

Informationservice Federal City of Bonn

Beethoven in Bonn

The heritage of Ludwig van Beethoven who first saw the light of day in Bonn in 1770 is highly valued and honoured in Bonn. His music is present all over, it links Bonn with music-lovers in all parts of the world.

The orchestra of the city bears, of course, the name of the famous son: the Beethoven Orchestra (www.beethoven-orchester.de) founded in 1906 is the musical "ambassador" of Bonn. It promotes Bonn successfully with its concerts in Germany and in other countries and its CD recordings. The Orchestra plays an important artistic role in the Beethoven Festival programmes.

Since 1999, Bonn has been celebrating its Beethoven festivals (www.beethovenfest.de) every year. World-famous interpreters of music as well as young, highly-talented musicians are guests in Bonn for these occasions. The International Beethoven Festival underwent considerable changes in the course of its history. Its origin is the three-day music festival organised on the Münsterplatz (Minster Square) in 1845 by Franz Liszt for the unveiling of the Beethoven Monument which marked the 75th anniversary of the composer. To cultivate Beethoven's work, annual chamber music festivals were initiated by the Society of the Beethovenhaus since 1889. The Beethoven Festivals took a more popularised form since 1927. From 1959 on, they were organised in two-year turns by the City of Bonn. In 2005, Deutsche Telekom organised the first International Beethoven Piano Competition which purports to provide every two years to young musicians a platform for an international career (www.beethoven-competition-bonn.de). Federal President Horst Köhler was patron of its inauguration.

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Strolling about the city, visitors encounter frequent reminders of Beethoven. The **Beethoven-Haus**, a landmark of Bonn, is managed by the Beethoven-Haus-Society. It includes a museum, the Beethoven Archive, the Chamber Music Hall and, recently, the Digital Beethoven-Haus. The museum shows a representative cross section of the Society's stock, the world's largest private Beethoven collection. Portraits, original manuscripts, instruments and objects of daily use provide a vivid and authentic insight into the life and work of the composer. The Beethoven Archive, founded as a research institute on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Beethoven's death, is the central documentation office for the composer's life, work and his intellectual environment and includes a specialised library. The Chamber Music Hall, inaugurated in 1989, boasts excellent acoustics and is considered one of the most beautiful modern concert halls. Beyond the specific focus on the works of Beethoven and his contemporaries, attention is also devoted to the music of our time. The Digital Beethoven Archive provides on the Internet all about the composer, his work, his life and his time. To the sound of Beethoven's music it enables virtual visitors to leaf through first

editions and manuscripts which are not accessible otherwise.

The **Beethovenhalle**, inaugurated on September 8, 1959, and modernised in 1996/7, is Bonn's concert and congress hall. It is the home of the Beethoven Orchestra, and renowned international orchestras and world-famous artists make guest appearances here. Important events are the annual Beethoven Festivals, but also big congresses and party conventions. The largest of the four convention halls seats 2,000 persons. Today's Beethovenhalle is the third of its name in Bonn. The first one was a wooden construction, proposed by Franz Liszt for the first Beethoven Festival. It had to be demolished due to fire hazard. The second hall, also a wooden construction, erected for the second festival on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Beethoven's death in 1870, was totally destroyed by fire in the worst bomb raid on Bonn on October 18, 1944. The **Beethoven Monument** on the Münsterplatz (Minster Square) was unveiled in August 1845 on the occasion of the first Beethoven Festival, remembering the 75th anniversary of his birth. The Dresden sculptor Ernst Hähnel won the tender organised in 1840. The stance and the symbols of the statue characterise "the inspired artist of sound" receiving a creative thought with his eyes turned upward and recording the notes in his book with a pencil. His Rhenish mother, Maria Magdalena van Beethoven, née Keverich, found her final resting place in the Old Cemetery in 1787. A plain stone slab on her grave which was rediscovered in 1932 remembers her and her great son whose words are inscribed on it, "She was to me such a good and kind mother, my best friend". The sculpture "Beethon" in front of the Beethovenhalle (a play on words, combining "Beethoven" and "Beton" = concrete), made of concrete by the Düsseldorf artist Professor Klaus Kammerichs has become a modern mark of the Beethoven-City Bonn.