

# Ludwig van Beethoven



Beethoven composing about 1811

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in 1760 in what is now Germany. His father was a noted musician who taught his son music. Beethoven showed great musical talent at a very young age. He began playing the piano in public concerts at just seven years old.

Beethoven moved to Vienna, Austria when he was a young man. There he continued to study and perform in concerts. By 1795, he became a serious composer. In 1800 he published his first symphony. He became financially successful through his performances and through his published works.

About 1796, Beethoven began to have trouble hearing sounds. Over time it became worse, and by 1814, he was unable to hear anything. Still, Beethoven continued to perform until 1811. He

continued to compose music until his death. He wrote some of his greatest works after he became deaf. His famous Ninth Symphony, completed in 1824, was written after he had lost his hearing.

Beethoven died in 1827. He was a very popular musician and over 20,000 people attended his funeral. He is considered one of the greatest composers of all time. His symphonies, concertos and sonatas are some of the most famous pieces of classical music in the world today.



A painting of Beethoven about 1820



## What Do You Think?

Why do you think Beethoven had to stop performing when he lost his hearing, but was able to keep composing?

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## Sound Vibrations

When his hearing loss began, Beethoven used sound vibrations to help him with when he played and composed music. Sound vibrations happen when an air wave passes through an object. In our ears, our auditory nerve receives information from the waves and sends the information to our brain, which translates the waves as sound.

We can also feel the sound waves with our skin. The nerve endings feel the waves as it reaches them. You can feel this by placing your fingertips on a television with the sound off. Then turn the television on, and you will “feel” the sound.

Beethoven cut the legs off of his piano and placed it on the floor. He could then feel the vibrations when he played. He also had a device that connected the sound board of his piano to his temples, so he could feel the vibrations.