



BEETHOVEN

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 2 in B-flat major, Op. 15

Ludwig van Beethoven (December 1770 – 26 March 1827) was a German composer and pianist. A crucial figure in the transition between the Classical and Romantic eras in Western art music, he remains one of the most famous and influential of all composers. His best known compositions include 9 symphonies, 5 concertos for piano, 32 piano sonatas, and 16 string quartets. Born in Bonn, Beethoven intended to study with Mozart, but sadly only met him once before the master's death in 1791. Beethoven permanently moved to Vienna in 1792 and began studying with Haydn, quickly gaining a reputation as a virtuoso pianist. Haydn's influence is strongly seen in the music of this "early" period, though Beethoven also explored new directions and gradually expanded the scope and ambition of his work. In about 1800 his hearing began to deteriorate, and by the last decade of his life he was almost totally deaf. He gave up conducting and performing in public but continued to compose; many of his most admired works (including 7 of his 9 symphonies) come from these "middle" and "late" periods. Common themes of his "middle" period include heroism, struggle, and triumph, seen through his opera *Fidelio*, *Overture to Egmont*, and his Third and Fifth Symphonies. Works from his "late" period are characterised by their intellectual depth, their formal innovations, and their intense, highly personal expression. The String Quartet, Op. 131 has seven linked movements (instead of the usual four), and the Ninth Symphony adds choral forces to the orchestra in the last movement and embraces Enlightened ideals of brotherhood through Schiller's poem *An die Freude* (To Joy). Almost universally admired by the time of his death, some 20,000 Viennese citizens attended his funeral procession.

Ludwig van Beethoven's **Piano Concerto No. 1 in C major**, Op. 15, was written during 1796 and 1797. Dedicated to his pupil Countess Anna Louise Barbara Keglevics, its first performance was in Prague in 1798, with Beethoven himself playing the piano. Although this was Beethoven's first piano concerto to be published, it was his third attempt at the genre, following an unpublished piano concerto and the Piano Concerto No. 2, published after Piano Concerto No. 1 but composed almost ten years earlier. As with the Piano Concerto No. 2, this C major concerto reflects Beethoven's assimilation of the styles of Mozart and Haydn, while its abrupt harmonic shifts demonstrate Beethoven's musical personality. The first movement is in sonata form. It has a main theme repeated many times, and there are several subordinate themes. The second movement is in the key of A-flat major, in this context a key relatively remote from the concerto's opening key of C major. Like many slow movements, this movement is in ternary (ABA) form. Its opening A section presents several themes that are then developed in the middle B section. Finally, the third movement is a seven-part rondo (ABACABA), a traditional third-movement form in classical concerti.