

Title: Why *This* Epigraph? :V.F. Odoevsky's "Poslednij kvartet Betxovena" and E.T.A. Hoffmann's "The Story of Krespel"

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This paper explains the significance of the epigraph to Prince Odoevsky's "Poslednij kvartet Betxovena" (1831), a passage from Hoffmann's "The Story of Krespel" (1816), which refers to Krespel's putative madness. The two stories seem to have little in common beyond the musical theme of authors who were both composers. However, a close examination of the two tales reveals that the tales do, in fact, have enough similarities to justify Odoevsky's choice of epigraph. In both works art causes suffering and death to the artist. Antonia's singing in the Hoffmann story causes her untimely demise. In the Odoevsky tale Beethoven claims that artistic expression arises from suffering and that the artist gives up half his life in order to create. The work ends with the discussion of Beethoven's funeral. Krespel is a violin maker and Odoevsky writes of Beethoven's last *quartet*. Krespel has a house built without a plan, simply telling workers on the spot where to insert a window. Beethoven explains to music critics that his notes are the result of inspiration rather than a particular technique.

Both Krespel and Beethoven are considered mad, and live solitary lives except for the company of a beautiful, musically gifted young woman. The public misunderstands Krespel's personal life the way the audience does not appreciate Beethoven's musical innovations.

Works Cited

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