

Programme Note by Chris Darwin: please use freely for non-commercial purposes

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827) 7 Variations on 'God Save the King', WoO 78 (1803)

Along with about 140 other classical composers, Jimi Hendrix (spontaneously), the Sex Pistols (controversially) and Queen (aptly), Beethoven produced a version of our anonymous anthem 'God Save the King'. In 1803, he offered his publisher Breitkopf these 7 variations for piano along with 5 jaunty variations on 'Rule Britannia'. It is not clear why he chose to write them. Perhaps they reflected his admiration for an admiring Britain and also provided him with some light relief from writing the 'Eroica' Symphony. Incidentally, WoO 78 refers to a 1955 catalogue of those of Beethoven's works that had been published without opus numbers (Werke ohne Opuszahl).