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THE INNER BEETHOVEN

A 52-minute documentary

Written and directed by Anna Sigalevitch and Priscilla Pizzato

Graphic illustrations by Olivier Patté

A Redstone production



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INTRODUCTION

In choosing to tell Beethoven's story through his correspondence, we have made the decision to emphasize the composer's private side both in the story we tell and in our style of direction.

Of course, Beethoven's life as a public figure features in many of the letters he wrote and received, but they also afford glimpses of Beethoven as a child, a humanist, a devoted friend and an admirer of Haydn. We encounter him in different moods - ardent, melancholy, angry, devotedly loyal, and in love. Unexpected sides of the composer are revealed: we are startled to learn about his battle for guardianship of his nephew or devastated by his response to his deafness.

Hundreds of these letters have survived. They provide astonishingly detailed information about Beethoven's life from his childhood to his death.

The documentary will also be composed of interviews with the greatest specialists on Beethoven's life and work, filmed rehearsals and concerts of his music, and production footage of the places that encapsulate his life.

As regards the correspondence, we will select the letters we feel will best serve the dramatic construction and help move the narrative forward. They will be accompanied by the music Beethoven composed in the various periods, and illustrated by Olivier Patté's drawings at differing points in the composer's life.

The letters and the music will work together in harmony to tell the story of Beethoven's extraordinary life and creative output and depict his astounding vitality - "une force qui va" (a moving force), to borrow Victor Hugo's phrase (in the play *Hernani*). That force has to be embodied by the direction - by the tempo of the editing, the drawings we will use to illustrate the correspondence and of course, above all, by the music.

THE DOCUMENTARY

Beethoven's childhood in Bonn (1770-1792)

We will use letters from Beethoven's loyal friend Wegeler, who met him when he was 12, to illustrate the first phase of the composer's life. They tell us about his beloved grandfather, his teachers and his first loves - and his relationship with his father, a strict disciplinarian who taught him music from the age of five: "His father forced him to do musical exercises, during which little Ludwig would often be in tears."



The letters reveal how Beethoven made the acquaintance of the Breuning family - a widowed mother and her four children - who were to play an important part in his artistic development. Wegeler writes: "An atmosphere of easy good manners prevailed in that household ... He was soon treated like one of the children of the family and spent not only most of his days there but also often his nights. There, he felt free."

The composer's beginnings in Vienna (1792-1802)

During his years in Vienna, Beethoven was still training as a composer, notably by working alongside Haydn, but it was during this period that he composed his first piano sonatas and symphonies. At 22, he was already beginning to win recognition.

Beethoven's so-called "heroic" period (1802-1812), named after his *Eroica Symphony*, marked the beginning of a period of intense activity, during which he composed hundreds of his best-known works. Beethoven himself writes of his *Sixth Symphony*: "The *Pastoral Symphony* is not a picture. In it are expressed in differing shades the impressions the countryside makes on one."

The *Pastoral Symphony* will allow us to reflect on Beethoven's love of nature: "No man could love the countryside more than I do."

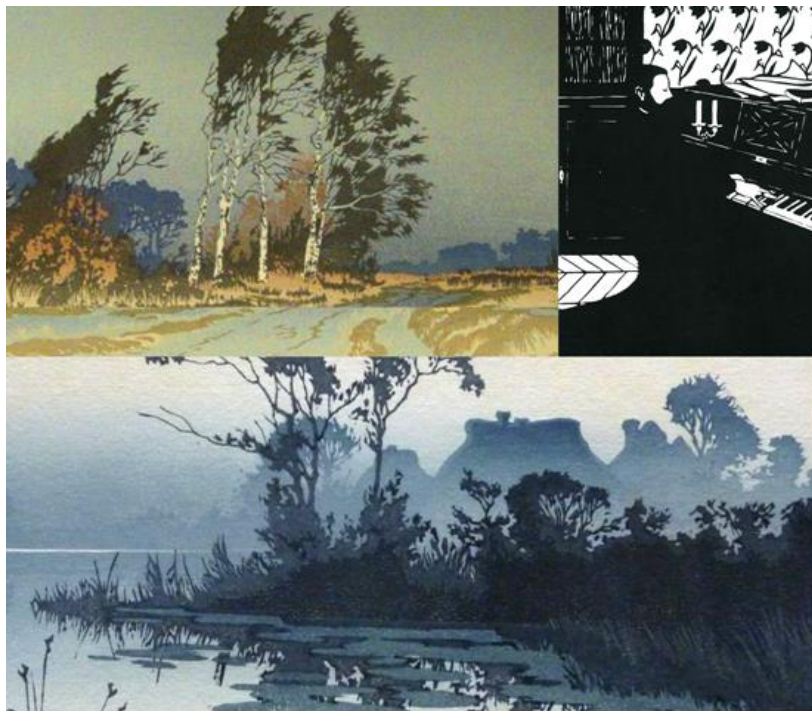
In the section about Beethoven in love, we will hear the *Moonlight Sonata*, which he dedicated to Giulietta Guicciardi, as he confides to a friend that he has fallen in love with the young countess. It was around this time that Beethoven wrote the letter to "the immortal beloved" that was found after his death - a letter that conveys how passionately he loved the woman it was addressed to and how much he suffered as a result of that love.



Beethoven's last years (1812-1827)

The last years of Beethoven's life were a sombre period, made painful by illness, his brother's death and lack of inspiration. Although he threw his remaining energy into his guardianship of his nephew Karl, that too was to be cause for suffering, when Karl attempted to commit suicide several years later.

In one of his frequent bouts of illness, Beethoven wrote to a friend: "Now I know what it feels like to get closer to the grave each day, without music."



But inspiration eventually returned to him in Mödling, whose enchanted landscapes he extols, and he was able to write the stupendous *Hammerklavier*. "Now that I know how to write ... here is a sonata that will give pianists plenty to do when it is played in 50 years' time."

It was also during these years that he composed the *Missa solemnis*, the last three piano sonatas and completed the *Ninth Symphony* with the towering "Ode to Joy".

He wrote his five last quartets, which were far ahead of their time and are seen as his musical testament, shortly before he died on 26 March 1827.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The music

The presence of the great conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim will act as the narrative thread of the documentary. He has conducted Beethoven's greatest works and has made recordings of all his piano sonatas. We will film him using two cameras, one on a stand, taking in the maestro and the piano, the other on a steadicam to enable us to follow his movements when he demonstrates what he is saying on the piano. He will guide us through the labyrinth of the score.

We will film him both in rehearsals with his orchestra and in concert. We will show him rehearsing the *Ninth Symphony* and the *Triple Concerto* (with Yo Yo Ma and Anne-Sophie Mutter) at the Philharmonic. These sequences, in which we will get up close to the music and the score, will be the beating heart of the documentary. We will use the same set-up to film the other musicians featured in the documentary. We will also use archive footage from famous films of performances for works that we cannot film ourselves.

Drawings

We will use drawings to illustrate the correspondence and give visual form to our telling of Beethoven's life. The illustrator Olivier Patté has already demonstrated his talent for creating distinctive atmospheres. His previous work includes the animations for ARTE's documentary series *Les Routes de l'esclavage* (*Slavery Routes*). Drawing on engravings by great Romantic and post-Romantic artists such as Gustave Doré, Felix Vallotton, Hugo Henneberg and Oskar Dröge for inspiration, he will create images to accompany Beethoven's correspondence and writings. His illustrations will combine a strong Romantic influence suited to the period, in which natural elements such as the sea, the wind and the forest play an important part, with sensitive renderings of interiors and private scenes. Bold strokes and vibrant colours will conjure up Beethoven's vitality and creative power.

As well as illustrating the content of the letters, attuning us to Beethoven's perceptions and embodying his viewpoint, the drawings will show us Beethoven as a person, showing us his inner thoughts. They will bring us closer to him, allow us to feel his passion, experience his music from within and share the

anguish of a man walled in by his deafness, who complains to his friend Wegeler of his "wretched existence". All the illustrated sequences will use the visual language of engravings, but there will be clear differences between them, and the style will vary in the course of the film, with aspects such as colour and thickness of strokes changing to reflect differing moods. Shifts between production or archive footage (sequences showing concerts, rehearsals, paintings and sculptures) and drawings will be fluid, so that the drawings feel like extensions of the filmed sequences rather than interruptions.

The drawings will not be static. We will use a number of techniques to animate them, such as switching drawings when a protagonist changes position (e.g. turns their head or raises their hand) or the weather changes (e.g. the sky turns dark or a squall blows up), or altering colours (to illustrate deafness, the colours of a drawing will suddenly go pale or turn to shades of grey before disappearing entirely). Another way of bringing the drawings to life is by creating a specific sound identity for each of them - natural elements such as wind or rain for exteriors and piano music, the sound of footsteps on floorboards or hooves on paving-stones for urban settings, and so on.

Voices

We will use a female narrator to contrast with the voice of the actor who will read Beethoven's writings.

People featured

Yo Yo Ma, cellist

Anne-Sophie Mutter, violinist

The Modigliani Quartet

Nike Wagner, who is the great-granddaughter of Richard Wagner and has been the Director of the Beethovenfest in Bonn since 2014.

Elizabeth Brisson, one of the greatest authorities on Beethoven's life and work, and the author of several books about him.



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