Episode 36 – Ludwig van Beethoven

At the age of 22, Ludwig van Beethoven composed the world famous “Ode to Joy” that is today the anthem of the European Union. An audio play leads the listeners out of the Beethoven house and straight into the 18th century.

Ludwig van Beethoven is one of the most famous citizens of the town of Bonn. Paula and Philipp present an audio play about the composition of his well-known 9th Symphony and the greatest stroke of fate in the life of the famous composer: the loss of his hearing.

When someone doesn’t understand something, it makes sense to repeat what was said. The professor deals with indirect speech in subordinate clauses with the conjunction “dass”.

Manuscript of Episode 36

You’re listening to the German language course Radio D, a joint project of the Goethe Institute and Deutsche Welle Radio. The author is Herrad Meese.

 Moderator Hello everyone, and welcome to Episode 36 of your German language course, Radio D. In this episode, we’d like to take you back into the past, to the time in which the “real” Ludwig van Beethoven lived. We are in the year 1792 in a small room in the house where Beethoven was born. The 22-year-old composer Ludwig van Beethoven is absorbed in reading a poem by Friedrich Schiller. Listen to the first scene.

Paula Hallo, liebe Hörerinnen und Hörer.

Philipp Willkommen ...

Paula ... bei Radio D.

Philipp Radio D ...

Paula ... das Hörspiel.

Moderator Pay attention to what Beethoven would like to do.
Szene 1: bei Beethoven zu Hause

Beethoven
An die Freude

Freude schöner Götterfunken

Freude

hm hm hm, Freude schöner Götterfunken

hm hm hm, Tochter aus Elysium

Alle Menschen werden Brüder, hm hm hm

Ja, das ist schön.

Vater von Beethoven
Das klang schön, Louis – eine neue Komposition?

Beethoven
Ja, Vater; ich habe ein Gedicht von Schiller gelesen, das ist wirklich wunderbar. Dazu will ich ein Lied komponieren.

Moderator
Beethoven is working on a new composition. Beethoven’s father, who calls his son LOUIS, has heard him playing. He obviously doesn’t know the melody that was being played, which is why he asks whether it’s a new composition.

Vater von Beethoven
Das klang schön, Louis – eine neue Komposition?

Moderator
Beethoven says yes, it is new: he wants to compose a song – LIED – to a poem by Schiller.

Beethoven
Ja, Vater; ich habe ein Gedicht von Schiller gelesen, das ist wirklich wunderbar. Dazu will ich ein Lied komponieren.

Moderator
The poem that Beethoven was reading at the start is called “Ode to Joy”.

Beethoven
An die Freude

Freude ... Freude schöner Götterfunken

Freude

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Moderator
The poem is by Friedrich Schiller, who wrote it in 1785. It is still known today all over the world thanks to Beethoven’s musical setting of it. In 1986, the melody was chosen as the European anthem. And, who knows: perhaps the line “All people become brothers” is more valid today than ever before as an ideal.

Beethoven
Alle Menschen werden Brüder.

Moderator
However, 30 years were to pass before the setting of the poem was to find its final musical form as the culmination of the Ninth Symphony.

But before this, Beethoven noticed something that was particularly terrible for a musician. You’ll find out what that was in the next scene, which is set ten years later – in 1802. Beethoven is in the country near Vienna, where a pupil is visiting him.

Szene 2: auf dem Land (Heiligenstadt)

Beethoven
Willkommen!
Schön, dass Sie mich besuchen.

Junger Mann
Guten Tag, Herr Beethoven.
Wie geht es Ihnen?

Beethoven
Ach!
Kommen Sie! Wollen wir zuerst ein wenig spazieren gehen?

Junger Mann
Aber gern.

Junger Mann
Spielt er nicht wunderbar?

Er spielt doch wunderbar, meinen Sie nicht auch?

Beethoven sagt nichts. Ob ihm die Musik nicht gefällt?

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Radio D – Teil 2


Ach schade, jetzt höre ich nichts mehr.

Beethoven
Kommen Sie! Gehen wir nach Hause.

Junger Mann
Spielt er nicht wunderbar?

Moderator
When a shepherd's flute can be heard out in the open countryside, the young man admires the beautiful playing.

Junger Mann
Er spielt doch wunderbar, meinen Sie nicht auch?

Moderator
But when Beethoven, his highly esteemed teacher, doesn't react, the young man, slightly perturbed, asks his question again.

Junger Mann
In Wien, ja, in Wien da hat mir doch jemand mal gesagt, dass Beethoven in letzter Zeit sehr schlecht hört.

Moderator
When Beethoven still doesn't react, the young man wonders to himself whether Beethoven perhaps doesn't like the music – or whether he may not even be able to hear it. The young man begins to remember how someone in Vienna once told him that Beethoven hadn't been hearing very well of late.

Junger Mann
Ach schade, jetzt höre ich nichts mehr.

Moderator
Only now does Beethoven react – and rather gruffly: he just wants to go home.

Beethoven
Kommen Sie! Gehen wir nach Hause.

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Radio D – Teil 2

Moderator
Maybe you are wondering how Beethoven himself felt about this insidious illness, which became worse and worse until it caused his total deafness eight years before he died.

The very same year, Beethoven writes a letter to his brothers. It is his testament, but he never sent it. In it, he describes the humiliation caused to him by the incident with the flute playing. And Beethoven tries to explain his behaviour, which was often misinterpreted as unsociable; he describes his despair, and tells how only his art and his love of mankind have kept him alive. Now listen to a few sentences from this letter, the famous “Heiligenstadt Testament”.

Szene 3: Testamentauszüge

Beethoven
Oh, ihr Menschen, ihr haltet mich für misanthropisch. Ihr tut mir Unrecht – ich bin nicht menschenfeindlich.

Ich, mit lebhafterm Temperament geboren, musste einsam leben.


Moderator
Did you hear the key word misanthropic? Beethoven believes that people consider him anti-social – but, he says, they wrong him by doing so.

Beethoven
Oh, ihr Menschen, ihr haltet mich für misanthropisch. Ihr tut mir Unrecht – ich bin nicht menschenfeindlich.

Moderator
Beethoven is driven to despair by the fact that he of all people, who was born with a lively temperament, has to spend his life lonely and on his own – EINSAM.
Beethoven
Ich, mit lebhaftem Temperament geboren, musste ein-
sam leben.

Moderator
Today, it may be hard for us to understand why Beethoven
told only two friends about his worsening deafness. As a
highly talented musician, he wasn’t able to ask people
around him to speak more loudly or yell because he was
deaf – TAUB.

Beethoven
Ich kann den Menschen nicht sagen: Sprecht lauter!
Schreit! Ich bin taub. Oh, ich kann es nicht.

Moderator
At Beethoven’s wish, his doctor is not to describe his ill-
ness or publish this testament until after his death.
It is unbelievable but true that Beethoven wrote the music
accompanying this scene in this year of crisis. And many
other compositions were to follow.
But I see that it is time for our professor. You’ll hear some-
thing more about Beethoven later.

Paula
Und nun kommt – unser Professor.

Philipp
Radio D ...

Paula
... Gespräch über Sprache.

Professor
Hello everyone! Now it’s time that I explained something
special to you – a particular kind of subordinate clause.

Moderator
You mean subordinate clauses introduced by that – DASS
-, as in your sentence just now?

Professor
Exactly. Listen to an example.

Sprecher
Er hat gesagt, dass Beethoven schlecht hört.

Sprecher
Er hat gesagt, dass Beethoven schlecht hört.

Sprecherin
Beethoven hört schlecht.

Subordinate clauses with DASS are clauses of statement.
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Moderator
And – as in all subordinate clauses – the verb is placed at the end of the sentence.

Sprecher
Kann es sein, dass er die Musik nicht hört?

Professor
Yes, of course. Subordinate clauses with DASS follow verbs like HÖREN, SAGEN, and WISSEN, or sentences that begin with ES IST and an adjective. „ES IST“ can however be left out.

Sprecher
Es ist schön, dass Sie mich besuchen.

Beethoven
Willkommen!
Schön, dass Sie mich besuchen.

Moderator
Thank you very much, professor. The 9th Symphony mentioned at the beginning was given its premiere in Vienna in 1824 – and was an unbelievable success. Beethoven was deaf when he wrote it and he was deaf when it was performed for the first time. Of course, he couldn’t hear all the applause, but a singer is reported to have turned him around towards the audience so that he could at least see the people clapping ...

In the next episode, you’ll find out what techniques you can use to make it easier to understand German.

Paula
Bis zum nächsten Mal, liebe Hörerinnen und Hörer.

... you’ve been listening to Radio D, a German course of the Goethe Institute and Deutsche Welle Radio ...

Philipp
Und tschüs.

Herrad Meese

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