



Schweizer Radio
und Fernsehen



Roll Over Beethoven

A Sitcom from Old Vienna in Nine Acts

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Co-Production:	SRF/BR 2020

Length: 56:35

Synopsis:

Ludwig van Beethoven has moved from Bonn to Vienna. The democratically minded free spirit from the Rhineland promptly gets into conflict with the reality of the imperial and royal monarchy, as well as with his fellow human beings' expectations.

As the first freelance artist in history, he struggles to deal with noble patrons, annoying social obligations, and the rush of mostly male groupies. A stubborn Swiss dilettante in search of a teacher in musical composition poses a recurring point of irritation.

Thus, the scrupulous composer is finding it very hard to put some decent notes on paper while being overrun with the hustle and bustle of the multinational imperial capital. And it could be so easy: all the poor man wants is some peace and quiet.

Dramatis personae:

Christoph Maria Herbst	Ludwig
Sandra Kreisler	Narrator
Anikó Donáth	Frau Schnaps, housekeeper
Jürg Kienberger	Schnyder, an adept
Helmut Berger	Archduke Rudolph, called Rainer
Gottfried Breitfuss	Emperor Franz / Schuppanzigh
Mona Petri	Marie Bigot / Johanna van Beethoven / Admirer
Martin Ostermeier	Grillparzer
Stefan Merki	Goethe / Landlord
Barbara Falter	Kaspar van Beethoven
Raphael Clamer	Rossini / Monsieur Bigot
Barbara Horvath	Nanette Streicher

Prelude.

Place: Nowhere

Dramatis personae: Marie

MUSIC. Sonata No. 28, A major, op. 101. I. Slow and longingly. 0'55

MARIE

Highly esteemed ladies and gentlemen! The authors would like to show you, the educated audience, who put on a solemn face when presented with Beethoven, how the great composer dealt with his everyday life. If you want to understand Beethoven, it is important to know that he spent his life sitting in the lap of Viennese aristocracy, who are willing to endure the minion only as long as he serves as a distraction, but will not hesitate to drop him as soon as he turns uncomfortable. At the time, noble bearing and snobbery saturated the air in Austria's atmosphere like a chemical particle that hardly anyone was able to avoid.

Beethoven always strived for openness and freedom, albeit with mixed success. Allow us to remark that while the genius may understand how to be naughty, however, naughtiness should not necessarily be taken as an indication of genius, for which it is frequently mistaken these days.

**MUSIC. Sonata No. 31 A flat Major op. 110, II. Allegro molto
+ Our Cat had Kittens - "Das liebe Kätzchen" WoO158, 28**

SCHUPPANZIGH (**in broad Viennese dialect*)

Oh dear, now it's getting bad.

MUSIC. Reverse Piano Blackhole Reverb 0'35

NARRATOR

Roll Over Beethoven. A sitcom from old Vienna in nine acts.

1'35

Act One: Vienna Calling.

Place: at Rainer's place (large room)

Dramatis Personae: Narrator, Archduke Rudolph (called Rainer) (r), Ludwig (l)

Later: Schnyder (an adept), Emperor Franz I.

MUSIC. Practicing scales, voice over

1'11

NARRATOR

At the beginning of the 19th century, Vienna is the metropolis for the world of music. The people of Vienna are downright addicted to culture. At least that's what Ludwig was told.

Scale exercise turns discordant and wrong

RAINER

Master. Are you happy with my progress?

LUDWIG

It'll do for Vienna.

Rainer continues playing

NARRATOR

Every Thursday, Ludwig gives piano lessons to Archduke Rudolph of Austria. The archduke is the Emperor's brother. As well as Ludwig's most important patron. Each year, he transfers one thousand five hundred golden ducats to Ludwig. To show his gratitude, Ludwig calls him "Rainer". Rainer calls Ludwig "Master".

RAINER

Master.

LUDWIG

Rainer?

RAINER

Master. Vienna is not as bad as you keep claiming. There are many art connoisseurs here who really appreciate your music.

LUDWIG

Are you talking about those art connoisseurs who flee from the concert halls to the tavern because “schnitzel and wine” (**imitates Viennese dialect*) are more to their taste than my symphonies?

RAINER

As they say so beautifully: first comes the grub, then the chorales.

LUDWIG

Who says that?

RAINER

Well, you!

LUDWIG

Er... (*contemplates*) ... upon reflection, the saying isn't so dumb after all. It's actually even quite good.

RAINER

To be honest: It is not yours after all.

LUDWIG

To be honest, I do find it quite ridiculous.

MUSIC. Piano accent Cluster

RAINER

You will be giving a concert for the emperor and his court tomorrow ...

significant pause

LUDWIG *irritated*

So what?

RAINER

Do you know already what you are going to play?

LUDWIG

My new piano sonata. In it, I blast all formal, harmonic and other boundaries of the sonata to smithereens. BAM!

Bowling alley. Ninepin strike.

RAINER

Bam ... As you might be aware, my brother is rather partial to light entertainment.

LUDWIG

So?

RAINER

So how about a lovely Fantaisie?

LUDWIG

Hm.

RAINER

Or a pretty little song (**Austrian expression*)?

LUDWIG

A pretty little song?!

RAINER

I am sure you will find the "right" notes, no? Anyway, the concert will solidify your

reputation in our city.

LUDWIG (** Rhineland dialect*)

Yes, I am afraid so, too, Rainer.

**MUSIC. Kodaly Quartet. Haydn: String Quartet op. 76 No. 3 Kaiserquartett
("Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser")**

1'12

Place: Corridor in Ludwig's place (staircase)

Dramatis personae: Narrator, Schnyder (l), Ludwig (r)

Hasty footsteps coming up the stairs.

NARRATOR

The lesson is over. Ludwig runs up the 112 steps to his new apartment. He is hungry. Upstairs, another groupie is waiting for him. Male...

SCHNYDER (** Swiss German*)

Master!

NARRATOR

... Franz Xaver Schnyder of Wartensee.

SCHNYDER

My Beethoven!

LUDWIG (*irritated*)

I know my name.

SCHNYDER

I do wish so very much ...

LUDWIG

This Schnyder guy...

SCHNYDER

... to take lessons in composition with you!

LUDWIG

And I am so very much not taking on any more students, as you are well aware.

SCHNYDER

But, Herr Beethoven, I came to Vienna just because of you.

LUDWIG

Tough luck.

SCHNYDER (**Swiss German*)

Dammit! Couldn't you make a tiny exception? Would you be so kind? Please, if you don't mind. Please! Please! Please!

LUDWIG

No! No! I have only one ... I have only one ... listen to me! I have only one student left, and only because I can't ditch him, much as I'd like to. You should go home while still can. Vienna is like old chewing gum: No colour. No taste. Just sticky.

SCHNYDER

Is it really better elsewhere?

LUDWIG

In England! In England, they really appreciate culture! Every single person in London knows something, and knows it well. But the Viennese, all they know is how to talk about food and drink while singing and tinkling music of little consequence.

SCHNYDER (** Swiss German*)

So what now? Am I accepted?

LUDWIG

Nooo!

MUSIC. Haydn, as above

Place: The throne room

Dramatis personae: Narrator, Emperor (c), Ludwig (half-r), Rainer (l)

Voice-over: Expectant bustle

NARRATOR

The following day. Showtime. Ludwig enters the Imperial Halls. The teeming audience sits in a semicircle around the grand piano. The Emperor receives and asks Ludwig kindly to regale the royal society with his piano recital.

EMPEROR (** Austrian dialect*)

Go on then, you may commence playing a little. Please.

tentative applause

MUSIC. “O du lieber Augustin (*German folk song)” (played with one finger)

LUDWIG

Thank you. I must be on my way.

MUSIC. Piano played through guitar amp

0'05

Restiveness

NARRATOR

Emperor Franz is fuming. The last time he was humiliated like this was when Napoleon nicked the Netherlands from him. There is only one solution:

EMPEROR

Deportation! Deportation! Never again shall this German rascal touch Habsburg

ground! The nerve to play the “Augustin” for us ...

RAINER

But don't you see what Austria owes him?

EMPEROR

Whatever can you mean now?

RAINER

People are coming to Vienna from all over the world to see him. Half of the hotel industry is living off Beethoven. And once he is dead ...

sings 5th Symphony



... Beethoven busts, Beethoven pralines, Beethoven museum, Beethoven walk, Beethoven-podcasts!!! (* pronounced in Viennese dialect)

EMPEROR

Podcasts? Somehow I have the feeling you want to cheat me.

RAINER

I am your brother.

KAISER

That's why.

Nevermind. Let him stay in Vienna after all.

MUSIC. Haydn final

NARRATOR

And what about Ludwig? He is already in the pub having schnitzel and wine. After the first bottle, he doesn't think Vienna is so bad any more. After the second one, he has quite a laugh about that stupid day. After the third one he realizes: he never wants to leave this place again.

Music swells

MUSIC. Wien bleibt Wien (*Vienna will be Vienna*). Musical box 0'40

NARRATOR

Every year, the population of Vienna slaughters and consumes: 66.795 oxen, 2.133 cows, 75.092 calves, 47.000 sheep, 120.000 lambs, 71.800 pigs ... and the odd pizza. A big city has a big stomach.

In his heart of hearts, however, Ludwig longs for Paris. Because Paris has not just a big stomach, but also a big revolutionary. Hint: starts with an N and ends with Apoleon.

6'30

Act Two: You Say You Want A Revolution.

Place: Beethoven's apartment, later outside
Dramatis personae: housekeeper (c), Ludwig (r), Grillparzer (l), Narrator
Later: Marie (l), Monsieur Bigot (l)

MUSIC. Eroica on the piano through the wall. Interrupted repeatedly 1'03

Doorbell



Door opening

HOUSEKEEPER

Herr Grillparzer is here.

Door closes. Piano breaks off:

LUDWIG (* *Rhineland dialect*)

Come on in, Grillparzer! My dear old chap and verse-wrangler!

GRILLPARZER

Am I not disturbing you at composing?

LUDWIG

No, no, it's all safe inside my head. A glass of Veltliner?

GRILLPARZER (* *Austrian dialect*)

A wee glass, sure, why not?

Sound of uncorking, pouring

GRILLPARZER (**Austrian dialect*)

By the way, Ludwig, how about the music to my poem “Longing for Love”, which I gave you the other day?

LUDWIG

Love will have to wait for a little while longer. I am about to do something that will have to become the biggest thing that exists.

GRILLPARZER (*doubtful*)

You don't say. What can possibly be greater than a poem by Grillparzer?

LUDWIG

Revolution! The French showed us how: liberty, equality, fraternity.

GRILLPARZER

Come on, don't let the emperor hear that, or the emperor's brother ... your patron?!

LUDWIG

Those aristocrats are all dogs!

GRILLPARZER

However, they pay you quite decently, those aristocrats.

LUDWIG

They want you to work, and they pay like scroungers and not even the agreed fee. Blackguards and scallywags, the lot of them. It couldn't be worse. The other day, the emperor even wanted to have me deported. From top to bottom, it's a rascally business. Revolution!

Door opening

HOUSEKEEPER (**Hungarian accent*)

A letter has arrived.

Door closing

Letter is torn open

MUSIC. A tender sound

0'05

NARRATOR

Impatiently, Ludwig tears open the letter, a tender scent rises from the envelope. Ludwig smiles dreamily.

GRILLPARZER

Is it from Napoleon himself?

Pause, Reaction

LUDWIG

M-mh ... dear Ludwig, thank you so much for the beautifully dedicated autograph of your piano sonata.

Blend in

MARIE

Concerning your charming invitation to a carriage ride, I would like to suggest tomorrow Tuesday, 11 in the morning. Yours affectionately, Marie Bigot.

LUDWIG

Of course! Carriage rides with Marie, every day!

GRILLPARZER

You had mentioned the revolution?

LUDWIG

It will have to wait a little. Tell me your love poem again, Grillparzer, will you?

MUSIC. Andante Favori (Guitar), Intro

0'40

GRILLPARZER

All are dallying and frolicking in blissful nature...

LUDWIG *talking along*

Yes, yes, I remember now, thank you very much ...

Cut to exterior, carriage outside, forest atmosphere, guitar continues

LUDWIG *sings along to the guitar*

All are kissing and embracing on forested peaks and hilly pastures

Only I am to avoid you

Graceful source of all life's joys...

over postlude

MARIE

This is lovely, Louis! I didn't know that you were as well-versed in the lighter artistic genre as you are in serious art. Wouldn't you like to come to Paris with us?

LUDWIG

There's nothing I would rather do! Then I could take the opportunity to pay my respects to Napoleon and present him with the revolutionary symphony.

MARIE

You'd be the first revolutionary composer in France! What am I saying: in the world!

LUDWIG

Free music for free people, freedom of the arts! – Tell me something: your husband won't mind?

MARIE

You will come along as my piano teacher. By the way, when is our next piano lesson?

LUDWIG
Tomorrow!

Carriage departs

NARRATOR
First, however, the *Eroica* needs to be finished.

Cut to Beethoven's apartment

MUSIC. The final bars of the Eroica

LUDWIG
singing along at the top of his voice

Door opening

GRILLPARZER (**Austrian dialect*)
Well, are you already writing the coronation hymn?

LUDWIG
This is the finale of my revolutionary symphony. Dedicated to the leader of the revolution, Bonaparte ...

GRILLPARZER
... who is about to crown himself emperor.

LUDWIG (**Rhineland dialect*)
What?

GRILLPARZER
Read it in the Imperial-Royal News today.

LUDWIG

Bastard!

MUSIC. Cluster accent

NARRATOR

In a fit of rage, Ludwig scratches Bonaparte's name from the first page with a penknife. In doing so, he cuts his thumb and causes a bloodbath.

Sound montage, swearing, blood spattering

GRILLPARZER

Just as I told you: So far, all revolutions have proven one thing – you can change a lot of things, but not human nature.

LUDWIG *sullenly*

I am going to Paris (*franz.*) anyway, with my Marie. Here, nobody understands me anyway.

MUSIC. Misty Drone

1'23

In the open, harnessing of horses

NARRATOR

On the following day, Ludwig is standing at the Wiener Neustadt mail coach station, waiting for Marie. It is six o'clock in the morning, and rather chilly. A shape approaches from the thick morning mist.

BIGOT

Beethoven?

LUDWIG

How do you know me?

BIGOT

Bigot's the name. Here is your autograph back. My wife's piano lessons with you are cancelled as of now.

LUDWIG

Whaaat ...can-cel ... but she was making such good progress and we did ...

BIGOT

Beethoven. You are a womaniser, a revolutionary, and stone broke.

LUDWIG

Revolutionary... yes. Womaniser ... why not? Stone broke ... maybe. But a drunkard??

BIGOT

I didn't call you a drunkard.

LUDWIG

I am one, however!

BIGOT

Mon dieu.

LUDWIG

Can I come with you to Paris anyway?

BIGOT

You will stay put here.

LUDWIG

But I've already given notice on my apartment.

BIGOT

Then go and find yourself another apartment. Dear god, it can't be that hard.

LUDWIG

The real estate market is totally overheated. There is not a single apartment to let in Vienna. I will have to reside in a tiny hole! Me! The emperor of music!

BIGOT

You see, that's what they call *revolution* (* french).

Cock crowing.

MUSIC. Revolutionary accent

5'37

Act Three: L'enfer, c'est les autres.

Place: Staircase, then Beethoven's apartment.

Dramatis Personae: Narrator, housekeeper (l, then c), Ludwig (r), Schnyder (l)

Viennese atmosphere, carriages, St. Stephen's Cathedral, front door, hasty steps coming upstairs, approaching

NARRATOR

In the end, Ludwig finds an affordable apartment after all. It's on the "Bel Air Etage", topmost on the fourth floor. He has chosen the apartment on account of the bad Feng Shui closer to ground level. In fact, Ludwig believes that dirty streets, rotting animal cadavers, and poisonous vapours from the ground can cause chronic diseases. At this moment, he is running up the 112 stairs to his apartment. A half-finished sonata beckons.

HOUSEKEEPER (**Hungarian accent*)

Härr Bääthoven!!

NARRATOR

...as does his housekeeper.

HOUSEKEEPER

Bääthoven!!!

NARRATOR

Ludwig lovingly calls her Mrs Schnaps. Ok, maybe leave out the "lovingly".

HOUSEKEEPER

Härr Bääthoven!!

LUDWIG

Will you be quiet! I know my name.

HOUSEKEEPER (**Hungarian accent*)

Miss Malfatti has called twice. I told her that the master...

LUDWIG *out of breath*

Alright ... alright. Anything else of importance?

HOUSEKEEPER

His Royal Highness Archduke Rudolph was asking when the next piano lesson will finally take place...

LUDWIG *quietly*

Oh, that outhouse fly... (*sic!*)

normal voice

Write to him: Already yesterday, the climate strongly disagreed with me, so unfortunately I am still housebound today and am devastated myself to find myself excluded from the grace of the Your Royal Highness's presence today. Er. Full stop. Your Royal Highness's most humble servant Beethoven.

And now I have to work – let no one enter!

withdraws into his room, door slams, plays the piano furiously (through the wall)

MUSIC. Piano Sonata No. 14, C sharp minor, op. 27, No. 2. III: Presto 0'42

interrupted by doorbell ringing



Staircase

SCHNYDER (*without a break*)

I am a poor musician, who will never find peace again without seeing his idol.

HOUSEKEEPER

Haha! Pardon?! You bumbling fool want to talk to Beethoven? Do you think anybody can just walk off the street and see him? Good day, sir. No way!

SCHNYDER

But my dear esteemed lady, I have come a long way, from Lucerne!

Music dies

BEETHOVEN *from the back (*Rhineland dialect)*

What is all that noise?! I cannot work like this. Tell that Swiss fellow to push off!

SCHNYDER

Uh, the emperor is at home? *calls* Did you receive my score sheets? I wish to study with you, highly esteemed master!

BEETHOVEN *from the back*

Why don't you go to Haydn! I have a life's work to finish here.

slams the piano keys

HOUSEKEEPER *quietly*

Come back later.

SCHNYDER *quietly*

Why?

HOUSEKEEPER *quietly*

Simply to annoy him.

Loud music continues

Door closing, Housekeeper enters the deafening reverberations of the piano room, change of acoustics

HOUSEKEEPER

Harrumph.

LUDWIG *frightened*

Ah!! I told you not to let anybody in!

HOUSEKEEPER

You still owe me this week's salary.

LUDWIG *moaning*

There is no money.

HOUSEKEEPER

Istenem (**Hungarian, Dear God*)! The archduke, the ladies, this Schnyder guy, and all the others who turn up here every day, they would kill to get lessons from you.

And what do you do? You send them all away and hide in your room.

LUDWIG

Yes! Because I want to be perceived as a human being ...

HOUSEKEEPER

HAHAHA!

LUDWIG

... and not just as a celebrity! Most people don't care at all who this Beethoven really is. Beethoven might just as well my ruffian brother.

Or you.

HOUSEKEEPER

Me, Beethoven? Well, why not. At least that would put some bread on the table for a change. And what about you? What are you going to do?

LUDWIG

Then I would be housekeeper instead! Finally I'd be able to work quietly.

MUSIC. Dissonant piano chords played by a rough hand, overlaid

0'47

NARRATOR

Ten minutes later, Ludwig is standing at the stove wearing a dress, apron and bonnet and cooking coffee, while Frau Schnaps sits at the grand piano, composing music.

Spoiler: this episode will not have a Happy End.

LUDWIG *with a female voice (l)*

Mister Bääthoven, you still owe me the salary for this week.

HOUSEKEEPER *with a male voice (r)*

Get out! I am composing.

LUDWIG *with a female voice*

Oh, you are trampling down all the musical sheets!

HOUSEKEEPER *with a male voice*

Alright. Anything else important?

LUDWIG *behaving out of part*

No, seriously: you are standing on the product of four weeks work!

HOUSEKEEPER *with disguised voice*

I have to accomplish a life's work here! And you keep nagging ...

LUDWIG

Mrs Schnaps, it's not funny any more!

HOUSEKEEPER

I think it is. You can leave the house-cleaning until tomorrow.

LUDWIG

I will not clean up! I am Beethoven!

HOUSEKEEPER

But I am Beethoven!

LUDWIG *thunders*

No ME!

HOUSEKEEPER

No me!

LUDWIG

ME!

HOUSEKEEPER

Nohohoho! I am Beethoven! You see, look at my face!

LUDWIG

I say ...

Ringing



SCHNYDER *from outside (c)*

Highly esteemed master!

LUDWIG *whispers*

Pssst! If Schnyder sees me like that, I will be the laughing stock of the town.

HOUSEKEEPER *whispers*

Alright. I'll be quiet. But only if I get my salary.

LUDWIG *starts to speak*

I, I, I ...

HOUSEKEEPER *whispers*
Plus a 100 percent pay raise.

SCHNYDER *from outside*
Herr van Beethoven ...

Knocking

LUDWIG *whispers*
You know no shame!

SCHNYDER *from outside (*Swiss German)*
... anybody home?

HOUSEKEEPER *whispers*
Yeah, well after all, my name is Beethoven.

SCHNYDER *from outside*
Hello?

Knocking

LUDWIG *whispers*
I am Beethoven!

HOUSEKEEPER *whispers*
You wish. I am Beethoven. New Beethoven!!

LUDWIG *whispers*
I am Beethoven!

SCHNYDER *from outside*
Herr van Beethoven?

Doorknob rattling

HOUSEKEEPER *whispers*

Shall I let the Swiss guy in?

LUDWIG *whispers*

No, no! You – my god! – ... you will get what you want. Herr... Beethoven!!!

HOUSEKEEPER *whispers*

Alright. I know my name.

LUDWIG *whispers*

Haha.

MUSIC. “Unsa Katz” (Cimbalom)

see above

5'04

over finale:

Act FOUR: Notes and needs

Place: Beethoven's apartment

Dramatis Personae: Narrator, Kaspar (l), Ludwig (r), Johanna (Kaspar's fiancée)(c)

later: Schnyder (c)

NARRATOR

The the next day, Ludwig gives notice to the housekeeper. As well as to his landlord. His brother helps him move – and takes the opportunity to move into the new apartment as well. Now he is having a go at working as Ludwig's manager and secretary.

KASPAR

I think it's great we're living together again. Would you ever have thought it?

LUDWIG

M-mh.

KASPAR (**Rhineland dialect*)

Will you look at him! Still the same sourpuss brother.

LUDWIG

At least the sourpuss brother has made a name for himself.

Which is more than you can say for yourself.

KASPAR (**Rhineland dialect*)

I don't have to make a name for myself. I've already got one: I'm Beethoven's brother! And I will go down in history as your successful secretary.

LUDWIG

You are legend already. In the city's wine taverns -

KASPAR

Well, I am networking to contact potential patrons.

LUDWIG

So? Have you netted any assignments yet?

KASPAR *proudly*

Yes indeed! The publisher Nägeli wants to buy the string quintet.

I've drawn up the contract already. You just have to sign here.

LUDWIG

WHAT?! But we've already sold the string quintet to Breitkopf & Härtel.

KASPAR

Weeell. No one needs to know about that.

LUDWIG

Kaspar!!! If you keep going like this, you can move out right away. And I will have to go back to playing the viola again to earn money. I am a respectable artist!! I will not sign this!

KASPAR

But you do want to live off your music at some point.

LUDWIG

Yes, that's right.

How about you?

KASPAR

I am already living off your music.

MUSIC. Piano accent Cluster

KASPAR

Anyway, a letter arrived from England this morning.

The king is asking for a new symphony by Beethoven. And he is paying 200 pounds.

LUDWIG

How much is that if you convert it?

KASPAR

One hundred kilos. No, just kidding.

Two hundred pounds are about 150 ducats. That's 120 guilders, 90 florins, or ...

LUDWIG

Hold on, it's getting less and less.

KASPAR

Yes, so it is.

LUDWIG

All my notes can't cover my needs.

KASPAR

Want to like to read the small print as well? Here: final deadline, format for the note sheets, length of the press statement, line spacing ...

LUDWIG

Yes, yes, and so on and so forth. All this chickenshit has become more important than art itself. They dictate everything. I bet there's also something on how the music should sound: "We would like to order a light symphony for the whoole family"...

KASPAR

That's right. How do you know that?

LUDWIG *demoralized*

There is no right life in the wrong one.

KASPAR

Come on, let's go for a drink. In the end, it has always turned out well...

Uncorking sound

LUDWIG

As our dear father, may he rest in peace, used to say: alcohol, if enjoyed in small amounts, won't do harm in larger quantities.

Uncorking sound

KASPAR (**Rhineland dialect*)

Exactly. Let's knock 'em back while we still can. Here's to the old man!

BOTH

Cheers da da da daaa



Doorbell ringing. Ludwig runs for the door himself.

LUDWIG

I am not taking on any more students.

JOHANNA (*sweet Viennese girl*)

Good day to you, sir. You must be Ludwig!

LUDWIG

I could possibly consider an exception in case of a female piano student.

KASPAR *calling from the back*

This is Johanna. We are engaged!

LUDWIG *pleased*

What?! Why didn't you tell me earlier? Very pleased to meet you! Do come in, miss.

Door closes

JOHANNA

Charming. In my imagination, you were all different. More spiritually minded. Not this virile, this animalistic ...

LUDWIG (*laughing with embarrassment*)

Anim ... hahaha, you're too kind! Lovely, lovely, dear brother ...

So, now if you will excuse me, I must briefly transcend our current boundaries of understanding in the sphere of piano music.

(*exiting*) By the way, I will need a new grand piano for that soon. A louder one. It's got to make a proper rumble, it really does! BAM!

Bowling Alley. Nine-pin strike.

MUSIC. Piano Sonata No. 21, C Major, op. 53 „Waldstein“. movement I: Allegro con Brio

0'39

NARRATOR

Kaspar and Johanna are getting married. Three months after the wedding, little Karl draws his first breath of Imperial air. Fun fact: he looks a lot like Ludwig. And Ludwig has really taken a fancy to the boy.

Narren an dem Buben gefressen.

Music continues

in the background hasty steps up the stairs

NARRATOR

Meanwhile, Kaspar has been promoted from secretary to division manager. His first official act was to dismiss the new housekeeper. Who is going to do the cooking now? Ludwig, of course.

And guess who is not tidying up?

Door opens, beer bottles falling

LUDWIG

Ka Kaspar!

KASPAR

Ludwig! Did you get pizza? I am getting hungry.

Crunching sound, walking on glass

LUDWIG

What a mess! Oh dear, and that smell! Could you maybe take away these empty bottles!?

Now guess whom I met in the street!

KASPAR *sneering*

Your everlasting fiancé?

LUDWIG

Asshole.

It was Nägeli. He asked me why we sold him an old sting quintet. Tell me, did you forge my signature?

KASPAR

Pfff ... I signed with Beethoven. That isn't wrong, after all.

LUDWIG

You are a fraud!!!

KASPAR

Look who's talking! Do you think I don't notice you sneaking around my wife all the time? Not to mention all those private piano lessons behind locked doors. Strange.

LUDWIG

Oh please!

KASPAR

Funny how you never hear a sound!

Bell ringing



LUDWIG

Nobody home!

SCHNYDER *quietly*

Pardon me ...

LUDWIG

Oh no

NARRATOR

Franz Xaver Schnyder von Wartensee ...

SCHNYDER *quietly*

... the door was open and so I thought ...

NARRATOR

... the Groupie.

SCHNYDER

... I'd just come in...

LUDWIG

This is even worse timing than usually!

SCHNYDER

Esteemed master. I got all ... all... my ... all my courage together and – (takes a deep breath) and wrote a sonnet for you.

KASPAR *aside*

Pffffff

LUDWIG

Boah ...

SCHNYDER *solemnly*

Our hearts with kindness you have unsealed
As chests swell in your torrent of notes
And life in elven glamour shining floats
On blossomed hill that your imagination builds...

LUDWIG

I am asleep already.

SCHNYDER

Things go better...

LUDWIG

... with coke.

Now get out of here! Both of you! OUT!
Otherwise I won't write another single note!

KASPAR

Come on, it was good! It wasn't so bad at all.

SCHNYDER (**Swiss German*)

I hadn't even finished yet

LUDWIG

CAN YOU HEAR ME, OH HUMANITY?!

Clap of thunder, than rain, overlaid with:

NARRATOR

That did the trick. The gentlemen are beating retreat. Schnyder starts to polish his sonnet. Kaspar stays out of sight for a while. And what about Ludwig? From now on, he is taking care of business himself. At least, he had had a good teacher.

MUSIC. Variations on the English folk song “Rule Britannia” for piano (D major)

WoO 79

0'41

overlaid with:

LUDWIG *aside*

The English are asking for a symphony in the style of my second symphony? Alright. Then I will simply take my second ... (*sudden*) TATT TAAA... (*quietly again*) turn D major into h minor ... add a piccolo flute ... (*humming*) naaa naaa naaa naaaaaa naaa, and then put a One in front. Done! Beethoven's 12th Symphony. Dedicated to the King of England ... and to my dear brother. The dedication is an extra charge, of course.

6'40

ACT FIVE: German Bromance.

Place: Spa (outside, but tiled)

Dramatis Personae: Narrator, Ludwig, Goethe, young woman

Water park sounds, someone jumps off the ten-meter diving board, overlaid with:

NARRATOR

Ever heard of Teplitz? No? Then maybe you were born in the wrong century. In the 19th century, Bad Teplitz is the hotspot of the European upper crust. You know: hot springs and such. All the world and their wife meet here to take the waters. As soon as Ludwig finds out that Goethe is on a wellness retreat in Teplitz, he takes the next coach to Bohemia.

someone jumps off the ten-meter diving board

A few days later, the two heavyweights are facing each other. In the warm water pool.

Overall bubbling noise, spillover gurgles, Goethe quietly singing to himself "Seven Nation Army"

LUDWIG

Hello.

Singing stops

GOETHE

Hello?!

LUDWIG

It's just me, Beethoven.

May I have five minutes?

GOETHE

Five minutes, no more. Then I have to go for my fango.

LUDWIG

I am such a great fan of yours.

GOETHE

Fan Beethoven ...

LUDWIG

Herr Goethe, I would like to express my heartfelt estimation and admiration. You are the most precious jewel of our nation. And I ...

YOUNG WOMAN

Pardon, ehm. Could I have an autograph please?

GOETHE

Sure. If you have a goose quill ...

YOUNG WOMAN

Okay, let's see.

swims off

GOETHE

whistles after her

LUDWIG

It was my pleasure to compose the music for your play "Egmont", as you know.

GOETHE

Hot chick.

LUDWIG (*ignores him*)

... mhm. This play breathes the spirit of freedom, it is so full of devotion and empathy and you wrote such beautiful phrases in it, like:

“From celestial delight to mortal distress;

Only the soul that loves finds happiness.”

GOETHE

Yesyesyesyes, I must admit it's quite brilliant.

someone jumps off the ten-meter diving board

LUDWIG

Herr Goethe! I have this vision: the two of us – the greatest minds of German culture – create a piece of art together. A work that will unite poetry and music as never before. I would like to lay the founding stone for this creation here.

GOETHE

Yes, that sounds quite exciting. Indeed, indeed. – Unfortunately, my days here are filled with salons attended by the high and highest society. Where else do you ever meet so much nobility in one place. – And so many intrusive admirers.

someone jumps off the ten-meter diving board

Unpleasant pause. Spillover gurgling, Goethe quietly singing to himself "Seven Nation Army", Ludwig quietly sings something else entirely.

LUDWIG

By the way, how did you like my composition for your Egmont? You never did answer me.

GOETHE

Your music? ... It was ... musical.

LUDWIG

... musical?

GOETHE

Yesyes. In fact, music truly has a serving function. It should submit to the text ... accompany it, in a way.

LUDWIG

... submit ...

GOETHE

Well, you know: Music is at its best when it is not even perceived as such ... (*stunned by his own brilliance*) ... a fantastic phrase! I must already have written it down somewhere myself.

someone jumps off the ten-meter diving board

NARRATOR

Fun fact: While Ludwig is struggling with Goethe, Napoleon starts his invasion of Russia. With 500.000 soldiers. Beethoven could use them right now in his confrontation with Goethe, the masterful bard and state poet laureate.

LUDWIG

Ahem ... by the way, have you been to the book fair this year?

GOETHE *sneering*

Ha ... I hardly find the time even to read my own stuff. That would be worth the effort at least.

LUDWIG

Well, I am reading "Frankenstein" at the moment. A great book.

GOETHE

What are you telling me? That my books are not great?

LUDWIG

No, not at all, I just wanted to ...

GOETHE

Posterity decides about what is great! Even two hundred years from now, they will still read Goethe!

LUDWIG *quietly*

... still have to read Goethe.

GOETHE

Eh?!

LUDWIG

Nothing.

someone jumps off the ten-meter diving board

This Frankenstein is a doctor. But a very special one! He collects body parts and assembles a new creature from them. And this creature ...

GOETHE

... he brings to life.

LUDWIG

How do you know that?

GOETHE

Ha! That's one of mine. Faust, Part Two.

LUDWIG

Oops.

NARRATOR

Oops.

GOETHE

So now please leave me alone with your Funkenstein. I will not tolerate any other poet beside me.

LUDWIG

“Frankenstein” was written by a woman.

GOETHE

As if.

LUDWIG *calls out*

Rainer!

GOETHE

Mrs Rainer? Never heard of her.

LUDWIG

No. Over there in the whirlpool. That’s Rainer. One of my piano students.

GOETHE

The guy with the ugly lower lip?

LUDWIG

Yep.

GOETHE

Dear God, that lip! Woah, it flops down like a cleaning rag. Yuck! Oh no. There’s other people swimming in that water ...!

LUDWIG

The famous Habsburg lip.

GOETHE

Beg your pardon?

LUDWIG *quietly*

His official title is Archduke Rudolph of Austria.

GOETHE *quietly as well*

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. The emperor's brother! You call him by his first name? Who would have ...er. ... Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear, I mean: this is awesome! Why didn't you say so right away? That changes everything, of course!

solemnly

Ludwig ...

LUDWIG

Herr van Beethoven.

GOETHE *embarrassed*

Would I be considered phony if I announced a great interest in our mutual art project at this point?

LUDWIG *contemplates*

Mhm.

GOETHE

We could dedicate ourselves to this Frankenstein myth. There is a lot of potential in this: artificial intelligence ... human hubris ...women ...

LUDWIG

First, the right.

Then the left.

Both are telling you good-bye.

I'll swim over to Rainer. My piano student and friend!

swims off

NARRATOR

Fun fact: As it happens, following this weekend, the thermal spring will be renamed the “Spa Hotel Beethoven”.

GOETHE *aside*

What. The. F...

How could I be such an idiot!? That’s just – ahhhh ...

YOUNG WOMAN

Here I am again. With a writing quill!

GOETHE *suddenly*

Ah! Charming admirer! Where shall I immortalize myself? On writing paper?

lecherously

Or even on your wonderful ...

YOUNG WOMAN *interrupting*

But where has Beethoven gone?

MUSIC. Brief accent

0’06

MUSIC. Drone

0’30

voiceover

NARRATOR

A shitty day. For everyone involved. In the evening, Goethe will note in his diary: “Went for a dip today.”

And Napoleon? He defeats the Russian army and takes the world’s biggest city with a great ballyhoo. However, as soon as they are inside, the Russians set fire to all corners and ends of Moscow, and the wind quickly carries the flames into all city quarters.

Three days later, Moscow is reduced to ashes.

And Ludwig? He needs some cooling down, too.

6’25

Act Six: Fidelio.

Place: Beethoven's apartment, later the police station

Dramatis Personae: Ludwig, Nanette Streicher, Narrator, Landlord, Police Officer

MUSIC. Impro Fidelio-Overture op. 72, tentatively.

0'40

Noise prelude: A chair suddenly falls over, a tin bucket is emptied with a rattling sound, water splatters onto the floor

LUDWIG

Brrr ... Aah! that's good!

NANETTE

It's me, Nanette.

Door slamming

LUDWIG

Nanette, how nice!

NANETTE

For God's sake, Ludwig! What has happened here?

LUDWIG

I was so hot, I poured a bucket of water over my head.

NANETTE

The sheet music with the notes got all wet, too! Oh Ludwig ...

LUDWIG

The notes! I can do without them anyway, those notes.

NANETTE

Are you still brooding over your opera?

LUDWIG

It's driving me insane! Why does every opera have to follow the same scheme? Man falls in love with woman, intrigue, fate, and a few torturers ... in the end, the woman is saved by her hero. Wedding and everybody is happy.

NANETTE

Come on, leave out the torturers.

LUDWIG

Out of the question. No opera without torture.

NANETTE

Oh dear, what a mess you got here! How can you work like this? You might want to empty the chamber pot, for starters.

Sounds of tidying up, voiceover:

NARRATOR

Concerning worldly matters, Ludwig readily takes advice from Nanette Streicher. It's not as if she didn't have anything else to do. Nanette is the owner of the most renowned manufacture of pianos in Vienna; Haydn, Mozart, and Clementi appreciate her instruments and her piano playing. And on top of all that, she still finds time for her children.

A fly buzzes away from the garbage

LUDWIG

What mess?

NARRATOR

This child is a little too old for that sort of thing.

NANETTE

Tell me, have you eaten anything today?

LUDWIG

I ordered a pizza.

NANETTE

Listen, Louis: You should ...

LUDWIG

... consider getting married. Yes, I know. It's not so simple with love, however.
Life is not an opera, after all.

NANETTE

You have to decide what you want, that's all. What do you want in life, Ludwig?

Fly

LUDWIG

To make music.

NANETTE

Why?

LUDWIG

Pfff ... for art's sake.

NANETTE

Be honest.

MUSIC. Sonata No. 26, E-flat Major, op. 81a. I. "Farewell": Adagio

0'44

LUDWIG

... because I want people to like my art.

NANETTE

Why?

LUDWIG *quietly*

Because I ... want to be loved.

NANETTE

There you go.

LUDWIG

Could we leave this matter for later, Nanette? The fact is, I desperately need a new piano. And what's most important: IT HAS TO BE LOUD!

Loud ringing



Steps though puddles approaching the door

LUDWIG

Who is this now?

Opening

LUDWIG

You must be kidding me?!

LANDLORD

Herr Beethoven, once again the water is dripping through my ceiling!

LUDWIG

The whole Austrian state with its monkeys and lackeys is utterly rotten! And you – you're no exception in that regard!

LANDLORD

I am just a simple house owner.

LUDWIG

And I am just a simple brain owner. Do you know what you are, sirrah? A proper enemy of the arts, that's what!

LANDLORD

It is dripping through the ceiling ...

LUDWIG

Yes, I know ...

LANDLORD

... the music is too loud. Furthermore, don't call me "sirrah".

LUDWIG

You see, Nanette? This is what I mean. That's what you get for trying to help art come into its own...

LANDLORD

Until three o'clock in the morning.

NANETTE

Never mind, Louis. Maybe you could once more show some consideration, Mr Landlord? I can pay for the damage ...

LUDWIG

... here I am, abstaining from most things, ruining my health, letting myself be led by the muse only. And then you come along, sirrah!!! – obstructing the divine spark!!!

LANDLORD *briefly abusive (*Austrian)*

Divine spark? Don't make me laugh.

LUDWIG

Do we have to do this?

NANETTE

Ludwig, no!!!

LUDWIG

Mhm, yes we do.

Push, clattering sound

NARRATOR

Ludwig throws his landlord down the stairs.

LANDLORD *from downstairs*

Herr Beethoven, your tenancy is terminated with immediate effect!! By Saturday!!!

Fly

LUDWIG

Suits me, I had been planning to move out by Friday. I don't need your apartment anyway. Deicide!

Door closes, fly stays outside.

LUDWIG *calming down*

I wanted to move to the countryside anyway. Ha ha!

NANETTE *sighs*

Would you like me to be there for the move?

LUDWIG

I am not a child anymore.

NANETTE

Hm.

LUDWIG

I won't get lost, don't worry.

MUSIC. Sonata No. 26, E flat major, op. 81a. I. Farewell: Adagio

s.o.

obligatory carriage with pattering of hooves, whip cracking, giddyups

NARRATOR

Of course, Ludwig gets lost. On the way, he has a sudden inspiration for a new Overture. He follows it. Suddenly, everyone is gone. By the time he reaches a backwater at the edge of the Wienerwald, dusty and drenched in sweat, it's evening.

Blend into prison atmosphere

POLICEMAN

I am arresting you for vagrancy.

Barred door slammed shut and locked

LUDWIG

It's me, blockhead: Beethoven. The Beethoven! The emperor of music. Does that not fit into your blockhead?

POLICEMAN (**Austrian dialect*)

And I am Duke Metternich.

LUDWIG

No, you're not, because I know him. But you don't know me, more's the dishonour. Now let me out! I am moving apartments at the moment.

POLICEMAN

So, where are you moving to then?

LUDWIG
To Baden.

POLICEMAN
Address?

LUDWIG
Well, the Beethoven House, of course!

Steps, swinging door

NANETTE *storming in*
Set Beethoven free at once.

LUDWIG
Nanette!

NANETTE
That is no way to treat Austria's greatest musical poet, I really must say.

LUDWIG
Dear Nanette, what a blessing!

Sound of unlocking

POLICEMAN
Next time I will know better.

LUDWIG
Finally.

POLICEMAN

You have to admit, Mrs Streicher: The man can easily be mistaken for a vagabond. Furthermore, he insulted officers. And he is acting confused. Have a nice evening, madam!

LUDWIG *imitates him, then:*

Brutish ignoramus!

NANETTE

Will you please come along now. Let's go furnish your new apartment.

LUDWIG

No. I have to finish writing my opera now. Finally I have an idea.

NANETTE

What idea?

LUDWIG

A man is sitting in jail.

NANETTE

Yes?

LUDWIG

Then a woman appears and saves him.

NANETTE

Er, a woman saves him?

LUDWIG

Yes, and there's going to be torturers as well!

NANETTE

No one will believe you. First of all, she would have to disguise herself, this woman.

LUDWIG

Yes they will, they will! Come, come, come, I need to write it all down! It's already in my head.

NANETTE

No, no, or no one will believe you!

LUDWIG

I need paper.

NANETTE

Somehow that sounds familiar?!

MUSIC. Impro Fidelio piano reduction softly

s.a.

NARRATOR

Life is an opera, after all.

Music fades slowly

LUDWIG

Bam!

Bowling alley. Nine-pin strike

5'30

Act Seven: A Man's World.

Place: Beethoven's apartment, later a Viennese tavern

Dramatis Personae: Narrator, Ludwig, Grillparzer, Schuppanzigh

MUSIC. Variations on "Rule Britannia" for piano (D Major) WoO 79 0'40

NARRATOR

1810. My, my! What a year. All of Austria is exhausted from the last war, which raged from the Rhine to the Danube and from Italy all the way to Hungary.

Fun fact on the side: once again, the Brits have not been a great help.

(conspiratorially) So instead, Plan B: One of Emperor Franz's daughters has been married off to Napoleon. That should provide peace.

And what about our musical emperor, Beethoven? He has great aspirations as well.

He is preparing a roast veal. For his friends Franz Grillparzer and Ignaz

Schuppanzigh. They have been chosen to be the first to hear about his new plans.

BEETHOVEN

So good of you to come! Let's have a toast! To friendship!

clinking of glasses

GRILLPARZER

Say, Beethoven, your invitation said something about "embarking on new paths" ...

SCHUPPANZIGH

... and roast veal please!

GRILLPARZER (**Austrian dialect*)

What are you talking about? Is this going to be your late work now?

LUDWIG

Today, I wanted to talk to you about something else than the music.

I wanted to talk to you about my feelings.

SCHUPPANZIGH

What's that now? Feelings!?! That's so eighties.

NARRATOR

Ignaz Schuppanzigh is talking about the 1780s. That's when "The Sorrows of Young Werther" came out and people suddenly started to talk about their feelings in public. They haven't stopped since.

LUDWIG

I am unhappy with my life as a white male artist.
Music, women, alcohol. There must be more to life.

SCHUPPANZIGH

Here's another one. A man tells his friend:
Listen, my wife's gone. My job's gone. My apartment is gone.
What other evil could possibly befall me?

LUDWIG

No idea.

SCHUPPANZIGH

The friend says: Well, your wife might come back.

falls into a fit of laughter

GRILLPARZER

I know that one.

LUDWIG

THAT is exactly what I mean. He might simply have comforted his poor friend.

GRILLPARZER

Well, I find it weird when a man puts his arm around me.
Please put it away, Beethoven.

LUDWIG

Sorry.

GRILLPARZER

And now go on talking.

LUDWIG

Why does every talk about women end in a sexist joke?
Why are we always talking about women instead of talking to them?

SCHUPPANZIGH

And what's that burnt smell?

GRILLPARZER and SCHUPPANZIGH sniffing

LUDWIG

Ooh no, the roast!

NARRATOR

Fuck, the roast! Ludwig runs into the kitchen.

Shattering noise, swearing

Too late. The roast is charred.

LUDWIG

Does anybody have the number of the pizza delivery?

NARRATOR

And so the gentlemen's round continues in the Viennese tavern "The Swan".

GRILLPARZER (**Austrian dialect*)

Lovely waitress they have here.

LUDWIG

There you go again. That's sexist.

Inside the tavern. Serbian folk music

NARRATOR

They serve pizza – fried, breaded, minced. In this order exactly.

GRILLPARZER

Well. In fact, that shows my appreciation of the female sex, I'd rather think.

SCHUPPANZIGH

Is it politically incorrect to say "lovely" now?

GRILLPARZER

Is it politically incorrect to say "lovely" now?

LUDWIG *moans*

Aaaah ... I can't take it anymore.

SCHUPPANZIGH

Beethoven, what is wrong with you anyway?

LUDWIG

The pizza is so greasy.

SCHUPPANZIGH

Come on, I am not talking about the food, I am talking about the girls.

You were always the wildest of all of us.

GRILLPARZER

Oh yes!

SCHUPPANZIGH

Brentano ... Brunsvik ... Bigot .. and that's only the letter B.

LUDWIG

Those days are over now.

Tavern atmosphere fades

MUSIC. Andante favori, WoO 57.

0'22

LUDWIG

I am getting married.

GRILLPARZER

You don't say.

SCHUPPANZIGH

That's wonderful!

LUDWIG

No. I only sent off the proposal last week.

SCHUPPANZIGH

Zenzi, bring me another wine! And a fruit brandy! Hang on, make that three fruit brandies ... three double shots please ...

voiceover

NARRATOR

That's the way you do it in Vienna. If you want to get married, you have to propose in writing. Including baptism certificate and whatnot. –

Fun fact: Even Napoleon himself wasn't able to avoid that.

Toasting, back to tavern atmosphere

GRILLPARZER

God save our Emperor Franz!

ALL EXCEPT LUDWIG:

Lads! Cheers, gentlemen! Cheers!

LUDWIG

Don't you even want to know her name?

GRILLPARZER

It will soon be "Mrs Beethoven", presumably. *(laughs)*

NARRATOR

She is called Therese, by the way.

LUDWIG

Just you laugh. I am looking forward to the warm comfort of a family. To talks on long winter evenings, to slippers under the bed, to the smell of roast veal, to ...

SCHUPPANZIGH

Roast veal! Wonderful ...

GRILLPARZER

Well, you are probably right, Beethoven. At a certain age, the physical stuff isn't so important any more.

LUDWIG

That's not what this is about, my dear Grillparzer!

SCHUPPANZIGH (**Austrian dialect*)

Well, guys, look here – let's be honest:

once you're forty, sex is ... like holidays.

You do it two or three times a year.

You've look forward to it for ages.

And once you're there – you're happy to get it over with quickly!

GRILLPARZER and SCHUPPANZIGH laugh

LUDWIG

You are so embarrassing.

SCHUPPANZIGH

A friend told me that joke. Mind you, he has a daughter, a juicy eighteen-year-old, as pretty as a picture ...

GRILLPARZER

Hear, hear ...

GRILLPARZER and SCHUPPANZIGH laugh

BEETHOVEN *to himself*

Here they go again ...

SCHUPPANZIGH

Unfortunately, she fell madly in love. With the piano teacher.

GRILLPARZER

Well, he knows which keys need pushing.

GRILLPARZER and SCHUPPANZIGH laugh

SCHUPPANZIGH *shouts*

And where the pedal is

GRILLPARZER and SCHUPPANZIGH laugh more

LUDWIG

What's the father's opinion?

SCHUPPANZIGH

Well, he doesn't like it at all. And now the two even want to get married. When the "bridegroom" is more than twice the lass's age. That is disgusting, come on.

Furthermore, the fellow is completely naive.

LUDWIG

Aha. And in what way?

SCHUPPANZIGH

Well, he sits in his apartment the whole day, by himself, composing.

Laughter

LUDWIG

Is that so bad?

SCHUPPANZIGH

Pfff ... People like that are not fit for life! You cannot start a family with a guy like that.

LUDWIG *serious*

Well then ... I guess it's better, if he stays alone inside his world of music.

GRILLPARZER (**Austrian dialect*)

Exactly.

SCHUPPANZIGH

Exactly!

Energetic moving of chairs

LUDWIG

Friends. I am off.

SCHUPPANZIGH (**Austrian dialect*)

Come on, Beethoven. We were having such a good time. Let's go see the girls now. Tonight is basically your stag night! Last chance to sow your wild oats, you have to...

LUDWIG

I don't have to do anything at all. Stag night is moved.

GRILLPARZER

Come on Beethoven, you're boring us!

SCHUPPANZIGH

Go on, don't be such a bore!

LUDWIG

The tab's on me. Farewell. And say hello to Herr Malfatti.

SCHUPPANZIGH

Well I never! Hey, so he knows my friend with the juicy daughter ...

GRILLPARZER

Well, then I bet he also knows the crazy piano teacher for sure.

SCHUPPANZIGH

I do hope that our Beethoven will not become one of those crazies.

GRILLPARZER

Stop it, that would be awful ...

SCHUPPANZIGH (**Austrian dialect*)

What's that you say? No, Grillparzer, she's absolutely lovely. A real hot kitten!

GRILLPARZER

Are you talking about Malfatti now?

SCHUPPANZIGH

Hell yeah. A hot little kitten.

GRILLPARZER

You are right, I've seen her, too.

GRILLPARZER AND SCHUPPANZIGH keep talking about girls

voiceover

NARRATOR

Fun fact: Ludwig had written a special love song dedicated to his beloved: "Für Therese". The wedding plans will be cancelled, however. Soon, "Therese" will become "Elise".

6'06

Act Eight: A Matter of Taste.

Place: Beethoven's apartment, later Cocktail at Metternich's

Dramatis Personae: Ludwig, Narrator, Gioacchino Rossini, Rainer

NARRATOR

Once again, it's Saturday. Ludwig is standing in his bathroom, shaving.

Scraping

LUDWIG

humming a hit from "Il Barbiere di Siviglia"

Ouch! How I hate that! Dear God, what a massacre! Where is the damn blotting paper?

hectic search in drawers

Ring



Ring



NARRATOR

Can't you answer the door? Something wrong with your ears, Ludwig?

Scuffling, key turning in lock

Opening

NARRATOR

There's an admirer waiting outside.

ROSSINI *out of breath*

It's a long flight of stairs up to your place, Maestro di Beetofe!

NARRATOR

It's 30-year-old Gioacchino Rossini.

ROSSINI

A true gradus ad parnassum ...

LUDWIG *absently*

Er, have we met ... er?

ROSSINI

Not yet. But you must certainly know my masterpiece, the Barber of ...

LUDWIG

Ah, the barber! The barber has arrived. Oh, I just had a little mishap while shaving.

ROSSINI

No, I am talking about the opera.

LUDWIG

Do come on in first! We will talk about your old man some other time.

Door closing

NARRATOR *thoughtfully*

It is possible that at this point, Ludwig's hearing has really begun to deteriorate.

LUDWIG

Here's the razor. Get going, young man. Careful!

ROSSINI

But ...

LUDWIG

Don't talk back, or I will throw you out!

scraping noises

ROSSINI *starts the shave*

Well, then I'll start here ... careful, retract your earlobes ... then over ... I will leave a bit around the mouth ... this will conceal your unflattering chin ...

LUDWIG

One moment! This beard looks like a toilet seat!

ROSSINI

We prefer the expression Henriquate. A royal beard. It's all the rage now in Italy.

LUDWIG

Italy? What am I, Rossini?

Scraping stops

ROSSINI *loud*

NO! Because I am Rossini!

LUDWIG

What ... but why didn't you say so straight away? I read your *Barber of Sevilla* with pleasure, Signore Rossini. An excellent opera. Pleasant! Lively!

ROSSINI

Mille Grazie, Maestro di Beetofe! This is very flattering, coming from the mouth of the greatest living composer.

NARRATOR

In fact, the only work by Beethoven that Rossini knows is the *Eroica*, and that he only discovered recently. But he was very impressed.

LUDWIG

The compliment came easily. You are a gifted theatre painter.

ROSSINI *taken aback*

Er, thank you. Well, nobody's ever called me that before.

LUDWIG

Italians should only write comical operas.

ROSSINI

I have composed serious operas as well, *Moses in Egypt*, for example.

LUDWIG

Aaaa, what crap! You lack the necessary profundity for serious work. How long did you work on the *Barber of Sevilla*, Rossini?

ROSSINI

Fourteen days. Usually it takes me three or four weeks. And you, on the *Eroica*?

LUDWIG

One or two. Years. Usually it takes me three or four years.

uncomfortable pause

At least you have your excellent manager. The sort of bloodhound of the theatre that only Italy can spawn! Ever since he took over the local theatre as well, my opera hasn't been played in Vienna at all.

ROSSINI

Oh. Scusi.

LUDWIG

In the end, it is all a matter of management. You did absolutely right, Rossini.

ROSSINI

Aha. And what about my notes now?

LUDWIG

Ah ok. Yes. Hand them over, will you?

Hasty leafing through big sheets

LUDWIG

You left out the Overture? Interesting.

*Hasty page-turning, nonverbal comments, humming, unintelligible words
voiceover*

NARRATOR

With breath-taking speed, Ludwig browses through the score. Meanwhile Rossini steals a glance around the run-down apartment. Dirty laundry, books, half-empty wine bottles, and scores are piled on the floor. Rossini himself resides in a spacious villa in Bologna with his stylish girlfriend. He is shocked by Beethoven's precarious surroundings.

ROSSINI

Do you like it?

Page-turning stops

LUDWIG

This part here.

MUSIC. A subtle sound

LUDWIG

This ... smells really nice. A scent of

ROSSINI *expectantly*

Of ...?

LUDWIG

Truffles.

ROSSINI *indulgently*

Ah, truffles! The Mozart among mushrooms ... the more you enjoy of them, the more attractions you discover. What does that say about my music, however?

LUDWIG

Yes, one moment, I will know in a bit.

hasty leafing, voiceover

ROSSINI

If we get a chance, I could make my salad dressing with truffles for you. Oil from Provence, English mustard, French vinegar, and a touch of ...

LUDWIG

Well, I prefer a decent roast veal. Here in Vienna, however, they'd rather let me starve ...

hasty page-turning continues, mumbling

NARRATOR

Ludwig prefers to keep quiet about the stipend his piano student Rainer pays him annually.

Big book slamming shut. Subwoofer, echo effects

LUDWIG

A respectable soufflé. All in all a pleasant taste, but not much content. I repeat: opera buffa – that’s your thing. Or maybe you had better concentrate on cooking altogether. Here in Vienna, we could do with a decent pizza place, for example. Oh, that reminds me: I have a lunch date in a few minutes.

NARRATOR

The master’s eagerly awaited anointment has turned into something more like a smack on the head. Ludwig puts an arm around Rossini and ushers him out the door.

ROSSINI

Er. Thank you. I wish you all the best, Maestro!

LUDWIG

Yes, up yours too, my friend. And you know what: Write many more Barbers!

MUSIC. Piano accent

Cocktail reception, Rossini makes small talk

voiceover

NARRATOR

A few hours later, Rossini is invited to a gala dinner at Metternich’s. All of Vienna’s bigwigs have assembled here, among them piano student Rainer, a.k.a. Archduke Rudolph.

ROSSINI

Eccellenza! Beetofe lives in the pettiest conditions in a shed! Fourth floor, murderous staircase ... don’t you think he deserves a house of his own?

RAINER

You are absolutely right there. Don’t you have a big villa in Italy?

ROSSINI

You know, good old Beetofe is a part of Vienna. Like St. Stephen's Cathedral. Half the hotel industry lives off Beetofe.

RAINER

Then why don't you come to Vienna as well, Signore Rossini!

ROSSINI

Ha! There isn't even a decent pizza place here.

RAINER

That's true, unfortunately. Besides, Beethoven isn't doing quite as badly as he pretends. He even owns shares. I wouldn't touch them, myself.

ROSSINI

In the end, it's all a matter of management.

RAINER

Someone should tell the Master that!

ROSSINI

He wouldn't understand.

RAINER

But why?

ROSSINI

Because he is already half deaf.

Cin cin!

Toasting

6'02

Act Nine: Apotheosis.

Place: *nowhere*

Dramatis Personae: Ludwig, Narrator; in flashback: Rainer, Grillparzer

MUSIC. Sonata No. 28, A Major, op. 101. I. (treated)

5'18

LUDWIG

It is so nice and quiet here. Almost like being in a graveyard.

NARRATOR

Well, maybe that's because it is a graveyard. The Vienna Central Cemetery.

LUDWIG

Oh. Does that mean I've moved house again?

NARRATOR

You have become immortal. But in the end, it all happened very quickly: lead poisoning was what did you in.

LUDWIG

And who are you? An angel?

NARRATOR

I am in charge of quality control here. And I would like to have a final interview with you.

LUDWIG

This urge to talk about and to assess everything, is unbearable.

NARRATOR

Let's start with your profession.

LUDWIG

I should have become a painter. That much is certain. Then I could have smeared the world with paint to my liking. As a musician, I almost starved.

NARRATOR

Come on, please don't exaggerate like that again. You didn't starve. On the contrary. Your paternal friend and patron Rainer predicted it:

RAINER (*in echo*)

Beethoven is an attraction already. And once he is dead

sings 5th Symphony



... Beethoven busts, Beethoven pralines, Beethoven Museum, Beethoven Poodcaasts!!!

fade out, voiceover

LUDWIG

Once I am dead, of course, I'm considered a Viennese. Sure. Ridiculous!

NARRATOR

On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate your time in Vienna?

LUDWIG

Pheew...well, at the time I did feel quite out of place sometimes. Those noble scumbags will endure a favourite only until he becomes uncomfortable. So, I'd give it a 2 to 3.

NARRATOR

But the life annuity was a nice gesture of Rainer's, don't you agree?

LUDWIG

Well after all, this is about the freedom of the arts!! What do a few lousy ducats matter? It is the nobility's goddamned duty and obligation to ensure that music is brought into the world. At the risk of repeating myself: People in Vienna only know how to talk about food and drink.

NARRATOR

Come on, be honest, Ludwig; where else in the world would you have been able to indulge in your foibles so completely?

LUDWIG

Pffff ... no idea. Saarbrücken? Kempten? In Canton Aargau?

NARRATOR

Oh come on, come on! That was only possible in Vienna. Composing in your undies, repeated water damage, moving house 47 times, and insulting everyone who doesn't manage to get out of your way. Add to that a stupendous consumption of pianos ...

LUDWIG

I can't help it, I have a strong left hand.

NARRATOR

Even kind-hearted Nanette called you the piano strangler.

LUDWIG

Oh, Nanette. Her pianos were a league of their own. But too quiet, unfortunately. It's got to make a rumble! BAM!!

Bowling alley. Nine-pin strike!

NARRATOR

That much eccentricity would have been too much even for the English. Cue career plans.

LUDWIG

The Brits have disappointed me just as much as the Austrians or the French. And I am not just talking about the war here. They offered me money for an imitation of my beginner's symphony. Hello?

NARRATOR

Well, a thousand pounds, after all.

LUDWIG

A Beethoven is not for sale.

NARRATOR

Instead, others are getting filthy rich off your music. Karajan shortened your Ninth into the European Hymn and cashed in on the royalties.

LUDWIG

Karajan is dead. Beethoven lives.

NARRATOR

That depends on your point of view. How do you like this: the Ode to Joy has been made to serve as a hymn for dictators, unjust states, and torture regimes. Hitler declared himself to be the hero of the Eroica.

LUDWIG

It's a pity that evil people like songs too. If they need to, they steal from the good ones. That reminds me: Who is making money off my works now?

NARRATOR

iTunes and Spotify.

LUDWIG

These two gangsters should be put in jail!

NARRATOR

A chap named Kurt Eisner claimed you for the Socialist cause. He said: In the epic class struggle of the proletariat glows the divine spark of joy, emanating from the society of misery and happenstance to shine on the artwork of a new society.

LUDWIG

I like that. He gets it.

GRILLPARZER (*in echo*)

So far, all revolutions have proven one thing – you can change a lot of things, but not human nature.

LUDWIG

My dear Grillparzer, old friend! A hopeless monarchist and state official. Why is he showing up at my final interview?

NARRATOR

Well, we've already reached the final item. Capacity for teamwork.

LUDWIG

Oh dear. I have always longed for solitude, but whenever I was alone, I was the unhappiest person alive.

NARRATOR

Nice phrasing.

LUDWIG

It's a quote. I did like to rip off stuff, too. But in a way that no one noticed.

NARRATOR

Oh Ludwig. You truly transcend all categories. You are a global event. A connection to eternity. An avatar. A galaxy in your own right ... I'll leave this assessment sheet now. Nobody will ever look at it anyway.

LUDWIG

Does that mean we are done here? Then I'm off to play piano. Bye-bye!

NARRATOR

See ya!

MUSIC. How about a Viennese song, like

NARRATOR

Let's have another bottle of wine

Holloderoh!

It need not be the end of the line

Holloderoh!

And once it's gone we won't make a fuss

Holloderoh!

But start all over, all of us, hello!

5'50

FINIS

Postscript.

MUSIC. Misty Drone

Harnessing of horses.

MONA

Roll Over Beethoven. A sitcom from old Vienna in nine acts
by Johannes Mayr and Ulrich Bassenge.

With Christoph Maria Herbst as Ludwig

Sandra Kreisler as the Narrator

Anikó Donáth as Mrs Schnaps

Jürg Kienberger as Schnyder

Helmut Berger as Archduke Rudolph, a.k.a. Rainer

Gottfried Breitfuss as Emperor Franz and Schuppanzigh

Mona Petri as Marie Bigot and Johanna van Beethoven

Martin Ostermeier as Grillparzer

Stefan Merki as Goethe and Landlord

Barbara Falter as Kaspar van Beethoven

Raphael Clamer as Rossini and Monsieur Bigot

Barbara Horvath as Nanette Streicher.

Fortepiano: Christian Ludwig Mayer

Sound engineers: Basil Kneubühler and Helge Schwarz

Directors: Ulrich Bassenge and Johannes Mayr.

A co-production of Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen and Bayerischer Rundfunk.

Dramatic advisers: Wolfram Höll and Katja Huber.

1'17