

How the worlds of two composers are linked Paul Hindemith and Ludwig van Beethoven

**Special exhibition in the Beethoven House Bonn,
20th June until 30th August 2009**

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) and Ludwig van Beethoven are two composers who would not automatically be linked with each other. The aim of this exhibition is to demonstrate the connections between the two.

Room 6 (1st floor): The first link between the two composers is the viola, the instrument which Beethoven played in his youth in the court orchestra in Bonn and for which he wrote chamber music compositions. Hindemith foresook the violin in 1919 and turned his attention to the viola. For many years he was considered one of the best viola players of his time (both as a soloist and as a member of the Amar Quartet). He composed important pieces for the instrument, such as the Sonata op. 25 No. 1, which he first performed in 1922 in Cologne. It is a substantial piece of music, even if Hindemith remarked, with regard to its genesis, “I wrote the First and Fifth Movements in the restaurant car between Frankfurt and Cologne and then went straight onto the rostrum and performed the sonata.” This work would thus play a prominent role in a Music History of German Railways!

And with regard to their age, Beethoven’s and Hindemith’s instruments are quite similar. Beethoven’s viola was made in Vienna around 1785, and Hindemith’s was made in Naples in 1804.

Room 7: In Showcase 1 documents are on display which illustrate the admiration both composers felt for Johann Sebastian Bach. As part of his studies, Beethoven copied two of Bach’s Inventions, and in 1825 he wrote a comedy canon for the composer Friedrich Daniel Kuhlau which he named „Kühl, nicht lau“ (cool, not tepid) and which was composed around the notes B-A-C-H (H = B in English). Hindemith on the other hand wrote down as a young man a graphic analysis of the fugue of the 3rd Violin Sonata, and forty years later, during a performance which he was conducting in Düsseldorf, he realised a figured bass of the Mass in B minor, and in his work for piano “Ludus tonalis” he alludes to Bach’s “Well Tempered Piano”. During the Bach Festival in Hamburg in 1950 he gave a lecture entitled “J.S. Bach, an obligating legacy”, which at the time received much

attention. The printed copy on display was autographed by Hindemith for the viola player Emil Platen when he conducted his symphony “The Harmony of the World” in Bonn in 1954. The photograph, also signed, was taken during a rehearsal with the Bonn orchestra. Today, 55 years later, Prof. Emil Platen is still an active associate of the Beethoven House.

In November 1948 the two composers “met” when Hindemith visited the Beethoven memorial erected in 1895 in the courtyard of the Conservatorio di Musica S. Pietro a Maiella in Naples (see the photo on the wall).

Hindemith was also a talented and creative drawer and from 1941/42 he designed his own greeting cards at Christmas and New Year. In 1953 Beethoven was the motif, and from 1953 the Hindemiths themselves, whereby Gertrud was always portrayed a lion on account of her being a leo. The last greeting card shows the lion, wearing felt slippers, prowling round the organ and listening to the composer playing a concerto for organ and orchestra which he had written in the course of the year.

Showcase 2: In his work Hindemith occasionally walked in Beethoven’s footsteps. He was a great fan of marching music and in 1946, for the quick march in his “Symphonia serena”, he paraphrased the descant of the first twelve bars of Beethoven’s “March for the Bohemian Militia”, which Beethoven composed in 1809, when the monarchy was being threatened by the Napoleonic armies, for a brother of his pupil Archduke Rudolph, who had his own regiment. Hindemith’s march from his “Chamber music no. 5” op. 36 No. 4 constitutes the last movement of his first concerto for solo viola and expanded chamber orchestra. It is a distorted parody of the well-known “Bavarian March-past” about which a contemporary critic wrote after a performance in Mülheim in 1930: “A lamentable, dishevelled military march, stripped of its last piece of dignity and coughing asthmatically, is pared from a battered orchestra which is driven on by a helpless, growling bass tuba and which the composer has robbed of its violins and violas, while the solo viola performs the wildest, most outlandish and extravagant cadences. The apotheosis of a funfair!” Beethoven composed more military marches. In 1816 he had the honour of being assigned to write a march for the grand parade of the civic artillery corps of the imperial and royal capital Vienna.

On the other hand, when he offered two tattoos and a march to the Leipzig publisher Peters in 1823 the deal was not concluded, because Peters was not satisfied with the pieces.

Showcase 3: Another link with Beethoven is provided by the funeral march from Hindemith’s 1st Piano Sonata, which he wrote during his second trip to Turkey in the spring of 1936. Since Walter Giesecking, the pianist designated for the premiere, raised objections to the original second movement which was a set of variations, Hindemith wrote the slow movement on display here, as a funeral march. The funeral character can be considered to be symbolic of his precarious situation in Nazi-Germany. Hindemith refers directly to Beethoven’s funeral march from the Piano Sonata in A-flat major op. 26, which was very popular during Beethoven’s lifetime and which could even then be purchased separately. It is no coincidence that the score of this piece lies on the music desk in Joseph Danhauser’s portrait “Franz Liszt at the piano” (heliogravure on the wall).

Showcase 4: Obviously Beethoven’s works played an important role for the practicing musician Hindemith, both as chamber musician and conductor. He drew up a list of all the pieces of Beethoven’s chamber music he had performed up to 1931. These include the Serenade for Violin, Viola and Cello in D major op. 8. Hindemith formed a string trio with the violinist Joseph Wolfthal (after 1931 Szymon Goldberg) and the cellist Emanuel Feuermann and together they recorded the composition in London in 1934. Beethoven’s Duo for Viola and Cello in E-flat major WoO 32 was also part of Hindemith’s repertoire. On display here are an old manuscript copy of the piece and Hindemith’s own performance material. Little is known about the occasion of the work’s composition or for whom Beethoven wrote these two movements with their very unusual instrumentation. It is possible that Beethoven intended to compose a work with four movements, but he only wrote two down in an autograph miscellany which is today kept in London. The title, written in his own handwriting, is “Duet with two obbligato eyeglasses by L. v. Beethoven”. To which two shortsighted persons was he referring? As we can gather from his handwritten list of compositions, Hindemith spontaneously decided during the recording sessions in London to write a piece of his own with the same instrumentation, because there was still space on the disc. The resulting work was recorded immediately.

There still exist a monocle of Beethoven from around 1806 (glass, -3 dioptries) and the spectacles on display, as well as spectacles from the last years of his life (see showcase in Room 9). The glasses on display have -1.75 dioptries and are probably reading-glasses from his later life, although he could have worn them as a boy. The other spectacles were used by the short-sighted composer for distance vision. The lenses both have -4.25 dioptries. Paul Hindemith’s spectacles are normally kept in the study of his last home in the Swiss municipality of Blonay, overlooking Lake Geneva. These are reading-glasses, which Hindemith required as he got older. They certainly enabled him to conduct Beethoven’s 9th Symphony from a pocket score in 1958 (*Showcase 5*).

Hindemith performed regularly in Bonn, for the first time on 4th January 1924 as a member of the Amar Quartet. Works by Hindemith’s highly respected colleague Arnold Schönberg were in the programme to celebrate the year of his 50th birthday. Hindemith’s 5th String Quartet op. 32 was also performed. The sketches on display for that work, composed in 1923, show the orchestral draft or particell for the complete piece. Hindemith, who could concentrate on composing in almost any situation, made the pocket-sized sketchbook himself and carried it with him on his concert tours. Beethoven had used similar sketchbooks. The transcript of Beethoven’s String Quartet in B-flat major op. 130 with the “Great Fugue” op. 133 as its finale is also unusually small in size. It is the dedication copy for his fervent admirer Prince Nikolaus Borisovitch Galatsin, who had commissioned the work. He lived in St. Petersburg and therefore the size of the copy was dictated by the requirements of shipment. Shortly afterwards Beethoven took out the “Great Fugue” and published it as a separate work, his Opus 133. This monumental and very advanced composition, adapted for orchestra, is the work by Beethoven most frequently performed by Paul Hindemith as a conductor. All the notes and comments on the score on display are in his handwriting. He also wrote four additional bass parts based on the cello part.

Showcase 6: In 1928 Hindemith came into direct contact with the Beethoven House when the Amar Quartet performed at the Beethoven House’s Festival of Chamber Music. They played his String Trio op. 34 as well as a quartet by Max Reger. Correspondence with the chairman of the organizing committee, Privy Councillor Matthias Reincke, shows that they were originally requested to play

the Quartet op. 32, but it had already been performed in Bonn only four years previously. The quartet’s principal, Licco Amar, therefore suggested a change of programme, which was readily accepted. The list of performers and their fees shows that the highest paid was the esteemed alto Sigrid Onégin. The Amar Quartet received 1,200 marks, almost as much as the renowned Budapest String Quartet, which had however greater travel expenses. For her rendering of songs by Schubert and Schumann during the last two concerts, which consisted otherwise mainly of instrumental music, Onégin was paid the much larger sum of 4,000 marks. Famous vocalists always moved in different spheres with regard to their fees.

As is shown by the pamphlet for the construction of a new Beethoven Hall after the old building had been destroyed in the 2nd World War, Hindemith was a member of the board of trustees and a fervent supporter of the ambitious project. It is therefore no coincidence that he, one of Germany’s leading music figures, was asked to conduct at the opening concert on 8th September 1959. Hindemith made a ring-file of index cards, on which he noted all his music activities after 1947 (*Showcase 7*). He listed all his conducting engagements with dates and places, and noted his performances as an instrumentalist, his lectures and his grammophone recording sessions. On card 33 he made his notes about the inaugural concert at the Beethoven Hall in Bonn, where he conducted parts of Beethoven’s Opus 43 (“The Creatures of Prometheus” Nos. 5, 7, 14 and 16) as well as his own orchestral suite “Nobilissima Visione”. Next to these cards is Beethoven’s own piano score for his ballet “The Creatures of Prometheus”, which had been printed 158 years earlier and which contains numerous hand-written notes made by the composer. His hand-written addendum on the cover reads: “due to the lack of a red writing instrument the mistakes are partially corrected in pencil, so it is requested that particular care be taken”.

Hindemith, whose great drawing talent is demonstrated by his cartoons on “musical” topics which hang on the wall, was admitted in 1952 to the Order pour le Mérite based in the federal capital Bonn, whose members were outstanding personalities in the fields of science and arts. On 30th November 1954 Wilhelm Furtwängler, a member of the order, died and during the gathering of the order on 18th June 1955 in Bonn, Hindemith gave an memorial address in

honour of Furtwängler, in which he said: “He possessed the great secret of proportion. Just as he could present phrases, themes, parts, movements, complete symphonies and programmes as ornate entities, so was his entire being as a musician guided by this same feeling for symmetry. [...] he himself had become the standard against which all music conciously or unconsciously measured itself, a standard which now is missing.” The photograph was taken on Furtwängler’s 47th birthday in January 1933, obviously in an exuberant carnival atmosphere. For many years Hindemith had a close relationship with the conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, who at that time was also one of the greatest interpreters of Beethoven’s music. In 1930 Furtwängler conducted the first performance of Hindemith’s “Concert Music” op. 48 for viola and extended chamber orchestra, with the composer as soloist. In 1932 Furtwängler inspired Hindemith to compose the “Philharmonic Concerto”, which is dedicated to the fiftieth birthday of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. The cultural and political controversy which in 1934 blew up surrounding Hindemith’s symphony “Mathis the Painter“ (defamed by the Nazi leadership as „Bolshevistic culture“) led Furtwängler to publish a newspaper article in November 1934 in his defence, in an unsuccessful attempt to rebut the accusations against the composer. The bond remained between Hindemith and Furtwängler until the latter’s death in 1954.

Hindemiths letter from London to his wife Gertrud dated 23rd January 1936 tells her about the genesis and musical form of his “Funeral Music” for solo viola and string ensemble. At the end of January 1936 Hindemith was on a concert tour in London to perform his viola concerto “The Swan-Turner”, written the previous year. After the death of King George V on 20th January the concert was cancelled and Hindemith was asked to compose funeral music to perform instead of his viola concerto, to which he duly complied. 28 years later this piece was performed in mourning for Hindemith himself during the 4th Masters Concert in the Beethoven Hall in Bonn.

Showcase 8: Beethoven and Hindemuth acted similarly with regard to producing occasional works for their publishers. Beethoven composed on 21st September 1819 the canon “Believe and Hope” for the Berlin publisher Maurice Schlesinger. Schlesinger had done the composer a great

favour by procuring a beef roast for him. Beethoven reciprocated by promising the publisher among other works his last three piano sonatas, which he soon worked out. Beethoven’s letter of 10th September 1821 to his Viennese publisher Tobias Haslinger contains two versions of the comic canon “Oh Tobias”. In 1963 Hindemith composed the Latin canon “Et obstinati” as an eightieth birthday present for his friend and publisher Ludwig Strecker.

The two composers came into contact with Turkish music in very different ways. In the “Choir of the Dervishes” (No. 3 of his music for August von Kotzebue’s “The Ruins of Athens” op. 113), Beethoven took up the then exceedingly popular Turkish theme without personally ever having heard original Turkish music. He knew only that which in Vienna was considered to be Turkish music: with plenty of percussion and unusual rhythms. A score is on display which has been proof-read and amended by the composer himself. On page one he has written the remark: “N.B.: is accompanied by castanets”. After the “Choir of the Dervishes” he wrote a “Marcia alla turca”. Beethoven wrote the work during his stay at the spa of Teplitz in Bohemia in the summer of 1811 for the inauguration of the theatre in Pest. In Teplitz he was able to listen to “Turkish” music, performed by a military band, four times a day. 125 years later Paul Hindemith had the opportunity to study on the spot and in detail the real music of the Turkish people. He had accepted in early 1935 an invitation from the Turkish Ministry of Education to coordinate the restructuring along European lines of music teaching in Turkey. For this purpose he undertook four trips to Turkey in the years 1935, 1936 and 1937, each time spending several months there. He started the photo album after his second trip in 1936. He produced two extensive reports about the situation of music teaching in Turkey, containing concrete suggestions for new concepts and a reorganisation of music teaching at the conservatories in Istanbul and Ankara. His memorandum of 1935/36 is open at the page which contains his reflections on Turkish art music.

The letter of 17th December 1935 from the Director for Fine Arts at the Turkish Ministry of Education, Cevat Memduh Altar, makes it clear how multifaceted the assignments were, to which Hindemith had to address himself. He had to draw up educational master plans, was responsible for the purchase of instruments as well as picking out suitable musicians in Germany to send as teachers to the Turkish

colleges. Among those musicians whom Hindemith recommended for the positions in Turkey there were some who were subject to persecution by the Nazi-Regime, and who thus were able to emigrate from Germany. One of these was the pianist Eduard Zuckmayer (1890-1972), brother of the writer Carl Zuckmayer.

A considerable proportion of Hindemith’s work is aimed at musical laymen and children in particular. Examples are on display in the *Showcases 1 and 2* in *Room 12*. The focus of this second part of the exhibition is however on the fundamental changes and improvements which have taken place in the Beethoven House in the last 11 years under the directorship of Prof. Dr. Andreas Eckhardt, who is also president of the Hindemith Foundation and to whom we say goodbye with this exhibition as he enters retirement. Just as Hindemith adopted an educational approach with the two works on display “Let us build a town” and “Music Festival in Plön” (he had taught since 1929 at one of Germany’s oldest municipal music colleges, the Music College Neukölln in Berlin), in the same way the Beethoven House strives with its wide range of educational activities to kindle enthusiasm for Beethoven and his music among children and young adults. Examples of these activities are on display in *Showcase 1* and in the first two picture frames. Additionally, the three publications which are on the table have resulted from practical work.

Showcase 2: A large-scale programme of alteration and extension (see photos on the wall) paved “new ways” of making possible the extensive use of new media. In December 2004 our Studio for Digital Collections was opened in the neighbouring house “Im Mohren” with more than 5,000 documents available for study, in perfect size and quality. While listening to Beethoven’s works one can at the same time follow his autograph manuscript scores. Beethoven’s life can be traced with the help of letters and pictures, it is possible to visit a digital reconstruction of his long demolished last home in Vienna, and much more. A large proportion of this is also available on the Beethoven House website (www.beethoven-haus-bonn.de), as is the children’s page “Hallo Beethoven”. In the historical vaulted cellar the Stage for Music Visualisation presents an interactive 3D performance of “Fidelio 21st Century”.

In recent years top-class musicians have recorded a series of CDs with music by Beethoven and his contemporaries

performed on Beethoven’s original instruments which are on display in the museum. Complemented by an informative booklet on the “Beethoven House Ensemble” they make rewarding listening.

Just one of the large number of new acquisitions made over the last 11 years is the manuscript copy of the “Missa solemnis” op. 123 on display in *Showcase 3*. This contains the composer’s own corrections written in pencil and ink and was used as the master copy in the production of the first printed edition. At present the Beethoven house is trying to buy the last outstanding Beethoven manuscript still in private possession: the autograph manuscript of the “Diabelli Variations” op. 120. 280,000 euros are still missing which must be raised before the end of this year. Of course you may make a contribution! (There is a donation box at the museum shop cash desk). Or you can “adopt” a bar or certain notes. Details of how you can help us to make the purchase can be found on the website www.weltklassisch.de.

For the third time Kurt Masur (President of the Beethoven House Society) will in the autumn of this year be giving a master class in conducting (see the poster above Showcase 3). Starting in 2010 the Beethoven House will also be offering master classes in chamber music. Outstanding musicians such as the violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, the pianists András Schiff and Andreas Staier, and the Artemis Quartet have already agreed to participate.

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N.K./M.L./S.S-G./G.S.

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Paul Hindemith in front of the Beethoven Monument in Naples