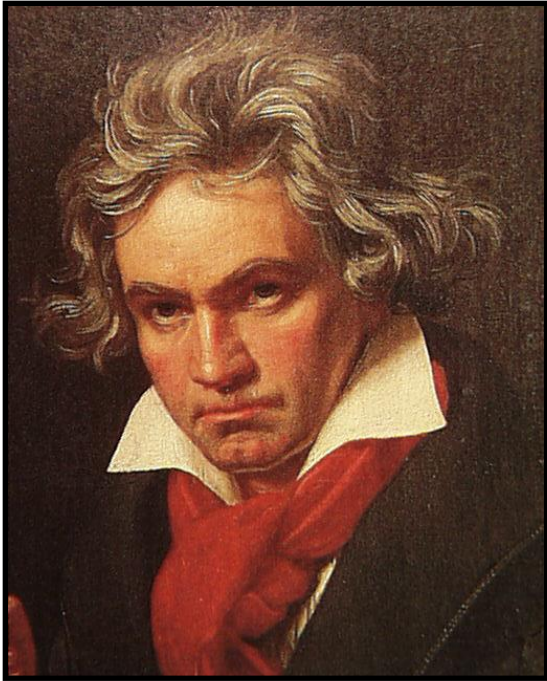


LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN



Ludwig van Beethoven

was a German composer and pianist who lived from 1770 to 1827 (57 years).

Although most of his lifetime took place during what is technically considered the Classical period of musical history, (1750-1820)

Beethoven is often classified as a Romantic composer.

In fact, Beethoven is credited as being the one and only composer who initiated the Romantic movement in music.

Beethoven is **the** crucial figure in **the transition** between the **Classical and Romantic periods** in Western classical music, and remains one of the most iconic and influential composers of all time. Much of Beethoven's early music is in the Classical period style.

Musical Example:

Beethoven: ***Symphony No. 1*** (composed in 1800)
1st Movement

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2qr3iYFli4>



Beethoven was born in Bonn, in what is now Germany. When he was in his early 20s, he moved to **Vienna, Austria**, where he studied with the great composer **Franz Joseph Haydn** and quickly developed a reputation as a brilliant concert pianist.

Musical Example:

Ludwig van Beethoven

Sonata No. 3 in C Major for Piano (1796) 1st Movement

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qezWYgK4wII>

By 1801, just five years later, Beethoven's style as a composer had developed to the extent that his music no longer had the sound or feeling of the Classical period.

Musical Example: Listen to an excerpt from the first movement of Beethoven's ***Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp minor for piano***, composed in 1801. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6txOvK-mAk>

Known as the **Moonlight Sonata**, this is one of Beethoven's best-known works. It has a moody, dreamlike quality, in sharp contrast to the kind of music that Haydn and Mozart had composed for the first movements of their piano sonatas.

In 1796, when Beethoven was 26 years old, he began to suffer from a severe form of **tinnitus**, a "ringing" in his ears that made it hard for him to perceive and appreciate music. He also avoided conversation. **By 1814, when he was 44 years old, Beethoven was almost completely deaf.** Amazingly, despite this disability, he continued to compose for another 13 years until his death at age 57.

Beethoven led an unconventional life. He never had a job or a position as a musical director. He supported himself by giving music lessons to wealthy people and accepted money from wealthy patrons. Beethoven never married due to the fact that he was born a commoner and all the people he associated with were nobility. He did have numerous affairs with married women of the noble class, some of whom were his patrons and piano students.

Beethoven is one of several composers who were known for having larger-than-life egos. His personal motto was "per aspera ad astra," a phrase in Latin that means "through adversity to the stars." A lot of his music reflects this ideal, particularly his **Fifth Symphony**, which is certainly the **best-known symphony in musical history**.

Beethoven's Symphonies

Of all of Beethoven's many compositions, by far the most important are his nine symphonies. Had Beethoven not composed these nine symphonies, or had he composed symphonies that were less brilliant in character, it would not be as likely that his reputation would be as lofty, or that he would be considered to be among the very greatest composers.



Unlike the composers of previous generations, Beethoven composed only 9 symphonies. The composers of the previous generation just prior to Beethoven composed symphonies by the dozens.

Mozart composed 41 symphonies and Haydn composed 104 symphonies. However, while there are a number of great symphonies among them, not all of Mozart's or Haydn's symphonies are considered to be great. But all 9

of Beethoven's symphonies are considered to be great.

Taken as a whole, the symphonies of Beethoven are the single most important contribution to the symphonic genre by any composer. They form the foundation of the modern symphonic repertoire. Every orchestra in the world plays Beethoven's symphonies on a regular basis. When the average music lover thinks of symphonies, it is the Beethoven symphonies that first come to mind.

The first of Beethoven's symphonies to break the Classical mold was his **3rd Symphony**, also called the "Eroica Symphony," which he composed in 1803 and 1804. Eroica means "heroic" in Italian. A lot of Beethoven's music from this point forward has this same type of heroic characteristic. Many music historians identify this work as the first example of Romantic music.



Beethoven was the first composer to invest a great amount of energy and excitement into the finales of his symphonies. Nearly every composer who composed symphonies after Beethoven tried to do the same thing.

Musical Example: Listen to a portion of the 4th movement, or Finale, of Beethoven's ***Symphony No. 3***, known as the "**Eroica**," or "Heroic" Symphony.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tt4jtYpTHWM>

Listen for:

- big contrasts in volume (dynamics)
- heroic quality
- great excitement

The entire "Eroica Symphony" takes approximately 50 minutes to perform, making it the longest symphony in musical history up to that point. Beethoven was also an important composer of overtures. In musical history, the overture began as an orchestral composition of moderately short duration that was performed before an opera, ballet or other stage work, such as a play. With Beethoven, the overture became a kind of miniature symphony that could be performed by itself, without an opera or a ballet.

Musical Example: Linked below are two excerpts (one from the beginning of the piece and one from the end) of one of Beethoven's most famous overtures, the ***Egmont Overture***.

Listen For:

- 1st Excerpt (beginning) drama, tension, suspense
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChcrZX2rZ1M>
- 2nd Excerpt (end): heroic quality / brass instruments
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QY8G4OJG6c>

Egmont is the name of a famous stage play by the great German writer **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**, (1749-1832) who is usually just called "Goethe." He is one of the most important literary figures of the Romantic era.

Today, Beethoven is renowned as a composer of

- **Symphonies** (9)
- **Concertos** (5 piano concertos and one for violin that are among the most famous concertos for those instruments)
- **Opera** (only one, called "Fidelio")
- **Piano Sonatas** and other solo piano works (32 sonatas, the cornerstone works of the piano repertoire)
- **Chamber Music** (string quartets, sonatas for piano & violin and piano & cello)
- **Choral Works** (particularly the Finale of his ***Ninth Symphony***)

Beethoven's ***Symphony No. 9 in D minor***, is the final complete symphony of Beethoven. Completed in 1824, this symphony is one of the best known works of the Western classical repertoire. It is considered by critics to be one of Beethoven's masterpieces and one of the greatest musical compositions ever written.

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was the first example of a major composer using voices in a symphony, thus making it a **“choral symphony.”** The words are sung during the final movement by four vocal soloists and a chorus. They were taken from the **“Ode to Joy,”** a poem written by the great German poet **Friedrich Schiller.**

Text Excerpt of Friedrich Schiller’s *An Die Freude* (“Ode To Joy”)

In German:

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elysium!
Wir betreten feuertrunken,
Himmlische, Dein Heiligtum.
Deine Zauber binden wieder,
Was die Mode streng geteilt,
Alle Menschen werden Brüder,
Wo Dein sanfter Flügel weilt.

English Translation:

Joy, beautiful sparkle of the gods,
Daughter of Elysium,
We enter, fire-drunk,
Heavenly one, your shrine.
Your magic binds again
What custom has strictly parted.
All of mankind become brothers
Where your tender wing abides.

The line of text, **“Alle Menschen werden Brüder”** is the most significant line of text in the poem. Because of the enormous added significance it has due to Beethoven’s musical setting of the poem, this phrase has taken on worldwide significance in the struggle for human rights throughout the world.

Musical Example: Linked Below are three YouTube videos that together contain a complete performance of the choral finale to Beethoven’s 9th Symphony with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Leonard Bernstein. The first video contains a spoken introduction by Maestro Bernstein.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZJ1Tgf4JL8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9V5yUsrcmdg>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_5z0m7cs0A



In 1989, the **Fall of the Berlin Wall** was celebrated with a performance of **Beethoven's Ninth Symphony** by the Berlin Philharmonic conducted by Leonard Bernstein.

No other work of music could conceivably be performed to celebrate such a monumental event. For this performance, the German word **"Freiheit"** ("Freedom") replaced the word **"Freude"** ("Joy").

In Japan, it is an end-of-year tradition to sing the "Ode to Joy," the final movement of Beethoven's **Ninth Symphony**. This music is so well-known in Japan that it's known simply as **Daiku**, literally "Number Nine." In Osaka, Japan, a 10,000-member chorus of amateur singers called "Number Nine Chorus" performs **Daiku** every December, to thundering effect. While there are some professionals involved (the soloists and orchestra), the Number Nine Chorus is largely a community effort.

Musical Example:
(a performance of
"Daiku")

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITzeRSJQtB4>





COMPACT
disc

Question:

What does **Beethoven's Ninth Symphony**, composed in 1824, have to do with the development of the Compact Disk, in 1980?

Answer: The length of **Beethoven's Ninth Symphony** was used to determine **the size and capacity of the modern Compact Audio Disk.**

The longest known performance of **Beethoven's Ninth Symphony** lasted 74 minutes. This was a recording made during the **Bayreuth Festival** in Germany in 1951, conducted by a famous German conductor named **Wilhelm Furtwängler.**

Many classical music fans consider it to be the best performance of this symphony ever recorded.

In 1980, when a team of Japanese and German engineers were designing the Compact Disk, the maximum duration of audio content was originally planned to be 60 minutes. But then one of the Japanese engineers suggested that it should be at least 74 minutes to accommodate Wilhelm Furtwängler's recording of Beethoven's Ninth. The German engineers agreed. **A diameter of 12 centimeters was required for this playing time. That is the diameter of a standard Compact Disk.**

