

**Robert L. Shearer**

**The Beethoven Years**



DR. CICERO BOOKS

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**For D.N.S.**  
who took the bullet that only grazed my brain

## Author's Note

I would like to thank the following people for their help with the text of *The Beethoven Years*, and the companies that kindly gave permission for me to use certain published material. I am greatly indebted to Dr. Paul Beighley for his advice on the portrayal of bipolar disease and schizophrenia, and on the drugs used in their treatment; and to the model for "Dr. Wilmot" in Book IV of this work, Wende Anderson, Psy.D. She especially has my gratitude for her advice on the sections that deal with the doctor-patient relationship, as well as for her having not only read, but proofread, the entire manuscript. The author is also grateful for the encouragement of Mrs. Sylvia Radic, who was kind enough to proofread the work also. Of course, any remaining errors are my fault alone. I also thank my colleague Prof. Gabriella Baika for her advice on the French that appears in the novel, and especially for her help in translating into French the poem in the fourth chapter of Book I.

Thanks also go to Alfred Publishing Company and Sony/ATV for their permission to quote from the song *Hey, Good Lookin'* by Hank Williams, Sr. in the third chapter of Book II. I found I could not resist taking in its entirety an advertisement for an anim  pornographic video, published by Astral Ocean/Asia Blue, and presenting it as a "libretto" on which the main

character in Book I wants to compose an opera (the quotation appears in the first chapter there).

Because the actor James Woods appears as himself in the fourth chapter of Book III, I contacted his publicist, Ron Hofmann; Mr. Woods himself had no problem with this, and I thank them both. The epigraph on the first page of the novel is a true quote, although the time frame for my work is some years after the 1986 interview James Woods gave *Newsday* about his playing a schizophrenic for the television movie *Promise*. In the course of researching that role in Santa Monica (I move this to New York) he had gotten to know some people afflicted with schizophrenia, and it was one of those who had thought himself Beethoven. Although the initial inspiration for the novel came from that man's words as recounted by Mr. Woods, my main character is, however, solely the result of literary imagination.

Above all, I am greatly indebted to the research on the "Immortal Beloved" of the true Beethoven which was carried out and published by Maynard Solomon; as the reader will see, the novel turns on the provocative historical question of her identity, so admirably resolved by Prof. Solomon (and detailed in his *Beethoven*, Schirmer Books, 1977). I have used his research extensively.

As for indebtednesses of another kind, let me say that there are so many apt literary expressions that one not only might appropriate, but that one *should*. Donald Barthelme's account of an old-style printing press's plate "kissing the paper" in his "Our Work and Why We Do It" (*Amateurs*, Pocket Books, 1977) is transformed somewhat to apply to the structure of self-consciousness (in "Eastwind's" first convalescent dream, the tenth chapter of Book IV); another of that author's phrases, "a tourist of the emotions," was also irresistible. The last peroration of "Darrell Jimmy the Gentiles' Gentleman" is derived in some part from Jean-Paul Sartre's doctrine of *Le Regard*; and the content of "Hackensack's" imitation of Darrell Jimmy was inspired by

a section of *The Diamond Cutter Sutra*, translated by F. Max Müller. Schoenberg's twelve-tone system as redolent of someone having "cut out randomly chosen words from a Shakespearean sonnet and assembled them in iambic pentameter; all syntax, no semantics" I took from Sir Yehudi Menuhin's discussion with Glenn Gould of the composer's dodecaphonic technique.

I have worked some of the reported and recorded remarks of Beethoven into the text, though sometimes in altered form; his tart response to the copyist Rampel, who somewhat fawningly had called him "gracious sir"—"Go to the devil with your 'gracious sir!' There is only one who can be called gracious, and that is God"—is a case in point in the first chapter of Book I. His remark to his friend Karl Holz—"I, too, am a king!"—appears in the work, though in the context of a schizophrenic's defiance of his psychiatrist; as well, excerpts from the Heiligenstadt Testament, the composer's impassioned account of his malady, are reworked a bit near the end of the second chapter in Book IV. In places I have incorporated Beethoven's reference to his symphonies as his "children." And because it will certainly be mystifying to readers unacquainted with his Ninth Symphony, the recurring phrase "*nicht diese Töne*" ("not these sounds") uttered in moments of agitation by my main character, "Ludi Vann," refers to the beginning of the baritone's recitative introducing the last movement of that symphony; the "*vor Gott!*" ("for God!") that is quoted a number of times in the novel refers to the thunderous harmonic shift in the "Ode to Joy" section of that work's same movement, where, at measures ninety-three and ninety-four, the soprano "A" in an A-major chord maintains its uppermost placement but comes to beam out anew (and loudly) in an F-major setting. "Broadwood," mentioned in Ludi's conversation with David Letterman, was the manufacturer of one of Beethoven's pianos.

Finally, a word about the use of dialect. Because "Ludi Vann" is a white man who takes himself to be black much of

the time, he speaks, though inconsistently, in a kind of Ebonics (a term proposed by African-American academics in 1996), especially with his black friends. And while this dialect is, strictly speaking, neither primarily slang nor metaphoric in the sense of G.K. Chesterton's remark, "All slang is metaphor, and all metaphor is poetry," for me the allure of this gentle linguistic anarchy was precisely its character as a kind of poetry; no ethnic caricature is intended in the least.

Again, my thanks to the individuals and companies referenced above.

rls  
Melbourne Beach, Florida  
November 2013

# **The Beethoven Years**

*Quos deus vult perdere prius dementat.*

## Introduction: *con moto*

I spent some time with a man who is working on his Ph.D. Before his illness was brought under control, he thought he was Beethoven. He said he looks back on that period as the happiest in his life.

—James Woods, *Newsday*, December 1986

And it was, then. Blur to me now. But the breakthrough with Sepulveda has held for over a year now, and I find I can do it, can actually have something of a life that a normal guy has, though the old patterns of his motifs and their development course beneath the medicated atmosphere in the electrical thunderstorm of my brain, but politely, they're tame now, background music, and I can say to Mr. Sands the boss, "Just fine, sir," and "Software has signed off on the design," and "Just a question of circuitry at this point," and he nods and I know thinks well of the future to which we both belong—those great words from which I still get a hint of brass in iambic proclamation: *belong* and *future*. Now.

These days I can spot the old newspaper seller without the flames shooting from around his head and his voice sounding in trumpets and trombones, can actually buy a newspaper and peruse the headlines and think: why, that's interesting. Didn't know for example that French Blow Up

Atoll in Nuke Test, hadn't suspected Corpse in Attic Former Spouse, unapprised of Garbage Dumpster Babies Plan Reunion, all news to me at this juncture, now that this thing is under control—or nearly so; there are the dreams, still. But I can even work, as I do, with electronics and not have them speak my name, can design software and read schematics without circuits being the map of electrical Armageddon where Resistors finally would submit to the Transformer, positive and negative having been absolute terms for Good and Evil in the drama of electronic redemption and damnation. That's a relief. Electricity, that is to say, played a large part in my former life, if it was my life, but now even the vertical-eyed wall outlets with their censorious "oh!" mouths are more silent, though I admit I occasionally have to sing the jingle when I walk by them:

*Götterfunken*, transformed di-ode to joy;  
Rispedal has whispered all,  
Functioning electro-chemical ploy!

Something Dr. Sepulveda suggested.

I have met the enemy and prevailed by ruling over it, by directing it through so many tunnels and hoops and coaxing it into fields where bloom the flowers of artificial light. And sound. Information. I make screens light up, I make organs sing, I dazzle the night of limitation with the fireworks of possibility, I have finished my doctorate and heard my calling. Though I am no longer he.



Finding out, or being found out, that I was not who I was is not exactly new to me. Let me go back, let me slow down a little. I shouldn't go on so.

I began learning my electronic skills in prison, in a program for what they called non-violent offenders, to the extent forgery fits that bill—though it seems to me forgery is, without blood, the most violent possible of crimes. It began with checks, but that soon became too easy; I perfected my method, which I got from the school of acting of the same name, at an early age, and practiced it stringently enough not to get caught: rather than simply trying to make my hand—wrist mostly—behave well enough to form someone else’s signature, I was an innovator; I got to know the person, to learn his or her self-image, ambitions, tastes, loves, hates, and (this was the best part) I most importantly gained the craft of intuition into their darkest recesses, what they would deny to their last breath because life simply *could not go on* should this or that certain thought or fantasy get out. I once got fifty thousand dollars forging the signature of an older woman, my lover, by *being*, as I wrote her name, a vain aspirant to social status who adored Tony Bennett and denigrated Puccini (“Verdi-lite,” she’d sniffed once), and whose darkest fantasy I knew to be that of “clean-up” in a sexual threesome involving representatives of the major races. A cosmopolitan woman. You laugh, but I actually *made myself into* that as I signed her name to the check I’d written to me. In court even she’d had a very hard time denying it was her signature. “It *is* my signature,” she’d replied to my lawyer, who’d insisted it was, “but I didn’t write it.” The testimony of handwriting experts had not particularly aided the prosecution’s case. I got away with that one. And the killer is: we returned to being lovers a few weeks later. “You’re the me I know best,” she enigmatically said one day, “a living mirror.” “On the contrary,” I’d countered, “I’m the you you don’t know at all, the one who lives between the surface and the coated back of the glass.”

Later escapades were to prove fatal to my career, at least with checks. But by then I had become fascinated with what I took to be the only question: what difference is there between an original and a *perfect* fake? In meaning and

value? No, in *truth*? And so I was drawn to the areas where appearance could drift behind itself to take on the being of the works masters had made.

Oh, such lucidity! It comes with its side effect of drowsiness; calm mind, memories I almost never had.

I moved then to painting, and worked at it for years. Not a success; I had a teacher who disparaged my efforts. I considered engraving, but not for the sake of counterfeiting—a vulgar affair. I became a student of all the arts, but gravitated toward music, entering the music program at Emory a little older than most students. After several years of composition and theory, not to mention piano, I found a way. I composed a “Chopin” mazurka and sold it to a confederate in musicology who wished to make a name for himself with “discoveries” of lost music and letters of great composers. Needless to say, I had to learn Chopin’s hand, but at that time I was suffering asthma attacks and undergoing bouts of morbidity, and (though not Polish) could work up a creditable *Zal*—this mainly involved getting a wince in my smile and much reading of the history of Poland—so I was able to make it convincing. Well, I admit I’m extemporizing a bit. But it was great *technical* training in the forgery of old manuscripts: how to make an ink that would test out as having come from a previous century; where I could still get paper with the right watermarks—a thorough education. As it turned out, my crony lost his nerve, though I kept the money he’d paid me. I didn’t do it for the money, of course; it was really only the sincerest form of flattery raised a power.

And, oh did I learn my craft: manuscripts, diaries, documents; I became a master. I was brilliant at it; I had the gift. Look, you have to understand there is something primordial, sexual, Olympian to forgery of that sort. Is a genius of fakery a fake genius? Genius makes the work, but the greatness of the work makes genius. And if the greatness of the work is *in the work*, then to remake the work—rather, to *make* the work again—is to taste greatness, as if to *be* the genius-

creator of it; that is, to overcome the disparity of reach and grasp, to break the vacuous bubble of temporal reflection that is only the ache of the knowing-self and the known-self endlessly switching places, an eternity of becoming: as if to arrive at oneself as another, to *be* oneself as another.

And I know now: the as-if was the anacrusis to the measures of madness in my life. The Anna crisis.



And then the day came when I discovered computers. I found the Internet. Suddenly, all the forgeries I had loved paled against the deep hue of promise, of the myriad of the possible. And I saw that hard artificial intelligence was the greatest forgery of all.

It fascinated me, it was profound for me, because it was the diabolical fakery of the human condition. The image of human cogitation artificial intelligence conjured for me was that of mockery, an insult to the daily suffering of abysmal self-awareness; a falsifier of ourselves. That was my perception.

And I thought, O wonderful.

Just out of prison, where the computer courses had been primitive, I got a parolee grant to get into graduate school: computer science, back at my old alma mater, no less, with a concentration in artificial intelligence. A man I took to be the ugliest, falsest human being to inhabit the universe, a founder of A.I. at M.I.T., bore down on me with his sick stare from a frame on my wall, like an icon of a sadsack saint. I'd had some ideas for software that would take me into the forgery of the human condition, lucrative fakeries, and I gained the methodology as though from an acolyte's devotion. It has served me well. At this moment, something I've developed has gotten the interest of the boss; it's served me very well. I learned everything legal and illegal about computers.

For a while I was fond of giving out the password to Fort Knox's accounting system (it was "srallod6771," "1776dollars" backward. And it was only my seventeenth hack). But I was careful not to steal anything, not to leave any trail. I had bigger plans.

Because I knew there was something in me, something that whispered in my ear at an early age. At sixteen I had posed as my older brother, forged his signature as the co-signer of a car loan, then defaulted; it was the eldest crime, without, as I said, the blood.

In vain I sought a tattoo parlor that knew the mark of Cain. By then I was already in love with deception, fakery, false witness. And I know why now. In those days a deep notion held me—justified everything.

For I thought, Christ! Who couldn't see that the false side dictates the true side of the cosmos now? That in our time everything only *appears to be*? That the perfect fake is at once the original? End of story. The rest is pathetic grasping at foundational—*straws*. Straw houses are our only abodes. I was simply in tune with the cosmos in its world-forgery, and it made me a cosmic master. It taught me the legitimacy of evil. In those days. And I thought:

Evil: Good owes *everything* to it. Tell Good that Evil has left the building, its eyes would cut to the side; who turned out the lights, the dark backlighting? it would wonder.

Of course, all that could be said of Good's dependence on Evil could be reversed, I knew—the terms switched. But that was just it: in the passage of time, Good and Evil have always been wrapped up together, lovers whose identities merge. And what I came to think was, each comes to dominate for a while, each gets on top for a period. I saw the sickness of the twentieth century with its poison gas, death camps, atomic destruction, and I saw it was Evil's at-bat. Play ball, I'd said in my soul, and let me design some games.

And, oh, the scams I pulled, mainly from my bogus catalogue—Zephyr-Right's Deals (a name which delighted me

in that it sounded, correctly, as “Zephyr-Right steals”)—which offered outrageously salacious items for sale; undelivered, they were embarrassing enough that no one filed any complaints. I did quite a business; it paid off some student loans.

That people took me at my word was mind-boggling at first, but it shored up my knowledge that what you appear to be for others is what you are, perception forging reality. It’s all I had—it’s all most of us ever have had. A master of the cosmos, I’d found everybody out, including myself. I lived to lie, I embraced falsehood and forgery that my practice might cast me, constellation-like, into a night whose gleaming lights could not be distinguished from those reflected from stars that had long since gone out of existence, sucked into collapse by the unwarranted heaviness of their being.

That was how I felt then. Maybe I was naïve.

But something came up.

One day I was attempting to sell a phony catalogue item that needed a German name. It was supposed to have been a dildo used by Eva Braun in the late stages of the war, when Hitler was too wracked with the knowledge of the imminent demise of the Third Reich to have been any good with his fleshly riding crop. That was the story; really, there are people who will believe things like that and send you their credit card numbers. I was trying to think of a name for it, something I was asking thousands for, conjuring the force and arrogance of Nazism—a name, maybe, with “*Panzer*” in it, as in *Der Panzerpoker*; say, or perhaps bearing Der Führer’s fun-time gal’s name, like “the Braun Bomber.” Both those seemed a little lame.

At that time I was working on my doctorate at Emory and had the use of the various libraries. I went to the Hoke O’Kelley and asked for a book on German culture; the librarian found me something suitable. Looking like a serious student, I sat at a table, reveling at what I was really doing. I randomly opened the volume to a chapter on Goethe and kind of laughed; clearly, Goethe and dildoes were disparate

universes. But I got curious about the “quotations” section of the chapter, and looked over the list of topics on which the great Romantic had expounded. I chose “Beethoven” and read the entry: “1812:” it stated, “Goethe says of Beethoven that he was ‘an utterly untamed personality,’ writing to his wife, ‘never have I seen an artist with more power of concentration, more energy, more inwardness.’”

“Inwardness” stopped me. It was true. A man, a sufferer, a soul who wrestled with an inner angel that—maybe this was a kind of grace—wouldn’t materialize to be the ectoplasm of the gaze of others. I was intrigued. No, rather, my knowledge of the daily whoredom our very appearance to the world entailed, was—piqued.

I began spending more time on Beethoven in the libraries, at his sonatas on the crummy upright piano in my apartment; eventually I immersed myself in his biographies—Thayer, among the standards, Solomon, among the later—any work about Beethoven I could find. I became fascinated with someone who rejected the whole outward image of himself, who had something inside that passed show, the sanctity of Hamlet’s grief—pretty unthinkable in our evil, superficial time, I thought. He couldn’t be forged because the world couldn’t get past his deafness, couldn’t get inside him.

I’m not romanticizing. Oh, sure, he sold the same composition to different publishers, he wrote crap for money once in a while, he tried to pass off the “van” in his name as “von,” locating him among the nobility, he visited the brothels of Vienna, wooed other men’s wives; he refused to defend his mother’s honor against the rumor that he was the illegitimate son of Frederick the Great, for whom she had worked. He was irascible, wily, maybe a drunk. *But within...!* An inwardness honed and purged to be the purest mettle, given to the fire of his own forge, vaporized into the absence the muse dreamt herself into.

It took me. I saw my fascination turning into obsession.

I know why now. Even though he was from a better

time, the possibility that this inwardness was still open to us, even in our evil age, was a taunt, a rip in my otherwise whole-cloth cosmos, a universe of pure appearance stamping the ingots of Being, where the daily alchemy of value transmuted the shimmer of image into the gleam of truth, each of us spinning straw into gold—the old scam of a foundation for the reedy structure of our everyday world. He never fell to image because the inside never shows; that this was yet possible was the hole in my cosmology. But it became more than a gap; it became a sore.

I began hearing his music in my head, unbidden. I noticed one day that I walked in the rhythms of his measures. I considered the emptiness of my heart where there was no joy, only a kind of bitter glee, and I stopped walking one day, as I heard the last movement of his Ninth Symphony thundering in my mind; I stopped, stupefied: a man who had suffered the cruelest irony that God could have conceived—deafness for a great composer—had limned joy itself as divine! But it didn't make me happy; it wasn't some sort of movie-scene epiphany. No, it *hurt* with a confusion that came at me like the jagged edges of a broken beer bottle in a bar fight.

At first I loved him, naively, but that love matured into a passion I knew not where directed. It preyed on my mind.



But I'm getting nervous spouting off like this, telling you everything. Look, I've got work to do; something is really going my way here at the company. All I know is I'm no longer delusional. I've almost recovered, I know my name now. Recovery for me means covering the distance to myself. I'm on the way.

So enough. I'm tired of this first-person account. Shearer, you want to do the narrative, step in when it's needed? Would you? I really am pretty busy.

He says he'll do it. Wait...

He says he gets to jump around in time. Whatever.

All I know now is that I manipulate formulas, design schematics, write lines of symbols in calculated code to machines.

No more lines and dots in divine code to musicians.

# **BOOK ONE**

*Days of Dementia*



## Madness in the Beethoven Years

I the divine nigger for the Morse massa I jot and scratch but only as afterthought to thunderous harmonies in my headt, melody threading above and through time stitched in the hem of the garment as rhythms myriad, profuse, suggestive, but if time don't dance who can pay the Piper? The Piper demand his *dues*, muvvah. Demand, as I say, *tribute* else why you think *tribulation*, great weary ache from pulling the worldt, you think clink-clank of chains be think-thank of mortals bearing destiny like perpetual brow-beadts enough for Him? But I say O froindes, *nicht diese* tones. *Nicht* 'em! He want spirit in dit-dit-dit-dah, Morse massa say that "V" for victory (political freedom, transcendence of death, fill-in- you'-own-damn-blank), harmonies in thirds upper register for angelic voices so high only dogs hear truth, they try to talk it come out howls of demons...

Admitted, on page my notes look like clusters of fly shit but they not, you know what? They tiny, eensy-iny little

ROBERT L. SHEARER

black holes suck celestial ether through them, vibrate in pitch-black pitch, collapsing the gravity of the worl', like. My job 'scription be caging fly-away dots, constructing dialogue of points and lines that to the knowing eye become the known ear bursting in counterpoint and choirs... But not talkin' cart aheadt of horse here in that them dots, and them squiggles too, they ain't first in the order of things.

First be His thunderous voice the spirit speakin' to me 'bout the moodt of things, celestial weather, gossip of angels, the lates' in ontological fads, sayin' to me, you be he, you be he, you Ludi Vann you talk the talk for me whose authentic voice is silence, you a translator of silence, you who speak silence in the vernacular, you whom I done taught silence, whom I love most, as your affliction prove.

Well, that a big job. But he give it to me, and I walk the walk.

Silence, it hide in the sonority of brass, rustle in the silk of strings, it there in the nasal hair of reedts.

I walk through the throng of wounded also walking, also with their version of what been done to 'em, each gotta stagger 'cording to the heaviness of the invisible crosses they bear, we congregate on da screets, we pool our eyes, exchange curses and promises. A black man sing, prophet in his own landt, which is: The Screets, pop. teeming widh us who acknowledge the whole universe because we can't appropriate any of the fucker, we hear the nigger sing:

I am the alpha and the omega  
The ultimate scene make-ah  
I smile Shiva's crooked grin  
You-got-to-end-where-you begin.

Come, go gotha  
You gotta go gotha  
along with me.

## THE BEETHOVEN YEARS

Yeah, said grinnin' Shiva's grin  
Dancin' Death's forward grine  
Nobody's eyes saw my sin  
An' I've hidden it from mine.

Come, go gotha  
Ya gotta go gotha  
along with me.

But nix these tones. I only sing along 'cause of my kinship with all black people, black is the color of silence, the nerve from my ear to my brain is black; white for that damn matter is all colors run riot in atonal confusion, Schoen- *bête-noire-ian*, the blandt cowardice of light keeping it from just damn declaring itself by withholding itself, ax me.

But nix these damn *Töne!*

Damn turn-na!

Damn tur-*nin'*. Toinin', toinin' wheel...

Turning turned, *mutatis mutandis*. I speak many dialects of silence. I am a chameleon of silence. I hear with my eyes, speak from them, one pique-ture worth a thousand words, looks could kill I'd outdone any serial maniac they fried; but looks could hold them in love, in compassion and forgiveness, that too I'd rate up there with my Master and his Son, and Fatboy of the Far East. I try to tell them of my love and compassion, of course it comes out in weird distorted harmonies of those who cannot hear themselves, scares them they hand me money not knowing I'm rich, live in constant tonal riches, a treasury of tones. Inside my head.

For how can I tell them I am deaf!? How can I say to them, speak louder! For I am deaf! Beethoven is deaf!

How do I know I am he? I can be no other, I have a proof that exhibits congruency on several points:

1. He suffered. I suffer.

ROBERT L. SHEARER

2. He suffered. I suffer.

3. He suffered. I suffer.

Q.E.D.

Then too, I know Morse massa had a PLAN in mindt, I know he give me the affliction, his love, his voice (silence), I know 'cause I met Him. Still do, down on corner. 'Course He can't come oudt from behindt the burning bush, the cloudt on Mount Sinus, but ain't no cosmic injunction 'gainst DISGUISES, is they? So they be this look like to the nekkid eye newsseller, seen the flames from his headt, the infinite depth of his eyepools, the cosmic fury gentled down over the aeons omniscience in every hair of eyebrow, every wrinkle on foreheadt, singing black boy his man, dark seraphim attendant, "Yassuh, Mist' Godt." When not wailing. Tell me that ain't Massa Morse, street name: Augie Blick. Tell me he who bring the news ain't Godt. *But dint know it till he give me the affliction*, which he effected by means of subterfuge, i.e., by beckoning me over, shout in my face: "Every valley shall be exalted, every mountain laid low, and we shall be change in the blink of an eye, scientists affirm." Then he heldt up newspaper, headline shouting "One Dead in Murder-Suicide Half-Pact." And I fell into a rapture and had a vision:

*I saw the body of an innocent man, eyes turned up in his head, knew it was I standing over him, not only observer of scene, but towering over his broken corpse like a cause he the effect of which, that is, I saw him Isaac-like to my Abraham who heard NOT the angel of the Lord calling off the hound of faith. I knew we shall both be changed when Augie blicks his fickle fick, our hearts white as snow, for I cleansed you of the world and am cleansed of the world, murderer and victim smiling into each other's eyes knowing they played their roles on the world's stage, just a goof to get to the Godhead... But I be blameless, blameless as Fate be bline, I not hearing His dog whistle to hound-of-faith: a silent tone to a hearing ear*

## THE BEETHOVEN YEARS

change in an *augenblick* to a piercing tone to a silent ear, a soprano "A," harmony of A-major, that in its constancy beamed out as His divine love/forgiveness in sudden *fortissimo* setting of F-major, *tutti: vor! Gott!*

That was the vision Fate granted me.

Sharp shooting pain in my ears, stillness on the aural plane, Augie Blick's divine mouth move and shout silence in my face stanching the blood with both His hands read my lips read my lips I speak the code.

I was *deaf*.

Thus knocked faith at my door.



REPORT OF OFFICER R. RIVERA, NYPD,  
314562, Oct. 6, 1996.

Responded to call from A. Eisenhardt, owner of Abe's News and Books. Harassment by street person. Arrived approximately five minutes after dispatch. Homeless man on sidewalk looked to have been assaulted, hand to ears bleeding heavily. No I.D.

Complainant stated man approached him in a daze, was incoherent, seemed not to understand function of the establishment, raved and swore at him. Complainant shouted at him to leave. Man then grabbed receipt spindles from counter and pushed them into his own ears, collapsed on sidewalk. Complainant retrieved spindles, applied compresses. Ambulance called. Unit 21, Boucher and Brogdan, arrived approximately ten minutes.

Homeless man admitted to emergency room, Sisters of Mercy. Condition as yet

undetermined.



From the files of Arnaud de Belmont, M.D., staff psychiatrist, New York State Hospital, Bellevue, New York:

The patient, a street person going by the appellation "Ludi Vann," medically treated at the S. of M. ER for self-inflicted injury: self-mutilation; ear-drums punctured by sharp objects. He is slowly recovering, but is still hearing-impaired to a debilitating degree.

History: paranoid schizophrenic episodes, including delusions. Webber and the staff psychologist at S. of M. agree on a diagnosis of Bipolar I Disorder, severe with psychotic features. He has been Involuntarily Committed twice before. Webber has started lithium therapy with him - results pending.

Because his hearing is minimal, we communicated by what he insisted on calling "conversation books." Our attempts at written communication were interrupted early when I scrawled that I preferred using the computer keyboard and screen, but that the system was down and couldn't function. He at that point responded in a hoarse, toneless voice that he was "down" too, in the sense street people use the term, but could still function. His diction was that of black English, though he is Caucasian.

Then to my amazement he got up and walked over to the unit, rummaged through

## THE BEETHOVEN YEARS

my desk drawer (I thought it best to let him), found and bent a paperclip into a kind of screwdriver, undid the unit's cover and proceeded to inspect the tinny mazes and mysterious lumps, probing this and that connection; he turned the unit on and off until, suddenly, the screen came up and the keyboard worked. It obeyed all the commands, including those of the word processor program.

In the same uninflected voice he said something about a long familiarity with keyboards and his ability as an improviser. "Good," I typed, clacking at the keyboard, "let's key in our questions and answers." But he insisted on the ragged notebooks he'd brought to the session. As below:

### CONVERSATION BOOK I

Belmont: *I want you to know our approach with you is a combination of chemical therapy and counseling, Ludi.*

Ludi Vann: *Why are you do this*

Belmont: *We want to help you. You've been pretty sick. Don't be ashamed, we all have health problems from time to time, and the mind is no different.*

L.V.: *I'm not sick my minds afflicted OK but its a devine thing*



photo by Erika Masterson

### about the author

Robert L. Shearer has been a professor of philosophy and music for over three decades at Florida Tech, where he also teaches cultural history and logic. A published poet, he is also a writer of cultural history; in 2003 he won the Thomas M. Campbell Award for Best Paper for his article “Mathematics and the Mind of God: Implications of the New Cosmology of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century,” published in *The Florida Conference of Historians Annual Proceedings*.

A musician, he has performed as a pianist (and composer) in public recitals and concerts, including having performed the D-Minor Keyboard Concerto of Johann Sebastian Bach with an orchestra at Villa Vizcaya in Miami (1985) in a concert he sponsored to honor the third centenary of the composer’s birth.

He is currently working on a book on the philosophy of mathematics—when not out sailing his home-built sloop, the *Neurotic Dolphin*.

To the memory of my beloved mentor,  
the distinguished Brazilian educator, Dr.  
Emanuel Cicero, born in 1907 in Ubatuba,  
São Paulo. Rector of the College of Rio  
Grande do Sul from 1943 to 1978, he died  
in 1988 in Lisbon.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Max Reyes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

—Maximiliano Reyes, publisher

**-FIM-**



DR. CICERO BOOKS