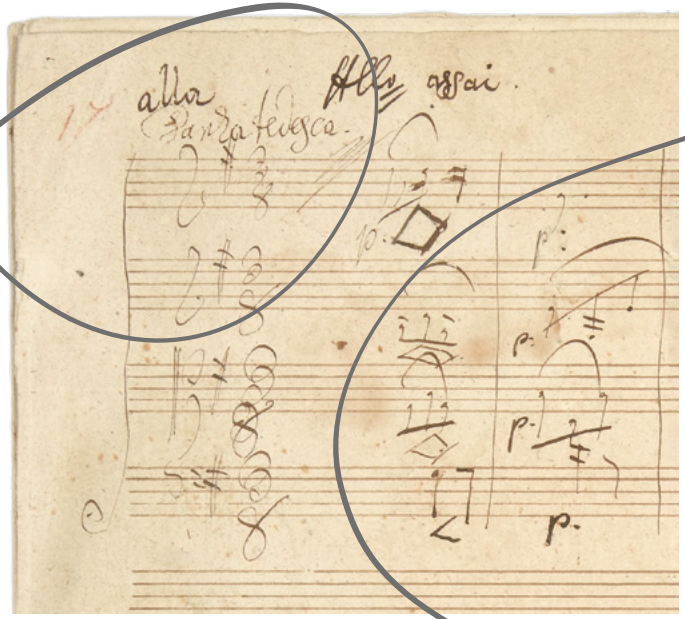
# Entwined Paths

**The long journey of the Danza tedesca from Beethoven's String Quartet op. 130**




**Exhibition at the Beethoven-Haus Bonn**
3 September 2025 to 11 January 2026

EN

BTHVN
BEETHOVEN-HAUS
BONN

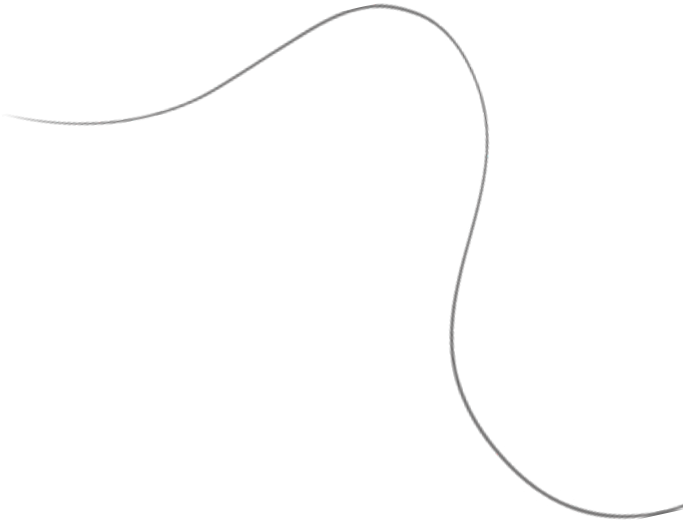
Image on the cover:

**Excerpt from the first page of the 4th movement ‘Alla danza tedesca’, from op. 130**
Beethoven-Haus Bonn, NE 398

# Entwined Paths

## The Long Journey of the Danza tedesca from Beethoven’s String Quartet op. 130

Julia Ronge



**Exhibition at the Beethoven-Haus Bonn**
3 September 2025 to 11 January 2026

# Genesis, Vienna

In November 1822, Prince Nikolai Borisovich Galitzin asked Beethoven to compose “un, deux ou trois Nouveaux Quatuors” (one, two or three new quartets), the fee for which the composer was free to determine – an unbeatable offer. At the beginning of 1823, Beethoven set his fee at 50 ducats for each quartet. He promised to deliver the first quartet by the end of February, or mid-March at the latest – as was often the case, an empty promise.

Beethoven did not begin work on the first of the ‘Galitzin Quartets’, the one in E flat major, op. 127, until May 1824, completing it in January or February 1825. The second, in A minor, op. 132, was composed relatively quickly immediately afterwards and was finished in July 1825. He began work on the third and last quartet for Galitzin, in B flat major, op. 130, in May 1825, drawing on ideas that had already emerged during his work on the other two quartets, but which he had not used. A shorter version of the fourth movement, ‘Alla danza tedesca’, was initially intended for the A minor quartet, but was discarded and eventually expanded for use in the B flat major quartet, op. 130. The latter was completed at the turn of 1825/26, at which point it had the Great Fugue as its final movement. In January 1826, a copy was made for Galitzin and sent to St. Petersburg.

# Karl Holz, Vienna

Meanwhile, the Schuppanzigh Quartet, led by Ignaz Schuppanzigh with Karl Holz on second violin, Franz Weiß on viola and Joseph Linke on cello, began rehearsals for the premiere, which was to take place on 21 March 1826 in the hall of the Musikverein in Vienna. The very fact that several rehearsals were planned for the performance was something special. "We only ever rehearse your quartets; not Haydn's or Mozart's, they work better without rehearsal", noted second violinist Karl Holz in January 1826. Rehearsals often took place in Beethoven's apartment, where he sat between the two violins so that he could still hear some of the music or at least watch the bowing. All the members of the quartet were such good friends with Beethoven that Holz referred to the formation as 'Beethoven's personal quartet'. Holz became a good friend of Beethoven's, running private errands for him; Beethoven even appointed him as his biographer. The composer expressed his affection for Holz by endowing him with nicknames such as 'Best Holz Christi' (Best Wood of Christ) and 'Best Maha[g]oni Holz' (Best Mahogany Wood). Beethoven ate with Holz almost every day, wanting to compensate him for his efforts, as he wrote to him in 1825 or 1826: "The meal will be ready at one o'clock, when I will be expecting you. I am sorry to cause

you so much inconvenience. – Your B — — — n".
Beethoven's nephew Karl commented sarcastically on the regularity of their meals together in June 1826: "Holz is invited to lunch 365 times a year; and even when he is not invited, he invites himself."

In his obituary, the poet and publicist Ignaz Franz Castelli described Holz as an "admirer, indeed a friend of the great master Beethoven, he was one of the few who already at that time fully appreciated the glory of his compositions, when what is now clear and well-formed was still considered chaos. For this reason, Holz was always consulted as an understanding and faithful interpreter and apostle of this master in passages of his works where there was doubt about their meaning."

Opinions on Beethoven's music were very divided after the premiere. While everyone generally admired the other movements, they did not understand the final fugue. Beethoven's brother Johann aptly summed up the work's effect. On 1 April, he wrote in Beethoven's conversation book: "The whole city is abuzz about your latest quartet, everyone is delighted with it, the reasonable say that one has to hear the last piece several times to understand it, the others wish that it would be omitted because [it] is too difficult to understand. –" On the initiative of publisher Mathias Artaria, Beethoven finally separated the fugue and published it separately as Op. 133, composing a new final movement for Op. 130. During the preparations for printing, Karl Holz proved to be a tireless advocate for Beethoven's interests. He not only carefully proofread the engraver's copy, but also made corrections to at least six galley proofs. He was also instrumental in the printing of quartet Op. 132. Holz, who in his day job worked as a cashier for the Lower Austrian provincial assembly, had plenty of time for such work, as he noted in a conversation book in August 1825: "I have a very easy job. Basically, I only work for an hour. The rest of the time is my own. But I have to sit inside; at least I have to put my body inside. I always have something interesting to do." Probably due to his tireless support in private and professional matters, Beethoven gave him his autograph manuscript of the 4th movement, 'Alla danza tedesca', as a token of gratitude. The manuscript comprises 15 pages of musical notation across nine pages. Beethoven's working method is clearly evident, as in numerous places he scratched out notes with a knife to replace them with new ones that better reflected his ideas or created more ideal proportions. With this gift, the manuscript began an adventurous journey along a complex web of entwined paths.

# Joseph Hellmesberger, Vienna

In 1849, the Viennese violinist Joseph Hellmesberger founded a string quartet with Matthias Durst on violin, Carl Heißler on viola and Carl Schlesinger on cello – all members of the court orchestra – with which he performed subscription concerts. He skilfully mixed string quartet compositions with other chamber music works, thereby also including various pianists in his series. With these subscription concerts, Hellmesberger took over the legacy of Ignaz Schuppanzigh, who was the first to professionalise the string quartet genre, establishing a subscription concert series featuring string quartet works. Although a quartet series existed in Vienna even after Schuppanzigh's death in 1830, founded by the violinist Leopold Jansa, it did not reach the level of Schuppanzigh's. At least, that is how it was described in the article that appeared in the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* on 4 November 1870, on the anniversary of Hellmesberger's first quartet evening:

*"Hellmesberger's greatest contribution to Vienna lies in his firm establishment and popularisation of one of the noblest but most serious art forms, the string quartet. With the quartet performances initiated by Joseph Hellmesberger on 4 November 1849, a new era dawned for the string quartet in Vienna. At the same time, the Austrian capital already*

*had another quartet that performed in public, led by the talented violinist Jansa; but over time, its performances sank into ever greater technical sloppiness, and the programme moved with embarrassing regularity within the same limited circle: Haydn, Mozart, the earliest Beethoven, at most Spohr, with a considerable number of virtuoso pieces added. The finest blossoms of chamber music, Beethoven's last quartets, even the works from the middle period of this master, the magnificent quartets of Schubert, Schumann and Mendelssohn – were complete musical 'terra incognita'. […] Things were more difficult with Beethoven's last works, of which Hellmesberger first performed the Quartet in B flat major, op. 130 (with clever calculation, he had chosen precisely this most cheerful and luminous of the last quartets).*"

Hellmesberger included Beethoven's String Quartet in B flat major, op. 130, "the most cheerful and luminous of the last quartets", in the programme for the fifth concert of his first series on 6 December 1849. The reviewer of the performance in the *Wiener Zeitung* was enthusiastic:

*"Hellmesberger's quartet evenings, which are increasing in interest and sophistication wherever possible, rightly enjoy the most numerous and select audience. The fifth evening (on 6 December) featured Beethoven's great Quartet in B flat major, op. 130, which is one of the master's most powerful, poetic, but also most difficult chamber music works, and which had previously been the monopoly of a small artistic circle in Vienna. We cannot thank Mr. Hellmesberger and his three collaborators enough for bringing it to the public, and in a performance so perfect that it silenced all criticism.*"

Holz seems to have shared this enthusiasm, because after the concert he gave Hellmesberger the autograph of the fourth movement of op. 130 and wrote a dedication on its last, previously blank page: "To my friend Joseph Hellmesberger, in memory of the excellent performance of this quartet on 6 December 1849, Karl Holz."

# Heinrich Steger, Vienna

The next known owner of the manuscript was the Viennese lawyer Heinrich Steger. The well-known criminal defence lawyer was distinguished by his great musicality and eloquence, which, according to a later newspaper report, had already been noticed during his school days: "What was striking about the boy was his musical and declamatory talent and his brilliant rhetoric." One of the many obituaries for Steger describes his character in more detail:

*"Dr. Heinrich Steger was a unique figure. The organ that roared within him was the creation of his musicality; it would have been inconceivable without his love for the world of Beethoven. Dr. Heinrich Steger represented the rare combination of a lawyer and an artist; this almost unheard-of combination created the great orator whose stream of thoughts flowed silvery, as if illuminated by an invisible moon. No one before him, no one after him: this rhetorical effect sinks with the personality that created it."*

Steger was a gifted pianist and was involved in the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, of which he was a member of the board as chairman of both the legal and concert sections from 1897. All obituaries highlight his special relationship with music and his excellent piano playing.

"His uniqueness is characterised by the musicality of his nature. Music was an element of life for him. A master of the piano, he devoted a large part of his free time to this art form that liberates one from the heaviness of the earth. He was a skilled performer and connoisseur […]," emphasised Richard Preßburger in the *Neue Freie Presse*. And Karl Lafite singled out Steger's "brilliant piano playing" in the same newspaper:

*"Schumann and Chopin were his guiding stars in this field; he repeatedly found himself drawn to the symphonic études, which he loved passionately, and was particularly enthralled by Chopin's romantic, glowing sound world. His incorruptibly honest sensibility did not shy away from an open avowal of Mendelssohn's formal artistry and tonal beauty; he loved 'Elijah' and 'Paul' above all else, and cherished the old 'Songs Without Words' with tender understanding. An avid study of Beethoven harmoniously permeated his entire life, and in opera he swore by Wagner. In Viennese society, this piano playing with its sincere, firm, confident touch and diction – with its natural technical ability – was very popular, and Dr. Heinrich Steger was often heard at the director's evenings of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde […], sometimes with his loving interpretation of Josef Strauss's waltzes in particular."*



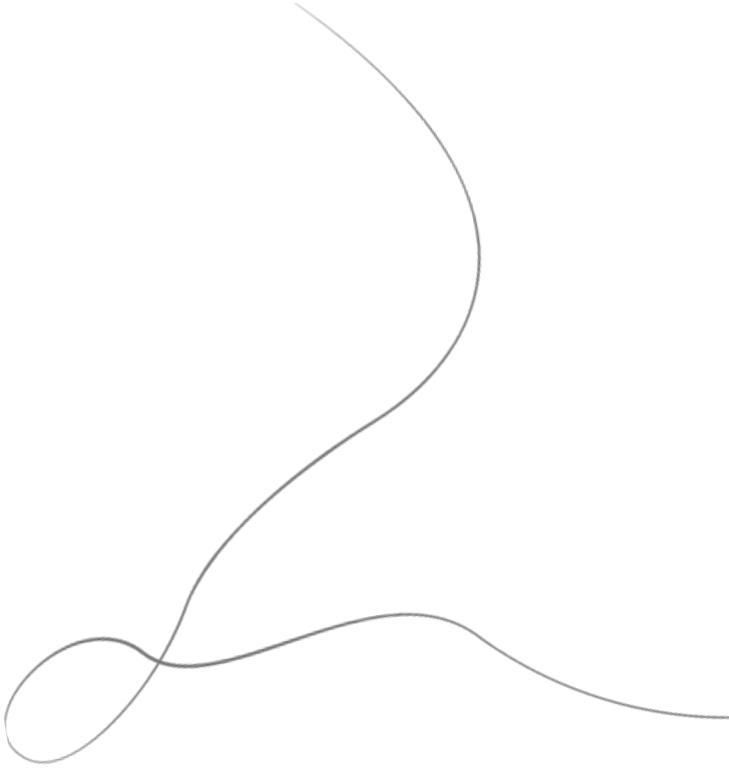
How and when the manuscript came into his possession is unknown. As court conductor, director of the conservatory and also a famous violinist, Hellmesberger would have had enough connections to Steger. Whether Steger received it as a gift or purchased it remains unclear. However, the change of ownership certainly took place before Hellmesberger's death.

Steger owned nine other Beethoven autographs and published a notice in the *Neue Freie Presse* in April 1893:

*"You may be interested to know that within the space of a year I have succeeded in purchasing a collection of very important manuscripts by Beethoven, some of which were already abroad and some of which were to be sold abroad. The collection consists of manuscripts of the following works: Waldstein Sonata, op. 53, for piano; Pastoral Sonata, op. 28, for piano; Cello Sonata, op. 69, 1st movement; Coriolan Overture, op. 62, score; String Quartet in C major, op. 59; Seven Bagatelles for Piano, op. 33, composed in 1782 [recte: 1801/2]; Song Cycle: 'An die ferne Geliebte' (To the Distant Beloved), op. 98; String Quartet, op. 130, 'Alla danza tedesca'; String Quartet, op. 135, 1st movement (the master's last work). Although this collection is in my private possession, I am of course willing to allow any true art lover to view these manuscripts. With the utmost respect, Dr. Steger, Vienna, I., Gonzaga-Gasse No. 14."*

To present his manuscripts to a potential audience in an appropriate manner, Steger had them bound in silk velvet of different colours, decorated with brass fittings with enamel and glass beads.

In March 1904, he offered to sell his Beethoven autographs to the Beethoven-Haus association in Bonn, repeatedly emphasising that he had "had a precious envelope made" for his manuscripts. Board member Friedrich Knickenberg, negotiated a total price of 35,000 Reichsmarks for the collection. He considered this to be "certainly not too high" and, "in view of the outstanding, unique importance of the offer and taking into account the proceeds from next year's music festival and the newly added members", asked to purchase the entire collection. However, not all board members agreed with him and did not want to speculate on the proceeds of future music festivals, preferring to use only the available funds for three manuscripts and to promise the owner further purchases in subsequent years. After lengthy negotiations, the board acquired the autographs of the Piano Sonata op. 28, the String Quartet op. 59 no. 3 and the song cycle 'To the Distant Beloved' op. 98, agreeing with Steger on a right of first refusal for further pieces. The association made use of this right in 1906 and also acquired the Coriolan Overture, op. 62, which was also "in perfect condition, complete in an elegant envelope." The fourth movement of op. 130 remained in Steger's possession and was probably still there in 1915, when he announced to the Beethoven-Haus: "I intend to leave some more Beethoven pieces from my collection to the association after the war." However, this did not happen.



# The Ignaz Petschek family, Aussig

Steger gradually sold off his entire collection, partly via auction houses and partly directly to private individuals. The 'Danza tedesca' passed into the hands of the Petschek family in Aussig (Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, today Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic), who, like Steger, were Jewish. It is not known how Steger and the Petscheks knew each other, but there are plenty of possible connections. The Petscheks, appreciative of art and music, often spent time in Vienna, where they could have easily met Steger, who moved in the same circles. Steger had also sold two of his autographs to the Wittgenstein family. The Wittgensteins – including the pianist Paul and the philosopher Ludwig – supported art and music in Vienna and had originally made their fortune in the steel trade and were thus involved in the mining industry. The Petscheks had initially traded in coal and briquettes and, with growing success, had also turned to mining, i.e. the coal and steel industries. By 1930, the family was the majority shareholder in the Central German and East Elbe lignite syndicate and also had holdings in Rhenish lignite. It is thus quite conceivable that Steger's contact with the Petscheks was mediated by the Wittgensteins. Whether Steger sold the 'Danza tedesca' or gave it to the Petscheks as a gift re-

mains unknown. It is also conceivable that the manuscript passed through the hands of an unknown intermediate owner between Steger and the Petscheks.

In keeping with their social standing, the Petscheks were very actively involved in social causes. On the occasion of Ignaz and Helene Petschek's golden wedding anniversary in February 1934, an article appeared in the magazine *Frauenfreude – Mädchenglück (Women's Joy – Girls' Happiness)* highlighting the achievements of Ignaz Petschek, the 'philanthropist'. The Petscheks not only financed a nursery, a children's pavilion at the Aussig hospital, a tuberculosis sanatorium, a home for female workers, an extension to the Aussig school for the blind and a children's home, but also provided swift and straightforward help to numerous supplicants. The *Neue Wiener Journal* published a report on the same occasion, stating that Ignaz Petschek "is not only the richest man in the state, but his soul also corresponds to his cheque book, a fact that is rarely found among European's wealthiest people. In this respect, Petschek is reminiscent of the generosity and philanthropy of a Rockefeller or Vanderbild, although Petschek sacrificed enormous sums for the common good much earlier." Since the tax burden was low by today's standards, wealthy industrialists and members of high finance were expected by society to engage in social welfare, as the state was neither willing nor able to do so financially. In this respect, patriarchal care and welfare



were the norm for the Petscheks' social class. However, the fact that only American entrepreneurs were suitable for comparison may also be an indication of how the family was perceived by the public. (In contrast, in 1929, the *Düsseldorfer Stadt-Anzeiger* published an overview of the richest Germans, which appeared in many newspapers and also listed the Petscheks, smugly headlined 'In America, They Would Be Destitute'.) The *Neues Wiener Journal* also considered it remarkable "that during the war he [Ignaz Petschek] donated money not for the war, but for its victims. Among other things, in 1917 he set up a complete medical train for the transport of wounded soldiers at the Simmering wagon factory, which then served as the k. k. permanent hospital train No. 47."

It was not only their monopoly position and wealth, but also their Jewish religion, which made the Petscheks a target in the highly politicised media as early as the 1920s. The miners' work was physically demanding and dangerous. Wages were low, but the cost of living was high, resulting in a low standard of living. Understandably, the workers' press criticised the capitalist interests of the Ignaz Petschek Group and the effects of the monopoly on prices. In headlines from July 1929, the *Essener Volkszeitung* newspaper drew a causal connection between "The Petschek Brown Coal Monopoly and the Briquette Shortage", speculating that the Petschek Group were creating "Artificial Market Shortages to Secure Discounts and the

Market." In 1930, the SPD party organ *Volksblatt* criticised the exorbitant profits that Petschek made through wholesale discounts when purchasing from lignite syndicates in which he held a majority stake, and demanded: "We consider it urgently necessary that the trade discount of the East Elbe lignite syndicate be reduced, because profits from the coal trade, such as those achieved by the aforementioned company, exceed the permissible level even in a capitalist economic system." The fact that Ignaz Petschek also made donations to the Stahlhelm and the NSDAP in 1930 to protect his interests was widely reported in the left-wing press. The Austrian *Arbeiter-Zeitung* reported on bank donations to the NSDAP: "Until now, the National Socialist movement had been voluntarily supported financially by a number of heavy industrialists in the Rhineland and Westphalia; then the lignite magnate Petschek also paid, despite his triple status as a Czechoslovak citizen, capitalist and Jew." The *Volkswille* mocked this under the headline "Money Doesn't Stink" with the statement: "The Stahlhelm takes it from the Jews too". The satirical *Pfefferpotthast* had already aptly captured the situation in its column 'Ungeflügelte Worte' (Unwinged Words) in 1929: "A real German man doesn't like Jews. But he gladly takes their money. (Hitler and the lignite magnate Petschek.)"

The nationalist press, on the other hand, attributed the company's business practices to racial characteristics, as



expected, and openly incited anti-Semitism against the Petscheks. When wages were increased in 1927 after strikes, prices for private coal trading also rose, which negated the wage increase for small consumers. The *Volksruf* looked "Behind the Scenes of the Miners' strike in Germany" and saw the "Jewish coal magnates" and in particular "Petschek as the Dictator of the Coal market" as the main culprits. *Der eiserne Besen* also called for measures by the Reich Ministry of Economics, but when these met with resistance, the paper concluded: "This resistance is called Petschek. Because of this Jewish millionaire, German consumers have to put up with a coal price increase."

The Petscheks were a high-profile target for the National Socialists, and not only because they were Jewish. As Czechoslovakians, they paid hardly any taxes to the German Reich, even though a large part of their holdings was located on Reich territory. This was based on a treaty between Germany and Czechoslovakia, according to which direct taxes were only payable in the country to which one belonged. Others undoubtedly benefited from this as well, but the Petscheks were particularly targeted by the press even before 1933. The National Socialist German Reich had its eye on the economic power of the Ignaz Petschek Group and used this tax legislation to achieve its goals. The expropriation of the group became the largest 'Aryanisation' case of the Third Reich, offering

the state and other German companies, above all the Flick Group, the opportunity to enrich themselves. However, the German authorities did not gain access until 30 September 1938, after the Munich Agreement, which ceded the Sudetenland to Germany. Previous attempts had been made to prove that the Petschek brothers had their corporate headquarters in Berlin rather than in Aussig – i.e. within the German Reich and not in Czechoslovakia – but these attempts had failed. The Petscheks had left Czechoslovakia a few weeks before the annexation of the Sudetenland and emigrated to the United States via several stopovers. They had packed their belongings, including the Beethoven autograph, into boxes and handed them over to the company E. Bloch & Söhne in Brno for onward transport by the shipping company Bláha & Gärtner. With the annexation of the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, Brno was no longer a safe place, so their property, which was already on its way abroad, was intercepted at the border and returned to Brno. The Brno District Finance Office took over the disposal of the confiscated boxes. In November 1939, Franz Petschek (one of Ignaz Petschek's four sons) was offered personal items from his and other family members' possessions for repurchase "at a reasonable price in exchange for foreign currency". For example, the price for the "wardrobe, which is in three large trunks, regardless of who it belongs to, together with the trunks themselves" was set at 3,200



Swiss francs, and for two "boxes of women's clothing and bed linen" at 2,000 Swiss francs. In the same letter, Franz Petschek was informed that emigration fees for the family were also to be paid to the Ministry of Finance in Prague.

According to the "Final Report on the De-Jewification of the Ignaz Petschek Group" from May 1940, initial attempts to take over the Petschek Group had already been made in 1937 (Political Archive of the Foreign Office, RZ 214/99365). In the summer of 1938, representatives of several ministries and other central authorities met in Berlin to coordinate the 'Aryanisation' of the group. The basis and justification for the appropriation was a fabricated tax debt, which the tax authorities estimated would amount to a total of 300 million Reichsmarks by 1939. In addition, there were foreign exchange offences that were attributed to the family – as was the case with many wealthy Jews.

Although the Petscheks had moved their company's headquarters from Aussig to Brno in the interior of the country in 1938, they were unable to escape expropriation. As early as January 1939, the Reich Ministry of Economics appointed a trustee who, in accordance with the "Ordinance on the Use of Jewish Property", which forced Jews to sell or liquidate their businesses, was to administer the state expropriation and sell off parts of the company. The Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda was always involved in the interministerial discussions on

the Petschek case that followed until 1940, so that the 'Aryanisation' could be exploited for propaganda purposes. The "de-Jewification of the lignite trade" and the associated mining companies was therefore the subject of numerous reports. Such propaganda texts appeared throughout the country, even in the provinces. A typical example was published in March 1940 by the Dorstener *General-Anzeiger*:

*"Financier Petschek's Keen Nose: News has come from London that the Petscheks, once the masters of Bohemian and Central German lignite, want to leave England and emigrate to America. This Jewish family has always shown an unusual instinct for knowing when it was time to change their place of residence. Three months before the liberation of the Sudetenland, the Petscheks sold their coal interests in the Sudetenland, having already disposed of their holdings in the central German coal industry. Unlike some of their fellow Germans, they were under no illusions about the determination of the German leadership on the Sudetenland and on the Jewish question. They also readily accepted the losses incurred by the sale in order to be able to transfer the rest of their assets to England for safekeeping. Now, even England is no longer safe enough for them! Their instincts apparently tell them that England will offer as little security for their money tomorrow as Czechoslovakia did yesterday."*



The newspaper article makes use of classic stereotypes of anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda. Petschek is characterised by and mocked for his supposed Jewish racial characteristics (nose, instinct, greed, business acumen). At the same time, the greatness and determination of the German Reich is glorified at England's expense. At the time of publication in spring 1940, the 'Aryanisation' of the Ignaz Petschek Group had already been completed, and Hermann Göring, as commissioner for the Four-Year Plan, received the aforementioned 18-page final report on 3 May 1940. The denigration of the famous Jewish family remained of interest for propaganda purposes, especially since it could be conveniently linked to England's putative inevitable defeat.

# Moravian Museum, Brno

When the German authorities confiscated the Petscheks' transport crates, they were presumably searching for further business documents that could be used to dismantle the Ignaz Petschek Group. At least, that is what the above-mentioned final report suggests:

*"The tax audit department had been working for years on the tax assessment of the Petschek family. [...] One piece of valuable evidence after the other fell into the hands of the tax authorities as a result of the occupation of the Sudetenland in October 1938, Czechoslovakia in March 1939 and Poland in September 1939. Contrary to the truth, the Petscheks had always claimed that Aussig was the centre of their activities. The evidence to the contrary was found on the spot after the occupation of Ústí. In the Protectorate, many boxes of books and documents that the Petscheks had brought with them from the Sudetenland to Czechoslovakia were confiscated shortly before they were shipped to Switzerland."*

The confiscation of the valuables also found in the boxes was intended to offset the Reich's exorbitant tax demands. The Beethoven autograph, which was part of this confiscated property, was transferred to the Moravian

Museum in Brno in 1939, where it could be best preserved. The decree of 1 October 1940 on the protection of cultural monuments in Bohemia and Moravia made it more difficult to export cultural assets by making them subject to authorisation. Generally, the more valuable artifacts often ended up in museums in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia as 'loans', while less valuable ones were sold. In 1942, the Gestapo in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia became interested in the valuable manuscript. Consequently, the head of the museum's music archive, Jan Racek, was interrogated by the Gestapo. In order to dampen the German occupiers' interest in the manuscript, he claimed, against his better judgement, that it was a forgery. On 20 October 1942, it was declared the property of the Protectorate and officially handed over to the museum in January 1943.

After the war and until the end of the 1950s, the Petschek family – now based America – tried to recover their property, but it proved particularly challenging to find out where the Beethoven autograph was located. Since the Petscheks knew that the autograph had been confiscated by the Germans, they first searched libraries in Germany, especially in Berlin, where additional movements of String Quartet op. 130 had been located in the Prussian State Library before the war. By the time they realised that the manuscript had not left Brno, Czechoslovakia had become a communist regime and categorically refused to return



cultural heritage and so-called public property to Western 'imperialists'. In principle, transfers of ownership that had been carried out during the German occupation and under pressure from the German Reich for national, racial or political reasons were declared invalid. However, this only applied to a limited extent to the property of persons declared "unreliable to the state". These included, in principle, German-speaking Sudeten Germans, even if they were also Jewish. In a 1930 census, all Czechoslovakians had to declare a nationality, which referred to their linguistic and cultural identity (in terms of state nationality, they were all Czechoslovakians). Many Jews, including the Petscheks, had opted for German. According to historians Eduard Kubů and Jan Kulík Jr., this proved fatal for them after the Second World War during negotiations for the return of their property, due to their newly acquired American citizenship: "The Ministry of the Interior (led by the communist Václav Nosek) classified this act [of accepting foreign citizenship], carried out at a time of 'increased threat to the republic', as a violation of military regulations, i.e. as a breach of loyalty to the state. On this basis, the Ministry of the Interior prepared to confiscate the property of members of this family." The facts of the case are summarised in a decision by the Finance Department of the District National Committee in Ústí nad Labem (Property Division), which in January 1956 finally rejected the restitution of the confiscated property. The reason given was that the Petscheks

were Germans within the meaning of the Beneš decrees ("persons of German nationality", i.e. belonging to the German ethnic group in Czechoslovakia), so their double expropriation without compensation was considered lawful. The aforementioned finance department soberly stated in its reasoning that the family "could not prove any exception to this provision, namely that they were members of the German ethnic group who remained loyal to the Czechoslovak Republic, participated in the struggle for freedom, or suffered under National Socialist terror. There is no such evidence on the basis of which a legally prescribed exception could be granted. On the contrary, during the period of increased danger to the republic and throughout the entire occupation, the persons named remained outside the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic and did not return to their Czechoslovak homeland after liberation." In other words, the Jews persecuted by the Nazis were accused of leaving the Czechoslovak Republic, not participating in the liberation struggle, and not having suffered under Nazi terror. Naturally, the Petscheks were unable to provide proof of their "civic reliability", as they did not submit to communist regulations, no longer lived in Czechoslovakia and had since acquired American citizenship. For many decades, they were unable to assert their claims; the Beethoven autograph remained in the collections of the Moravian Museum.



Fundamental changes in the assessment only came about with the political changes after 1989. Since 2000, there has been a law in the Czech Republic on the restitution of Jewish property looted by the Nazis, even without current Czech citizenship. But it was not until 2022, more than 80 years after the initial expropriation, that the history of injustice came to an end after lengthy negotiations and the manuscript was returned.

Through the mediation of American Beethoven researcher Lewis Lockwood, the family's descendants entered into negotiations with the Beethoven-Haus in Bonn in July 2023 regarding the sale of the manuscript. It is gratifying and an honour that, despite their history, the family considered an institution in Germany. At the end of 2024, the Beethoven-Haus was able to acquire the manuscript thanks to the generous support of the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States, the Ministry of Culture and Science of North Rhine-Westphalia, the NRW Stiftung, Kunststiftung NRW, the Berthold Leibinger Stiftung and several private donors.

*We would like to thank Patrick Bormann (Bonn) and Simona Šindlářová (Brno) for their support.*



# Photo credits

**P. 2** **Ludwig van Beethoven**
Lithograph after a painting by Johann Stephan Decker, 1824
Beethoven-Haus Bonn

P. 4 **Karl Holz**
Portrait miniature by Betty Fröhlich, 1824
Wien Museum, photo: Birgit and Peter Kainz

S. 8 **Joseph Hellmesberger**
Portrait, oil on canvas, 1876
Archive, library and collections of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien

S. 12 **Heinrich Steger**
Photo, 1898
From private ownership

S. 18 **The Petschek family, Aussig, in their music room**
Photo, c. 1930
From private ownership

S. 28 **Moravian Museum, Brno, Department of the History of Music**
Photo: Simona Šindlářová

The Beethoven-Haus is funded by:

Der Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien

Ministerium für Kultur und Wissenschaft des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen

FREUDE.
JOY.
JOIE.
BONN.

The exhibition is sponsored by:

GIELEN-LEYENDECKER-STIFTUNG

**Scenography and graphic design**

**neo.studio**
**neumann schneider architekten PartG mbB**
Tobias Groot, Lilly Stöckle, Tobias Neumann

**Concept**
Julia Ronge, Nicole Kämpken

**Project assistance**
Nicolas Magnin

**Texts**
Julia Ronge

**Translation**
DeepL, Sonia McCall-Labelle