

Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Ludwig Van Beethoven was born in Bonn, Germany in 1770. His father and grandfather were both musicians also. Beethoven was a child prodigy, and his dad taught him piano and violin very strictly. When Beethoven did not play well, his father boxed his ears. Beethoven stopped going to school when he was very young, and was almost illiterate in math. Studying music instead, he became a very good pianist, and played his first public piano concert when he was 6, and published his first piece of music when he was 12. Later in his life, Beethoven took custody of his nephew Karl, and he began to train Karl as a musician, but he was too strict and Karl did not become a musician.

Beethoven's father died when he was 18, so he played viola in an orchestra to make money for himself and his two younger brothers (even though the three brothers often fought in the streets!). Haydn was visiting Bonn and when he heard Beethoven perform, he insisted that he travel back to Vienna with him. There, he was taught by Haydn, Salieri, and Albrechtsberger. Although these teachers trained him in the style of Baroque music, Beethoven invented his own style which was later called Classical. He also auditioned as a composition student for Mozart while he was in Vienna, but his trip was cut short when he found out his mother was dying. He quickly returned home. Five years later Beethoven went back to Vienna to live. In a few years, he became famous as a pianist and played for rich and famous people. They paid him and in return, Beethoven dedicated his music to them.

During his life, Beethoven was very interested in the ideas of the Enlightenment, and in politics. He even dedicated his third symphony to Napoleon, but crossed out the dedication later when he learned more about Napoleon. Beethoven also liked to read poetry. The lyrics to the fourth movement of his Ninth Symphony is from a poem he liked by Schiller.

When Beethoven was 28 years old, he noticed he was losing his hearing. He was very upset, and went into seclusion from both the public and his friends. He tried to keep his deafness a secret. Eventually, he was completely deaf. He only communicated with visitors and trusted friends by writing. Beethoven continued composing for many years after he lost his hearing. At this late point in his life, he became seriously ill. When Beethoven died in 1827 at age 56 (maybe from a chill), almost 30,000 people attended his funeral. Beethoven was lucky, because a lot of composers only became famous after their death, but he enjoyed fame during his lifetime.

Beethoven's most famous pieces include Für Elise, Moonlight Sonata, and his Fifth and Ninth Symphonies. Altogether, he composed 9 symphonies, 1 opera, 32 piano sonatas, 5 piano concertos, 16 string quartets, and 16 sonatas.

Name _____

Date _____

Please complete the sentences.

1) Beethoven was born in the country of _____ in the year _____.

2-3) _____ and _____ were the two instruments that Beethoven learned to play as a child.

4) One of Beethoven's teachers was _____.

5) Beethoven invented his own musical style which was later called _____.

6) One thing Beethoven was interested in was _____.

7) Towards the end of his life, Beethoven lost his sense of _____.

8) Beethoven died in the year _____.

9-10) Two famous pieces by Beethoven are _____ and _____.