

L. van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67*



Symphony No. 5 was written in 1804–08. This symphony is one of the most popular and well-known compositions in all of European classical music, and one of the most often played symphonies. It comprises four movements:

1. **Allegro con brio**
2. **Andante con moto**
3. **Scherzo. Allegro**
4. **Allegro**

The symphony is scored for piccolo (fourth movement only), 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets in B flat and C, 2

bassoons, contrabassoon (fourth movement only), 2 horns in E flat and C, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones (alto, tenor, and bass, fourth movement only), timpani and strings. It is approximately 30 minutes long.

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.

Symphony No. 5 was premiered in Vienna's *Theater an der Wien* in 1808 and achieved its prodigious reputation soon afterwards. E.T.A. Hoffmann described the symphony as "one of the most important works of the time" and gives the following review following one of the performances:

"Radiant beams shoot through the deep night of this region, and we become aware of gigantic shadows which, rocking back and forth, close in on us and destroy all within us except the pain of endless longing—a longing in which every pleasure that rose up amid jubilant tones sinks and succumbs. Only through this pain, which, while consuming but not destroying love, hope, and joy, tries to burst our breasts with a full-voiced general cry from all the passions, do we live on and are captivated beholders of the spirits."

The symphony begins by stating a distinctive four-note "short-short-short-long" motif twice. This motif appears frequently in popular culture, from disco to rock and roll, in films and on television. During World War II, the BBC used the four-note motif to introduce its radio news broadcasts because its rhythm is the Morse code letter "V" (••• —, "victory"). Beethoven dedicated the symphony to two of his patrons, Prince Franz Joseph von Lobkowitz and Count Rasumovsky. The dedication appeared in the first printed edition of April 1809. Groundbreaking both in terms of its technical and emotional impact, the Fifth has had a large influence on composers and music critics, and inspired work by such composers as Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Bruckner, Mahler, and Hector Berlioz. The Fifth stands with the Third Symphony and Ninth Symphony as the most revolutionary of Beethoven's compositions.