

Beethoven :: In Concert

presented by Margaret Marsh • 14-08-2025

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Born in Bonn :: 1770-1827

Beethoven displayed his musical talent at a young age, and was initially taught by his father, **Johann**. He went on to study piano, violin and viola with other musicians.

In 1779 he began composition lessons with the court organist, **Christian Gottlob Neefe**, under whose tutelage he composed **Nine Keyboard Variations on a March** by Ernst Dressler in C minor (WoO 63). This was his first published work - 1782.

9 Variations on a March. WoO 63 [6.22]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeloJPaL17M>

At 21, he moved to Vienna, which became his base, and studied composition with **Haydn**.

He gained a reputation as a virtuoso pianist, and soon found a patron in **Karl Alois, Prince Lichnowsky**, which resulted in his three Opus 1 piano trios (the earliest works to which he accorded an opus number) in 1795.

Symphony No. 1 in C major, Op. 21 (1800) [25.00]

Dedicated to Baron Gottfried van Swieten, an early patron of the composer. It premiered in Vienna on 2 April, 1800, and served to announce Beethoven's talents and arrival as a composer.

The symphony is clearly indebted to Beethoven's predecessors, particularly his teacher **Haydn** as well as **Mozart**, but nonetheless has characteristics that mark it uniquely as Beethoven's work, notably ...

- the frequent use of *sforzandi*, a musical term indicating a sudden, strong accent on a single note or chord.
- the sudden shifts in tonal centers that were uncommon for traditional symphonic form (particularly in the third movement),
- the prominent, more independent use of wind instruments.

The **Holy Roman Emperor Francis II** is reported to have attended the premiere and reacted by saying ...

“There is something revolutionary in that music!”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2X-1EeJL1O8>

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 36 (1802) [35.00]

Dedicated to Karl Alois, Prince Lichnowsky, it was written during Beethoven's stay at Heiligenstadt at a time when his deafness was becoming more pronounced and he began to realise that it might be incurable.

The work was premiered in the *Theater an der Wien* in Vienna on 5 April 1803, and was conducted by the composer.

Beethoven wrote the Second Symphony without a standard minuet; instead, a scherzo took its place, giving the composition even greater scope and energy.

The scherzo and the finale are filled with Beethovenian musical jokes, which shocked the sensibilities of many contemporary critics. One Viennese critic for the "*Zeitung fuer die elegante Welt*" (*Newspaper for the Elegant World*) famously wrote of the Symphony that it was ...

“a hideously writhing, wounded dragon that refuses to die, but writhing in its last agonies and, in the fourth movement, bleeding to death.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytOL_iszvAE

Symphony No. 3 in E-flat, Op. 55. Eroica. (1804) [45.00]

The First Great Romantic Symphony

One of Beethoven's most celebrated works, the **Eroica Symphony**, is a large-scale composition in 4 movements that marked the beginning of his innovative “**middle period**”. The work broke boundaries in symphonic form, length, harmony, emotional and cultural content.

It is widely considered a landmark in the transition between the Classical and Romantic eras. It is also often considered to be the first **Romantic symphony**.

Beethoven conducted a private performance for his patron Prince Lobkowitz in June 1804, and later the first public performance on 7 April 1805.

Why was Eroica controversial?

The new symphony breaks musical traditions of all kinds. It not only plays longer than his first compositions at 45 minutes, but it also carries the traits of the new romantic spirit and is much more complicated than his previous works.

Criticism in the beginning crossed it out as “heavy, endless and washed away.”

More information: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._3_\(Beethoven\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._3_(Beethoven))

Eroica – The Movie 2003

'The day that changed music forever'

A BBC film that dramatises the first performance of Beethoven's Symphony No 3, Eroica. Set in Vienna on 9 June 1804, the date of the private, first performance of the work at the palace of Beethoven's patron, Prince Lobkowitz.

Josef Haydn was present at this private performance:

"Unusual? He's done something no composer has ever done. He's placed himself at the center of his work. He gives us a glimpse into his soul. I expect that's why it is so noisy. But it is something new, quite new. The artist as hero. Everything is different from today."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vg-ngFcpxE>

Full 2003 BBC movie. 1.23.00:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuIHG0QY7-4&t=176s>

The Players

Ian Hart as Ludwig van Beethoven

Jack Davenport as Prince Franz Lobkowitz

Fenella Woolgar as Princess Marie Lobkowitz

Claire Skinner as Countess Josephine von Deym

Lucy Akhurst as Countess Teresa von Brunswick (Josephine's sister)

Tim Pigott-Smith as Count Dietrichstein

Frank Finlay as Joseph Haydn

Leo Bill as Ferdinand Ries

Anton Lesser as Sukowaty (Beethoven's copyist)

Peter Hanson as Wranitzky (violin leader of the orchestra in the film
and of the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique)