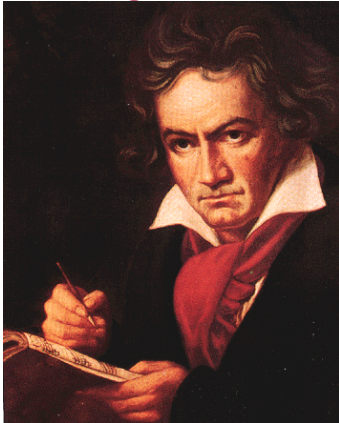


## Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)



Born: 1770 (Bonn, Germany)  
Died: 1827 (Vienna, Austria)

### FAST FACTS

- Studied violin and piano with his father and others
- Made money off of patrons and performances
- Completely lost his hearing around age 33
- Wrote 9 famous symphonies
- Changed the world's viewpoint on the function of music

Beethoven's life was marked with challenges. Many people consider him the greatest composer who lived, because his music expresses the emotional impact of the obstacles he faced and eventually overcame.

Like many classical composers, Beethoven was born into a musical family: his grandfather and father were both court musicians, and his strict father taught him piano and violin in hopes of turning Beethoven into a child prodigy, like Mozart. Beethoven also studied with other musicians and composers in his hometown and in Vienna, including Haydn. Many of Beethoven's earlier pieces reflect Haydn's light and cheerful style. During this early period, he wrote mostly piano pieces, since he was trained as a pianist. After he moved to Vienna, Beethoven gathered patrons (wealthy people who support the arts) to pay for his compositions and piano performances.

In the early 1800s, more patrons and more money allowed Beethoven to be more daring with the music he wrote. At this time, though, Beethoven was caring for his brother's son, and completely lost his hearing, so his frustrations came out in his music. He was determined to work through his frustrations, however, and spent more time refining his pieces instead of writing as many as he could, (like Haydn and Mozart). Sometimes he even missed deadlines for music he was writing for his patrons because he worked so hard on them! He kept notebooks to write down musical ideas for his famous symphonies, and used music as a way to express a story or a dramatic idea, all influenced by the dramatic events he went through. This was so powerful and impressive to composers from the 1800s even up to today that an entire period of music is devoted to dramatic music: the Romantic Period.

Beethoven was not just a composer; he was a legend who fronted an entirely new direction in music. He made the world's idea of music shift from music as simply entertainment, and something to do for fun, to an emotional and dramatic story. We are grateful for his determination to produce incredible music - symphonies, string quartets, piano music, various sonatas, and much more - despite impossible odds!

### Let's Listen!



- See world-renowned and enthusiastic conductor Gustavo Dudamel conduct Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*. Where have you heard the opening tune before? [click here](#).
- Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*: [click here](#).