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LA PHILHARMONIC'S TRAVELING VAN OFFERS VIRTUAL REALITY BEETHOVEN CONCERT

 WORK & LIFESTYLE

VAN Beethoven is a customized van that is outfitted with Oculus Rift headsets, forming a virtual reality concert hall.

Classical music has long carried a reputation as an exclusive art form, not least because concert tickets to see the world's greatest orchestras are usually prohibitively expensive. Now, an initiative by the LA Philharmonic hopes to change that, by using virtual reality to bring an incredible musical performance to the masses inside their traveling concert experience truck — the perfectly named VAN Beethoven.



VAN Beethoven is a customized van that will be touring Los Angeles this fall, decked out with carpet and seating from the Walt Disney Concert Hall and Oculus Rift headsets. Audience members enter the van, take a seat and put on the headset and high quality headphones. The viewer is then able to virtually experience a specially filmed concert of the LA Phil performing Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. The equipment enables them shift to different perspective within the concert hall — from behind the orchestra to among them — simply by moving their head. The soundtrack also shifts, according to the viewer's position, corresponding to the different acoustics they would hear.

The concert was recorded in collaboration with an interactive agency, using binaural sound recordings and 360 degrees 3D cameras. It is available to download as a free app for use with Samsung Gear VR headset. The VAN Beethoven will visit over ten locations in the coming month, including Grand Park, LA County Fair and Levitt Pavilion Pasadena. The initiative shows great potential for the use of VR in arts education: when the cost of virtual reality technology eventually lowers, a similar setup could be used by schools to introduce pupils to traditionally expensive art forms including classical music, opera and even theatre. How else could VR be used to make culture more inclusive?

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