

L. van Beethoven, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 61*



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.

Beethoven's one and only concerto for violin and orchestra is in three movements:

1. *Allegro ma non troppo*
2. *Larghetto*
3. *Rondo. Allegro*

It is scored, in addition to the solo violin, for single flute, and pairs of oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets, and timpani along with strings. It is approximately 30 minutes long. The concerto was premiered on December 23, 1806 in the *Theater an der Wien* in Vienna.

Beethoven wrote the concerto for his colleague Franz Clement, a leading violinist of the day, who had earlier given him helpful advice on his opera *Fidelio*. The occasion was a benefit concert for Clement. However, the first printed edition (1808) was dedicated to Beethoven's friend Stephan von Breuning.

It is believed that Beethoven finished the solo part so late that Clement had to sight-read part of his performance. Perhaps to express his annoyance, or to show what he could do when he had time to prepare, Clement is said to have interrupted the concerto between the first and second movements with a solo composition of his own, played on one string of the violin held upside down; however, other sources claim that he did play such a piece but only at the end of the program. The concerto has become a tremendous success in 1844, well after Beethoven's death, with performances by the then 12-year-old violinist Joseph Joachim with the orchestra conducted by Felix Mendelssohn. Ever since, it has been one of the most important works of the violin concerto repertoire and it is frequently performed and recorded today.