

Examples of this phenomenon appear repeatedly throughout the period.

Haydn's . . . symphonies lead us into vast green woodlands, into a merry, gaily colored throng of happy mortals. Youths and maidens float past in a circling dance; laughing children, peering out from behind the trees, from behind the rose bushes, pelt one another playfully with flowers.

And again:

Beethoven's instrumental music opens up to us also the realm of the monstrous and the immeasurable. Burning flashes of light shoot through the deep night of this realm, and we become aware of giant shadows that [move] back and forth, driving us into narrower and narrower confines until they destroy us. . . .⁵⁶

Even Liszt, prior to valorizing the program, waxes rhapsodic in this purple paean to the metaphorical power of absolute music.

On the towering, sounding waves of music, feeling lifts us up to heights that lie beyond the atmosphere of our earth and shows us cloud landscapes and world archipelagos that move about in ethereal space like singing swans . . . what is it that causes ideals to shimmer before us like the gilded spires of that submerged city, that recalls to us the indescribable recollections that surrounded our cradles, that conducts us through the reverberating workshops of the elements, that inspires us with all that ardor of thirsting after inexhaustible rapture which the blissful experience?⁵⁷

Paul Bekker describes the theme in the closing pages of Beethoven's 32nd and final piano sonata as

increasingly spiritualized, dematerialized. High notes call up a vision of ideal unapproachable heights, the accompanying rhythms flow along, sweeping, harp-like; high above all, a trill suggests the glitter of stars, while among them all runs the melody like a silver thread—the thread woven between earth and heaven by the aspiration of a great soul.⁵⁸

And finally, Beethoven

is above putting his own personality forward in any way, and all his endeavors are directed toward a single end—that all the wonderful enchanting pictures and apparitions that the composer has