

# About Beethoven



Musically, Beethoven was initially influenced by Bach, Mozart, and Haydn. Bach formed the basis of Beethoven's extensive study in counterpoint, and he was an admirer of the works of Mozart, most importantly their structure and thematic conventions. It is reported that as a young man, Beethoven travelled from his hometown of Bonn, Germany to the Austrian capital, Vienna, to perform some piano improvisations for Mozart. Mozart reportedly said, "keep your eyes on him; someday he will give the world something to talk about."

Beethoven was for some time a student of Haydn in Vienna and was influenced by his work, especially in structure and form. Haydn's use of accents and rests to create interest, tension and syncopation were also a likely influence on Beethoven along with his extensive development and repetition of simple motives as opposed to the more melodically driven work of Mozart.

From these beginnings in the Classical style, Beethoven found his own voice and sought to express music as the highest art form. He developed, in duration and complexity, all the classical genres and is considered a point of transition between the Classical and Romantic eras.

Beethoven's musical style developed alongside and was influenced by his life experiences. As a freelance composer, he was able to compose works as he wished and often channelled his own emotions into his music. This is not to say his music is always programmatic or a reflection of his current circumstances as he was able to write the most light-hearted and joyful music even at times of greatest difficulty. His developing and then total loss of hearing created feelings of utmost despair for Beethoven, and yet, his time in nature and walks in the country inspired some of the most joyful and beautiful music. For Beethoven, music was more than entertainment; it was a way to express the highest ideals for humankind.

## BEETHOVEN'S THREE PERIODS

Musically, Beethoven's compositions are often grouped into three periods: Early (approx. 1794–1802), Middle (1803–1814) and Late (1814–1827) and represent three evolutions in his development.

The First Period represents Beethoven assimilating the prevailing Classical Style and finding his own voice within it. His works are influenced by Mozart and Haydn although there is already a sense of his personal style coming through. This period includes his first two symphonies and several piano sonatas and string quartets.

The Second Period is said to occur after his hearing loss was pronounced incurable which led Beethoven into a period of great despair. Musically, Beethoven became fiercely independent, and his style was one of development outside the classical model. This included longer duration, more thematic development especially in Development and Coda sections, larger range of dynamics, pitch, and expression which led to a greater contrast of mood, greater unity within works through the linking of movements and referencing themes across movements and expanded orchestration including trombone, contrabassoon, and piccolo. This period includes Symphonies 3 – 8, his only opera, *Fidelio*, and his final two Piano Concerti. There was a general sense of victory over despair and this period is often referred to as his 'heroic' period.

His Third Period came after another harrowing period in his life which included the custody battle of his nephew and his complete hearing loss and increasing ill health. His music became more reflective and introspective, almost transcendental in nature in addition to breaking new ground in compositional structure, style, and sound. This period includes his 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony, the *Missa Solemnis*, and his final, sublime, string quartets.

Beethoven stands as a towering figure of Western Art Music and has influenced generations of composers, notably Robert Schumann, Johannes Brahms, and Hector Berlioz.

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## BEETHOVEN – THE BRIDGE FROM THE CLASSICAL TO THE ROMANTIC

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) is considered to be one of the most influential and innovative of all classical music composers. He sought to create music that communicated emotion and the struggles and achievements of mankind.

The innovations he brought to music have led him to be considered the bridge from the balanced and refined music of the Classical Period to the passionate and individualised music of the Romantic Period. His nine symphonies are thought to have revolutionised the form.

His first two remain in the established classical style, but his Third Symphony, named 'Eroica' is approximately twice the length of a standard classical symphony and much more complex in harmony and structure.

Symphony	Date of Composition	Developments
3 'Eroica'	1804	Approximately twice as long as Symphony 1. Much more complex in harmony and structure.
5	1808	Linking bridge between 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> movement played by timpani. Use of piccolo, contrabassoon and trombones. Main motive is present in 3 of 4 movements.
6 'Pastoral'	1808	Programmatic, including a thunderstorm. 5 movements. Movements 3, 4 and 5 are all linked without a break.
9	1824	Very long and complex. Use of chorus plus solo singers in 4 <sup>th</sup> movement. Source of the 'Ode to Joy'. Use of cymbals and bass drum in percussion section.

Beethoven Symphony 1		Beethoven Symphony 3 'Eroica'		Beethoven Symphony 9 'Choral'	
Composed in approx	1801	Composed in approx	1804	Composed in approx	1824
Total Duration	25 mins	Total Duration	44 mins	Total Duration	72 mins
Movement 1: Adagio molto – allegro con brio	8.37mins	Movement 1: Allegro con Brio	13.11mins	Movement 1: Allegro ma non troppo	16.25mins
Movement 2: Andante cantabile con moto	7.07mins	Movement 2: Marcia funebre: Adagio assai	13.58mins	Movement 2: Molto vivace-Presto	14.42mins
Movement 3: Menuetto (Allegro molto e vivace)	4.04mins	Movement 3: Scherzo*: Allegro vivace	5.54mins	Movement 3: Adagio molto e cantabile – Andante moderato	16.04mins
Movement 4: Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace	5.43mins	Movement 4: Finale: Allegro molto	10.52mins	Movement 4: Presto – Recitativo – Allegro assai – Allegro assai vivace – Alla Marcia – Andante maestoso – allegro enegatico, sempre ben marcato. Allegro ma non troppo - Prestissimo	24.31mins
		*Beethoven introduced the Scherzo and Trio rather than the Minuet and Trio. This was faster and more energetic than the more moderate and restrained Minuet.			