

## Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 1 in C major, Op. 21*



*Symphony No. 1 in C major* was premiered on April 2, 1800 in Vienna, and is dedicated to Baron Gottfried van Swieten, an early patron of the composer. The symphony is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings and is approximately 23 minutes long.

1. *Adagio molto. Allegro con brio*
2. *Andante cantabile con moto*
3. *Menuetto: Allegro molto e vivace*
4. *Finale: Adagio. Allegro molto e vivace*

Ludwig van Beethoven (c. 16 December 1770 – 26 March 1827) was a German composer and pianist. He was a crucial figure in the transitional period between the Classical and Romantic eras in Western classical music, and remains one of the most acclaimed and influential composers of all time. Born in Bonn, Germany, he moved to Vienna, Austria in his early twenties and settled there, studying with Joseph Haydn and quickly gaining a reputation as a virtuoso pianist. His hearing began to deteriorate in the late 1790s, yet he continued to compose, conduct, and perform, even after becoming completely deaf.

The year 1800 marked a watershed in Beethoven's development. On April 2 in Vienna, he made his debut as a composer of symphonies during a concert he had arranged and financed himself. Beethoven began to work intensively on his first symphony in 1799, completing the work the following year. The symphony, though enthusiastically received at its premiere, already carried portents of the composer's coming radicalism. At the time, some observers commented upon the work's prominent use of wind instruments, but few noted the first symphony's masterstroke; it opens with the "wrong" chord—a dominant seventh of the subdominant key of F major, and not the expected tonic chord of C major. The English musicologist Sir Donald Francis Tovey dubbed this work "a comedy of manners." It is, in some sense, a skit on the deeply engrained style and vocabulary of Classicism itself, though the humor is unquestionably Beethoven's own. The opening movement begins with the celebrated discord mentioned above, which ushers in the slow introduction, questioning and insistent. It leads to the beginning of the exposition, again interrogatory in character. Fanfares add a martial flavor to the music, which is offset by the more lyrically inclined second theme. The *Andante* seems more subdued and relaxed, but the manner in which it preserves the latent drama associated with symphonic form is particularly subtle and entertaining. The third movement's marking raises the question of whether Beethoven could have intended this to

be a stately Haydn minuet before he increased the tempo indication. Tovey likened the explosive start of the finale to the release of "a cat from a bag." The whole orchestra plays a unison fortissimo chord of G, the dominant, an effect that recalls the slow introduction of the first movement. The development features a daring harmonic treatment of the scale theme, and Beethoven employs much dense counterpoint before the work ends in a positive and triumphant reassertion of C major.

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