



Program Notes

for kids

Beethoven Festival with Garrick Ohlsson
Saturday, September 19, 2015
8:00 p.m.
Hill Auditorium

Beethoven Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major, “Eroica”

Intermission

Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor
Beethoven Choral Fantasy



Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra
Music in the Key of A²



If you go to Bonn, Germany, you can visit Beethoven's birthplace and see this statue of him in the center of town.

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 16, 1770 in Bonn, Germany | Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna, Austria

Family

Ludwig van Beethoven's parents were Johann van Beethoven and Maria Magdalena Keverich. Johann was a German musician, teacher, and singer, and was Beethoven's first music teacher. Johann was quite harsh with Ludwig, and neighbors sometimes reported seeing Beethoven standing at the piano in tears. Beethoven had two brothers and one sister. He never married nor had children.

Music

Beethoven is one of the most important composers of classical music. His best-known compositions include 9 symphonies, 5 concertos for piano, 32 piano sonatas, and 16 string quartets. Because his ninth symphony was so well respected, composers since Beethoven have felt the "curse of the ninth." Many believed that they would die after completing nine symphonies, so they were afraid to reach that landmark.

Symphony No. 3, "Eroica"

What kind of piece is this?

A *Symphony* is a long piece of music containing three or four movements. These *movements*, or sections, each have their own characteristics. Some movements may be upbeat and lively, while others may be slower and more song-like. This symphony has four movements and is about a forty-five minutes long, much longer than any symphony before it.

Fun Facts

Beethoven's talent and powerful personality made him many friends, but he frequently lost friends by insulting them. He once wrote a song called "Praise to the Fat One" for an overweight violinist. Another time he became angry with a prince and told him, "There are and there will be thousands of princes. There is only one Beethoven."

One of his favorite foods was macaroni and cheese. He was known for his poor cooking skills and for his bad behavior in restaurants. He had a loud laugh, an annoying voice, and sometimes left a restaurant without paying, writing music on the bill instead.

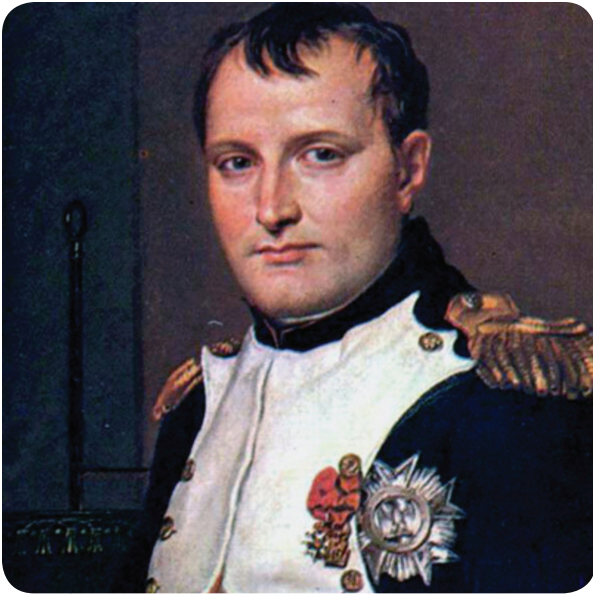
Beethoven composed best while walking. He was often seen wandering the streets, waving his arms and loudly singing bits of music, oblivious to the crowds of people staring at him.

Listen for...

The Symphony opens with two thunderous chords that some people think were meant to sound like cannon blasts.

The second movement of the Symphony was played at the funerals of Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy. What do you think makes it sound so sad?

One audience member at the first performance of this Symphony thought it was too long. He said, "I'd give a silver coin if it would stop!" What do you think?



Napoleon Bonaparte

When was it written?

Beethoven finished writing this Symphony in 1804. With this Symphony, he entered what is known as his “middle period” and the beginning of the “Romantic period” in music. Romantic music tries to portray emotions drawn from real life experiences.

What is it about?

Beethoven originally dedicated this Symphony to Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon did not come from a noble family, but many people thought he would lead Europe into a happier time. Beethoven liked the idea of a person with humble origins being a great leader. But when Napoleon’s French troops invaded Beethoven’s hometown and then Napoleon declared himself Emperor, Beethoven got very angry with him and removed the

dedication from the Symphony. He gave the Symphony a new title: “Eroica,” meaning “Heroic.” He wrote on the music: “Heroic Symphony: Composed to celebrate the memory of a great man.”

Piano Concerto No. 3

What kind of piece is this?

A *concerto* is a piece of music written for a solo instrument with an orchestra. In this case, the piano player is the soloist, so he sits at the front of the stage and plays the most important part. In a concerto, the soloist and orchestra can interact in different ways: the soloist could play alone, the orchestra could play alone, the orchestra could play something to support the soloist, or the soloist could join in like a member of the orchestra. Concertos usually have three movements.

When was it written?

Beethoven composed this Concerto in 1800. It was first performed in 1803, with Beethoven playing the solo piano part.

About the Performer

Garrick Ohlsson

Born April 13, 1948 in New York

Garrick Ohlsson began piano lessons at age 8 and by age 13 was enrolled at the prestigious Julliard School. His career really took off when he became the first American to win the International Frederic Chopin Piano Competition in 1970. Since then, he’s been traveling the world playing with orchestras, in chamber groups and in solo recitals. With all that traveling, it helps that he speaks seven languages: English, Polish, Italian, Spanish, French, German and Swedish! When he’s not touring,

Listen for...

In the first movement of the Concerto, the pianist waits for the orchestra to play for over 3 minutes before he starts. When he finally comes in, he plays three quick scales before repeating one of the melodies the orchestra had played. In the 2nd and 3rd movements, the pianist gets to play first.

Near the end of the first movement, the pianist plays a *cadenza*. This is a section where the soloist plays by himself and is allowed to *improvise*, or make up music on the spot. It is a chance for the pianist to show off his technical skills and musical imagination. You’ll notice that the other musicians will put their instruments down and the conductor will stop conducting to listen.

he's home in San Francisco. Ohlsson is 6-feet 4-inches tall and his hands can stretch across a wide range of keys on the piano.

Choral Fantasy

What kind of piece is this?

This piece is not like any other piece of classical music. When Beethoven composed it, he wrote that it was an “improvisation for piano with gradual entrance of the orchestra and finally a choral section and finale.” Beethoven’s use of the word *improvisation* makes sense when you think of this work as a *fantasy*. An improvisation is a section of a piece of music that a musician makes up on the spot. And a fantasy is a musical composition with no set structure that is composed “according to the composer’s fancy.” Both words imply that the composer is using his imagination to create a unique piece of music. This one features a solo pianist, solo singers and a choir.



Beethoven composing at the piano

When was it written?

The Fantasy was first performed in 1808. The first performance did not go well. The whole thing simply fell apart because Beethoven really wasn’t done composing it yet.

What is it about?

Beethoven asked a poet to write words to match the music he had already composed for the Choral Fantasy. The German words are about how music and the arts can inspire people and bring them together. The second verse reads:

When music’s enchantment reigns,
speaking of the sacred word,
Magnificence takes form,
The night and the tempest turns to light:
Outer peace and inner bliss
Reign o’er the fortunate ones.
All art in the spring’s sun
Lets light flow from both.

Listen for...

The work begins with a long piano solo that is a lot like a *cadenza*, which you heard in the Piano Concerto: it sounds as though it is made up on the spot and it is not conducted.

The *tempo*, or speed, of the music changes frequently during the Choral Fantasy. See if you can hear at least eight tempo changes.

For some reason, Beethoven was in a hurry to finish this piece. Not only did it fall apart at the premiere, but he also wrote that he thought the words weren’t very good as the poet had written them in quite a hurry.