

# *Ludwig Van Beethoven*

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(1770-1827)

## **Life**

Ludwig van Beethoven was a German composer and pianist of classical music. He was a significant figure in the transition of classical era to Romanticism and remains still one of the most influential and recognized musicians of this period and also considered to be the greatest musician of all time (among others).

Beethoven was born in Bonn the capital of the Electorate of Cologne which was part of the Holy Roman Empire. There is no authentic record of his birth date, however the registry of his baptism by a Catholic service is in 17 December 1770.

He found his musical talents from a very young age and he was taught by his father Johann van Beethoven until composer and conductor Christian Cottlob Neefe who later took his father place as his music teacher. In the age of 21 he moved to Vienna where he studied composition with Joseph Haydn an Austrian composer of the Classical Period. Beethoven also gained a reputation as a virtuoso pianist this period and soon was courted by Prince Lichnowsky for compositions.

## **Career**

His first published composition, a set of keyboard variations, was in 1783 by his then teacher Christian Cottlob Neefe who helped him with the procedure. Beethoven soon began to work as an assistant organist with Neefe, at first without payment (1781) and later as a paid employee (1784) of the court chapel conducted by Andrea Luchess. His first piano sonatas named "Kurfust" (Elector) for the Elector Maximilian Friendrien were published also in 1783.

In December 1786 Beethoven travelled in Vienna at his employer's expense with the hope to meet and study with also influential musician this period, Mozart. The details of their relationship still remain uncertain including the fact if they had actually met. When he learned his mother was ill Beethoven quickly returned to Bonn (May 1787). Unfortunately she died shortly after his arrival. His father after her death lapsed into alcoholism and depression. From 1790 to 1792 he composed a significant number of works (none of them were published at the time) that clearly showed his progress, rage and maturity. With the Electors help he left Bonn in 1792 for Vienna but after his arrival there he learned that his father passed away. Mozart had also recently died.

He did not immediately established himself as a composer but instead devoted in studying and performance. By 1793 he had a reputation as an improviser in the salons of the nobility, often playing preludes and fugues of J. S. Bach.

## **Hearing loss**

Beethoven is reported to having hearing loss from a fit he suffered in 1798 induced by a rage at the interruption of his work, having fallen over he got up only to find himself deaf. His hearing only partially recovered and during his gradual decline he was slowed down by a severe form of tinnitus. In 1801 he wrote to his friends about his condition and symptoms and the difficulties they caused in his work and also the professional and social setting. The cause of his deafness is until today unknown but it was been attributed to typhus an auto-immune disorder and even his habit of putting his head into cold water in order to stay awake. After this by the advice of his doctor he lived in a small town in Austria, just outside Vienna from April to October 1802 there he wrote a letter to his brothers saying his thoughts on committing suicide due to his growing deafness. Over time his hearing loss became profound: at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony in 1824 he had to be turned around to see the applause of the audience because he could not hear neither it or the orchestra. This did not only prevented him from composing music but it made playing at concerts extremely difficult for him. After his fail to perform in 1811 his own piano concerto (No 5) he never performed in public again. Beethoven died in 1827 at the age of 56.

## **Some accomplishments during his life time**

During his life Ludwig Van Beethoven composed 9 symphonies, 5 piano concertos, 1 violin concerto, 32 piano sonatas, 16 string quartets, a mass and an opera (Fidelio). Other works like Für Elise were discovered after his death and are considered as historical musical achievements.

Beethoven's legacy is characterized for his innovative compositions his combination of vocals and instruments and also for widening the scope of sonatas, symphonies, concertos and quartets.

Last he is considered among the greatest musicians of all time and his entire career is divided into Early, Middle and Late periods. The Early period is seen to last until 1802 the Middle from 1802 to 1812 and the Late period from 1812 to his death in 1827.

*"Music is one incorporeal entrance into the higher world of knowledge which comprehends mankind but which mankind cannot comprehend"*

*-Ludwig van Beethoven*

## **Sources**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig\\_van\\_Beethoven](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig_van_Beethoven)

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