

## Fur Elise

*Read through this information about Beethoven's composition commonly known as Fur- Elise and then listen to a recording of the piece. Do any of these facts make more sense when you hear the music?*

- Actual but rarely used title - Bagatelle No. 25 in A minor
- But it's a nickname that should never have existed, Beethoven did indeed include a dedication on the manuscript but it was 'Fur Therese.'
- It is widely acknowledged that Therese, perhaps the true dedicatee of Fur Elise was Therese Malfattie, a woman to whom Beethoven proposed in 1810 – the same year he composed Fur Elise. She was also the owner of the manuscript.
- Beethoven composed the piece on 27 April 1810. At this stage, Beethoven's hearing was getting gradually weaker.
- As he got progressively more deaf, his pieces got higher and higher. This might account for the relatively high pitch of Fur Elise which reaches an E7 – two Es about a top soprano C.
- Fur Elise wasn't published until 1865, nearly forty years after Beethoven's death on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1827
- The opening phrase of 'Fur Elise' is a simple six note phrase, and one of the best know motifs in classical music. The simple beginning of alternating E-D sharp is a *minor Second* interval that sets the tone for the entire piece. It is a gentle plea by Beethoven that resolves itself in the latter part of the phrase (B-D natural -C – A). The final note establishes the key of the piece, **A minor**.
- Fur Elise, unlike many classical masterpieces is an accessible piece to play. The simple right hand melody is accompanied with a sequence of broken chords in the left hand.
- The piece is in **Rondo Form** with the main melody reappearing 3 times. The form can be summarized as ABACA.
- In the C section, Beethoven employs a pedal point in the form of a pulsing A note.

### The famous opening phrase

The image shows the first six measures of the opening phrase of 'Fur Elise'. The music is in 3/8 time and A minor. The tempo is marked 'Poco moto.' and the dynamics are 'pp' (pianissimo). The right hand plays a simple melody starting with E4, D4 sharp, B3, D4 natural, C4, and A3. The left hand plays broken chords: E4, D4 sharp, B3; E4, D4 sharp, B3, A3; E4, D4 sharp, B3, A3; E4, D4 sharp, B3, A3; E4, D4 sharp, B3, A3; and E4, D4 sharp, B3, A3. The piece ends with a fermata over the final A3 note.