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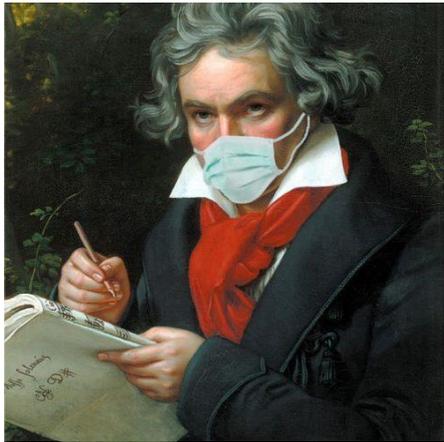
*Programme Notes 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2020*



**BTHVN**  
**2020**

## About Today's Music Selections

Today's session was always going to be about Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Not only was it voted at No1 on the ABC Classic FM Top 100 Beethoven survey, but at the planned Beethoven 2020 Festival in Bonn (Beethoven's birthplace) this symphony was to be the grand finale to the year of celebrations – with Daniel Barenboim conducting his own West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. It seemed only natural, then, as we began our U3A Music Appreciation year that we feature not only a Beethoven composition in each of our sessions, but that we follow the lead of the City of Bonn and conclude our own “Beethoven Year” with a recording of the Ninth Symphony by the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra with Barenboim wielding the baton.



Alas, the best laid plans have fallen victim to the Pandemic and the Beethoven 2020 year internationally, if not fizzled out, performance-wise, has limped to a tame conclusion. But not with us. Here in U3A Benalla: we have held up our end, as best we can, in honouring this great composer. And his Ninth will, as planned, round out our year, even though it is not being presented in the manner we would have liked.

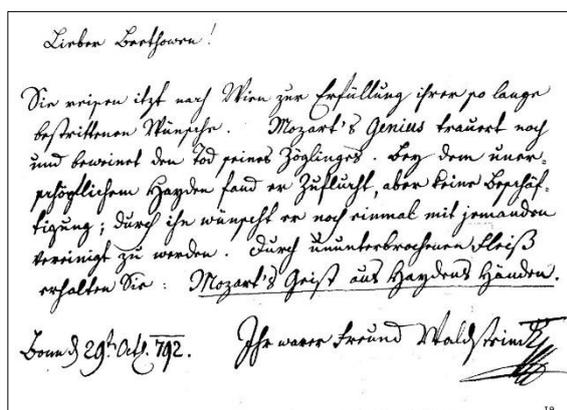
To fill out the session a couple of other Beethoven works have been included – his “Waldstein” Piano Sonata and the dreamy, ever-popular, “Für Elise”. The inclusion of these two additional compositions means that in honouring Beethoven this year we will have looked at each of the “Top 20” in that ABC Classic FM survey.

First up this session is the Waldstein Piano Sonata, so named as Beethoven dedicated it to Count Ferdinand von Waldstein a descendant of one of Austria's noblest families, an amateur composer, and a dedicated patron of the arts, who became Beethoven's most important early patron.



Count Ferdinand von Waldstein

When Beethoven moved to Vienna for good in 1792 (he had made an earlier foray in 1787, but had to hurry back to Bonn when he learned of the mortal illness of his mother), it was Waldstein who financed the venture. He sent the young composer off with an admonition to “receive the spirit of Mozart [who had died just months before] from the hands of Haydn,” which Beethoven did in a series of lessons with the recently retired Esterházy Kapellmeister.



An entry from Beethoven's friendship book penned by Count Waldstein reads:  
 “Dear Beethoven! You go to realise a long-desired wish: the genius of Mozart is still in mourning and weeps for the death of its disciple. (...) By incessant application, receive Mozart's spirit from Haydn's hands.”

Waldstein was instrumental also in opening many doors of the Viennese aristocracy to Beethoven. Although Waldstein's financial dealings led him to an impoverished end (mainly in raising his own army to fight Napoleon's army – bankrupting himself in the process), Beethoven immortalized his name by inscribing the dedication of one of his greatest creations to him – the C major Piano Sonata.



Su Yeon Kim

As to whose performance of this work we might consider, there are some great names as well as lesser known ones to choose from. I have elected to go for a young emerging pianist from South Korea – Su Yeong Kim. Her performance is some 5 minutes shorter than recordings of say Barenboim, Kemp, Arrau, to name some (is it her tempo, or did she leave some out?), but I have chosen her simply because of the comparative lightness of tone with which she plays it. Beethoven did ask for lots of fortissimo pedal in this sonata, and I think Miss Kim gets it right, as the pianos of Beethoven's day were much more lightly built than the pianos we are accustomed to today with their much heavier frames and tone.

Su Yeon Kim was born 4 June 1994. She graduated with distinction from the Mozarteum University, Salzburg, and was previously a student at the Korean University of the Arts. She gained international recognition as a semi-finalist of both the International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw and the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels, and has won numerous prizes at other international competitions.

Kim has given concerts extensively in Asia and in Europe, performing with such ensembles as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Chamber Orchestra of Wallonia in Mons and the Kraków Philharmonic Orchestra. She has given concerts at the Herkulessaal in Munich, the Béla Bartók Memorial House in Budapest and the John F Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington. Kim has been described by the press as “one of the most empathetic and sincere musicians among the young generation”, and as having “a remarkably sophisticated technique with incredibly detailed articulation and miniature values”.

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Next we have Beethoven's **Für Elise** ..... but was it really for Elise? The piece wasn't published until some 40 years after Beethoven's death and when the music was being transcribed, Beethoven's handwriting was misread. The text on the manuscript actually read 'Für Therese'. Maybe, then, it was for a Therese? Beethoven is supposed to have given the piece to a woman by that name – Therese Malfatti to whom Beethoven proposed in 1810 – the same year he composed it.. But he didn't write it for her. At least, most experts don't think he did. Besides, she turned down his offer of marriage.



WHO WAS  
**ELISE?**

Nobody in Beethoven's circle went by the name 'Elise'. Was it a pet name? At one point, Beethoven was keen on an Elisabeth Röckel – was she Elise? Röckel was a German soprano who played Florestan in Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*, and many sources indicate that Elisabeth often met with Beethoven, who is said to have fallen in love with the young woman and wanted to marry her also.



Elisabeth Roskel



Therese Malfatti



Elizaveta Alexeevna

And

then

There is also a third candidate – an “Elise” – the child prodigy and budding German soprano, Elise Barenfeld. Treated for a while as a child prodigy, she first travelled on concert tours with Beethoven's friend. In 2012, musicologist Rita Steblin claimed Beethoven dedicated ‘Für Elise’ to Barenfeld. Steblin thinks Therese Malfatti could have been the 13 year old Barenfeld's piano teacher, and Beethoven dedicated to Elise the easy Bagatelle, “to do his beloved Therese a favour”.

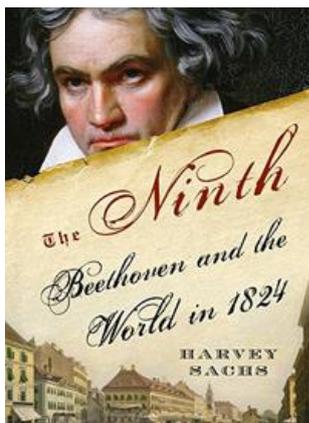
And just to muddy the water a bit more there is even a version that the composition was devoted to Elizaveta Alexeevna, the wife of Alexander I, the Russian Emperor.

While mystery remains as to its dedication, ‘Für Elise’ is undoubtedly one of Beethoven's most famous works. It seems almost strange now, that, at the time it was composed, the piece was relatively incidental. but the main thing is that this composition survived till our days.

A warning though to the creative side of all men: – to train our handwriting if we are going to devote something to a beloved one – don't confuse people . And nowadays it even could cause a fight between all women for the right to be mentioned in the name of such great music.

No mystery or argument, though, about the pianist. Lang Lang is a household name (almost) when it comes to concert pianists and needs no introduction.

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And so we come to the grand finale – **Beethoven's Ninth Symphony** and, undoubtedly, the high point of his compositional life.

“Beethoven was a modern artist who followed his very own will of expression, who did not compose primarily for the glory of God or the glorification of a prince, but raised his musical voice to express the confidence of a peaceful and joyful human coexistence. His music is an appeal to humanity and is based on the conviction that there is a moral core that unites us all to live together”.

(From the notes for the originally conceived closing concert in Bonn of the Beethoven Jubilee Year BTHVN 2020).



Nicholas Cook

British musicologist Nicholas Cook, Emeritus Professor of Music at Cambridge University (among other claims to fame) had this to say about the work:

*“Of all the works in the mainstream repertory of Western music, the Ninth Symphony ..... from its first performance [in Vienna in 1824] up to the present day, has inspired diametrically opposed interpretations”.*

*Those interpretations include those earlier listeners and commentators who heard and saw in it evidence that Beethoven had “lost it” compositionally speaking; that the piece, with its incomprehensible scale, nearly impossible technical demands, and above all its crazily utopian humanist idealism in the choral setting of Friedrich Schiller’s Ode to Joy in its last movement, amounted to madness. On the other side, Hector Berlioz thought it the “culmination of its author’s genius”.*

*“It’s been held up as the central work of Western classical music both by those who imagine it as the ‘ne plus ultra’ of symphonic, technical, and compositional imagination and mastery, and by those who want to say that classical music can embrace the world outside the concert hall as well as within it, and that the piece is a sounding bell of social change, of emotional hope, and even of political reform”.*

*The Ode to Joy tune – which Beethoven composed as a motto for the whole world to take to its heart to become a national anthem of humanity itself, something much bigger in its impact even than the anthems of nation states that had emerged by the early 19th century – has been adopted as a the motto of dictatorships as well as democracies.*

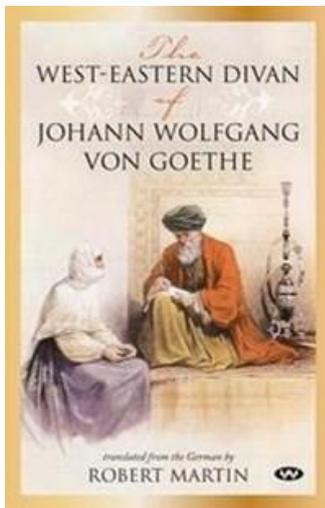
*Today, the Ode to Joy is the anthem of the European Union and the sound of Hogmanay and New Year celebrations everywhere from Germany to Japan, and it’s an annual fixture at the BBC Proms, traditionally on the penultimate night of the season.*

*(Tom Service, writing in “The Guardian” September 2014).*

*It’s a performance from the BBC Proms (in 2012) that we will listen to, performed as mentioned earlier, by the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra conducted by Daniel Barenboim.*



*For 20 years, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra has been a significant presence in the international music world. In 1999, Daniel Barenboim and the late Palestinian literary scholar Edward W. Said created a workshop for young musicians to promote coexistence and intercultural dialogue.*



They named the orchestra and workshop after Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's collection of poems "West-Eastern Divan", a central work for the development of the concept of world culture (the term stands for "oriental poetry collection", by the way). The orchestra's first rehearsal sessions took place in Weimar and Chicago. An equal number of Israeli and Arab musicians form the base of the ensemble, together with members from Turkey, Iran, and Spain. They meet each summer for rehearsals, followed by an international concert tour.

Since its founding, the orchestra has proved time and again that music can break down barriers previously considered insurmountable. The only political aspect that prevails in the work of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra is the conviction that there is no military solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and that the destinies of Israelis and Palestinians are inextricably linked.



In Goethe's view, East and West were two sides of a coin:  
"The Orient and the Occident can no longer be separated."

Through its work and existence, the orchestra demonstrates that bridges can be built to encourage people to listen to the other's narrative. While music alone cannot resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, it grants the individual the right and obligation to express herself or himself fully while listening to his or her neighbour. Based on this notion of equality, cooperation, and justice for all, the orchestra represents an alternative model to the current situation in the Middle East.

(From the Home page of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra - <https://west-eastern-divan.org/divan-orchestra>).



Daniel Barenboim, is an Argentine-born pianist and conductor, who moved with his family to Israel at the age of nine. He had already performed in his first concert. Today, Barenboim is an outspoken critic of Israel's occupation of Palestine, but rather than take up political activism in a typical sense, this pianist has found means to debate the meaning of democracy and cultural identity through music.

And so to Beethoven's musical items themselves.....

## Piano Sonata No. 21 in C major, Op. 53 (Waldstein)



Beethoven may have dedicated his Sonata as “Waldstein”, but French music lovers and critics have interestingly named the sonata “L’Aurore”, as a result of the aesthetical significations of the work: light and serenity. The movements of the sonata can be interpreted as different moments of a day. The first movement is a pleasant yet noisy and roaring day. The second movement (in the original form (see below) can be interpreted as a calm night, while the third movement is the ardent dawn of a new day.

The Waldstein sonata is considered to be one of the more notable piano sonatas that Beethoven ever composed and, maybe, equalled only by the Appassionata sonata. They are both part of the works between op. 50 and op. 60 that, through their content, form and proportions, represent the height of Beethoven’s creation.

Programme notes for a performance by the Californian Symphony Orchestra describe it as “a symphony masquerading as a piano sonata. Painted on a panoramic canvas and shot through with the supercharged energy characteristic of such glorious mid-period works as the Kreutzer violin sonata, the Waldstein is a concert work of uncommon effectiveness, even by Beethovenian standards.

The first movement, marked *Allegro con brio*, elicits a steam-engine affect in its surging rhythms and headlong forward momentum. There’s no ‘slow movement’ in the usual sense, but an *Adagio molto* “introduction” that provides a moment of respite before launching into the utterly magical rondo finale, featuring an innovative use of the ‘damper’ pedal that creates a shimmering acoustic nimbus around the main reprise, repeats of which are contrasted with propulsively athletic episodes, the whole capped off by a madcap coda.

(Acknowledgement: californiasymphony.org)

The reason for 2<sup>nd</sup> movement revision replacing it with short introduction for the last movement, is that Beethoven originally composed a 9-minute *Andante* second movement, but, in response to the criticism that the sonata was too long, replaced it with the present 28-bar *Introduzione*. The original became the stand-alone composition, published separately, named “*Andante Favori*”.



The first movement – *Allegro con Brio* – contains an element of novelty for the time in which was written, namely the introduction of the B major tonality early on which is surprising if we take into account the fact that the initial tonality of the sonata is C major

The replacement for the second movement titled simply “*Introduzione*” (“Introduction”) marked *Adagio molto*, as its name suggests becomes an introduction to the final movement – *Rondo, Allegretto moderato*. This new movement acts as a dramatic introduction to the last movement, so that the sonata feels like a two-movement work. This form caught on, and appears over the next six years in the *Appassionata* and *Lebewohl* sonatas, the violin concerto, and the last two piano concertos.

The *Introduzione* also presages the orchestral introduction to the dungeon scene in the opera *Fidelio* Beethoven composed a little later.

The original second movement published separately as the *Andante Favori*, was numbered WoO 57. (WoO means Work without Opus).



Ferdinand Ries

As a footnote to Beethoven’s revision eliminating the second movement, the “*Andante Favori*” became the subject of a quarrel between Beethoven and his friend Ferdinand Ries. When Beethoven played him this part, Ries was very pleased by what he had heard and memorized the piece with great ease. He then played the movement to count Lichnowsky who memorized only the beginning. When the count met Beethoven, he played him the few measures he had heard from Ries. The composer realized what Ries had done and decided to never again let Ries listen to any of his unpublished compositions.

The YouTube link to Su Yeon Kim’s recital is:



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgyL68g\\_PWc&t=32s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgyL68g_PWc&t=32s)

## Bagatelle No. 25 in A minor for Solo Piano WoO59 (Für Elise)



Beethoven wrote this small gem on April 27, 1810, and called it a “bagatelle.” The term’s meaning is a trifle or a thing of little importance. In music, a bagatelle is a short, light piece of music, usually for the piano. It is similar to an “Albumblatt”, literally an “album leaf”, a solo piano piece friends could share with one another by pasting it in a musical scrapbook.

Musically, Für Elise is a five-part rondo with the form ABACA (put simply this means there are three sections – A, B & C. The A passage comes first, followed by the B; the A is repeated after the B, followed by the C and the A is repeated again). It is in the key of A minor, which gives it a sad or wistful sound, full of regret and longing.

The first section is the famous melody that everyone knows, with the right hand playing the melody itself and with the left hand playing arpeggios (chords played note by note instead of all at once). The other sections are more challenging, incorporating the keys E major, C major, G major, and F major.

The repeated central theme's A minor key builds a melancholy, longing mood. However, Für Elise's other themes are in complete contrast to the main theme, creating a sense of whimsy, unpredictability, and playfulness.

Für Elise is part of the Romantic music movement that developed in the late 18th and early 19th century in Europe along with Romanticism in the arts in general. Note that capital-R Romanticism has nothing to do with small-r romance.



Instead, Romantic music was characterized by ideas of revolting against Industrial Revolution and the perceived triumph of hyper-rationalism. Romanticism instead embraced a preoccupation with nature, an imagined glorious past, and beautifully terrifying and unknowable spiritual and emotional experiences.

(Acknowledgement: [blog.prepscholar.com](http://blog.prepscholar.com))

We can see some of this in the way Für Elise shuttles back and forth between the forlorn plea of the repeated main theme and the sudden, mercurial shifts in tone of the B and C themes.



The YouTube link to this recording by Lang Lang (there are others) is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5oSa4itomE>

## Symphony No 9 in D minor, Opus 125

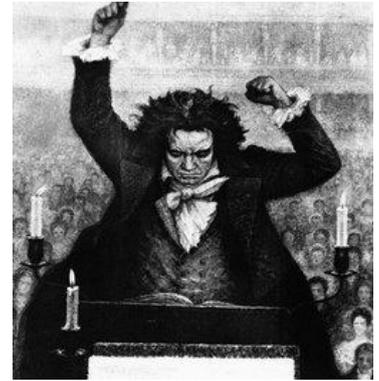


Friedrich Schiller

Musicologists have long held that Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is the culmination of his genius.

Here he uses solo voices in a symphony for the first time, setting to music the words of Schiller's poem 'An die Freude', and is the longest and most complex of all his symphonies. Some may regard it as the pinnacle of his achievement, because it is his last symphony – but he was working on his Tenth when he died, so one wonders what that would have become had Beethoven managed to complete it. The summit and all of his achievements, a masterful musical celebration of the human race, and a massive work that makes all who hear it feel better about life; the tragedy is Beethoven himself never got to hear it played – except in his head, his deafness having completely taken over by this time.

Somehow or other though, he managed to conduct the orchestra at its premiere and was famously unaware of the rapturous response the symphony received from the audience. How did he manage it? While it is said that Beethoven did indeed appear to beat time and turn the pages of his score (and, according to some accounts, even engage in some over-the-top theatrical gesturing), the players and the singers had been cautioned beforehand to pay no attention to him. Instead, they all followed the discreet, utterly reliable beat provided by the Concertmaster.



At first glance, the Ninth appears to be a conventional, if unusually large, symphony in four movements, with the slow movement placed not second, but third, just before the finale. But the finale is like nothing else in symphonic music: scored for four soloists, full chorus, and orchestra, it is extremely long (longer than any of the other movements) and highly complex – almost a symphony in miniature, with its own introduction, scherzo-like section, slow music, and grand wrap-up. Mozart had shifted the weight of the classical symphony to the finale with his Jupiter Symphony, but Beethoven has now pushed it to the limit.

The Ninth Symphony opens in hushed anticipation, from which an elementally simple theme soon erupts violently. The dynamic energy and scope of the ideas in this movement suggest creation myths to many, or scientific theories such as the Big Bang.

Beethoven changed the usual order of symphonic movements here, placing a Scherzo next. A scherzo is typically a dancing, often humorous movement with a contrasting middle section. Beethoven's dark Scherzo is relentlessly concentrated, its insistence intensified by fugal imitation. The contrast is supplied by a graceful hymn that suggests the ultimate joy of the finale.

The slow movement (Adagio) is the peaceful balance to the preceding furies. Beethoven develops two themes to increasing levels of yearning through sophisticated variations.

The introduction of voices in the finale is Beethoven's most obvious innovation, although he had models in French revolutionary symphonies, and it is still an electrifying moment when the baritone first sings. Chaos returns at the beginning of the movement, from which Beethoven recalls the main themes of the preceding movements, before the baritone calls for new tunes. The composer's decades-in-the-making setting of Schiller's Ode to Joy – which he freely cut and reordered – emerges at last as an immense and triumphant set of variations, expressing our highest aspirations with music of life-affirming exaltation. For almost 200 years, the famous hymnal theme to this symphony's finale – the 'Ode to Joy' – has symbolised hope, unity and fellowship – across borders and through conflicts.

[Acknowledgements: Programme notes Chicago Symphony (cso.org) & Los Angeles Philharmonic (laphil.com) Orchestras].

The first verse of Schiller's Ode to Joy is:

### German

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,  
Tochter aus Elysium,  
Wir betreten feuertrunken,  
Himmlische, dein Heiligthum!  
Deine Zauber binden wieder  
Was die Mode streng geteilt;  
Alle Menschen werden Brüder,  
Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.

### English

Joy, bright spark of divinity,  
Daughter of Elysium,  
Fire-inspired we tread  
Within thy sanctuary.  
Thy magic power re-unites  
All that custom has divided,  
All men become brothers,  
Under the sway of thy gentle wings.

The complete text of Schiller's poem can be seen at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ode\\_to\\_Joy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ode_to_Joy)

The YouTube link to the recording by the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra with Daniel Barenboim conducting at the BBC Proms in 2012 (complete with introduction by the compere and interview with Daniel Barenboim) is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWe2-0SGmRU&t=418s>

The soloists are: Anna Samuil, soprano; Waltraud Meier, mezzo-soprano;  
Michael König, tenor; René Pape, bass.

The choir is the National Youth Choir of Great Britain

