

Beethoven's 250th Birthday Music Room Objects



Portrait of Beethoven (altered a bit for the festivities). This year we are celebrating the 250th birthday of the enduringly popular composer [Ludwig van Beethoven](#) who was born around December 17, 1770 (his baptism date).

Beethoven never married, but there has been much speculation about whom he wrote the piece *Für Elise*. Two portraits on the wall are of women who are possible “candidates.”



Portrait of Elisabeth Röckel. “According to a 2010 study by Klaus Martin Kopitz, there is evidence that the piece was written for the 17-year-old German soprano singer [Elisabeth Röckel](#) (1793–1883)... who played Florestan in the 1806 revival of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*. "Elise", as she was called by a parish priest (later she called herself "Betty"), had been a friend of Beethoven's since 1808, who, according to Kopitz, perhaps wanted to marry her.” (from Wikipedia's [Für Elise](#) entry)



Portrait of Therese Malfatti. “Max Unger suggested that Ludwig Nohl may have transcribed the title incorrectly and the original work may have been named "Für Therese",^[10] a reference to [Therese Malfatti von Rohrenbach zu Dezza](#) (1792–1851). She was a friend and student of Beethoven's to whom he supposedly proposed in 1810.” (from Wikipedia's [Für Elise](#) entry)



Portrait of Daniel Steibelt. Steibelt was one of Europe's most renowned piano virtuosos, competed against Beethoven in an improvisation contest. “Steibelt, realising he was not only being comprehensively outplayed but humiliated, strode out of the room. Prince Lobkowitz hurried after him, returning a few moments later to say Steibelt had said he would never again set foot in Vienna as long as Beethoven lived there.” (from [The man who dared to challenge Beethoven to a musical duel in Vienna](#))



Beethoven's Broadwood fortepiano. The piano was an [evolving instrument](#) during Beethoven's life and he was a virtuoso pianist. One of his favorites was a Broadwood fortepiano built in 1817 which was a gift from English piano maker Thomas Broadwood. It inspired him to compose his most famous piece for solo piano, the 'Hammerklavier' Sonata. (from [Listen to Beethoven epic 'Hammerklavier' Sonata, played on the composer's own piano](#))



Ear Trumpet. “Beethoven began to lose his hearing in 1798. “If I belonged to any other profession, it would be easier,” he told a friend, “but in my profession it is a frightful state.” Between 1812 and 1816, he tried ear trumpets, with little success.” But there is evidence he never went completely deaf. (from ['Deaf' genius Beethoven was able to hear his final symphony after all](#))



Chamber pot. “Ludwig van Beethoven was an often unpleasant and always unhappy man, notoriously unkempt and suffering from chronic diarrhea, liver disease and depression. He lived in squalor, was once observed keeping an unemptied chamber pot under his piano.” (from [The Difficult Life of Ludwig](#))



Music handwritten by Beethoven. “Beethoven, famous for his messy (and at times indecipherable) sketches, planned out much of his work on leaves of paper and sketch books - resulting in a chaotic mess for scholars to untangle.” (from [What did the great composers' handwriting look like?](#))



Violin. While Beethoven was a brilliant pianist, he was a mediocre violinist who was probably unable to play his own violin concertos. (from [Did Beethoven Play Violin?](#))



Rat. “Plagued by multiple diseases throughout his life, the worst to afflict Beethoven was hearing loss. He suffered through tinnitus, a ringing in the ears, for years, and though the actual cause of his hearing loss is unknown, stories attribute it to either a childhood disease of some sort or typhus caught from a rat’s flea.” (from [5 Things You May Not Know About Beethoven](#))



Figurine of a yellowhammer bird. “Beethoven's student, [Carl Czerny](#), and biographer [Anton Schindler](#), both suggested that the composer got the idea for the first four notes of [his 5th symphony](#) from the yellowhammer's call, although more likely the opening of the [4th Piano Concerto](#) was actually the work in question.^{[42][43]} Beethoven also used the yellowhammer theme in two [piano sonatas](#), [no. 21 in C major](#) (the "Waldstein", Op.53) and [No. 23 in F minor](#) (the "Appassionata", Op.57).” (from Wikipedia’s [Yellowhammer](#) entry)



Bust of Beethoven. Because of Beethoven’s [enduring popularity](#), there have been many tributes to him. “Today, 3D representations in the form of busts and even action figures are widely available. The ubiquity of Beethoven imagery reflects his status as a true icon, one of a handful of creative personalities whose achievements have become bywords for the supreme capacities of the human spirit.” (from [Beethoven At 250: An Icon At Risk Of Overexposure?](#))



Poodle. When Beethoven was young, he composed a piece called "Elegy on the Death of a Poodle" (*Elegie auf den Tod eines Pudels*). The exact poodle he was referencing is unknown. (from [Listening to Beethoven #17 – Elegie auf den Tod eines Pudels](#))