

PANHARMONICON

A European Comedy

by

Michael Black

“What care I for the limits of your damn’d fiddling?”
Ludwig van Beethoven

“Napoleon ... complained bitterly that the Emperor of Austria could happily survive a hundred lost battles, ... whereas himself, the child of the French revolution, would be at risk after a single defeat”, *Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Extremes, pp.54/55*

“Imagine the past and remember the future” *E.H. Carr*

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A reading of this play took place at the Nottingham Playhouse, April 2002

A NOTE ON THE AUTHOR

Michael Black was born in 1962, and grew up in south Manchester. He was educated at York University, where he completed a degree in European Literature and History, and then at Cambridge, where he completed a doctorate in South African anti-apartheid literature.

His plays have been performed in London, Cardiff, Manchester, York and Edinburgh at home, and in Timisoara, Iasi and Bucharest abroad. They include *The Life To Come* (Edinburgh 1984, Cardiff 1985), *Pure Walking Evil* (London 1989, National Theatre of Romania 1990/91) and *The Amber Room* (London, 1998).

He has been awarded three Arts Council Theatre Writing Bursaries, of which *Panharmonicon* represents the fruits of the second. An option on the script was taken up by the commercial producers P.W. Productions, and the play has recently been translated into French.

Pure Walking Evil recently had a rehearsed reading in New York at the Genesis Guild, May 2002, and is scheduled for production at Vox Humana Productions, Los Angeles, 2003/4.

Michael has recently completed *The Minotaur*, a play about Picasso and his three mistresses, set in Paris in 1945/6, immediately after the liberation from the Nazis. The play is due to have a rehearsed reading in Paris in April 2009.

Michael's most recently completed play is *The Lady Of The Camellias*, a stage adaptation of the Alexandre Dumas *filis* novel (1848).

CHARACTERS

The Emperor of Austria

Marie-Louise

His daughter

Prince Metternich

His Chief Minister

Holz, Weiss, Schuppanzigh

Members of the Court Orchestra

Maelzel

The Court Mechanic

Frau Maelzel

His wife

Beethoven

The Court Composer

Talleyrand

The French Ambassador

Castlereagh

The British Ambassador

Messenger

The more Beethoven [due to deafness] lost connection with the outside world, the clearer was his inward vision. The surer he felt of his inner wealth, the more confidently did he make his outward demands...

Richard Wagner

Beethoven's outward appearance had something unusual and striking about it... Generally lost in thought and humming to himself, he frequently gesticulated with his arms while walking.

Stephan von Breuning

[Beethoven's] talent amazed me; unfortunately he is an utterly untamed personality, who is not altogether in the wrong in holding the world to be detestable but surely does not make it any the more enjoyable either for himself or for others by his attitude. He is easily excused, on the other hand, and much to be pitied, as his hearing is leaving him, which perhaps mars the musical part of his nature less than the social.

Goethe



The kernel of this play, namely that Beethoven wrote *The Battle Symphony* for Maelzel's Panharmonicon, a mechanical wind band, is entirely true.

Beethoven's piano, on stage throughout, should not be a modern concert grand. It should be more like the Broadwood piano presented to him in 1815 (*see illustration above*). Pianos such as this are much smaller than a grand, although they retain the same shape. They are also wood-stained a far lighter colour.

The Battle Symphony itself is a truly dreadful piece of music, full of bombast and hot air, and it is also 15 minutes long, far too long for the purposes of the play. What is needed is a new piece of music about two minutes long, based on *The Battle Symphony* and equally as bad. *Please request a tape of the play's music if required...*

ACT ONE

(Schuppanzigh about to play the 1st variation of the Kaiser Quartet, strident and unsubtly, conducted by Holz with a bow, who holds a viola under his arm. Holz raises his conducting arm and Schuppanzigh starts. Ten bars later...)

- BEETHOVEN Wait! Allow me *(he switches his metronome on. Tick, tick, tick... Holz counts in the time, and Schuppanzigh starts playing again, once more stridently and unsubtly)*
- HOLZ Excellent, excellent
- BEETHOVEN It's rubbish man. Where's the elegance, the beauty?
- SCHUPPANZIGH That's what's written. That's what I'm playing
- BEETHOVEN What about this? Or that? You're missing that bit out. The way you play it, it sounds like a national anthem. A few cheap verses and we'll all end up standing stock rigid singing sycophantic words in praise of an idiot. Or worse
- HOLZ Haydn did write it for the Emperor
- BEETHOVEN He wrote it because he wanted to
- HOLZ Yes. For the Emperor
- BEETHOVEN No. For the money
- SCHUPPANZIGH And you talk of beauty?
- BEETHOVEN If you could play it, I wouldn't have to. *(Beethoven hums the melody, emphasising its elegance and subtlety)*. There. You see? The humanity is all in those phrases. Otherwise it's arrogant. Now it's your turn *(Schuppanzigh tries again, much more subtly, this time playing the parts towards the end Beethoven alludes to, but with some mistakes)*. You see? If you had any technique, that would be perfect. Go away, practice for ten years, and I might even let you play something of mine
- HOLZ Beethoven. Who d'you think you are?

BEETHOVEN Birds, sir, would nest in your hair were it not they'd suffocate
(he slaps Holz's wig, and huge clouds of dust rise from it.
Beethoven exits)

WEISS *(Entering, holding a viola and a bottle of beer, and obviously*
drunk) I'm sorry I'm late. Has anyone got a spare bass string?
 Mine's broken

EMPEROR *(Entering, holding a violin)* Gentlemen...

METTERNICH *(Entering)* Your Majesty! Your Majesty!

EMPEROR What is it Metternich? I'm busy

METTERNICH A matter of state

EMPEROR Problems in Poland, sedition in Slovakia? What now?

METTERNICH It's the French Your Majesty. Three days ago they moved
 twenty battalions of the Grand Army towards the Italian Alps
 under the personal charge of Napoleon

EMPEROR But they're still in France?

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty

EMPEROR Then I can't see how it affects us

METTERNICH What if Napoleon crosses the Alps?

EMPEROR Crosses the Alps, Metternich? Don't be silly, he's not
 Hannibal. Now go away

METTERNICH But the great St. Bernard Pass...

EMPEROR Metternich!

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty *(Metternich exits)*

EMPEROR I hope you've been practising as hard as I have. At least ten
 minutes a day, and sometimes longer if the Empress lets me.
 She's no taste that woman. *(They arrange themselves to play*
the 1st Variation of the Kaiser Quartet. Weiss falls off his seat.
They start, playing both out of time and out of tune. Weiss
doesn't play at all) Stop! There's something not quite right.
 Herr Weiss, you're playing too loud

SCHUPPANZIGH Your Majesty. Herr Weiss isn't playing at all

EMPEROR Oh. Well, when he does play, make sure he doesn't play too
 loud *(they resume playing...)*

MESSENGER *(Entering, running)* Your Majesty, Your Majesty! Napoleon has crossed the Alps, and attacked von Melas' forces at Marengo

EMPEROR What! Metternich, Metternich!

METTERNICH *(Entering)* Your Majesty

EMPEROR Napoleon has crossed the Alps, and attacked von Melas' forces at Marengo. Where's that?

METTERNICH Northern Italy Your Majesty

EMPEROR Crossed the Alps Metternich! Why didn't you warn me? If Hannibal could do it, why not Napoleon?

METTERNICH Most perspicacious Your Majesty

EMPEROR We need a plan

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty

EMPEROR So where is it?

METTERNICH Responsibility for grand strategy rests with the Emperor

EMPEROR Then why isn't he here!? Oh. Well. *(To the Messenger)* Go back to von Melas, and tell him to make sure he wins

MESSENGER Von Melas, fearing the greater French numbers, decided early to attack the French centre under Victor, who suffered heavy losses and was forced to withdraw around midday

EMPEROR Bravo!

MESSENGER However, the French centre was but a decoy. The flanks, under Napoleon and Desaix, had already crossed the Po and the Scrivia, thereby encircling von Melas whom they attacked with an overwhelming force in the afternoon. The Austrian forces suffered heavy losses, and retreated in panic to Alessandria, where von Melas awaits the Emperor's instructions

EMPEROR We'll withdraw to Genoa and regroup. This has taught me an important lesson. We are at war, and the important thing about wars is winning them. So that's my plan. We win

METTERNICH It's promising Your Majesty. But it needs fleshing out. Some details of strategy...

- EMPEROR We win and win until we've finally won. (*Points to his head*)
It's all in here, and that's where it's staying. If I write it down,
some French spy might steal it
- METTERNICH Very prudent Your Majesty
- EMPEROR Come along Metternich, we've an army to raise. Drunkards to
press-gang, taxes to extort from the suffering multitude
- METTERNICH I'll prepare something patriotic for the newspapers (*the*
Emperor and Metternich exit)
- WEISS Would you believe it. Europe in chaos again, just when you
thought it was safe to get pissed with impunity. You'll not
catch me in a tavern these next six months. I'll wake up on
some foreign field with a musket in my hand, and a
Frenchman with another one bearing down on my belly
- SCHUPPANZIGH My grandmother was born near Marengo. As Austrian as the
day is long. For an Italian. And now she's French. Well, her
bones are, if you see what I mean
- MESSENGER Still, it'll all be over by Christmas (*Exuent. The lighting*
changes to illuminate the back of the stage which is littered
with various mechanical parts, and parts of broken musical
instruments, suggestive of Maelzel's workshop. Enter
Beethoven and Maelzel...)
- MAELZEL ... I'm a mechanic Beethoven, not a musician. If I'm no good
at my job, the wheels fall off the Emperor's carriage.
Everyone notices (*they stand and watch the metronome, still*
ticking away). What do you think of my latest invention? Did
it keep them in time?
- BEETHOVEN Nothing would keep that lot in time. But I can see the
potential
- MAELZEL I'll give you one third of the profits if you'll put your name to
it. "Maelzel's metronome, as recommended by the fêted
composer Ludwig van Beethoven". Think of all those drawing
rooms. Think of all those young ladies so eagerly practising in
private. This little beauty is their perfect mechanical

companion, in which ever time you want (*he switches the metronome off*)

BEETHOVEN They'll still be out of time without it

MAELZEL Society's too polite to notice things like that

BEETHOVEN I notice the orchestra

MAELZEL But most people don't, and if they do, they don't care. There are no real consequences. No one gets hurt. Society goes on, good orchestra or bad. That's why Weiss is probably the new first violinist

BEETHOVEN Who told you that?

MAELZEL No one. But I'll wager he is

BEETHOVEN Why?

MAELZEL Because his playing doesn't show the Emperor up, does it? And that's how you get on

BEETHOVEN What are you building?

MAELZEL It's just an idea. Still, it might interest you I suppose. If it works

BEETHOVEN Not as much as a new piano

MAELZEL You haven't got any money

BEETHOVEN I need more octaves. I can't write...

MAELZEL More expensive still

BEETHOVEN I'll write you a sonata

MAELZEL How much is it worth?

BEETHOVEN Thirty ducats

MAELZEL And a quartet?

BEETHOVEN Fifty

MAELZEL A concerto?

BEETHOVEN Seventy

MAELZEL It's still not enough. What about a symphony?

BEETHOVEN Negotiable from one hundred upwards

MAELZEL Alright. A symphony, including dedication, and you don't owe me a single florin

FRAU MAELZEL *(Entering)* We're at war, we're at war! Napoleon's crossed the Alps and defeated von Melas at Marengo. Look *(she shows Maelzel a newspaper)*

MAELZEL Things are looking up my sweet. More cannons to build, more commission...

FRAU MAELZEL Is that all you can say! The French'll be marching through Vienna within the fortnight, and you're thinking about money. What about the children?

MAELZEL We haven't got any children

FRAU MAELZEL Oh. How can you be so cruel? You know I've always wanted children. They'd be a great comfort at a time like this

MAELZEL Darling. Sweetheart. Light of my life. If you can't say anything useful, piss off home and make some sauerkraut. *(She exits, crying)* Women, Beethoven. You've got to know how to handle them

EMPEROR *(Entering with Metternich)* Herr van Beethoven. Herr Maelzel

MAELZEL *(Bowing sycophantically)* Your Majesty

EMPEROR I've just passed your wife. Wonderful breasts. I hope you make good use of them. Now, where was I?

METTERNICH War, Your Majesty

EMPEROR Oh yes, we're at war with Napoleon, so, what we need is weapons. So get busy building them. Hire as much labour as you need. And don't worry about money, I'll sign an Imperial Decree. Ah. And you Beethoven. Compose something patriotic. Something we can all sing along to

BEETHOVEN Yes Your Majesty

EMPEROR Good. You can discuss all the details with Prince Metternich. Carry on *(he exits. Maelzel starts working again at his contraption)*

METTERNICH I hope you understand Herr Maelzel. I'll want very scrupulous accounts. Right down to the last musket

MAELZEL Of course Your Excellency

METTERNICH And if I get the slightest whiff of profiteering, you'll be straight for the battlefield

MAELZEL And who would replace me? (*Maelzel continues working on his contraption, banging nails in or making some other loud noise. A strange white noise starts to get louder and louder*)

BEETHOVEN What about my piano?

METTERNICH Your piano, Herr van Beethoven, will have to wait

MAELZEL No. I'll build that first. I've already accepted the order

METTERNICH Herr Maelzel. You'll do as I say

MAELZEL Yes. When the money arrives. War or no war, money comes first

METTERNICH What are you building now?

MAELZEL It's a secret

BEETHOVEN Stop it (*Maelzel keeps banging away at his wooden frame, the white noise becomes louder. Beethoven holds his head and creases up on the floor*). Stop it! (*Maelzel stops the banging*)

METTERNICH Stop what? Get up man

BEETHOVEN That noise

MAELZEL What noise?

BEETHOVEN My hearing...

MAELZEL Are you alright?

BEETHOVEN Yes. Just a migraine. God willing

MAELZEL Never mind Him. You've been overworking

METTERNICH You don't believe in God then, Herr Maelzel?

MAELZEL What if I don't?

METTERNICH If you don't, you don't. But I hope you believe in something divine. God save you otherwise

MAELZEL Why?

METTERNICH Because you'll go mad. (*The lighting changes to illuminate the front of the stage once again. Marie-Louise walks across the stage towards Beethoven's piano, which is still in darkness front stage right*) Princess. There's a great deal of gossip that you've been seen out unaccompanied late in the evenings at places dangerously bohemian. Particularly *The Swan* and *The Ox*

MARIE-LOUISE Prince Metternich. I've only ridden past *The Ox* once in my life, and I don't even know where *The Swan* is

METTERNICH Where were you last night?

MARIE-LOUISE I was in my room, in the Hofburg, studying, alone, again, as usual

METTERNICH Just you remember young lady. There's nothing that happens in Vienna I don't know about (*Metternich exits. Marie-Louise goes to Beethoven's piano, now illuminated. She knocks on the piano*)

MARIE-LOUISE Phew! Where's the wine?

BEETHOVEN There isn't any

MARIE-LOUISE (*Laughing*) The day you don't have any wine is the day Count Metternich gives his ego to charity

BEETHOVEN Be careful. The man has spies everywhere

MARIE-LOUISE (*She searches under the piano. Finds a bottle of wine*) Ah ha! (*swigs from the bottle. Offers the bottle to Beethoven who swigs from it too*)

BEETHOVEN I'm drinking too much already

MARIE-LOUISE Go on

BEETHOVEN You'll get me into trouble

MARIE-LOUISE Let's play (*she plays the opening bars of Bagatelle Op.33. No.1, then they play four hands, then Beethoven takes over. Marie-Louise kicks off her shoes, and starts dancing all around the stage, singing to the music and coming back towards the piano to play four hands with Beethoven during the trills. Then she lets her hair down...*) You're the only one I can talk to. They're all such stuffed shirts!

BEETHOVEN Don't talk. Just dance. (*Her dancing and singing continue, and she occasionally duets with Beethoven during the parts of the piece made for a four hands duologue. She twirls around yelling with joy, to be confronted by Metternich at the edge of the stage, semi-lit*)

METTERNICH Last night. You were at *The Swan*. (*To Beethoven*) And I've warned you before! She's not some burgher's wench. She's the Emperor's daughter

BEETHOVEN She's got a right to dance

METTERNICH She has permission to dance with her dancing master. With you she only has permission to learn the piano. There should be no other communication of any kind between you. (*Marie-Louise exits. The lighting changes to illuminate the Emperor in front of a mirror, practising his fencing. Metternich walks towards him*)

EMPEROR Well now Napoleon Bonaparte, take that, and that!

METTERNICH Your Majesty, as Chief Minister I have been pondering developments. Despite the greatness of the Austrian forces, the scale of Napoleon's ambition makes one thing abundantly clear

EMPEROR And that! And that! And that!

METTERNICH Namely, successful prosecution of the war will prove impossible without alliances with at least one of Prussia, Russia, and Great Britain

EMPEROR Never! You conniving Corsican. Enjoy your victories whilst they last, because they won't last long! The Russians are unreliable, the Prussians are our rivals, and the English only care about their colonies. They're not interested in Europe and they never will be

METTERNICH But all have common cause against France Your Majesty

EMPEROR We'll see this through alone Metternich. *En garde!*

METTERNICH There is also the matter of the fiscal balances. In order to pay for the war, we will have to borrow. And in order to repay the borrowings, we must be frugal. Court expenditure must be drastically reduced

EMPEROR No, no, no! In order to borrow, we must appear to be rich, and in order to appear to be rich, we must spend profusely. Where's your logic man?

MESSENGER (*Entering*) Your Majesty, Your Majesty

EMPEROR What of the battle? What news from Hohenlinden? Is Napoleon routed?

MESSENGER Not exactly Your Majesty

EMPEROR But we've won?

MESSENGER Not exactly Your Majesty

EMPEROR But I gave express orders

MESSENGER In the heat of battle Your Majesty...

EMPEROR Yes...

MESSENGER We lost

EMPEROR How badly?

MESSENGER 30,000 infantry dead, 2,000 cannon captured. The road to Vienna is now open and undefended

EMPEROR So. Napoleon thinks the Emperor of Austria is easy meat does he?! He thinks we're just going to lie down and take it! Well he's right. Metternich! Sue for peace

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty

EMPEROR What will it cost?

METTERNICH The Duchy of Parma and the left bank of the Rhine I would imagine

EMPEROR We can't give him all that

METTERNICH Napoleon has already taken it. What choice do we have?

EMPEROR Good idea. Lull him into a false sense of security. We lose and lose...

METTERNICH ... and what then?

EMPEROR We start winning

METTERNICH How?

EMPEROR I've just told you. Open talks with the Prussians, but be discreet. Then talk to the Tsar, but don't tell him you're talking to the Prussians. And finally talk to the English. Tell them we'll fight the war if they'll lend the money. But don't forget the fiscal balances Metternich. We're all going to have to be frugal (*he exits*)

TALLEYRAND (*Standing at a corner of the stage, illuminated*) Prince Metternich, as French Ambassador, I entreat you to negotiate.

Further delay can result only in Napoleon marching direct to Vienna

- METTERNICH Well, well, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord. The man himself. The last news of you I heard, you were training for the priesthood. What happened?
- TALLEYRAND The revolution happened. I found myself in the purple cassock of a banned religion destined only for the scaffold. So I changed sides
- METTERNICH Without reservations?
- TALLEYRAND Napoleon won't tolerate them
- METTERNICH What chance a French withdrawal from Austrian territories if we offer the left bank of the Rhine?
- TALLEYRAND We'd want some Italian territories ceded as well
- METTERNICH Naples perhaps?
- TALLEYRAND No. Parma. It's far more prosperous
- METTERNICH I heard that Napoleon prefers Naples
- TALLEYRAND How?
- METTERNICH I seduced his sister
- TALLEYRAND Which one?
- METTERNICH Caroline. The one they say is so beautiful...
- TALLEYRAND I seduced Elise
- METTERNICH Rather you than me
- TALLEYRAND I kept my eyes closed. But she's very willing, and far closer to Napoleon...
- METTERNICH Did you learn much?
- TALLEYRAND No. But I taught her everything she knows
- METTERNICH I still say Naples. Caroline was an orgasmic mine of information by the time I'd finished with her
- TALLEYRAND Very well, speak direct to Napoleon when he occupies your capital. I'll tell him that you...
- METTERNICH I have your guarantee he will withdraw if we cede what you ask?
- TALLEYRAND You have my word
- METTERNICH Before God?

TALLEYRAND I gave up God with the priesthood. Further, Napoleon will expect the Austrian army to retire permanently behind the River Mincio after handing over all fortresses to the west and south

METTERNICH You speak as though all Italy were yours

TALLEYRAND It very soon will be. The Emperor of the French shall be king of the Italians to boot. Not to mention overlord of Germany *(Talleyrand exits. The lights focus on Beethoven at his piano once again. He is composing, and playing something reminiscent, although by no means identical, to the start of the fourth movement of the 9th Symphony, the "Ode to Joy". It doesn't sound very promising. He repeats the opening phrase several times. Metternich approaches him, and knocks aggressively on the piano)*

METTERNICH Beethoven. Beethoven *(Beethoven keeps playing, oblivious). Beethoven! (Metternich slams the piano keyboard cover closed onto Beethoven's fingers)*

BEETHOVEN What did you do that for?

METTERNICH Composed anything patriotic yet?

BEETHOVEN I haven't had the time

METTERNICH You seem to think you compose for no one else but yourself. It's the Emperor who pays your bills. So don't forget. I'm watching you – and never more so than when you teach his daughter

EMPEROR *(Entering with his violin)* Ah, Metternich. What news of our alliances?

METTERNICH The English have agreed to provide the subsidies necessary, provided we also conclude an alliance with Russia, thus forming an alliance against Napoleon stretching from west to east

EMPEROR What of the Prussians?

METTERNICH The Prussians presently prefer peace, which is to say they calculate they can defend themselves against Napoleon alone if need be

- EMPEROR So, Britain and Russia it is then. A combined army in the field with good leadership, and the day will yet be ours
- MESSENGER (*Entering*) Your Majesty, Your Majesty! Napoleon has crossed the Rhine, and moved in a vast concentric sweep through Germany, finally putting siege to General Mack at Ulm. Without recourse to a major battle, he has taken 64,000 Austrian prisoners at cost of under 2,000 casualties of his own!
- EMPEROR We lose and lose! The plan is working Metternich! That's Napoleon's last victory. It'll be different when we manoeuvre jointly with the Russians
- METTERNICH Of course Your Majesty
- MESSENGER If only you could have seen Napoleon at first hand! What a man, predestined by Heaven!
- EMPEROR Yes, yes (*enter Marie-Louise*). Ah, my dear...
- MESSENGER He turns marching, fighting and pursuit into a single remorseless process – we had no time to draw breath. I heard a colonel say it will take a hundred years for our army to rival his!
- METTERNICH Shut up man and go! Your thoughts are treason (*exit the Messenger*)
- MARIE-LOUISE His thoughts are true. Europe is befuddled by dim-wit kings and emperors. Napoleon's the only one with any brains. Papa (*kisses the Emperor*)
- EMPEROR You exclude me from that?
- MARIE-LOUISE What do you think?
- EMPEROR And where might you be off to?
- MARIE-LOUISE To my dancing lessons. Unless of course Count Metternich has any objections...
- METTERNICH Princess, each pursuit in its proper place
- EMPEROR Be off with you then (*he kisses her*). And now, where are the orchestra?
- METTERNICH I'll fetch them Your Majesty. (*Metternich exits. Beethoven starts playing the piano, a piece once more reminiscent of the*

“Ode to Joy”. The Emperor walks towards Beethoven’s piano, and knocks on it)

- EMPEROR Herr van Beethoven. *(He knocks again)* Herr van Beethoven *(Beethoven keeps playing. The Emperor plays one of the keys on the piano to distract him)* It is I. Your Emperor
- BEETHOVEN *(Irritated)* What do you want? *(Politely)* Your Majesty
- EMPEROR A damn’d good shag if the truth be known, but that’s by the by. But I was wondering, have you composed anything patriotic yet?
- BEETHOVEN I need a victory Your Majesty
- EMPEROR A victory? Oh, yes, of course! A victory!
- BEETHOVEN Or perhaps even two
- EMPEROR Steady on
- BEETHOVEN I can’t compose patriotically when we keep losing. I’ve no inspiration
- EMPEROR Losing so far has all been part of my master plan Beethoven. The victories will come, rest assured
- BEETHOVEN *(Starting to play his piano again, still on the theme of the “Ode to Joy”)* Well, until they do, you’ll have to keep playing Haydn
- EMPEROR Haydn? Oh. Haydn, yes, the *Kaiser Quartet!* The one he wrote for me
- BEETHOVEN The very same *(enter Schuppanzigh, Holz and Weiss)*
- EMPEROR Ah, gentlemen *(over the sound of Beethoven’s playing)*
- HOLZ And what shall we play today Your Majesty?
- EMPEROR Haydn. The *Kaiser Quartet*. Oh, and I’ve bought one of these from Herr Maelzel *(he brings out a metronome)*
- SCHUPPANZIGH As you wish *(they arrange themselves into position and start playing)*
- WEISS Wait! My bass string’s broken *(they stop. The metronome keeps ticking away)*
- EMPEROR Tick, tick, tick. Come along, we can’t stop just for that *(they start again, and play perhaps ten bars. Enter the Messenger)*
- MESSENGER Your Majesty. Your Majesty. I bring news from the front

EMPEROR Ah, Napoleon routed at last! The combined Austrian-Russian army has doubtless sent him scampering back to France! The Emperor of Austria and the Tsar of Russia! What more rock-like alliance could there be than that!

MESSENGER Quite so Your Majesty, but...

EMPEROR But what man, spit it out! How many prisoners have we taken, what reparations should we claim?

MESSENGER The field of Austerlitz stretches for six miles, north to south. The mile-wide valley between the Zurlan and the Pratzen Heights is watered by the Goldbach stream. To the east stands a hill called the Santon, topped by a small chapel. The hillsides are bare, and encourage manoeuvre

EMPEROR And...

MESSENGER And Napoleon took our commander Kutusov by surprise, seizing the initiative by mid-morning with the superb mobility of his army corps, each one a miniature army capable of fighting a far greater force for at least 24 hours

EMPEROR In short then?

MESSENGER In short?

EMPEROR Yes. In a nutshell

MESSENGER We lost. Further, the Russians are scattered, making haphazard withdrawal back through Poland. You should have been there Your Majesty. Napoleon is awesome, Austerlitz his masterpiece. I heard one of our Generals say...

EMPEROR Yes, yes, I've heard it all before. Metternich! I should never have trusted the Tsar. And as for that buffoon Kutusov... Forging relations with the Prussians would be far more profitable. Metternich!

METTERNICH *(Entering)* Your Majesty

EMPEROR Napoleon has routed the joint army at Austerlitz. Where's that?

METTERNICH Moravia Your Majesty

EMPEROR What are we to do?

METTERNICH Are you willing to have the French permanently encamped in Vienna?

EMPEROR Of course not

METTERNICH Then we must cede territory. As our opening position I would suggest ceding Venice to the French Italian lands

EMPEROR No, no, no! Venice was to be Marie-Louise's birthday present

METTERNICH In which case, I recommend relinquishing Istria

EMPEROR Never! Istria supplies the most delectable truffles

METTERNICH I would also presume we must further lose Croatia and Dalamatia...

EMPEROR I mean seriously man, how would I live without truffles?

METTERNICH ... give Vararlburg and the other Alpine enclaves to Bavaria, a lackey ally of Napoleon, and possibly also cede Tyrol

EMPEROR Again no! That must be a third of my kingdom! Mark that Istria also gives very good wine, and Tyrol is the Empress's favourite holiday

METTERNICH But Your Majesty, surely it's all part of the plan to lose and lose

EMPEROR Yes, but when do we win?

METTERNICH When? Your Majesty knows when we win

EMPEROR Yes, I know, I was just testing whether you know

METTERNICH Of course I know. We win when we win

EMPEROR Exactly. But don't tell anyone!

METTERNICH My lips are sealed. You are, if I may say so, relying on the one thing Napoleon will never anticipate. Your overweening, utterly arrogant and totally unjustified conviction you're always right

EMPEROR It's all down to breeding Metternich. I have it, Napoleon hasn't (*he exits*)

METTERNICH (*To the orchestra*) As for you gentlemen, I presume you realise the gravity of the situation

HOLZ I was born in Venice. How can it be French? There's no logic to it

METTERNICH It is the logic of force, which has its own remorseless rules, as does the logic of finance

SCHUPPANZIGH What's finance got to do with it?

METTERNICH Due to the gravity of the war's effect on our exchequer, I am left with no choice but to cut the orchestra's funding by one third

WEISS What?

METTERNICH You heard the Emperor. We are to lose one third of our lands, and therefore one third of our taxable revenues

SCHUPPANZIGH But the orchestra can't survive on that

METTERNICH We're at war Schuppanzigh, and we can't spend what hasn't been raised

SCHUPPANZIGH I can't spend what I haven't been paid

METTERNICH We either spend less, or we produce more

HOLZ What do you produce?

METTERNICH A great many things. Principally the laws and edicts you obey

SCHUPPANZIGH And wars

METTERNICH Napoleon produces wars. I attempt to contain them

HOLZ Then you're not very good at it

METTERNICH I will produce peace. Eventually

SCHUPPANZIGH With what? All that rubbish about we lose and lose and lose until we win!?

METTERNICH It is but a tactic. The Emperor has a complex mind

SCHUPPANZIGH Him! Complex?

HOLZ You've got no soul. Music is the ...

WEISS ... elixir of the spirit, purer than any alcohol can ever be

METTERNICH You can start by drinking less

WEISS Why should I?

METTERNICH Because from now on you're being paid less

HOLZ I still don't see what you produce

METTERNICH I produce order where otherwise there would be only chaos. Which is a great deal more than can be said for the orchestra. Orchestra's produce only music, and music doesn't win wars. Now be off with you (*the orchestra exit*)

HOLZ (As he goes) And what would you know about winning wars?

MESSENGER (Entering) Your Majesty, Your Majesty

METTERNICH His Majesty is otherwise engaged. What news?

MESSENGER It's the Prussians Count. What a rout! Napoleon strikes like lightning. First, he invaded Saxony from Bamberg, and then changed his line of operations by a swing to the west in order to destroy the Prussians at Jena and Auerstadt. He then unleashed a devastating pursuit to the Baltic coast which the French reached in less than three weeks and 150,000 prisoners later. The Prussian army is in tatters. The Russians too have made peace with Napoleon after the bloody battle of Friedland

METTERNICH On what terms?

MESSENGER Russia is to have freedom of action east of the Vistula, France to the west

METTERNICH This is grave news. A weak Austria and Prussia allow Napoleon free reign in Europe through to Poland. What news of the English in Spain?

MESSENGER Wellesley's troops have landed, but are yet to fully engage. In the meantime, the French have once more pre-empted the opposition by marching into Lisbon. Napoleon is master of Europe from the Atlantic to the Danube

METTERNICH Repose is impossible under the rule of this man. He knows only assertion through battle. We cannot win without alliances, and yet somehow we must carry on alone. This is a time for desperate measures... *(Messenger and Metternich exit. Beethoven starts composing at the piano again, which is now slightly out of tune)*

MAELZEL *(Entering, with a bag of money. He goes over to Beethoven's piano and puts the bag on top of it)* There you are

BEETHOVEN Maelzel. What's that for?

MAELZEL One hundred ducats. Your percentage on the first month's sale of the metronome. Even the Emperor bought one

BEETHOVEN And what about my piano?

MAELZEL Never mind your piano. I've got a better idea. Come with me

BEETHOVEN Where are we going?

MAELZEL *(They walk towards the back of the stage, once again illuminated as Maelzel's workshop)* To see my latest invention, and if you liked the metronome, you'll think this adorable. I would have told you about it sooner, but I wasn't sure I could get it to work properly. But now I have, you have the honour of being the first person to witness its endless possibilities. *(He stands centre stage back in front of a large item of some kind covered in a large white sheet)* I present to you *(he pulls off the sheet revealing a machine the shape of an inverted pyramid, with bits of many instruments, violas, trombones, trumpets etc., sticking out from it. Being wider at the top than at the bottom it looks inherently unstable. There is a crank at the bottom to wind it up)* the world's one and only Panharmonicon. *Pan* of course means many, *harmonicon* means harmonies. The machine of many harmonies

BEETHOVEN And what exactly does it do?

MAELZEL It plays whatever melody is composed for it, mimicking the sounds of a conventional orchestra

BEETHOVEN You mean it's out of time, out of tune, farts, belches, argues back at you ...

MAELZEL Not at all. Precisely because it's mechanised, the Panharmonicon has no mind of its own – and that means it doesn't make mistakes either

BEETHOVEN I find that difficult to believe

MAELZEL So did I. But I've built it! Think of the potential. Every courtier, every bourgeois, every burgher will want one

BEETHOVEN And my music can be played without mistakes, disputes, rancour or acrimony?

MAELZEL Precisely. Listen *(he winds the Panharmonicon up, and it begins to play the Kaiser Quartet)*

BEETHOVEN Don't play that. I'm sick to the back teeth of that

MAELZEL How about this then? (*He changes the tune by changing a canister similar to those used on a pianola. The Panharmonicon plays ...*)

BEETHOVEN Mozart's *Jupiter Symphony*. That's passable. Even respectable

MAELZEL And have you heard one mistake?

BEETHOVEN I confess not. Perhaps a bit passionless, but ...

MAELZEL This, I promise, will convince you! (*He changes the tune again. The Panharmonicon plays ...*)

BEETHOVEN My very own *3rd Symphony*. I'm impressed. Even the correct time signature. No one ever gets that right!

MAELZEL Will you compose for it? Something popular and patriotic. The same as with the metronome – I'll give a third of the profits every time the Panharmonicon plays a piece of music by you. All we need to think about now is where, how and when we publicly unveil it. My little beauty

FRAU MAELZEL (*Entering*) Who's your little beauty?

MAELZEL You are my sweet, you are (*Beethoven starts to hear white noise, and holds his head*)

FRAU MAELZEL You should have been home hours ago. So I've given your dinner to the dog, and it's your own fault (*she exits*)

MAELZEL As soon as I'm rich, she'll be the first to go

BEETHOVEN Your wife or the dog? (*The white noise in Beethoven's head gets louder and louder*)

MAELZEL Do we have a deal?

BEETHOVEN (*Still holding his head*) What?

MAELZEL I said do we have a deal?

BEETHOVEN (*The white noise suddenly stops*) Do we have a what?

MAELZEL Do we have a deal?

BEETHOVEN Oh. Yes (*The shake hands and exit*)

EMPEROR (*Entering*) Metternich, Metternich! The peasants are revolting

METTERNICH (*Entering from the opposite side*) I know they are Your Majesty, they always have been

EMPEROR No, no. In Tyrol. There's been a rebellion against the French

METTERNICH I know. Against the high taxes, against conscription, and even against closing the convents

EMPEROR The people are with us! We must strike at once! What d'you mean, you know?

METTERNICH I haven't mentioned it because we must see how it develops before we act. At the moment it's the revolt of only three innkeepers and a rabble

EMPEROR Now is the hour for us to lead Metternich! And besides, I should never have allowed you to cede Tyrol to the French in the first place. I want it back

METTERNICH If we strike now and lose again you will cede even more

EMPEROR Nonsense. I can feel victory in my bones, so I've sent instructions to the Archduke Charles to engage Napoleon as soon as possible

METTERNICH *(Protesting)* Your Majesty!

MESSENGER *(Entering)* Your Majesty! The Archduke Charles has engaged the French at Eggmühl

EMPEROR Eggmühl. Where's that?

METTERNICH On the Danube Your Majesty

EMPEROR And how goes the fight?

MESSENGER Napoleon immediately attacked from the centre, splitting our armies of Germany and Italy, but the Archduke withdrew to the left bank of the river with 150,000 men intact, destroying the bridges as he went. Our forces then attacked the French infantry who retired with great losses to the island of Lobau

EMPEROR Bravo, bravo!

MESSENGER However, Napoleon soon repaired the bridges between the island and Aspern and then struck victoriously with his artillery to defeat the Archduke Charles at Wagram

EMPEROR Wagram?

METTERNICH It's near Essling Your Majesty

EMPEROR I know that Metternich! I'm the Emperor! Well there we are. It was obvious the rebellion was never big enough to be decisive in the first place. But fear not – our actions will all

encourage Napoleon to be over-confident! How will you treat for peace?

METTERNICH Cede Cracow to the Duchy of Warsaw and cede Salzburg to Bavaria. On the Adriatic we must give up Carniola, as well as our ports Trieste and Fiume. However, we might be able to secure our frontier to the south of the Brenner Pass

EMPEROR Then don't just stand there man, get to it! And in the meantime, I'll put our final plan into action

METTERNICH You have new thoughts on strategy Your Majesty?

EMPEROR Of course I do. We lose and lose and lose and lose and then finally win. That's bound to fool him. (*Metternich feigns tears*) What's the matter?

METTERNICH Oh, Your Majesty. What sagacity! What grace under pressure. Where would Austria be without you? But perhaps I might add a small addendum to your genius. Whilst we lose and lose and lose and lose until we finally win, why not conclude an alliance nonetheless, simply to fool Napoleon still further. And we seal the alliance by the marriage of the Princess Marie-Louise to Napoleon himself. What he seeks to achieve through war, we shall achieve by wedlock

EMPEROR The Emperor of the French marry my daughter?! That half European Mediterranean upstart! The man's a usurper Metternich! The Habsburg blood line goes all the way back to Charlesmagne. Napoleon's goes back twenty years to some peasant hut in Corsica. Never!

METTERNICH Very well then, the Princess will doubtless elope with Herr van Beethoven, as all my best intelligence has long suspected

EMPEROR The Court composer marry my daughter!? That half Dutch, slovenly upstart! The man's a usurper Metternich! The Habsburg blood line goes all the way back to Charlesmagne. Beethoven's goes back twenty years to some peasant hut by the Zuider Zee. Why, I'd rather she married the Emperor of the French!

- METTERNICH My thoughts entirely Your Majesty. But surely, you can't mean ... Napoleon?
- EMPEROR The very same. The two most powerful men in Europe united by dynastic bond. Why didn't you think of it earlier?
- METTERNICH I really can't ...
- EMPEROR You see! There we have it. The final, Final Plan. We lose and lose and lose and lose and sue for peace and marry off my daughter. And then we win!
- METTERNICH Fool proof Your Majesty! I shall call the French Ambassador immediately
- EMPEROR Very well. I just hope you know what you're doing. So far against Napoleon you've signed away almost half my kingdom and now my daughter's hand as well. It's a lot to bare
- METTERNICH Napoleon's a *parvenu* Your Majesty. Marry your daughter to him, and he'll think it inconceivable that we would declare war on him ... *(They exit)*
- MESSENGER *(Entering, and holding a proclamation)* A victory, a victory! The English have defeated Napoleon in Spain! Wellesley victorious at Salamanca! And at La Coruna, and at Vittoria! Victories at last! The French retreat towards the Pyrenees. *(He looks around)* Would you believe it! Good news at last, and not a soul here to tell it to! *(He starts to exit)*
- BEETHOVEN *(Entering)* Wait! Let me see that
- MESSENGER Take a copy
- BEETHOVEN *(Taking a copy and reading it. Another copy falls to the ground)* Inspiration. *(Exits with the Messenger)*
- TALLEYRAND *(Entering with Metternich and the Emperor. Talleyrand picks up the proclamation on the ground. He reads it before screwing it up)* The Emperor Napoleon has asked me to convey personally his delight at this happy occasion, the coming together through wedlock of the oldest and newest grand families of Europe. But he wishes me to stress Austria

must support him fully in his establishment of the French Empire, the only Empire of truth and justice

EMPEROR *(Aside)* The only Empire of what?

METTERNICH *(Aside)* It is pointless to object Your Majesty. I doubt Talleyrand believes it himself. The man can lie fluently in five languages

TALLEYRAND Along with his marriage to Marie-Louise, Napoleon also demands Austrian support in the annexation of Holland, Hamburg, Bremen and Oldenburg

EMPEROR What? Yet more conquest! Is there no end to my future son-in-law's ambition?

METTERNICH We accept your conditions Ambassador

EMPEROR What? All of them?

METTERNICH *(Enter Marie-Louise)* Ah, Princess, may I introduce you to Ambassador Talleyrand, who is to accompany you to France

MARIE-LOUISE Ambassador. Are the marriage papers in order?

TALLEYRAND They are Your Highness

MARIE-LOUISE Well then, my fate is sealed

EMPEROR *(Hugging her)* Marie-Louise, you are nervous without reason! Napoleon will adore you as any sane man must

MARIE-LOUISE What of Josephine?

TALLEYRAND The marriage was annulled

MARIE-LOUISE You mean she was barren

METTERNICH *(Aside)* Princess, your marriage will save not only Austria, but also give me time. The whole equilibrium of Europe is at stake

MARIE-LOUISE I wish to make one thing clear. I am doing this only because
...

BEETHOVEN *(Entering, carrying flowers)* Please stay Your Highness. How can you *(looks at Metternich)* give her away to such a tyrant?

TALLEYRAND Who is this man?

BEETHOVEN Princess. Marry me, and I will compose the sweetest melodies in Heaven

EMPEROR Good grief, you were right Metternich. The court composer has real designs on my daughter ...

METTERNICH Beethoven. You have ideas above your station

BEETHOVEN My station? My station is the equal of anyone's

EMPEROR Perhaps you could compose for the service

BEETHOVEN Of my own wedding?

EMPEROR No, no. Of the Emperor Napoleon to the Princess Marie-Louise

TALLEYRAND Always assuming Napoleon agrees

MARIE-LOUISE What is this to be called? An alliance or a subjugation?

MESSENGER *(Entering)* The Ambassador Talleyrand's carriage is ready

EMPEROR Well my dear, destiny awaits you

MARIE-LOUISE And what of Beethoven?

METTERNICH Precisely. What of him?

BEETHOVEN *(Hearing the beginnings of his white noise)* Speak to me

MARIE-LOUISE It is impossible

BEETHOVEN *(The white noise starts getting louder. To Marie-Louise)*
Please. Take the flowers *(she does so. He holds his head)*

EMPEROR *(To the Messenger)* See Herr van Beethoven is escorted back to his lodgings. I don't think he's well *(the white noise gets louder and louder, becoming deafening)*

MARIE-LOUISE And see he gets some food. He probably hasn't eaten in days

MESSENGER Yes Your Highness

TALLEYRAND Princess. Allow me to escort you *(Talleyrand and Marie-Louise exit, followed by the Emperor and Metternich. The white noise reaches a final crescendo, and Beethoven falls to the ground, still holding his head. Then sudden silence)*

MESSENGER So, the court composer is in love with the Princess is he?
Well, I suppose you could say who isn't! But to ask her to marry you, in front of the Emperor and the Chief Minister, well, I think that shows some courage!

BEETHOVEN What? *(The Messenger exits, supporting Beethoven)*

EMPEROR *(Entering with Metternich)* Well now Metternich, allied to Napoleon and on the winning side at last. Now that's what I call strategy

METTERNICH But Napoleon has started losing Your Majesty

EMPEROR Napoleon? Lose? His success is the most immutable law of our age

METTERNICH Not any more. Wellesley has routed him in Spain ...

EMPEROR But Napoleon still occupies Moscow! The Tsar is at Napoleon's mercy. From France through to Russia he remains ascendant

METTERNICH Napoleon might occupy Moscow, but he has no supplies to sustain him through the Russian winter. And besides, the Tsar has simply retired to his other capital, St. Petersburg

EMPEROR Two capitals. That's very clever, but I can't help feeling it's cheating. It's like having your head cut off only to sprout another one

METTERNICH The diplomatic scene is much altered Your Majesty. First we opposed Napoleon, went to war and lost. And then we decided to ally with Napoleon, only to find we lose again!

EMPEROR Destiny calls Metternich! We've lost and lost and lost and lost enough. It is high time we won!

METTERNICH How Your Majesty?

EMPEROR Change sides! Ally with Britain, placate the Tsar, treat with the Prussians. What is needed is a grand coalition of all the nations against Napoleon, and as his most implacable opponent, I am the man to lead it!

METTERNICH Your Majesty, grand coalitions are sooner spoken of than created

EMPEROR Why?

METTERNICH Firstly we must consider the aloofness of the English, an aloofness which suggests they lack interest in any such venture. The English would rather win alone than win in the concert of others and are further obsessed by sea power against that of land – the battle of Trafalgar makes both points

self-evident. And then we must consider that in the character of the Russian aristocrat, the inconstancy of the Slavic mind has been magnified to the point of mental instability; hence why the Tsar appears liberal one day, tyrannical the next; how is one ever to divine where he truly stands? As for the French, against whom we fight, well, they are always passionate in what they support, but they change what they do support day by day and therefore the opinion of the other nations about them changes just as frequently. The French speak of revolution when they mean the subservience of others, and they appear to invoke justice only when they fear losing. And as for the Prussians, they have many talents, but no talent to rejoice. The Prussians prefer to be morose Prussians and they like to spend their time thinking about what problems will develop next. Thus the Russians and the French constantly change sides, but are never on the same side at the same time. The Russians don't like the Prussians because of the Prussian talent of finding problems, since the Russians have more problems than anyone else and spend their time largely trying to avoid them. Meanwhile, the French don't like Prussians because however much they change sides, they're always against the Prussians; indeed this is possibly the one thing about which they're consistent. And the Prussians don't like the French because when they think of what problem will arise next, the French are invariably part of it. Finally, the English simply lose patience with the entire spectacle, which is probably why no British Foreign Secretary has ever set foot on continental soil, and doubtless never will. In fact, I'm banking on it

EMPEROR

And the Austrians?

METTERNICH

The Austrians never think about anything except beer and sausages. Hence the extent of my power

EMPEROR

Your power?

- METTERNICH Neither the criticism of the prejudiced nor the censure of the superficial concern me Your Majesty. Only the reservations of the brilliant. And I have none
- EMPEROR Nevertheless, we need a grand coalition to secure what we seek
- METTERNICH Which is?
- EMPEROR Peace man! Peace and quiet! What else would it be? So get to it. The only victory that counts is the final one, and that is at hand! *(They exit)*
- BEETHOVEN *(Entering alone and speaking out)* Who would be a deaf composer? Be entombed within a sad reputation for being good despite cruel infirmity? I read of a 14th century Italian madrigal singer, universally praised for his authenticity of tone though deaf as a mute. It is clever, admirable, indicates great perseverance. But it is the triumph of a freak. Such circus-like ingenuity unbecomes a serious man. And yet I, Ludwig van Beethoven, am gradually deafening. But not with some deafness recorded in the history books by those who so absent mindedly hear. This deafness is an intermittent violent disorder, a cantankerous yelling making the space within my skull a cacophonous hell that not a Dante could describe nor even contemplate. And each time it leaves me my hearing is further reduced. So I resolve to keep my growing condition secret. Be rude, eccentric and unkempt in demeanour, do anything for a disguise that conceals my worsening malady. I would be a tramp rather than pitied. *(He exits. Enter the Emperor, practising his fencing in front of a mirror)*
- EMPEROR You've lost. We've won. Where's the Emperor Napoleon now eh? *(Enter Metternich)* How ends the Russian campaign? Is the French army completely routed?
- METTERNICH Completely Your Majesty
- EMPEROR You see Metternich. Events have unfolded as only I could foresee. And yet my heart sinks at your furrowed brow. Can't you rejoice?

METTERNICH No Your Majesty

EMPEROR But we've won man. Peace at last! It's a time to celebrate

METTERNICH Your Majesty. The machinations of diplomacy increase rather than decrease at times such as this. And forewarned of the quick wits of our Allies, I have therefore been busy on your behalf. In short, I know which way the wind blows. *(The Emperor wets his finger and holds it to the non-existent wind. Metternich puts it down)* To pay for the war, we have no choice but to devalue our currency by four fifths

EMPEROR What!

METTERNICH The war is over, Your Majesty, and our bankers want their money back. This will of course ruin the Exchequer, render worthless all savings and be a general source of discontent and misery. However, it is but the first cut of a double edged sword

EMPEROR *(Holds up his sword)* It's an épée

METTERNICH It's a metaphor. Europe is exhausted Your Majesty. Thus, knowing full well that no one would dare bring arms against us, I threatened to renege on all loan repayments unless our Allies agreed that the Congress of the peace settlement be held here in the Imperial City of Vienna

EMPEROR And did they?

METTERNICH They did indeed. Thus the entire crowned and diplomatic services of Europe – by my estimation some five reigning dynasties and some 200 princely families – will shortly descend upon us, and this being greatly to our financial benefit we shall ensure the Congress lasts as long as possible. Through the voluptuous entertainments and fantastic employments such a gathering will create in its wake, the people of Vienna shall quickly remake their fortunes, perhaps gaining even more than they have at this moment lost

EMPEROR Brilliant!

METTERNICH Thank you Your Majesty. It's called a supply-side led recovery. We manufacture a boom in consumption

EMPEROR Steady on, we don't want to make people ill
METTERNICH Your Majesty?
EMPEROR Well, it's all most ingenious. But why add consumption?
 Leave tuberculosis out of it

INTERVAL

(During the interval, Beethoven's variations on God Save The King, WoO.78, are heard in the theatre foyer and bar)

ACT TWO

(Lights up, and all characters present, with the exception of Marie-Louise and Castlereagh)

- MAELZEL Most honoured Emperor, princes and counts, ladies and gentlemen of the Court, and gathered diplomats. And Herr Weiss. I present to you my very latest invention, the Panharmonicon, a mechanical reproduction device of all the known sounds ever made by an orchestra the world over, as well as several other noises completely new to itself. It is my hope the Panharmonicon will bring much joy to the Emperor, and it will play for you today a most original and new composition from the hand of Herr van Beethoven. Without further ado, *The Battle Symphony*, or *Victory at Vittoria ...* *(The Panharmonicon proceeds to play the Battle Symphony, a bombast tune with little melody and much military drumming. During the performance, Maelzel comments over the music etc.)* Here we have the arrival of the French, and here the attack of Wellesley's British troops, Wellesley of course now being the Duke of Wellington in honour to his success ...
- ALL Bravo, bravo!
- EMPEROR *(Talking over the music)* Metternich. Isn't that Talleyrand? How can he still be French Ambassador after the defeat of Napoleon?
- METTERNICH First the priesthood, then a champion of the revolution, and now the representative of the newly restored French monarchy. *Plus ça change, plus c'est le même chose*
- TALLEYRAND *(To the Emperor)* After the excessive conquests of Napoleon Your Majesty, Louis XVIII wishes me to communicate he

desires only a just settlement. We French represent only ancient legitimacy and proportion

METTERNICH No, no. That's what I represent. An unbroken dynasty of 500 years, and I'll not be usurped

TALLEYRAND I ask only for the natural boundaries of France

EMPEROR *(General clapping for the end of the Battle Symphony)*
Metternich, isn't it splendid! What a triumph! Well done Herr van Beethoven! Something patriotic at last, and well worth waiting for!

BEETHOVEN You think it worthy? God save us all! The piece is not as I ...

EMPEROR And Herr Maelzel, is there no end to your ingenuity? If you can build a mechanical orchestra, they why not a mechanical composer?

WEISS We've got one of those already

MAELZEL Think of the possibilities for the Panharmonicon Your Majesty. A mechanical music machine for every burgher. Symphonic reproduction in every drawing room! I seek from Your Majesty only my just reward of a royal patent

SCHUPPANZIGH When to approach him? Shall I do it now?

HOLZ Yes, yes, whilst he's in a good mood

SCHUPPANZIGH Weiss?

WEISS I say now

SCHUPPANZIGH Your Majesty. The members of the court orchestra wish an audience with relation to their rates of pay, which were sharply reduced by Count Metternich during the war. Now that peace is here, we demand ...

METTERNICH You? *Demand?*

SCHUPPANZIGH ... we *ask* your favour that our wages be restored to their former level, plus allowances for the considerable inflation

EMPEROR Metternich. Is this true? You reduced their pay?

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty

EMPEROR Well I'm having none of it. As from today, the court orchestra is summarily sacked! Who needs an orchestra when you've got a Panharmonicon!

SCHUPPANZIGH But Your Majesty ...

EMPEROR No buts. You're speaking to a man in possession of the world's only symphonic musical machine, and I'll not let it be said that I don't embrace progress. Now go away

WEISS/HOLZ But Your Majesty ...

METTERNICH You heard what your Emperor said (*Holz, Weiss and Schuppanzigh exit*)

EMPEROR Metternich. Continue

METTERNICH Your Majesty. I hereby declare the Congress of Vienna open. It is the aim of the United Nations of the grand coalition against Napoleon to strengthen the principles of religion and the family, to defend the moral authority of legitimate sovereigns, and to save smaller nations from the consequences of their own stupidity

TALLEYRAND Bravo, bravo!

METTERNICH (*To the Emperor*) See how immediately Talleyrand courts favour. He is the one man I fear

TALLEYRAND (*Taking over*) And as the representative of the restored French monarchy, let me say we seek nothing but justice not only for the larger but also for the lesser powers of the Continent. And of the past let me say that any war outside France's *natural limits* was not the war of the French people, only the war of Napoleon

METTERNICH The Congress shall proceed by establishing the common will of Europe working through the powers of the United Nations – Austria, Russia, Prussia (*enter Lord Castlereagh*)

CASTLEREAGH And Great Britain

EMPEROR Metternich. Who is this man?

METTERNICH Lord Castlereagh. We were not expecting you

CASTLEREAGH Gracious Emperor. Prince Metternich. I stand here as the first British Foreign Secretary to set foot on the Continent

EMPEROR But you said ...

METTERNICH Events unfold in ways unforeseen

CASTLEREAGH For too long, indeed ever since Mary lost the English territories at Calais, Britain has seen it's destiny as separate from Europe. But that situation has changed forever, as I think our contribution to the defeat of the French tyrant indefatigably proves

TALLEYRAND Lord Castlereagh. Welcome

METTERNICH *(To the Emperor)* This could cause no end of trouble

FRAU MAELZEL *(To Castlereagh)* Well hello handsome. And who are you?

CASTLEREAGH What do you want?

FRAU MAELZEL What do you want?

CASTLEREAGH I don't want anything

FRAU MAELZEL I know exactly what you want. I can see it in your eyes

METTERNICH The Congress shall operate via a series of committees to determine the just re-arrangement of Europe. There shall be the Committee for the re-constitution of Germany, for that of Italy and also for that of Poland

EMPEROR And I shall run the most important committee of all, the Entertainments Committee! Vienna will be the playground of Europe, in celebration at our new deliverance, a theatre of pageants and fantasy. The palaces of Fischer von Erlach and Lukas von Hildebrandt will be permanently open, the Imperial stables will house 1400 horses for excursions. Today, Signorina Bigottini will dance the ballet *Nina*, and the *Battle Symphony* will be performed to the public every second hour. I am also arranging sledging trips to the Weinerwald

TALLEYRAND If peace can be obtained by pleasure, then surely this is the place

FRAU MAELZEL Your Majesty, are you free?

EMPEROR Of course I'm free. Are you?

FRAU MAELZEL As a matter of fact, I'm very expensive, but then I'm very good at it

EMPEROR Take me where you will *(Emperor and Frau Maelzel go to exit)*

MAELZEL Where d'you think you're going?

- FRAU MAELZEL None of your business
- MAELZEL But Your Majesty, the matter of my patent ...
- EMPEROR A patent? So you can build Panharmonicons for every
commoner? Oh, no, Herr Maelzel, I'll not have that. I must
have the only one ...
- METTERNICH And Your Majesty, we must discuss the first draft of the treaty
for the reorganisation of Germany
- EMPEROR Later, Metternich, later (*he exits with Frau Maelzel*)
- BEETHOVEN Well, that's put paid to your plans
- MAELZEL Come, we must talk (*Beethoven and Maelzel exit*)
- CASTLEREAGH What are the difficulties?
- METTERNICH If denied in Poland, the Prussians claim Saxony, contiguous in
both religion and language, and they also want the right bank
of the Rhine. The smaller German states seek to defend the
Saxon king, arguing it is not for Prussia to take, but for the
King of Saxony to decide what he yields
- TALLEYRAND I have the draft before me Prince Metternich, and it is wholly
unsatisfactory. In the first place, why should the King of
Saxony be penalised for an alliance with Napoleon about
which he had no real choice? All the great powers and most of
the lesser ones were allied to the French tyrant at some point
or other
- CASTLEREAGH With the exception of Britain, resolute throughout
- TALLEYRAND In the main, it is simply at matter of timing. And as an affront
to natural justice, this won't do at all (*he tears the treaty up in
his hands, and throws the litter all over the floor. He then
exits*)
- METTERNICH A pointless gesture from a desperate man. Will you come with
me to the von Erlach's? They say Katharina Bragation will be
there, and Wilhelmine de Sagan likewise
- CASTLEREAGH Count Metternich, I did not travel all this way to compete for
the affections of coquettish women. I came to ensure a just
settlement on the Continent with concomitant security for
British interests. In particular, we seek trading access to

Antwerp through the mouth of the Scheldt and the incorporation of Belgium into Holland as a bulwark against French power

METTERNICH The mouth of the Scheldt? I must speak with Talleyrand. And he of course will be at the von Erlach's. With us continentals Lord Castlereagh, competing for the affections of coquettish women frequently *is* diplomacy. If I can defeat him on that score, I can defeat him on any other. Those are the rules. Good day (*Metternich exits. Enter Frau Maelzel*)

FRAU MAELZEL Well hello again big boy. All alone are we?

CASTLEREAGH For twenty three years, almost continuously we fought Napoleon, often alone and never once changing sides. And yet no one seems to appreciate it

FRAU MAELZEL I do

CASTLEREAGH You do?

FRAU MAELZEL Of course I do. I like a man who knows his mind. Are you going to the von Erlach's?

CASTLEREAGH No I am not

FRAU MAELZEL Neither am I

CASTLEREAGH As a matter of interest ...

FRAU MAELZEL Yes ...

CASTLEREAGH As a matter of interest, where did you go with the Emperor? And how much did it cost?

FRAU MAELZEL Why don't you ask him? I could take you there too

CASTLEREAGH I must retire. I have diplomatic bags to read

FRAU MAELZEL Well. You know where I am. (*They both exit, different sides. Enter Beethoven and Maelzel*)

MAELZEL I don't understand why you're so angry

BEETHOVEN You changed the *Battle Symphony* for Heaven's sake! I am never faithfully reproduced. Why on earth all those drums? Who's the composer, you or me?

MAELZEL Beethoven, your taste is too refined. It's me who knows the public mood. Think of how they clapped!

BEETHOVEN That had nothing to do with the music. It's simply the euphoria of victory

MAELZEL You're never satisfied. First the orchestra was no good, and now you complain of me

BEETHOVEN My work is constantly tampered with by idiots and incompetents!

MAELZEL Bloody aristocrats, wanting to keep everything to themselves. We could make a fortune if the Emperor would grant me a patent

BEETHOVEN I know. But it's the Emperor who pays your wages, and mine too for that matter. The only thing you can hope for is to ask for payment for the Panharmonicon's performances here in Vienna

MAELZEL That won't work. The Emperor's *largesse* demands the performances are free. And to think of all the work! (*Enter Frau Maelzel*) My angel, my sweet ...

FRAU MAELZEL You don't win me over with that lovey-dovey nonsense. Have you seen the Emperor?

MAELZEL No

FRAU MAELZEL Well, if you see him, don't tell him you've seen me

MAELZEL What's this all about?

FRAU MAELZEL My fortune (*she starts to exit*). Oh. And if you see Lord Castlereagh, tell him I'll be available at 8 o'clock. He'll succumb in the end (*she exits*)

BEETHOVEN I should never have written the *Battle Symphony* in the first place

MAELZEL But it's your biggest public success! You're never satisfied! I must follow my wife (*he exits. Enter the Emperor*)

EMPEROR Ah. Herr van Beethoven. Have you seen Frau Maelzel?

BEETHOVEN No

EMPEROR Well, if you do see her, don't tell her you've seen me. We're playing kiss-chase, only I've forgotten who is chasing who! (*He exits. Enter Holz, Weiss and Schuppanzigh*)

SCHUPPANZIGH Well, well, if it isn't the collaborator himself

BEETHOVEN What d'you want? And I've no time for fools

SCHUPPANZIGH Pleased with yourself are you that the orchestra is out of a job?

BEETHOVEN That's got nothing to do with me. All I did was agree to write one piece of music

WEISS But if you hadn't complained about us so much, Maelzel would never have built the Panharmonicon in the first place

BEETHOVEN Accept it. You're not good enough. And if I have to, I'll write only for the piano rather than give you work

HOLZ *(Drinking)* Not good enough? What about the *Battle Symphony*? I've never heard such a cacophony in all my life

BEETHOVEN What choice did I have? The Emperor wanted something patriotic and wouldn't relent – but I can see now that patriotism isn't real inspiration. Maelzel added most of the drums, but it was rubbish anyway

HOLZ So what are you going to do about it?

BEETHOVEN About what?

SCHUPPANZIGH About us! We need your help to get our jobs back. We need the recommendation of the court composer

HOLZ Look. I admit I find your work difficult. And I admit I could practise more. If you support us, I promise I'll get better

BEETHOVEN Really? If I was to support you, I'd need your support in electing me as Kappelmeister. I'd want to conduct every piece, and have total control over the repertoire

SCHUPPANZIGH We'll all pledge our word

BEETHOVEN The question remains though. What do you do with the Panharmonicon? Because so long as the Emperor has that he doesn't need you. Now get lost. I'm trying to work

SCHUPPANZIGH We musicians must stand together Beethoven. Those two have taken it very badly. Holz is so upset he's started drinking, and Weiss is so upset that he's stopped! *(The orchestra exit. Beethoven is left alone on stage. He goes to his piano and starts composing the "Ode to Joy" again. The white noise starts again, and gets louder and louder. He stops composing to hold his head between his hands. The white noise continues*

to a deafening pitch, louder than ever before and then suddenly stops)

- BEETHOVEN Hello. Hello. *(He plays a piano chord, very loud)* Goodbye
- EMPEROR *(Entering)* Metternich. Metternich!
- METTERNICH *(Entering)* Your Majesty
- EMPEROR Guess what! The Empress, the Tsar and I just went for a walk through the fair at the Augarten, dressed as commoners to see if the crowd would recognise who we were. And they did!
- METTERNICH Was the Empress wearing anything conspicuous Your Majesty?
- EMPEROR No. Well, only a tiara. You see, you just can't hide good breeding. *(He goes to the Panharmonicon and winds it up. It starts to play the Battle Symphony)*. I'm especially fond of Wellington's cavalry charge Metternich. Inspiring!
- METTERNICH The Congress must address its first issues Your Majesty, and I need to know your mind. Talleyrand campaigns for a France within her *natural limits*, that is the Rhine, the Alps and the Pyrenees, but Lord Castlereagh wishes to constrain France to her so-called *ancient limits* – that is, he wishes to occupy the left bank of the Rhine as a defence against French aggression. Which arrangement should I support?
- EMPEROR I want all good music made available for the Panharmonicon Metternich, and I'm making it my primary business. Nothing could be more fitting for the festivities. But the question is, just what music should we include? What of Bach for instance? I think I'll plumb for the *Brandenburg Concertos*, but do we need all six? I mean, they do go on. And then of course there's Handel. What do you think? The *Water Music*, or *the Arrival of the Queen of Sheba*?
- METTERNICH Your Majesty. I am not familiar ...
- EMPEROR When it comes to Haydn, I think the *Kaiser Quartet* suffices for now, because I don't want too much of any one composer before I've considered the others. It's all a matter of balance
- METTERNICH A balance of powers Your Majesty. Quite so. Consider the dispute between Russia and Prussia over Poland ...

- EMPEROR The whole thing is a quandary Metternich. Imagine being on a desert island and only being allowed so many tunes to take with you! And then we come to Mozart. Well, he's a bit libertine in places, don't you know, and you have to be surprisingly careful. For instance, *Così Fan Tutti* is perfectly acceptable, but the *Marriage of Figaro* is definitely not. We can't have a world where the servants are brighter than their masters, now can we? Where would we all be then?
- METTERNICH I have no idea
- EMPEROR And do we need any Beethoven? Granted the *Battle Symphony*, but of the rest? Pah! The time signature of the 3rd *Symphony* for example. Impossible! Anyway, I must go and find Maelzel. Now that I've decided on the first pieces of music you really need, he must get to work on them immediately (*he exits. Enter Frau Maelzel*)
- METTERNICH Frau Maelzel. If you're looking for the Emperor you've just missed him. How's business?
- FRAU MAELZEL Booming. The Congress creates no end to employments such as mine. There's not enough hours in the day Count. English, French, Italian, you name it. And they've all got more money than sense
- METTERNICH I'm sure. Doesn't your husband mind what you're doing?
- FRAU MAELZEL I never take my work home with me. (*Enter Castlereagh*) Lord Castlereagh, we meet again. Did you get my message? 8 o'clock
- CASTLEREAGH Count Metternich, I must protest. I am a happily married man, and yet this woman pursues me ...
- FRAU MAELZEL You should be flattered. I don't work with rubbish
- CASTLEREAGH What is the Emperor's position on the limits of France?
- METTERNICH He is undecided. I have however read your proposal concerning the guarantee of British maritime rights and the acquisition of Cape Town in exchange for fortresses against the French to be built in Holland. And I am unconvinced. What I seek is a balance of Continental powers that effectively means no one

power has the overwhelming means to defeat any other through war. Whereas you English seem to worry only about French aggression. What about Russian aggression in the east? (*He tears the proposal up, and throws the litter on the floor*) What about Prussian designs in Germany?

- CASTLEREAGH If the Austrians will support a France confined to *ancient limits*, then Britain will do all in her power to limit Russia
- TALLEYRAND (*Entering*) But how Lord Castlereagh? The easiest way to contain Russia in the east is to build a strong Bourbon France in the west whilst allowing Prussia to gain Poland, Poland so often being the victim of Russian intentions in the past
- METTERNICH Really? That's not what you told Katharina Bragation. She dined with me last night, in private, and told me you were all but prepared to see Poland vanish in Russian clutches
- TALLEYRAND You'd be better off speaking to Wilhelmine de Sagan than the Countess Bragation. I can't imagine that you've dined with her
- METTERNICH No, but then I haven't tried. In truth, I've been more than busy as the confidante of Julie Zichy-Festetics, the one they say is so beautiful she refuses 99 men out of every 100
- TALLEYRAND The point is, Count Metternich, that the Countess Bragation misrepresents me over Poland simply because as an owner of Polish lands, she would benefit greatly under the rule of the Tsar, whereas Wilhelmine grasps that a strong France is essential to a balanced Europe, and therefore supports my request for *natural limits*. And as for Julie Zichy-Festetics, I don't see where she has relevance at all
- METTERNICH If you knew her, you'd think her relevant to everything
- CASTLEREAGH Gentlemen! This disguised rutting is no way to re-organise a Continent
- TALLEYRAND And what would you suggest?
- CASTLEREAGH Debate, consultation, compromise. But in the full light of day in the conference chamber, not in furtive drawing rooms and boudoirs by night
- METT/TALL (*Together*) It sounds terribly dull

- CASTLEREAGH And as the only power with no territorial interests in continental affairs, it is obvious that I should chair the Congress. From this day forward, Britain shall be at the heart of Europe
- METTERNICH Lord Castlereagh. Britain shall only ever be at the heart of Europe if there be an earthquake of quite monumental size. Government co-operation is one thing, the English channel quite another
- CASTLEREAGH I still say it is I who should chair the Congress
- METTERNICH (*Drawing Castlereagh aside*) That would destroy my entire strategy. To maintain the supremacy of the four victorious powers, the whole point of the Congress is to make sure it never meets, for then the lesser powers could exercise their votes. Why else does Talleyrand champion their cause – because, like them, he is locked out of the real decision making. Come, we can discuss this further at the Hildebrandts
(*Metternich and Castlereagh exit*)
- MESSENGER (*Entering*) Get your copy of the Congress Bulletin! Only 60 florins! All the news! Consider the issues – an independent Poland, or one under Prussian or Russian control? Should France be allowed her *natural limits*, or will Holland's independence be guaranteed by Britain? All this, together with daily listings of all the festivities. Today, two dramas; *Louis XIV at the feet of Madame de la Valliere!*, and *Hippolytus defending his virtue before Theseus*
- TALLEYRAND Let me have a copy. How about an article on the role of France in guaranteeing the rights of the smaller nations? Unattributed of course, but wholly reliable. Ask yourself, why have the four united nations yet to call the full Congress? And will they ever call it? Besides, given the disputes over Saxony and Poland, are the four united nations actually united at all? (*Messenger and Talleyrand exit. The lighting changes to reveal Maelzel in his workshop*)

METTERNICH *(Entering)* Herr Maelzel. When I entered into the negotiations for this Congress, I pursued the following line of thought. So far as the Emperor is concerned, the Empire is but a large playground, each constituent part distinguished only as the location of a different toy. In Bohemia it is ornamental glassware, in Temesvar it is textiles and tapestries, and in Istria, lest I ever forget, it is truffles. Thus, what negotiations I could make on the Emperor's behalf, I thought, depended entirely on which toys he is tired of and which he desires most at any given time. Whilst this strategy is clearly infantile, it is at least consistent, and therefore carries some chance of success. But now I discover the Emperor has lost interest in all his other toys and territories and is infatuated only with your infernal machine. It is as if he would cede all but your Panharmonicon and the room in which it sits without blinking. Naturally this is no foundation for successful strategy. We must therefore destroy your machine

MAELZEL What?

METTERNICH Herr Maelzel, as Chief Minister to the Emperor of Austria, I demand you obey me

MAELZEL Why should I? The Emperor's very proud of me

METTERNICH How proud will he be when he grows tired of the Panharmonicon, only to discover he's lost most of his kingdom? We are facing diplomatic disaster

MAELZEL How much?

METTERNICH Ah ha! Tell me, in your wildest dreams, what do you most desire?

MAELZEL To go to America Your Excellency

METTERNICH And seek your fortune in the land of democracy and freedom? Am I right? I loath democracy for the simple reason I'd rather pay court to the Emperor of Austria than to the grocer at the end of the road, but if that's your choice, then you shall have it. Passage, board, lodgings, capital for a fresh start, all you could possibly desire

MAELZEL And Frau Maelzel?

METTERNICH The choice is entirely yours

MAELZEL Then we'll leave her out of it. I don't believe what she's doing
...

METTERNICH But you must render the Panharmonicon unworkable and
unrepairable. And no tricks. Do you understand?

MAELZEL My word of honour

METTERNICH If you double cross me, I'll hound you for the rest of your days.
(They shake hands on the deal) Good. *(Gives Maelzel an
envelope)* Half the money now, and half when the deed is done

MAELZEL *(Bowing)* Your Excellency. *(He exits one side. Metternich
watches him go, and then claps his hands. From the opposite
side, enter Schuppanzigh)*

SCHUPPANZIGH Well?

METTERNICH The Panharmonicon is as good as history

SCHUPPANZIGH History always comes back

METTERNICH But Maelzel won't, and he's the only person who can either
build or repair one. He's off to America. After he's destroyed
the rotten fruits of his labour of course

SCHUPPANZIGH America! Bloody hell, how's he going to get there?

METTERNICH I'm paying

SCHUPPANZIGH If I promised to give up the violin, would you pay for me to go
to America?

METTERNICH Don't tempt me

SCHUPPANZIGH It's very generous though. I thought you'd banish him to some
outlying province

METTERNICH How could I? He's the Emperor's favourite. Besides, I am kind
only to be cruel. Herr Maelzel is a man of great ambition but
very limited self-knowledge. If I give him his absolute
freedom, he will, in good time, absolutely destroy himself. I
shall get my revenge, never fear

FRAU MAELZEL *(Entering)* Has my husband been here?

METTERNICH No Frau Maelzel

- FRAU MAELZEL Don't lie. I knew there was something going on, and if you won't tell me, I'll find out myself (*she exits*)
- METTERNICH And now. What intelligence have you for me?
- SCHUPPANZIGH This morning, Lord Castlereagh rose at seven thirty, and went for a walk through the Prater. There he met with Frau Maelzel, for whom he ordered a carriage
- METTERNICH Ah ha! I can embarrass him
- SCHUPPANZIGH Meanwhile, Katharina Bragation received the Tsar at eight, but he left looking disappointed and troubled less than one hour later
- METTERNICH I knew it. She'll have convinced him how resolute I remain over Russian domination in Poland
- SCHUPPANZIGH Finally, Talleyrand paid court to Wilhelmine de Sagan between the hours of ten in the evening and three in the morning, before retiring, only to rise early this morning and call directly on Julie Zichy-Festetics. He was, however, refused an audience
- METTERNICH Bravo! I remain ascendant. That's not bad for a first time spy. Come, I'll buy you breakfast. I can spin this Congress out for some time yet. Keep them all guessing until, in exasperation, they fall in with Austrian demands. (*They exit. Lighting changes to reveal Weiss leaning against a stage wall, playing the refrain of the Kaiser Quartet. Holz is with him, drunk*)
- MESSENGER (*Entering, over the music*) Get your Congress Bulletin here! Read the thoughts of the French delegation, from a reliable source. Read of Castlereagh's plans to chair the full Congress. Read of Austrian opposition. Plus a full list of the day's entertainments! Book your place with Klauswitz as he ascends over the Danube in a balloon. Dance the polonaise at the Hofburg Palace!
- WEISS Hoy! Beethoven? (*Lighting reveals Beethoven half-lit at his piano*) Did you hear that? (*Weiss plays the refrain again*) You see, I'm improving! And I don't need a metronome to know it! Well come on, at least say something (*Beethoven, seated at the*

piano does not reply, but again starts improvising a theme from the “Ode to Joy”). Miserable sod

- EMPEROR *(Entering, in disguise, wearing a wide-brimmed hat)* I’m looking for a woman by the name of Frau Maelzel. Handsome figure, wonderful breasts, succulent as water melons. Have you seen her?
- WEISS She’s busy. She was here, but that was hours ago
- EMPEROR Let me see that bulletin. So, the French support the rights of the smaller nations do they? Well, it seems reasonable, but do they mean it?
- WEISS Everyone should be allowed their own destiny. That’s what I say. It’s not for high and mighty kings and emperors to decide what country I live in or what language I’m allowed to speak
- EMPEROR And tell me young man, is this bulletin your own invention?
- MESSENGER It is
- EMPEROR What did you do before?
- MESSENGER I was the Emperor’s messenger. But after the war there’s a lot less messages, so I do this in my spare time
- HOLZ *(Drunk)* And we were the Emperor’s orchestra, but the bastard sacked us. Just like that. They say you can make a fortune playing on the streets, but that’s rubbish. There’s too many of us for a start
- MESSENGER Would you like to read my editorial?
- EMPEROR After the war, I’m sure the Emperor found his finances ...
- WEISS His finances! What about ours? I mean, he sacks us, supposedly because we’re not good enough, but I mean, how good is he at ruling? Answer me that! It’s that bastard Metternich that’s really in charge. That’s what I think *(Beethoven continues to improvise)*
- EMPEROR Is it my imagination, or is his piano out of tune?
- WEISS *(Listening carefully)* It’s out of tune
- HOLZ The impertinence! And he calls us incompetent! Hoy! Beethoven! Your piano’s out of tune *(Beethoven keeps playing. Holz goes up to him, and bangs on his piano).* I said, your

piano's out of tune! (*Beethoven keeps playing. Holz slams the keyboard cover down on Beethoven's fingers*)

BEETHOVEN (*Standing*) Will you leave me alone!

EMPEROR Herr van Beethoven. Your piano's out of tune. Perhaps...

BEETHOVEN Piss off, all of you. I demand solitude

HOLZ Who d'you think you are anyway? Mozart!?

BEETHOVEN All I'm trying to do is write a piano sonata. But not just any piano sonata! I want to compose a sonata that defines the piano itself. A piano sonata both strident and gentle, ancient and modern, lyrical yet adamant. And at least with a sonata, I can play it myself. I'll write no more crap, not for money, not for the orchestra, and definitely not for the Panharmonicon

EMPEROR Ah, the *Battle Symphony*! Splendid

SCHUPPANZIGH The *Battle Symphony*? Splendid? What kind of moron are you?

EMPEROR Well, I don't know much about art, but I know what I like

HOLZ Who the hell are you anyway?

EMPEROR Just a traveller passing through. Looking for Frau Maelzel

WEISS They say she's the Emperor's whore

HOLZ Got any money? I need a drink

EMPEROR I think you've had enough

HOLZ Don't tell me when I've had enough! I haven't started yet. Are you going to give me any or not?

MESSENGER Would you like to read my editorial? It's my best yet

METTERNICH (*Entering*) Your Majesty, Your Majesty

EMPEROR Sssshhh! Not now man. I'm in disguise Metternich. Mingling with the masses. Finding out what the people think

METTERNICH Very little as a general rule

EMPEROR On the contrary. They're most effusive

SCHUPPANZIGH Your Majesty! You're the bleeding Emperor aren't you!

EMPEROR I'm not. (*Pointing at Metternich*) This man has delusions of grandeur (*Whispering*) What is it?

METTERNICH I've secured the return of Istria Your Majesty

EMPEROR Bravo! I've got my truffles back

HOLZ You are aren't you! You're the Emperor himself! Come to gloat have you? Finding out what it's like to live without work! To live on the streets

EMPEROR Metternich! Are there no hostels for these men?

METTERNICH They're just common drunks Your Majesty

WEISS Common drunks! We're the court orchestra!

EMPEROR And Metternich, (*holding the bulletin*) ...

MESSENGER Please, read the editorial

EMPEROR ... it says here that Talleyrand is supporting the rights of the smaller nations for self-determination. Why are we opposed to that?

MESSENGER Precisely. You must read the editorial

METTERNICH Shut up man (*he pulls his sword*). Or I'll run you through. And the rest of this drunken rabble. Your Majesty, the Austrian Empire is made up of Italians, Germans, Serbs, Croats, Magyars. If we allowed self-determination to dominate, our empire would disintegrate rapidly – which is why Talleyrand supports the principle, both undermining us, and courting popularity at the same time. Where would we be if we allowed Serbs and Croats to argue for self-determination over the very same lands? And then we must take account of religion. What of the Muslims in Herzegovina? (*He takes the Emperor's bulletin and tears it up, throwing the pieces to the ground. Metternich and the Emperor exit*)

HOLZ So what's so special about your editorial, eh?

MESSENGER (*Coughs. Clears his throat. During this speech, all present gradually leave the stage, with the exception of Holz, who falls into a drunken stupor*) What we must ponder is the meaning of Europe itself. Because if it is one thing to be an Austrian, or a Prussian or a Frenchman, it is quite another to be a European. To be European is to come from a divorced family, a continent constantly at war with itself. But it is also to be a sacred child, the offspring of the Phoenician princess Europa whom Zeus loved so passionately he took her for his wife in the guise of a

bull. To be European is to share in the diversity of different languages all somehow subtly connected. It is to understand that once again, as a great leader has tried to unite Europe by force and failed, the Europeans are too complex a people to be ruled by any one other single national body. It is to understand that quite another mysterious and fairminded alchemy of nationhood and culture is needed. To be European is to rejoice in regional diversity, and to loath the malignant tumour of violent nationalism, be it French or German or Serbian or of any other kind. To be European is an act of faith. It is to stand on the tenuous ground of future possibility. It is to promote the myth of a co-operative future with scant historical evidence to support you. And yet, what is a myth if not a lie we use to explain a complex truth? For the Europe of violence, intolerance, bloodshed and terror can never lastingly triumph over the Europe of infinite intelligence and resource, the Europe of reason and enlightenment, of Leonardo and Galileo, of Michelangelo, Socrates and Plato, the Europe of western civilisation itself. The Renaissance was a European experience. The Reformation was a European experience, and what we have learned, in peace or at war, we have ultimately learned together. To be European is to talk to the future amidst the babble of the present. To be European is to be ... *(he notices he is alone)* ... the person no one never listens to *(he exits)*

CASTLEREAGH
FRAU MAELZEL

(Entering) Vienna. This monstrous talking house of Vienna *(Entering from the opposite side, and meeting Castlereagh centre stage)* Lord Castlereagh. We meet again. They say women need to feel loved to have sex, whereas men need to have sex to feel loved. But you strike me as the more sensitive sort *(she takes him by the hand)*. Come with me. *(They exit, Marie-Louise enters, walking across stage to Beethoven's piano. Stepping over the litter, being grabbed by a drunken Holz around the leg. Here, and onwards, she is dressed in trousers, as if emancipated)*

HOLZ Hello beautiful. Don't I know you?

MARIE-LOUISE (*Standing stock-straight, restrained, but adamant*) Get off me

HOLZ I never forget a face

MARIE-LOUISE Leave me alone. (*She continues towards Beethoven's piano. She knocks on it. She knocks again. No answer. The lights go up, Beethoven's fallen asleep over the piano. She rocks his shoulders to wake him*) Ludwig. Ludwig

BEETHOVEN Princess!

MARIE-LOUISE I've brought you some cheese. And some fruit. How are you? My father says you've been writing him letters

BEETHOVEN Your father's been writing me letters (*holding out a conversation book*). You'll have to write everything down (*she pauses. Then hugs him. She writes down. He reads*)

BEETHOVEN Almost totally. But it's not the deafness. It's the ringing in my ears. (*She writes down, he reads*) No. Today there is clearness. Just silence. You're here. (*She writes down, he reads, and laughs, shrugging his shoulders*) At least I wrote back. (*She writes down, he reads*) All the time (*mimes playing the piano*). What else is there? You've left Napoleon?

MARIE-LOUISE We're not going to talk about Napoleon (*she writes it down*)

BEETHOVEN (*He reads. And laughs. He mimes Napoleon marching this way and that way across Europe at the head of an army, one arm pointing forwards, the other inside his jacket*) You don't have to talk about him. (*She writes down, he reads*) No. It's not. Honestly. I'm discovering a great deal. Listen. (*He starts to play the piano, playing a rhythm of very loud and soft notes clearing the skeletal beginnings of the "Ode to Joy", but the piano is badly out of tune. He continues to play, immersed. Marie-Louise stops him*) I've discovered this rhythm you see. I call it a rhythm of deafness. Can you hear it? (*Goes back to the beginning of the "Ode to Joy", stressing two forced notes*) We can still play together. The bagatelle, when you danced

MARIE-LOUISE I'm out of practise

BEETHOVEN *(Continues to play)* Write it down! *(She writes it down)* I can hear these notes back through the floor. I hear with my boots. Then I know where I am. So you see, you can be a deaf composer! *(Marie-Louise stops him again. She writes down. He reads)* Out of tune? How badly? *(She writes down. He reads. Silence. Then very loud note)* I am surrounded by incompetence, and consumed by perfection *(the lighting changes to illuminate Metternich and the Emperor, entering)*

METTERNICH Your Majesty. The Congress is considering the Italian provinces

EMPEROR Tell them they can have anything they want so long as we get Parma and Piacenza. I want them for Marie-Louise

METTERNICH Surely we should also hold out Trieste. We need a sea port. Is something the matter?

EMPEROR The Panharmonicon Metternich. It's not working

METTERNICH Oh no Your Majesty

EMPEROR I'll have to find Maelzel

METTERNICH And then, quite apart from the question of Italy, the very vexed questions of Saxony and Poland continue to dominate ...

EMPEROR *(Standing in front of the Panharmonicon)* Does anyone know how to make this thing work?

METTERNICH No, Your Majesty

EMPEROR What does that bit do?

METTERNICH To which bit does Your Majesty refer?

EMPEROR That bit. Up there

METTERNICH Ah. It would appear to be a cog which rotates on a spindle in a circular manner, though for what reason I know not

EMPEROR Can you fix it?

METTERNICH No Your Majesty, I cannot. And if I might make so bold, there also remains outstanding the matter of the right bank of the Rhine. Should we cede so much to the Prussians?

EMPEROR Someone must know how it works

METTERNICH Yes. Maelzel. But he has departed post-haste to America

EMPEROR What! But he was on a retainer

METTERNICH *De jure* yes, *de facto* no. Even Your Majesty has little influence in the New World

EMPEROR We don't have a man there?

METTERNICH No Your Majesty, we do not

EMPEROR And he just left?

METTERNICH Quickly pursued by creditors. Or so I gather

EMPEROR Life's very dull without music. *(Pause)* Still, I play the fiddle. Perhaps Beethoven could write a little piece for me. I've written him several letters ...

METTERNICH I think he'd demand greater resources

EMPEROR He's got the very latest invention! The Panharmonicon!

METTERNICH It doesn't work Your Majesty

EMPEROR Then we must fix it! Give me a shoulder back

METTERNICH Your Majesty!

EMPEROR Come on man. That's an order. *(Metternich reluctantly acquiesces as the Emperor climbs onto his shoulders)* You know, Metternich, I think I've made a mistake

METTERNICH You Your Majesty?

EMPEROR Yes, me! Extraordinary isn't it. I shouldn't have sacked the orchestra ...

METTERNICH ... oh, surely ...

EMPEROR ... until I had a service contract with Maelzel. Then he wouldn't have gone away, because the contract could have paid off his creditors. And then he could mend the Panharmonicon. So I made a mistake, but it's your fault Metternich

METTERNICH Mine Your Majesty?

EMPEROR Yes. You should have thought of it first. That's your job. To think what I think – first! Make sure it doesn't happen again

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty

EMPEROR Oh, it's obvious what that bit does! Look. It turns the thingy that drives the whotsit which swivels the other thingy that beats the drum. Sometimes

METTERNICH Of course Your Majesty

EMPEROR Then why didn't you think of it first? *(Enter Talleyrand)*

METTERNICH Your Majesty. His Excellency the French Ambassador
 EMPEROR Fixed it! (*The Panharmonicon starts playing the Kaiser Quartet, but not as in the Haydn version. This version is strident and militaristic, as in Hitler and the 3rd Reich*) What d'you want?

METTERNICH Ambassador Talleyrand wants the left bank of the Rhine Your Majesty

EMPEROR I thought that was the right bank

METTERNICH That's the Prussians

EMPEROR Well left bank, right bank, you can't have it today. I'm busy. Go away (*he starts humming the tune*)

TALLEYRAND I will not be treated so casually. This is a disgrace to all living Frenchmen! (*He exits*)

EMPEROR Whatever's the matter with him?

METTERNICH Congratulations Your Majesty. You have just offended the one man I must ingratiate

EMPEROR Only too pleased to help. Metternich! What am I doing up here? Put me down. We can't just fool around!

METTERNICH No Your Majesty

EMPEROR (*Metternich puts the Emperor down*) Europe needs us! (*Enter Marie-Louise*)

EMPEROR Ah, Marie-Louise! Home at last (*they embrace*). Leave us Metternich (*Metternich bows and exits*)

MARIE-LOUISE What ever is that?

EMPEROR It's the world's one and only Panharmonicon. A mechanical musical machine

MARIE-LOUISE There must be something wrong with it. The Kaiser Quartet isn't supposed to sound like that! That version scares me to death. It's full of demons and darkness, flaming skies and mass murder. Switch it off (*the Emperor does so*). I've just been to see Beethoven

EMPEROR Ah, Beethoven! Yes, he sent me a letter

MARIE-LOUISE What did it say?

EMPEROR Well, you see, I wrote to him, suggesting I could practise the fiddle with him, and, well, he's temperamental I suppose. You know what artists are like

MARIE-LOUISE What did he say?

EMPEROR "Piss off you over-bred cretin". It's not often that people ...

MARIE-LOUISE I can explain that. But only if you're feeling charitable

EMPEROR Why?

MARIE-LOUISE He's been acting eccentric as a disguise

EMPEROR Whatever for?

MARIE-LOUISE Because he's deaf

EMPEROR Deaf!? You mean the court composer to the Emperor of Austria has defective ...

MARIE-LOUISE Don't get high and mighty. He's deaf Papa. It's a condition, not an insult

EMPEROR Hence why his piano is out of tune?

MARIE-LOUISE Precisely. However, I've been talking with him, and he said ...

EMPEROR "Pardon?". A joke! And Beethoven said "Pardon?"

MARIE-LOUISE Papa. For once in your life, stop acting the fool!

EMPEROR I act the fool because that way people take it for granted that your decisions are bound to be incompetent and then they can never blame you. If you act with intelligence life is much more difficult. People start to rely on you, trust your decisions, hold you to account ...

MARIE-LOUISE The point is, Beethoven's afraid you'll sack him if you find out

EMPEROR Why does he think that?

MARIE-LOUISE Maybe it's because you've already sacked the orchestra

EMPEROR But I'd never get rid of someone just because they're disabled. It's wicked. The orchestra were as drunk as skunks

MARIE-LOUISE They're drunk because they've got nothing to do all day, and they're angry

EMPEROR Yes. They are a bit hot under the collar. As a matter of fact, I ran into them ...

MARIE-LOUISE This is my home. But I come back here and I don't recognise where I live any more. You can't behave like this

EMPEROR Like what?

MARIE-LOUISE Throwing people onto the streets

EMPEROR Why not?

MARIE-LOUISE Because you're the Emperor! And it's got no breeding

EMPEROR Hasn't it?

MARIE-LOUISE No. It's common. It's the kind of thing you'd expect from some provincial grocer. Papa, it is time to behave with true nobility. Remember how you were educated. Descartes, Voltaire ...

EMPEROR Rousseau! The social contract! Metternich!

METTERNICH (*Entering*) Your Majesty?

EMPEROR What d'you know about Rousseau?

METTERNICH Very little. Machiavelli's more my man. Ah. Princess. How good to have you home. I've spoken to the Pope's envoy, Cardinal Consalvi, so if you could find the time to call on him, I'm sure he'll tear up your marriage contract with Napoleon there and then. Apparently there were several divinely inspired mistakes during the service, so consider it never happened. However, with the restoration of the French Bourbon monarchy, there should be many opportunities ...

MARIE-LOUISE Count Metternich. I'm not interested in your opportunities. I'm married to Napoleon, and it's with Napoleon I'll stay

EMPEROR But he's exiled to some tiny island!

MARIE-LOUISE Then so am I. And before you ask the reason, it's because it's the only way I know to stop that (*points at Metternich*) scheming swine running the rest of my life in the same devious way he ran it before. (*To Metternich*) This is the one thing you thought I'd never do

EMPEROR It's the one thing I never thought you'd do

MARIE-LOUISE That makes three of us. But I'm doing it. And unless you start behaving with real wisdom Papa, I'm never coming back (*she exits*)

METTERNICH Events have unfolded in ways unforeseen

EMPEROR They always do

METTERNICH However, given my progress with the Tsar over Poland this morning, it is but a small calamity. He agrees Cracow is to be a free city

EMPEROR Metternich. In case you hadn't noticed, my daughter has just run off with a penniless Corsican peasant who lives on a barren island and also happens to be an international outlaw of notorious renown. It's not the marriage the Emperor of Austria had in mind!

METTERNICH Necessity demanded ...

EMPEROR Necessity can demand flying pigs when you start talking. And there's another thing. It's time the Congress of Vienna came to an end. The Tsar of Russia loves, the King of Denmark drinks, the King of Wurtemberg eats, the King of Prussia dances, the King of Bavaria does all four, and the Emperor of Austria pays!

METTERNICH Yes. It must be a great privilege

EMPEROR Privilege! It's no such thing. It's very expensive. And besides, the Russian servants aren't house trained. I want it over as soon as possible. Is that clear?

METTERNICH The Congress is a great stimulus to our economy Your Majesty

EMPEROR Well it isn't a great stimulus to me. Everlasting peace Metternich. That's what we're after

METTERNICH Ah no Your Majesty. What we are after is a period of long term stability. However, it remains essential that the conditions of settlement of the last war contain within them the pre-conditions necessary to create the next war. Otherwise, History would cease. And if that happened, the likes of you and me would be out of a job

EMPEROR I don't need to worry about a job Metternich! I'm the Emperor!

METTERNICH What I'm saying ...

EMPEROR I know what you're saying. You're saying that "everlasting peace" and "long term stability" are philosophically distinct. And what I'm saying is that in practice I want that distinction to be as indistinct as possible for as long as possible. Is that clear?

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty

EMPEROR So when I say “everlasting peace” I mean as long a period of “long term stability” as human frailty can so devise. By which I mean it is doubtless necessary to aspire to everlasting peace to achieve any kind of long term stability whatsoever!

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty

EMPEROR In other words, there’s only one Emperor around here, and you’re not him!

METTERNICH No Your Majesty

EMPEROR And the point of saying this is that the point of privilege is not to acquire more. The point of privilege is to understand you’re privileged to possess it in the first place

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty

EMPEROR Which is to say it is necessary for people in positions of power to proceed by principles more robust than those of evident self-interest and short-term profit

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty

EMPEROR And I think we’ve all forgotten that

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty

EMPEROR Because I’m going to tell you something that generally speaking, only Emperors know

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty

EMPEROR So listen carefully

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty

EMPEROR There are, in essence, two strategies employed in the attempt to retain power. The first, and haphazardly beneficial, strategy is to pretend to be stupid when you are in fact intelligent. The second, and always disastrous, strategy is to pretend to be intelligent when you are in fact stupid. Stupidity you see, is at least benign, whereas intelligence is all too frequently malignant

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty

EMPEROR And if you’re going to spend your life re-arranging Europe, it’s really quite important you understand that

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty

EMPEROR Because rearranging continents is very confusing. And a lot of people get upset

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty

EMPEROR So. Everlasting peace Metternich. Get to it

METTERNICH Yes Your Majesty (*he exits. Enter Frau Maelzel, carrying travel bags*)

EMPEROR Gretel!

FRAU MAELZEL Empsy-wempsy!

EMPEROR At last. Where have you been?

FRAU MAELZEL To the depths of depravity

EMPEROR What about this evening?

FRAU MAELZEL I've had enough

EMPEROR I paid you a retainer

FRAU MAELZEL And I retained it. Oh, Empsy, don't be like that! Vienna's a boom town! In the last six months, I've been shagged senseless one thousand, two hundred and fourteen different times, by six hundred and sixty two different men, speaking twenty three different languages and representing forty five different countries, in no fewer than seventeen different positions

EMPEROR Seventeen! You only did sixteen with me. What's the other one?

FRAU MAELZEL You couldn't afford it ...

EMPEROR I'll arrange an overdraft

FRAU MAELZEL ... and besides, it's strictly for perverts

EMPEROR I'd still like to know

FRAU MAELZEL I've retired. That low down swine of a husband has bugged off for good and all, and I'm not waiting for him to come back. Because I'm rich. Yes! Rich, rich, rich! So I'm off

EMPEROR What are you going to do?

FRAU MAELZEL I'm going to cleanse myself. Take the waters in Baden-Baden. And then I'm going to start a finishing school for the young ladies of Saxony. The Saxons have got such dreadful manners, there must be a market

EMPEROR D'you think you're suited?

FRAU MAELZEL I think I'm entirely suited. Men are young womens' biggest problem, and there's nothing about men I don't know

EMPEROR No

FRAU MAELZEL They're all shysters! With the exception of Your Majesty

EMPEROR Yes. Of course

CASTLEREAGH *(Entering, holding a bunch of flowers)* I've made up my mind. I've never felt this way about anyone. Marry me

FRAU MAELZEL Oh God

CASTLEREAGH *(Clutches Frau Maelzel's legs)* I'll give it all up. The wife, the club, the seat in the Lords

FRAU MAELZEL Sod off back to Blighty you daft old toad

EMPEROR No, no, no

CASTLEREAGH *(Seeing the Emperor)* Oh my God. You. It's all been a plot to read my diplomatic bags hasn't it

EMPEROR It's been nothing of the sort

CASTLEREAGH I'm ruined!

EMPEROR I can assure you Lord Castlereagh that we Viennese treat all affairs of the groin with the strictest confidence

CASTLEREAGH But this is love!

EMPEROR Minions! Attend! *(Puts his arm around Castlereagh)*

CASTLEREAGH I'll give up everything. Even the estate in County Sligo

FRAU MAELZEL How much is it worth?

EMPEROR Don't say another word. Rash agreements about giving up territory can be very expensive *(enter the Messenger)*

EMPEROR Ah. See that Lord Castlereagh gets back to his lodgings, has a good bath, a good night's sleep, a hearty breakfast, and the first carriage back to a channel port in the morning

MESSENGER Yes Your Majesty

CASTLEREAGH I think I love you

FRAU MAELZEL I know you *think* you love me, but really you're just a repressed Englishman who's finally met a woman unembarrassed about bodily functions. They say when the Queen farts it's her Lady-in-Waiting who apologises

CASTLEREAGH I'm going mad

EMPEROR Nonsense. It's just your brain's been addled by too much contact with us fickle continentals. A good dose of deep, dull Englishness and you'll be back to normal in no time

CASTLEREAGH You won't tell my wife?

FRAU MAELZEL Lord Castlereagh. I've never met your wife, I'm never likely to meet your wife, and if you introduced me, I would beseech you to be brief (*Messenger and Castlereagh exit*)

EMPEROR When are you leaving?

FRAU MAELZEL Now

EMPEROR You'll be sorely missed

FRAU MAELZEL They'll be others

EMPEROR Yes, there doubtless will, relations with the Empress being what they are. Miserable old bag. D'you know, the Empress thinks I have whores because I'm oversexed. But it's nothing to do with that. It's because she doesn't have a sense of humour. And because she's frigid. But that's because she doesn't have a sense of humour. And if you can't have a good giggle with no clothes on, then when can you?

FRAU MAELZEL I don't know Your Majesty

EMPEROR No, neither do I. D'you want a reference? "The Emperor Francis recommends ..."

FRAU MAELZEL It wouldn't be right

EMPEROR Well, I'll think of you. And when I do, I'll giggle

FRAU MAELZEL Goodbye Your Majesty

EMPEROR Yes. Goodbye. And good luck. (*Frau Maelzel exits, enter Metternich*) Ah. Has it ended yet?

METTERNICH Your Majesty. I have in my possession the triumph of our labours. The Final Act of the Congress of Vienna, awaiting only your own most royal signature

EMPEROR At last! (*Metternich gives the document to the Emperor. The Emperor signs it*) And so by a flourish of his pen, was Europe put back together

METTERNICH Not quite Your Majesty. You must remember the Act still has to be ratified by various Diets and Parliaments, most principally that of the British

EMPEROR Living proof why no sensible monarch permits one

METTERNICH My thoughts entirely

EMPEROR Nevertheless. Peace and quiet at last! Now everything can return to normal

METTERNICH Not quite Your Majesty. The deputation of the Court Orchestra requests an audience

EMPEROR Can't it wait?

METTERNICH It would be unwise to be thought evasive. Firstly because, replete with too much cheap wine, their mood is fractious. And secondly, because they're outside the door, and could well kick it in

EMPEROR *(Pointing to the Panharmonicon)* Is it about that?

METTERNICH Yes. And their re-employment

EMPEROR What should I say?

METTERNICH Something conciliatory

EMPEROR How about "never sack the orchestra. They start to play their own tune"?

METTERNICH It lacks gravitas. The conciliation must be matched by a profundity that reminds them of your regal omnipotence

EMPEROR And what would you suggest, clever clogs?

METTERNICH There's only one Emperor, Your Majesty, and only an Emperor could so compose. I'll show them in. *(Metternich exits and comes back with the orchestra – and Beethoven, who is at the front, with Schuppanzigh)*

SCHUPPANZIGH Your Majesty. I've come to get my job back, mine and all the other musicians. Herr van Beethoven's here to withdraw his request to be orchestra Kappelmeister, on the grounds he's finally admitted he's deaf as a door post

BEETHOVEN What?

EMPEROR *(Shouting)* He said you don't want to be Kappelmeister

BEETHOVEN Yes I do

SCHUPPANZIGH In that case, the orchestra will resign. Which is a bit stupid if you've just given us our jobs back

EMPEROR I haven't yet

SCHUPPANZIGH No. But you will. Because that piece of blasphemous clinking clockwork doesn't work, does it? (*He kicks the Panharmonicon. It starts playing the Kaiser Quartet in Hitler mode. He kicks it again. It stops*) See

BEETHOVEN It's still better than you

SCHUPPANZIGH Come here and say that

EMPEROR Gentlemen. Gentlemen. The passions of your Muse betray you. It is my intention to re-employ all members of the Court Orchestra in the capacities they occupied before Herr Maelzel's invention of the Panharmonicon. And it is further my intention, by Imperial Decree, to create a new position of Imperial Kappelmeister to be occupied by Herr van Beethoven. This is in honour of Herr van Beethoven's consummate reputation as a conductor of the highest class, and yet recognises his even greater talents as a composer. It will therefore be the job of the Imperial Kappelmeister to appoint other conductors to the Court Orchestra, so leaving Herr van Beethoven to compose without any other undue burdens of office. Well, gentlemen?

SCUPPANZIGH What d'you think?

HOLZ/WEISS (*Together*) It sounds reasonable

SCHUPPANZIGH (*Shouting and at once bowing in mock honour to Beethoven*) Imperial Kappelmeister!

EMPEROR Herr van Beethoven?

BEETHOVEN What?

EMPEROR (*Shouting in his ear*) Imperial Kappelmeister!

BEETHOVEN How much?

EMPEROR 400 ducats a year

BEETHOVEN 600

EMPEROR 500

BEETHOVEN 550

EMPEROR You drive a hard bargain

BEETHOVEN I'm the best

SCHUPPANZIGH There's something else (*pointing to the Panharmonicon*). That
contraption must be pulled down and destroyed, and all plans
of it burned

EMPEROR Herr Schuppanzigh, your thoughts happily anticipate my own

WEISS And that bastard Maelzel must be banned from all of the
Austrian Empire for life

METTERNICH I think that will prove unnecessary. I have news of Herr
Maelzel's progress, newly acquired from the Americas, where
he went with his invention in search of a fortune, which
indeed it seems he made, several fold. The Americans were
much impressed by the Panharmonicon at fairgrounds and
other such vulgar gatherings, so much so they duplicated the
invention by some means entitled "mass production". But in
so doing, the attracting novelty of the machine was rapidly
lost, and the republican mind being naturally fickle, the public
grew quickly bored. The Americans it seems are a people of
much energy, but little art. Herr Maelzel proceeded to lose on
the gambling tables all he had won. He died penniless, and by
all accounts, quite mad. (*Beethoven, Schuppanzigh, Holz and
Weiss start clapping*)

EMPEROR Divine retribution perhaps

HOLZ More likely the pox

EMPEROR Whatever, the episode is closed. I trust the future, gentlemen,
to your glorious music, the more unmechanical the better. And
with Royal reflection I conclude; we must always encourage
the beautiful. The merely functional will always encourage
itself

METTERNICH Very good Your Majesty. Very good

EMPEROR I know Metternich, I know. And with that, I pronounce this
audience, and the Congress of Vienna both, to be well and
truly closed. Peace at last!

MESSENGER (*Entering, running breathlessly*) Your Majesty! Your Majesty!

EMPEROR Not now. Go away
MESSENGER But Your Majesty. It is most urgent news
EMPEROR Very well then, but this better be good
MESSENGER I have news Napoleon has escaped from Elba, and is
 marshalling his troops in Flanders, at a place called Waterloo
EMPEROR Metternich! We need a plan!
METTERNICH Responsibility for grand strategy rests with the Emperor Your
 Majesty
EMPEROR Then why isn't he here!?

(As the lights go down, the opening of the "Ode to Joy" is heard, in finished form, and played on a piano in perfect tune. The "Ode to Joy" continues through the curtain call, and in the theatre foyer thereafter, played by full orchestra)

THE END

[Europe is] a rubble heap, a charnel house,
a breeding ground for pestilence and hate.

Winston Churchill, *1945*

Europeans have myths and legends in
common – Greek and Norse, Christian and
Muslim. We need to learn, we need to
experience both the confusion and the
terror of recent European history in order
to inhabit Europe.

A.S. Byatt, *Waterstone's "Great European Books"*
promotion, May 1998

Europe is a mosaic, not a melting pot.

Douglas Hurd, *1997*

Most people suppose I read Metternich by
candlelight.

Henry Kissinger, *1997*