

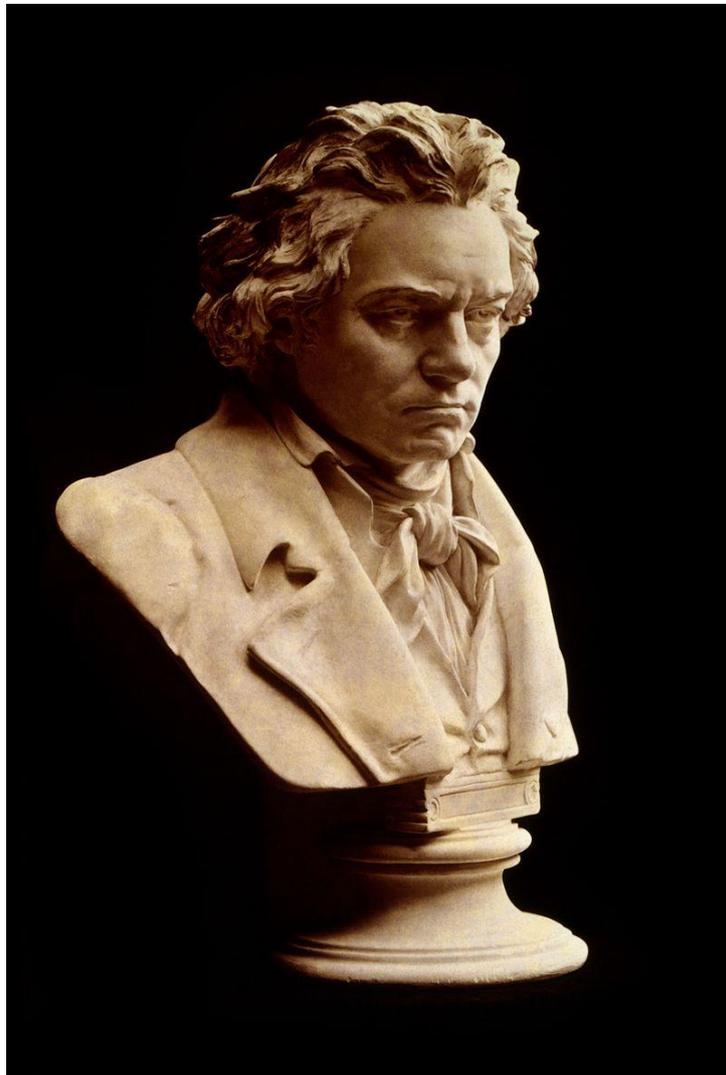


UNIVERSITY OF  
THE THIRD AGE

Benalla & District Inc.



*Programme Notes 8th March, 2019*



*Ludwig van Beethoven*

## Ludwig van Beethoven (December 16, 1770 to March 26, 1827)

Ludwig van Beethoven was the predominant and perhaps crucial musical figure connecting the Classical and Romantic ages of Western music. His innovative compositions combined vocals and instruments, widening the scope of sonata, symphony, concerto and quartet.

Beethoven's personal life was marked by a struggle against deafness, and some of his most important works were composed during the last 10 years of his life, when he was quite unable to hear. He died at the age of 56.

Beethoven's work was magnificent! During his whole career, he composed nearly 400 works, 138 of which have an opus number and maybe 225 or so which don't (many of which are sets of variations and setting of folk songs). Many works that were unpublished or else published without opus numbers have been assigned either "WoO" (works without opus number) or "Anh" (appendix) numbers. For example, the short piano piece "Für Elise", is more fully known as the "Bagatelle in A minor, WoO 59 ('Für Elise')".

His major compositions include 9 symphonies, 17 string quartets, 7 concertos, 32 piano sonatas, 10 sonatas for violin and piano and 1 opera.

### 1770 -1792



The house of Beethoven's birth, Bonn, Germany

Beethoven was born into a musical family three generations deep in Bonn, Germany. His grandfather was a bass singer who eventually became Kapellmeister; his father was a tenor who played and taught piano and violin, including early lessons to his son. Christian Gottlob Neefe, Beethoven's first influential music teacher, was hired by the same court where Beethoven's father and grandfather taught.

A busy organist, Neefe recognized Beethoven's skill and potential, allowing him to serve as his assistant and occasional substitute for orchestra gigs.

Eventually some of Neefe's salary was transferred to Beethoven for his services, providing him with a means to support himself while still having time to compose and develop musically.



Beethoven age 13

### 1792-1795      Studies with Haydn

Surrounding himself in Bonn with a circle of musically skilled friends, who commissioned him regularly, Beethoven accepted a proposal to study with Haydn in Vienna; he was in his early 20s. Count Waldenstein, a musician friend of Beethoven's, supported his studies with Haydn by famously writing:



Portrait of Beethoven as a young man by Carl Traugott Riedel (1769–1832)

“Dear Beethoven: The Genius of Mozart is still mourning and weeping over the death of her pupil. She found a refuge but no occupation with the inexhaustible Haydn...With the help of assiduous labour you shall receive Mozart’s spirit from Haydn’s hands.”

Beethoven would go on to dedicate many of his early sonatas to his teacher Haydn, and ultimately symbolized the bridge between the Classical and Romantic periods.

### 1795–1801 Going Deaf

By 1790, Beethoven was accepted in Vienna’s social circles, the respect for his music and pianistic talent was well recognized, and he was traveling in Europe as a performing musician. To his brother, from Prague, he wrote: “I am well, very well. My art is winning me friends and respect, and what more do I want?” Only six years later, upon the realization that he was going deaf, his outlook changed dramatically:

“I must confess that I am living a miserable life. For almost two years I have ceased to attend any social functions, just because I find it impossible to say to people: I am deaf.”

A love interest at the time, the 17-year-old Countess Giulietta Guicciardi, temporarily lifted Beethoven’s spirits: he dedicated the ‘Moonlight’ Sonata, of 1801, to her. While he continued to compose furiously, his deafness and overall decline in health became a serious preoccupation.

### 1801–1806 Eroica & Fidelio



Beethoven in 1803, painted by Christian Horneman

In the summer of 1803 Beethoven finished writing the Eroica symphony, originally titled “Bonaparte,” after his French contemporary. Before it was published, Napoleon made himself emperor in 1804 and Beethoven famously re-titled the symphony merely “Eroica.” It wasn’t the last time Napoleon’s actions would affect Beethoven’s career. At the presentation of Beethoven’s first and only opera, Fidelio, in 1805, Napoleon’s troops had just entered Vienna, and Beethoven’s usual audience of wealthy, Viennese nobility were not to be found in the concert hall; the opera’s reception was lukewarm.

## 1806-1814 Heights of Composition & Productivity



Ludwig van Beethoven: detail of an 1804-05 portrait by Joseph Willibrord Mähler.

The complete painting depicts Beethoven with a lyre-guitar.

From the Spring of 1806 through 1808, Beethoven's productivity reached historic proportions. Three string quartets, the "Appassionata" sonata, the Fourth Symphony, the Violin concerto, and most of the Fourth Piano Concerto were all composed during this period. In 1814, the Congress of Vienna gave Beethoven the perfect opportunity to produce even more works specifically for the nobility of Europe, as his status, at this high point in his career, dictated. The numerous resulting pieces were unanimously well-received; simultaneously Beethoven made his last public appearances as a pianist, his deafness worsening.

## 1814-1817 Family Turmoil and Responsibility



Beethoven in 1814; portrait by Louis-René Leironne

After the Congress of 1814, a wealthy Beethoven, at the height of his fame, received some news as unexpected as his dramatic dynamic shifts. His brother, dying of tuberculosis, stated in his will his intention that Beethoven become the sole guardian of his son Karl.

Temporarily, Beethoven split custody with Karl's mother, but his inability to fulfil his brother's last wishes caused him distress.

After written appeals to local courts, Beethoven eventually earned sole guardianship of Karl - only to feel over-whelming guilt over the resulting separation of Karl from his mother.

Beethoven in 1815 portrait by Joseph Willibrord Mähler



## 1817-1826 From Personal Distress, a Huge Creative Output

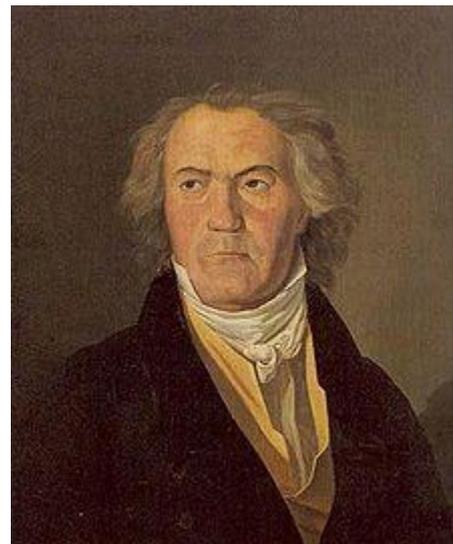


Taking care of his nephew, his deteriorating health and almost total deafness possessed Beethoven for a few years; around 1817, the clouds lifted and a period of productivity began. Over the next seven years, Beethoven would compose four piano sonatas, the *Missa solemnis*, the *Diabelli Variations*, and one of the most famous pieces of music ever written, his *Ninth Symphony*.

Portrait by Joseph Karl Stieler, 1820

## 1826-1827 Attempted suicide of Beethoven's nephew; Beethoven's own death

Increasingly rebellious and resentful of his ailing uncle, Karl attempted suicide in 1826. Deeply disturbed by this, Beethoven retreated to a property owned by his brother Johann to rest, and to write some of his last compositions: the *String Quartet in F Major Op. 135* and the *Grosse Fuge*, (op. 133). Beethoven returned to Vienna, and having grown increasingly ill, died. He left his entire estate to Karl.



Beethoven in 1823 by  
Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller



Beethoven's grave in Vienna

## Fidelio



The only opera by Beethoven, but what an opera ! "Fidelio", Leonard Bernstein wrote "is a timeless monument to Love, Life and Liberty. A celebration of Human Rights, of the Freedom to Speak out, to Dissent, a Political Manifesto against Tyranny and Oppression, a Hymn to the Beauty and Sanctity of Marriage, an exulted affirmation of Faith in God as the ultimate Human Resource".

Fidelio's first performance came just days after Napoleon's army occupied Vienna. The opera's themes of liberty and political struggle mirror the revolutionary turbulence of the time.

At the centre of Fidelio is the love of Leonora for her imprisoned husband, Florestan. In order to free him, she submits herself as an assistant to the jailer, Rocco. Disguised as a young man (Fidelio), she first appears bearing the chains used to bind her husband and other prisoners. We learn that because of his political trespass (the precise nature of which is left to our imagination), Florestan will be killed. Through Leonora's persistence, Florestan is eventually recognized by his friend Don Fernando and freed. Leonora herself unlocks his chains.

It is fitting, then, that the overture begins and ends in E major, the key assigned to Leonora in the opera.

As with much of Beethoven's work, it is possible to hear Fidelio as a personal testament. Composed during the same period as the Third Symphony, when he was coming to terms with his increasing deafness, Beethoven's only opera allowed him to explore human frailty and suffering, but also heroic resistance to these struggles. He wrote at the time, "I am resolved to overcome all this, but how will it be possible?"

Beethoven struggled with Fidelio for almost ten years, following the opera's unsuccessful initial performance in Vienna in November, 1805. His revisions produced three versions and replaced parts of a libretto he found uninspiring. By the time Beethoven reached the final version, he had written four different overtures. The first three are now known as Leonora 1,2 & 3, with Leonora No 3 version being the one most often played today as a stand-alone concert piece. Some modern day conductors like to insert No 3 as a kind of intermezzo between the two scenes of the second act.

With the Fidelio Overture, written in 1814 for the successful final version of the opera, Beethoven found a brilliant curtain-raiser which serves, rather than overpowers, the stage. The Overture doesn't use any of the opera's themes and resolves in E major, far away from Fidelio's ultimate triumphant goal of C major.

We hear it played by the Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Leonard Bernstein.

This performance of the complete opera is available on Youtube, The link is:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=YI-CF\\_rOApI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YI-CF_rOApI)

KHATIA  
BUNIATISHVILI



Israel Philharmonic Orchestra  
ZUBIN MEHTA

## *Piano Concerto No 1 in C major Opus 15*

The piece was written between 1796 and 1797 and dedicated to Beethoven's pupil – the Countess of Bratislava, Anna Louise Barbara ("Babette") Keglevics. The first performance was in Prague in 1798, with Beethoven himself playing the piano aged in his late 20s.

It is customary to point out that Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1 was actually his Piano Concerto No. 2 and that his Piano Concerto No. 2 was his Piano Concerto No. 1. The so-called Piano Concerto No. 1 in C major appears to date from 1795 (it was premiered on December 18 of that year), while the so-called Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major occupied Beethoven sporadically through the decade of the 1790s and may have been premiered as early as March 29, 1795.

The confusion arises from the fact that both works were released to the public in 1801, by different publishing houses in different cities, but because C-major Concerto, played here, was issued first, it is identified as the composer's Piano Concerto No. 1.

The first movement (*allegro con brio*) is set for flute, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets, timpani and strings, is notable for its sense of poise and restraint. It's in sonata form, but with an added orchestral exposition, a cadenza, and a coda. It has a main theme repeated many times, and there are several subordinate themes.



The orchestral exposition changes keys many times, but the second exposition is mainly in G major. The development starts in E-flat major, then modulates to C minor, which ends with an octave glissando. The recapitulation is in C major.

We listen to Khatia Buniatishvili with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Zubin Mehta – recorded in July 2015.

The Youtube link to the complete concerto is:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLL0w-WFNGI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLL0w-WFNGI)

## *Septet in E flat major Opus 20*

Fifteen years after this septet's premiere, following yet another celebrated performance, Beethoven is said to have declared "That damn work; I wish it could be burned". Although the septet significantly boosted Beethoven's reputation as a composer and increased his standing with publishers, he eventually came to resent its enormous popularity, feeling that it took attention away from his later, more deserving works.



*Cologne Chamber soloists*

At the time it was written, the work broke new ground with its original scoring and unconventional exploration of the relationship between the winds and strings. Rather than the customary pairing of wind instruments used in chamber music at the time, Beethoven wrote for clarinet, horn and bassoon, violin, viola, cello and double bass: a combination that was adopted as standard instrumentation by the next generation of composers.

The six-movement work is neatly symmetrical, with slow introductions to both the first and last movements. The clarinet and violin share the exquisite melodies of the second movement, arching over a steadily pulsing accompaniment. Two dance movements – a minuet and a scherzo – frame the fourth movement, a set of variations on a Rhenish folk song that showcases each instrument in turn. The final movement, with its mock solemn opening, quickly dissolves into a sparkling, playful celebration of the virtuosic skills of both the composer and the performers.

With its light-hearted energy, abundant musical jokes and scintillating instrumental dialogues, it is not hard to see why the septet so charmed audiences in Vienna in the 1800s, and remains a firm favourite today.

We listen to the 4th movement played by the Cologne Chamber Soloists and recorded in October 2015. The Youtube link is: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIQicdg69JA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIQicdg69JA)

## **Sonata for Violin No. 9 in A major Opus 47**

Commonly known as the “Kreutzer Sonata” his opus 47 is a violin sonata Beethoven published in 1802. It is known for its demanding violin part, unusual length (a typical performance lasts slightly less than 40 minutes), and emotional scope – while the first movement is predominantly furious, the second is meditative and the third joyous and exuberant.

What's perhaps not so commonly known is it's earlier name: "Sonata mulattica" – violin sonata for a coloured person.

Beethoven originally wrote the famous sonata for another virtuoso, George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower (1779-1860). Bridgetower caused a stir not least because of his appearance: he was the son of a coloured man (his father was from the West Indies or Africa) and a European woman (the nationality of his mother is not known with any certainty, possibilities include German, Austrian or Polish).

In concert programmes he was therefore now and then marketed as being the "son of an African lord". It would be wrong to say that Bridgetower's success was merely a result of his exotic appearance. He was indeed one of the most celebrated violinists of his time.



*George Bridgetower*

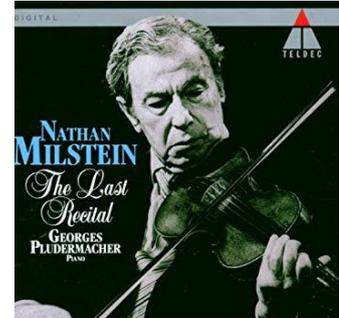


Rudolphe Kreutzer

Beethoven greatly admired Bridgetower and gave a concert with him on 24 May 1803, in which the Sonata op. 47 was given its first performance. However, following a disagreement and falling out with Bridgetower, Beethoven re-dedicated this sonata to another great violinist of the time – Rudolphe Kreutzer and ever since the sonata has borne the name "Kreutzer-Sonata".

We listen to the final movement of a performance by Nathan Milstein and Georges Pludermacher in what was to be Milstein's final concert appearance in July 1986 at the age of 82 before an accident brought his career to a close.

The link for this particular rendition of the complete work is:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSC4W1qWMP4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSC4W1qWMP4)



## Triple Concerto in C major Opus 56

Beethoven's Triple Concerto is arguably the least successful of any of Beethoven's mature concertos in the concert hall. It's one of those pieces that never seems to get a performance that does it justice. Usually, you get po-faced seriousness when a big orchestra and three star names try to out-do each other, as the cello, violin, and piano soloists fight for the limelight. On disc, it hasn't fared much better, and there's an infamous Herbert von Karajan recording from 1969 with David Oistrakh on violin, Sviatoslav Richter on piano, and cellist Mstislav Rostropovich: it's a nadir of gigantic egos trying to trump each other, a bonfire of the vanities from which Karajan and the Berlin Phil still somehow manage to emerge victorious. Richter himself said of it: "It's a dreadful recording and I disown it utterly..." (as reported by "The Guardian", UK, in May 2009).

Composed in 1803, Beethoven's Triple Concerto remained unperformed for five years, until its outing at a summer music festival in Vienna in 1808.

The very name Triple Concerto is slightly misleading here. At first glance, you might expect a three-for-the-price-of-one concerto experience, with the violin, cello and piano all happily co-existing as genuine soloists. But what Beethoven gives us is something slightly different.

In many ways, it's an odd work: there's very little conversation between the instruments and the orchestra, with nearly everything of interest being played by the soloists. Although that's to be expected to some degree, all of Beethoven's other concertos still appear to have orchestral material that, when heard alone, remains pretty compelling. And there's a real risk that in any performance of the piece the intended interplay between the three soloists is diminished by the individual musicians' desire to ensure that they come out on top when an audience asks afterwards, 'Who was the best?'



The finest performances of the Triple Concerto are therefore those where ego is removed, allowing the music to become the sole star. The work has chamber-like qualities; indeed, it's easy to wonder whether an entire orchestral



accompaniment was really necessary – but that was Beethoven's call to make, not ours.

We listen to a recording where the violinist are husband and wife (Pinkus Zukerman and Amanda Forsyth) so dare they try to outdo each other?, while the pianist is Soviet born, now American citizen, Yefim Bronfman. We hear the second and third movements. The second movement (Largo, in A-flat major), is a large-scale introduction to the finale, Rondo (“alla polacca” or “polonaise”) which follows it without pause.

The Youtube link (complete concerto) is: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkXGtE8\\_cig](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkXGtE8_cig)

### **Piano Sonata No 26 in E flat major Opus 81a “Les Adieux”.**

Beethoven's “Les Adieux” (“Farewell”) Piano Sonata was completed on May 4, 1809 as Napoleon's army invaded Vienna. Among the fleeing aristocrats was Beethoven's sponsor and composition and piano student, Archduke Rudolf (1788-1831).

In addition to this Sonata, Beethoven dedicated a handful of other significant works to the Archduke, including the “Emperor” Piano Concerto, the Op. 97 Piano Trio, the Tenth (and last) Violin Sonata, and the monumental choral work, Missa solemnis. A year earlier in 1808, Napoleon's brother, the King of Westphalia, granted Beethoven an offer of employment. Determined to keep Beethoven in Vienna, Archduke Rudolf promised to provide the composer with income for the rest of his life, apparently remaining good to his word.

This is Beethoven's only sonata to include a program – in this case, a reference to the Archduke's forced evacuation.

The first movement is titled, Das Lebewohl (“The Farewell”). The second movement, Abwesenheit (“The Absence”) is filled with melancholy solitude. The third, Das Wiedersehen (“The Return”) sparkles with joyful exuberance, including Haydnesque jokes in the form of sudden, jolting fortés. Just before the close of the final movement, there is an intimate moment of quiet reflection, perhaps gratitude, in which hints of the first movement's “lebewohl” motive return.



We listen to the latter part of the 2nd movement (andante espressivo) and then the 3rd movement which follows seamlessly. The tempo for the 3rd movement is “Vivacissimamente” – the liveliest time measurement. The pianist is Daniel Barenboim. Youtube link (complete work):

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1jbbtpLwNM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1jbbtpLwNM)

## Symphony No 7 in A major Opus 92

Beethoven composed his Symphony No. 7 in 1811, while staying in the Bohemian spa town of Teplice in the hope of improving his poor health.

It's tempting to feel sorry for Beethoven's Symphony No. 7. Hidden away amid the Fifth (the most famous opening four notes in the history of classical music, the Sixth (how could anyone fail to love the 'Pastoral'?) and the mighty colossus that is his Ninth, you feel as if the Seventh is a work that could easily get forgotten.

That fate has arguably befallen Symphony No. 8 – but not No. 7. The raw power and drama found in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 seem, in many ways, to be receiving their first full outing here. There's a visceral quality to the music – not least in the almost crazed finale when the musicians appear to be playing as if their lives depend on it.

The sombre second movement (the now famous 'allegretto'), which has been performed on its own: used in *The King's Speech* (and summed up the moment perfectly) and other films, and inspired composers from Schubert to jazz pianist Jacques Loussier, is a wonderful blend between orchestral gravitas and the swelling tunes Beethoven writes so well. In the case of the premiere, the orchestral musicians included fellow composers Meyerbeer, Spohr and Moscheles, with Beethoven himself on the podium.



Colin Firth as King  
George VI in  
*'The King's Speech'*

Described by Wagner, no less, as 'the apotheosis of the dance', this four-movement symphony begins in grave, sombre tones. Not for Beethoven the stirring opening to the Fifth, or the lilting, sunny start to the Sixth; instead, the orchestral colours are dark, creating a sense of foreboding about what's to come. The lightness of touch in later parts of the symphony – particularly the third movement – is therefore surprising, with some parts seeming very consciously to link back to the light-hearted mood of the Pastoral. The unbounded finale, meanwhile, was apparently summed up by Tchaikovsky as 'a whole series of images, full of unrestrained joy, full of bliss and pleasure of life'. (classic fm.com).



Ivan Fischer

We listen to the final movement described this way by one commentator: Beethoven became a race-car driver..... a heart-pounding final lap with the accelerator pressed to the floor'.

The orchestra is the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam conducted by Iván Fischer. The youtube link for the whole symphony is:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4788Tmz9Zo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4788Tmz9Zo)

## Piano Trio in B flat major Opus 97 "The Archduke"



Beethoven's patron  
Archduke Rudolph

The "Archduke" Trio, one of the staples of the chamber music repertory was mostly written in March, 1811, and was dedicated to Archduke Rudolph, the youngest son of Emperor Leopold II. Rudolph was both patron and pupil to Beethoven, and was said to have been a talented musician. His relationship with Beethoven was one of genuine affection.

The trio was given its premiere performance at a charity concert for the military. It has been acclaimed as the most beautiful of all Beethoven's Piano Trios, and one that holds a poignant place in his life.

At its first public performance Beethoven insisted on playing the piano part, although his hearing was now (1814) seriously defective. The composer and violinist Louis Spohr reported:

"It was not a good performance. In the first place the piano was badly out of tune, which was of little concern to Beethoven because he could not hear it. Secondly, on account of his deafness, there was scarcely anything left of the virtuosity of the artist which had formerly been so greatly admired. In forte passages the poor deaf man pounded on the keys till the strings jangled, and in piano he played so softly that whole groups of notes were omitted, so that the music was unintelligible. I was deeply saddened at so harsh a fate. It is a great misfortune for anyone to be deaf, but how can a musician endure it without giving way to despair? From now on Beethoven's continual melancholy was no longer a riddle to me.

Beethoven knew it too. Apart from one more performance a few weeks later, he never performed in public again. Listen to the glorious slow movement of the Archduke Trio knowing that, and it will carry a whole new meaning".

We indeed do just that and go back to the days of black and white cinematography to see and hear it played in 1974 by Wlhelm Kempff, Yehudi Menuhin and Mstislav Rostropovich. You can relive the experience on youtube at

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulXGtMITC50](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulXGtMITC50)

### **Fidelio – Finale**

Don Fernando, Special Minister of State arrives at the prison where Florestan and other political prisoners are being held, bearing a message of fraternity and liberty: by the king's orders, all the prisoners are to be released. When the chief jailer ushers Florestan and Leonore into Don Fernando's presence, the minister is astonished to recognise his friend whom he believed to be dead. The crimes of Pizarro, the Governor of the prison are revealed and he is arrested. Everybody exults as Leonore frees Florestan from his chains and the opera comes to a close with a chorus "He who has gained a loving wife, join in our rejoicing". We watch and hear this finale from the same recording as began this morning's programme, with Gundala Janowitz as Leonora, Rene Kollo as Florestan, the Vienna State Opera Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Bernstein. A 1978 production.