Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn, Germany (see map on p.3) in 1770, to Johann van Beethoven and Maria Magdalena Keverich. Although Beethoven's exact birth date is not known, his family celebrated it on December 16. Ludwig's first musical instruction came from his father Johann who was said to have been a harsh teacher. Johann later asked his friend, Tobias Pfeiffer, to teach his son. It seems that the harsh treatment continued, as Johann and his friend would come home late on occasion to pull young Ludwig from his bed to practice until morning.

Ludwig's talent was recognized early on, and by 1778 he was learning to play the organ and viola in addition to his piano studies. His most important teacher in Bonn was Christian Gottlob Neefe, a Court organist. It was Neefe who helped Beethoven publish his first piece of music.

In 1787, young Beethoven decided to travel to Vienna (see map on p. 3), hoping to meet and study composition with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. It is not clear if he succeeded in meeting or studying with Mozart. He was forced to return to Bonn to care for his ailing mother, who died several months later. His father died in 1792.

In 1792 Beethoven went back to Vienna to study with the famous composer Joseph Haydn and other musicians who lived there. Beethoven rapidly became a famous keyboard performer and as a gifted young composer with a number of works to his credit. In 1795 several of his compositions were published, advancing his career.

Beethoven lived in Vienna from 1792 to his death in 1827. In 1796 he made a trip to Berlin (see map p. 3) in northern Germany, where his schedule included a visit to the court of King Frederick William of Prussia, an amateur cellist. Later Beethoven made several trips to Budapest (see map p. 3). In 1808 Beethoven received an invitation to become music director in Kassel, Germany. This alarmed several of his wealthy Viennese friends, who formed a group of backers and agreed to guarantee Beethoven an annual salary of 1,400 florins to keep him in Vienna. He thus became one of the first musicians in history to be able to live independently on his music salary.
By his twenties, Beethoven began to suffer from hearing loss. He did, however, continue to compose, conduct and perform, even after he was completely deaf. One story recalls that after conducting the **premiere** of his Ninth Symphony he had to be turned around to see the overwhelming applause of the audience. When he heard nothing, he began to weep.

Ludwig van Beethoven's most popular pieces are his Fifth Symphony, *Für Elise* for piano solo, and his Ninth Symphony, which includes the melody *Ode to Joy*. He is remembered as an important **composer** in the transitional period between the **Classical Era** and **Romantic Era** in music and continues to be one of the most famous and influential composers of all time. Sources: [https://makingmusicfun.net/](https://makingmusicfun.net/) and [https://www.notablebiographies.com](https://www.notablebiographies.com)

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### Vienna in Beethoven’s Time

Up until about 1790, many European cities enjoyed an active and varied concert life. Popular music and art music mingled on every concert, but no one yet thought in those terms. Music lovers without much knowledge or training could enjoy concert music, because its style was familiar. **Connoisseurs** found something to like in the less sophisticated music.

The wars between Napoleonic France and the older monarchies transformed the face of Europe. Because of this conflict, between 1790 and the middle of the 1810s, concert life ceased entirely in London and Paris (see map p. 3), two of the three major musical capitals. Vienna, the third major musical capital, did not suffer complete loss of its concert life, but the number and quality of concerts diminished. Opera suffered, too.

In 1804, Franz II became “Emperor of Austria”. As a result, Vienna gained the status of imperial city of Austria. In 1805, the French army occupied Vienna for two months, while Napoleon resided in the Schönbrunn Palace. In 1809, the Viennese attempted to repel another French assault, but after only a few hours, the city stood in flames and Vienna was forced to surrender.
It was on the battlefield in the northeast of what is today Vienna, where Napoleon suffered his first defeat. However, the French army soon reclaimed its military superiority at the Battle of Wagram. Before their withdrawal, Napoleon’s troops destroyed large sections of the city’s fortifications. After Napoleon’s defeat, the rulers of Europe gathered at the “Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) to establish a new political order in Europe. Vienna became the center of the European Restoration.

(Sources: https://www.deutschakademie.com & https://music.allpurposeguru.com)

Musical Form

Composers have a form mind when they write music. It is important for musicians who play music to understand the form of a piece of music so that they can play it as the composer intended it to be performed. Generally, the first section in the music is labeled “A,” the second is “B,” the third is “C” and so on. During the Classical Era in Europe (from about 1750-1820) the following forms became the basis for most of the music written by composers such as Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven:

- **Strophic** - AAA, etc.
- **Binary** - AB
- **Ternary** - ABA
- **Rondo** - ABACA, or ABACADA
- **Arch** - ABCBA
- **Sonata Form** - Exposition: (Theme 1 - Theme 2) --- Development --- Recapitulation: (Theme 1 - Theme 2)
- **Sonata Rondo** - ABA - C - ABA.
The Quapaw Quartet will perform selections from Beethoven’s String Quartet Opus 18, No. 4. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKY43du5xSo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKY43du5xSo) There are four movements (sections) of the composition. The first movement is in Sonata form, the second is a Scherzo which is a fugue, a popular form prior to the **Classical Era** in which instruments play the same melody with staggered entrances. The third movement is a Minuet and Trio (ABA form) and the fourth is a Rondo.

Beethoven is especially well-known for the music he wrote in Sonata form. In his early works, he followed the form very closely like Haydn and Mozart had done. As he matured as a composer, he used the Sonata form as a framework and added/expanded sections. Other composers followed Beethoven’s example which ushered in what is known as the **Romantic Era** in European music from about 1820-1910.

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**SONATA FORM**

Sometimes called “Sonata-Allegro Form”

Developed in the Classical Period
1750-1820

**EXPOSITION**

Usually based on at least one of the themes from the exposition, but can be based on NEW material.

**DEVELOPMENT**

Shortest Section (usually) INSTABILITY Ends in Dominant Key

**RECAPITULATION**

Closing Section

**CODA (optional)**

A short extension to give closure

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**Vocabulary**

- **Classical Era** – a period of time from about 1750 to the early 1800’s when art and music making focused on form and balance
- **composer** – a person who writes music
- **composition** – written music
- **connoisseurs** – experts with advanced tastes
- **dynamics (in music)** – how loud or soft the music is
- **harmony** – a musical term for notes used in a musical piece that provide background for the melody
- **melody** – a long passage of music forming a theme that you can recognize as in a song
- **premiere** – first performance
- **prolific** – very productive
- **Romantic Era** – a period of time from the early 1800’s to the early 1900’s when art and music making reflected strong emotions and feelings
- **texture (in music)** – the way the melody, rhythm and harmony combine in a composition

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