

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Complete Symphonies & Concertos

Hannes Minnaar | Liza Ferschtman | Storioni Trio

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra

Jan Willem de Vriend



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CD 1

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 4 in B flat Major, Op. 60 (1806)

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| [1] Adagio – Allegro vivace | 11:45 |
| [2] Adagio | 8:19 |
| [3] Allegro molto e vivace | 5:41 |
| [4] Allegro ma non troppo | 7:10 |

Symphony No. 6 in F Major, Op. 68 "Sinfonia Pastorale" (1808)

| | |
|--|--------------|
| [5] Allegro ma non troppo – Angenehme, heitere Empfindungen, welche bei der Ankunft auf dem Lande im Menschen erwachen | 11:30 |
| [6] Andante molto moto – Szene am Bach | 11:49 |
| [7] Allegro – Lustiges Zusammensein der Landleute | 5:10 |
| [8] Allegro – Donner. Sturm | 3:51 |
| [9] Allegretto – Hirtengesang. Wohltätige, mit Dank an die Gottheit verbundene Gefühle nach dem Sturm | 9:12 |

Total time 74:29

CD 2

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 1 in C Major, Op. 21 (1799/1800)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| [1] Adagio molto – Allegro con brio | 8:58 |
| [2] Andante cantabile con moto | 7:06 |
| [3] Menuetto (Allegro molto e vivace) | 4:02 |
| [4] Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace | 6:08 |

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67 (1808)

| | |
|----------------------|--------------|
| [5] Allegro con brio | 6:37 |
| [6] Andante con moto | 8:29 |
| [7] Allegro | 4:47 |
| [8] Allegro | 10:02 |

Total time 56:19

CD 3

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92 (1811/12)

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| [1] Poco sostenuto – Vivace | 13:42 |
| [2] Allegretto | 8:44 |
| [3] Presto | 9:14 |
| [4] Allegro con brio | 8:56 |

Symphony No. 8 in F Major, Op. 93 (1812)

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| [5] Allegro vivace e con brio | 8:53 |
| [6] Allegretto scherzando | 4:07 |
| [7] Tempo di Menuetto | 4:40 |
| [8] Allegro vivace | 7:41 |

Total time 65:57

CD 4

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 36 (1801)

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| [1] Adagio – Allegro con brio | 12:17 |
| [2] Larghetto | 10:19 |
| [3] Scherzo: Allegro | 4:51 |
| [4] Allegro molto | 6:48 |

Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 55 "Eroica" (1803/4)

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| [1] Allegro con brio | 16:46 |
| [2] Marcia funebre: Adagio assai | 12:49 |
| [3] Scherzo: Allegro vivace | 5:37 |
| [4] Finale: Allegro molto | 11:24 |

Total time 80:56

CD 5

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125 (1824)

| | |
|--|--------------|
| [1] Allegro ma non troppo e un poco maestoso | 14:45 |
| [2] Molto vivace | 13:08 |
| [3] Adagio molto e cantabile | 12:32 |
| [4] Finale: Presto | 22:47 |

Total time 63:14

CD 6

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat Major, Op. 19 (ca. 1788-1801)

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| [1] Allegro con brio | 14:23 |
| [2] Adagio | 7:29 |
| [3] Rondo: Allegro molto | 6:11 |

Piano Concerto No. 1 in C Major, Op. 15 (1795; rev.1800)

| | |
|----------------------|--------------|
| [4] Allegro con brio | 17:49 |
| [5] Largo | 10:13 |
| [6] Rondo: Allegro | 8:50 |

Total time 64:59

CD 7

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Minor, Op. 37

| | |
|----------------------|-------|
| [1] Allegro con brio | 17:10 |
| [2] Largo | 7:47 |
| [3] Rondo: Allegro | 9:41 |

Concerto for violin, cello and piano in C Major, Op. 56

"Triple Concerto" (1803)

| | |
|------------------------|-------|
| [4] Allegro | 16:55 |
| [5] Largo (attacca) | 4:48 |
| [6] Rondo alla polacca | 13:05 |

Total time 69:30

CD 8

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58 (1807)

| | |
|----------------------|-------|
| [1] Allegro moderato | 17:23 |
| [2] Andante con moto | 4:52 |
| [3] Rondo: Vivace | 10:16 |

Piano Concerto No. 5 in E flat Major, Op. 73 'Emperor' (1809)

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| [4] Allegro | 20:04 |
| [5] Adagio un poco moto | 7:12 |
| [6] Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo | 10:28 |

Total time 70:19

(All cadenzas by Ludwig van Beethoven)

CD 9

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 61 (1806)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| [1] Allegro ma non troppo * | 25:04 |
| [2] Larghetto | 8:52 |
| [3] Rondo (Allegro) ** | 9:52 |

[4] **Violin Romance No. 1 in G Major, Op. 40** (ca. 1802) 6:26

[5] **Violin Romance No. 2 in F Major, Op. 50** (1805) 8:04

Total time 58:27

* cadenza Beethoven, transcribed for Viollin by Wolfgang Schneiderhan - Timpani Peter Prommel

** cadenza Fritz Kreisler

This box is a compilation of separately released CD's on Challenge Classics.

**For booklet with the original liner notes,
please see www.challengerecords.com/booklets/cc72856**



Complete Symphonies

Over the past few years, Jan Willem de Vriend and The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra have made CD recordings of all the symphonies of Ludwig van Beethoven. This box contains them all.

At an international level, Jan Willem de Vriend is more and more regarded as an outstanding conductor with a new, fresh point of view. As is his vision of Beethoven. For instance, the important classical magazine Gramophone wrote about Symphonies nos. 4 & 6: "These are strong, thrustful performances."

De Vriend digs deeper and deeper: this is clear not only from listening to these CDs. In interviews, he regularly talks about how he works and his ideas. In a fascinating and lengthy interview on Opus-klassiek.nl by music connoisseur Aart van der Wal, De Vriend talked about aspects such as the use of a trumpet mouthpiece by horn players in Beethoven's day and age:

"It allowed them to play a minor third higher, and this created fantastically shrill effects, such as in the opening of the Seventh. Oddly enough, no book has ever mentioned this, but it is one of the many things that have been passed down and that make a huge difference. And correspondence has been preserved from a contrabass player who took part in the premiere of Beethoven's Ninth in Vienna and then sent his fingerings to London. Things like this teach me certain aspects that say so much! And the fact that the horn players used trumpet mouthpieces also says a lot. Then I read the score very differently. It shows me both the technical possibilities and the difficulties that musicians

of the age must have personally experienced. In the symphonies, we – that is, The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra – use 'old brass' copies from that era, and this pays out in the performances. Something really happens: there is tension, the orchestra can make noise, exactly as Beethoven meant them to, in my opinion. And then there are also the woodwinds, actually made of wood, that sound so wonderfully spicy and robust ..."

His words clearly show an intense passion for music. They also show that Jan Willem de Vriend will never stop investigating. Curiosity and eagerness are simply part of him and the way he works. And this means that, in his hands, music from the past comes to life, time and time again.

Valentine Laout-van Leeuwenstein

Symphony No. 4 and Symphony No. 6

October 1806. In a fit of fury, Beethoven retreats in a huff from the country estate of his noble friend and maecenas Prince Karl Lichnowsky. He sends him a letter: „Prince, what you are, you are by accident of birth what I am, I am through my own efforts. There are thousands of princes. There is only one Beethoven!“

Beethoven composed his Fourth Symphony in the summer of 1806 when he was a guest of Lichnowsky in his castle in Grätz, near Troppau in the present Czech Republic. When French troops were stationed on the estate and Lichnowsky urged the composer to cheer the men with some piano playing, Beethoven refused. Lichnowsky then asserted feudal rights and ordered him to do so. But Beethoven would not allow himself to be put upon; he left the castle and, after sending the letter this quotation is taken from, he returned to Vienna. The anecdote sketches Beethoven's attitude toward the nobility. Although he was generally on good terms with his noble friends and benefactors, he was not someone who could be commanded! He needed the nobility for his income and he generally made clever use of this relationship, but he bowed to no-one, except perhaps God and a handful of great minds he admired.

1806 was a very productive year for Beethoven, one in which his creative juices were flowing abundantly. He composed not only his Fourth symphony, but other great works such as the violin concerto, the Fourth piano concerto and the Razumovsky quartets. The years leading up to 1806 had been turbulent. It was a time of war – with Napoleon, who was conquering more and more parts of Europe. And then there was the betrayal felt by Beethoven and others when Napoleon allowed himself to be crowned Emperor in 1804! In a personal sense,

too, Beethoven had been through very hard times: he grew increasingly deaf, and suffered from abdominal complaints. In 1802 things were going so badly with Beethoven that he had suicidal tendencies.

If you want to perform his symphonies and surely if you want to record them, you must make a thorough study of Beethoven's personal situation and that of the world around him. Here we can only set down a few short brushstrokes on an enormous empty metaphoric canvas. A canvas that must be filled completely, preferably painted true to life right down to the smallest details, using a fantastic palette of colours. When it is finished, we will see Beethoven, situated in his time. The painting will tell a story. With this new Beethoven cycle conductor Jan Willem de Vriend, together with The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra, ventures to tell a new story. His story. With enormous passion and enthusiasm, he has immersed himself in the life and work of Beethoven. To gain the best possible understanding of Beethoven, he says, you must know something about the people around him: for example, his teachers Albrechtsberger and Neefe, who watched his career. You need to know what it was like in Bonn when he grew up there. You need to know that his grandfather enjoyed trading wine and that Beethoven therefore took pleasure in allowing himself to be paid in wine, for example by his publisher. You need to know where his roots are. You need to know the music of his pupils, such as Ries and Moscheles. Jan Willem de Vriend has conducted the music of Beethoven, of people who composed for him, of his contemporaries. He has been working on this intensively for the past twenty years.

A new recording of the symphonies of Beethoven is no easy matter, because there are fantastic recordings by such conductors as Mengelberg, Fürtwängler and many others. According to Jan Willem de Vriend, some young conductors regularly give the impression that they have no idea of where Beethoven comes from or the sort of time when the music was composed. They evidently do not yet have enough knowledge of the spirit of Beethoven's time.

In addition, there is the aspect of maturity. To understand the music and the human aspect to the full, you probably need to have attained a certain age. Because of his deafness, Beethoven listened more and more inside himself, and this created a sense of awareness among fellow composers. Schumann said, "I am no longer even sure if we can still compose, because did not Beethoven already say everything?" And yet the form, and the fact that the *Zeitgeist* continued to change, meant that these geniuses, too, could go on composing. And, to come back to musicians like Jan Willem de Vriend, is it not an advantage when you also master the art of listening inside and can find there a certain reflection of what you hear in Beethoven? In other words, can we say that a certain wisdom of the world is also needed?

The Fourth is the symphony heard least frequently in concert halls. It does not deserve this because although as a symphony it may perhaps seem to have less stature, in essence it says more with less. The Fourth is wedged in between two giant compositions: the Third, the monumental *Eroïca*, and the Fifth, sometimes viewed as 'the symphony of the victory over destiny'. It was Schumann who, in relation to the Fourth, spoke of "a slender Greek virgin between two Norse gods".

And yet it stands erect, proud, powerful and in full-blown beauty, this virgin! Although it starts with a mysterious pianissimo and a major-minor oscillation which puts listeners on the wrong foot, the Fourth basically exudes a passionate joy of life. Moreover, it is a symphony full of contrasts. Beethoven was mad about Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach; for him, C.P.E. was the great Bach. His influences can clearly be found in the Fourth, with its many contrasts and the concept of *Sturm und Drang*. This idea is given exhaustive treatment by Beethoven; after it, *Sturm und Drang* was over and done with, as far as he was concerned.

Beethoven completed his Sixth symphony in 1808. Four years after he tore up the title page of the *Eroïca* – because it was dedicated to Bonaparte and Beethoven felt betrayed by him – he accepted the position of music director at the new court of Jérôme Bonaparte, Napoleon's brother! He had been made king of Westphalia and made his residence in Kassel. Beethoven was forced to accept the position on account of financial difficulties and on 22 December 1808 he gave a farewell concert in Vienna. But ultimately he never had to actually hold the position, because Prince Lobkowitz, Prince Kinsky and Archduke Rudolph offered him a reasonable annual allowance which he accepted and thanks to which he was able to remain in Vienna as a free artist.

The Sixth symphony was written the most quickly. Each symphony sounds as if Beethoven has reinvented the form or added something new to it – for example, the Fifth with its minimalism and the Sixth with its depiction of the pastoral. This is more than the sounds of nature; it also means painting the feel of nature in tones. It cannot be achieved in a literal imitation of the sounds

you hear outdoors. The Baroque period worked with precise resemblances, as in Vivaldi's Four Seasons. Composer Tartini once said, "If you want to play the violin well, just listen to the birds and do what they do". In Beethoven, imitation is fading and emphasis is on how we perceive nature. Beethoven said that he loved trees better than people, and in the end this really was the case: he felt forsaken by everyone and everything.

For Jan Willem de Vriend, recording Beethoven's symphonies is an absolute dream come true. His work with ensembles such as the Combattimento Consort Amsterdam has brought him in close contact with the music of Beethoven and his predecessors. This has given him in-depth knowledge of the period on the basis of which he can construct his own story.

Every musical interpretation comes about with the knowledge and learning of its conductor at the time. It is frustrating to think that a few years after the recording, your own insights have developed to such a degree that as a conductor you may think, "How could I have done that?" On the one hand, of course, this is the perfectionist speaking. On the other hand, it is actually an advantage. New facts and insights may have come to light in the intervening years. This means that the symphonies will continue to be recorded for many years to come. All conductors who try their luck with these works present to us interpretations that say a lot about the conductors themselves and the time in which the recordings were made.

The canvas can never be filled completely; that would be utopia. The picture will constantly be changed by new facts and nuances. This recording of the Fourth and Sixth symphonies is an interpretation of Jan Willem de Vriend and

his orchestra, belonging to a certain moment in time and recounted entirely in sounds. It is a story understood in detail and given shape in masterly fashion.

Symphony No. 1 and Symphony No. 5

"... ce n'est pas là Beethoven. Nous allons le trouver." ("... this is not Beethoven. We are about to meet him"). So wrote Hector Berlioz in his essays about Beethoven's symphonies. Berlioz was not particularly impressed with Beethoven's First. In that symphony he saw nothing of the innovative master of just a few years later.

Beethoven began the sketches of his First Symphony in 1795. He then set it aside with other material and only returned to complete it in 1799. The First Symphony reached the concert hall in 1800, performed with a symphony by Mozart and an aria from Haydn's *The Creation*. That it was in the company of Mozart and Haydn that the symphony made its debut is symbolic, for Beethoven, after all, had a "Mozart problem." At this early point in his career he could not yet separate himself from Mozart's greatness, which was there for all to see in for instance in his last three symphonies and the C minor piano concerto. Beethoven, it seems, had once said of it to the pianist and composer J.B. Cramer, "Ah, Cramer, we shall never be capable of making such a thing." Though audiences then considered the First Symphony something new and colossal – scarcely imaginable nowadays – and the scherzo, for example, had its innovative aspects, Mozart's last symphonies were in this regard always more "important."

Beethoven's fledgling First could in no sense be said to "overshadow" Mozart's legacy or liberate classical form and attain a loftier level. Neither could it outshine "Papa Haydn." Beethoven and Haydn had periodic run-ins, for example around 1792, when Beethoven had counterpoint lessons with the older master. Their temperaments, careers and ambitions were totally different. Still, Beethoven saw Haydn as a mentor and considered him an important and innovative composer from whom he could learn much. The First Symphony shows in addition the influence of Beethoven's teachers Albrechtsberger and Neefe as well as of the Italian composer Cherubini. It is not at all strange that Beethoven alludes in the First Symphony to his predecessors and that as it progresses it gradually becomes more *his own work*.

Beethoven also had another problem: At the time he wrote the First Symphony, he was focused on composing for the music-loving public. And because this public was important to him, he wrote a number of works that would charm concertgoers. Among the pieces written during this quest worldly success were his first two piano concertos, the Septet and First Symphony. As Beethoven biographer Lewis Lockwood put it, through these works he could increase his fame and not alienate patrons and listeners.

You might call it prudent career planning. Beethoven could find a place for innovation in other works, such as the Cello Sonatas, op. 5, or Piano Trios, op. 1. Though he couldn't actually reveal his true nature as a composer during these early years, it was a different matter altogether with regard to his career as a piano virtuoso. Beethoven was widely known as one of the great pianists of the time when he wrote the First Symphony. Upon having to compete

against in an improvisation contest, the virtuoso pianist Abbé Joseph Gelinek sighed "He is not a normal man, he is the devil!" Beethoven's power, energy, ingenuity and groundbreaking ideas were welcome in his improvisations if not yet in composition.

Then there is the Fifth Symphony, written in 1807 and 1808. By the time it was performed, together with the Sixth Symphony and other works, Beethoven's music had long since been sown with revolutionary musical seeds that had grown into towering stalks. Though still in use, the musical forms of the Classical era had been brilliantly expanded. That such a minimalist theme as the Fifth's could be the foundation of so lengthy a work was until then unheard of (the *Eroica* excluded). Audiences of the time must have shot from their seats when they heard it. While beforehand the musical aesthetic sought first and foremost beauty and smooth fluency, these were no longer a priority in pieces like the *Eroica* and Fifth symphonies. Beethoven's ingenuity, turning the theme inside out and examining it from every angle, inspires awe in listeners. The tiny theme at the beginning of the Fifth becomes grandiose through what Beethoven does with it. The awe listeners feel is a form of experiencing beauty. It grabs hold and can shake you to your roots. Interesting in this regard is a comment Beethoven made to the musician Louis Schlösser – one of the few he made about how he composed:

"I carry my thoughts about me for a long time, often a very long time, before I write them down; meanwhile my memory is so faithful that I am sure never to forget, not even in years a theme that has once occurred to me.

I change many things, discard and try again until I am satisfied. Then, however, begins in my head the development in every direction and, inasmuch as I know exactly what I want, the fundamental idea never deserts me – it arises before me, grows – I see and hear the picture in all its extent and dimensions stand before my mind like a cast, and there remains for me nothing but the labor of writing it down.”¹

There was much talk in the latter half of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th about the “exalted” in music, the *intangible* and *incomprehensible* – something you don’t immediately fathom that takes effort to grasp. As a child of his time, Beethoven took the liberty of giving his music more contrast, expression and the aforementioned power and driving energy. It was as though through his way of composing he underscored the central idea at the point in history: *liberation*, release in every way from the yoke of the past. Freedom for everyone, a concept reflected in the music and the greater independence vis-à-vis the nobility and patrons. Beethoven: the first freelance composer.

The centuries-old discussion about whether Beethoven’s symphonies are endowed with extra-musical meaning sparked a vehement dispute between heart-and-soul Romantics such as E.T.A. Hoffmann and Wagner and non-formalists such as Eduard Hanslick, Schoenberg and Theodor Adorno. But is this discussion still necessary? The truth, after all, surely lies somewhere in the middle. Is it not inherent in music, as Carl Czerny and others proposed, that some sort of story always lies behind it and that this worked as a source of

1. Friedrich Kerst (and others) in the book “Beethoven, the man and the artist, as revealed in his own words”

momentum in Beethoven’s composition? A story, however, can also be a single image, a feeling, or a musical idea that during the act of composition develops into something directly evoking images. Whether there is an extra-musical element is not so much the point. More important is what it evokes in the mind of the conductor who interprets it, using *his* musical background, knowledge and personality. And also, the images and feelings it stirs in the listener!

According to the conductor Jan Willem de Vriend, in the Fifth Symphony you can hear the repressiveness and authoritarianism of the period of the Metternich government (with the reactionary Klemens von Metternich) in Vienna. It rings out in the motif of the first movement, and the entire symphony seems like a process of breaking free from it. However, every limitation can in itself present a kind of “freedom,” as certainly was the case with Beethoven’s deafness: not being able to hear the world around you creates the freedom to be able to hear yourself and use that experience to compose. The end of the Fifth has enormous riches of sound, with the piccolo as highest instrument and the contrabassoon with the trombones as lowest. It is like a triumphant march celebrating victory and sounds like liberation: it is irrepressible, you can feel it, the triumph. So it was in Beethoven’s life, not only personally, owing to his physical limitations, but also socially: how the Viennese were oppressed by the Metternich government, an unimaginable disappointment after the French Revolution. What had happened to freedom, equality and fraternity?

De Vriend has and continues to intensively study Beethoven – the man, his music, his time, teachers and predecessors – in order to gain the most complete image possible to serve as a framework for comprehending the symphonies. It is a never-ending study through which he keeps developing

further insights, making each of his recordings of Beethoven's symphonies valuable. Recordings, after all, convey not just the artistry of the composer, but of the conductor and his orchestra as well.

Symphony No. 7 and Symphony No. 8

“Der wahre Künstler hat keinen Stolz; leider sieht er, dass die Kunst keine Grenzen hat.” (“The true artist has no pride. He sees unfortunately that art has no limits.”)

This is what Beethoven wrote to eight-year-old Emilie M. in 1812, who had kindly sent him a portfolio that she had embroidered along with a letter expressing her admiration. Beethoven continued: *“Er fühlt dunkel, wie weit er vom Ziele entfernt ist, und indes er vielleicht von andern bewundert wird, trauert er, noch nicht dahin gekommen zu sein, wohin ihm der bessere Genius nur wie eine ferne Sonne vorleuchtet.” (“He has a vague awareness of how far he is from reaching his goal and while others may perhaps admire him, he laments that he has not yet reached the point to which his better genius only lights the way for him like a distant sun.”)*

1812 was a difficult year for Beethoven. His general health and his hearing in particular were steadily declining. Throughout his life he had been unlucky in love; none of his relationships had lasted very long. At the beginning of July in that year Beethoven wrote his three famous letters to his “Immortal Beloved”. Beethoven biographers such as Solomon Maynard and Lewis Lockwood have concluded that these letters were very likely addressed to Antonie Brentano. There is still no real proof as to who his mysterious beloved was. But it is certain

that Beethoven loved this woman, whoever she was, from the depths of his soul. The words in his letters are heartfelt and moving. But a truly long-lasting relationship with a woman was not possible in his life. He reached this conclusion himself and became more and more convinced of it. A relationship could not fit in with his way of life, his unpredictable nature and his devotion to his music. Because Beethoven was his work, he was his music. For him, music was supreme. The beautiful letter to little Emilie, following on the impassioned letters to an “Immortal Beloved” written ten days previously, show a very personal side of Beethoven. A man of flesh and blood, one who needed love but who had to do without it. It tore him to pieces, as indeed did his deafness, but amid all his suffering it would seem that he always felt a deep motivation to go on. His art gave him a hold on life. And in the years that followed, in which he would spend less time composing, music continued to be his beacon in a raging sea that sometimes threatened to destroy him. The raging sea: a fitting metaphor for the years from 1812 to 1817, a time of transition leading to his late period. The artist, fragile and human, had a moral object, an object by means of which he could elevate himself to a higher level. It is the only way in which a human being can do so. This Kantian principle shows exactly how Beethoven saw his work as a composer.

It was also how he was regarded after his death: a Beethoven who suffered, but who created exalted art, was revered. This is how Beethoven became the giant, one who inspired fear in many people. Composers felt Ludwig's hot breath in their neck if they so much as dared to think about composing a symphony. But if you look at Beethoven himself, you simply see a man: not a deity, but a highly gifted person. A man who indeed had to suffer physically and in his human relationships, but who had a huge drive, who was aware of

his genius and knew that it was precisely with his music that he could make a meaningful contribution. Without his music – his life elixir – he might well have killed himself.

1812 was an end, a turning point and a beginning. It was the end of a glorious period in which he put the finishing touches on Symphony No. 7 and wrote No. 8 – a culmination of ten years of composing at the highest level. Beethoven had come all the way. The eventful year of 1812 was also a turning point: emotional and relational crises (difficulties in love, loss of friends, problems in his family), physical and financial crises, brought him to an impasse and this affected his work. It seemed as if he had lost his unbridled energy. His deafness caused him to focus outside of himself, but at the same time he took counsel with himself as to how to go on in his work. This was a breeding ground, a beginning, for his late period, in which many of his works were even more complex, surpassing the comprehension of contemporaries. Pianist *Hélène Grimaud* puts it quite beautifully: *“His music is strongly rooted in all that is human, with all our vulnerabilities and shortcomings, but at the same time there is an element of a Promethean struggle to overcome it, not to give up. To surmount the difficulties.”*

When Beethoven spent the summer of 1812 taking a cure in Teplitz, he finally met Goethe, whom he adored as an artist. As a person, Goethe was a bit disappointing, because Beethoven thought that he was too obsequious towards the nobility and the princes who turned up in the well-known spa in large numbers precisely that summer. The famous anecdote in which Goethe took off his hat and bowed to a royal coach while Beethoven turned his back

on it with large steps is a good example of the difference between the two. As an artist and as a person, Beethoven felt he was no less than any other human being. He did not feel intimidated by the nobility. Quite the contrary. People just had to take him the way he was. Goethe was not so easy-going and according to Beethoven, much too unctuous. He had probably expected more of Goethe, the great artist.

To say that Beethoven did not know modesty is not true. In his letter to Emilie M. he wrote, *“Do not rob Handel, Haydn and Mozart of their laurel wreaths. They are entitled to theirs, but I am not yet entitled to one.”* This shows modesty, and he was frequently uncertain about his abilities (as shown by the other quotes from this letter as well). According to Beethoven, nothing was perfect: everything could always be improved. He was driven by this sense of perfectionism. And it is how, with each attempt, he got more out of himself. Pianist *Hélène Grimaud* says, *“Beethoven dug around in his own material, going deeper each time. To him, deeper meant higher.”*

Beethoven did not need to be modest about his Seventh symphony. In a letter to Johann Peter Salomon in London, to whom he wrote in 1815 asking him to help find a British publisher, he called it *“... a grand symphony in A major (one of my most excellent works)”*. In each movement of this symphony he used groups of rhythmic figures, with a leading element to set them off. Clearly, the use of rhythm was already important earlier in his career, with the first movement of No. 5 as the best known example. But in No. 7 the rhythmic action has come to the foreground; it is an underlying principle. One of Beethoven's most famous works is the Allegretto, the slow movement of this symphony.

The audience was won over, and even today it has not lost any of its popularity. It is indeed of incredible beauty. The most important rhythmic theme of the introduction comes back again and again, increasing in intensity and growing more palpable. The range, from low registers to high, and the movement from *piano* to *fortissimo* contribute to the enormous musical drama.

Things grow even more intense in the finale as the dynamic range alternates between *pianississimo* and *fortississimo*. Ostinato patterns, variations on rhythmic figures, everything is ten times bigger. That torrential energy! It almost seems as if he has broken loose, arms lashing out in all directions. *Seems*, because in fact he is in control of the seeming chaos. A control that was absent in his daily life, but that he had in his music.

After the unbridled exuberance of No. 7, the audience proved not to understand No. 8 so well. About this, Beethoven is said to have told Czerny, “*That’s because it is so much better.*” Beethoven chose to revert to the classical symphonic style: in retrospective. But it is definitely not a step back. For example, humour, an aspect that someone like Haydn often used in his music, is an important element here as well. But Beethoven’s humour is more acerbic. In the finale, a single tone, the C sharp (and the enharmonic D flat) is the key. The C sharp bites and stabs in a movement written in F major, and what it is ultimately about is to integrate that C sharp. This is humour of a different calibre than that of Haydn. It is so typically Beethoven and is what makes him unique.

In this, the third part in the series of Beethoven symphonies, we hear No. 7 and No. 8 in an interpretation by Jan Willem de Vriend and his Netherlands

Symphony Orchestra. As always, they delve into the depths of the symphonies and from these depths, they elevate themselves to a higher level (as so nicely put above by *Hélène Grimaud*) in their understanding of Ludwig van Beethoven.

Symphony No. 2 and Symphony No. 3

“I heard your ballet yesterday and it pleased me very much!” (“Nun! gestern habe ich Ihr Ballett gehört, es hat mir sehr gefallen!”), so said Haydn to Beethoven in 1801, to which Beethoven replied: “O dear Papa, you are very kind; but it is far from being a *Creation!*” (“O, lieber Papa! Sie sind sehr gütig, aber es ist doch noch lange keine *Schöpfung!*”). Haydn was surprised and almost insulted by this remark, and he retorted: “That is true; it is not a *Creation* and I can scarcely believe that it will ever become one.” (“Das ist wahr, es ist noch keine *Schöpfung*, glaube auch schwerlich, daß es dieselbe je erreichen wird”). According to William Kinderman³, this anecdote – about Beethoven’s ballet *The Creation of Prometheus* – is very plausible and also quite typical.

It shows Beethoven’s predilection for plays on words. Haydn’s great oratorio *The Creation (Die Schöpfung)* had recently had its first performance, and it is telling that the two com-posers agreed that the ballet was “far from a *Creation*”. According to Kinderman, the Prometheus ballet is a creation myth in its own

2. Anecdote recorded by Aloys Fuchs, a collector from Vienna.

From: *Thayer’s Life of Beethoven, Volume 1, pp. 272-3*

3. *William Kinderman in his book “Beethoven”, pp. 86 ff.*

right, but it is actually the music of the *Eroica* that personifies the Promethean stature and that can be seen as the “creation”.

The myth of the Titan Prometheus as it was used by the Italian dancer and choreographer Salvatore Viganò and Beethoven in the ballet was not entirely in accordance with the Greek original. In the version of Viganò and Beethoven, Prometheus shaped human civilisation: he was a philosopher and teacher, not a victim who spent many years chained to a rock. Prometheus sculpts two creatures from clay and gives them the fire he has stolen from the gods, thus animating them. It is the only way to impart knowledge and culture to his creations (i.e. mankind). Unfortunately, Prometheus pays for this with his life. But ... of course this version has a happy ending, thanks to the intervention of the god Pan, who brings him to back life. Prometheus is then praised by his two archetypal creations for his heroic deed.

According to Lewis Lockwood⁴, the Prometheus ballet, composed in the winter of 1800-1801, paved the way from the Second to the Third Symphony. It is widely known that the finale of the *Eroica* uses a theme from the ballet. Kinderman goes one step further, saying that Beethoven also used many other symbolic and dramatic elements from the ballet in this symphony, and not just in the finale.

But back to the Second Symphony. Beethoven composed it during a time of deep personal crisis. His health, and his hearing in particular, was fast declining; he felt isolated and depressed. The situation was so serious that there were

times when he no longer wished to live. At least we can deduce this from the famous *Heiligenstadt Testament*, which he wrote to his brothers (and to humanity) in 1802. He wrote it, putting more or less all his thoughts on paper, and then filed it away. It would not resurface until after his death. The music of the Second Symphony exudes Beethoven’s desire to rise above his personal difficulties (although naturally traces of his misery as well can always be found in his music). Lockwood: “His ability to nurture his creative psyche and protect it from the physical and psychological anguish of his growing deafness is one of the more remarkable features of his life.”⁵

Beethoven composed many works in the years from 1798 to 1802. He knew he was going through a period of tremendous artistic growth. He wanted a grip on his fate; as he clearly put it in a famous quote: “Ich will dem Schicksal in den Rachen greifen, ganz niederbeugen soll es mich gewiss nicht.” (“I will seize Fate by the throat; it will certainly not bend and crush me completely.”) Even though he had no influence on his physical condition, he was definitely in complete control of his work! Although a “prisoner” in his own body, he cast off more and more of his compositional “chains”. In the Second Symphony, we can still hear Mozart’s influence (e.g. the Prague Symphony and “quotations” from operas) and that of Haydn. At the same time, we hear him beginning to sever the ties to those he looked up to. Abrupt key changes, more intense use of rhythms, strong contrasts (in the movements, between the movements) are but a few examples; after using them in the Second Symphony, he continued to develop them. From this point onward, he no longer needed Mozart or Haydn. Looking at the anecdote between Haydn and Beethoven in this light, we can conclude

4. Lewis Lockwood in his book “The Music and Life of Beethoven”, p. 149

5. Lewis Lockwood in his book “The Music and Life of Beethoven”

that Beethoven had gone through a period of rapid growth, from a feisty adolescent to a mature master composer: by the time his Third Symphony came into being, he had risen well above Haydn!

Conductor Jan Willem de Vriend calls the Second Symphony “a marvel, a cheerful symphony in D major, the radiant key of power and grandeur”. The contrast with how Beethoven must have felt was huge and this makes it a fascinating work.

A great deal has been written about the Third Symphony. Not in the last place, there has been much discussion and research of the heroic aspects of this “*Eroica*”. Who was the hero Beethoven had in mind? Was it Napoleon, or on second thoughts, was it someone else? After all, once Napoleon had been crowned emperor, Beethoven was highly disappointed in him. Was it Prometheus? Was it Beethoven himself? There are many theories. Jan Willem de Vriend adds an interesting hero to this list: Beethoven’s grandfather! It was widely known that Ludwig idolised his grandfather Louis (from Mechelen, in Belgium); he had a portrait of him. His grandfather died when he was two or three years old. But all of Bonn always talked about him, because he was such a special person. It must have driven Ludwig’s father Johannes mad now and then, because he was not in the same league. Ludwig was always hearing how fantastic his grandfather had been: a free thinker, very progressive, cordial, friendly and kind. So Beethoven’s grandfather may also have been a hero who served as a model for the Third Symphony.

Still, nowadays many musicologists and biographers agree that the *Eroica* tends to symbolise the hero in general, not one specific hero. What is more important

is the “giant step forward in quality”⁶ that we hear in the *Eroica*, compared to music composed before it. What makes it special is that it is a temporisation of the musical form.⁷ It is about the “form as a process”, in contrast to the “form as architecture”. “Form as a process” means a focused, dynamic and continuous motion. It can be likened to an arrow heading straight for its target. Although the target is important, so is the route it takes to get there. But emphasis lies on the end, the finale. Before that, music was architectural in form; it was a symmetrical structure, a unity unto itself, built around a pivotal point, cyclic.

Repetition, so important in the sonata form, becomes problematic in a work with “form as a process”. Of course, solutions are provided for this in the *Eroica*: identical thematic configurations at the beginning of the exposition, in the recapitulation and the coda are developed differently each time. This leads to different conclusions in similar situations, which are related to each other in a way that leads to a strong intensification. This is enhanced by moments of simulated acceleration. They are achieved by “opening out” the orchestral apparatus. This leads to an experience of being “inundated by time”: an outpouring of ideas.⁸

According to Reinhold Brinkmann, the sound palette of the symphony orchestra can be viewed as a kind of revolutionary rhetoric. After a long road with many transitions, an important individual voice comes forward, that of the French horn (m. 631), which seems to advance a thesis. Gradually more and more

6. Reinhold Brinkmann in “In the Time of the *Eroica*”, from the book “Beethoven and His World”, p. 16

7. *idem*, pp. 16 ff.

8. *idem*, p. 17

voices and groups join in, as if they agree or want to add something, and they become part of the larger whole. The orchestra as an allegory for the Revolution, this is what we see at the end of the first movement. "It is as if the music were speaking with a thousand tongues and, by doing so, becomes one single voice."⁹

Symphony No. 9

"I am Isis. I am that is, and that was, and that shall be, and no mortal hath raised the veil from before my face." - famous inscription on the colonnade of the Temple of Isis in ancient Egypt. (Ich bin, was da ist / Ich bin alles was ist, was war, und was seyn wird, kein sterblicher Mensch hat meinen Schleyer aufgehoben)

Beethoven once wrote this down and the sentence had lain on his desk ever since, together with another one: "He is One, self-existent, and to that One, all things owe their existence." ("Er ist einzig von ihm selbst, diesem Einigen sind alle Dinge ihr Daseyn schuldig")¹⁰. These were important words to Beethoven. Perhaps they inspired him to aim for the highest attainable in his work. And even if he could never gain a place as high as that One, or as the goddess of motherhood (Isis), he felt it was his moral duty to give the world what it was that *he* could give: his musical legacy.

The developmental history of the ninth symphony goes back a long way.

9. *idem*, p. 21

Beethoven worked on it from 1818 to 1824. But he had read Schiller's "Ode to Joy" ("An die Freude") before 1793, and from that time on he had fostered a wish to set the text to music. In the final decade of the eighteenth century, Beethoven could not yet suspect that the words would become so powerful in a symphony. Over the years, musical arrangements of several lines of Schiller's text appeared in his sketchbooks. Increasingly, Beethoven felt the need to approach this on a grandiose scale, and in 1818 he gradually began working out his ideas. On this, Lewis Lockwood says: "The Ninth in my view was written to revive a lost idealism. It was a strong political statement in a time when the practical possibilities of realizing Schiller's ideals of universal brotherhood had been virtually extinguished by the post-Napoleonic regimes. Beethoven's decision to complete the work was thus intended to right the balance, to send a message of hope to the future, and to proclaim that message to the world."¹¹

Lockwood also stresses Beethoven's sense that a lot depended on comparing and contrasting the secular and the religious aspects in the "Ode to Joy", and then bringing them together in the final movement: "... the great synthesis in which humanity's ideal state can be found only by reaching toward the heavens to find God."¹²

The fact that, for many, the melody of "Ode to Joy" represents Beethoven's ninth symphony is because the Ode to Joy theme has become so famous and

10. *I.a.* in Maynard Solomon "Beethoven Essays", p. 347

11. From "Beethoven - The Music and the Life" by Lewis Lockwood, p. 422

is still hugely popular today. The melody has been played at all the Olympic Games, and it has been used by the European Union as the official European anthem since the 1980s. It has also been used numerous times in commercials and films – in short, it is heard everywhere.

You might see the slow step-by-step march of this diatonic, bristling, almost folksy melody as symbolic of humanity and universal brotherhood. This interpretation of the melody dates back to the earliest reviews of the ninth. Of course, it is much more than this. Some also cite the religious connotation of the melody, perhaps referring to the Lutheran chorale “Rejoice greatly, o my soul” (“Freu’ dich sehr, o meine Seele”) or – recently proposed by Hans Werner Küthen – a link to Mozart’s “Offertorium Misericordias Domini” (KV 222). This same Küthen reminds us that Schiller’s text had profound connections with masonry, as a result of which certain critics saw Beethoven’s arrangement as a genuine *Masonic hymn*.¹³

But Beethoven’s ninth is not only the *Ode to Joy*, which serves as an apotheosis in the finale. The symphony also has three other movements. The choice of D minor was an essential aspect in this symphony: it was the key of turbulence, of desperation. It was a very important key for Mozart, for example. Suffice it to say “Don Giovanni”: D minor is the main key of this fantastic opera, the demonic force of which, according to Lewis Lockwood, anticipates on the first part of the ninth symphony.¹⁴

12. *Idem.*, p. 423

13. From “Beethoven Forum, vol. 7” - Michael C. Tusa, p. 118.

When I spoke with him about the symphonies, conductor Jan Willem de Vriend added that around the time of the first sketches for the ninth, the Welsh steam engine came into use in Vienna. And the first steam locomotive was built in England at the beginning of the 19th century. At the time, people were frightened by it: suddenly your body could be transported at tremendous speeds! It was viewed as something of a wonder: “Your body arrives, but your spirit does not.” Characteristic of the Welsh steam engine was the fact that it consisted of two boilers instead of one, and the pressure from the boilers could be used to operate machines. Because the pressure could vary greatly, the steam engine had many valves to indicate its temperature. One such valve sounded just like a fifth. If you then listen to the beginning of the *Ninth*, you first hear those semiquavers very gently percolating, as if a fire is starting, and then you ‘hear’ the valves whistling in fifths and everything picks up speed, going faster and faster, as if the machine is shaking, and then ... in the following measures, everything ‘collapses’. So the first movement sounds like a machine being tested. And then there is the second movement, starting out with short rhythmic notes and then speeding up, until it seems to mimic a machine. Where is the machine taking us, where will it lead? This seems to be the question behind it. The third movement is a sort of prayer and a hope articulated by Beethoven – the eternity of the human soul, the triumph of good, the peace and calm this will bring. These machines will make us equal; no-one will have to grovel. As we know, the opposite happened, but Beethoven did not know this at the time. To cap it all off, in the final movement Beethoven cites Schiller’s *Ode*

14. From “Beethoven - The Music and the Life” by Lewis Lockwood, p. 427

to Joy, clearly coloured by a time that stood for freedom, for independence. Hope and optimism speak from the music and the only result can be that everyone picks up on it.¹⁵

Jan Willem de Vriend used to have a friend with whom he spoke endlessly about the Beethoven symphonies. In their talks, they tried to include as many things as they could from the time when they were written. Beethoven was in fact very ambivalent: although he felt that people were equal, he did not conduct himself accordingly. The people who worked for him he treated like drudges, preferring to associate with those of the nobility; not just because of the money but also because of the status. He is known to have dressed very well, certainly at the beginning of the 19th century. Then you had the “junge Werther” craze, after the figure in Goethe’s novel, a book with the same status as a Harry Potter today. Beethoven devoured the book and indeed dressed just like the young Werther. There was an entire clothing line. As we now might speak of Prada or Dolce&Gabbana, people then spoke of the ‘Werther line’.¹⁶

Although his behaviour did not always show it, Beethoven’s ideal was definitely that all people would be equal. (This is why Schiller’s text appealed to him at such a young age.) After all, it is often the case that people who have an ideal to which they devote themselves, with which they feel great affinity, are absolutely unable to attain it in their daily lives. There is something appealingly human about the fact that Beethoven had big ideals for himself – and for humanity – and that he could not integrate them in his personal life. But he could use the ideals in his work, he could unleash a musical revolution. Is it not

moving that in the work of this man, who was such an earthy person, the divine spark can be observed so clearly?

Beethoven will always continue to fascinate people. Whether you adore him, admire him, criticise him or find him abominable, friend and foe must agree that he played a major role in the history of music. Even today, when we hear his symphonies – and surely the *Ninth* – we can do nothing but agree that it is masterly music.

Jan Willem de Vriend does not think that he is ‘finished’ with Beethoven now that he has recorded all the symphonies. He will continue to philosophise about them, analyse scores and try to get the character of the era in focus – an ongoing and in-depth process.

No, we are never finished with Beethoven!

Valentine Laoût- van Leeuwenstein

15. Interview with Jan Willem de Vriend

16. Interview with Jan Willem de Vriend

Piano Concertos

Beethoven wrote five concertos for piano and orchestra. It doesn't sound like much; his near-contemporary Mozart composed 27. But although it may be a bit smaller, Beethoven's contribution is a true monument in the history of music. He used the first two concertos to move away from his example, Mozart (whose last piano concerto was from 1791, while Beethoven completed his first in 1795); in *Concerto No. 3* Beethoven carved out new dimensions for the genre's dramatic possibilities. And *Concertos nos 4 and 5* have proved to be unmatched in their genre: the radiant *Concerto No. 4* is worshipped by experts and aficionados alike, while No. 5 is the all-time favourite of the public at large. Almost 25 years passed between Beethoven's first sketches for a piano concerto and the double line he drew under his last one. His piano concertos thus show a development covering more than half of the composer's life.

Piano Concerto No. 2

Before we listen to the young Dutch pianist Hannes Minnaar play Beethoven's first two piano concertos, it is perhaps interesting to see how another young pianist may have played them once, long ago – a German who lived in Vienna, a headstrong and temperamental genius. His name? Ludwig van Beethoven. His pupil, the famous composer of etudes and sensitive observer Carl Czerny, once described his playing: "[...] characterised by passionate strength, alternated with all the charm of a smooth *cantabile*. The expressiveness is often intensified to extremes, particularly when the music tends towards humour [...] Passages become extremely daring by use of the pedal [...] His playing does not

possess that clean and brilliant elegance of certain other pianists. On the other hand, it was spirited, grand and, especially in the *adagio*, filled with emotion and romanticism."

Strength. Smoothness. Humour. Focus on these aspects and you will come close to Beethoven. Minnaar, De Vriend and The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra play the concertos in reverse order: first 2, then 1. A bit odd. Or isn't it? Artistically, it is highly defensible: introduced as it were by the more balanced, more modest *Piano Concerto No. 2*, No. 1 radiates all the more festiveness (trumpets, clarinets and timpani have come to join the orchestra). Perhaps the lovely, gentle, almost feminine B flat major of *Concerto No. 2* would not have been able to hold its own after the male and martial C major. But there is something else.

Piano Concerto No. 2 actually came first. It was composed earlier, at least in its initial version. Beethoven never numbered his concertos; the confusion arose because he published the Concerto in C major before the one in B flat major, in March and December 1801. It was a deliberate choice: he found the concerto in C major better, more ambitious, more brilliant, more impressive, better suited to his debut as a composer of piano concertos.

Or it may be that he had somewhat less confidence in *Piano Concerto No. 2*. A great deal of trial and error had gone into its composition. Apart from a capably made but impersonal piano concerto in E flat major, composed when he was

fourteen, it was his first real attempt in the genre of piano concertos. He started on it before 1790, perhaps even in 1788. He was just a boy of seventeen, living in the provincial town of Bonn, performing for the local citizenry. When, in 1792, he moved to Vienna – then the epicentre of music – for his career, he had the first version of the concerto in his trunk. He rewrote it twice between 1793 and 1795. Perhaps Beethoven even premiered it in 1795, although today it is thought that he played his *Piano Concerto No. 1* for this great Vienna debut. But if it was No. 2, then the audience will have heard something charming that still breathed the spirit of Haydn and Mozart, but still most definitely a piece by Ludwig van Beethoven. (Musicologists sometimes speak of its relationship to Mozart's *Piano Concerto K 595*, also in B flat major, although that was not composed until Beethoven had been working for some time.)

Whether it was premiered or not, Beethoven was still not satisfied. Three years later he once again altered it substantially. Particularly in the opera-like *Adagio*, while the original *Rondo* had even disappeared completely: in its place was one with mischievous syncopation and halfway through a charming *all'ungarese*, the *rondo* that we now know, music as it could only occur to Beethoven. Beethoven played this version in Prague in 1798. It was a chance performance; the audience was so enthusiastic after he had played his *concerto in C major* that he hastened to put together a new score of the one in B flat major. There was no time to write out the solo part, the conductor simply had to do without it and Beethoven did a lot of improvising; only the most important transitional passages were written out... By then it was three years later, thirteen years after its first conception when Beethoven, who was still frantically correcting the solo part just before the curtain went up, could finally regard his *Piano Concerto No. 2* as

complete and sent it to his publisher. He accompanied it by the words "I do not consider this one of my best compositions"... What to say to that?

It is interesting, though. In *Concerto No. 2* you hear more or less the earliest Beethoven; a lot of its notes come straight from Bonn. And you hear a fairly late Beethoven. The *Cadenza* in the first movement is from 1809. The composer even seems to run ahead of himself; it is not hard to liken the piece to the *Hammerklavier Sonata* from 1819, as we can hear in the stirring *Fugato* at the beginning. Shortly before the end there is a very bold pause, you almost think that the music has run into a dead end... until a scale brings us back to reality and to the orchestra. The late Beethoven enjoyed taking such risks. 1788-1809: the period leading up to *Piano Concerto No. 2* lasted more than 20 years. Which is in fact the entire period during which Beethoven wrote piano concertos.

Piano Concerto No. 1

Beethoven had a much easier time producing this piece. The sources report 1795 as the year in which it was composed, with corrections to 1800. It is not known for certain when it premiered. It may have been very soon after completion of the first version, on 29 March 1795 in the Hofburg in Vienna (if not, then No. 2 was performed at the time). Beethoven played, Haydn conducted. *Toute Vienne* was there – Haydn was a celebrity, a crowd pleaser, and people wanted to see his self-willed pupil, the guy from Bonn with his black, black eyes and hair – often unkempt – in person. It must have been a performance on the razor's edge. The score was not finished until the very last minute: four copyists had to be found to write out the parts from the not-yet-dry manuscript and give them

straight to the musicians. But not to Beethoven, because as usual, he played from memory, or even improvised a bit.

The concert was a big success. “The famous Mr. Ludwig van Beethoven [won] the sincere approval of the audience”, wrote the *Wiener Zeitung* three days later. Perhaps this was why Beethoven put this same concerto back on the music stands for an important occasion five years later, in the version we know today. It was April 2nd 1800, during his first concert for his own benefit, once again in the Hofburg in Vienna. “Tickets are available at the address of Mr. Van Beethoven, Tiefer Graben 241, third floor, and from the theatre’s ticket seller”, the Viennese newspaper announced a few days before the event, at which the *Symphony No. 1* would also be performed. One may well hope that the real fans had heard the performance five years earlier, because this time it did not turn out so well. The orchestra played poorly under a conductor who was not in the mood. “They paid no attention whatsoever to the soloist. As a result, the accompaniment showed absolutely no fine tuning, and did not respond at all to [his] musical feelings.”

Piano Concerto No. 1 is Beethoven through and through. You hear it straightaway at the beginning. This is the characteristic master who makes everything out of nothing. Because what exactly does the first theme consist of? An octave leap, later filled in with a scale. And then, in reply, another octave leap and another scale, a few notes higher this time. It is nothing, simply nothing. But the way it *sounds*... At the end of the orchestral introduction this turns into fireworks produced by musical scales as never heard before. Beethoven builds an entire movement on ‘nothing’, uncommonly powerful and *con brio*. The *Largo* sings

sweetly, the *Rondo* is humorous the way the human being Beethoven must often have been humorous, and not just as a young man. The theme confuses the listener: are we starting on a downbeat or an upbeat? Beethoven had tried it out earlier in the *Rondo* of his *Piano Concerto No. 2*. And so these two piano concertos form a lovely pair.

Piano Concerto No. 3

The first concertos: replete with youth, sparkling, often even rambunctious; the last two both more mature and more heroic. And *Piano Concerto No. 3* then? In part still building on his youth (Beethoven was around 30 when he wrote it), this is the first one where we hear heroism. Might has become the central theme.

Beethoven himself regarded it with a mixture of modesty and pride. ‘Cramer, Cramer, we’ll never be able to produce anything like that!’ he once said to a colleague, referring to Mozart’s *Piano Concerto in C major*, K. 491. Beethoven performed the brilliant work himself; he felt a great reverence for it, and chose it as the example for his *Concerto No. 3*. But there is something else. In 1801 he wrote to his publisher: ‘It [*Piano Concerto No. 3*] is one of my best compositions in this genre.’ For a long time, he did not want to part with it: ‘Musical policy prescribes that the composer retains his best concertos for himself for a while’; he preferred to keep it ‘for when I go on tour again.’ As usual, Beethoven knew exactly what he was worth, and if you had any idea at all about music, you took your hat off to Mozart.

The work did not come about overnight. Although the premiere was in 1803, Beethoven probably started on it in 1797 – even before the first two piano concertos had been written. Considering the letter cited above, it must have been rather well under way in 1801, although no matter how strange it may sound, the final version had still not been committed to paper when it premiered. Before it was published in 1804, Beethoven continued to tinker with it, one reason for which was his enthusiastic encounter with the latest product of Parisian piano manufacturer Erard: he had again managed to expand the tonal range, to more than five octaves, and Beethoven hastened to benefit from this.

‘But where’s the piano?’ When you first listen to the beginning of *Piano Concerto No. 3*, you grow a bit concerned. The composer, highly resourceful and with a flair for drama, unfolds a grandiose tableau for the orchestra, but leaves the soloist with 111 empty initial measures. The audience that had gathered in the Theater an der Wien on the evening of 3 April 1803 for the premiere, with Beethoven himself as the soloist, was probably uneasy. A solo concerto was meant to be a joyous occasion, a playful dialogue between the orchestra and the soloist, and which one would win? They were expecting a light-footed and preferably virtuoso display. But this massive introduction was like a rock, a tower of strength.

If you wanted to follow Beethoven’s musical ways closely – and there were a number of them – then evidently, it would cost you some effort. Goodness gracious, what an evening! Not only *Piano Concerto No. 3* premiered, but also Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 2* and the oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives*.

Together with *Symphony No. 1*, it was a bit much for one concert, even for the greatest admirers. The audience was hesitant, unsure. Some members of the choir and the orchestra were even rebellious. The rehearsals for this marathon had started at eight o’clock in the morning (!) and didn’t end until two-thirty in the afternoon. The musicians were exhausted; they grumbled. But problems were prevented by a tactical intervention from higher up: Prince Karl Lichnowsky, a devotee of Beethoven’s who had sat through the entire rehearsal, ordered huge baskets filled with bread, cold meats and wine and asked everyone to kindly help themselves. Material consolation for mental effort. After that, they all had one more go at a rehearsal of *Christ on the Mount of Olives*... It was not the first time that Beethoven was saved by a prince, and would not be the last time either.

A certain Ignaz Ritter von Seyfried did not have a very enjoyable evening. He had the privilege of turning the pages for Beethoven’s piano concerto. A lowly task? ‘Heaven help me,’ he said later, ‘it was easier said than done. I saw before me almost nothing but empty leaves; at the most, on one page or another, a few Egyptian hieroglyphs wholly unintelligible to me were scribbled down. Beethoven hadn’t had time to commit everything to paper. He would give me a secret glance whenever he was at the end of one of these invisible passages, and my scarcely concealed anxiety not to miss the decisive moment amused him greatly, and during the pleasant supper afterwards, he laughed most heartily about it.’

How did people react to this remarkable spectacle? With reserve. Coolly. We can well assume that no justice was done to many aspects – whether

Beethoven could laugh about them or not. With 1800 florins, the profits were good, but the *Zeitung für die Elegante Welt* judged the concert as follows: 'The performance by Mr v.B., who is after all known to be an excellent pianist, could not fully satisfy the expectations of the public.' And that was it. Not until one year later, after an academy concert in the Augarten, the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* took a much more positive view: 'This concerto is undoubtedly one of Beethoven's loveliest works. It is a masterful piece.' It was perhaps a boon that the solo part as presented by Beethoven's pupil Ferdinand Ries was less chaotic.

As mentioned, Beethoven took Mozart's *K. 491* as an example for this piano concerto. The key of C minor is just a coincidence; this mainly attests to the fact that it is Beethoven's preferred key –think of *Symphony No. 5*, the unfinished *No. 10*, *Coriolan Overture*, *Choral Fantasy*, the *Piano Sonatas Op. 10 No. 1*, *Pathétique*, *Op. 111*, and so on – and so it naturally had to be represented in the domain of the solo concertos. The most important thing Beethoven borrowed from his older colleague was the interplay of light and dark. For instance, right at the beginning: the theme, first softly, *piano*, and then overwhelmingly *forte* – a theme with a broken triad, not unknown in the work of Mozart. Once the solo part has taken the floor, it stays there, as it does in Mozart, until the first movement reaches its bitter end. The casual and surprising start of the final rondo is also reminiscent of his great role model. The surprising 6/8 time of the coda also has a parallel in Mozart's other great concerto in a minor key: *K. 466* in D minor.

Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 3* is an uncommonly expansive and dramatic concerto, innovative and pioneering in many senses. The length of the introduction alone! Then the piano makes its entrance, not as per usual, with its own theme, but with a scale. If anyone else wrote it, it would be a joyless stopgap of the best kind, but Beethoven turns it into a characteristically robust gesture. (In the *Largo*, it makes a brief and witty comeback shortly before the end.) The cadenza is not a virtuoso excursion but a fundamental and compositionally necessary part (most often, Beethoven's own cadenza from 1809 is played). The passage for the timpani, immediately afterwards, is striking; softly arpeggio-ing, the piano recovers from its cadenza, suggests a major key but in vain, while the timpani modestly but emphatically asks our attention with a punctuated rhythm (an echo of the third measure). It must be the first time in history that a soloist accompanied a timpani.

The transition to the second movement, the *Largo*, must have been a shock at the time. And it still is. From C minor to E major: unheard of. Are these two keys in any way related? Perhaps Beethoven had in mind an ultimate minor-major effect: the interval from C to E is a major third. Later, Brahms (*Symphony No. 1*) and Rachmaninoff (*Piano Concerto No. 2*) would imitate this. The piano seizes the opportunity, perhaps in revenge because the orchestra made it wait so long in the first movement, while the orchestra stays hushed. This elaborate solo opening is novel, presaging the famous beginning of *Piano Concerto No. 4*.

Once the orchestra is allowed to play, it must play *con sordino* (muted), and trumpets and timpani are not appropriate to this ethereal whole. About two-thirds of the way through the playful rondo, Beethoven reaches

back briefly for the E major of the Largo (no, he never forgets anything!) and ends exuberantly in C major – youthfully happy, as he will never be again.

Piano Concerto No. 4

Once he had accepted the fact that he was inevitably going completely deaf, Beethoven wrote in his moving “Heiligenstädter Testament” (1802): “As the leaves of autumn fall and are withered, so hope has been blighted. Even the high courage, which often inspired me in the beautiful days of summer, has disappeared. Oh Providence, grant me but at least one day of *pure joy!*” Did Providence grant him that one day? It is hard to say. When it came to happiness, Beethoven had no-one but himself to rely on, as the further tragic course of his life shows. The only thing he had that could counter the forces of fate was his music. And in the first years after he had accepted his fate, his music was a source of huge joy to him. It emanates an optimism that is as beneficent as it is powerful. Take *Piano Concerto No. 4*, written in 1806: here we become aware of a sort of latent energy, music articulated in rays of sunlight, the deeply effusive light of the month of September.

The start is revolutionary. Completely alone, the piano posits its theme – which is highly unusual – and then the orchestra immediately follows suit. It is as if Beethoven first shows us the piano sketch, and then goes on to let us discover how this theme can grow, recede and grow again, taking on more and more meaning. This also allows him to compose a lengthy orchestral introduction without making the impression that he has forgotten the soloist (his *Piano Concerto No. 3* opens with such an enormous orchestral exposition that the

solo instrument has to wait a long time for its turn...). In the Andante Beethoven quite summarily allows the soloist and the orchestra to converse. The rebellious strings are gently soothed and calmed by the pianist. And quite successfully: the orchestral sentences gradually become shorter, only to merge with the conciliatory pleas of the piano. (Franz Liszt likened this dialogue to Orpheus pleading with the Furies.) Just before the strings yield, the soloist puts forth some moving chromatics and a hair-raising trill. This is followed by the Rondo: expressing a zest for life with simple ingredients tossed in: repeated notes, broken triads, dashes of rhythm. But so very effective!

This absolute masterpiece premiered on 22 December 1808 in the *Theater an der Wien*. It was a concert never to be forgotten. And it was truly gigantic, because in addition to this piece, *Symphonies nos 5 and 6*, the *Choral Fantasy*, the aria *Ah! Perfido* and two parts of the *Mass in C Major* were also premiered. Simply too much beauty. The audience, in an unheated hall – it was an icy December evening – had to digest four hours’ worth of new music. The playing was not up to par: second-rate musicians, too little rehearsal time and Beethoven himself, nearly deaf, was not in form, to put it mildly. Some of the audience, such as composer J.F. Reichardt, even wished “that they had dared to leave the hall earlier”.

Piano Concerto No. 5

Beethoven’s *Piano Concerto No. 5* is called the “Emperor Concerto”. It was not given this name by Beethoven, and it makes an incorrect impression. The piece was not dedicated to an emperor, it was not commissioned by an emperor,

and it is not about an emperor. Based on the preferences of both the public and the composer, you might call it the crown on his piano concertos and so – although still very much the first among equals – the emperor among the concertos, but then we risk clashing swords with the ‘true’ experts who would choose No. 4.

In 1809, the year that he wrote his *Piano Concerto No. 5*, Beethoven did not have much time for emperors. He lived in Vienna, which was occupied by the armies of the Emperor Napoleon. Heavy cannon fire had caused much destruction; entire families had been reduced to beggary. Beethoven’s house was next to the city walls and when Napoleon issued the order to demolish the wall, his house was left quite unprotected. On the very day that the explosives were positioned, a French officer who admired Beethoven’s music sought out the composer when out delivering a message. Unfortunately, the Frenchman was in uniform. “Do I have the honour of speaking with monsieur Beethoven?” he asked. “Yes, sir! But I must tell you that I know very little French”, Beethoven replied drily. Not much later, once the shelling of the city had started, he was obliged to move in with his brother Johann. There, in the basement, he waited with pillows over his head until the guns had stopped booming.

It was a very lonely time. His noble patrons left the city. Friends, weakened by the conditions of war, died. Joseph Haydn, his former teacher and a person whom he greatly admired, died shortly after the bombardment. Beethoven’s mood was sombre. He made some idle sketches for a new piano concerto but had to tell his publisher that he had a hard time setting himself to work, and could only put some disconnected notes to paper. “Life all around me is destructive and chaotic. Nothing but drums, cannons and human suffering...”

But meanwhile. When you are Beethoven, you persevere. Some hear in *Piano Concerto No. 5* Beethoven’s response to the suffering of war and the rising tide of Napoleonic victories. But Beethoven certainly does not sit back and watch; this work was not written from the point of view of a victim. When it premiered on 28 November 1811, not in Vienna but in the Gewandhaus in Leipzig, it was immediately very well received on account of its martial character and the huge strength it emanates. The concerto opens with a clear statement: a powerful chord produced by the orchestra – the masses – is immediately answered by vast arpeggios from the single piano. Twice the orchestra repeats its contention, and only then gives its permission to the piano to launch the main theme. Like two soldiers, the first and third movements carry the stretcher of the *Adagio*, which bears an injured combatant. This is how Beethoven wrote his *Piano Concerto No. 5*, this unyielding music that he dedicated to his patron and faithful friend, Archduke Rudolf (perhaps it should even be called the “Archduke Concerto”), a work that guns can never destroy.

This CD brings the last two concertos together. When you hear them, you cannot help but find it unfortunate that his *Piano Concerto No. 6* (in D major, 1815) never got beyond the sketch stage. The solo concerto is absent in Beethoven’s final creative period. But if you are still hungry for more, more is to be found: there is a quite pleasant piano concerto composed when he was fourteen, and when his magnificent *Violin Concerto* was not appreciated by his contemporaries, he turned it into a piece for piano and orchestra.

Stephen Westra

Translation: Carol Stennes/Muse Translations

Violin Concerto

Beethoven's Violin Concerto was beyond any doubt strongly influenced by the violin concertos of the French school, especially those of Giovanni Battista Viotta (1755-1824) and Rodolphe Kreutzer (1766-1831). It was therefore no coincidence that Beethoven dedicated his Violin Sonata in A major, Op. 47, to Kreutzer, a violinist from Versailles who was one of the instrument's great virtuosos. Kreutzer, however, never played the piece and complained that it was incomprehensible ("rageusement intelligible"). Beethoven was far ahead of his time for the instrument.

The violin playing of Beethoven's friend Franz Clement (1780-1842) was said to be especially intimate and gracious, with unflinching intonation and a highly developed bowing technique. That must have greatly appealed to Beethoven, for he was no fan of the dazzling, demonstrative type of playing in which so many violinists shone and resorted to to win over audiences. Clement, more-over, had earned respect as conductor of the Theater an der Wien and the composer of some 25 concertos. It is hardly surprising that Beethoven dedicated his first and only violin concerto to Clement. The inscription above the manuscript reads: "Concert par Clemenza pour Clement primo Violino e direttore al teatro a Vienna Del L.V. Bthwn 1806."

Despite Clement's mastery of the instrument, however, it was no easy task to perform the premiere, given December 23, 1806, in the Theater an der Wien. Beethoven had delivered the score far too late and the ink was scarcely dry when Clement performed it. He simply had to make the best of it as he sight-read the work, which was shoehorned between pieces by Mozart, Cherubini and Handel.

According to the critics, he played well. Clement could certainly have premiered one or more of his own pieces instead of Beethoven's concerto, but he knew that a new concerto by Beethoven, widely held to be Joseph Haydn's successor, would attract a lot of attention. Clement could count on a sold-out hall, and the profits from the event were to flow almost entirely into his own pocket.

We read everywhere that Beethoven's Violin Concerto got at best a lukewarm reception, but, fortunately, some listeners were more enthusiastic. One critic reported that the audience liked the concert "in general," although it was Clement's "fantasies" that got the most approval. That's not surprising, for juggling like a circus performer, Clement even played holding his instrument upside down.

Was Clement a violin virtuoso? A review in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* of January 7, 1807, certainly did not emphasize as much, but it noted that he performed Beethoven's Violin Concerto with his "usual elegance and grace." The manuscript indicates that Beethoven must have been aware of the need to leave enough room for the virtuoso element: after completing the piece, Beethoven – evidently in consultation with Clement – made slight changes to the solo part here and there without crossing out the original version. Beethoven apparently preferred his original concept, from a purely musical standpoint, for its expressive power, judging by his later arrangement of the piece as piano concerto (Op. 61a), which ignores the "improved" violin part and follows the original version.

Complicating matters even more, there exists a third version of the solo part that is mostly a combination of the two others. Beethoven probably made this version when he prepared the first edition. It reaffirms that he favoured the first version, for the only virtuoso elements to make their way into this third and final version were those that he considered in keeping with the original concept. It is abundantly clear from this that for Beethoven, the composer stood above the (virtuoso) performer, that music took primacy over everyone and everything else. Was it not he, after all, who believed music was a higher revelation than philosophy?

The haste with which the Violin Concerto was written may have been the reason (though it was no different with the Kreutzer Sonata) that in the lengthy opening movement (which at 20 minutes is as long as many entire violin concertos) the trusted classical sonata form was less faithfully adhered to than was usual at that time. Instead of the traditional dualism between a first and second theme we find the introduction of no less than five independent theme groups that are so loosely connected to each other that they seem like a hodgepodge – hence the criticism at the time of the movement’s “scattered nature” and “endless repetition” of “insignificant passages.” Beethoven’s new ideas were moreover unprecedented, though grounded in his unerring sense of poetic refinement and impeccable feeling for proportion. They were the product of what by and large was a difficult life marked in part by a lack of good manners on the one hand, and on the other by inconceivable meticulousness when it came to the arts.

Who in those days could have comprehended the significance of the revolutionary and mysterious four soft kettledrum soundings of the tonic D?

It was the first time in music history that a solo kettledrum took the initiative at the very beginning. No less remarkable must the subsequent almost solemn hymn of the woodwinds have sounded, from which then develops the classical aesthetic contours of the so striking Allegro ma non troppo. In the inimitable Larghetto that follows, presented as an equally sublimely structured romance, it is as though time temporarily stands still in the beautifully traced contemplations of the congenial dialogue between the soloist and orchestra (how entirely different is the tone of the turbulent middle movement of the Fourth Piano Concerto!). A diminished seventh chord announces the transition to the absolutely carefree finale – though dark clouds pass by in the minor key episodes – one of Beethoven’s perfectly conceived closing rondos. Beethoven’s Violin Concerto exudes such majestic grandeur and intense lyricism that even on the strength of that alone, it must be counted among the most beautiful concertos of the instrument’s repertoire.

Beethoven often worked simultaneously on various large compositions. Thus, in the summer and autumn of 1806, the Fourth Piano Concerto, op. 58, Fourth Symphony, op. 60, and Violin Concerto, op. 61, appeared in close succession, more or less during a break in his work on the Fifth Symphony, op. 67. The year before, on April 7, 1805, the composer had shaken the musical world to its foundations with his Third Symphony, op. 55, the *Eroica*. But the Violin Concerto, like the Fourth Symphony, is predominantly lyrical and contemplative. It is hard to imagine that a man who had placed his life entirely in the service of music and then in 1801 had been confronted with the certainty that he would lose his hearing would five years later be amid one of the most fruitful periods of his life. What works arose around this time! The Second

through Sixth Symphonies, the Third through Fifth Piano Concertos, the Triple Concerto, the *Rasumovsky* Quartets, the Violin Concerto, *Leonore* (later *Fidelio*), the incidental music for *Egmont*, the oratorio *Christus am Ölberge*, the Mass in C, two mighty piano sonatas (the *Waldstein* and *Appassionata*). And all of this in the knowledge that he could not say to people: I am deaf. On June 29, 1801, he wrote in a well-known letter to his good friend Franz Wegeler in Bonn: “[...] I go through life in a miserable way; for two years I have shunned all company because it is impossible for me to say: I am deaf. Had I taken up another profession, such a thing would not be so hard to do, but in my profession it is a horrible thing. For my enemies, and they are not few in number, what would they say of it!” Two days later, on July 1, a similar letter went to Carl Amenda, another friend, who had just returned to his native Latvia. Beethoven impressed upon both that they had to keep his confession in the strictest confidence. Not even the girlfriend of his youth, Leonore von Breuning – who married Wegeler in 1802 – was to be told.

After a memorable premiere in 1806, nothing was heard of Beethoven’s Violin Concerto. Then, 38 years later, in 1844, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy conducted a hugely successful performance of the piece during a London Philharmonic Society concert with the then 14-year-old Joseph Joachim as soloist. Several months later, Mendelssohn completed his Violin Concerto in E minor, not coincidentally the second work chronologically to take a central place in the extensive violin concerto repertoire.

There can be no doubt. Beethoven’s violin romances are not only some of the most beautiful music, they are also precisely what the title promises: instrumental love songs. The first, in G major, op. 40, probably dates from 1802. The second, in F major, op. 50, was composed in 1798 – despite the high opus number – but was only published in 1805, three years after the first.

In their *Biographische Notizen über Ludwig van Beethoven* (Biographical Notes on Ludwig van Beethoven, 1838), Beethoven’s friends Franz Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries wrote of his many loves. According to Wegeler, “He was never without love and was in fact usually brought to the highest state of turmoil by it.” Ries commented that his master had a weakness for beautiful young women. One evening in Baden, he found Beethoven on a sofa with one such woman beside him. Ries did not want to disturb the two, but Beethoven beckoned him and asked him to play on the piano. “Play something enamored!” Then, “Now something melancholy!” And finally, “Now something passionate!” Who the woman was remains unknown, but perhaps it was she who moved the composer to write some of the most beautiful violin romances.

Aart van der Wal

Translation: John Lydon/Muse Translations

Complete Symphonies & Concertos

What you have in your hands is a box with which Challenge Classics intends to make its contribution to the celebrations for the 250th anniversary of the birth of Ludwig van Beethoven.

It is a unique and completely original collection in the panorama of today's discography, as it contains the complete corpus of the symphonies, as well as all the works for (instrumental) soloist and orchestra, i.e. all the concertos: the five Concertos for piano and orchestra, the Violin Concerto and the Triple Concerto for piano, violin, cello and orchestra. These works are supplemented by two of Beethoven's other works for violin and orchestra, namely the Romances.

This means that, apart from the overtures and some dances, this boxed set contains all of Beethoven's orchestral and symphonic production (purely instrumental, and therefore not including voices). In other words, you now have what musicologists, but above all the listeners around the world, have recognised for about two hundred years now as being one of (if not the) highest peaks in the history of music.

A further and precious special feature of this boxed set is its coherence, in the sense that all the works recorded here are directed by a single conductor, Jan Willem de Vriend, at the head of a single orchestra, the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra.

It is clear that this aspect provides a unity, an organic force and therefore an authority that other collections featuring different directors cannot boast. Finally, the soloists in the concertos are, like de Vriend himself, among the star artists of our record label: the pianist Hannes Minnaar and the violinist Liza Ferschtman. For the Triple Concerto, we have chosen the version appreciated by critics and audiences alike, with the Storioni Trio.

Therefore, it seems somewhat unusual that in a recording market bursting at the seams with offers and proposals, in particular with Beethoven records this year, no one had yet thought of collecting the orchestral / symphonic production of Beethoven in a single box and under the baton of a single director, music that includes some of the public's (and of course musicologists') most loved masterpieces. The Symphonies, the Piano Concertos and the Violin Concerto all enjoy the status of absolute masterpieces in the history of music, while the Triple Concerto, perhaps the Cinderella among the works collected here, is a significant work within both Beethoven's own corpus and the musical output of the early 19th century, if only for the total novelty of the chosen solo instruments at the time.

We conclude this brief presentation, underlining one last but significant factor in the project's cohesion and cogency: all the recordings presented here were curated by Bert van der Wolf of Northstar Recording, one of the most innovative and capable sound engineers of the classic milieu.

Mario Morese

Jan Willem de Vriend, formerly principal conductor of the Residentie Orkest The Hague (from 2015 to 2019), is now principal guest conductor of the Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona i Nacional de Catalunya, Orchestre National de Lille and Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra. He is also Artist in Residence at the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra and makes regular guest appearances with such ensembles as the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Rotterdam Philharmonic.

De Vriend first established an international reputation as artistic director of the Combattimento Consort Amsterdam, which he established in 1982 and led from the violin until 2015. Specialising in music of the 17th and 18th century, and applying historically informed practice on modern instruments, the consort gave new life to many rarely heard works and Gramophone magazine praised its players as “accomplished... with technical finesse and a lively feeling for characterisation”. Its collaborative spirit lives on in de Vriend’s approach as he explores and energises the symphonic repertoire, in particular the music of Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms and Johann Strauss.

From 2006 to 2018, he was chief conductor of the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra (Het Orkest van het Oosten), based in the city of Enschede. Early in his tenure he made a major impact with Mahler’s Symphony No 1 in the 1893 Hamburg version, subsequently recorded for Challenge Classics. Gramophone magazine wrote: “Don’t miss this one... The music-making is winningly fresh and vigorous”. De Vriend and the orchestra went on to record a substantial Beethoven

catalogue for Challenge Classics, embracing the complete symphonies and concertos (with Hannes Minnaar and Liza Ferschtman among the soloists). Classic FM praised the interpretation of Symphony No 7 for “a bounding flair that does real justice to the composer’s capacity for joy”. Further landmarks in the Challenge Classics catalogue are the complete Mendelssohn symphonies, again with the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra, and the complete symphonies of Schubert, recorded with the Residentie Orkest, also De Vriend’s orchestra for a Decca recording of Mendelssohn’s complete works for piano and orchestra. The Konzerthausorchester Berlin was the choice for a Berlin Classics album of Schumann’s complete works for piano and orchestra.

From 2008 to 2015 Jan Willem de Vriend was principal guest conductor of the Brabant Orchestra (now the South Netherlands Philharmonic) and he has made guest appearances with, among others, the Belgian National Orchestra, SWR Symphony Orchestra Stuttgart, Royal Flanders Philharmonic Orchestra, Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra, Wiener Kammerorchester and Hong Kong Philharmonic. His future plans include engagements with the Rotterdam Philharmonic, MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra and NDR Radiophilharmonie.

In the field of opera, in both Europe and the USA, de Vriend and Combattimento Consort Amsterdam gave performances, of works by Monteverdi, Haydn, Handel, Telemann, and J.S. Bach (the ‘Hunting’ and ‘Coffee’ cantatas at the Leipzig Bach Festival), all in stagings by the director Eva Buchmann. Operas by such composers as Mozart, Verdi and Cherubini featured in his seasons with the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra, which included a visit to Switzerland with



productions of Don Giovanni and Rossini's La Gazzetta, again directed by Eva Buchmann. De Vriend has also conducted opera in Amsterdam (Nederlandse Reisopera), Barcelona, Strasbourg, Luzern, Schwetzingen and Bergen.

In the Netherlands he has presented several television series and is well known for his appearances on a variety of other programmes about music. In 2012 he received a prize from the national station NPO Radio 4 for his creative contribution to classical music.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra is based in Enschede (Overijssel). With Jan Willem de Vriend being its artistic director and chief conductor from 2006 till 2016 The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra recorded the complete Beethoven symphonies and concertos as well as Mendelssohn's five symphonies. Under De Vriend's leadership the orchestra has expanded its repertoire to cover music from four centuries. Its use of period instruments in the classical repertoire gave the orchestra a distinctive and highly individual character.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra has made successful tours of the United States, Spain, China and England, and it has performed in such famous venues as Carnegie Hall in New York and Birmingham Symphony Hall. Its CDs of the Beethoven symphonies (for Challenge Classics) and music by Dutch composers such as Julius Röntgen and Jan van Gilse (for the CPO label) were very well received by the international music press. The orchestra's commitment to expanding its social relevance is reflected in the large number of projects

in which education is a key element and in international partnerships with European innovative orchestras.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra has worked with distinguished conductors, such as its former chief conductor Jaap van Zweden, Vasily Petrenko, Edo de Waart, Hans Vonk, Gerd Albrecht, Marc Soustrot, Claus Peter Flor and Tan Dun. Ed Spanjaard was the orchestra's principal conductor from 2017 till 2019. The orchestra merged with Het Gelders Orkest from Arnhem (Gelderland) as per September 2019. The orchestras continue their activities as 'Phion – Orchestra of Gelderland & Overijssel.'

Hannes Minnaar

Dutch pianist Hannes Minnaar is consistently described by the critics as being able to convey musical essence in all its purity. They talk about his spontaneity and naturalness, an ease without superficiality. 'My overall approach to music is to take a score very seriously, which is not the same as taking it literally. Pianists from earlier days are a constant inspiration in that respect. I admire such artists as Alfred Cortot, who does not position himself between the composer and the piece, yet leaves an unmistakable mark on the music. Wilhelm Kempff's aural richness and trueness, for example, is an example of something I aspire to.'

In Spring 2019, Hannes Minnaar performed on the renowned Master Pianists Series in Amsterdam's Concertgebouw; as the first Dutchman in 20 years. Hailed by the national press as an undisputed success, NRC noted his playing

as 'free of bluff and swagger' and 'in deference to the music at all times'. BBC Music Magazine proclaimed his second solo album their *Choice of the Month*, saying: 'Underlying Bach's contrapuntal wizardry is a compelling emotional narrative'. On the third solo album, Gramophone wrote: 'Minnaar's identification with Fauré's unique realm of music is complete and his deeply felt interpretations shine with clarity and infinite nuance.'

Minnaar first gained attention as second prize winner of the Geneva International Music Competition 2008, and third prize winner at the Queen Elisabeth Competition 2010. The influence from his teachers including Jan Wijn, Jacques van Oortmerssen and Ferenc Rados, and masterclasses with Menahem Pressler profoundly informed his performance inspiration. Among conductors, Minnaar has worked with Herbert Blomstedt, Antony Hermus, Xian Zhang and the late Jirí Belohlávek. He collaborates with all major Dutch orchestras including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and orchestras throughout Europe. Minnaar was made a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellow in 2011, and he received the Dutch Music Award in 2016 – the highest honour bestowed upon a classical musician by the Dutch Ministry of Culture.

Vitally important to Minnaar's musical *raison d'être* is his work with the Van Baerle Trio, founded together with violinist Maria Milstein and cellist Gideon den Herder in 2004. Nominated by Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, they were ECHO Rising Stars 2013–14. The 250th anniversary of Beethoven has been a major focus for Minnaar in recent seasons both in performance and recordings. His discography includes Beethoven's complete piano concertos, violin sonatas and piano trios.

Liza Ferschtman violin

Renowned for her strong musical personality and the versatility of her musicianship, which combines powerful dynamism and intense lyricism, Liza Ferschtman has been praised in the international musical press, with The New York Times describing her as 'nothing short of revelatory', and referring to the 'laserlike intensity, purity and refined beauty of her playing', while The Guardian commended her 'vivacious musical personality' and 'lovely lyrical quality'.

Since winning the Dutch Music Award, the most distinguished prize for Dutch musicians, in 2006, Liza has appeared as a soloist with many of the world's top orchestras, including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, London Philharmonic, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Warsaw Philharmonic and Brussels Philharmonic, collaborating with conductors including Jaap van Zweden, Iván Fischer, Stéphane Denève, Jacek Kasprzyk, Jun Märkl, Frans Brüggen, Neeme Järvi, Otto Tausk, Dmitry Sitkovetsky and Thomas Søndergård. Liza Ferschtman is also a passionate chamber musician and a popular guest at festivals and concert venues throughout the world; since 2007 she has been artistic director of the Delft Chamber Music Festival. Her chamber music partners include Elisabeth Leonskaja, Jonathan Biss, Alisa Weilerstein, Christian Poltéra, Julius Drake, Martin Roscoe, Nobuko Imai, Lars Anders Tomter, Marie Luise Neunecker, Sharon Kam and Amihai Grosz.

Liza Ferschtman has an impressive discography. Her CDs for Challenge Classics feature violin concertos by Beethoven, Dvořák, Mendelssohn, Korngold and Bernstein (Serenade). She has also recorded chamber music on CD, including

Mendelssohn's Octet, works by Schubert and Beethoven performed with Inon Barnatan and the Kodaly, Ravel and Schulhoff duos performed with her father, the cellist Dmitri Ferschtman. Her most recent CD of the Bernstein Serenade and Korngold Concerto received wide critical acclaim, including five stars in Fono Forum and 'Album of the Month' in die Welt. Her earlier CD of solo works by Bach and Ysaÿe was chosen as 'CD of the Month' by The Strad.

The daughter of prominent musicians, Liza grew up in a musical environment in Amsterdam, and as a young child she was soon taking her first violin lessons from the legendary violinist and family friend Philip Hirschhorn. After his death she studied with Herman Krebbers, Ida Kavafian at the celebrated Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and David Takeno in London.

Storioni Trio

Bart van de Roer piano | Wouter Vossen violin | Marc Vossen cello

For over two decades, the Storioni Trio revels in the joys of musical collaboration as one of the world's leading piano trios. Two brothers who performed together from earliest childhood and their pianist soul-mate form a threesome whose musical adventures celebrate unique chemistry and the confidence to bring audiences to new levels of discovery. Combining the strength of their individual accomplishment as soloists, pedagogues and orchestral leaders to the chamber music front, the Storioni Trio welcomes an international audience to discover their unique quality.

The triple Concerto specialists - Three soloists, one performance
With triple concertos at the heart of their far-reaching repertoire, the Storioni Trio moves beyond technical fluency to embrace this genre. While many dismiss Beethoven's Triple Concerto as an awkward composition that is difficult to perform, the Storioni Trio is justifiably proud of their approach to this masterwork. "Its exceptional balance displays Beethoven's uncanny perception of how to create for three solo voices and his creative approach to repeated thematic material."

Spontaneity is the hallmark of every performance and the trio's freedom to let go is based on a thorough understanding of the score. A triple concerto performance gives the audience a special gift: three soloists expressing one unified work. To find the balance between individual virtuosity and collective unity challenges us to open new doors. The audience is treated to something of a spectacle: three soloists, one performance. Beethoven gives us the chance to reinvent ourselves as individual musicians and as a trio as he always dares us to confront ourselves.

Since starting their Beethoven adventures under the watchful guidance of no less a light than Menahem Pressler almost two decades ago, the Storioni Trio has found their own voice, their own move forward to recreate color and drama within the tools of Beethoven's art.

Like a great chef preparing the optimal meal, chamber musicians search for ways to extend the aural palette and arrange ear-opening and mind-expanding experiences in concert programming and recording. The Storioni Trio's

experience with performing the Beethoven Triple Concerto as a cornerstone has paved the way to free move forward and perform less-familiar masterpieces. In the 1930s, Alfredo Casella's Triple Concerto Op. 56 and Martinu's Concerto were created; both wonderful compositions that deserve a warm welcome from music lovers all over the world.

The international adventures for the Storioni Trio continues with commissions by the Polish composer Penderecki, the Finnish Kalevi Aho, the Australian Brett Dean, the American David Lang. Dutch composer Theo Loevendie who has gained a considerable following with his jazzy oeuvre will write a piece for the two-stringed Chinese erhu and piano trio for the Storioni's in the near future.

Wouter Vossen plays a rare violin from 1794 by the Cremonian violin maker Laorentius Storioni with a violin stick from 1845 by the famous French baton maker Dominique Peccatte. Marc Vossen, plays a Milanese Grancino cello from 1700.

This Recording was Produced, Engineered and Edited using the 'High Quality Musical Mastering' principle with the use of Sonodore microphones, Avalon Acoustic & Musikelectronic Geithain monitoring, Siltech Mono-Crystal cabling and dCS - & Merging Technologies converters.



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Recording dates:

- CD 1: 30 June - 3 July 2009 (Symphony No. 4), 23 - 26 June 2008 (Symphony No. 6)
- CD 2: 29-30 June 2009 (Symphony No. 1), 8-10 February 2010 (Symphony No. 5)
- CD 3: 29-30 June 2010 (Symphony No. 7), 25-26 June 2008 (Symphony No. 8)
- CD 4: 18-20 May 2009 (Symphony No. 3), 7-8 September 2010 (Symphony No. 2)
- CD 5: 12-14 & 18 July 2011
- CD 6: 2-4 February 2015
- CD 7: 23 & 27 September 2016 (Piano Concertos No. 3), 2-3 July 2012 (Triple Concerto)
- CD 8: 26-28 May 2014
- CD 9: 10-12 February 2010 (Violin Concerto), 30 June - 1 July 2010 (Violin Romances)

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Graphic Design: Natasja Wallenburg & Juan Carlos Villarroel

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