



Press Release, 13 December 2019

## Beethoven Beyond Myths and Clichés

Two key exhibitions marking the Beethoven Year in Bonn are opening on 17 December

### ***Beethoven – World.Citizen.Music***

Exhibition of the Bundeskunsthalle in cooperation with the Beethoven Haus Bonn  
17 December 2019 to 26 April 2020

### **The New Beethoven Haus**

Museum in the house of Beethoven's birth with a new permanent display and more space  
from 17 December 2019

Special exhibition 'In Great Company – Joseph Stieler's Portrait of Beethoven and its History'  
17 December 2019 to 26 April 2020

**BONN.** December 2020 marks the 250th anniversary of Ludwig van Beethoven's birth. Bonn, his native city celebrates the composer's birthday with a year-long programme of events, BTHVN 2020, under the patronage of Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The programme kicks off on 17 December with the opening of the two central exhibitions at the Bundeskunsthalle (Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany) and the Beethoven Haus. They present a nuanced and multifaceted picture of the world-famous artist – stripped of threadbare myths and clichés, but not of his humanity and complexity. The exhibitions form the musical and historical basis for the events of the anniversary year.

The Bundeskunsthalle – in cooperation with the Beethoven Haus Bonn – is showing the comprehensive survey exhibition ***Beethoven – World.Citizen.Music*** (until 26 April 2020). The exhibition traces the key events and phases of the composer's life, setting them in the larger context of the momentous historical events of the time and correlating them with his musical oeuvre. The exhibition is the first to bring together a wide-ranging selection of some 250 priceless objects – drawn from the collection of the Beethoven Haus as well as from public and private lenders across Europe – that offer a uniquely perceptive insight into the life and work of the composer. The reopening of the **Museum in the house of Ludwig van Beethoven's birth** coincides with the opening of the exhibition at the Bundeskunsthalle. The permanent display has been completely reconfigured and the museum has gained a few rooms, among them a 'treasure chamber' with original manuscripts by Beethoven, a music room and a separate space for special exhibitions, which will be inaugurated on 17 December with a display about the history of Joseph Karl Stieler's iconic Beethoven portrait.

**Bundeskunsthalle: *Beethoven – World.Citizen.Music***

In what historical context did Beethoven create his visionary works? How did he deal with his progressive hearing loss and very poor health? Was he a revolutionary or a political opportunist?

The central exhibition of the Beethoven Year explores these as well as numerous other questions. It locates the artist and his works in his epoch, the turbulent period between Ancien Régime, Revolution, European reorganisation and subsequent Restoration. At the same time, it offers a nuanced view of the multifaceted personality of the composer and man Beethoven. The exhibition scrutinises time-honoured clichés – such as that of the lone genius – and presents some of the most moving Beethoven documents, many of which have rarely or never been presented in public. Among the highlights are several outstanding Beethoven autographs, for example the manuscript copy of the *Eroica*, sketches for the *Ode to Joy*, written as early as 1812, and the Heiligenstadt Testament of 1802, in which the composer expressed his despair at his increasing deafness.

The exhibition architects, neo-studio from Berlin, have created a vivid and atmospheric setting to showcase not only the many facets of Beethoven's life but also his significance and the changing society he lived in. Also on show are iconic Beethoven portraits, best-known among them the near-ubiquitous Stieler picture, but also several less well known portraits from his younger years. Another focus is on the historical musical instruments that were of central importance to Beethoven's compositions. Visitors can experience the period sound of Beethoven's *hammerklavier* in a series of matinée performances on two reproduction fortepianos and immerse themselves in the composer's key works and musical cosmos at strategically placed audio stations. A very different musical experience is provided by two Emoti Chairs, which translate sounds into vibrations and convey an impression of how the composer may have perceived music despite his deafness.

A programme of events tailored for different groups of visitors, including deaf and hearing-impaired people, invites young and old to get to know Beethoven's world. The exhibition is accompanied by an audio guide with a wealth of in-depth information; the children's guide takes the form of an audio play. The exhibition catalogue is conceived as a comprehensive, lavishly illustrated book on Beethoven's life and work.

**New Beethoven Haus Bonn**

The museum in the house of Ludwig van Beethoven's birth is one of most-visited music museum in the world. The new permanent display, which has been open since mid-September, offers a contemporary, experience-oriented and emotional encounter with Beethoven and provides insights into his life and work.

From 17 December, the refurbished Beethoven House with all its new rooms will be open to the public: A music room in the neighbouring building offers space for regular concerts on historical



keyboard instruments as well as other events. The 'treasure chamber' in the vaulted cellar below presents a rotating display of valuable original Beethoven manuscripts. A major boon of the renovation is the fact that the museum finally has a space for special exhibitions – four will be shown over the course of the anniversary year. The series kicks off on 17 December with the exhibition 'In Great Company – Joseph Stieler's Portrait of Beethoven and its History'. No other portrait of Ludwig van Beethoven has achieved a similarly iconic status as the painting showing the composer with the manuscript of the *Missa Solemnis*. Drawing on original paintings and archival material, the presentation thematises not only the multi-faceted history of the painting's impact and reception, it also sheds light on the story behind the portrait and places it in the larger context of portraits of key figures in German politics, society and culture of the nineteenth century.

The new museum shop, café and ticket counter have moved across the road from the museum. On the floor above, a seminar room has been set up for the museum's education and events programme. Here, visitors can access the digital archive of the Beethoven House via tablets. Musically, the Beethoven-Haus celebrates the great composer at the end of January with the anniversary edition of the *BTHVN WOCHE* (17 January to 9 February) and throughout the year with an exciting programme of concerts and renowned artists.

[www.bundeskunsthalle.de](http://www.bundeskunsthalle.de)

[www.beethoven.de](http://www.beethoven.de)

### Tickets

Tickets for both venues can be booked through BONNTICKET. The Beethoven Haus offers fixed time slots. Combination tickets for both exhibitions are also available through BONNTICKET.

### Catalogues

*Beethoven - Welt.Bürger.Musik*, Wienand Verlag, Cologne, 264 pages, ISBN 978-3-86832-555-3, € 35 at the Bundeskunsthalle and € 39,80 in well-stocked bookshops

*In bester Gesellschaft – Joseph Stielers Beethoven-Porträt und seine Geschichte*, Verlag Beethoven-Haus Bonn; 97 pages, ISBN 978-3-88188-171-5, 12 € (available from the Beethoven Haus museum shop)

### CONTACT

Kirsten Lehnert, press office *Beethoven – Welt.Bürger.Musik*

c/o projekt2508 GmbH, T: +49 (0)228 / 184967-24, [presse@projekt2508.de](mailto:presse@projekt2508.de)

On behalf of the Bundeskunsthalle and the Beethoven Haus Bonn

Press contact Bundeskunsthalle

Sven Bergmann, T +49 (0)228 / 9171-205, [bergmann@bundeskunsthalle.de](mailto:bergmann@bundeskunsthalle.de)

Press contact Beethoven Haus Bonn

Ursula Timmer-Fontani, T +49 (0)228 / 98 175-16, [timmer-fontani@beethoven.de](mailto:timmer-fontani@beethoven.de)