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Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

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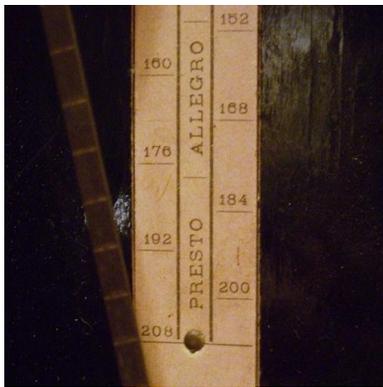
Saturday, **September 7th, 2013**, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

1813: Wagner, Vanhal, Beethoven

Richard Wagner (1813-1883). [Wesendonck Lieder](#) (1857), orch. Felix Mottl. Measha Brueggergosman, Cleveland Orchestra, Franz Welser-Möst. DG 4778773, Tr 5-9. 20:10

Johann Baptist Vanhal (1739-1813). [Symphony in C minor](#) (c.1770). Toronto Camerata, Kevin Mallon. Naxos 557483, Tr 5-8. 16:24

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827). [Wellington's Victory](#) (1813). London Symphony Orchestra, Antal Dorati. Mercury 434360, Tr 4-5. 15:13



The two most famous composers for whom 2013 is a bicentennial are Richard Wagner and Giuseppe Verdi. They were born in 1813, but in the spirit of Discoveries we'll dig a little deeper to see what else happened that year.

Wagner's *Wesendonck* songs and *Siegfried Idyll* are his only non-operatic works heard with any regularity these days. The songs are unusual also because the words are by someone else (most of the time he set his own texts). The *Wesendonck* of the title is the poet Mathilde Wesendonck, wife of Otto, a financial supporter of Wagner's in the 1850s. She may have been the muse for the opera he was about to start, *Tristan und Isolde*, but in any case, he specifically called two of the five songs "studies" for *Tristan*.

Wagner wrote these for voice and piano and did orchestrate one of them. But Felix Mottl, an excellent conductor who specialized in Wagner's operas, orchestrated the entire set, and that's the version most used today. Mottl conducted *Tristan* in Bayreuth in 1886, and during his 100th performance of that opera, in Munich in 1911, he suffered a heart attack and died soon after.

A composer's death bicentennial for 1813 belongs to Johann Baptist Vanhal (also spelled Wanhal and many other ways). A well-known composer from Bohemia of more than 70 lively symphonies, he worked most of his life in Vienna, writing Masses and other church music. He also made a good living composing piano music for the growing retail trade, including popular incidental and "battle" pieces. He had given up his earlier interest in large instrumental works, but his symphonies are charming, and very much in the spirit of Haydn. Fortunately, these have started to be recorded in recent years, so that we have open to us another window into the Classical period.

One birth, one death, and for one piece composed in 1813, we choose the famous (or infamous) *Wellington's Victory* by Beethoven. Having nothing to do with Napoleon and Waterloo (that was in 1815), this celebrates Wellington's defeat of Napoleon's brother Joseph Bonaparte at Vitoria in Spain.

At word of the victory, Johann Nepomuk Mälzel, who would patent a time-keeping metronome, commissioned Beethoven to write a piece to be played on another Mälzel invention, the panharmonicon, which played wind instruments by itself. Beethoven wrote something too big, though; only a large (actual) band could play it. Beethoven's solution was to expand it for orchestra. He added feuding percussionists to represent the armies, as in any proper "battle" piece, and the result is *Wellington's Victory*, a mélange of pomp, nationalist tunes, and cannon that, if not considered among Beethoven's finest works, certainly fits the bill for a celebration.

With apologies to Verdi for the oversight, we nevertheless take a snapshot of 1813 for a birth, a death, a creation, and, keeping time, a bicentennial.

Hosted by [Kile Smith](#), former Curator of the Fleisher Collection, and [Jack Moore](#), Program Director of [WRTI](#). In *Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection* we uncover the unknown, rediscover the little-known, and take a fresh look at some of the remarkable treasures housed in the Fleisher Collection of Orchestral Music, at the Parkway Central Library of the [Free Library of Philadelphia](#). The Fleisher Collection is the largest lending library of orchestral performance material in the world. For recording details, please go to our [web page](#). For a detailed list of all our shows, please visit our [archives](#).