

“From the heart – may it go – to the heart!”

Beethoven's Missa solennis

**Special Exhibition in the Beethoven-Haus Bonn
8th September to 13th December 2006**

An important new acquisition for the Beethoven-Haus Collection and the general theme of this year's Beethoven Festival “Rossija” – as the name of the country is spelled in Latin script – provided the impulse for placing the Missa solennis, which was first performed in public in 1824 in St. Petersburg, at the centre of this special exhibition. The so-called engraver's copy (i.e.: the manuscript used by the music engraver as the master for the first edition) is on public exhibition here for the first time. Beethoven sent it in 1825 to the publisher Schott, whence it has now passed into the possession of the Beethoven-Haus.

In February 1819 Beethoven learned of the appointment of his scholar and benefactor Archduke Rudolph of Austria (1788-1831) as Archbishop of Olmütz (with the rank of cardinal). As coadjutor bishop he had already secured the right of succession in 1805. The enthronement ceremony was scheduled for 9th March (the remembrance day of the holy apostles Cyrillus and Methodius, the patron saints of Moravia) in the year 1820. Beethoven's feelings for his “admirable and talented prince” who was a loyal benefactor and for many years his pupil in composition, can be measured by the fact that Beethoven dedicated more and greater works to him than to anyone else. Accordingly, Beethoven assumed that at the celebratory high mass a work of his would be performed, and he began immediately with its composition. The day of the performance would be “the most pleasurable of my life”. With it he secretly associated the hope that he would be appointed court master of music and thus gain basic financial security for himself.

Room 7

Showcase 1: As part of his wide-ranging preparations Beethoven wrote down preliminary tonal studies in the empty spaces of a conversation notebook. The large

sketchbook contains the first studies for the Mass, which were done in the spring of 1819. In addition to such large sized sketchbooks Beethoven also used smaller, so-called pocket sketchbooks when he was working away from home. The one to be seen here contains studies for the Kyrie and the Gloria, but also the occasional study for the Credo. They are open here at pages containing studies for the Gloria.

Showcase 2: The importance the Mass had for Beethoven can be judged with the help of the best-known portrait of the composer. It was painted in 1820 by Joseph Karl Stieler at the behest of the Brentano family who were friends of Beethoven. A study for the painting is on display here, a copy of the painting is on the wall and the original hangs in Room 8. The painter asked Beethoven what he should write on the music book and the composer decided on the Mass and chose the Credo for the title on the cover. However the painter has stylised the music book and not portrayed the proportions accurately. It ought to look like the one here in the showcase, which contains studies for the Credo and Agnus Dei. They were written down in the spring of 1820, after the actual reason for the Mass had already passed. Beethoven then interrupted his work on the project on several occasions, for instance in favour of the last three piano sonatas, without ever forgetting it completely. On the autograph of the Mass Beethoven has written the motto “From the heart – may it go – to the heart!”. This very personal dedication, coined for Archduke Rudolph, is derived from Johann Michael Sailer's translation of Thomas à Kempis' “De Imitatione Christi” (“The Imitation of Christ”), which had become a popular work. Beethoven admired the theologian Sailer, who was friends with Franz and Antonie Brentano and wanted to place his nephew Karl in his custody in Landshut, shortly before he began work on the Mass. The archduke had supported this scheme, although in the end it failed to come about. Even today the motto can still be considered valid, even in the higher sense.

The Missa solennis was to be Beethoven's most lucrative work. This was helped by the fact that he initially

propagated the work in the form of copies which he offered for instance to royal and aristocratic families for the handsome fee of 50 ducats. *Showcase 3* contains his letter to the ambassador in Vienna of the Grand Duchy of Sachsen-Weimar, the employer of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, in which he praises the Mass as being “his most successful brainchild”. Beethoven asked Goethe and other influential men he knew such as Karl Friedrich Zelter in Berlin to intercede on his behalf with the rulers. Whereas Goethe achieved nothing, the Prussian King ordered a copy. Of at least 24 requests by Beethoven, no less than 10 were answered favourably.

Showcase 4: The Russian Prince Nikolai Borisovich Galitzin, a great admirer of Beethoven, was not only asked to be intermediary at the court of the Tsar, but in fact bought a copy himself. This served as the basis for the first performance of the work, given by the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Society in the Tsar's chapel on 7th April 1824. Galitzin described Beethoven as “music's third hero” (together with Mozart and Haydn) and as the “God of melody and harmony”. Whereas that score has been lost, the one of the Kyrie and Gloria still exists which Beethoven sent to his former pupil and secretary Ferdinand Ries in 1825. A performance planned for the Lower Rhine Music Festival did not take place however, because the sheet music arrived too late.

The new acquisition is on display in *Showcases 5 and 6*. The engraver's copy is a vital source of information for the work, for it alone contains the trombone and organ parts which were composed later. It is covered with corrections in the composer's handwriting. He complained to the publisher that he had “read it through with the greatest of care – no little task with a copyist who hardly understands a thing of what he writes”. One of his head copyist had also participated in the proof-reading. It must be understood that after he had finished the actual composition Beethoven spent about another two whole years supervising and proof-reading the subscription copies and this engraver's copy, before he could consider the work to be finally completed. On the

open page of the Agnus Dei there is a note in the margin which says, “I ask for inward and outward peace”. Beethoven sent the score to the publisher in January 1825.

On the wall there is a poster from Beethoven’s academy in the Kärtnertor Theatre advertising the first performance of the 9th Symphony on 7th May 1824, when the Kyrie, Gloria and Agnus were also performed for the first time in Vienna. In 1871 during the 2nd Bonn Beethoven Festival the work was performed for the second time in his hometown. The event was captured in a drawing by Knut Ekwall. The violinist is standing, which indicates that the Benedictus is being played at the time.

Showcases 7 and 8: Beethoven offered the Mass to a total of seven publishers. As a fee he demanded 1,000 guilders C.M., nearly twice the amount he had requested for the Ninth Symphony. He offered the work to the Vienna publisher Artaria in August 1822, but an agreement was finally reached with the publishing house Schott in Mainz. The original edition appears in three forms: score, parts and piano reduction.

Stieler’s portrait of Beethoven soon became very popular and a lithographed reproduction, produced on order of the artist by his nephew, was sent by Beethoven as a last greeting and with a hand-written dedication to his old friend Franz Gerhard Wegeler.

Room 12 (at the end of the circuit on the ground floor):

The second part of the special exhibition examines Beethoven’s relationship with cultural circles in Russia. Although he never went to Russia, his works were known and appreciated there. To a large extent this was no doubt due to the Russian Count Andrey Kyrillovich Rasumovsky, who spent many years as a diplomat in Vienna. Through his family connections with Prince Lichnowsky (his sister-in-law was the wife of Beethoven’s first benefactor) he must have met the composer personally at an early stage. Beethoven dedicated the three string quartets op. 59 to him, the first two of which contain Russian folk melodies. *Showcase 1* contains the autograph score of the third quartet and the

dedication page of the original edition of 1808 with indications where Beethoven used Russian themes. It may have been a commissioned work, for between 1808 and 1816 the music-loving count maintained his own string quartet under the conductorship of Ignaz Schuppanzigh. Occasionally he even played the second violin himself. With its regular concerts the ensemble did much to spread the popularity of Beethoven’s string quartets. Together with Prince Lobkowitz, Rasumovsky was also dedicatee of the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies.

During the Congresses of Vienna the Tsarina Elisabeth Alexejewna visited Beethoven’s great academy on 29th November 1814 for the premiere of the cantata “The Glorious Moment”. As was mentioned in the press, she maximised Beethoven’s earnings with a “generous present of 200 ducats”. Thereupon Beethoven composed for her the Polonaise op. 89. The Tsarina also took it upon herself to have money sent to him as a belated present for the three violin sonatas op. 30 which he had dedicated to the Tsar. Tsar Alexander I was later to become one of the subscribers to a handwritten copy of the Missa solemnis.

In the last years of his life Beethoven also cultivated a close relationship to another Russian prince: Nikolai Borisovich Galitzin, who had spent his childhood in Vienna and now lived in St. Petersburg. In November 1822 he asked the composer for “one, two or three new quartets” (letter in *Showcase 2*). Beethoven fulfilled the request with the string quartets op. 127, 132 and 130. *Showcase 2* contains the autograph score of the finale of the first Galitzin Quartet as well as a typical letter with ironical remarks from Beethoven to Ignaz Schuppanzigh, who wanted to give the first performance of the work with his quartet. On display in *Showcase 3* are the small-format copies of the parts, intended for the client and corrected by Beethoven himself. All three original editions, which were published by different companies, contain the appropriate dedication. Although Beethoven had not yet received the agreed fee for the second quartet, he nevertheless dedicated the overture to “The

Consecration of the House” op. 124 to the prince in December 1825. The letter on display from the prince’s son proves that Beethoven never lived to see his remuneration. Not until long after his death was the payment made to his nephew Karl.

Beethoven made a note in April 1826 of an announcement in the Viennese newspaper concerning Prince Galitzin’s length of stay and place of abode in Vienna. There is however no surviving evidence to show that the two met.

Beethoven-Haus Bonn
Bonngasse 20
D-53111 Bonn
www.beethoven-haus-bonn.de

