

Peter Medhurst evaluates Beethoven on the 250th anniversary of the composer's birth.

A **Special Interest Day (SID)** organised by The Arts Society East Grinstead on 10 February 2021 as a Zoom Webinar and made available to subscribers from The Arts Society Turners Hill. The fee per subscriber was a very modest £5.00, and worth every penny.

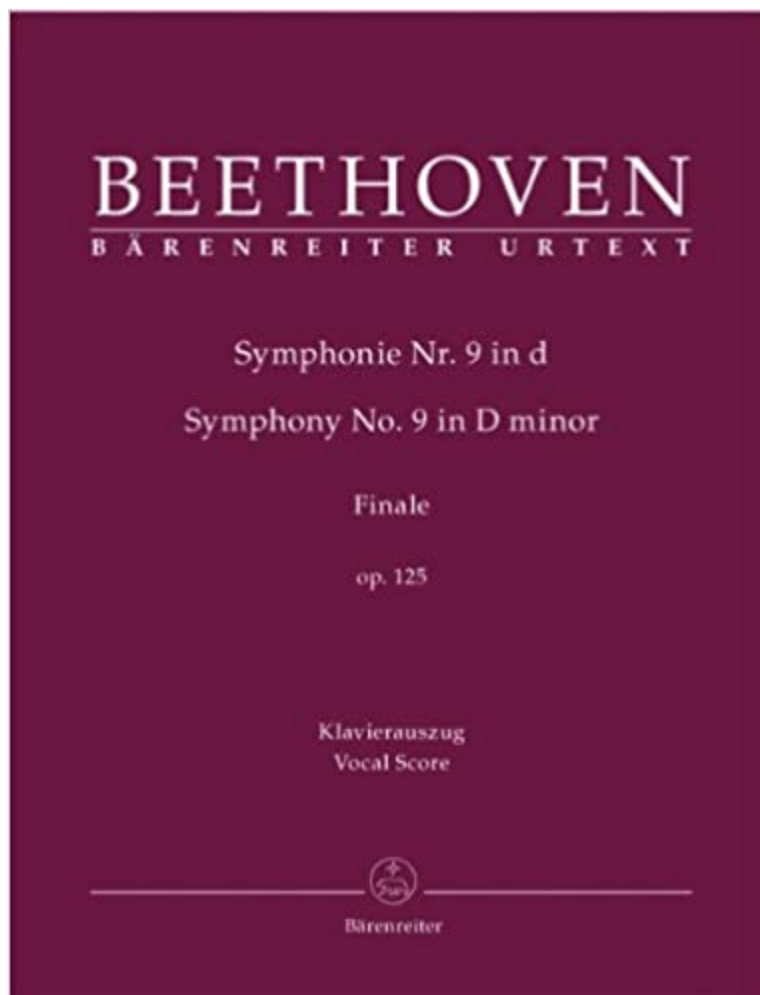


Peter Medhurst is an accomplished musicologist and concert performer, as a singer and pianist. His versatile demonstrations are always accompanied by lucid dialogue. Many of us are familiar with his presentations on stage and now we welcomed him to the Zoom world to tackle the very challenging topic of Ludwig van Beethoven, 1770 – 1827.



Beethoven is widely seen as the fiery rebel, initially supportive of the revolutionary politics of the times in which he lived, though perhaps unhappy in love and, eventually, in health. Peter introduced Beethoven by outlining the classical training he had received in the wake of the 18th century greats: Bach, Mozart and Haydn, notably by his father and then his teacher Gottlob Neeff (1748-1798) which enabled him to understand where he could move the previous rigidities forward to thrill audiences. The early piano and violin sonatas were crucial in exploring these pathways.





The question that obviously arises is which of Beethoven's works is the greatest? Peter was inclined to see the composer's career as a progression through three stages, only the last of which was entrusted to symphonies, the harmonies and rhythms of which had been explored in earlier works for piano and for piano and violin sonatas. His view of symphonies was that no. 5 was the greatest composition, not the 9th (the most famous but probably the most pleasing to the public, given that he had by then established his audience and reputation, who were eager to anticipate stunning advances).

Peter volunteered the view that Beethoven was the greatest composer who ever lived.

Questions focussed on Beethoven's alleged deafness and on Peter's fabulous Steinway piano. Which of us wouldn't want one of those and indeed the Music Room to go with it?