

London Philharmonic Orchestra



GCSE
BrightSparks
Resources

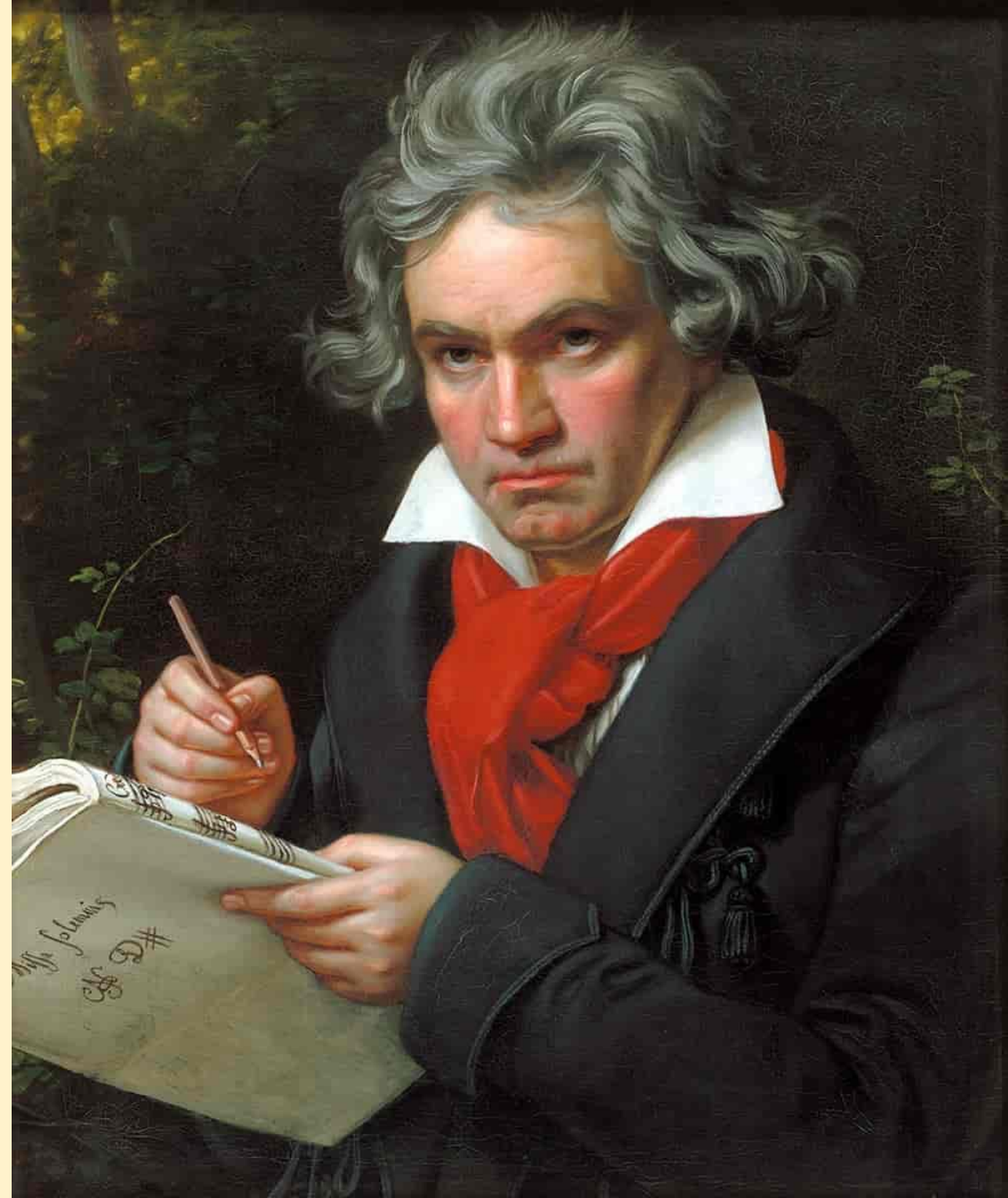
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Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770–1827)

Symphony No.1 First movement (1800)



Features of the Classical Period (c. 1730–1830)

- Perfect musical structures
- Balanced, regular phrasing
- System of harmonic rules

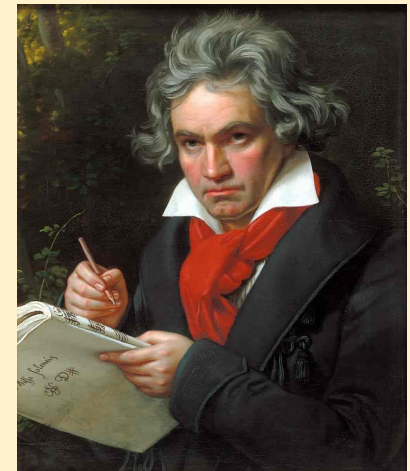
Key composers:



Franz Joseph Haydn
(1732–1809)



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756–1791)



Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770–1827)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

- Beethoven is considered to be one of the most important figures in the history of Western classical music
- He was born in Bonn, Germany, in 1770, and displayed his musical talent from a young age
- Aged 21 he moved to Vienna, Austria, and studied composition with the famous classical composer Joseph Haydn
- Symphony No.1 was his first major orchestral work, but throughout his career he wrote more symphonies, string quartets, concertos, chamber music and piano sonatas
- He began to lose his hearing early in his career, and was almost completely deaf by 1815
- He died after several months of illness in 1827

What is a symphony?

A symphony is a large piece for orchestra, often in four movements (sections):

1. Fast (typically in **sonata form**)
2. Slow
3. Dance (**Minuet and trio** or **Scherzo**)
4. Fast

Minuet and trio = Dances from the 1600s

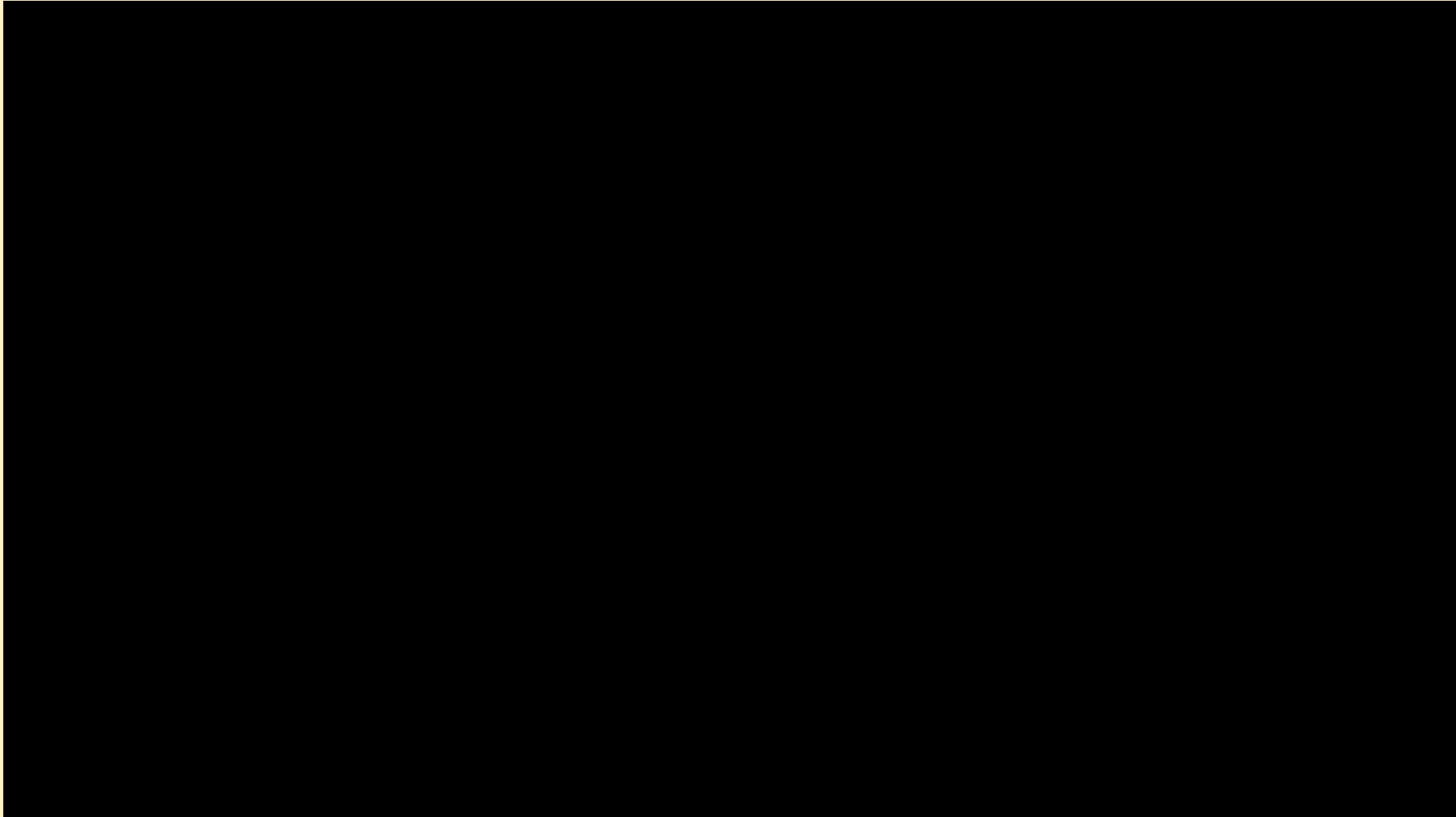
Scherzo = A short and upbeat piece of music, usually in 3/4 time.
Comes from the Italian word for 'joke.'

Sonata form

- Sonata form is the structure typically used in the first movement of a classical symphony
- It features **three** sections and **two** subjects/themes. The sections are:
 - Exposition (composer exposes the two themes)
 - Development (ideas are combined and developed)
 - Recapitulation (return to the beginning)
- Finishes with a **coda** (ending section)

Beethoven
Symphony No.1 – first movement
Analysis

Scrolling score and analysis...



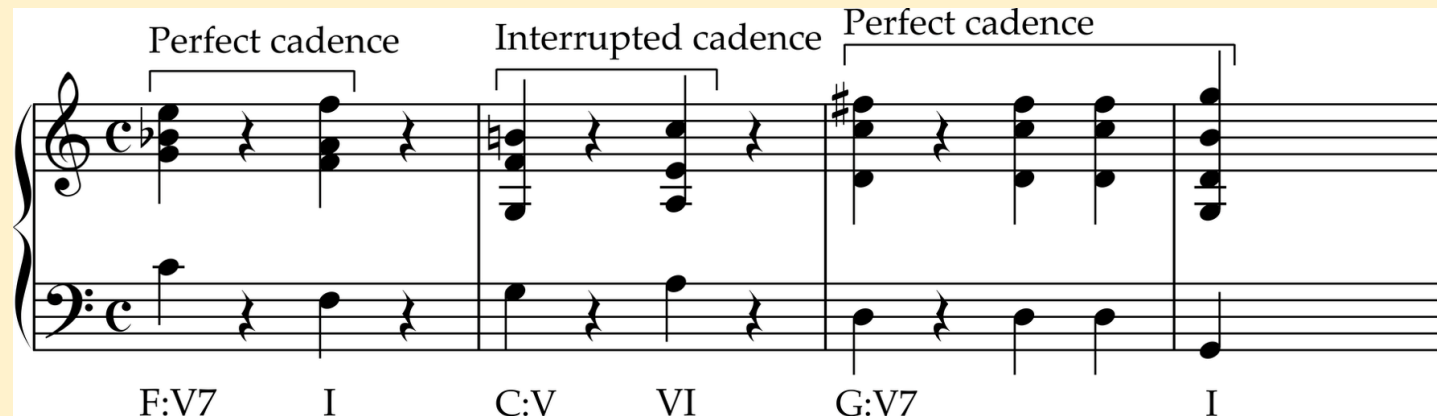
<https://youtu.be/VwMqvKTpXEs>

Introduction (bars 1 – 12)

- Adagio molto (slow)
- Three **cadences** (two chords that finish a phrase)
- Doesn't establish the key (tonally ambiguous)
- Mysterious
- An unusual way to begin a symphony!
- Features passing notes, appoggiaturas and chromatic movement
- Chords are marked **tenuto** (played with slight emphasis)

Perfect cadence = Chords V – I (sounds resolved)

Interrupted cadence = Chords V – VI (sounds unresolved)



The musical notation shows three cadences in a piano introduction. The first cadence is a Perfect cadence (V-I) in F major, with chords F:V7 and I. The second cadence is an Interrupted cadence (V-VI) in C major, with chords C:V and VI. The third cadence is a Perfect cadence (V-I) in G major, with chords G:V7 and I. The notation includes treble and bass staves with notes and rests, and chord symbols below the bass staff.

Introduction (bars 1 – 12)

- Finishes with a perfect cadence in the home key of C (Ic – V7 – I)

The image shows a musical score for the introduction of a piece in C major. The score is written in 2/4 time and consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The bass line begins with a C: Ic chord (C4, E3, G3). It then moves to a G major scale (V7) starting on G3, which includes the notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F#, and G. This scale is followed by passing notes (F#4, E4, D4) leading to the final I chord (C4, E3, G3). The treble staff shows a series of chords: C: Ic, G major (V7), and C: Ic. The labels 'G major scale', 'passing notes', and 'I' are placed below the bass line to identify the different sections of the music.

- Key finally established ready for...

Exposition section (bars 13 – 110)

1st theme/subject:

The image shows a musical staff in treble clef with a common time signature. The first measure contains a dotted half note on C4. The second measure contains a dotted quarter note on C4 and an eighth note on E4, both boxed and labeled "dotted rhythm". The third measure contains a dotted quarter note on C4 and an eighth note on E4, also boxed and labeled "dotted rhythm". The fourth measure contains a sequence of eighth notes: C4, E4, G4, B4, C5, G4, E4, C4. The fifth measure contains a sequence of eighth notes: C4, E4, G4, B4, C5, G4, E4, C4, boxed and labeled "Notes of triad plus 7th" with the notes C, E, G, B, C written above it.

- Establishes the key of C major
- Features dotted rhythms and uses the notes of the C major triad with an added 7th
- Immediately repeated up a tone in D minor to make a **sequence**
- Ends with a **trill (two notes alternate quickly)**.

Regular phrasing

- **Regular phrasing** = phrases last the same length (in the Classical period, usually 4 or 8 bars). Also called 'balanced phrasing'
- Beethoven's first subject is unusual because it lasts for 5 bars and is placed within a 6 bar phrase

Exposition section (bars 13 – 110)

- Bar 30 – descending G7 arpeggio and perfect cadence lead to...
- Transition theme (bar 32) – 8 bar tonic pedal and...

Antiphony = orchestra is split into two 'teams' playing the same material back and forth (woodwind vs strings)

- Bar 53 – Imperfect cadence (I – V) leads to...

Exposition section (bars 13 – 110)

2nd theme/subject (bar 53):

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Flute (Flt.) and Oboe (Ob.). The score is in G major, indicated by the text "In G (dominant key)" at the bottom. The Flute part is written on a treble clef staff and features a melodic line with slurs and accents, starting with a half note G4 and moving through A4, B4, and C5. The Oboe part is written on a treble clef staff and features a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes, starting with a half note G4 and moving through A4, B4, and C5. The score is divided into four measures, with the Flute part playing in the second and fourth measures and the Oboe part playing in the first and third measures.

- Oboe and flute in **dialogue** (also known as **conversational** or **question and answer**)
- **Legato** (smooth)
- String accompaniment is **staccato** (spiky)

Codetta (bar 88)

- **Codetta** = short musical material at the end of a section
- Dotted rhythms (based on the 1st subject)
- Bouncing staccato accompaniment with **arpeggios** (broken chords)
- **Cadential phrasing** = a repeating phrase used to emphasize the cadence
- Perfect cadence in G, the dominant key (bar 105)



Development section (bars 110 – 177)

- All ideas so far combine, interact and develop
- Beethoven mainly uses 1st subject theme (with dotted rhythm)
- Begins in G minor and moves through some unusual keys using a **sequence**
- Uses a **cycle of fifths** (keys are a 5th apart)

Development section (bars 110 – 177)

- Bar 136: **canon** = an idea is imitated by different instruments with staggered entries (also known as a round)
- Bar 139: **contrary motion** = parts move up and down at the same time
- Bar 144: **imitation** = one idea (the dotted rhythm!) is copied and moved across the orchestra
- Bar 171: dramatic dynamics and falling G triad lead to...

Exposition section (bars 178 – 258)

- Return to the exposition section
- 1st subject now played in unison and fortissimo (*ff*) (before it was quiet and only played by the strings)
- Spans 5 octaves
- Bar 188: transition with **sequence** and **dialogue** lead to...
- Bar 205: 2nd subject now in home key

Coda (bars 259 – end)

- Coda = ending section
- Series of perfect cadences to confirm return to home key
- Long **legato** notes vs short **staccato** notes (bar 277)
- Dramatic dynamics
- Bar 285: final statement of 1st subject theme
- Bar 288: tutti (everyone), C major triad
- Bar 290: timpani roll on tonic note
- Bar 294: final C major chords played triple stopped (3 notes) by violins

Explore more...

- Revise the Symphony form further with our [Guide to the Classical Symphony](#)
- Test your knowledge of musical terminology with our [bumper terminology quiz](#)
- Support your knowledge of classical music with our resources exploring Mozart's [Horn Concerto No. 4](#), [Clarinet Concerto](#) and [Eine Kleine Nachtmusik](#)