

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN: PART 1: HIS LIFE

Due to Beethoven's importance of both the Classical and Romantic periods of music, I have split his life and music into different sections. Section 1 deals with his life, 2 and 3 deals with his music.

Born: December 16, 1770 (birthday celebrated), Bonn (present day Germany)

Baptism: December 1770, Roman Catholic service

Death: March 26, 1827

FAMILY ORIGINS

Grandfather (fathers side): Lodewijk van Beethoven (Flemish origin), who was a bass singer at the Court of Elector of Cologne.

Father: Johann van Beethoven, who was a tenor singer at the Court of the Elector of Cologne and a music teacher (piano and violin).

Mother: Marina Magdalena Keverich

Grandfather (mothers side): Johann Heinrich Keverich, who was the head chef of the Court of the Archbishopric of Trier

EARLY LIFE

Beethoven led a difficult life; his music reflects the problems and struggles which occurred in his life. Beethoven showed musical talent at a young age and was subsidized and encouraged by many teachers and nobility. With his mother dying at a young age and an alcoholic and controlling father, Beethoven was forced to take care of his younger brothers. He often composed as well as performing throughout each musical period of his life to make enough money for his living expenses. His concerts showed financial success, but were often met with mixed reviews.

MIDDLE LIFE

Beethoven's last public performance in 1811 was not a success. In the middle of his life, he developed hearing problems. These hearing problems not only made his performances difficult, but also his social life. A difficult emotional period in 1813 led to a drop in his compositional output, as well as his personal appearance and manners in public. He also experienced much illness, especially in his later years.

LATER YEARS

Beethoven experienced much illness in his later years. His last days were generally spent in bed. Many friends came to visit him. Beethoven died on March 26, 1827 during a thunderstorm. Beethoven was initially buried in the Wahrung Ceremony, north-west of Zentralfriedhof. There is dispute about the cause of Beethoven's death.

BEETHOVEN'S CHARACTER

Much of his personal life was due to, in part by his deafness, which led to many of his problems and struggles. It is also noted that he was often irascible and may have suffered from bipolar disorder (type of brain disorder that affects moods and emotions) and irritability brought on by chronic abdominal pain beginning in his twenties that has been attributed to possible lead poisoning. Beethoven also showed disdain for authority and social rank.

RELIGIOUS VIEWS

Beethoven was attracted to the ideals of the Enlightenment. When Beethoven found out of Napoleon's imperial ambitions in 1804, he rededicated his Third Symphony to Prince Joseph Franz von Lobkowitz, at whose palace it was first performed. Also, the first movement of his Ninth Symphony features an elaborate choral setting of Schiller's Ode An die Freude (Ode to Joy), an optimistic hymn championing the brotherhood of humanity. Scholars disagree about his religious beliefs, and about the role they played in his works. It has been asserted, but not proven that Beethoven was a Freemason (Freemasonry is the oldest and largest worldwide fraternity dedicated to the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of a Supreme Being).