

2009 Young Australian Writers' Awards  
**ASG Short Story Award**

Awarded to

**Joanne Bui**

The Mac.Robertson Girls' High School,  
Melbourne, Vic.

for

*The Final Movement*



**Australian  
Scholarships  
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SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

# The Final Movement

No one was allowed in.

I told them that he was working on a new piece and didn't want anyone to hear it until he was done. But I didn't know what he was doing.

He keeps the doors shut except when he needs me to clear the room of crumpled up paper or bring him more paper. On these occasions he stands watching silently until I had finished, then he would shut the door. That was how we spent the day. I used to think about getting him to talk, but I know the reason I was not shut out like everybody else was because I don't ask questions.

"You're too simple, Rueben. Think about what the composer heard, not what you see on the paper", he said.

One evening I was practising in my room when I heard the crashes and bangs quieten down the hall. I hurried to his door and he gestured me to come through. He sat down at the piano.

He started with a sad, sweet theme I had heard for a good few hours four days ago. It continued, rising and falling and then he was raging with it in the bass. It abruptly changed to what would have been a pleasant melody but he leaned in closer to the keys and played with angry, syncopated accents then with louder, shriller accents, like screaming. Before he shut everybody out and was still teaching, he shouted whenever I used force with the piano.

"Are you trying to play the piano?" he had demanded, "Or are you trying to destroy it?"

I didn't know what to do. The piano was screaming. He was smashing the strings. When he finished, he turned to face me for the first time.

"Ist es nicht schön?" he said loudly. Is it not beautiful?

I didn't answer.

"I'm leaving. You know what to do with these. Copy and publish."

He looked at me, as if daring me to speak, to ask him why he was leaving and where he was going. But I only nodded and took the sheets from him. He seemed to struggle for a moment, then clapped me on the shoulder and walked out.

I did what he told me to do. I sat in my room and tried to decipher his notes and indications, neatly copying it onto new lined paper. I picked through the screaming and the anger and tried to make it like how his music was before.

Two weeks later his brother arrived, storming into his room. I hurried to it and the moment I stepped in, a sheaf of paper was shoved in my face. The title read *Heiligenstadt Testament*.

"He sent me his will!"

I regarded him silently.

"Is he not here?"

I shook my head.

"Where did he go?"

"I don't know."

I took the sheaf of paper, looked through it and my eye caught a passage, *I was compelled early to isolate myself, to live in loneliness... and yet it was impossible for me to say to men, "Speak louder, shout, for I am deaf"*.

After his brother left, I returned to my room. Think about what the composer heard. I threw away the copy I had neatly written and laid in front of me new blank sheets.

I wrote in his notes, his chords. I wrote in the *forte* and the accents and the screaming. When I finished, I wrote in the top right hand corner, 'Ludwig von Beethoven, 1802.'

And it was the music that he never heard.

*Written by Joanne Bui, Age 15  
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