

# PRELUDE

DECEMBER 2023 • MASTERWORKS #4



HARTFORD  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA

## Beethoven 5+5 December 8 – 10, 2023

While Beethoven was an undisputed musical genius, he had a reputation for being disagreeable, explosive, anti-social, over-bearing and utterly lacking in personal hygiene.<sup>i</sup> He had tempestuous explosions with almost everyone he encountered, and he destroyed relationships by provoking raging quarrels. Even those who tolerated the extremes in his behavior called him “half crazy” and reported that when enraged “he became like a wild animal.”<sup>ii</sup> In this issue of Prelude, we go beyond the music to examine Beethoven’s personal life, and the identity of his mysterious “Eternal Beloved.”



Beethoven

From an early age, Beethoven’s father, Johann, pushed his son to follow in the footsteps of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, twelve years older than Ludwig.<sup>iii</sup> Knowing that Mozart gave his first public performance at age seven, Johann arranged public performances for Ludwig. The child was eight years old, but to compete with Mozart, Johann touted his son as a “six-year-old wunderkind,” causing Ludwig to be confused as to his own age and birthdate throughout most of his life.<sup>iv</sup> Ludwig demonstrated precocious talent from a young age, so Johann’s insistence that the child become a musician was not unreasonable.<sup>v</sup> But Johann’s vision for his son took the form of horrific abuse.

Johann, a confirmed alcoholic, routinely returned home late at night, with friends from various bars, and awakened his young son to perform for their entertainment.<sup>vi</sup> Struggling to please his father, Ludwig stood on a stool to reach the keys of the pianoforte, while Johann beat his son for every missed note.<sup>vii</sup> The torment continued until dawn, as Johann demanded that his anguished child begin again, over and over, until the piece was performed to

his satisfaction, or until Johann gave up, out of sheer exhaustion.<sup>viii</sup>

Ludwig’s harsh childhood impacted his adult relationships and his sense of self for the duration of his life.<sup>ix</sup> Young Beethoven was raised in an unrelenting state of fear and anxiety. He learned negative behaviors from a young age, and his destructive actions only increased as he grew older.<sup>x</sup> The composer’s genius gave him a sense of purpose, but while he aspired for greatness and beauty, nothing short of perfection was acceptable to him.<sup>xi</sup> The unattainable image of perfection was projected onto the women he fell in love with, who could never live up to his ideal, and who were far above his social station, notwithstanding his musical achievements and fame.<sup>xii</sup> Beethoven never married.

After the composer’s death in 1827, Beethoven’s secretary, Anton Schindler, and two other friends hunted through his apartment, in search of some bank bonds he had bequeathed to his nephew, Karl.<sup>xiii</sup> In a small drawer, the friends found a document that has come to be known as the Heiligenstadt Testament, in which Beethoven, in 1802, described his agonizing battle with deafness, and a ten-page love letter, addressed to a woman he called his “Eternal Beloved” (sometimes translated as “Immortal Beloved.”)<sup>xiv</sup> A portion of Beethoven’s passionate letter reads as follows:

MASTERWORKS  
SPONSORS

The Edward C. & Ann T.  
**ROBERTS**  
FOUNDATION

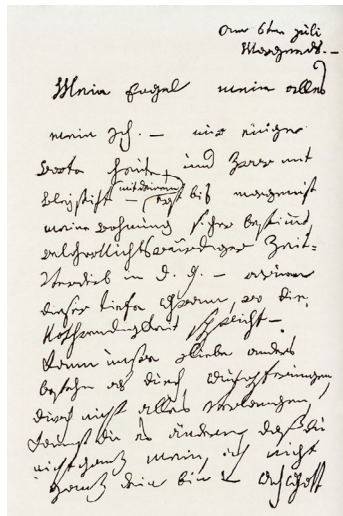
The Elizabeth M. and Harriette  
M. Landon Foundation

**My angel, my all, my own self...**

**Can you change the fact that you are not entirely mine, I not entirely yours? .... While still in bed my thoughts rush to you, my Eternal Beloved, sometimes joyful, other times sadly, waiting to see whether Fate will listen to us...**

**You – my love – my all – farewell – oh go on loving me – never doubt the most faithful heart of your beloved.**

**L  
Ever thine.  
Ever mine.  
Ever us.<sup>xv</sup>**



Immortal Beloved Letter

Beethoven scholars have spent nearly 200 years trying to determine the identity of his “Eternal Beloved.”<sup>xvi</sup> The letter was dated July 6, without a year, and was likely written over the span of two days in 1812.<sup>xvii</sup>

Over the last 30 to 40 years, musicologists analyzed and dated the actual paper of the letter and compared Beethoven’s diary with his appointment calendar to determine his whereabouts at specific points in time.<sup>xviii</sup> Using the date of the letter and Beethoven’s calendars, it has been determined that the letter likely was written to a woman he met in Prague in July of 1812.<sup>xix</sup> In trying to learn the identity of Beethoven’s “Eternal Beloved”, scholars have focused on a

number of his love interests. Four possibilities are explored below.

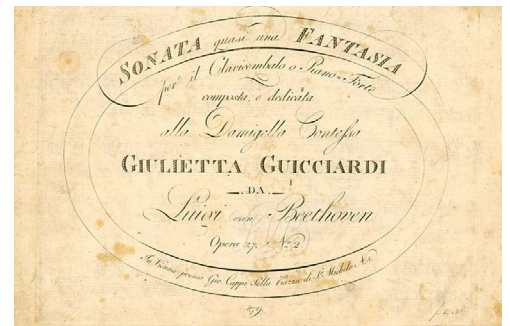
**Josephine Brunsvik** (1779-1821) first met Beethoven in 1799, when Josephine’s mother took her and her sister, Therese, to Vienna.<sup>xx</sup> Therese was an excellent pianist,



Josephine Brunsvik

fluent in five languages, and her brother, Franz, was a close friend to Beethoven. Beethoven dedicated his Piano Sonata in F sharp major Op 78 to Therese, but she was not interested in a physical relationship.<sup>xxi</sup> Her younger sister, Josephine, had married at age 20, but in 1804, after just five years of marriage, Josephine was widowed.<sup>xxii</sup> Over a century later, after World War II, 13 love letters that Beethoven wrote to Josephine were discovered for the first time.<sup>xxiii</sup> The letters reveal Beethoven’s love for Josephine and in one, he suggested a physical relationship, which she refused.<sup>xxiv</sup> He composed the song, *An die Hoffnung [To Hope] Op 32* for Josephine in 1805, but she rejected his attentions and in 1810, married Count Stackelberg, ending Beethoven’s hopes.<sup>xxv</sup> Her marriage was disastrous and Josephine expressed the intention of going to Prague as Stackelberg took the couple’s children back to Estonia.<sup>xxvi</sup> There is evidence that Beethoven was in Prague at the same time, but there is no evidence that they met even though the time line roughly matches the date of the “Eternal Beloved” letter. Roughly nine months later, in April of 1813, Josephine gave birth to a daughter, Minona, and while Josephine asserted that Beethoven was the father, there is nothing to verify her claims. Moreover, there is no compelling proof that she was in Prague in 1812.

After Josephine’s first marriage in 1799, Beethoven took on a new pupil, **Countess Julie “Giulietta” Guicciardi**.<sup>xxvii</sup> Julie was 18 when she became Beethoven’s pupil in 1801.<sup>xxviii</sup> Beethoven quickly fell in love with her, and in a letter to his friend, Franz Wegeler, he referred to Julie as his “dear enchanting girl.”<sup>xxix</sup> While he confided his desire to propose marriage,



Moonlight Sonata

Beethoven also knew that Julie, from an aristocratic family, was far beyond his social standing.<sup>xxx</sup> Beethoven’s Piano Sonata No. 2, Op 27, later called the *Moonlight Sonata*, was written in 1801, published

in March of 1802, and was dedicated to Julie, under the name “Guilietta.”<sup>xxxvi</sup>

In November of 1803, Julie married Count Wenzel Robert von Gallenberg, a composer of modest talent, and moved to Naples.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Her life intersected with Beethoven’s in 1822 when Julie and her husband moved back to Vienna, because Gallenberg had secured a position at Theater am Kärntnertor.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

This theater was important for one particular event: it housed the 1824 premiere of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. While it is romantic to think that Julie was in attendance, moved by Beethoven’s music and the soaring “Ode to Joy,” there is no evidence that she was there. But we do know that Beethoven had



Giuliett Portrait Miniature

not forgotten about her. Beethoven reportedly told his secretary, Anton Schindler, that Julie loved him more than her husband, and that after their wedding, she’d come to him for attention and affection.<sup>xxxix</sup> Even more compelling evidence of Beethoven’s adoration of Julie is the fact that when the “Eternal Beloved” letter was found in Beethoven’s desk after his death, a small portrait miniature with an image believed to be Julie Guicciardi, was found alongside.<sup>xl</sup> But nothing places her in Prague in 1812.

Beethoven also fell in love with **Therese Malfatti**, a cousin to one of Beethoven’s friends, and who, like Julie Guicciardi, was one of his piano students.<sup>xli</sup>

He contemplated proposing marriage to her, but his plans never materialized.<sup>xlii</sup> In 1810, Beethoven was invited to attend a very extravagant party given by



Therese Malfatti

her parents and was to perform a piano composition that he had composed for Therese.<sup>xliii</sup> Unfortunately, Beethoven was so drunk that he could not perform the piece, let alone continue with his plans to propose marriage.<sup>xliiii</sup> Therese’s wealthy parents were appalled. Therese had him write her name on the title page of the piece, and his nearly illegible scribble read, *Für Therese*.<sup>xli</sup> Upon Therese’s death in 1851, the composition was found among her belongings.<sup>xli</sup> A music publisher recognized the scrawled writing as Beethoven’s and decided to publish it. While it was published under the title *Bagatelle*, the publisher misread the dedication and transcribed it as *Für Elise*, and that has remained the title of one of the most well-known piano compositions in the world.<sup>xliii</sup> As Beethoven’s relationship with Therese ended in 1810, it is unlikely that she was the object of his letter, written two years later, in 1812.

While there is no definitive proof, Beethoven scholars seem to agree that the most likely choice for Beethoven’s “Eternal Beloved” is **Antonie Brentano**.<sup>xliiii</sup> Antonie, the daughter of a diplomat, was raised in Vienna, and her father arranged her marriage to Franz Brentano, a wealthy Frankfurt merchant 15 years her senior.<sup>xliiii</sup> A letter she wrote to a family member confirms that she met Beethoven in 1811, likely through an introduction from her husband’s half-sister, Bettina, who already knew the composer.<sup>xliiii</sup>



Antonie Brentano

Antonie was deeply involved with the arts. She suffered frequent bouts of illness, and to illustrate the extent of their friendship and his desire to comfort Antonie, Beethoven often went to her home to play piano in the anteroom outside her bedroom.<sup>xliiii</sup>

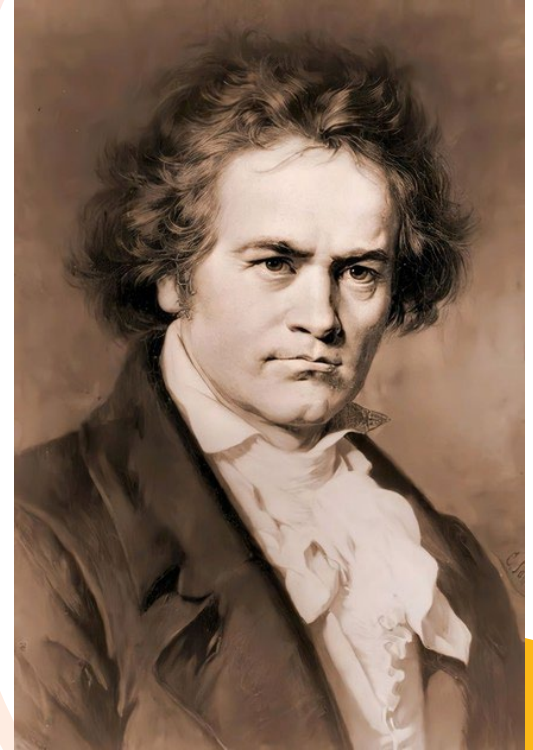
Antonie arrived in Prague on July 3, 1812, with her husband and children, en route to the spa village of

Karlsbad.<sup>xlvii</sup> Beethoven had arrived in Prague two days earlier, as he travelled to Karlsbad.<sup>xlviii</sup> The romantic affair likely occurred on July 3<sup>rd</sup> in Prague.<sup>xlix</sup> Beethoven saw Antonie in Karlsbad in the weeks following, but there is no evidence that he saw her ever again after that.<sup>1</sup> By the time he returned to Vienna, Antonie and her family had returned to Frankfurt.<sup>li</sup>

Antonie gave birth to her last child, a son named Karl Josef, on March 8, 1813, roughly nine months after the presumed July affair.<sup>lii</sup> When he was four years old, the child became gravely ill and as a result, he suffered from limited physical movement and reduced mental capacity.<sup>liii</sup> Susan Lund, a British Beethoven scholar, and the author of *Beethoven: Life of an Artist*,<sup>liv</sup> is convinced that Karl Josef was Beethoven's child.<sup>lv</sup> She further advanced the theory that Beethoven's great work, *Missa Solemnis*, was written in response to his own grief upon his separation from a secret and stricken child, and as a consolation to the boy's mother, his beloved, a devout Catholic who would appreciate a religious work composed to ease her suffering.<sup>lvi</sup>

Beethoven dedicated several works to Antonie, most notably his *Diabelli Variations Op 120*.<sup>lvii</sup> There is also evidence that he intended to dedicate his two final piano sonatas to her as well, and his song cycle, *An die ferne Geliebte [To the Distant Beloved]*, was almost certainly written with her in mind.<sup>lviii</sup>

Antonie long outlived Beethoven, and upon hearing of Beethoven's death, she wrote a multi-page list of her friends who had passed. The first entry on her list read, "Beethoven, 26 March 1827."<sup>lix</sup> We will never know if she ever received a copy of the letter that we now believe was intended for her.



Beethoven

## JOIN US!

**Please join the HSO** on December 8 - 10, 2023, to hear our guest conductor, Gerard Schwarz, conduct the Hartford Symphony Orchestra in a Beethoven "double header" that will include Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5, Op 73 (*The Emperor*) with soloist Orion Weiss, and Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, Op. 67, plus *Four Hymns Without Words* by composer Adolphus Hailstock.

**Did you borrow this Prelude? Get your own free copy! Whether you're a ticket buyer, donor, curious about the music, or know someone who is, just send an email to [dshulansky@hartfordsymphony.org](mailto:dshulansky@hartfordsymphony.org) We'll make sure you receive Prelude by email, in advance of each HSO Masterworks concert!**

## Want to learn more about the music dedicated to the women in Beethoven's life? If so, we hope you will explore some of our recommendations:

Listen to the simple but beautiful *Für Elise*, dedicated to Therese Malfatti, performed by Alice Sara Ott, on a Deutsche Grammophone recording:

[Alice Sara Ott – Beethoven: Für Elise, WoO 59 - YouTube](#)

Enjoy the *Moonlight Sonata*, Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 14, Op. 27, dedicated to Julie "Giulietta" Guicciardi, performed by Valentina Lisitsa:

[Beethoven Sonata # 14 "Moonlight" Op. 27 No. 2 Valentina Lisitsa - YouTube](#)

Enjoy Dora Petković's performance of Piano Sonata No. 24 in F sharp major, Op 78, dedicated to Therese Brunsvik:

[Beethoven - Piano Sonata F sharp major op. 78 - Dora Petković - piano - YouTube](#)

Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations Op 120*, dedicated to Antonie Brentano, may be enjoyed here, in a performance by Alfred Brendel. The piece consists of 33 variations on a waltz by Anton Diabelli:

[Beethoven Diabelli Variations Op 120 Alfred Brendel piano - YouTube](#)

If you are truly ambitious, here is a complete recording of *Missa Solemnis*, believed to have been written to console Antonie Brentano, performed by the Vienna Chorus and the Frankfurt Radio Symphony:

[Beethoven: Missa solemnis - hr-Sinfonieorchester - Wiener Singverein - Andrés Orozco-Estrada - YouTube](#)

**Want proof of Beethoven's explosive passions?** Just listen to his Piano Sonata No. 23, Op. 57, known as the *Appassionata*. A performance of the third and final movement by Lang Lang in December of 2019 may be watched here:

[Beethoven: "Appassionata" Piano Sonata No. 23, Op 57 - III. Allegro ma non troppo - YouTube](#)

## Looking for more about Beethoven's Beloved? Explore these links:

Susan Lund's book is referenced here:

[Beethoven: Life of an Artist eBook : Lund, Susan: Amazon.co.uk: Kindle Store.](#)

A new book, *Immortal*, written by Jessica Duchen and published in 2020, also ponders the identity of Beethoven's mystery woman, and is referenced here:

[Immortal: Amazon.co.uk: Jessica Duchen: 9781789651157: Books](#)

The 1995 movie, *Immortal Beloved*, with Gary Oldman as Beethoven, theorizes that the composer's beloved was his sister-in-law, Joanna, but musicologists do not believe the accuracy of the claim. The movie may be viewed here:

[Watch Immortal Beloved | Prime Video \(amazon.com\)](#)



## WONDERING HOW THE MUSIC OF OUR FEATURED CONCERT WILL SOUND? Try HSO'S LISTENING GUIDE, with links to the pieces you'll hear on our concert stage – and more!

Enjoy this beautiful performance of Beethoven's Concerto No. 5 by renowned soloist Maurizio Pollini, with the Sinfónica de Galicia, conducted by the soloist's son, Daniele Pollini:

[Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 5 "Emperor" Op. 73 - Daniele & Maurizio Pollini - Sinfónica de Galicia - YouTube](#)

Here is the Vienna Philharmonic, in a performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, conducted by Leonard Bernstein:

[Ludwig van Beethoven Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67 - Leonard Bernstein - YouTube](#)

# CASEY'S CLASSICS

Want the best recordings of the pieces you'll experience on the concert program? **Coleman Casey**, HSO's dear friend, Director Emeritus and beloved in-house audiophile, offers his recording recommendations of selections featured in our upcoming Masterworks Concert.

Beethoven's **Piano Concerto # 5 ("Emperor")** is performed with tremendous dignity and fantastic intellectual rigor by Claudio Arrau and the Dresden Staatskapelle under the direction of Colin Davis (DECCA).

Beethoven's **Symphony #5** has tremendous energy and is played with perfection of ensemble by George Szell and the Cleveland Orchestra (SONY).



Beethoven

# REFERENCES

- i [Beethoven as a Child and His Father's Alcoholism - Articles by MagellanTV](#)
- ii [In a Major and Minor Mood Beethoven's Manic Depression | HealthyPlace](#)
- iii [Beethoven as a Child and His Father's Alcoholism - Articles by MagellanTV](#)
- iv Ibid
- v Ibid
- vi Ibid
- vii [The Lifelong Suffering of a Genius: Beethoven's Personal Struggle | Aspen Music Festival And School](#)
- viii [Beethoven as a Child and His Father's Alcoholism - Articles by MagellanTV](#)
- ix [The Lifelong Suffering of a Genius: Beethoven's Personal Struggle | Aspen Music Festival And School](#)
- x Ibid
- xi Ibid
- xii Ibid
- xiii [Who Was Beethoven's 'Immortal Beloved'? \(biography.com\)](#)
- xiv Ibid
- xv Ibid
- xvi Ibid
- xvii Ibid
- xviii [The Two Women Who Could Be Beethoven's 'Immortal Beloved' | Colorado Public Radio \(cpr.org\)](#)
- xix Ibid
- xx [Who Was Beethoven's 'Immortal Beloved'? \(biography.com\)](#)
- xxi Ibid
- xxii [Josephine Brunsvik \(1779-1821\): Beethoven's great love - Classic FM](#)
- xxiii Ibid
- xxiv [Who Was Beethoven's 'Immortal Beloved'? \(biography.com\)](#)
- xxv [Josephine Brunsvik \(1779-1821\): Beethoven's great love - Classic FM](#)
- xxvi Ibid
- xxvii [The Woman at the Heart of Beethoven's 'Moonlight' Sonata - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)
- xxviii Ibid
- xxix Ibid
- xxx Ibid
- xxxi Ibid
- xxxii Ibid
- xxxiii Ibid
- xxxiv Ibid
- xxxv Ibid
- xxxvi [Therese Malfatti \(1792-1851\) and Beethoven's Für Elise - Classic FM](#)
- xxxvii [Who Was Beethoven's 'Immortal Beloved'? \(biography.com\)](#)
- xxxviii [Therese Malfatti \(1792-1851\) and Beethoven's Für Elise - Classic FM](#)
- xxxix Ibid
- xl Ibid
- xli Ibid
- xlii Ibid
- xliii [Antonie Brentano \(1780 - 1869\): Beethoven's Eternally Beloved - Classic FM](#)
- xliv Ibid
- xlv Ibid
- xlvi Ibid
- xlvii Ibid
- xlviii Ibid
- xlix Ibid
- l Ibid
- li Ibid
- lii [Did Beethoven's love for married aristocrat and a doomed son colour his darkest work? | Ludwig van Beethoven | The Guardian](#)
- liii Ibid
- liv Susan Lund's book may be viewed here: [Beethoven: Life of an Artist eBook : Lund, Susan: Amazon.co.uk: Kindle Store.](#)
- lv [Did Beethoven's love for married aristocrat and a doomed son colour his darkest work? | Ludwig van Beethoven | The Guardian](#)
- lvi Ibid
- lvii [Antonie Brentano \(1780 - 1869\): Beethoven's Eternally Beloved - Classic FM](#)
- lviii Ibid
- lix Ibid