

Bonngasse 24-26
53111 Bonn, Germany

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Press office

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Phone: +49 228-98 175-16
Fax: +49 228-98 175-24
presse@beethoven.de
www.beethoven.de

Press release

Beethoven's birthplace shines in new splendour

To start into the anniversary year, the redesigned museum at Beethoven's birthplace will be opened officially in a ceremony on December 16, 2019. From December 17 onwards, the new Beethoven-Haus is open to the public.

Bonn, December 13, 2019 – To start into the Beethoven anniversary year BTHVN2020 the composer's birthplace in Bonn shines in new splendour. The completely redesigned and extended museum will be inaugurated in a ceremony on December 16. The "New Beethoven-Haus" is clearly one of the anniversary year's prominent projects. The redesign worth € 3.75 million was made possible by the German Federal Government, the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia and the Rhineland Regional Association. Around € 850,000 were contributed by the Beethoven-Haus Bonn Association by means of donations from individuals, foundations, banks and businesses.

"As a civic society, we are very grateful for having been able to carry out this important project for the Beethoven anniversary year with the support of the German public authorities and numerous private givers. Beethoven's birthplace is a magnet for Beethoven friends from all over the world, so we are pleased to present Beethoven here in a modern way," says Malte Boecker, Director of the Beethoven-Haus Bonn.

Monika Grütters, German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, adds: "The Beethoven-Haus in Bonn is one of the most frequented composer museums worldwide. At the redesigned and extended museum and the new permanent exhibition visitors from all over the world can experience Ludwig van Beethoven and his outstanding personality in many ways. Until today, he is one of the most important ambassadors of German culture. There is one thing that holds true for all of Beethoven's music: The more we deal with it, the more interesting and emotional it gets. In our times, taking a close look at the visionary, humanist and passionate European Ludwig van Beethoven, is more needed than ever. As such, the Beethoven-Haus will help to close the gap between the past and the future, thereby continuing to attract visitors from the whole world".

Isabel Pfeiffer-Poensgen, Minister for Culture and Science of the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia, says: "The reopening of the Beethoven-Haus marks the start into the

anniversary year BTHVN 2020 that is celebrated in North-Rhine Westphalia, Germany and the whole world. The newly designed presentation allows visitors to get to know the great composer and his oeuvre in many exciting ways. The museum has further developed its role as an international hotspot for Beethoven research and education in a modern manner and has created a place where the importance of Beethoven can be experienced like nowhere else. As such, the Beethoven-Haus Bonn becomes the centre of a comprehensive anniversary programme that will honour the cosmopolitan Beethoven, his music and impact during the course of one year in all facets.”

Encounter with Beethoven in an experience-oriented and emotional way

The new presentation that replaces the exhibition from 1996 gives visitors the opportunity to meet Beethoven at his birthplace in an exciting and emotional way. The concept for the new permanent exhibition was developed by museum director Nicole Kämpken and her team. Exceptional items of the world's most important Beethoven collection, among them original instruments, authentic portraits, music manuscripts, letters and items of daily life from Beethoven's possession, serve as the exhibition's basis.

“The power of the exhibits and the way they are categorised into different topics let visitors get in close contact with Beethoven as a human being and artist. Selected compositions demonstrate the new standards he set in music. The exhibition gives an insight about both his daily life as well as the circle of friends and patrons,” says Kämpken. Museum visitors can now make a connection to their own experience of today and as such deal with Beethoven not merely as a figure of the past.

Beethoven's birthplace as central exhibit

The museum was designed by Holzer Kobler Architekturen from Switzerland in cooperation with 2xGoldstein, Studio TheGreenEyl and Lichtvision Design. “During his lifetime and until today Beethoven has been touching people from all over the world as genius composer and unique personality. For the new exhibition, we wanted to turn his birthplace into the central exhibit in a particular way. As such, for the overall design, we focused on a harmonious interaction between the historic architecture and a modern perspective on Beethoven and his time,” explains architect Barbara Holzer.

Three special rooms located above each other in the back part of the house, where the Beethoven family actually lived, are designed in a rather unconventional style. A diorama on the ground floor shows the city of Bonn at Beethoven's lifetime. In the sound room located above it five important early compositions prove the composer's musical uniqueness, and in the attic, the bedroom of Beethoven's parents, so far referred to as his birthroom, can now be entered—something that was not possible in the past. By means of a mirror surface and media fade-ins a dreamlike state and a feeling of hovering is to be created and a poetic location established to sensually connect to the Beethoven phenomenon.

A Mediaguide provides with further information

Descriptions in German and English help to quickly identify the items on display. A media guide included in the admission provides complementary texts, pictures and music. Currently, the media guide is available in German, English, Japanese, Chinese and Spanish. Apart from a version for children, there are also versions in simple language and German sign language and for visually impaired visitors. The media guide was promoted by the Rhineland Regional Association, too.

“With its museum consulting services and cultural funding the Rhineland Regional Association (LVR) has been supporting for many years the whole engagement around the Beethoven-Haus in its different facets as a memorial, composer museum and cultural institution. Thus, it was a pleasure for us to contribute to the 250th anniversary of this world-known Rhineland composer whose music is part of the world's musical heritage, and to the redesign of the exhibition at his birthplace.

One aspect related to our contribution to the new media guide that was of particular importance to us as Germany's biggest cross-regional social assistance authority is the fact that the guide also features a simple language and sign language version as well as versions for visually impaired visitors. To make Beethoven accessible to everybody is what we aim for,” summarises Anne Henk-Hollstein, Chairwoman of the Landschaftsversammlung Rheinland, the activities of the LVR.

New offers for visitors

The museum's extension creates room for more opportunities for the public. As a special attraction, the basement vault of the historic neighbouring house features a treasure chamber where original manuscripts from Beethoven are on display. The ground floor accommodates a music room where visitors can listen to concerts on historic keyboard instruments. For the first time, the Museum Beethoven-Haus also has an area dedicated to temporary exhibitions. The first special exhibition to be presented here is about the most famous Beethoven portrait painted by Joseph Stieler.

The modern reception area in the opposite building at Bonngasse 21 now contains the new museum shop with admission desk and a small cafeteria. The upper floor houses a seminar room for education events organised by the Beethoven-Haus. There, visitors can access the Digital Archive of the Beethoven-Haus on tablet computers to take a virtual look at other collection items.

All Bonn citizens are invited to explore the new Beethoven-Haus after its official inauguration during an open-house day on December 17, i.e. Beethoven's baptism day. The open-house day will end in the evening with an Open Stage at the chamber music hall. Free admission on this day.

About the Beethoven-Haus Bonn

The Beethoven-Haus Bonn association, founded in 1889, is the worldwide leading Beethoven centre. It strives to preserve Beethoven's life, work and heritage. The Beethoven-Haus Bonn includes the world's most important Beethoven collection, the museum at Beethoven's birth place attracting over 100,000 visitors per year, a scientific research department dedicated to music with its own library and a publishing house as well as the Hermann J. Abs chamber music hall. Thanks to the engagement and support of 900 friends, patrons and members from more than 20 countries as well as the German government, the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the Rhineland Regional Council and the city of Bonn, the association carries out various cultural tasks and initiatives of national and international importance. Since 2013 Tabea Zimmermann, a renowned violist, chamber musician and professor, has been serving as President. In the spring of 2020, the violinist Daniel Hope takes this office. In 2016 the non-profit institution Beethoven Jubiläums Gesellschaft was founded under the umbrella of the Beethoven-Haus Foundation to coordinate and promote Beethoven's 250th anniversary in 2020.

Press photographs showing the newly designed rooms can be downloaded at www.beethoven.de/de/pressebilder/list.

Please note the **copyright**: Beethoven-Haus Bonn, photographer: David Ertl

Opening hours of the Beethoven-Haus museum starting December 17:

Daily from 10 am to 6 pm; information on closing days can be found at www.beethoven.de

Advance ticket sale

Tickets with a fixed time slot can be booked at Bonnticket

(https://www.bonnticket.de/beethoven-haus-bonn/?referer_info=bt_partner). They can also be purchased at the Beethoven-Haus shop. Group reservations must be requested at the museum office at museum@beethoven.de.

Open house day on Beethoven's baptism day, December 17, 2019:

10 am to 6 pm (museum); after 6 pm at the chamber music hall (Open Stage)

Free admission

Special exhibitions

In good company—Joseph Stieler's Beethoven portrait and its history

From December 17, 2019 until April 26, 2020

Contact

Ursula Timmer-Fontani, Head of Corporate Communications

timmer-fontani@beethoven.de

Ph. +49 228 98175-16