

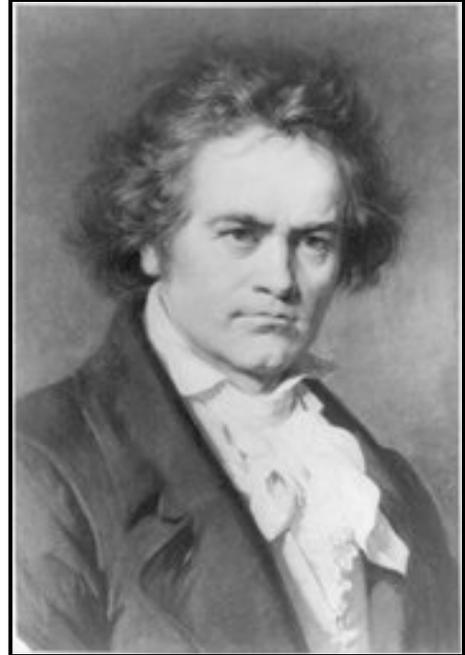
# LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born in Bonn, Germany 1770

Died in Vienna, Austria 1827

## **Allegro con brio** from **Symphony No. 5, Op. 67**

**Ludwig van Beethoven** was considered to be one of the most influential composers in the history of Western music. He was born in Bonn, Germany in December of 1770 and grew up in court surroundings where he began his musical training at a very early age under the tutelage of his father. After the age of eight he took lessons from court organist Christian Gottlob Neefe, who nurtured Beethoven's talent. Beethoven had a difficult childhood. His father was harsh and demanding. Following Beethoven's mother's death, his father lost his job and Beethoven was put in the position of having to support his family. He played viola in the theater orchestra, gave lessons, and played the piano. By this time, he was composing piano works and beginning to attract attention.



In 1790 Joseph Haydn passed through Bonn en route to London when he heard Beethoven's new *Mass* and was greatly impressed. On his return to Vienna, Haydn again stopped at Bonn and met Beethoven personally at which time he invited the young composer to study with him. Beethoven moved to Vienna in 1792 and became a pupil of Haydn's, but only for a short time as he found the older composer to be too academic. In his late twenties Beethoven began to notice signs that he was going deaf. He gave up performing in public, but he continued to produce notable masterpieces despite this challenge, in fact his music began to show a deepening of spiritual content. It was at this time that he produced such masterpieces as the *Waldstein*, *Appassionata*, and *Moonlight* sonatas for piano, as well as the *Eroica Symphony*.

In 1818 Beethoven entered his last productive period, which was perhaps the greatest of all, composing works such as the *Ninth Symphony*, the *Missa Solemnis* and the last string quartets. On May 7, 1824, Beethoven made his final public appearance to conduct the premiere of his *Ninth Symphony*. By this time, he was completely deaf; when the *Symphony* ended, Beethoven, who was several measures off, continued conducting, even as the audience applauded. In 1826, while visiting his brother, Beethoven contracted a cold, which developed into pneumonia; he died on March 26.

Because of the time during which Beethoven lived, the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, he was positioned between two major aesthetic movements: classicism and romanticism, both of which were responses to the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment. His music represents a transition from classical courtly forms wherein balance and purity of expression were honored to romantic revolutionary forms where individual and freer modes of expression were sought after. In this era of transition his music is considered the "bridge" between these two important movements.

Beethoven broke away from classical form and style and ventured into dissonance and free tonality. He used a musical language that was daring for its modulations, progressions and harmonic vocabulary, and his thematic material was immensely varied and fertile. He greatly extended principles of sonata form and motivic development that he had inherited from Haydn and Mozart, writing lengthier, more ambitious movements. Beethoven also redefined the symphony, transforming it from the highly structured, four movements form of Haydn's era to a looser open ended form that would accommodate or employ as many movements as necessary to give the work cohesion.

Beethoven was a product of his time, a time of revolution and change in Europe, the Americas and elsewhere, that championed the rights of the individual and democratic ideals. In line with this, he believed in individual expression and making art accessible to the common man. These beliefs took him away from working in churches or in a noble court as his predecessors had done; instead he took the initiative to support himself through a combination of means, garnering income from stipends or gifts from individuals, public performances, concerts, lessons, and sales of his works. In this way he was the precursor of the professional composer of today.

### **Symphony No. 5, Op. 67**

Beethoven wrote the Symphony over the space of some four years, beginning in the spring of 1804. The Symphony was premiered later that year together with the Sixth at Beethoven's famous marathon concert at Vienna's Theater on December 22. Reports indicate that all did not go well. Second-rate musicians playing in third-rate conditions after limited rehearsal had to struggle their way through this demanding new music, and things fell apart. But inadequate performance conditions did not dampen enthusiasm for the Fifth Symphony, which was soon recognized as a masterpiece.

Another reason for the great fame and popularity of this Symphony is that it distills so much of Beethoven's musical style. One feature is its "organicism" the fact that all four movements seem to grow from seeds sown in the opening measures. While Beethoven used the distinctive rhythmic figure of the three shorts and one long in other works from this time, it clearly helps to unify the entire Symphony. Beethoven's innovation is not simply that this brief passage may mean something, but that listeners are prompted in the first place to ask themselves what it means.

After the most familiar of openings, the piece modulates to the relative major key and the horns announce the second theme with a fanfare using the same rhythm. The theme itself starts quietly and smoothly, but underneath it, on cellos and basses, the initial rhythmic motive quietly makes itself heard. Quickly another climax builds, and the exposition ends with the whole orchestra playing the original motive together.

During the development section, the horn call that introduced the second theme is gradually broken down into smaller and smaller elements until only a single chord is echoed quietly between the strings and the woodwinds. Then the recapitulation brings back the music of the movement's first part with crashing force. A short coda brings the movement to a powerful conclusion.

Throughout the movement, long crescendos (from *pianissimo*, *pp*, to *fortissimo*, *ff*) and short passages of quiet music (*piano*, *p*) serve to increase the intensity and drive. The overall effect is one of great power and compression.



## Development

**2:42** Opening motive in horns, *ff*, in f minor, echoed by strings.

Sudden *p*, basic motive developed by strings and woodwinds.

Another gradual ascent and crescendo, leading to forceful repeated chords.

**3:16** Horn-call motive in violins, *ff*, followed by descending line in low strings, twice.

Pairs of high chords in woodwinds and brass, *ff*, alternating with lower chords in strings, *ff*.

Sudden decrease in volume, alternation between single chords, key changes.

Sudden *ff*, horn-call in full orchestra; return to alternation of wind and string chords, *pp*, with key changes.

Sudden *ff*, opening motive repeated many times, leading back to recapitulation.

## Recapitulation

**4:00** *First theme*

Opening motive, *ff*, in tonic (c minor), full orchestra.

Opening motive developed, strings, *p*, joined by slow-moving melody on one oboe.

Oboe unexpectedly interrupts the music with a short, plaintive solo.

**4:32** *Transition*

Development of opening motive resumes in strings, *p*.

Gradual crescendo, full orchestra, *ff*, repeated timpani notes, sudden stop.

Horn-call motive, *ff*, in horns.

**4:54** *Second theme*

Contrasting gentle melody, *p*, in C major (the *major* of the tonic!), played alternately by violins and flutes.

(Basic motive accompanies in timpani when flutes play.)

Gradual buildup to the return of:

Jubilant string theme, *ff*, in violins, played twice.

Woodwinds and horns rapidly descend, twice, followed by a cadence using the rhythm of the opening motive. Then, without pause, into:

## Coda

**5:35** Forceful repeated chords, *ff*, with pauses.

Horn-call motive in lower strings and bassoons, along with flowing violin melody, *f*, in tonic (C minor).

Descending pattern, violins, leads to:

**6:05** A completely new theme in the strings, rising up the minor scale in four-note sequences.



Four-note fragments of the new theme are forcefully alternated between woodwinds and strings.

A short passage of fast, loud, repeated notes leads into a return of the opening motive, *ff*, full orchestra.

Suddenly *pp*; strings and woodwinds develop the motive for a few seconds.

A swift and dramatic return to full orchestra, ending with *ff* chords.