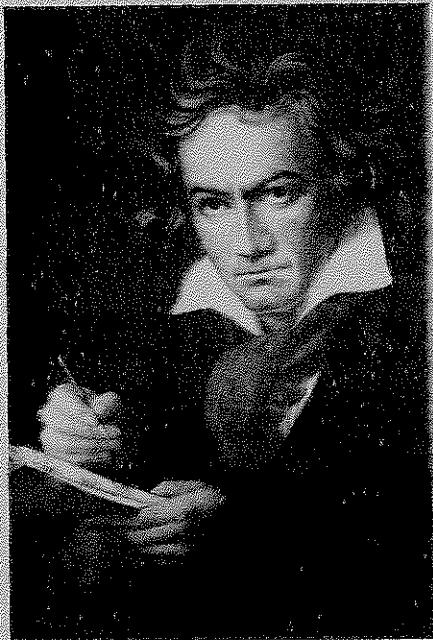


# Ludwig van Beethoven



*born*  
**December 16, 1770**  
*Bonn, Germany*  
*died*  
**March 26, 1827**  
*Vienna, Austria*

“

**Music is the  
electrical soil in  
which the spirit lives.**  
—*Ludwig van Beethoven*

”

Lood'-vig fahn Bay'-tob-vn.

The first syllable rhymes with "wood."

The last syllable of his last name is a quick "vn."

## A composer of the Classical and Romantic eras.

Ludwig van Beethoven began taking piano lessons at age four. When Ludwig turned eight, his father decided to make money from his son's talent. He presented Ludwig as a concert pianist and advertised that the eight year old Ludwig was only six years old.

Although Ludwig was never a child musical prodigy like Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, by 14 he was quite a good musician and became the assistant organist at a local church. At 17, he met Mozart, who predicted a great career in music for Beethoven. By age 19, he was playing violin in local orchestras and giving music lessons to help support his family.

In his early 20s he moved to Vienna, Austria, and began composing and performing as a concert pianist. Here, he took composition lessons from Franz Joseph Haydn. Beethoven knew that to earn a living as a composer, he needed wealthy patrons who would support him financially. He began making friends with wealthy supporters of music. By 1795 (age 25) he abandoned teaching and began composing and performing full-time.

He traveled throughout Europe, displaying his talents as a composer and pianist to larger audiences. His earliest compositions were orchestral and chamber music, primarily sonatas, concertos, and various piano works. He wrote his first symphony in 1800 and shortly after began composing oratorios.

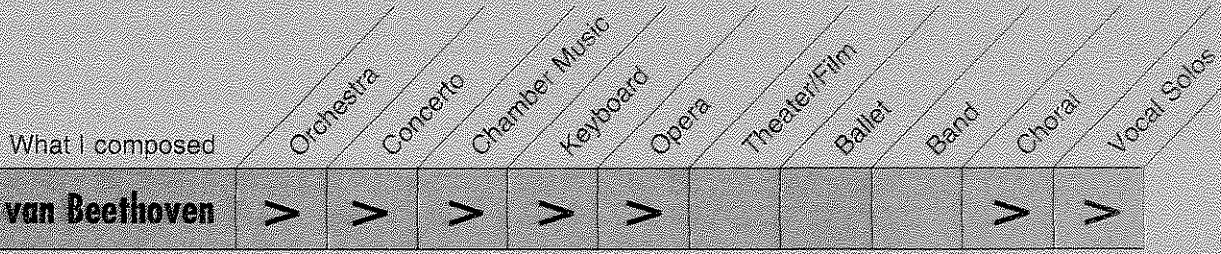
The period 1800-1815 was prolific for Beethoven. By 1815 (age 45) he had completed 8 symphonies, 27 piano sonatas, numerous sonatas for various string instruments, 10 piano trios, 11 string quartets, dozens of orchestral works, and numerous vocal solos and choral works.

Composing was difficult for Beethoven. He agonized over every piece. He had begun losing his hearing in his 20s. By his mid 40s he gave up his performing career, devoting as much time as possible to composing. The last 12 years of his life were spent composing while he slowly but steadily lost all of his hearing.

Beethoven spent his life seeking financial support from wealthy patrons of the arts. He fell in love several times but never married; his poor origins prevented him from marrying the upper-class women he desired. In practical matters such as renting an apartment, organizing performances of his music, or publishing his music, he was a disaster.

Beethoven was short, stocky, and muscular. He dressed carelessly. He was often restless and moody, and worked at composing every morning with intense concentration. He would fly into a rage at small matters which upset him, yet he was always loyal to his friends and supporters. Those friends and supporters helped to give Beethoven the freedom to compose some of the greatest European music of the nineteenth century.

# Ludwig van Beethoven



## Beethoven Factoids:

- Beethoven's musical manuscripts were terrible. One copyist said, "I would rather copy 20 pages by another composer than one page of Beethoven's."
- He was a student of **Franz Haydn** and a friend of **Franz Schubert**.
- Beethoven was a slow worker. His manuscripts and musical notebooks show many revisions. He was never satisfied with his music and tried endlessly to improve it.
- Beethoven's early music (prior to 1800) was composed in the **Classical Style** and his later music (after 1800) was composed in the **Romantic Style**. For this reason he is often called a musical bridge between the Classical and Romantic periods.

1770: Birth of Ludwig van Beethoven.

1775: George Washington made commander-in-chief at the start of the American Revolutionary War.

1790: Washington, D.C. founded.

1799: Haydn composes *The Creation*, an oratorio.

1800: Napoleon and his French army defeat Austria and conquer Italy.

1805: Thomas Jefferson begins second term as President of U.S.

1812: U.S. declares war on Britain (referred to as War of 1812).

1818: Franz Gruber, an Austrian school teacher, composes the famous Christmas carol *Silent Night*.

1827: Death of Ludwig van Beethoven; Noah Webster publishes *American Dictionary of the English Language*.

**What in the world  
is happening?**

# Listen!

## Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) Symphony No. 5 In C Minor, opus 67, First Movement



The first four notes of this symphony may be the most famous and most recognizable notes ever written. Music historians have found musical sketches for this symphony which indicate Beethoven began work on it as early as 1805. Actually Beethoven's Sixth Symphony (sometimes known as the "Pastoral" Symphony) was composed during the same time span. Some historians believe the Sixth Symphony was actually finished before the Fifth Symphony. Both the Fifth and the Sixth Symphonies were performed for the first time on December 22, 1808 in Vienna, Austria.

Beethoven's music is often called "the balance of expression and design." He was a deep thinker and his language was music. His music expressed what he thought and felt about life. When Beethoven wrote this symphony he was already losing his hearing.

Do the first few notes sound like a knock on the door? Beethoven himself said of the first theme: "so knocks Fate on the door!" The knocking is heard twice, and then the strings and woodwinds begin their echo. The theme of this movement is based on four notes that are more rhythmic than melodic. Beethoven creatively used this rhythm to link all the other ideas in this first movement of the symphony.

- Try to find those four notes on the piano or your own instrument.
- What brass instrument is most prominently heard in this movement?

66

Beethoven was once performing a piano concerto with an orchestra when he forgot he was the soloist and began to conduct the orchestra.  
99

### TIMING

- :01 Listen carefully to the opening four notes by the strings. You will hear four notes, played in this rhythm, again and again throughout the piece. This four-note phrase is developed by the composer.
- :18 Four notes appear again in the same rhythm as the opening motive. More development follows. Listen for the string instruments, which play rapidly.
- :43 The French horns play a brief, powerful solo. Listen for the woodwinds following the horns, then the strings, which grow louder and louder (a crescendo).
- 1:25 The four-note opening motive is stated again. You will hear the same musical elements you heard at :01 and :18.
- 2:09 The French horns begin a repeat of the section you heard at :43.

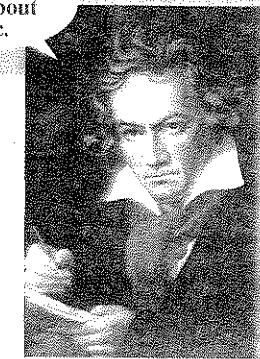
# Review!

Ludwig van Beethoven

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Place the letter of the correct answer in the space provided.

For True/False questions, print True or False in the space provided.

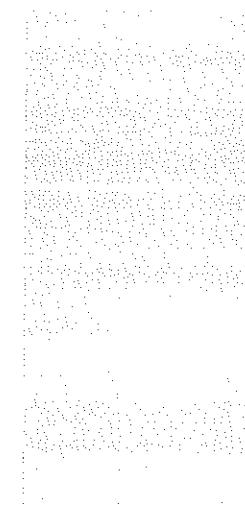


My music is  
music about  
music.

1. Beethoven wrote \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. only five symphonies  
B. more than five symphonies
  
2. What instrument did Beethoven *not* play? \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. violin      C. organ  
B. flute      D. piano
  
3. True or False: Composing was very easy for Beethoven and he worked very rapidly. \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. True or False: As a child, Beethoven traveled throughout Europe as a performer.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
5. By the time he was 45, Beethoven \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. gave up composing to concentrate on his career as a pianist  
B. gave up his career as a pianist to concentrate on his composing
  
6. In his final years, Beethoven was \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. blind      C. both blind and deaf  
B. deaf      D. neither blind nor deaf
  
7. Beethoven was born in \_\_\_\_\_.      A. Germany  
Beethoven spent most of his life in \_\_\_\_\_.      B. Austria
  
8. True or False: Beethoven composed many sonatas. \_\_\_\_\_
  
9. True or False: Beethoven spent most of his life as a court musician.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
10. Which type of music did Beethoven *not* write? \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. symphonies      C. keyboard music  
B. operas      D. band music

## BONUS:

As a teenager, Beethoven met what famous composer?

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
A decorative background graphic featuring a stylized, repeating pattern of musical notes and symbols, such as treble clefs and eighth notes, arranged in a grid-like fashion.