

## Back to the future with Beethoven

**The Beethoven Orchester Bonn under its general music director, Dirk Kaftan, is getting the anniversary year of its namesake off to a highly innovative and individual start. More than 80 concerts in 12 concert series at a wide range of venues in Bonn will offer listeners musical discoveries, enjoyment and surprises.**



How is it possible to do artistic justice to Ludwig van Beethoven for his 250th birthday? After all, he is the most famous son of the city of Bonn, with a worldwide popularity that has made him a kind of international benchmark for cultural quality. And his works have long been the daily bread of any classical musician. There would be enough reasons to ring in a noisy marathon of adulation starting on December 16 (most likely Beethoven's birthday) in Germany's erstwhile capital – but the Beethoven

Orchester Bonn, under its artistic director, **Dirk Kaftan**, has decided to take a different, more reflective path: “This time, there is not going to be a star cult, a self-celebration,” stresses Kaftan, who took up his position in 2017. Bonn's general music director and his musicians have set themselves the goal in this anniversary year of “demonstrating the relevance of Beethoven's music, its power and his ideas – for here and now, for every age and target group, for you and me. We want to firmly reestablish a place for Beethoven and our Beethoven Orchester Bonn at the centre of society and in the heart of the city.”

It is thus only natural that in 2020, the Beethoven Orchester Bonn will be performing at **a large number of different and sometimes new venues** in the city besides the opera house – from La Redoute and the assembly room of the Alter Bundesrat to the university, Beethoven-Haus, Kreuzkirche, Pantheon, Brückenforum, the Telekom Forum and the BaseCamp Hostel. There are also two open-air concerts, one on the lawns of the Hofgartenwiese (with live stream) and one at the Kunstrasen Bonn. The programmes and formats are equally varied, but by no means haphazard. The season schedule for 2019/20 includes **12 concert series**, with altogether more than 80 programmes on offer.

The series “On Site/Court Orchestra”, presented in the historical Redoute, the former ballroom building of the prince-electoral, casts a special look at Beethoven's roots – and, in the process, those of today's Beethoven Orchester Bonn. Three concerts examine the question: “How were things back in Beethoven's day?” For Kaftan, this is an exciting journey through time: “In this project, we revive the repertoire and performing style of the orchestra in which Beethoven began his career.” The opening concert in the series with the motto “Füllhorn/The Horn of Plenty”, which has already taken place with great success (General-Anzeiger: “[...] the strings did without vibrato, the horns without valves. And the result was worth hearing. The playing was full of energy and extreme verve.”) is to be followed at the start of 2020 by the programmes

“Influencers” (23 Jan.) with early classical symphonies by Joseph Martin Kraus and Antonio Rosetti and a piano concerto by Franz Xaver Sterkel (with Yorck Kronenberg on the fortepiano), and “Paris” (26 Mar.) with works by François-Joseph Gossec, Giuseppe Maria Cambini, François Devienne and Luigi Boccherini. In the series “**Im Spiegel/In the Mirror**”, which has also already begun, Beethoven is again a major focus: on four Sunday afternoons, well-known guests encounter popular pieces in the opera house – for example, the German TV presenter and multi-instrumentalist Götz Alsmann will meet Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in C minor, op. 67 (12 Jan.) and the US pianist Kit Armstrong the Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, op. 37 (22 Mar.). And from January onwards, the “**Beethoven-Lounge**” promises to be a musical talk show of the finest calibre. In this season, Dirk Kaftan has invited prominent and eloquent young guests to the Pantheon on five evenings, where he will explore with them their highly individual takes on the composer and his current significance. They include **Kit Armstrong** and members of the German National Youth Orchestra (6 Jan.), the rising South Korean piano star William Youn (2 Mar.) and the German viola virtuoso **Nils Mönkemeyer** (4 May).

The concerts in partnership with the BTHVN2020 Beethoven Jubiläums GmbH (Beethoven Anniversary Society) are also an important part of the current season. As was only fitting, things kicked off on the composer's birthday with an imposing opening gala, which will be followed before Christmas by a “Beethoven-Marathon” (21 Dec.) with performances of all the composer's symphonies in unusual instrumentations and arrangements, with some **public participation**. Here, it is already clear that the Beethoven Orchester Bonn is keeping to its word: orchestral professionals will sit next to amateur musicians and Beethoven will become the focus of a joint musical experience.

In January, there will be another highlight of this concert series under the title “Schicksale/Fates” (11 Jan.). On this evening, two iconic compositions by Beethoven will be set in contrast with one another: the Piano Concerto No. 4 with its mellow, cheerful, almost pastoral character, performed by the outstanding Beethoven interpreter **Gerhard Oppitz**, and the epochal Symphony No. 5 with its suggestions of power and defiance, of setting the world on fire and assailing the heavens. Another exceptional concert project should be mentioned with regard to this series, which will end on 16 December 2020 with the “BeethovenNacht/Beethoven Night”): under the motto “X-Rayed” (26 Jun.), Beethoven's Seventh will be staged as a multi-media performance, a journey of discovery with projections, moderation – and, of course, the original score performed by the Beethoven Orchester Bonn.

So the Beethoven Orchester Bonn is taking the 250th anniversary of its namesake's birth as an opportunity to strike out in new directions and undertake daring experiments. “This celebration will have a much broader scope than in the past,” Dirk Kaftan says with conviction. “And that gives us the chance to share an awareness of Beethoven's continued relevance with people – and not just those in this city.”

[www.beethoven-orchester.de](http://www.beethoven-orchester.de)



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