

## **LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN: PART 3: INTRODUCTION TO HIS COMPOSITIONS**

Before I give an analysis of two of Beethoven's works: Piano Sonata No. 8 in C Minor (Pathétique Sonata/Grand Sonata Pathétique) as well as his well-known Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, a short introduction will be given.

### **INTRODUCTION TO BEETHOVEN'S COMPOSITIONS; HIS USE OF THE KEY OF C MINOR**

The use of the key of C Minor is evident in many of his compositions, and the reasons for choosing this key are numerous. One of the key reasons is that he felt this key to be powerful and emotionally stormy, producing a very turbulent and heroic feel. He rejected the traditional aesthetics of prior music and focused on writing music that is not as pleasing to the ear. His use of tonality is different than its traditional use in the Classical music, such that of Franz Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

It is also said that he has used this key to represent his most extrovert form, his impatience of any compromise. We can also see this in a number of ways. The onset and eventually his complete deafness, the financial issues at times with the sales of his works, and other personal and family difficulties which all contributed to a general madness of sorts.

Many of the pieces which employ this key are remarkable for their beauty and importance, but also carry a strong emotional force. Most critics and musicologists make note of this fact, but not all agree. Some take a different stance on the matter; one in particular used the two words "unknowing prisoner." Again, we can liken this to Beethoven's character as well as his deafness, in which his music is caught between the traditional Classical style and that of the more lyrical Romantic era.

As far as his use of modulation, he didn't always modulate to parallel and relative major and minor keys when using the key of C Minor. He used the relative key (E flat Major) as well as A flat Major and the tonic major (C Major) but also modulated to more distant and sharp keys, such as that of E Major. This being said, he was also haunted by visions of C minor moving to C Major, where he would raise the 7<sup>th</sup> of C minor to "B" (this is known as using the Major Dominant in a minor key). He also left the minor dominant in its natural state and created the recapitulation in the minor mode for some but not all works. A few other exceptions to the standard forms included a major-mode restatement in the recapitulation, slight deviations from the traditional Sonata Form, and ending the final cadential tonic chord in C major, rather than that of C minor.

His compositional output included the following:

1. Nine Symphonies
2. Five Piano Concertos
3. One Violin Concerto
4. 32 Piano Sonatas
5. Sixteen String Quartets
6. A Mass, the Missa Solemnis
7. An Opera, Fidelio