

# Fellows

## **Peter Höyng**

Fulbright/IFK\_Senior Fellow

Duration of fellowship

01. March 2013 bis 30. June 2013

## **Peter Höyng**

### **PROJECT TITLE**

Reading Beethoven's Readings: His Intellectual Life in Vienna

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Throughout his life Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) was an avid and voracious reader, and in particular he read what was then categorized as belles lettres, literature that was appreciated for its aesthetic qualities (Schön, 1999). Since it might seem derivative to a traditional musicologist to linger on the impact of literature on Beethoven's musical compositions (Nohl, 1870; Leitzmann, 1921; Wagner, 1921; Solomon, 1998; Dahlhaus, 1987, 1991; Cooper, 2000; Davies, 2002; Lockwood, 2003), one should hardly be surprised that no thorough study on Beethoven as a reader exists (Solomon 1988, 2003). Yet, outside the realm of musicology one might be astounded by the utter absence of any biography that systematically researches Beethoven's intellectual pursuits, especially since he was familiar with texts by such canonical authors as Homer, Aristotle, Plutarch, Petrarch, Shakespeare, and Rousseau, and with the writings of his German contemporaries, Klopstock, Herder, Höltz, Gellert, Goethe, Schiller, Kotzebue, Matthisson, Mereau, and Werner, choosing some of their texts for many of his songs and other compositions (Beethovens Briefwechsel, 1996–1998; Beethovens Konversationshefte, 1972–2001). One might be even more

surprised to learn that there has been a relatively small amount of scholarly attention paid to the composer's lifelong and extensive reading practice.

As a literary scholar with an emphasis on cultural studies, I am interested in a comprehensive and systematic assessment of Beethoven's lifelong interest in reading. I argue that we do indeed gain new insights into his intellectual universe that have been so far either overlooked or treated as mere byproducts of other aspects of the composer's biography, and hence not given their due attention. My study aims to provide a foundation that enables us to think (and speak) in a more historically specific way about how the aesthetics of a musical experience trigger the desire and need for a hermeneutic signification, one which, while objectified in the musical material itself, ultimately becomes independent of it (Wellmer, 2009; Adorno, 1999). In the end, my study will help to explain how such a bewildering range of images and interpretations of Beethoven have emerged: a man portrayed as heroic, opportunistic, pro-plebeian, apolitical, nationalistic, and cosmopolitan – often simultaneously (Buch, 2003).

## **CV**

Peter Höyng studierte Germanistik und europäische Geschichte in Bonn, Siegen und Madison, Wisconsin, wo er 1993 seinen Doktorgrad in deutscher Literatur erlangte. Bis 2005 lehrte und forschte er an der University of Tennessee-Knoxville, bevor er als Leiter der Deutsch-Abteilung am Emory College of Arts & Sciences in Atlanta, Georgia berufen wurde. Aufgrund diverser Initiativen wie u. a. der curricularen Reform wurde die Abteilung 2012 als eines der Center of Excellence von der American Association of Teachers in German (AATG) ausgezeichnet. In seiner Forschung konzentriert er sich auf folgende Schwerpunkte, die oft untereinander in Beziehung treten: Deutsche Literatur und Kultur seit dem 18. Jahrhundert; deutsch-jüdische Kultur seit 1750; Theorie und Geschichte des deutschen Theaters; Beziehungen zwischen (klassischer) Musik und Literatur.

## **Publications**

(u. a.): Kleist und Beethoven als „Generation Napoleon“ oder ästhetische Darstellungen von Gewalt, in: Dieter Sevin und Christoph Zeller (Hg.), *Heinrich von Kleist – Style and Concept: Explorations in Literary Dissonance*, Berlin 2013, S. 287–300; Im Echoraum der Literatur: Kulturpolitische Bedingungen des literarischen Diskurses in Österreich, in: Michael Boehringer und Susanne Hochreiter (Hg.), *Zeitenwende: Österreichische Literatur seit dem Millennium, 2000–2010*, Wien 2011, S. 64–81; Keine Harmonie, nirgends. Anfängliche Reflektionen zu Georg Kreislers Vortragsstil, in: Ana R. Carlero und Brigitte E. Jirku (Hg.), *Literatur als Performance*, Heidelberg 2013; Ambiguities of Violence in Beethoven's Ninth through the Eyes of Stanley Kubrick's "A Clockwork Orange", in: *The German Quarterly* vol. 84.2, 2011, S. 159–176; For Heaven's Sake: I have You Walk Into the Dark. Grillparzer's Containment of Beethoven and the Ambivalences of their Melusina-Project, in: *Goethe Yearbook* vol. 17, 2011, S. 275–302; A Dream of a White Vienna after World War I: Hugo Bettauer's "The City Without Jews" and "The Blue Stain", in: La Vinia Delois Jennings (Hg.), *At Home and Abroad: Historicizing Twentieth-Century Whiteness in Literature and Performance*, Knoxville 2009, S. 29–60.