

Karen Klein

On Hearing the Borromeo Quartet Play Beethoven's "Heiliger Dankgesang"

I. First, the chords.

Their sound humbles adjectives--
stately, sonorous, majestic, resonant--
exposes the words' inadequacy.

The measured progression
hones our attention,
makes us wait, expectant.

The diapason calls forth the presence
of an absent organ, as if it were the instrument
not a mere string quartet.

II. Then, the melodic phrase.

It enters with full humility
through the second violin,
the first too grand for its modest approach.

Yet it returns again, plaintive, and again,
its repetitive insistence like a child's why
that never gets an answer.

III. Finally, the melodic phrase.

This time in the first violin—its timbre firm,
Beethoven after his near-fatal illness,
the composition a product of his recovery.

But this is no "holy song of thanks."
The certitude he brought back
becomes an urgent plea

that when the Dark Angel closes in,
his wings will obliterate fear,
his embrace be compassionate.

After retiring from Brandeis University faculty, poet/dancer, **Karen Klein** founded *teXtmoVes*, a collaborative of poets/dancers/ choreographers who perform together and independently, most recently at Urbanity Central, Boston. Her haiku have been published nationally, internationally, and anthologized. Her contemporary lyric poems have been printed in *The Cape Cod Poetry Review*, *Pudding Magazine*, *The Comstock Review*, *SLANT*, *The Somerville Times*, *Ibbetson Street #47*, online in *The Drunken Boat*, *Fusion Magazine*, read as *Sunday Poet on Boston Area Small Press* and *Poetry Scene*, *WCAI Poetry Sunday*, and *Poet-to-Poet* interview with Doug Holder, Somerville Cable TV. A member of Steeple Street Poets, she is compiling her first chapbook.