



Beethoven in Bonn

9–14 September 2026 (MM 174)

6 days

Lecturer: Barry Cooper

Beethoven specialists Le Concert Olympique (cond. Jan Caeyers) are joined by soloists such as Kit Armstrong and Christian Poltéra, to present a spectrum of Beethoven's work including symphonies, concertos and sonatas.

The Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich and VOCES8 also appear.

Four of the five concerts take place at the Beethovenhalle, which reopens this year after an extensive, years-long restoration.

Explore the musical heritage and history of this former capital city, Beethoven's birthplace.

Option to travel by rail (first class) from London to Cologne.

Talks on the music by renowned Beethoven scholar, Barry Cooper.

Beethoven's symphonies form a major cornerstone of the entire orchestral repertoire. He was particularly attracted to the genre and regarded it as the highest form of instrumental music. Of his nine symphonies and the beginnings of a tenth, we shall hear four, including the ground-breaking *Eroica*, originally intended to celebrate Napoleon. It transformed instrumental music almost as thoroughly as Napoleon transformed European politics.

In addition, we shall hear three of Beethoven's concertos, including his Triple Concerto for violin, cello, and piano – the only one of its kind – plus three of his piano sonatas, including the dramatic *Pathétique*. The concerts will also contain music by several other composers, notably some preludes and fugues from J.S. Bach's *Well-tempered Clavier*, which Beethoven so much admired.

Bonn was the seat of the Prince-Archbishops of Cologne, ex-officio one of the eight Electors of the Holy Roman Empire and temporal ruler of one of the weightier principalities in the German-speaking lands. Its location on the Rhine, Europe's great thoroughfare, and not far from France and the Netherlands helped to ensure that it was no cultural backwater. During Beethoven's youth the electoral court maintained a corps of musicians which ranked with the largest of such establishments – larger than those, for example, in Salzburg or Eszterháza.



Beethoven, original to Florian Uhlig

Beethoven's father and grandfather had been among their number, and Beethoven himself may well have been content to have settled into lifelong electoral service, his Olympian talents nurtured by the security of a salaried existence. But the French Revolution and subsequent conquest of the Rhineland eliminated that possibility. The study visit he made to Vienna at the age of 22 became a lifelong exile. Maybe distance made the heart grow fonder, but his letters suggest he had the warmest memories of his home town and enduring affection for his Bonn friends and some (not all) of his family.

The annual International Beethoven Festival is a major event worthy of the composer's native city, showcasing world-class orchestras and artists from around the globe.

Itinerary

Day 1. Travel by rail from London to Cologne, leaving St Pancras at c. 9.00am and changing at Brussels. Continue by coach from Cologne to Bonn, arriving in time for dinner in the hotel restaurant.

Days 2. A morning walk follows a route linking places associated with Beethoven: family homes, school, churches where he played the organ, the Electoral Palace, the tavern he frequented, memorial sculpture and the Beethovenhalle (concert hall). In the afternoon visit the graves of Beethoven's mother and Robert Schumann. Early dinner before an **evening concert at the Beethovenhalle with the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Paavo Järvi (conductor), Bomsori Kim (violin): Arnold Schoenberg, Verklärte Nacht (Transfigured Night) for string orchestra; Erich Korngold, Violin Concerto; Beethoven: Symphony No. 7.**

Day 3: Maria Laach. A relaxing day begins with cruising upstream along the Rhine past wooded hills, vineyards and small towns. Disembark at Remagen and drive into the hills to the west to visit Maria Laach, an abbey with one of the most complete and satisfying of Romanesque churches. Lunch here and time to walk around the lake. **Evening concert at the Kreuzkirche with vocal ensemble VOCES8: music from the metropolises of Venice, Paris, London, and New York, including works by Orlando di Lasso, Igor Stravinsky, and Eric Whitacre**

Beethoven in Bonn
continued

Day 4. Guided visit of the Haus der Geschichte, an excellent museum of the history of Germany since 1945, followed by some free time with the opportunity to visit the adjacent Kunstmuseum Bonn, a good collection of 20th-century art, especially August Macke. **Evening concert at the Beethovenhalle with Le Concert Olympique, Jan Caeyers (conductor), Kit Armstrong (piano):** J. S. Bach, *Prelude and Fugue No. 21 from The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book II*; Beethoven, *Piano Concerto No. 2*; *Piano Sonata No. 8 'Pathétique'*; *Symphony No. 1*.

Day 5. Morning concert at the Beethovenhalle with Le Concert Olympique, Jan Caeyers (conductor), Kit Armstrong (piano): J. S. Bach, *Prelude and Fugue No. 1 from The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I*; Beethoven, *Piano Concerto No. 1*; *Piano Sonata No. 17 'The Tempest'*; *Symphony No. 2*. The afternoon is free for independent exploration of Bonn. The Rheinisches Landesmuseum, well documenting the history of the region through works of art and artefacts, is recommended. Early dinner before an **evening concert at the Beethovenhalle with Le Concert Olympique, Jan Caeyers (conductor), Ilya Gringolts (violin), Christian Poltéra (cello), Kit Armstrong (piano):** Beethoven, *Symphony No. 3 'Eroica'*; J. S. Bach, *Prelude and Fugue No. 12 from The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book II*; Beethoven, *Piano Sonata No. 22; Triple Concerto*.

Day 6. Leave for Cologne by coach, boarding the 10.45am train for Brussels. The Eurostar arrives at London St Pancras at c. 4.00pm.

Lecturer

Barry Cooper. Barry Cooper is a Professor of Music at the University of Manchester. He has written or edited ten books on Beethoven, the latest being *The Creation of Beethoven's Nine Symphonies* (Boydell Press, 2024). He has also produced scholarly performing editions of several major works, including Beethoven's 35 *Piano Sonatas* and *Missa solemnis*. In 1988 his completion of the first movement of Beethoven's unfinished Tenth Symphony attracted widespread international attention, and has since been performed in many countries.

Only Beethoven's music will be covered in the lectures.

Practicalities

Included: top category ticket for five concerts are included; private coach travel; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 1 lunch and 4 dinners with wine; all admissions; tips for waiters, drivers and guides; all airport and state taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Music: tickets to be confirmed autumn 2025.

Accommodation. Königshof (ameronhotels.com): 4-star with modern rooms and a restaurant with views of the Rhine. *Single rooms throughout are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? A fair amount of walking is unavoidable, and the tour is planned on the expectation that participants walk to concerts. Participants need to be able to lift their own luggage onto coaches and trains. The rail journey from London to Cologne and back necessitates a change in Brussels. Average distance by coach per day: c. 15 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.