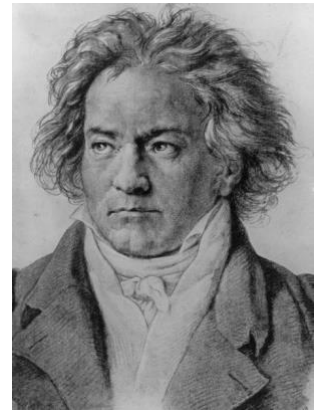


## Beethoven Fact Sheet

Classic FM's Fast and Friendly Guide to Beethoven Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbO05P5otaU#action=share>



### 1. When is Beethoven's birthday?

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn, Germany in December 1770... but no one is sure of the exact date! He was baptised on 17 December, so he was probably born the day before.

### 2. Beethoven's father creates a child prodigy

Never mind the exact date, the year of Beethoven's birth is sometimes questioned, and for years the composer thought he was born in 1772, two years too late. This may have been a deliberate deception on the part of his father (pictured) to make the musical prodigy seem younger – and therefore, more advanced for his age – than he actually was.

### 3. Beethoven on the violin

As a young boy, Beethoven played the violin, often enjoying improvisation rather than reading the notes from a score. His father once asked: "What silly trash are you scratching together now? You know I can't bear that – scratch by note, otherwise your scratching won't amount to much." How wrong he was...

### 4. Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart

After the death of Mozart in 1791, musicians in his hometown of Vienna were in need of a new genius. The Viennese Count Waldstein (pictured) told the young Beethoven if he worked hard enough he would receive 'Mozart's spirit through Haydn's hands'. No pressure then.

### 5. Was Beethoven deaf?

Composing anything at all is a challenge, even for a musical genius. So when you consider Beethoven started to go deaf around 1796, aged just 25, it's a wonder he managed to write any music at all. He communicated using conversation books, asking his friends to write down what they wanted to say so he could respond.

### 6. Beethoven's Symphony No. 1 – a musical joke?

Beethoven was 30 when his first symphony was first performed in the Burgtheater in Vienna (pictured), and it went where no symphony had ever gone before. Symphonies were seen to be pretty light-hearted works, but Beethoven took this one step further with the introduction, which sounds so musically off-beam it's often considered to be a joke!

## **7. Beethoven's three musical periods: early period**

It's hard to split Beethoven's music up into sections, but it's generally agreed there are three different periods with three broad styles. The first is his early period, ending around 1802 after the Heiligenstadt Testament, and includes the first and second symphonies, a set of six string quartets, piano concerto no. 1 and 2, and around a dozen piano sonatas – including the 'Pathétique' sonata.

## **8. Beethoven's three musical periods: 'heroic' middle period**

After his personal crisis, it's perhaps no surprise that Beethoven's middle period works are more emotional. A lot of the music from this period expresses heroes and struggles – including Symphony No. 3, the last three piano concertos, five string quartets, Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*, and piano sonatas including the 'Moonlight', 'Waldstein' and 'Appassionata'.

## **9. Beethoven's 'Moonlight' Sonata**

It's one of Beethoven's great piano works, but he never knew the piece as the 'Moonlight' Sonata. He simply called it Piano Sonata No. 14, and it wasn't given its poetic nickname until 1832, five years after Beethoven's death. German poet Ludwig Rellstab said the first movement sounded like moonlight shining upon Lake Lucerne, and the name stuck.

## **10. Beethoven's opera: *Fidelio***

If a job's worth doing, it's worth doing properly. He may have only composed one opera, but Beethoven poured blood, sweat, and tears into revising and improving it. He reworked the whole opera over a ten year period, giving us the two act version performed today – the older version is sometimes known as *Leonore*.

## **11. Beethoven at the movies**

The moving music from Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 is a perfect soundtrack to 2010 blockbuster smash, *The King's Speech*, as George VI makes his address to the nation. You'll also find hints of his fifth symphony in unexpected places, if you listen carefully – have you watched *Saturday Night Fever* recently...?

## **12. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and the 'Ode to Joy'**

Symphony No. 9 is often nicknamed the 'choral' symphony, but it's only the finale that features a choir. Using singers in a symphony was a wild idea at the time, but it seems to have paid off – Beethoven's Ninth Symphony changed the face of classical music forever, and continues to inspire listeners and composers to this day!

### **13. When and how did Beethoven die?**

We all like a tippie, but Beethoven may have been more partial to a pint than most. He was once arrested for being a tramp by an unsuspecting policeman who didn't recognise him! After his death in 1827, his autopsy revealed a shrunken liver due to cirrhosis.