

L. van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 7 in A major, Op. 92*



Portrait of Beethoven circa 1812.

Beethoven began to work on his Symphony No. 7 in 1811, while he was staying in the town of Teplice in the hope of improving his health. It is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets in B flat, 2 bassoons, 2 horns in A, 2 trumpets in D, timpani and strings and it is approximately 37 minutes long. The Symphony consists of four movements:

1. *Poco sostenuto — Vivace*
2. *Allegretto*
3. *Presto — Assai meno presto (trio)*
4. *Allegro con brio*

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 work was premiered in Vienna on December 8, 1813 at a charity concert for soldiers wounded in the Battle of Hanau, with Beethoven himself conducting and double featured with the patriotic Wellington's Victory symphony. The orchestra was led by Beethoven's friend, Ignaz Schuppanzigh, and included some of the finest musicians of the day: violinist Louis Spohr, Johann Hummel, Giacomo Meyerbeer, Antonio Salieri, Anton Romberg, and the Italian double bass virtuoso, Domenico Dragonetti, whom Beethoven himself described as playing "with great fire and expressive power". It is also said that the Italian Guitar Virtuoso Mauro Giuliani played Cello at the premier. The piece was very well received, and the second movement, the allegretto, had to be encored. Spohr made particular mention of Beethoven's antics on the rostrum ("*as a sforzando occurred, he tore his arms with a great vehemence asunder ... at the entrance of a forte he jumped in the air*"), and the concert would inevitably be repeated due to its immense success.

Critics and listeners have often felt stirred or inspired by the Seventh Symphony. For instance, one program-note author writes: "*... the final movement zips along at an irrepressible pace that threatens to sweep the entire orchestra off its feet and around the theater, caught up in the sheer joy of performing one of the most perfect symphonies ever written.*" Composer and music author Antony Hopkins says of the symphony: "*The Seventh Symphony perhaps more than any of the others gives us a feeling of true spontaneity; the notes seem to fly off the page as we are borne along on a floodtide of inspired invention.* Beethoven himself spoke of it fondly as "one of my best works". Another admirer, Richard Wagner, referring to the lively rhythms which permeate the work, called it the "*apotheosis of the dance*".