

The Classical Era (1750-1820)

Classical Composers

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)



- Born in Rohrau, Austria
- Known as “Papa Haydn” for his many musical contributions and because of his “fatherly” teaching of many composers during the classical era.
- First true classical composer
- Father of the Symphony [Symphony #94 - "Surprise"](#) [Symphony #45 "Farewell" with explanation.](#)
 - Adapted and perfected the form, other composers followed in his footsteps
- Father of the String Quartet [Emperor Quartet - Movement II](#)
 - Standardized the instrumentation and form of the string quartet
 - 2 violins, 1 viola, 1 cello
- Employed for much of his life by Prince Esterhazy (his primary patron)
 - Composer/conductor of court orchestra
 - Lived a luxurious life
 - Wrote an incredible amount of music while in this position and retired from Esterhazy with a “life pension”
- Master teacher of other composers (most famously Mozart and Beethoven)
- Produced a huge amount of music during his lifetime. Not all has survived into modern times so sometimes these numbers vary, from one source to another. The numbers listed below may be estimated.
 - 104 symphonies
 - String quartets – numbers vary from 77-85.
 - Concertos – 30 or more written for all instruments including keyboard, violin, cello, bass, trumpet, oboe and flute as soloists.
 - Sonatas – including [solo piano](#) and [piano/violin](#)
 - Operas – perhaps as many as 23
 - [Masses](#) – perhaps as many as 14.
 - Many [oratorios](#) (4) and cantatas
- Notable works:
 - [Surprise Symphony \(No. 94\) Movement II](#)
 - [Clock Symphony \(No. 101\) Movement II](#)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)



- TRUE MUSICAL GENIUS
- Born in Salzburg, Austria
- Father was a well-known and respected musician
- Child prodigy
 - Played harpsichord at age 3 & 4
 - [Composed first piece at age 5](#)
 - Published first piece at age 6
 - [Symphony # 1 \(age 8\)](#)
 - [Opera "Mitridate" \(age 13\)](#)
- Toured Europe with his father and sister
 - Performed for kings, queens, aristocracy
- Mastered all forms and wrote them all perfectly
- Compositions were perfect, free from error. Composition was, for him, a relatively easy process. It was as if he was simply writing down ideas already completed in his head. Extensive revision was not necessary.



- As a child, he enjoyed great fame. Faced difficulties as an adult finding steady employment, in spite of his overwhelming talent. Led a very indulgent life, which when combined with his lack of work meant he and his wife lived far above their means.
- Died while working on his [Requiem](#) but before completing it.
- Was so poor at the time of his death that his wife could not afford a proper funeral, and consequently his body was dumped in a pauper's grave. To this day, we do not know exactly where this true musical genius is laid to rest.
- 35 years of life = 600+ compositions!
 - 41 symphonies
 - many operas (the only ones really performed from the Classical era)
 - masses (including the [Requiem](#))

- concertos
- piano sonatas
- instrumental sonatas
- songs
- oratorios
- cantatas
- Notable works:
 - [Symphony No. 40](#)
 - [Eine Kline Nachtmusik](#)
 - [Marriage of Figaro](#)
 - [Magic Flute](#)
 - [Piano Sonata in C Major](#)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)



- Born in Bonn, Germany
- Credited with bridging the Classical and Romantic eras (transitional composer)
- Composed with more force, strength, and emotion than other Classical composers
- Master of form, but knew how to break the rules, thus taking us into a new era
- Student of Haydn, but grew tired of his traditional approach and sought teachers with fresh ideas
- Difficult childhood –
 - Father was a singer, wanted Beethoven to be like Mozart
 - Had much potential but was not a prodigy like Mozart
 - Father beat him if he failed musically
 - Only comfort came from his mother
- As a child, performed for Mozart, who suggested that Beethoven would one day give the world something to listen to.
- Was first known as a piano virtuoso when he moved to Vienna. Would challenge other pianists to “improvisation” contests. Was eventually forced to stop his performing due to deafness.
- Reputation for being miserable. Never married. Always pictured with a frown.
- Suffered from hearing loss much of his life, which drove him into isolation.
- Went completely deaf by the end of his life, but **STILL COMPOSED!**

- His greatest composition, Symphony No. 9, was written when he was completely deaf! It included a chorus and vocal soloists with the orchestra in the final movement (A first for a symphony)
- A perfectionist who struggled to compose, he constantly revised his compositions, often taking years to finish one work. He did not possess the natural genius of Mozart.



His compositions are generally divided into 3 style periods:

1st period – Classical - Compositions show a great classical influence of Haydn and Mozart. He is following the rules of traditional “classical” composition containing emotion within the form.

2nd period – Transition - Compositions begin to slowly depart from the traditions of classicism and many of the standard rule that governed composition and form began to be broken. The music becomes more accented, passionate and dynamic. He begins to use more dissonance to create tension and great volume differences to create excitement. It is often said that Beethoven used dynamics as structural devices (the way Haydn used form). In so doing, he increased the size of the standard orchestra of his time to 45-55 musicians. The works of this time period are his most recognizable and beloved.

3rd period – Romantic - Deafness had caused him to retreat from most social settings. This music considered rather abstract and is almost a total departure from classicism. Here, the emotion will rule the form. It is the beginning of a new way of creating music and is the time of his greatest musical achievement (if not his most popular).

- Less compositional output than Haydn or Mozart (due to his seemingly unending revisions and his eventual deafness). He composed only about 136 pieces of music in total. Although the list includes some vocal music, Beethoven is best known for his instrumental music (for orchestras and string quartets) and for his piano music.
 - 9 symphonies ([Symphony #6 – Pastoral](#))
 - concert overtures ([Leonore](#) [Egmont](#)) - an INDIVIDUAL CONCERT PIECE in a single movement without reference to a stage performance and generally based on a literary theme.
 - concertos (for piano/[violin](#))
 - chamber music ([String Quartet Op. 18 #4 in C minor](#))
 - 1 opera (Fidelio)
 - 2 masses
 - 32 piano sonatas ([Sonata #8 Mvt. 2](#))
- Notable works:
 - [Symphony No. 5](#) (transitional)
 - [Symphony No. 9](#) (Choral, Movement 4 “Ode to Joy”)
 - [Moonlight Sonata](#)
 - [Für Elise](#)
 - [Pathétique Sonata](#)

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)



- Crossed the bridge into Romanticism built by his idol, Beethoven
- Composed brilliantly in all forms
- Best known as a composer of over 600 art songs! ART SONG – A MUSICAL SETTING OF A POEM FOR SOLO VOICE AND PIANO.
- died before reaching his peak as a composer
- Major Compositions:
 - [The Erlking](#) (art song)
 - [Symphony No. 8](#) (The Unfinished)
 - [Ave Maria](#)