron in 1932, had to ask Zweig in 1931 "which Dr. Bodmer in Zurich it was who possessed the autograph collection." At the time Zweig did not yet know Bodmer's first names, but on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1933 he was a guest at Bodmer's, for Zweig a glorious moment. "I have seen the collection in Zurich, it is simply fantastic and besides that: what a house, with a wonderful Botticelli, a Rembrandt and other similar valuables", he wrote to his publisher Anton Kippenberg, in turn the owner of an exceptional Goethe collection. The catalogue of the Bodmer Collection, written by Unger over a period of years, finally appeared in 1939 – in a version that was more compact than originally planned, shortened owing to circumstances. The name of the collector was not included in the work. Zweig had often asked how it was going and had recommended a publisher.

(Showcase 4:) By the late 1930s when Zweig had largely stopped collecting, partly because of the Nazi ban on publications meant considerably less income for him, two important Beethoven manuscripts came on the market. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 1938 he wrote to Unger: "Dear *Herr Doktor*,

your card reached me here on my travels. You are going to have some exciting days because of the *Waldstein Sonata*, which was also offered to me – unfortunately I cannot rise to such figures any longer and I would wish, without envy, that this item will go to Zurich as a crowning work." It was the autograph of the Piano Sonata in C major op. 53. A few days later Zweig wrote to the pupil of Bartok and Busoni, Gisella Selden-Goth: "a small item – namely the *Waldstein Sonata* – was offered to me, but again one has to admit that one must give up wishes and wanting. In the end, also too beautiful for a private person. In the old days when the sales were in Germany and everything was easier, I could cherish such dreams. As a proposition for a wealthy person it would have offered more security than all the paper and houses of our uncertain part of the world." Bodmer acquired the sonata, enabling the Beethoven House to publish a lavishly produced facsimile of the manuscript in 1954. Already in 1931 Zweig had cast a fly for the other big fish. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of October he wrote to a colleague collector, the industrialist Karl Geigy-Hagenbach in Basel: "I have made a try to release my locked-up German marks to obtain an important work that would in fact be the jewel of my collection – one of the most decisive of Beethoven's sketch books with studies for Symphonies 7, 8 and 9; an extensive volume, the largest in private ownership." But also this work, the so-called *Pettersche Skizzenbuch*, went to Bodmer. The sellers were the heirs of Erich Prieger, one of the founding fathers of the Beethoven House Society.

(Showcase 5:) Once Zweig had stopped collecting on a regular basis, he began to arrange for manuscripts to go to Bodmer. In 1934 the banker Edward Speyer died. He had been a friend of Johannes Brahms, collected autographs and items of the fine arts and maintained a house in Shenley, Hertfordshire (England) where the most important musicians were received and concerts were given. Academics were happy to support him in his research and he kept up a correspondence with Unger. After Speyer died, his important autograph collection, which he had described himself, was put up for sale. Zweig arranged that the collection was exhibited at the *Sunday Times Book Exhibition* in London. On the occasion Zweig gave a lecture entitled "Sense and beauty in autographs" that soon appeared in print. Unger was presented with an example of the book with a dedication. The two folios of the 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony – of which one is to be seen here – and a sketch for the Piano Sonata in c minor op. 27 no. 2 he praised with the words: "here may be witnessed an eternal victory of the spirit over

matter, more visible than in any writing, any image." Shortly afterwards, thanks to Zweig's mediation, Bodmer was able to enlarge his collection by about thirty autographs in one go. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 1934, Zweig had hurriedly informed Unger: "Dear Doctor Unger, just a line. You know I hardly buy anything any more. [...] Is Dr. Bodmer still buying? Ach, here he could now have the whole splendid Speyer Collection, if he bought it en bloc. It contains the only four pages of the original manuscript of the Ninth Symphony in private hands, the ones missing in Berlin, the sketch of the Moonlight Sonata and wonderful letters. I think that for £6000 – £7000 he could have the whole collection, so that for the ten of Beethoven (including the priceless pages of the Ninth Symphony) the cost is about £2000; they are not letting things go separately, otherwise I myself might have got in your way. I shall stay here until Wednesday. Could you write to me immediately?" Speyer himself had recognized and corrected Anton Schindler's misattribution of the last seventeen bars of the score of the Great Fugue in the version for piano four hands op. 134 as a sketch for op. 130. One of the numerous Beethoven letters from the Speyer Collection is to be seen here; in the letter the composer, in a joking mood, addresses his friend and advisor Nikolaus Zmeskall in about 1811 or 1812.

(Showcase 6:) Autograph letters and scores, deriving from Beethoven's immediate circle and acquired by Bodmer from Speyer's widow, Antonia Speyer-Kufferath, include a letter of 1787 from Beethoven's teacher in Bonn, Christian Gottlob Neefe and the autograph of the Divertimento for piano op. 117 (1819) by Beethoven's pupil Ferdinand Ries, in turn the brother-in-law of Speyer. These two autographs are both to be seen here. In a letter to Unger written in June 1935, Antonia Speyer-Kufferath expressed her happiness on learning that "my husband's much loved treasure had found its way to such worthy hands". Zweig also involved Karl Geigy-Hagenbach in the sale and mediated for him in the acquisition of an extremely rare letter from Claudio Monteverdi. Zweig himself also did not go empty handed; he acquired the autograph of Mozart's *Veilchen* and the marriage contract between Mozart and Constanze Weber.

(Showcase 7:) Already on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 1934 Zweig had written to Unger: "Strangely enough I have recently not seen anything at all by Beethoven on offer. It seems that you have exhausted the essentials and except for the manuscript owned by Privy Councillor Friedländer and three or four other important items in Germany, there is hardly anything



left except minor things. In Vienna of course the big collection of Wittgenstein, that is, Stonborough, must be pretty much intact.” As a result, Unger contacted the Wittgenstein family and subsequently made an academic description of the collection. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 1937 Zweig wrote to thank for being sent the published edition of the work. The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein belonged to the Wittgenstein family. His elder brother, the pianist Paul Wittgenstein, who lost his right arm in the First World War, later commissioned concertos for the left hand from both Maurice Ravel and Paul Hindemith. Bodmer obtained a number of items from the Wittgenstein family. One of these, a large sketch book, still bearing the name Wittgenstein, containing sketches for both the Missa Solemnis and the Diabelli Variations as well as a sheet – displayed here – with ideas for works from the last Bonn period that were never realised and the autograph of *Glaube und hoffe!* (Believe and hope!), WoO 174, of 1819.

*(Showcase 8:)* In 1937, in the course of winding up his collection, Stefan Zweig sold one manuscript directly to Bodmer. Zweig had acquired the item, a curious joint production by Therese Malfatti and Beethoven of the Goethe song *Kennst Du das Land* op. 75, no. 1, in New York. At the time, Unger, in his appraisal for Bodmer, advised him not to pay too high a price. Beethoven’s ironic commentary at the end, concocted using numerous slips of the pen, runs as follows: “NB. In this song, the author has dared to bring the beautification of Miss. Therese to the light of day.” The first pages are indeed entirely written by the obviously inexperienced Therese; thereafter Beethoven took over writing the piece. Zweig proudly announced to Geigy-Hagenbach: “I have acquired a couple of very beautiful items, Beethoven’s Mignon song, half of which is by him and the other half by Therese Malfatti, unique in its sort, for it is not a copy but – a solitary case – the working together with a 17-year-old girl to whom he made an unrequited marriage proposal in the same. The piece was thought to have disappeared for ever and came into my possession via this detour; soon I hope too to acquire another very beautiful piece. For these eternal pieces of the immortal, I think 200–300 should ensure they give up the ghost. As in everything I also want to change my life in this respect.” It took some time before Zweig and Bodmer came to an agreement about the price.

Items from the Zweig Collection found their way to the collection of the Beethoven House along other routes and also much earlier on. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 1928 Zweig bought the autograph of the Ariette *Der Kuss* (the kiss) op. 128 (here to

be seen as a photograph that Zweig gave to the Beethoven Archive in 1929) at Henrici’s in Berlin, as indicated by the auctioner’s hand book (on loan from the autograph dealer of J. A. Stargardt, Berlin). After the auction Zweig also bought the second complete written work by Beethoven in his collection, namely the canon: *Kurz ist der Schmerz und ewig ist die Freude* (Short is the pain and the joy is eternal), WoO 163 on a text by Schiller. Zweig immediately put another work up for sale at the same auction house; this was a sketch page, which seemed less important to him, with a title design for Friedrich von Matthisson’s *Adelaide* – at the time of the composer an especially popular piece. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of June of this year it was acquired by the Beethoven House.

*(Room 9 on the second floor:)* In 1929 Zweig had a moment of enormous happiness, for him the summit of his life of collecting. In the resumé of his life *Die Welt von Gestern* (The world of yesterday) he expressed his boundless happiness in that he had succeeded “at least for a moment, to present visually the most tragic of his [Beethoven’s] life in a perfection that no museum on earth can offer.” He wrote of Beethoven’s writing desk, cashbox, folding writing stand, compass, a lock of hair as well as both miniature portraits, all of which he was able to acquire from Stephan Breuning (the great-grandson of Beethoven’s lifelong friend of the same name). Zweig was able to take these pieces to his English home in exile in 1939 and arrange them at his



Beethoven's desktop

house in Bath. His heirs sold them to Bodmer eleven years after Zweig’s suicide. Since 1956 they form one of the main attractions at the Beethoven House.

*(Room 12 on the ground floor, showcase 1:)* Throughout his life, Zweig was engaged in his interest for Beethoven. In his work copy of the complete letters of Beethoven edited by Emerich Kastner and published in 1910 (on loan, privately owned in London) he made a variety of notations, for instance in the letter to the publisher Gottfried Christoph Härtel in Leipzig that Beethoven wrote in August 1812; in the letter Beethoven severely judged Goethe, deeply admired by Zweig. Beethoven wrote: “Goethe pleases the atmosphere at court much more than is fitting for a poet. It has to do with not much more than the absurdities of virtuosos when poets, who should be seen as the first teachers of the nation, forget everything else beyond this sheen – .” The original letter, to be seen here, was acquired by Bodmer in about 1930 from Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig. Although he left it to his revered friend Romain Rolland to write about Beethoven, Zweig, together with Gisella Selden-Goth, made a plan in 1936 for a small publication about Beethoven; it came to nothing.

*(Showcase 2:)* In 1936 Zweig felt it necessary to dispose of his collection. He had already written to Unger three years before: “I will probably give up collecting altogether, I have enough to do to collect myself.” On the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1936 Zweig sent Ungar a sales catalogue *Repräsentative Original=Handschriften. Eine berühmte Autographen=Sammlung I. Teil* (Representative original manuscripts. A famous autograph collection part 1) from the Viennese antiquarian bookseller Hinterberger with the remark: “I believe it is really wonderful to retain only the things to which I am truly attached. I really do not have the time for a broad collection Once I would like to have encompassed the whole literary and musical cosmos, now a drawer full is enough for me.“ Only a single Beethoven sketch sheet is recorded in the catalogue, however related to the wrong composition. Mainly it contains sketches for the third movement of the *Hammerklavier* Sonata in B major op. 106. Zweig himself brought influence to bear regarding the formulation about the character of Beethoven’s way of writing. The sheet came to the collection of the Beethoven House in 1992 via a detour.

Already in October 1933 Zweig wrote to Unger: “I do not care for my collection any longer: for the most part it is put away in a bank safe in Salzburg because I am leaving here for London and do not want to leave everything in the

insecurity of an empty house, anyway the joy in many things is away. Here I am solitary in my life and will only stay for eight more days because of work, then comes London and then again Austria, assuming that it remains Austria (we have already been through a lot of tension and difficulties in Salzburg from which I can at last take a rest).” And on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 1938 he wrote: “please not a word about my collection in the papers! The most part has gone (much to Martin Bodm[er]). The coming times will show what will happen to the rest – I am like Herr B.[odmer] and I would not like it if people talk or write about my collection in public.”

*(Showcase 3:)* Between 1929 and 1931 Zweig corresponded with the Beethoven Archive, the research department of the Beethoven House. In 1925 he had lent the sketch sheet shown in showcase 2 for an exhibition in Salzburg. When information was requested, Zweig was named as the lender. This led to a further request to photograph his collection of Beethoveniana. Zweig fulfilled the wish with pleasure and allowed the auction house Leo Liepmannssohn to make a photograph of the housekeeping book sheet that Zweig had bought in 1931. The auctioner’s hand book is on loan from the legal successors of Liepmannssohn, that is Otto Haas in London.

*(Showcase 4:)* Zweig and Romain Rolland were close friends for many years. Romain Rolland was a French writer and music critic who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1915. Zweig described him as the “most human among poets” and as “the moral conscience of Europe”. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 1928 Zweig wrote to Unger: “I very much doubt that I will manage to speak with Rolland about his Beethoven autographs; I only have two short hours. But anyway about the Rampl letter I can give you some accurate news because the facsimile of the original four pages is in a catalogue of the autograph dealer Heck from whom he bought it and I will gladly write down for you the original measurements and compare the orthography. Perhaps nonetheless Rolland’s secretary can give a more accurate list of his Beethoven autographs in Villeneuve.” The letter, in which Beethoven wrote to his copyist Wenzel Rampl, is shown here, given to the Beethoven House by Rolland’s widow, Marie Romain Rolland. Unger communicated both with her and her husband by letter. Shortly before his death, Unger wrote: “Already in the 1930s my friend Stefan Zweig recommended Romain Rolland as the ‘best living expert on Beethoven’ but he didn’t need to do that at all; already in

those days I was often in touch with Rolland by post”. The exhibited example of Rolland’s *Beethoven. Les grandes Époques créatrices. De l'Héroïque a l'Appassionata* contains the hand-written dedication: “A la Beethoven Haus de Bonn en pieux hommage Romain Rolland Villeneuve, novembre 1928”.

On the walls, watercolours by the artistically gifted Max Unger are to be seen. Unger’s school friend Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, one of the most important German Expressionists, gave him the oil painting *Atelier-Interieur mit Fingerhut* (Atelier interior with Foxgloves) in 1937, thus giving Unger the hidden message (death can be caused by ingesting enough of any part of the common Foxglove, digitalis purpurea, presented in the vase in the foreground, and the stacked-up canvasses shown in the background) that he, Rottluff, would soon be labelled as a degenerate artist by the Nazis and would be forbidden to continue his work.

ML/NK

Translation: Michael Latcham

Beethoven-Haus Bonn  
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An extensive programme of events has been planned in conjunction with the exhibition. For more information see the website of the Beethoven-Haus:

[www.beethoven-haus-bonn.de](http://www.beethoven-haus-bonn.de)

The exhibition is sponsored by:

