



LUDWIG'S LOVER: John Klapproth, of Greytown, has written a book about the love life of a famous composer, entitled *Beethoven's Only Beloved: Josephine*.

PHOTO/AMIE HICKLAND

The score on Beethoven's love

Wairarapa writer lifts veil on mystery woman who captured German composer's heart

By Gerald Ford

John Klapproth fell in love with the music of Beethoven decades ago, as a young man in the aptly named city of Ludwigshosen, Germany.

Now in his adopted home of Greytown, Klapproth has written a groundbreaking biography of the woman he claims was Beethoven's one true love.

Klapproth has been living down under since 1987 — first for nine years in Upper Hut, then 11 years in Australia, before settling in Greytown in 2007.

The psychologist turned computer programmer clearly remembers the first time he really heard Beethoven, at 28 years of age.

"I had it on the radio in an apartment in Germany," Klapproth said.

"I was all of a sudden so excited I turned it up so loud that the neighbours complained."

The piece was *Symphony Number 8*, composed in 1812, and Klapproth believes that it expresses the high point in

Beethoven's otherwise unrequited lifelong love.

Beethoven, a bachelor, left behind a letter that has excited much debate over the years, addressed to a mystery woman known as his "immortal beloved" and "only beloved".

Klapproth has researched this mystery since that first radio symphony, and has now published his findings as the book, *Beethoven's Only Beloved: Josephine!*

By Klapproth's reckoning, much of Beethoven's music was romantically inspired, but especially *Symphony Number 8*.

"It was the moment he met (after a long absence) his immortal beloved, whom I believe was Josephine. It symbolises the sudden excitement of meeting a long-lost, but not forgotten, person he saw on the street."

Josephine Countess von Brunsvik was a pupil of Beethoven, a beauty admired by high society in Vienna and married against her will to a nobleman, who died leaving her with four young children.

Klapproth narrates

"Josephine's conflict between her love for Beethoven and the strict obligations of the rigid class structure of her time".

He believes despite a brief liaison that resulted in a daughter who could only have belonged to Beethoven, the pair stayed apart throughout their lives.

"Beethoven was very morality based, very Catholic from his upbringing."

Klapproth describes as "close to certain" his contention Beethoven fathered one of Josephine's children, and he believes it could be tested through DNA if the descendants were willing.

"Some of them are scared to death to get this confirmed."

Klapproth originally penned *Josephine* as the manuscript of a movie, but with no producer or director, he "thought I would try it as a book".

It was written during a four-week break from work and as an alternative to something else that may have taken up Klapproth's time.

"I was bored with the soccer World Cup; I couldn't listen to the commentators," Klapproth said. "I wanted to something interesting and more active."

Inspiration for the movie and the book had come from Beethoven's more romantic pieces.

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John Klapproth, author

These include Opus 50, a romance with violin and orchestra "so moving it brought tears my eyes".

Another piece Klapproth describes as "a sad song, a song about yearning, that can be related to events in Beethoven's life".

The famous pastoral symphony, Number 6, was one Klapproth played while courting a young lady in Germany.

"It appeared she liked it; she's still with me."

The author's enthusiasm for Beethoven was such he bought a CD player in the late 1970s.

He has recordings of every known piece Beethoven composed, even obscure and unfinished works, and of many several times over to compare performances.

Josephine is the first biography written in English about Countess Josephine, and is designed to be acceptable at a university as well as a popular level. The work was edited by "a renowned Beethoven scholar" and is also being published in German.

"It has been edited to withstand scrutiny and ensure it is something that would be accepted in Germany as a scholarly book. It could be controversial, but controversy is good publicity."

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