Abstract

Beethoven is generally considered to be one of the most significant composers of all time. His compositions denote a crucial turning point in the history of music, and his influence can be discussed in numerous ways – musically, technically, theoretically and even philosophically. This paper discusses Beethoven’s last creations and their contributions. Included is an overview of his personal life and an exploration of the historical, social, and political time in which he lived.

Keywords: Beethoven, classic music, symphony

INTRODUCTION
The Maestro: Ludwig van Beethoven

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn, Germany in 1770. He began his musical studies with his father Johann van Beethoven. Johann was a musician at the court of Bonn. Ludwig van Beethoven’s extraordinary musical talent was evident from early childhood and his first concert performance was in March of 1778 in Cologne, Germany. The most significant teacher in Bonn was Christian Gottlob Neefe, famous for his Singspiele and songs. Neefe became a musical and life mentor to Beethoven – becoming an iconic figure to Beethoven’s academic development. It was Neefe who was responsible for introducing Beethoven to the Johann Sebastian Bach’s “Well-Tempered Clavier” and to Philip Emanuel Bach’s “Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments”. Beethoven held huge respect for Philip Emanuel Bach’s writings – even to the point of obsession. At the age of twelve, Beethoven published his first work: 9 variations in C minor for piano. And the following year he composed his first three Piano Sonatas, Op. 2. In 1784, he became Neefe’s assistant organist at the court of Maximilian Franz, Elector of Cologne.

In 1787, Ludwig van Beethoven went to Vienna, the center of couture and music at that time, specifically with the intention of meeting Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. During his stay in Vienna he received a letter that his mother was dying so he returned to Bonn. Beethoven had a strong loving relationship with his mom, and she was the only one from his family to whom
he was close. She passed away on July 17, 1787 presenting Beethoven with one of his first traumas in his emotional development.

In 1792, Beethoven moved to Vienna and never returned to the town of his birth. In the beginning of his life in Vienna he was focused strongly on his studies and performing and less on composing. He studied with Hayden, Ignaz Schuppanzigh (violin), Antonio Salieri, and Johann Albrechtsberger. He became quite famous in the aristocratic circles due to his virtuosic performances and improvisations on the piano. Everyone a part of the musical life in Vienna admired Beethoven. Clementi described Beethoven’s piano playing as: “His playing was but little cultivated, not seldom violent, like himself, but always full of spirit” (Kullak, 1973).

Unfortunately, around 1796, his hearing began to fade and by 1820 he was completely deaf. This was the most difficult challenge presented to Beethoven throughout his life. The agony and humiliation of being a composer of music and yet unable to hear the notes he wrote was almost more than he could bear. In 1802, he wrote a letter to his brothers known as the Heiligenstadt Testament about his suffering in life. This letter of agony has lived throughout history as one of the most significant pieces of literature depicting human suffering.

Ludwig van Beethoven died on March 26, 1827 in Vienna. 20,000 Viennese citizens flooded the streets to pay tribute to this great artist during his funeral. His death was a huge loss to the musical community and yet his legend lives on through the many works he accomplished during his lifetime.

The works of Ludwig van Beethoven includes 32 piano sonatas, numerous sets of piano variations, 5 piano concertos, 9 symphonies, 11 overtures, violin concerto, 16 string quartets, 9 piano trios, 10 violin sonatas, 5 cello sonatas, an oratorio, an opera, two Masses, arias, songs and many other smaller works (Grout, 1996).

His later works became a model for the composers of the Romantic Period. The progression of his musical style spiraled directly into the romanticism of the era following his death.

“Beethoven was the first among the great masters to divorce the creative from the performing artist, the first to whom composing was a bitterly relentless affair, perhaps the only language of his soul” (Lang, 1970).

**Beethoven’s Three Musical Periods**

Ludwig van Beethoven composed his works during three distinct periods of his life between 1792 and 1822 – providing the musical community with a basic journal to his writing styles throughout his life. The compositions composed in the first period (1792-1802) had the Classical influences of Franz Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, yet Beethoven was trying to find his own voice. In his middle period (1802-1814) the musical style became decidedly more emotional with more dramatic and romantic elements.

1815-1827 was the last musical period of Beethoven’s life which many refer to as his Creative or Isolated Era, owing to the fact that he was deaf for the large portion of this period.
In this period he wrote the last five piano sonatas, the Ninth Symphony, the Missa Solemnis, the last six string quartets, and 17 bagatelles for the piano.

**Piano Sonata No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111**

- Maestoso – Allegro con brio e appassionato
- Arietta: Adagio molto semplice e cantabile

This sonata is the triumph of his Piano Sonatas, a work with such an intimate, and personal expression, representing the opposite forces of major and minor, allegro and adagio, appassionato and semplice. It was composed between 1821 and 1822 and dedicated to Archduke Rudolph. The first movement is with stormy character with classic Beethoven bifurcation between c minor and C Major. In this work great stress is placed on diminished-seventh chords in a turbulent, dissonant idiom. This movement is in the standard sonata-allegro form and has its origins from the French overture a standard genre of the baroque period. It is very interesting that the first theme of this movement he wrote in 1801.

The second movement is a six variation set. The opening theme is simple and by the third variation becomes wild euphoria. In the fourth variation, the tremolos, together with the syncopated chords in the right hand create an ethereal atmosphere. There are so many emotions, so much joy, and so much sadness. Many have questioned why Beethoven chose to end the cycle of Sonatas with a two movement work. What makes Op. 111 so special? Thomas Mann wrote: "But when it ends and while it ends, something comes, after so much rage, persistence, obstinacy, extravagance; something entirely unexpected and touching in its mildness and goodness. With the motif passed through many vicissitudes, which takes leave and so doing becomes itself entirely leave-taking, a parting wave and call, with this D G G occurs a slight change, it experiences a small melodic expansion. After an introductory C, it puts a C sharp before the D . . . and this added C Sharp is the most moving, consolatory, pathetically reconciling thing in the world. It is like having one's hair or cheek stroked, lovingly, understandingly, like a deep and silent farewell look. . . .“ (Mann, 1992).

Beethoven was completely deaf when he wrote this sonata. He couldn’t hear what he was writing. His creative powers continued to increase throughout his lifetime. Musicologist Pierro Weiss has written, “Beethoven’s late style is perfectly congruous in its own terms; it is the distillation of a lifetime’s experience in music.”

If we analyze the late sonatas shows that in Beethoven’s late works we have to deal with very small unite of structure, but no music has ever been built on bolder and straighter lines.

In this period his music is pure, passionate, and spiritual. In Op. 111 he brings out every nuance, every shade of expression. In turns of his piano writing, Op.111 is Beethoven’s highest achievement and the culmination of all his piano works.
Symphony No.9

- Allegro ma non troppoun poco maestoso
  - Scherzo: Molto vivace – Presto
- Adagio molto e cantabile
- Presto

The Symphony No.9 is in d minor and was completed in 1924. This symphony is Beethoven’s final symphony and considered as one of the best known works among Western classical music.

He started to work with the Symphony No.9 in 1818. It took him 6 years to finish it and present in front of public. In 1792 he was inspired by the poem, “Ode to Joy” (1785) by Schiller and after that he made plans in his mind to set this poem to music. Also, in the Symphony no.9 we can hear many tunes, which came from other Beethoven’s music written before the symphony. For example, the melody from “The Choral Fantasy” (1808) was brought in the symphony in the vocal part with chorus closer to the end in order to form the climax.

Another example is the theme from scherzo in symphony came from Beethoven’s fugue, which was written in 1815.

The symphony is scored for the full orchestra. Among woodwinds, there are piccolo; 2 flutes; 2 oboes; 2 Clarinets in A, B-flat, and C; 2 bassoons, and in the fourth movement contrabassoon. In the first and second movements there are 2 horns in D and B-flat; in the third and fourth movement there are 2 horns in B flat and E-flat. 2 trumpets in D and B flat; 3 trombones. Among percussion instruments, Beethoven used timpani, bass drum, triangle, and cymbals. All strings group was used (2 violins, violas, cellos, and double basses. Moreover, Beethoven used complete group of voices, such as soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, and Choir.

The symphony No. 9 has four movements. The opening of the first movement, Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso grows out of a void. It is in sonata from, in very fiery mood. It starts in pianissimo, and then grows to a loud and imposing first theme. Beethoven used many modulations, such as use of the median to tonic relationships among the keys. We can notice that right before the recapitulation Beethoven used D Major, which makes big difference in comparison with the beginning. The coda is very grandiose, and Beethoven used chromatic fourth intervals during the coda.

The second movement is Scherzo: Molto vivace – Presto, in d minor. This movement is very energetic, uses propulsive rhythms projects humor and power. Very interesting fact about this movement that Beethoven changed standard classical form of Scherzi. Usually, it supposed to be written in triple rhythm. Even though Ludwig did write the scherzo in triple meter, he made it that way that when you listen to the movement, it gives the feeling that it is in quadruple time.
The third movement, Adagio molto e cantabile, is slow and lyrical. This movement built from the introduction theme follows by variations in B-flat Major. In the final variation, Beethoven wrote interruptions of the melodies by putting loud fanfares for the full orchestra. This movement explores more personal, even spiritual realms.

The fourth movement is Presto. This movement unites the whole symphony together. It opens with what Wagner called the "terror fanfare" dissonant and frantic passage that leads to a "recitative". This movement used chorus and voice solos, which was very unique for that time. The words for vocal parts were taken from the poem “Ode to Joy” by Schiller. The symphony No. 9 moved the classical symphonic style into Romantic era. This symphony is a great example of Beethoven’s large orchestra. His aim was to express all feelings that he had for the music of this symphony more accurately, by using much wider range of instruments. The symphony was written in Beethoven’s late period where his music was much more evolved, where he tried to combine some aspects of baroque ideas of Handel and Bach with classical music, particularly with the music of Mozart and Haydn (they were his idols). Beethoven paid a lot of attention to his melodies; they are very lyrical and beautiful with deep thoughts and meanings. According to the critics this is Beethoven’s masterpiece and no other piece of music has exerted such an impact on later composers.

Beethoven himself said, "Symphonies are the best representation of my true self. I always seem to hear within me the sounds of a great orchestra."

Summary

Martin Cooper described this stylistic evolution as a "gradual reorientation of a complete, mature personality" whose artistic quest centered on the search for a "unity lying behind the diversity of the phenomena of human existence”.

Beethoven’s last compositions are realizations of his life and state of mind in his last years and his deafness and isolation from the world played a big role in his style. In this period he turned to the variations form and his emotional and harmonic language became richer. Another features of Beethoven's late style are blurring dividing lines, wide-spaced harmonic arches, leisurely march of melodies, contrapuntal textures, and invention of new sonorities.

All of his works in the late period are truly epic. Beethoven essentially exhausted all the musical possibilities within the confines of the Classical Era and pushed the compositional world directly into the Romantic Era.

REFERENCES


