

Beethoven String Quartets

Lecture 1 Handouts

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

- 1770 – The composer was baptized in Bonn on December 17, 1770, the son of Johann van Beethoven, a music teacher and tenor at the electoral court of Cologne. Beethoven's father was an alcoholic who abused Ludwig physically and psychologically.
- 1780 or 1781 – Beethoven began study with Christian Gottlob Neefe, a composer, organist, and conductor who was his only significant teacher until he left Bonn permanently in 1792.
- 1782 – Beethoven's first compositions began to appear, principally small-scale works for piano.
- 1782-92 – Beethoven was a member of the chapel of the electoral court, first as assistant organist, later as violist and composer.
- 1787 – Beethoven made a short trip to Vienna, where he may have met Mozart. The trip was cut short by his mother's illness. She died soon after his return to Bonn.
- 1790 and/or 1792 – Beethoven met Haydn in Bonn while Haydn was traveling between Vienna and London. Haydn was impressed enough with his talents to accept him as a pupil.
- 1792 – Beethoven moved to Vienna, where he was centered for the rest of his life, in order to study with Haydn. His relationship with Haydn was uneasy. Beethoven's father dies.
- 1800/01 – After earning a modest living for many years as a music teacher, pianist, and composer, Beethoven achieved a great degree of financial independence, most importantly due to an annuity granted by Prince Lichnowsky; at this time, he began to experience the first symptoms of deafness.
- 1802 – Beethoven wrote the Heiligenstadt Testament, a draft will, which expressed his troubled emotional state, especially over his deafness.
- 1809 – Upon threat of leaving Vienna, Beethoven was provided with a generous annuity from Prince Lobkovic, Prince Kinsky, and the archduke Rudolf of Austria. This was a period of economic disruption in the Austrian Empire caused by Napoleonic invasions.
- 1811-12 – Beethoven's affair with Antonie Brentano, the "Immortal Beloved," the only woman ever known to have returned his love.
- mid-1810's – Beethoven became almost totally deaf, frequently reduced to written communication only.
- 1815 – Beethoven's brother Caspar died leaving a nephew whom Beethoven wished to raise as his own. His attempts to secure guardianship led to protracted and humiliating litigation, but he succeeded in gaining custody in 1820. The nephew bitterly resented being torn from his mother.
- 1827 – Died in Vienna on March 26, deeply troubled and dissatisfied with the course of his personal life.

The String Quartets of Ludwig van Beethoven

Quartets of the Early Period:

Op. 18 – F major, G major, D major, C minor, A major, B-flat major
(composed 1798-1800; published Vienna, 1801)

Quartets of the Middle Period:

Op. 59 – F major, E minor, C major, “Razumovsky” (composed 1805-6; published
Vienna, 1808)

Op. 74 – E-flat major, “Harp” (composed 1809; published Leipzig and London, 1810)

Op. 95 – F minor, “Serioso” (composed 1810; published Vienna, 1816)

Quartets of the Late Period:

Op. 127 – E-flat major (composed 1823-24; published Mainz, 1826)

Op. 130 – B-flat major (composed 1825-26; published Vienna, 1827)

Op. 131 – C-sharp minor (composed 1826; published Mainz, 1827)

Op. 132 – A minor (composed 1825; published Paris and Berlin, 1827)

Op. 133 – B-flat major, “Grosse Fuge” (composed 1825-26; published Vienna, 1827;
originally intended as the finale to Op. 130)

Op. 135 – F major (composed 1826; published Berlin and Paris, 1827)

Opus Number and WoO Numbers in Beethoven's Works

The word "opus" means "work" in Latin. In the context of musical composition, it refers to a published work of music or a published collection of multiple works with a numbering attached by the publisher, usually one that was designated by the composer. The numberings are supposed to indicate a chronological order of publishing, not necessarily a chronological order of composition, although opus numbers generally do serve as a good general chronological guide to a composer's output of compositions.

The plural of "opus" is "opera." The abbreviation "Op." is attached to a single "opus." The abbreviation for the plural "opera" is "Opp." The designation "Op. posth." ("Opus posthumous") indicates a collection published after a composer's death.

In the case of published collections of works, the individual components of an Opus number are also numbered. The first composition of a collection of six works from an Op. 7 would be designated Op. 1, no. 1. The last composition in the same collection would be Op. 7, no. 6.

Hundreds of compositions by Beethoven survive only in the form of manuscripts or published works to which the publisher never attached an opus number. Such works have been catalogued with the prefix "WoO," based on the German designation *Werk ohne Opuszahl* ("work without opus number"). The most famous Beethoven composition identified with a "WoO" number is the bagatelle "Für Elise," WoO 59.

Lecture 2 Handouts

Beethoven Quartets of the Early Period:

Op. 18 (composed 1798-1800; published Vienna, 1801), dedicated to Prince Joseph Franz Maximilian von Lobkowitz (1772-1816):

No. 1 – F major

Allegro con brio
Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato
Scherzo: Allegro molto; Trio
Allegro

No. 2 – G major

Allegro
Adagio cantabile
Scherzo: Allegro [and Trio]
Allegro molto quasi Presto

No. 3 – D major

Allegro
Andante con moto
Allegro [Scherzo]; Minore [Trio]; Maggiore [Scherzo varied]
Presto

No. 4 – C minor

Allegro ma non tanto
Andante scherzoso quasi Allegretto
Menuetto [and Trio]
Allegro

No. 5 – A major

Allegro
Menuetto [and Trio]
Andante cantabile [a theme with variations]
Allegro

No. 6 – B-flat major

Allegro con brio
Adagio ma non troppo
Scherzo: Allegro
“La Malinconia” [“melancholy”]: Adagio (“questo pezzo si deve trattare colla più gran delicatezza”/
“this piece must be executed with the greatest delicacy”); Allegretto quasi Allegro

Sonata Form

On the broadest level, movements cast in Sonata Form include three large musical sections: the Exposition, Development, and Recapitulation.

The Exposition introduces (“exposes”) all the melodic materials to be used throughout the movement to the listener; it customarily begins in one key and ends in another.

The Development manipulates the melodic materials heard in the Exposition in an unpredictable fashion; they are re-arranged, re-interpreted, and put forth in different keys than when originally heard in the Exposition; the key structure is unstable, an intensification of the shift in key heard in the latter portion of the Exposition.

The Recapitulation offers a return to the melodic materials of the Exposition along with the original key; the thematic materials of the Exposition are repeated in the same order as they were heard in the Exposition, but all of them are heard in the original key (there is no shift in key).

In the Exposition and Recapitulation, there were customarily two themes of special prominence: a “first theme” heard at or near the start and a “second theme” heard roughly in the middle.

By the late eighteenth century, it was customary to include an extended Coda (“tail”) at the end of the Recapitulation to provide a rousing conclusion to the movement.

Rondo Form

Rondo forms are usually reserved for the concluding movements of symphonies, concertos, and chamber music. They are marked by a recurring refrain (the “rondo theme”) that keeps “coming back ‘round” in alternation with contrasting musical material. Rondo form as the basis of slow movements is possible.

Scherzos

Traditionally, the third movement of a four-movement symphony was supposed to be a “Scherzo” in the Beethoven tradition. In Italian, “scherzo” means “a joke,” and scherzos were introduced in symphonies and chamber music in the late eighteenth century as replacement for minuets. As a “musical joke,” a scherzo is almost never intended to be truly humorous, but they are supposed to be much lighter and simpler in style than first movements. Often, they are intended to be a bit jarring due to melodic or rhythmic irregularities. Brahms in particular was very fond of rhythmic complications, which are deliberately introduced to make his Scherzos difficult to count for audience members. Scherzos are typically constructed in a three-part form in which there is a contrasting section (the “Trio”) interspersed between statements of the main Scherzo section.

Lecture 3 Handout

Beethoven Quartets of the Middle Period:

Op. 59 (composed 1805-6; published Vienna, 1808), dedicated to Count Andrei Kyrillovich Razumovsky (1752-1836), hence the common nickname for the set, the “Razumovsky” Quartets:

No. 1 – F major

Allegro
Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando
Adagio molto e mesto
Allegro: Thème russe [“Russian theme”]

No. 2 – E minor

Allegro
Molto Adagio (“si tratta questo pezzo con molto di sentimento”/“this piece must be executed with a great deal of sentiment”)
Allegretto; Maggiore
Finale: Presto

No. 3 – C major

Andante con moto; Allegro vivace
Andante con moto quasi Allegretto
Menuetto: Grazioso; Trio
Allegro molto

Op. 74 in E-flat major (composed 1809; published Leipzig and London, 1810), the “Harp,” dedicated to Prince Joseph Franz Maximilian von Lobkowitz:

Poco Adagio; Allegro
Adagio ma non Troppo
Presto
Allegretto con variazioni

Op. 95 in F minor (composed 1810; published Vienna, 1816), the “Serioso,” dedicated to Count Nikolaus Zmeskall von Domanovecz (1759-1833):

Allegro con brio
Allegretto ma non Troppo
Allegro assai vivace ma serioso
Larghetto espressivo; Allegretto agitato; Allegro

Handout for Lecture 4

Beethoven Quartets of the Late Period:

Op. 127 in E-flat major (composed 1823-24; published Mainz, 1826), dedicated to Prince Nikolai Borisovich Galitzin (1794-1866):

Maestoso; Allegro
Adagio, ma non troppo e molto cantabile; Andante con moto; Adagio molto espressivo
Scherzando vivace
Allegro

Op. 130 in B-flat major (composed 1825-26; published Vienna, 1827), dedicated to Prince Nikolai Borisovich Galitzin:

Adagio ma non troppo; Allegro
Presto
Andante con moto, ma non troppo: poco scherzando
Alla danza tedesca: Allegro assai
Cavatina: Adagio molto espressivo
Finale: Allegro

Op. 131 in C-sharp minor (composed 1826; published Mainz, 1827), dedicated to Baron Joseph von Stutterheim (1764-1831):

Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo
Allegro molto vivace
Allegro moderato; Adagio
Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile; Più mosso; Andante moderato e lusinghiero; Adagio; Allegretto; Adagio, ma non troppo e semplice; Allegretto
Presto
Adagio quasi un poco andante
Allegro

Op. 132 in A minor (composed 1825; published Berlin and Paris, 1827), dedicated to Prince Nikolai Borisovich Galitzin:

Assai sostenuto; Allegro
Allegro ma non tanto
Molto adagio; Andante
Alla marcia, assai vivace
Allegro appassionato

Op. 133 in B-flat major (composed 1825-26; published Vienna, 1827; originally intended as the finale to Op. 130), the “Grosse Fuge” (the “Grand Fugue”), dedicated to Archduke Rudolf of Austria, Archbishop of Olomouc:

Subtitle: “Grande Fugue, tantôt libre, tantôt recherchée” (“A grand fugue, sometimes free, sometimes strict”)

Overtura

(1st fugue)

Meno mosso e moderato

(Interlude and 2nd fugue)

(Coda)

Op. 135 – F major (composed 1826; published Berlin and Paris, 1827), dedicated to Johann Nepomuk Wolfmayer (1768-1841)

Allegretto

Vivace

Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo

“Der schwer gefasste Entschluss” [“The difficult decision”]: Grave, ma non troppo tratto (“Muss es sein?” / “Must it be?”); Allegro (“Es muss sein!” / “It must be!”)

Supplemental Handouts

The Piano Sonatas of Ludwig van Beethoven

Sonatas of the Early Period:

- Op. 2, no. 1 – F minor (composed 1793-95; published Vienna, 1796) – 4 movements
Op. 2, no. 2 – A major (composed 1794-95; published Vienna, 1796) – 4 movements
Op. 2, no. 3 – C major (composed 1794-95; published Vienna, 1796) – 4 movements
- Op. 7 – E-flat major (composed 1796-97; published Vienna, 1797) – 4 movements
- Op. 10, no. 1 – C minor (composed 1795-97; published Vienna, 1798) – 3 movements
Op. 10, no. 2 – F major (composed 1796-97; published Vienna, 1798) – 3 movements
Op. 10, no. 3 – D major (composed 1797-98; published Vienna, 1798) – 4 movements
- Op. 13 – C minor, “Pathétique” (composed 1797-98?; published Vienna, 1799) – 3 movements
- Op. 14, no. 1 – E major (composed 1798; published Vienna, 1799) – 3 movements
Op. 14, no. 2 – G major (composed 1799?; published Vienna, 1799) – 3 movements
- Op. 22 – B-flat major (composed 1800; published Leipzig, 1802) – 4 movements
- Op. 26 – A-flat major (composed 1800-1; published Vienna, 1802) – 4 movements
- Op. 27, no. 1 – E-flat major (composed 1800-1; published Vienna, 1802) – 4 movements
- Op. 27, no. 2 – C-sharp minor, “Moonlight” (composed 1801; published Vienna, 1802) – 3 movements
- Op. 28 – D major, “Pastoral” (composed 1801; published Vienna, 1802) – 4 movements
- Op. 31, no. 1 – G major (composed 1802; published Zürich, 1803) – 3 movements
Op. 31, no. 2 – D minor, “Tempest” (composed 1802; published Zürich, 1803) – 3 movements
- Op. 31, no. 3 – E-flat major (composed 1802; published Zürich, 1803) – 4 movements
- Op. 49, no. 1 – G minor (composed 1797?; published Vienna, 1805) – 2 movements
Op. 49, no. 2 – G major (composed 1795-96; published Vienna, 1805) – 2 movements

Sonatas of the Middle Period:

Op. 53 – C major, “Waldstein” (composed 1803-4; published Vienna, 1805) – 3 movements

Op. 54 – F major (composed 1804; published Vienna, 1806) – 2 movements

Op. 57 – F minor, “Appassionata” (composed 1804-5; published Vienna, 1807) – 3 movements

Op. 78 – F-sharp minor (composed 1809; published Leipzig and London, 1810) – 2 movements

Op. 79 – G major (composed 1809; published Leipzig and London, 1810) – 3 movements

Op. 81a – E-flat major, “Les adieux” (composed 1809-10; published Leipzig and London, 1811) – 3 movements

Sonatas of the Late Period:

Op. 90 – E minor (composed 1814; published Vienna, 1815) – 2 movements

Op. 101 – A major (composed 1814; published Vienna, 1815) – 4 movements

Op. 106 – B-flat major, “Hammerklavier” (composed 1817-18; published Vienna and London, 1819) – 4 movements

Op. 109 – E major (composed 1820; published Berlin, 1821) – 2 movements

Op. 110 – A-flat major (composed 1821-22; published Paris, Berlin, and Vienna, 1822) – 4 movements

Op. 111 – C minor (composed 1821-22; published Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and London, 1823) – 2 movements

(+ several early works and fragments never published with opus numbers)

The Symphonies of Ludwig van Beethoven

Symphonies of the Early Period:

No. 1 – C major, Op. 21 (composed 1800; first performed 1800; published Leipzig, 1801)

No. 2 – D major, Op. 36 (composed 1801-2; first performed 1803; published Vienna, 1804)

Symphonies of the Middle Period:

No. 3 – E-flat major, Op. 55, “Eroica” (composed 1803; first performed 1805; published Vienna, 1806)

No. 4 – B-flat major, Op. 60 (composed 1806; first performed 1807; published Vienna, 1808)

No. 5 – C minor, Op. 67 (composed 1807-8; first performed 1808; published Vienna, 1809)

No. 6 – F major, Op. 68 (composed 1808; first performed 1808; published Leipzig, 1809)

No. 7 – A major, Op. 92 (composed 1811-12; first performed 1813; published Vienna, 1816)

No. 8 – F major, Op. 93 (composed 1812; first performed 1814; published Vienna, 1817)

Sole Symphony of the Late Period:

No. 9 – D minor, Op. 125, “Choral” (composed 1822-24; first performed 1824; published Mainz, 1826)

Some Members of Beethoven's Circle

Family:

Ludwig van Beethoven (1712-1773), grandfather

Johann van Beethoven (1740-1792), father

Maria Magdalena van Beethoven, née Keverich (1746-1787), mother

Kaspar Anton Karl van Beethoven (1774-1815), brother

Johanna van Beethoven, née Reiss (1786-1869), sister-in-law, wife of Kaspar

Karl van Beethoven (1806-1858), nephew, son of Kaspar

Nikolaus Johann van Beethoven (1776-1848), brother

Teachers:

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Johann Georg Albrechtsberger (1736-1809)

Christian Gottlob Neefe (1748-1798)

Antonio Salieri (1750-1825)

Johann Baptist Schenk (1753-1836)

Some Musical Colleagues and Friends:

Antoine Reicha (1770-1836)

Carl Friedrich Amenda (1771-1836)

Ignaz Schuppanzigh (1776-1830)

Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837)

Anton Diabelli (1781-1858)

Ferdinand Ries (1784-1838)

Carl Czerny (1791-1857)

Anton Felix Schindler (1795-1864)

Some prominent composers of symphonies and string quartets
of the classical period in music:

Giovanni Battista Sammartini (ca. 1700-1775)

Johann Stamitz (1717-1757)

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

The String Quartets of Franz Joseph Haydn

Early Quartets (most rarely performed today):

Op. 1 – No. 1: B-flat major, “La chasse”; No. 2: E-flat major; No. 3: D major; No. 4: G major; No. 6: C major; No. “0”: E-flat major

(most composed by 1762, perhaps ca. 1757-59; published 1764-66)

[No. 5 of the set is spurious]

Op. 2 – No. 1: A major; No. 2: E major; No. 4: F major; No. 6: B-flat major

(perhaps composed ca. 1760-62; published 1764-66)

[Nos. 3 and 5 of the set are spurious]

Op. 3 – a set of six spurious quartets

Op. 9 – No. 1: C major; No. 2: E-flat major; No. 3: G major; No. 4: D minor; No. 5: B-flat major; No. 6: A major

(composed and published ca. 1770)

Op. 17 - No. 1: E major; No. 2: F major; No. 3: E-flat major; No. 4: C minor; No. 5: G Major, “Recitative”; No. 6: D major

(composed 1771, published 1772)

Mature Quartets:

Op. 20, the “Sun” Quartets – No. 1: E-flat major; No. 2: C major; No. 3: G minor; No. 4: D major; No. 5: F minor; No. 6: A major

(composed 1772, published 1774)

Op. 33, the “Russian” Quartets – No. 1: B minor; No. 2: E-flat major, “The Joke”; No. 3: C major, “The Bird”; No. 4: B-flat major; No. 5: G major, “How do you do?”; No. 6: D major

(composed 1781, published 1782)

Op. 42 – One quartet in D minor

(composed 1785, published 1786)

Op. 50, the “Prussian” Quartets – No. 1: B-flat major; No. 2: C major; No. 3: E-flat major; No. 4: F-sharp minor; No. 5: F major, second movement, “Ein Traum”; No. 6: D major, “The Frog”

(composed and published in 1787)

Op. 54, the “Tost” Quartets I – No. 1: G major; No. 2: C major; No. 3: E-flat

(composed 1788, published 1789)

Op. 55, the “Tost” Quartets II – No. 1: A major; No. 2: F minor, “The Razor”; No. 3: B-flat major

(composed 1788; published 1790)

Op. 64, the “Tost” Quartets III - No. 1: C major; No. 2: B minor; No. 3: B-flat major; No. 4: G major; No. 5: D major, “The Lark”; No. 6: E-flat major

(composed 1790, published 1791)

Op. 71, the “Apponyi” Quartets I - No. 1: B-flat major; No. 2: D major; No. 3: E-flat major

(composed 1793, published 1795)

Op. 74, the “Apponyi” Quartets II - No. 1: C major; No. 2: F major; No. 3: G minor, “The Rider”

(composed 1793, published 1796)

Op. 76, the “Erdödy” Quartets - No. 1: G major; No. 2: D minor, “Fifths”; No. 3: C major, “Emperor”; No. 4: B-flat major, “Sunrise”; No. 5: D major; No. 6: E-flat major

(composed 1797, published 1799)

Op. 77, the “Lobkowitz” Quartets - No. 1: G major; No. 2: F major

(composed 1799, published 1802)

Op. 103 - movements II and III of an unfinished quartet in D minor

(composed by 1803, published in 1806)