



# Ludwig van BEETHOVEN

## *Overture to King Stephen, Op. 117*

**Ludwig van Beethoven** (11 December 1770 - 26 March 1827) was a German composer and pianist. A crucial figure in the transition between the Classical and Romantic eras in Western art music, he remains one of the most famous and influential of all composers. His best-known compositions include 9 symphonies, 5 piano concertos, 1 violin concerto, 32 piano sonatas, 16 string quartets, his great Mass the *Missa solemnis*, and one opera, *Fidelio*. Born in Bonn, then the capital of the Electorate of Cologne and part of the Holy Roman Empire, Beethoven displayed his musical talents at an early age and was taught by his father Johann van Beethoven and by composer and conductor Christian Gottlob Neefe. At the age of 21 he moved to Vienna, where he began studying composition with Joseph Haydn, and gained a reputation as a virtuoso pianist. He lived in Vienna until his death. By his late 20s his hearing began to deteriorate, and by the last decade of his life he was almost totally deaf. In 1811 he gave up conducting and performing in public but continued to compose; many of his most admired works come from these last 15 years of his life.

**King Stephen, Op. 117** (*König Stephan*) is a commemorative work composed by Ludwig van Beethoven in 1811. It includes an *overture in E flat major* and *nine vocal numbers*. Only the overture is usually played today. The title refers to King Stephen I, founder of the kingdom of Hungary in the year 1000. In 1808, Emperor Francis I of Austria commissioned the construction of a large theatre in Budapest, to alleviate the nationalist feelings incipient in Hungary and to celebrate the loyalty of Hungary to the Austrian monarchy. At the time of the inauguration of this theatre in 1811, Beethoven was commissioned to put to music two commemorative texts written by August von Kotzebue: *King Étienne* and *Ruins of Athens*. These overtures are among the least played orchestral works of the composer.