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REDEMPTION • TRANSCENDENCE
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BEETHOVEN'S NINE

ODE TO HUMANITY

A FILM BY
LARRY WEINSTEIN

Electronic Press Kit

3B-PRODUKTION AND RIDDLE FILMS PRESENTS
IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH ZDF AND SRG SSR IN ASSOCIATION WITH ARTE TVO AND UNITEL IN COLLABORATION WITH NRK SVT AND YLE
A LARRY WEINSTEIN FILM "BEETHOVEN'S NINE" FEATURING KERI-LYNN WILSON UKRAINIAN FREEDOM ORCHESTRA GABRIELA LENA FRANK
MONIKA BRODKA STEVEN PINKER REBECCA NEWBERGER GOLDSTEIN CHARLES M. SCHULZ LEONARD BERNSTEIN AND LARRY WEINSTEIN
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY JOHN MINH TRAN SVEN JAKOB-ENGELMANN AND FILIP DROZDZ EDITING BY DAVID NEW MUSIC BY LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY WOLFGANG BERGMANN AND SARAH POLLEY PRODUCED BY JASON CHARTERS BERNHARD VON HÜLSEN LIAM ROMALIS AND MARIA WILLER
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY LARRY WEINSTEIN



3B-PRODUKTION
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Beethoven's NINE

SYNOPSIS

LOGLINE

When director Larry Weinstein is pulled into his own documentary about Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, his film about war, hope and music's relevance to our society today becomes a deeply personal exploration.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

In early 2023, filmmaker Larry Weinstein set out to make a documentary about Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. It was supposed to be about how far we have come in the two hundred years since it was written. But when world events pull Larry into his own film, the question becomes a deeply personal one. Beethoven's Nine is a documentary about music, but also about war and hope. It follows nine unique individuals, including Ukrainian musicians, a deaf composer, a Polish rock star, a best-selling author, a legendary cartoonist and Weinstein himself, as they try to better understand the legacy of Beethoven's Ninth, the composer's own struggles, the inspiration music can provide and how humanity continues to look for hope even in the darkest times.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Directed by Oscar-nominated and Emmy-winning filmmaker Larry Weinstein (*Dreaming of a Jewish Christmas*, *September Songs*, *Making Overtures*), Beethoven's Nine is a deeply personal documentary exploring Beethoven's hope for a better world as expressed in his Ninth Symphony, and how far we have come in the two hundred years since it was written.

Inspired by the ideals of the Enlightenment, Beethoven's Ninth was the first symphony in history to be accompanied by words - words that were about love and freedom, hope and peace, embracing all of humanity and "kissing the millions." It was written both as a love letter to all of humankind and at the same time as a powerful protest piece. No matter how bad the world had become, this was a symphony dedicated to posterity - when we might finally all come together to embrace the ideals that make life worth living.

The film poses the question: Are we there yet? Are we finally worthy of the hopes and dreams of this highly evolved and thoroughly modern artist two hundred years later? Or has the Enlightenment fallen into an irretrievable abyss of darkness?

To answer that question, Weinstein explores the stories of nine individuals, all connected to this symphony in different ways. From behind-the-scenes rehearsals and a performance of the Ninth by Canadian/Ukrainian conductor **Keri-Lynn Wilson** and **The Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra** to the inspirational, Grammy-winning composer **Gabriela Lena Frank**, who was born deaf and sheds light on Beethoven's own hearing loss and how that affected his music and that of all the composers who followed him. The film travels to Warsaw to meet the Polish pop star **Brodka** and then to California to visit **Jean Schulz** whose husband **Charles** introduced millions of children to Beethoven through his comic strip *Peanuts*. In Berlin, we are taken to the site of one of **Leonard Bernstein's** last and most famous concerts, when he conducted the Ninth right after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and finally we travel to Massachusetts to hear from the psychologist **Steven Pinker** and philosopher **Rebecca Newberger Goldstein**, who help trace the links from the Enlightenment thinkers to Beethoven's masterpiece to today.

Finally, as recent life and world events collide, **Weinstein** himself is pulled into the story in an unexpected and heart-wrenching way, shining a light on how it is impossible to separate art from life, and making Beethoven's hope for humanity a personal quest for Weinstein as well.

Beethoven's NINE

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

I have just directed a film which inadvertently has become the most personal I've ever made. What was to have been a tribute to the greatest of all classical composers took a violent turn that has affected me and my family in a terrible and terrifying way.

The film opens with a musical explosion - the first notes of the second movement of Beethoven's 9th Symphony. It saunters its way through melodies that seem to ask the questions, "Why? Why are we here? Where are we going?" Music that wordlessly foreshadows the very central themes of the film to come. A conductor is seen making her way through the darkened corridors of a concert hall, musicians ready themselves to go onstage, a choir warms up with eerily dissonant vocal harmonies. All the while a narrator questions why Beethoven deliberately chose to alter the course of musical history by using words sung in a symphony - something that had never been done before: "Why? Why were these idealistic words so important to Beethoven? What were Beethoven's intentions – did he really believe that one day humankind would be capable of achieving harmony?"

Canadian/Ukrainian conductor Keri-Lynn Wilson gathers the forces of her formidable musicians who comprise the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra. They perform onstage in front of a massive Ukrainian flag. The music intercuts with images and sounds of rockets and explosions over the cities of the Ukraine. Like Beethoven, we too are forced to wonder whether we can ever achieve a better world that we all seek.

Beethoven's Nine is an intricate weave of stories of nine characters of various ages, genders, backgrounds and walks of life who are all somehow linked by their connection to Beethoven's masterpiece, and all that it has come to represent. They range from conductors to environmentalists to a rockstar, a comic strip artist, a social psychologist, a philosopher, a deaf composer, a filmmaker and an orchestra recently founded upon the very same principles that inspired Beethoven's Ninth – the ideals of peace, freedom, compassion and belief in humanity.

The stories of the nine connect and overlap with one another across continents. The theme is strong and eternal: to understand the motivations of the greatest of composers to write a piece that was unlike any other. Beethoven, aware of his mortality and pain, wrote the first symphony in history accompanied by words – words that were about love and freedom, hope and peace, embracing all of humanity and "kissing the millions". He wrote this music both as a love letter to all of humankind and at the same time as a powerful protest piece. No matter how bad the world has become, this was a symphony dedicated to posterity, when we might finally all come together in order to embrace ideals that make life worth living.

As we were in the midst of filming our subjects for **Beethoven's Nine**, a horrifying and historically unprecedented event gave us a new harrowing focus. On October 7th Hamas militants left Gaza for Israel and sped to several communities, including my sister Judih's Kibbutz Nir Oz. Even before arriving at the kibbutz, they encountered and immediately shot my sister and her husband, Gadi, making them the first civilian casualties of the entire war. Gadi most certainly succumbed to his wounds immediately, but Judih's fate was unconfirmed. Soon after the attack, my cinematographer and dear friend, John Minh Tran insisted that he turn the camera on me because it related so strongly to the themes of our film. The idea was abhorrent to me, but I acquiesced. Since then, my experience and my sister's story have become intertwined with the other stories in the film, as is the question of how we remain objective about the stories we tell as filmmakers, or if we ever really can be anything but immersed in our own subjectivity.

Hope, and what to hope for, is the at core of **Beethoven's Nine**. After two hundred years since the Ninth Symphony was written, are we any closer to its ideals? Are we yet worthy of the hopes and dreams of the highly evolved and thoroughly modern artist who composed it? Or has the Enlightenment fallen into an irretrievable abyss of darkness?

- Larry Weinstein, April 2024

Beethoven's NINE CAST



Gabriela Lena Frank

Currently serving as Composer-in-Residence with the storied Philadelphia Orchestra and included in the Washington Post's list of the most significant women composers in history (August 2017), identity has always been at the center of composer/pianist Gabriela Lena Frank's music. Born in Berkeley, California to a mother of mixed Peruvian/Chinese ancestry and a father of Lithuanian/Jewish descent, Gabriela explores her multicultural heritage through her compositions. Winner of a Latin Grammy and nominated for Grammys as both composer and pianist, in 2020 Frank was invited to compose a response to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony called Pachamama Meets an Ode, which drew upon her Peruvian heritage and which premiered at Carnegie Hall, conducted by Yannick Nézet-Seguin.

Keri-Lynn Wilson & The Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra

Keri-Lynn Wilson was born in Winnipeg, Canada to Ukrainian immigrants, and formed the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra in 2022 as a way of channeling her anger at Russia's invasion of Ukraine into action. Under the patronage of Ukraine's First Lady, Olena Zelenska, the orchestra's musicians are drawn from the Kyiv National Opera, Odesa Philharmonic Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, Lviv Philharmonic Orchestra, and Kharkiv Opera, among other Ukrainian ensembles. Outside of Ukraine, players come from ensembles including the Tonkünstler Orchestra of Vienna, Belgian National Orchestra, and Staatskapelle Berlin. Supported by the Metropolitan Opera and the Polish National Opera, the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra has performed at the Kennedy Center, Konzerthaus Berlin, the Lincoln Center, the Lucerne Festival and Royal Albert Hall among many other venues across Europe and North America. They will tour once again in 2024.



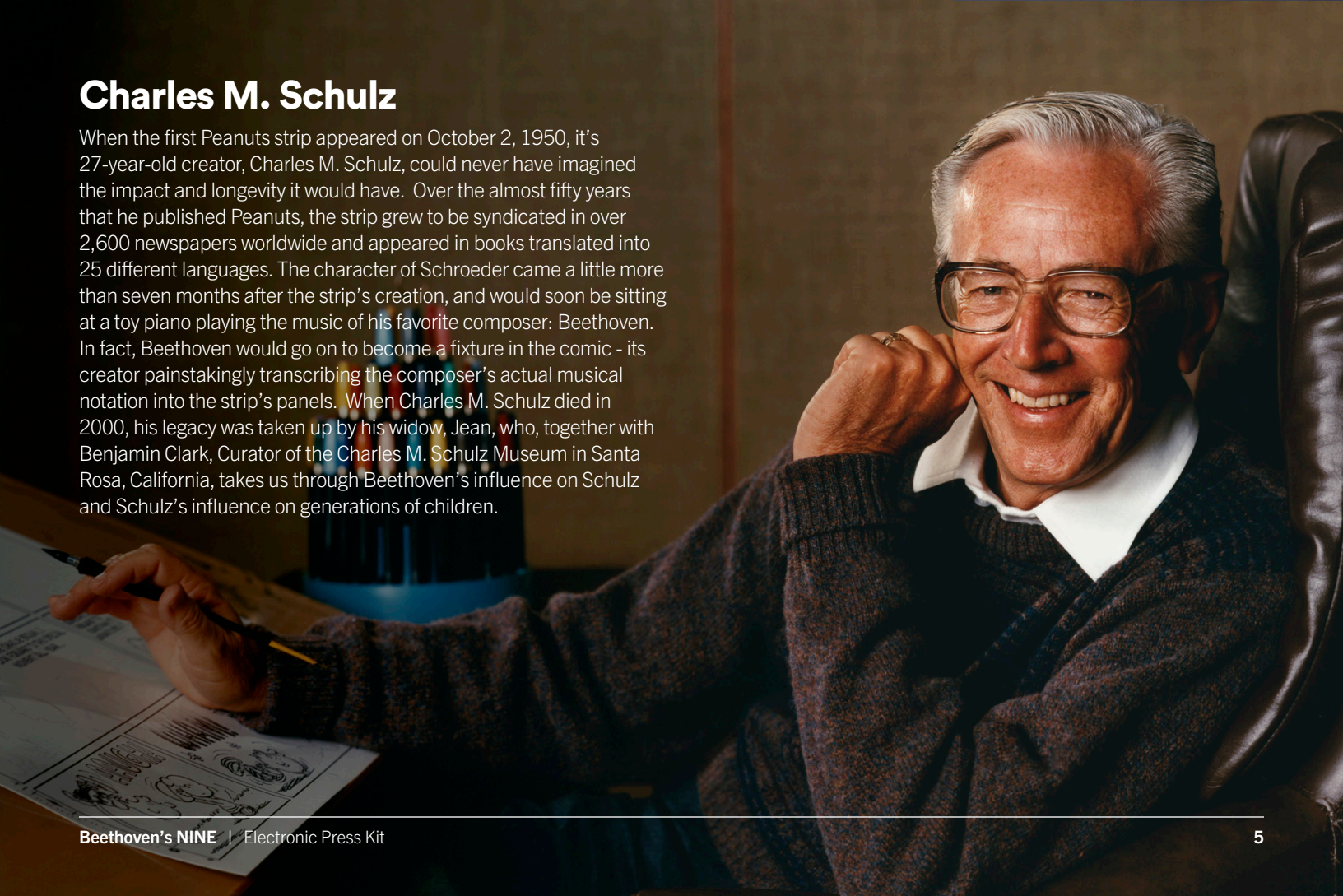
A portrait of Monika Brodka, a Polish musician, with curly hair and a yellow shirt with black abstract patterns.

Beethoven's NINE CAST

Brodka

Polish musician Monika Brodka's fearlessly individualistic approach has led to her being one of Poland's most original voices. Her music has many inspirations, including her own family's folk roots, and it continuously defies expectations. Much as Beethoven did 200 years ago, Brodka's art questions the status quo, turning traditions on their head and showing a simultaneous and seemingly contradictory mistrust and embrace of humanity. Brodka has released five albums since she rose to fame as the winner of Polish Pop Idol's third season in 2004. In addition to being a songwriter and musician, she is also a director, having won a Berlin Music Video Award for her video for the song "Game Change" and a Fryderyk for the video for Krzysztof Zalewski's song "Annuska."

Charles M. Schulz

A portrait of Charles M. Schulz, an elderly man with glasses, smiling and sitting at a desk with a pen and a comic strip panel.

When the first Peanuts strip appeared on October 2, 1950, it's 27-year-old creator, Charles M. Schulz, could never have imagined the impact and longevity it would have. Over the almost fifty years that he published Peanuts, the strip grew to be syndicated in over 2,600 newspapers worldwide and appeared in books translated into 25 different languages. The character of Schroeder came a little more than seven months after the strip's creation, and would soon be sitting at a toy piano playing the music of his favorite composer: Beethoven. In fact, Beethoven would go on to become a fixture in the comic - its creator painstakingly transcribing the composer's actual musical notation into the strip's panels. When Charles M. Schulz died in 2000, his legacy was taken up by his widow, Jean, who, together with Benjamin Clark, Curator of the Charles M. Schulz Museum in Santa Rosa, California, takes us through Beethoven's influence on Schulz and Schulz's influence on generations of children.

Beethoven's NINE CAST



Leonard Bernstein

If there is a single greatest inspiration for Keri-Lynn Wilson and the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra's performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Warsaw, it is probably Leonard Bernstein's 1989 performances marking the fall of the Berlin Wall, with musicians from East and West Berlin, the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union. Already nearing the end of his life, the concerts were a dream come true. As his biographer Humphrey Burton noted, they marked the climax in the public life of the world citizen Bernstein had become. Afterwards, Bernstein visited the wall, and borrowing a hammer from a young boy, Franz Kranke, he took his own turn tearing it down. Kranke and Bernstein's personal assistant at that time, Craig Urquhart, takes us back to those moments when peace, hope and optimism seemed possible.

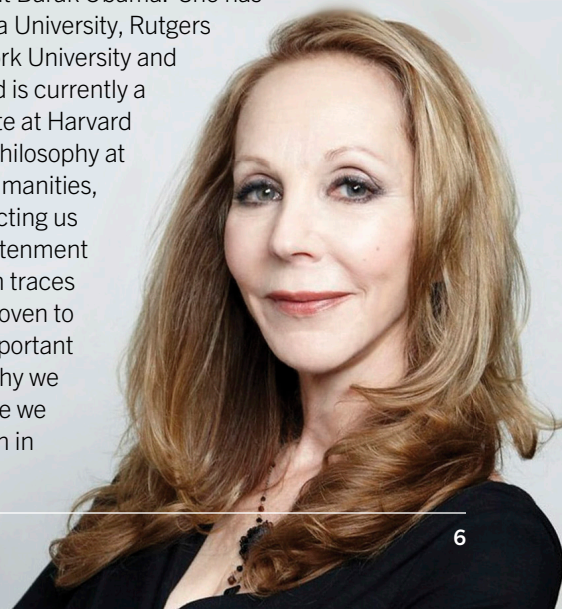
Steven Pinker

Steven Pinker is an experimental psychologist who conducts research in visual cognition, psycholinguistics, and social relations. He grew up in Montreal, Canada and earned his BA from McGill University and his PhD from Harvard. Currently Johnstone Professor of Psychology at Harvard, he has also taught at Stanford and MIT. Pinker has won numerous prizes for his research, his teaching, and his books, including *The Blank Slate*, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, and *Enlightenment Now*. He is an elected member of the National Academy of Sciences, a two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist, a Humanist of the Year, a recipient of nine honorary doctorates, and one of Foreign Policy's "World's Top 100 Public Intellectuals" and Time's "100 Most Influential People in the World Today." Pinker offers us a thoughtful argument for why the state of the world has never been better.



Rebecca Newberger Goldstein

A philosopher, novelist, and public intellectual, Rebecca Newberger Goldstein has written ten books, both fiction and non-fiction, and holds a Ph.D. in philosophy of science from Princeton University. Her publications include *Plato at the Googleplex*, *Why Philosophy Won't Go Away*, *36 Arguments for the Existence of God: A Work of Fiction* and the short-story collection, *Strange Attractors*, a New York Times Notable Book of the Year. Goldstein was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2005 and received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2006. In September 2015, she was awarded the National Humanities Medal by President Barack Obama. She has taught at Columbia University, Rutgers University, New York University and Trinity College, and is currently a Research Associate at Harvard and Professor of Philosophy at New College of Humanities, London. In connecting us to the great Enlightenment thinkers, Goldstein traces a path from Beethoven to today and asks important questions about why we are here and where we can find inspiration in the world today.



Beethoven's NINE CREW

Larry Weinstein, Writer/Director

Larry Weinstein has been cited as “one of the world’s pre-eminent directors of documentaries on musical subjects,” his 40 films blending dramatic, documentary and experimental techniques. *Ravel’s Brain*, *September Songs*, and *The War Symphonies* have all received Emmy Awards and several others have been nominated for that prize. Larry’s first film, *Making Overtures*, received an Oscar nomination. He has won dozens of Gemini and Canadian Screen Awards. His *Solidarity Song* won the Louvre’s Classique en Images Award as “the world’s best film on the arts over a 3-year span” and he has won more awards at the Golden Prague Festival than any other director.

Recent films include *The Devil’s Horn*, a documentary/fantasy about the history and curse of the saxophone; a biography of iconic French actress Leslie Caron in *The Reluctant Star*; *Propaganda: The Selling of Lies* and the Emmy-nominated dramatic/documentary/music-fantasy film *Dreaming of a Jewish Christmas*.

Weinstein’s films have been screened in 50 countries and he has been honoured with numerous retrospectives, including Hot Docs (Toronto), MOFFOM (Prague), DocAviv (Tel Aviv), Look of Sound (Bremen), Impara l’Arte Festival (Padova, Italy), The Havana Film Festival, and The Jakarta Film Festival. At Cannes’ MIPDOC 2007, he was named “International Trailblazer” for his “creativity, originality and risk-taking and pushing the genre of documentary forward.”



Beethoven's NINE CREW

Jason Charters & Liam Romalis

Producers, Riddle Films

Producers Liam Romalis and Jason Charters created Riddle Films in 2003 to dedicated to capturing the world of the performing arts and culture and making it accessible to as broad an audience as possible. Their work has streamed, screened and aired on television, online and at film festivals around the world, including the CBC, BBC, PBS, ARTE, NHK, the Toronto International Film Festival, the Sundance Film Festival and New York's Museum of Modern Art. With a strong belief in supporting arts organizations and artists, Riddle Films has partnered with the Canada's Royal Conservatory of Music, the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Azrieli Music Prize, Against the Grain Theatre, Crow's Theatre and the Necessary Angel Theatre Company in addition to artists such as the Gryphon Trio, the Afiara String Quartet, Dione Taylor, Serena Ryder, the Nathaniel Dett Chorale and Danny Grossman to name but a few. Productions include the Emmy-nominated music documentary, *Dreaming of a Jewish Christmas*, the documentary and installation film *The Group of Seven Guitars* produced for the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, the Canadian Screen Award nominated music series *God's Greatest Hits*, and *Joel Krosnick: What to Play Next*, an intimate portrait of the famed cellist as he retired after 42 years with the Juilliard String Quartet.

Wolfgang Bergmann

Executive Producer

Wolfgang Bergmann is CEO of ARTE Germany, ARTE Coordinator for ZDF and chair of ARTE's group Musica. For more than three decades in the TV business he has been focused on arts programs. He has initiated, coproduced and commissioned numerous award-winning films and documentaries and strands for cultural TV events on an international scale. His many credits include *Pina* by Wim Wenders, 2020 – *A Very Particular Year* by Cristina Trebbi and Jobst Knigge, *Kabale und Liebe* by Leander Haussmann and *Propaganda - The Art of Telling Lies* by Larry Weinstein.

Bernhard von Hülse & Maria Willer

Producers, 3B-Produktion

Founded in 2013 by the siblings Bernhard von Hülse and Maria Willer, 3B-Produktion has quickly established a firm place in the German speaking and international production landscape with award-winning productions that are focusing on music, the arts, history and current affairs. Particularly noteworthy are the series *Art & Crime* (Grimme Award) and *The Antagonists: Rivalry in Art*, the creative documentaries *The Florence Foster Jenkins Story* (Golden Prague 2017 award winner) and *Leonard Bernstein: A Genius Divided* (Grand Prix Golden Prague 2018). Currently the feature docs *Werner Herzog: Radical Dreamer* and the Emmy-nominated music documentary *Music Under the Swastika* are on festival tour (Telluride, IDFA, FIPADOC, Santa Barbara, FIFA, etc.). 3B has been producing for and co-producing with nearly all German public broadcasters for their main programs as well as for ARTE or 3sat. On an international scale 3B has been co-producing with broadcasters such as SRF, ORF, NRK and SVT and has recently finished three co-productions with European co-producers: WERNER HERZOG with Springfilms (UK), *Piano Dreams* with Gambit Pictures (Ireland) and *An Army of Women* with Differ Media (Norway).

Sarah Polley

Executive Producer

Sarah Polley is a Canadian filmmaker, writer, political activist and retired actress. Polley made her feature film directorial debut with *Away from Her*, for which she won the Canadian Screen Award for Best Director and was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. Polley's second film, *Take This Waltz*, premiered at the 2011 Toronto International Film Festival, followed by her first documentary film, *Stories We Tell*. She also wrote the miniseries *Alias Grace*, based on the 1996 novel of the same name by Margaret Atwood. In 2022, Polley wrote and directed the film *Women Talking*, based on the 2018 novel of the same name by Miriam Toews, which last year won the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay.

Beethoven's NINE CREW

David New

Editor

David New is an editor, writer and director, based in Toronto, Canada. His many credits as editor include *Mr. Dressup: The Magic of Make-Believe*, *Propaganda: The Art of Selling Lies*, *Dreaming of a Jewish Christmas* and *Songs of Freedom*. He is a Canadian Screen Award-winner for *Songs of Freedom* and a three-time Gemini Award-winner for editing the performing arts films *Ravel's Brain*, *September Songs: the Music of Kurt Weill and Satie* and *Suzanne*.

John Minh Tran

Cinematographer (Canada/USA)

John Minh Tran, CSC, is an award-winning Canadian cinematographer who works in documentary, documentary series, drama and commercials. Notable projects include *Borealis* (Winner, CSA for Best Photography, Documentary or Factual), *Waterlife* (Winner, CSC for Best Cinematography in a Documentary) and *Our Man in Tehran* (Winner, CSA for Best Photography in a Documentary, Documentary Program or Factual Series). Tran is currently at work on the documentary series *An Optimist's Guide to the Planet*, starring Nikolaj Coster-Waldau (*Game of Thrones*, *The Last Thing He Told Me*).

Sven Jakob-Engelmann

Cinematographer (Germany)

Beethoven's Nine is the second Beethoven documentary Sven Jakob-Engelmann has shot, having worked on the film *Beethoven's Ninth – Symphony for the World* in 2019. A veteran of German film and television, Jakob-Engelmann was the cinematographer on 3B-Produktion's *Music Under the Swastika – The Maestro and the Cellist of Auschwitz*, which screened at the Montreal International Festival of Films on Art (FIFA), was nominated for an International Emmy Award for Arts Programming and won the Czech Crystal for Documentary Programs dedicated to Music, Dance and Theatre at the 2023 Golden Prague International Television Festival.

Filip Drozd

Cinematographer (Poland)

Filip Drożdż is a Warsaw-based cinematographer who has worked on many award-winning documentary and fiction films. Having studied at the Academy of Fine Arts and graduated from the prestigious National Film School in Łódź, Poland, his films have been recognized in some of the top festivals around the world, such as Sundance (feature-length documentary competition), IDFA (Special Jury Award), Locarno (Semaine de la critique), Camerimage (Golden Frog nominee), HumanDoc (Grand Prix) and Doc Against Gravity (Grand Prix). Drożdż's main point of interest is exploring the boundaries between fiction and documentary cinema, and finding new forms. His debut fiction film, a dark comedy titled *A Night at the Kindergarten*, premiered on Netflix in December 2022.

Beethoven's NINE

CREDITS

Writer/Director

Larry Weinstein

Producers

Jason Charters
Bernhard von Hülse
Liam Romalis
Maria Willer

Executive Producers

Wolfgang Bergmann
Sarah Polley

Editor

David New

Cinematographers

John Minh Tran
Sven Jakob-Engelmann
Filip Drożdż

Cast

Keri-Lynn Wilson
Gabriela Lena Frank
The Ukrainian
Freedom Orchestra
Rebecca Newberger
Goldstein
Steven Pinker
Jean Schulz
Monika Brodka
Franz Kranke
Craig Urquhart
John Meyer
Helen Meyer
Benjamin Clark
Larry Weinstein
Ali Weinstein

Featuring

Charles M. Schulz
Leonard Bernstein

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Distribution by
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