



SUPER AUDIO CD

# LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Symphonies nos. 7 & 8

Complete symphonies vol. 3

**THE NETHERLANDS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Jan Willem de Vriend



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## LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

### Symphony no. 7 op. 92 in A major (1811/12)

[1] Poco sostenuto – Vivace	<b>13:42</b>
[2] Allegretto	<b>8:44</b>
[3] Presto	<b>9:14</b>
[4] Allegro con brio	<b>8:56</b>

### Symphony no. 8 op. 93 in F major (1812)

[5] Allegro vivace e con brio	<b>8:53</b>
[6] Allegretto scherzando	<b>4:07</b>
[7] Tempo di Menuetto	<b>4:40</b>
[8] Allegro vivace	<b>7:41</b>

total time 65:57

*“Der wahre Künstler hat keinen Stolz; leider sieht er, dass die Kunst keine Grenzen hat.” (“The true artist has no pride. He sees unfortunately that art has no limits.”)*

This is what Beethoven wrote to eight-year-old Emilie M. in 1812, who had kindly sent him a portfolio that she had embroidered along with a letter expressing her admiration. Beethoven continued: *“Er fühlt dunkel, wie weit er vom Ziele entfernt ist, und indes er vielleicht von andern bewundert wird, trauert er, noch nicht dahin gekommen zu sein, wohin ihm der bessere Genius nur wie eine ferne Sonne vorleuchtet.” (“He has a vague awareness of how far he is from reaching his goal and while others may perhaps admire him, he laments that he has not yet reached the point to which his better genius only lights the way for him like a distant sun.”)*

1812 was a difficult year for Beethoven. His general health and his hearing

in particular were steadily declining. Throughout his life he had been unlucky in love; none of his relationships had lasted very long. At the beginning of July in that year Beethoven wrote his three famous letters to his “Immortal Beloved”. Beethoven biographers such as Solomon Maynard and Lewis Lockwood have concluded that these letters were very likely addressed to Antonie Brentano. There is still no real proof as to who his mysterious beloved was. But it is certain that Beethoven loved this woman, whoever she was, from the depths of his soul. The words in his letters are heartfelt and moving. But a truly long-lasting relationship with a woman was not possible in his life. He reached this conclusion himself and became more and more convinced of it. A relationship could not fit in with his way of life, his unpredictable nature and his devotion to his music. Because Beethoven was his work, he was his music. For him, music was supreme.

The beautiful letter to little Emilie, following on the impassioned letters to an “Immortal Beloved” written ten days previously, show a very personal side of Beethoven. A man of flesh and blood, one who needed love but who had to do without it. It tore him to pieces, as indeed did his deafness, but amid all his suffering it would seem that he always felt a deep motivation to go on. His art gave him a hold on life. And in the years that followed, in which he would spend less time composing, music continued to be his beacon in a raging sea that sometimes threatened to destroy him. The raging sea: a fitting metaphor for the years from 1812 to 1817, a time of transition leading to his late period. The artist, fragile and human, had a moral object, an object by means of which he could elevate himself to a higher level. It is the only way in which a human being can do so. This Kantian principle shows ex-

actly how Beethoven saw his work as a composer.

It was also how he was regarded after his death: a Beethoven who suffered, but who created exalted art, was revered. This is how Beethoven became the giant, one who inspired fear in many people. Composers felt Ludwig’s hot breath in their neck if they so much as dared to think about composing a symphony. But if you look at Beethoven himself, you simply see a man: not a deity, but a highly gifted person. A man who indeed had to suffer physically and in his human relationships, but who had a huge drive, who was aware of his genius and knew that it was precisely with his music that he could make a meaningful contribution. Without his music – his life elixir – he might well have killed himself.

1812 was an end, a turning point and a beginning. It was the end of a

glorious period in which he put the finishing touches on Symphony No. 7 and wrote No. 8 – a culmination of ten years of composing at the highest level. Beethoven had come all the way. The eventful year of 1812 was also a turning point: emotional and relational crises (difficulties in love, loss of friends, problems in his family), physical and financial crises, brought him to an impasse and this affected his work. It seemed as if he had lost his unbridled energy. His deafness caused him to focus outside of himself, but at the same time he took counsel with himself as to how to go on in his work. This was a breeding ground, a beginning, for his late period, in which many of his works were even more complex, surpassing the comprehension of contemporaries. Pianist *Hélène Grimaud* puts it quite beautifully: *“His music is strongly rooted in all that is human, with all our vulnerabilities*

*and shortcomings, but at the same time there is an element of a Promethean struggle to overcome it, not to give up. To surmount the difficulties.”*

When Beethoven spent the summer of 1812 taking a cure in Teplitz, he finally met Goethe, whom he adored as an artist. As a person, Goethe was a bit disappointing, because Beethoven thought that he was too obsequious towards the nobility and the princes who turned up in the well-known spa in large numbers precisely that summer. The famous anecdote in which Goethe took off his hat and bowed to a royal coach while Beethoven turned his back on it with large steps is a good example of the difference between the two. As an artist and as a person, Beethoven felt he was no less than any other human being. He did not feel intimidated by the nobility. Quite the contrary. People just had

to take him the way he was. Goethe was not so easy-going and according to Beethoven, much too unctuous. He had probably expected more of Goethe, the great artist.

To say that Beethoven did not know modesty is not true. In his letter to Emilie M. he wrote, "*Do not rob Handel, Haydn and Mozart of their laurel wreaths. They are entitled to theirs, but I am not yet entitled to one.*" This shows modesty, and he was frequently uncertain about his abilities (as shown by the other quotes from this letter as well). According to Beethoven, nothing was perfect: everything could always be improved. He was driven by this sense of perfectionism. And it is how, with each attempt, he got more out of himself. Pianist *Hélène Grimaud* says, "*Beethoven dug around in his own material, going deeper each time. To him, deeper meant higher.*"

Beethoven did not need to be modest about his Seventh symphony. In a letter to Johann Peter Salomon in London, to whom he wrote in 1815 asking him to help find a British publisher, he called it "*... a grand symphony in A major (one of my most excellent works)*". In each movement of this symphony he used groups of rhythmic figures, with a leading element to set them off. Clearly, the use of rhythm was already important earlier in his career, with the first movement of No. 5 as the best known example. But in No. 7 the rhythmic action has come to the foreground; it is an underlying principle. One of Beethoven's most famous works is the Allegretto, the slow movement of this symphony. The audience was won over, and even today it has not lost any of its popularity. It is indeed of incredible beauty. The most important rhythmic theme of the introduction comes back again and again,

increasing in intensity and growing more palpable. The range, from low registers to high, and the movement from *piano* to *fortissimo* contribute to the enormous musical drama.

Things grow even more intense in the finale as the dynamic range alternates between *pianissimo* and *fortississimo*. Ostinato patterns, variations on rhythmic figures, everything is ten times bigger. That torrential energy! It almost seems as if he has broken loose, arms lashing out in all directions. Seems, because in fact he is in control of the seeming chaos. A control that was absent in his daily life, but that he had in his music.

After the unbridled exuberance of No. 7, the audience proved not to understand No. 8 so well. About this, Beethoven is said to have told Czerny, "*That's because it is so much better.*" Beethoven chose to revert

to the classical symphonic style: in retrospective. But it is definitely not a step back. For example, humour, an aspect that someone like Haydn often used in his music, is an important element here as well. But Beethoven's humour is more acerbic. In the finale, a single tone, the C sharp (and the enharmonic D flat) is the key. The C sharp bites and stabs in a movement written in F major, and what it is ultimately about is to integrate that C sharp. This is humour of a different calibre than that of Haydn. It is so typically Beethoven and is what makes him unique.

In this, the third part in the series of Beethoven symphonies, we hear No. 7 and No. 8 in an interpretation by Jan Willem de Vriend and his Netherlands Symphony Orchestra. As always, they delve into the depths of the symphonies and from these depths, they elevate themselves to a higher level

(as so nicely put above by *Hélène Grimaud*) in their understanding of Ludwig van Beethoven.

Valentine Laoût- van Leeuwenstein

Translation: Carol Stennes/Muse Translations

### **Jan Willem de Vriend**

Jan Willem de Vriend is the chief conductor and artistic director of the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra since 2006 and the artistic director of Combattimento Consort Amsterdam.

Since De Vriend was named chief conductor, the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra has become a notable phenomenon on the Netherlands' musical scene. It has presented semi-scenic performances of works by Mozart, Beethoven, Strauss and Mendelssohn. There were premieres of works by Offenbach, Say and Mahler. And by substituting period instruments in the brass section, it has developed its own distinctive sound in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century repertoire. Recently, the orchestra caused quite a stir by performing music by Schumann at festivals in Spain. It is currently recording Beethoven's complete symphonies conducted by De Vriend. Its long

Mahler tradition is being continued in recordings and tours.

In addition to being the chief conductor of the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra, De Vriend is the regular guest conductor of the Brabant Orchestra. He has conducted many distinguished Dutch orchestras, including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and The Hague Philharmonic Orchestra. De Vriend is also a welcome guest internationally and has conducted orchestras in China, Germany, Austria, Italy and France.

### **The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra**

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra (Orkest van het Oosten, based in Enschede) is the symphony orchestra of and for the province of Overijssel, bringing passion, commitment and

virtuosity to its audience. Performing at an international level, the orchestra is firmly rooted in society. Its balanced programming offers inspiring elements while the use of period instruments in the performance of its classical repertoire gives the orchestra its unique and highly individual character.

Performing concert series in towns across Overijssel, in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and other major cities, and concert tours abroad, the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra acts as a cultural representative for the Province of Overijssel. The orchestra works with the Nationale Reisopera (Dutch National Touring Opera Company) and regional choirs, and has undertaken successful tours to the United States, Canary Islands, Spain and the UK.

Directed by chief conductor Jan Willem de Vriend and permanent

guest conductor Mark Shanahan, the orchestra's unique reputation continues to grow, in both the Netherlands and abroad. CD recordings of music by Ludwig van Beethoven and Dutch composers including Jan van Gilse and Julius Röntgen are acclaimed and in great demand, and have established the orchestra's national and international reputation. The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra was recently awarded the Edison Klassiek Luister Publieksprijs 2010 for its recording of Paganini's violin concertos 1 and 2 with violinist Rudolf Koelman.

Concerts by The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra are enjoyed by a wide audience. The orchestra has played in many famous halls including Birmingham Symphony Hall and Carnegie Hall in New York, and has had the privilege of working with many renowned conductors includ-

ing former chief conductor Jaap van Zweden, Edo de Waart, Hans Vonk, Gerd Albrecht, Marc Soustrot, Vasily Petrenko, Eri Klas and Ed Spanjaard. It has accompanied numerous famous soloists, such as Ronald Brautigam, Kristian Bezuidenhout, Natalia Gutman, Charlotte Margiono, Antje Weithaas, Marie-Luise Neunecker, Sharon Bezaly, Robert Holl, Fazil Say, Rudolf Koelman and Thomas Zehetmair.

The orchestra's commitment to expanding its social relevance is reflected in its involvement in a number of extraordinary projects in which education forms a key element. In addition to its extensive symphonic programming, The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra has also inspired the creation of a number of ensembles, such as chamber orchestra Sinfonietta Aurora, the Baroque Academy of the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra and various chamber music ensembles.

Many of the orchestra's musicians play a key role in the region's music activities and society, either as teachers at schools and academies of music, or as musicians in ensembles and other projects.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra is financially supported by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Province of Overijssel and the Municipality of Enschede as well as annual contributions from sponsors.



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This High Definition Surround Recording was Produced, Engineered and Edited by Bert van der Wolf of NorthStar Recording Services, using the 'High Quality Musical Surround Mastering' principle. The basis of this recording principle is an optimal realistic and holographic, 3 dimensional representation of the musical instruments, voices and recording venue, according to traditional concert practice. For most historic music this means a frontal representation of the musical performance, nevertheless such that width and depth of the ensemble and acoustic characteristics of the hall do resemble 'real life' as much as possible. Some compositions in history, and many contemporary works do specifically ask for placement of musical instruments and voices all over the 360 degrees sound scape however, and in such cases this is also recorded as realistic as possible within the possibilities of the 5.1 Surround Sound standard.

This all requires a very innovative use of all 6 loudspeakers and the use of fully equal and full frequency range loudspeakers for all 5 discrete channels, and a complementary sub-woofer for the ultra low frequencies under 40Hz, is highly recommended to optimally benefit from the sound quality of this recording.

This recording was produced with the use of Sonodore microphones, Avalon Acoustic monitoring, Siltech Mono-Crystal cabling and dCS Converters.



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