BEETHOVEN – ORIGINAL AND DIGITAL

The Beethoven family lived for some years in the yellow house on the left-hand side in the courtyard of the set of buildings which today comprise the Beethoven-Haus. Ludwig van Beethoven was born here in December 1770. Since 1889 the Beethoven-Haus Society has maintained a commemorative museum in the birthplace, which today houses the world’s largest Beethoven collection. The exhibition rooms contain a selection of more than 150 original documents from the time Beethoven spent in Bonn and Vienna. The historical building adjoining on the right (the white rear building), in which Beethoven’s christening was once celebrated, has since 2004 accommodated the “Digital Beethoven-Haus”. Modern methods of presentation lead the visitor on a journey of exploration through Beethoven’s life and work (Studio of Digital Archives). His music is interpreted in a completely new way as audiovisual art and for the first time it is presented virtually (Stage for Musical Visualisation).

TOUR

You may begin your tour as you wish with:

- Beethoven’s Birthplace (museum), the yellow house, entered from the courtyard
- the Digital Archives Studio (multimedia-based Beethoven), the white house (ground floor), entered from the Sculptures Courtyard
- the Stage for Musical Visualisation (virtual theatre), performance times available at the ticket office, meeting point in the Studio of Digital Archives.

In addition we should like to draw your attention to:

- our Audio Guide (available in several languages with many examples of music, performed on historical instruments belonging to the museum)
- the current Special Exhibition (usually in Room 7 of the museum, please refer to the special guide)
- our Museum Shop (with many interesting articles including a CD series unique to the Beethoven-Haus)
You have now entered the house in which Ludwig van Beethoven was born. If you have chosen to borrow an audio guide, it will be handed to you here. The Museum of the Beethoven-Haus is made up of two buildings which were originally separated. After their marriage in 1767, Beethoven’s parents lived in the back house, toward the garden. Here Ludwig van Beethoven was born in December, 1770. The family lived in this house for a number of years and moved afterwards at least three times within the city of Bonn. In the 19th century the house fronting the street was used as a restaurant. When the whole building complex was put up for sale and was in danger of being demolished, twelve interested citizens of Bonn founded the Beethoven-Haus Society in 1889. It bought both houses, had them restored and joined them together in order to set up a memorial site there. The Society remains today the body responsible for Beethoven’s birth house, and it also owns the largest collection of Beethoveniana in the world. Beethoven’s life and works can thus be excellently documented in the Museum. The chronological table offers an overview of the most important dates in Beethoven’s life and in his compositional efforts (see “Important Dates” after the description of Room 12). Additionally, the family tree of the van Beethoven family [1] and the city maps of Bonn and Vienna [2] can be viewed here. The sites of Beethoven’s subsequent residences are marked on the map of Bonn. His birthplace is the only one to have been preserved.
Beethoven’s grandfather, Ludwig the Elder (1712-1773) [3], was a highly respected person in his capacity as the Master of the Chapel of the Elector of Cologne. The painting entitled “Bönnsche Ballstück” (1754) [4] shows the Bonn Court Orchestra playing at a masked ball in the theatre of the palace in Bonn (now the University). In the foreground is the Elector Clemens August. His successors, Elector Maximilian Friedrich [5] and Max Franz [6], the youngest son of Empress Maria Theresia, Elector of Cologne 1784-1794, were Beethoven’s employers when he was a young man. A liberal atmosphere influenced by the Enlightenment prevailed then at the Court. Ludwig van Beethoven was employed in the court orchestra starting in 1782 when he was 12 years old, first as substitute, then from 1784 as the regular organist, later also as violist and correpitor. He was thus in a position to contribute to the finances of the family. After the death of his mother (1787) he was the sole breadwinner and bore this burden alone.

Johann van Beethoven tried to present his talented son to the public as a wunderkind like Mozart. The earliest document of Ludwig van Beethoven’s public performances is the announcement (Avertissement) [7] of a concert on March 26, 1778 in Cologne. It is assumed that Ludwig’s father knowingly misstated his age as “6 years old” in order to attract greater attention to him. Beethoven’s first composition [8] was published in 1782 (9 Variations for Piano on a March by Dressler), aided by his most important teacher in Bonn, the court organist, theatre conductor and composer Christian Gottlob Neefe (1748 –1798) [9].
ROOM 3

The viola [10] which Beethoven played in the orchestra during his time in Bonn is displayed in the case. It was probably built by Sebastian Dalinger around 1780 in Vienna after a model by J. Stainer. Silhouettes of important composers of the 18th century [11] whose works influenced the compositions of the young Beethoven hang on the wall. Augustusburg Palace [12] in Brühl, the summer residence of the Elector, and his residence in Bonn [13] were the most important locations in which the orchestra performed.

ROOM 4

The central theme of this room revolves around the friends of Beethoven’s youth. The silhouette in the showcase is the earliest existing portrait [14] of Beethoven, then 16 years old. The silhouettes on the wall [15] show members of the von Breuning family, who were very important to Beethoven. He was a friend of the children and gave them piano lessons. The portrait [15a] shows the daughter Eleonore playing the square piano. Beethoven owed a debt of gratitude to her mother, Helene von Breuning [16], who offered him motherly advice after the death of his own mother (1787) as well as an intellectual and spiritual education. The greeting cards [17] from Beethoven and Eleonore von Breuning in the showcase bear witness to their lifelong friendship. The man who later became Eleonore’s husband, Franz Gerhard Wegeler (1765-1848) [18], a physician, was also a friend of Beethoven’s youth. He published the first authentic biography of Beethoven [19] in 1838.
Beethoven played regularly on this organ manual [20] from the Church of the Minor Orders (now St. Remigius) from his 10th year on. The rest of the instrument [21] was destroyed in the Second World War. The historic manual had already been removed from the organ during its restoration in 1904 and given to the Beethoven-Haus. On the right-hand wall two oil paintings by François Rousseau show courtly scenes. In the showcase, the first edition of the three early piano sonatas which he dedicated to the Elector are on display.

Beethoven left Bonn in 1792 in order to study composition with Joseph Haydn [22]. He was supposed to return to Bonn as a court musician at the end of his studies. The French occupation of the Rhineland in 1794 lead to the dissolution of the Electoral state, however, so that Beethoven remained permanently in Vienna. He never again saw his hometown of Bonn. His friends in Bonn presented him with an autograph album [23] at his departure in which they sent him off with all good wishes. It is opened up at the page with the famous entry by Ferdinand Count Waldstein: “...through ceaseless toil you will receive: Mozart’s spirit through Haydn’s hands”. Beethoven later dedicated his Sonata Op. 53, the “Waldstein Sonata” to him.
**BEETHOVEN IN VIENNA**

**ROOM 6**

The portrait etchings on the wall [24] show Beethoven’s teachers in Vienna: Joseph Haydn (1792-1794), Johann Georg Albrechtsberger (1794/95) and Antonio Salieri (1801/1802).

**ROOM 7**

Here the special exhibitions on various aspects of Beethoven’s life and works are displayed (see the respective catalogue or the brochure in this brief guide). Some objects from the special exhibitions are integrated into the permanent exhibition (they can be recognised by their grey signs). Both the portrait of Beethoven by Willibrord Joseph Mähler (1815) [25] and a valuable collection of historical woodwind instruments (Zimmermann Collection) [26] are on permanent exhibition.
This room ushers the visitor into Beethoven’s Viennese period. The bust of Beethoven [27] which was made in 1812 by the Viennese sculptor Franz Klein (1779-1840) is considered to be an especially accurate portrayal because it was made from the life mask (see Room 11). Evidence of Beethoven’s deafness is found in the case on the left-hand wall. Already at the age of 30, Beethoven reported a growing difficulty with his hearing and the isolation resulting from it to his friend Wegeler. One year later he wrote his famous “Heiligenstadt Testament” [28] for his two brothers. Ear trumpets [29] were of only limited help so that Beethoven had to communicate with the aid of notebooks, the so-called “Conversation books” [30]. These notebooks, which form a kind of protocol of his conversations, are an important source for Beethoven research today. Thomas Broadwood, the London piano builder, presented Beethoven with a grand piano [32] in 1817. The piano exhibited here is identical in its construction to that instrument. The instrument built by the famous Viennese piano builder Conrad Graf was Beethoven’s last grand piano [33]. The two pianofortes are displayed here as they were positioned in Beethoven’s last Viennese lodgings in the “Schwarzspanierhaus” (“The House of the Black-Robed Spaniard”).
CD productions with both pianos as well as one played on the string quartet instruments [31] which Beethoven received as a gift from his patron, Prince Carl Lichnowsky, can be purchased in the Museum’s shop. Hanging on the wall above the two pianos is what is probably the most famous Beethoven portrait of all times, painted in 1820 by Joseph Karl Stieler [34]. After the death of the composer, two miniatures with portraits of ladies [35] and a love letter addressed to the “Immortal Beloved” were discovered, probably in a portable writing desk. The identity of this lady has remained Beethoven’s secret up until today. Giulietta Guicciardi [36] was probably the object of his affection for a period of time. He dedicated his piano sonata op. 27, no. 2, the “Moonlight Sonata”, to her. Beethoven also maintained close personal relationships with Josephine and Therese Brunswik and Antonie Brentano at various times.

**ROOM 9**

In the Bodmer room, selected items from this eminently important private collection are exhibited. This collection was bequeathed to the Beethoven-Haus Society by the Swiss connoisseur, Hans Conrad Bodmer [37], in 1956. It includes numerous Beethoven manuscripts as well as Beethoven’s travel desk [38] and his normal desk [40], which Bodmer bought from Stefan Zweig’s collection.
The last written document in Beethoven’s hand [39] is a codicil to his last will and testament, written three days before his death. In it he wills his entire estate to his nephew Karl. The handwriting shows clear signs of his physical decline.

The tall case [41] shows smaller items from Beethoven’s everyday life as well as his “creed”.

Beethoven died on March 26, 1827 in Vienna in his lodgings in the “Schwarzspanierhaus”. The lithograph of Beethoven on his deathbed by Josef Danhauser [42] is a moving document of his death. The funeral cortege on March 29, 1827 [43] in which about 20,000 mourners took part, here depicted in watercolour by Franz Stöber, reveals how very famous and acclaimed Beethoven was already during his own lifetime.

**Room 10**

A photo on the left wall on the way back to the garden house offers a glimpse into the room in the “Schwarzspanierhaus”, in which Beethoven died [44]. The building was demolished in 1904.

**Room 11**

The death mask [45] was made by Josef Danhauser about 12 hours after Beethoven’s death. In order to investigate the causes of the composer’s deafness, the skull was opened shortly afterwards during the autopsy. The life mask [46] was taken by Franz Klein from the 41-year-old Beethoven.

**The Room in Which He Was Born**

The entry in the registry of baptism [47] from the former Remigius Church, dated December 17, 1770, is our only indication of when Beethoven was born. He probably first saw the light of day in this modest attic room on December 16 or 17, 1770.
ROOM 12
(former kitchen of the van Beethoven family)

Special exhibitions from Room 7 are continued here, or documents pertaining to the history of the Beethoven-Haus Society are displayed. In the neighbouring lecture room concerts are played on the historical pianoforte built by Conrad Graf (1824) [48], when the composer’s music can be heard as it must have sounded in his day. On the walls are portrait photos of the founders and the numerous honorary members of the Beethoven-Haus Society.

IMPORTANT DATES

1770 (December 16 or 17) Ludwig is born as the second child of Johann and Maria Magdalena van Beethoven and is baptized on Dec. 17 in the parish church of St. Remigius.

1778 (March 26) Ludwig van Beethoven’s first performance as a pianist, in Cologne.

1782 First publication of a composition.

1784 Beethoven becomes court organist, later also violist in the court orchestra of the Elector of Cologne.

1792 in November Beethoven moves to Vienna and becomes a student of Joseph Haydn.

1795 Beethoven’s Opus 1 (Three Piano Trios) appears in print.

1798 Beginning of his hearing problems.

1800 Beethoven organizes his first concert of his own works. The First Symphony is performed for the first time.

1802 (October 6) Heiligenstadt Testament, thoughts of suicide.

1809 Beethoven is promised an annuity by his patrons in order to keep him in Vienna.

1813 With “Wellington’s Victory or the Battle of Vittoria”, op. 91, Beethoven reaches the zenith of his fame.

1824 First performance of the Ninth Symphony.

1827 (March 26) Beethoven dies.

(March 29) Beethoven is buried. 20,000 people take part in the funeral procession.
The entrance to the Digital Archives Studio is in the Sculptures Courtyard. The studio is equipped with four double and eight single computer workstations with headphones. It enables the visitor to experience Beethoven’s works and other documents from the Beethoven-Haus collections with a new optical and acoustic intensity. The start-page on the screen provides an index of the contents and directs the user into the Digital Archives which contain more than 5,000 documents. Each document has been digitised using the latest techniques and can thus be viewed in the best possible picture quality and size. In addition there are explanations and recordings of all Beethoven’s works as well as audio letters, music scores which can be listened to, virtual exhibitions and a digital reconstruction of his last home. At the computer workstations the following choices are available:

- view Beethoven’s works as handwritten manuscripts and first editions
- listen to all his works in recordings made by the Deutschen Grammophon-Gesellschaft
- access original scores to listen to and read simultaneously
- retrace Beethoven’s life with the help of correspondence and pictures
- listen to recitals from Beethoven’s letters
- visit virtual exhibitions
- explore Beethoven’s last home in Vienna in a digital reconstruction
- examine more closely your favourite exhibits from the exhibition in Beethoven’s birthplace
- send greeting cards with various designs
- especially for children: “Hello, Beethoven!”
The Stage for Musical Visualisation in the historical vaulted cellar of the house known as “Im Mohren” is a forum for the experimental visual interpretation of Beethoven’s works using the new medium “Virtual World”. In a revolutionary way two selected compositions have been orchestrated with the help of three-dimensional computer graphics. Eighteen loudspeakers spread around the room also create a three-dimensional sound. Abstract figures and shapes appear on the screen and, when viewed through 3D spectacles, appear to be moving within the room. The performances (every 45 minutes, for starting times please enquire at the ticket desk) are accompanied by an info-trainer. Meeting point in the Studio of Digital Archives.

“FIDELIO, 21st CENTURY” (20 minutes)

Music: Ludwig van Beethoven, “Fidelio”, scenes from the second act (1814), performed by the Vienna Philharmonics under the direction of Leonard Bernstein (1978) and René Kollo (Florestan), Gundula Janowitz (Leonore), Hans Sotin (Don Pizarro), Manfred Jungwirth (Rocco).

“Fidelio, 21st century” is the first classical opera to be performed interactively in a 3D virtual reality or virtual environment. The opera’s characters are depicted as abstract figures consisting of small particles (particle systems). By following musical and dramaturgical directions, the figures express the music’s flow in dance-like movements. In addition, visitors can influence the performance through interactive devices.

The plot: The scenes chosen for the production represent the core of the opera’s plot: Florestan is defeated by his opponent Pizarro and imprisoned (introduction). There, he has a vision of his wife Leonore as an angel (aria “In des Lebens Frühlingsstagen” (In the spring days of life)). Pizarro who was let into the prison by Rocco, the prison guard, (whistling) tries to stab Florestan with a dagger. Fidelio (Leonore disguised as a male) throws herself between them, discloses her identity, fends off Pizarro’s dagger and saves her husband Florestan (quartet “Er sterbe” (He shall die)). Together they celebrate their rescue, reunion, liberation and Pizarro’s disempowerment (duet “O namenlose Freude” (Oh nameless joy)).
**The figures:** The opera’s figures consist of moving particles which can be distinguished by their specific form and colour: Pizarro (white bars), Leonore (blue wall or wave), Rocco (red and white double ball with tentacles), Florestan (white and red spiral). The prison is depicted by geometrically arranged bars.

**Interactive devices:** By means of the four interactive devices set up in the stage room, visitors can influence the optical and acoustical events to a certain extent during the performance and move the figures and their voices around in the room. Thereby, visitors can implement their own dramaturgical ideas. Each figure has its own interactive device. A flashing light indicates that the device is ready for use.

- Ropes Florestan (spiral)
- Ball Rocco (double ball)
- Column Leonore/Fidelio (wall/wave)
- Joystick Pizarro (white bars)

The audiovisual work of art called “Presto 126/4” was created as a lyrically tempered contrast and encore to “Fidelio”. The music is Beethoven’s bagatelle op. 126 no. 4 in B flat, played by Paul Komen on a pianoforte belonging to the Beethoven-Haus. The digital performance, which lasts four minutes, turns shapes, volume and sound spectra into a three-dimensional picture, which can be controlled interactively by the viewer.

**Production “Fidelio 21.st century” and “Presto 126/4”:**

For more information about music visualisations, go to [www.beethoven-haus-bonn.de](http://www.beethoven-haus-bonn.de)

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