

NAXOS
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NON-
FICTION

BIOGRAPHY



Jeremy Siepmann
**The Life
and
Works
of
Beethoven**

Narrated by
Jeremy Siepmann

with

**Bob Peck
Neville Jason
David Timson
Elaine Claxton
Karen Archer**

NA421512D

1	01 Childhood and Youth	0:22
2	Symphony No. 7 in A (finale)	5:11
3	Hammerklavier Sonata, Op.106 (excerpt)	4:31
4	Beethoven as a pianist	4:24
5	Sonata in C, Op. 2 No. 3 (finale)	4:58
6	Beethoven as pianist	4:25
7	German Dance, WoO 8, No. 4	6:24
8	Beethovens Vienna	7:50
9	Sextet in E flat, Op. 81b (first movement)	2:13
10	Beethoven as friend, pupil	7:41
11	Trio in C minor, Op. 1 No.1	7:14
12	Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat (finale)	5:59
13	The onset of deafness	3:29
14	Appassionata Sonata (finale)	8:10
15	The crest of the wave	0:38
16	Septet in B flat (Scherzo)	6:53
17	Sonata Pathétique, Op. 13 (excerpt)	3:19
18	Beethoven in love	3:37
19	Piano Sonata in C sharp minor, Op. 27 No.2 (excerpt)	1:24
20	A winning streak	1:11
21	Symphony No. 2 in D (finale, excerpt)	3:04

22	Beethoven in crisis: the Heiligenstadt Testament	5:24
23	§Eroica Symphony: Funeral March (excerpt)	3:55
24	Beethoven and heroism	6:24
25	Eroica Symphony (finale, excerpt)	1:52
26	Beethoven the revolutionary	2:55
27	Razumovsky Quartet No. 1 pp. 59 No. 1 Adagio (excerpt)	3:58
28	Beethoven and women	8:15
29	Violin Concerto in D, Op. 61	6:24
30	Beethoven the Performer	6:56
31	Emperor Concerto (finale)	10:00
32	Beethoven and suffering	0:56
33	Coriolan Overture	8:24
34	Beethoven and fate	3:59
35	Fifth Symphony (first movement)	7:30
36	Fifth Symphony (finale, excerpt)	4:27
37	Beethoven and the transcendence of suffering	2:17
38	Seventh Symphony (first movement)	4:16
39	Beethoven, Goethe and self pity	2:59
40	Beethoven on his method of composing	1:57
41	Beethoven and unrequited love	3:11

42	Serioso Quartet, Op. 95 (first movement)	4:52
43	The Immortal Beloved	7:59
44	Violin Sonata in G, Op. 96	10:03
45	To the brink of suicide _ and beyond	3:00
46	Battle Symphony (excerpt)	2:54
47	Prisoners Chorus from Fidelio	7:12
48	Archduke Trio	4:07
49	Beethoven kidnaps Karl	8:48
50	Beethovens manner and appearance	3:16
51	Pastoral Symphony (excerp)	2:55
52	Beethoven as a parent	17:22
53	Piano Sonata No. 32 Op. 11	4:50
54	Beethoven and friendship	4:27
55	His attitudes to publication	1:10
56	Beethoven as conductor	1:21
57	Ninth Symphony (Scherzo, excerpt)	3:53
58	His final works	1:53
59	String Quartet in B flat, Op. 130 (Cavatina)	7:06
60	Beethovens deat	5:29
61	Ninth Symphony (excerpt)	4:01

Total time: 4:55:34

Jeremy Siepmann

The Life and Works of Beethoven

The music of the Classical era, still in a relatively early phase at the time of Beethoven's birth in 1770, was based on preconceived notions of order, proportion and grace. Beauty and symmetry of form were objects of worship in themselves and combined to create a Utopian image, an idealisation of universal experience. In the Romantic age, thanks in no small part to Beethoven's truly epoch-making influence, this was largely replaced by a cult of individual expression, the crystallisation of the experience of the moment, the unfettered confession of powerful emotions and primal urges, the glorification of sensuality, a flirtation with the supernatural, an emphasis on spontaneity and improvisation and the cultivation of extremes – emotional, sensual, spiritual and structural. Where a near-reverence for symmetry had characterised the Classical era, Romanticism delighted in asymmetry. Form was no longer seen as a receptacle but as a by-product of emotion, to be generated from within. While the great Romantic painters covered their canvases

with grandiose landscapes, the great Romantic composers (starting with Beethoven, in his *Pastoral Symphony*) attempted similar representations in sound.

A further feature of the Romantic imagination was a taste for extravagance. And here, particularly where instrumental music is concerned, Beethoven was a trend-setter. His *Eroica*, *Pastoral* and *Choral* symphonies expanded the scope and size of the symphony to hitherto unimagined degrees (among them the inclusion of vocal soloists and chorus in a symphonic work), and his great *Hammerklavier* Sonata was twice as long (and twice as profound) as any typical classical sonata by Mozart or Haydn.

The ideals and consequences of the French Revolution were a source of alarm to the rulers of the crumbling Holy Roman Empire. As a consequence, Austria, with Vienna as its capital, became a bastion against French imperialism, and an efficient police state in which liberalism, both political and philosophical, was ruthlessly suppressed. But the Viennese, as Beethoven

early perceived, were not natural revolutionaries. Rather, they were noted for their political apathy and an almost decadent taste for pleasure. More troublesome to them than their homegrown overlords were the two occupations by the French, in 1805 and 1809. The latter, in particular, brought considerable hardship to the city in the form of monetary crises, serious food shortages and a fleeing population, while Austria as a whole suffered serious political and territorial setbacks. With the final defeat of Napoleon in 1814, however, Austria recouped many of her losses, and during the Peace Congress of 1814-15 became the principal focal point of European diplomatic, commercial and cultural activity. It was during this period, the capital now awash with visiting dignitaries and their entourages, that Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*, was mounted twenty-one times with consistent success. But while the festivities associated with the Congress marked a return to gaiety, they could also be seen as a wake for an age whose time was over. Increasingly, throughout Europe, bankers and businessmen replaced the nobility and landed aristocracy as the principal arbiters of taste and culture. To an

altogether new extent, music passed out of the palaces and into the marketplace. Composers were decreasingly dependent on aristocratic patronage, and now relied for their livelihood on the sales of their work, or, more commonly, on their income as teachers of the well-to-do. Performers, ever more reliant on the fickle patronage of a fee-paying public, emerged as a specialised breed of their own. Yet in the realm of the public concert, Vienna lagged well behind London. Although orchestral concerts had been mounted there since the 1770s, it wasn't until 1831, four years after Beethoven's death, that it acquired its own purpose-built concert hall. Throughout his life, concerts took place either in the palaces of the declining nobility, or in theatres (often privately owned and managed), or in ballrooms and other halls, none of them originally designed for music.

Inevitably, changes in social structure were accompanied by changes in taste. Especially after the hardships of the Napoleonic era, the public mood was for lightweight, escapist entertainment, most spectacularly exemplified by the new wave of lightweight Italian opera. This period marked the lowest ebb in Beethoven's fortunes as a composer, and the height of

his anger and disgust at the society around him.

Beethoven's relationship to the politics of his time was as individual, and sometimes as contradictory, as he was himself, and were based on a deep-rooted sense of natural justice, a powerful if not very precisely defined belief in a moral elite, and a curiously naive association of virtue with hard work and the overcoming of difficulties. 'What is difficult is also beautiful, good and great,' he once wrote. In his own life he seems frequently to have created difficulties for their own sake – or at any rate as a prerequisite of moral nobility. In 1816 he wrote in his journal, 'The chief characteristic of a distinguished man is endurance in adverse and harsh circumstances.' Nobility was a matter of moral virtue, not heredity, but it did constitute an elite and only those who had achieved it were fit to rule. That rulers were both necessary and desirable Beethoven never doubted, and he could never rid himself entirely of his admiration for Napoleon. While he championed the rights of humanity and saw it as a duty to give succour to the needy and the disadvantaged, he was by no means an apologist for the tenets of the French

Revolution (the dominant political fact of European life in his youth). He publicly deplored the repressive actions of the Habsburg rulers in whose domain he had chosen to live, and admired the British for their form of parliamentary democracy, yet he was never wholly a democrat. He believed in a hierarchical, paternalist society and generally scorned the proletarian masses, declaring flatly that 'the common citizen should be excluded from higher men.'

Yet another striking feature of Romanticism was the cult of the hero, especially as represented in the writings and art of the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations. Given the character of his music (particularly that of his middle period) and the many entries and quotations in his journal concerning heroes and the heroic, there can be little doubt that he envisaged himself as a hero in the great Classical mould. Closely allied to the cult of the hero was the cult of the genius, which arose in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in reaction against the concept of musician as artisan rather than artist, servant rather than master. The fact that 'genius' in Beethoven's case was both singular and eccentric (like the fact that he

had about him a suggestion of the occult, even the deranged) only added to his appeal, and served to fire not only his own imagination but that of the era which he came posthumously to personify. His unique development as a composer was a reflection of the time in which he lived and a formative influence on the spirit of the age which came after him. History was ripe for his emergence.

Notes by Jeremy Siepmann

JEREMY SIEPMANN

Though long resident in England, Jeremy Siepmann was born and formally educated in the United States. Having completed his studies at the Mannes College of Music in New York, he moved to London at the suggestion of Sir Malcolm Sargent in 1964. After several years as a freelance lecturer he was invited to join the staff of London University. For most of the last twenty years he has confined his teaching activity to the piano, his pupils including pianists of worldwide repute.

As a writer he has contributed articles, reviews and interviews to numerous journals and reference works (including *New Statesman*, *The Musical Times*, *Gramophone*, *BBC Music Magazine*, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*), some of them being reprinted in book form (Oxford University Press, Robson Books). His books include a widely acclaimed biography of Chopin (*The Reluctant Romantic*, Gollancz/Northeastern University Press, 1995), two volumes on the history and literature of the piano, and a biography of Brahms (Everyman/EMI, 1997). In December 1997 he was appointed editor of *Piano* magazine.

His career as a broadcaster began in New York in 1963 with an East Coast radio series on the life and work of Mozart, described by Alistair Cooke as 'the best music program on American radio'. On the strength of this, improbably, he was hired by the BBC as a humorist, in which capacity he furnished weekly satirical items on various aspects of American life.

After a long break he returned to broadcasting in 1977, since when he has devised, written and presented more than 1,000 programmes for the BBC, including the international award-winning series *The Elements of Music*. In 1988 he was appointed Head of Music at the BBC World Service, broadcasting to an estimated audience of 135 million. He left the Corporation in Spring 1994 to form his own independent production company.



Bob Peck was a highly versatile actor in the British tradition. He played many major classical roles at the Royal Shakespeare Company, including Macbeth, Lear and Iago as well as taking leading parts in new plays, including Pinter's *The Birthday Party*. At the same time, he was active in films and was seen extensively on television winning the 1985 BAFTA award for Best Actor and the BAMF Comedy Award in 1998. He died in 1999. This recording of *The Life and Works of Beethoven* was one of his last performances.



Neville Jason trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, where he was awarded the Diction Prize by Sir John Gielgud. He is a familiar voice on BBC Radio. For Naxos AudioBooks he has abridged and recorded Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* in 12 volumes.



David Timson trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, as both actor and singer. He has performed in modern and classic plays in the UK and abroad, and is a leading voice actor on radio and audiobook. For Naxos AudioBooks he has recorded volumes of Sherlock Holmes stories, and has directed *Twelfth Night* in which he also plays Feste.



Elaine Claxton has worked extensively in UK theatre, including London's Royal National Theatre. She has twice been a member of the BBC Radio Company, during which time she participated in over 200 broadcasts.



Karen Archer has worked for the Royal Shakespeare Company in *Nicholas Nickleby* and as Mrs Erlynne in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, as well as across the UK in plays such as *Ghosts*, *She Stoops to Conquer* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Her television appearances include *The Chief*, *Ruth Rendell Mysteries*, *Casualty* and *Chancer* and she has appeared in the films *The Secret Garden* and *Forever Young*.

The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

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Jeremy Siepmann

The Life and Works of Beethoven

Narrated by **Jeremy Siepmann**

with **Bob Peck • Neville Jason • David Timson
Elaine Claxton • Karen Archer**

For many people, Beethoven is the greatest composer who ever lived. In this portrait-in-sound, actors' readings combine with his music to reveal a titanic personality, both vulnerable and belligerent, comic and tragic, and above all heroic, as he comes to grips with perhaps the greatest disability a musician can suffer. No man's music is more universal, few men's lives are more inspiring. In every sense but one – his modest height – he was a giant.

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