



## Ludwig van Beethoven

### BIOGRAPHY

Ludwig von Beethoven is often called the greatest composer in history. Starting young and continuing even after he lost his hearing as an adult, he wrote exciting new works in many styles. His music was so important that it helped to define his time.

Beethoven was born in Bonn, Germany in 1770. Like many musicians of the 1700s, he was born into music. His father, Johann, was a member of a respected choir. After Beethoven played well on the piano from a young age, his father was determined to make him into a star. Beethoven was forced into long practices which often ran very late into the night.

As time passed, Beethoven's family became much poorer. By the time he was 18, his piano playing supported his entire family. It's easy to imagine the pressure he must have felt at such a young age. Although Beethoven had never become the child star his father had wanted, his name began to spread as he grew older. In his early twenties, he moved to a city called Vienna. His career rocketed skyward and even the most popular composers in the world started calling him a genius.

In his early thirties, Beethoven began to lose his hearing. He could ignore the problem at first, but as it grew worse, Beethoven was heartbroken. In his own words: "Even that high courage that inspired me in the fair days of summer has now vanished."

By the time he wrote his Ninth Symphony, which you may know from its famous "Ode to Joy" melody, his hearing was entirely gone. He still managed to show up on stage, although he needed help to conduct the orchestra. He heard neither the notes of his own symphony nor the applause of the crowd.

During Beethoven's life, he taught people to treat music with the same respect that they treated painting and poetry. His story continues to inspire artists of all sorts to this day.

### READINGS, RESOURCES, AND VIDEOS

[Hey Kids, Meet Ludwig van Beethoven | Composer Biography from Hey Kid's Meet the Composer](#)  
[Ludwig van Beethoven Composer Profile from Classics for Kids](#)  
[Beethoven from Illustrating History \(3 minutes\)](#)