



B E E T H O V E N F E S T B O N N

Bonn, 24 September 2007

## Beethovenfest Bonn 2007 full of joy and innovations

**Beethovenfest Bonn 2007 with the motto “Joy” achieves a take-up of 92%, with 43 concerts sold out**

The Beethovenfest Bonn 2007 with its motto “Joy” ended on Sunday evening with a much-applauded concert featuring the Bamberger Symphoniker conducted by Jonathan Nott with a masterly performance of Beethoven’s 9th Symphony. Someone else who has reason to be joyful is the festival director Ilona Schmiel: after all, she can report a 92% take-up of tickets and no less than 43 sell-outs out of a total of 61 events in the main programme. Lasting from 24 August to 23 September, the Beethovenfest Bonn 2007 shed light on Beethoven’s relations with Britain and its sphere of cultural influence. This season concludes the four-year cycle of Beethoven festivals centring on country-specific mottoes. The festivals from 2008 to 2010 will once again fall under a single superordinate theme.

This year’s motto “Joy” was derived from the choral finale of Beethoven’s 9th Symphony, with its words from Schiller’s “Ode to Joy”. The bridge to Great Britain leads via Beethoven’s piano pupil Ferdinand Ries. Ries went to London in 1813, becoming the first director of the Philharmonic Society, which in 1822 commissioned Beethoven to compose his Symphony No. 9. This year the Beethovenfest Bonn took as its theme, in 61 concerts and operatic performances, the multifarious relations between Beethoven and Great Britain during the composer’s lifetime and in the succeeding centuries right up to the present time. The festival played host to numerous British musicians and ensembles, including the Philharmonia Orchestra, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields conducted by Sir Neville Marriner, the pianist Paul Lewis as well as the Hilliard Ensemble and the Arditti Quartet. For the two last-named ensembles, the Beethovenfest commissioned a work from James Clarke: its first performance during the “Night of Voices” was received with a standing ovation.

The work “Untitled No. 4” by James Clarke was one of **eight works to receive their first performance** at the Beethovenfest Bonn 2007; since 2004, under the

**Internationale Beethovenfeste Bonn** gGmbH | Pressebüro Silke Neubarth  
Telefon +49-228-20 10 340 | Fax +49-228-20 10 344 | [presse@beethovenfest.de](mailto:presse@beethovenfest.de)

directorship of Ilona Schmiel, a total of 28 new works have been premiered at the festival. "One of our goals is to help shape the repertoire of the 21st century," says Ms. Schmiel, and she is glad that "some of the works premiered under our auspices in the last four years will receive second and third performances, and one of these without a doubt will be that by James Clarke. A further effect is that with this work we have stimulated other composers to write for the two ensembles." The two premieres of works by Mauricio Kagel, who celebrated his 75th birthday at the end of last year, namely "Verborgene Reime" for voices and percussion, and his Trio No. 3, will likewise in all probability be taken up into the musical repertoire and performed again.

Another work commissioned by the Beethovenfest Bonn and Theater Bonn, by contrast, Moritz Eggert's opera "FREAX", aroused vehement controversy. This two-act work was premiered in concert form, director Christoph Schlingensiefel "staging" his interpretation of FREAX, which is based on the 1932 film "Freaks" by Tod Browning, in film scenes and a presentation of his "family" in the interval. "I very much hope that this work will get the chance to be staged elsewhere," says Ms. Schmiel.

**The Beethovenfest demonstrated its innovative spirit not just by commissioning new works, but also by promoting new forms of confrontation with Beethoven and his oeuvre.** This manifested itself, during the "Night of Voices", in an improvisation on Beethoven's "Letter to the Immortal Beloved" by the performance artist Nigel Charnock, who was supported in his expressive performance by the clarinetist Michael Riessler, the vocalist Michael Schiefel and the table-percussionist Jean Pierre Drouet, who provided an impressive "translation" of the writing of the letter.

In the accompanying programme of the Beethovenfest Bonn 2007, the Berlin artist Götz Lemberg took a visual and tonal approach to Beethoven and his oeuvre. In "**Coloured Sounds**" at the T-Mobile Forum until 30 September, Götz Lemberg is showing three fascinating light-and-sound installations: "lighthoven" translates the first movement of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata into a light composition, in "h" visitors can take a ten-minute light-and-sound trip through the note B (h in German) and in a third work the artist has created a light-and-sound installation of his own based on a trombone note, a bass note and a cello note. In "**Look at Beethoven 2007**" **young media creatives once again sought access to Beethoven through film.** 21 films and an installation by trainees and film academy students from all over Germany were on show throughout the period of the festival. What director Ilona Schmiel found so stimulating in this project was "the linkage of traditional contents with innovative approaches in such a way as to preserve this musical culture in a viable form so that it remains interesting for up and coming generations and keeps leading to interesting discussions." The Beethovenfest Bonn hopes to use this project to become a rendezvous for young film-makers and in the medium term a forum for contemporary music film.

In the accompanying programme of the Beethovenfest Bonn 2007 our partners and

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institutions in the city staged 71 events. In exhibitions, installations, readings, concerts and discussions, including programmes and workshops for children, the theme of “Beethoven and British culture” was illuminated in a variety of ways. For the first time there was a **“public viewing”** at the Beethovenfest Bonn: the concert by the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela conducted by Gustavo Dudamel was transmitted live from the Beethovenhalle, where all the seats were sold out, to a nearby square, the Marktplatz, where a further audience of 2,000 listened attentively to the works being performed inside.

Worldwide, listeners could follow the Beethovenfest on the radio or on their computers. More than half the concerts were recorded by our media partners Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Deutsche Welle and Deutschlandfunk/DeutschlandRadio Kultur. Deutsche Welle is broadcasting more than a dozen of the 61 Beethovenfest concerts to more than 140 countries worldwide, excerpts of the recordings being already available for download as podcasts from [www.dw-world.de](http://www.dw-world.de). Five concerts were broadcast live, including the orchestra campus concert staged by Deutsche Welle and the Beethovenfest with the Cairo Conservatory of Music Orchestra, which went out to Egypt, and the final concert with the Bamberger Symphoniker conducted by Jonathan Nott live to St. Petersburg. More than **50 journalists reported on the events of the Beethovenfest Bonn at regional, national and international level. International critics came from Great Britain, Canada, Russia, Finland, Spain, Italy, Austria, Luxembourg, Hungary, Israel and Egypt.**

Next year’s Beethovenfest Bonn will be held from **29 August to 28 September 2008**. The programme will be announced in March 2008.

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