

BEFORE

Once opera was launched as an art form in Italy in the late 16th century, it quickly spread to other European countries.

STYLES BEFORE 1750

Classical themes prevailed in the first Italian operas c. 80–81. Less formal styles, including the German *Singspiel*, the English *masque*, and the French *vaudeville* included dialogue, dancing, and comic interludes.

17TH-CENTURY FRANCE

The operas of Jean-Baptiste Lully c. 84–85 were performed all over Europe. His court entertainments for King Louis XIV inspired Charpentier's 1693 opera *Médée*.

ENGLISH REVIVAL

Henry Purcell's c. 96–97 opera *Dido and Aeneas* evolved from the masque, a festive courtly entertainment, and semi-opera c. 95 – plays in which the acts were interspersed with music and dancing.

EARLY NEAPOLITAN OPERA

Allesandro Scarlatti c. 108–09 initiated a new style of opera in the 1690s, known as the Neapolitan school. His drama with music, *Il Pirro e Demetrio* (Pyrrhus and Demetrius; 1694), was a great success across Europe.

KEY WORKS

Giovanni Battista Pergolesi *La serva padrona* (The Servant Turned Mistress)
 Handel *Julius Caesar*; *Xerxes*
 John Gay *The Beggar's Opera*
 Christoph Willibald Gluck *Alceste*; *Orfeo ed Euridice* (*Orpheus and Eurydice*)
 W.A. Mozart *The Clemency of Titus*; *The Marriage of Figaro*

COMPOSER (1704–87)

CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD VON GLUCK

Christoph Gluck was born in Erasbach, Upper Palatinate, Bavaria, the son of a forester. He ran away from home to Prague where he studied organ and cello. In 1745, after studying with the Milanese composer Giuseppe Sammartini (1695–1750), he went to London, where he composed operas for the King's Theatre, and met Handel. After writing operas for various countries, he settled in Vienna.

With Ranieri de' Calzabigi (1714–95), librettist of Gluck's 1767 opera *Alceste*, he wrote a manifesto challenging prevailing operatic conventions, and called for better integration between music and drama.

Gluck died in 1787 and was buried in Vienna, Austria.



Opera Comes Alive

After its early days in Renaissance Florence, opera captured a central role in European music. The opening of opera houses in the 17th century moved it from a courtly pursuit to a public one, while 18th-century reforms readied opera for Romantic developments.

By the beginning of the 18th century, composers had developed styles of opera with elements that appealed to the tastes of their fellow countrymen and carried on traditions set out in previous generations in that country. However, Italian *opera seria* (serious opera) was still considered the standard form for opera – for instance, most of the 42 operas of George Frideric Handel (see pp.110–11) were *opera serie*.

In *opera seria*, a major role was usually allocated to a castrato (a high-voiced male singer). Mythological or historical stories were retold to a set formula, with elaborate arias as highlights. Recitative (speech-like singing that advances the plot) was accompanied only by a continuo (cello and keyboard playing a bass line). Arias were mostly *da capo* (meaning “from the top”). In these, a first melody was followed by a contrasting middle section, before the singer returned to the opening section again (back to the top). This time, the singer would decorate the melody with improvised virtuoso ornamentations.

Humanizing opera plots

Though widely appealing, the otherworldly style and stop-and-start format of *opera seria* were far removed from everyday life. Venetian court poets Apostolo Zeno (1669–1750) and Pietro Metastasio (1698–1782) attempted to “humanize” *opera seria*.

Rather than using characters simply as vehicles through which singers could deliver empty virtuosity, they wrote librettos focusing on the drama and emotions of the individual characters. As a result, by the middle of the 18th century, operas had tighter plots, rounded-out characters in credible situations, more dramatic energy, and more varied music.

In Paris, this was epitomized by the German-born composer Christoph Willibald von Gluck (see below), whose work for the Paris Opéra, including *Orfeo ed Euridice* and *Iphigénie en Tauride*, helped France to overtake Italy as the spiritual home of opera.

Gluck took the reforms of Zeno and Metastasio even further. To drive the plot more seamlessly, he favoured what he called “beautiful simplicity”. He transformed the traditional overture into an appropriately dramatic introduction to the whole opera. Gluck abandoned the *da capo* aria, with its formulaic repetition of the opening melody, and wrote recitatives that were accompanied

formula, but seem to be living, breathing people who experience authentic and familiar emotions. In Greek mythology, Orpheus (see p.20) journeys to Hades, the underworld,

to reclaim his love, Eurydice. To succeed he must leave Hades without looking at her, but at the last moment he glances back and so loses her forever. The poignant simplicity of Orpheus's aria “Che farò senza Euridice?” (“What will I do without Eurydice?”) only emphasizes the tragedy.

Comic opera

Alongside the developing *opera seria*, comic opera was finding its feet. Comic scenes had been popular in some early operas, and by the 1720s a new style, *opera buffa* (comic opera) took

hold in Italy. With more flexibility of structure than *opera seria*, the action romps along with song-like arias, chattering recitative, and ensembles (songs for two or more singers) that develop into musical discussions between characters.

The first example of *opera buffa* is generally regarded to be *La serva padrona* (The Servant Turned Mistress)



Theater poster for *The Beggar's Opera* John Gay's 1728 opera was an early example of English ballad opera, a light-hearted, satirical entertainment inspired by vaudeville comedies brought to London by the French.

“The most moving act in all opera.”

WRITER AND MYSTIC ROMAIN ROLLAND (1866–1944) ON ACT II OF GLUCK'S OPERA, “ORFEO ED EURIDICE”

and enhanced by the orchestra, rather than recitatives that were simply supported by a continuo.

These alterations made each act a coherent union of music and drama and, though Gluck's plots remained Classical, his characters are vibrantly human and recognizable. The roles of Orpheus and Eurydice in his 1762 opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* are not distant figures written to conform to a set

by the Italian composer Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710–36). Performed by an itinerant troupe of Italian comic actors (*buffoni*) in Paris in 1752, it sparked a two-year press war known as the *Querelle des bouffons* (Quarrel of the Comic Actors). One faction supported the lighter Italian music, while the other championed the traditional French operatic style. Philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau



Il Parnaso Confuso, Vienna, 1765
 Johann Franz Greipel's painting depicts Gluck's one-act theatrical serenade being premiered by four young archduchesses as a surprise to celebrate the remarriage of their brother, Joseph II.

(1712–78) was at the forefront as the debate continued, opposing Gluck's principles of "beautiful simplicity".

In London, John Gay (1685–1732) mocked the artifice of Italian *opera seria* in his 1728 ballad opera, *The Beggar's Opera*. The composer dropped recitative altogether, and favoured popular tunes and bawdy characters. Gay's controversial plot satirized the British government and pointed to the corruption of the governing class. Produced by John Rich, the opera was a huge financial success, and newspapers joked that it had made the "rich gay and Gay rich".

Operas of Mozart

Mozart (see pp.138–39) wrote both *opera seria* and *opera buffa*, often blurring the boundaries between

the serious and comic elements. *La Clemenza di Tito* (The Clemency of Titus), is an *opera seria* with a Classical subject, formal arias, and recitatives, as well as a castrato role. By contrast, *Le Nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*) has a social-comedy plot with "serious" aristocratic characters contrasting with the "comic" roles of servants and villagers.

1753 The year Jean-Jacques Rousseau published his essay, *Lettre sur la musique française*, in response to the *Querelle des bouffons*. He concluded that opera was impossible in the French language.

Instead of a castrato part, there is an important role for the bass voice. Mozart's fairytale-like opera *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*) is a *Singspiel* (a type of German comic opera with spoken dialogue) in which serious and comic elements meld and contrast. Written in 1791, only nine weeks before Mozart's death, the success of the opera offered the composer some small consolation.

AFTER >>>

Romantic composers relaxed the formal structures of opera to better serve the narrative.

THE SUPERNATURAL
 The plot of Weber's 1821 opera *Der Freischütz* (The Freeshooter, also called The Magic Marksman) featured a supernatural dimension in the form of seven magic bullets 166–67 >>>

FRENCH SPECTACLE
 Operas became grand. Berlioz 158–59 >>> made exceptional use of the orchestra in his 1856 opera *Les Troyens*, based on Virgil's *Aeneid*.

BEL CANTO
 While the operas could be serious or comic, the Italian *bel canto* (beautiful singing) style favoured by Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini demanded an extensive vocal range, a full, resonant tone, and great powers of lyricism.



GRITTY PLOTS
 Puccini 196–97 >>> made opera more personal, with intense emotional music and plots involving everyday people and their struggles.

PLAYBILL FOR THE 1829 ROSSINI OPERA "WILLIAM TELL"

BEFORE

Music performed by choirs was largely sacred, used in worship, and sung unaccompanied or with an organ.

EARLY GROUP SINGING

In the 13th century, religious plainchant began to develop into organum (two voices) and polyphony (many voices) << 46–47.

GLORIOUS EFFECT

The 16th-century works of Thomas Tallis, William Byrd, and Palestrina << 60–61 were admired for their serenely beautiful vocal lines, which were suited to large churches.

209 The number of surviving cantatas composed by Bach.

29 The number of oratorios written by Handel.

BAROQUE DEVELOPMENTS

Instruments were used to accompany sacred subjects to sublime effect in the Mass and Passion settings of J.S. Bach << 102–03.

Handel << 110–11 developed the oratorio form, dramatizing biblical stories in operatic fashion, using an orchestra, solo singers, and a choir. His *Messiah* was premiered in Dublin's Great Music Hall rather than a church.

Choral Music

In the 18th century, choral music took a significant leap. From its traditional role in church worship, it began to shift gradually into the concert hall, inviting composers to shake off spiritual sobriety and inject distinctly secular influences into their work.

During the first half of the 18th century, only a privileged few heard choral music outside a place of worship. But with the Enlightenment, which began in the mid-1700s, people were encouraged to formulate their own beliefs and codes of behaviour, which, across Europe, challenged the influence of the established churches.

Following tradition

However, composers continued to write choral music for church worship, especially settings of the Latin text of the Roman Catholic Mass. These were sung by professional singers, with little congregational involvement.

Haydn, Mozart, and many others, made settings of the Mass, and the special Requiem Mass for the dead, each in their own particular musical style. Luigi Cherubini even composed a Requiem Mass, in D minor, to be

played as his own funeral. Mozart's D minor *Requiem* was intended for church performance, but from the early 19th century it began to be staged in concert halls, where the sombre beauty and power of its orchestration could be appreciated aesthetically as well as spiritually.

New forms

Short religious works such as the cantata and motet also increased in popularity. These were sequences of choral and solo numbers normally accompanied by the organ, and occasionally by a small ensemble



Memorial masterpiece Mozart died before he could finish his *Requiem* in 1791. It was hurriedly completed by Franz Xaver Süssmayr and first performed in 1793.

of instruments to provide variety and colour. The words for such forms were chosen by the composer or his librettist, allowing more musical freedom than the strict texts of the Mass. These pithy musical "sermons"

often appeared between sections of the Mass, but were performed increasingly as concert pieces. Mozart's three-movement motet *Exultate, Jubilate* has a religious text but is operatic in style.



Choral ambition grows

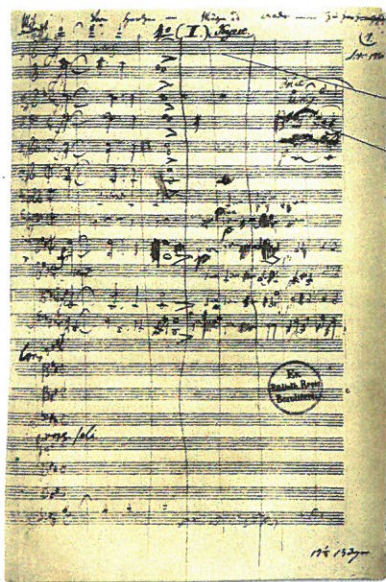
Beyond the church, music was developing apace. Composers began to address the wider dramatic potential of sacred texts and religious stories, their eyes fixed not only on the altar but also, increasingly, on the concert platform. Opera at this time was flourishing, orchestras were being established, and the public was developing an appetite for concert-going.

Inspired by Handel's oratorios (musical dramas on sacred themes designed for concert performance), Haydn's 1798 oratorio, *The Creation*, uses a libretto based on words from the Bible, Psalms, and John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*. The words go beyond the spiritual to celebrate light, earth, plants, animals, and nature itself. The highly descriptive music for three soloists, chorus, and orchestra was intended for the biggest stages, rather than churches. The impact of *The Creation* pointed confidently towards the Romantic age.

Twenty-five years after *The Creation*, Beethoven returned to the traditional theme of the

Mass with his *Missa Solemnis* (Solemn Mass). Now, however, he used his experience as a composer of operas and symphonies to inject new drama into the familiar text. Soloists, chorus, and orchestra were equal partners, setting an overall mood of profound

intensity. Long – some 80 minutes – and complex, this was sacred music fit for the grandest concert hall. Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Choral Fantasy, and Mass in C are further examples of his innovative writing for choruses.



Inscription

Kyrie – first movement

Bassoon notes deleted by composer

Composer's impassioned plea

The first page of Beethoven's score for his *Missa Solemnis* has the inscription: "Von Herzen – möge es wieder – zu Herzen gehen!" (From the heart – may it go again – to the heart!).

KEY WORKS

- Joseph Haydn** *The Creation*; *Nelson Mass* in D minor
- Mozart** *Mass* in C minor; *Requiem* in D minor
- Luigi Cherubini** *Requiem* in C minor
- Beethoven** *Missa Solemnis* in D major, Op. 123

COMPOSER (1760–1842)

LUIGI CHERUBINI

Born in Italy, Luigi Cherubini worked mostly in Paris, as a composer, conductor, and teacher, becoming director of the Conservatoire (college of music) in 1822. Though ill-tempered, he managed to acquire well-connected friends, such as Chopin and Rossini. In 1805, Beethoven declared him to be "Europe's foremost dramatic composer". Patriotic and politically astute, Cherubini supported the upheavals of the French Revolution and weathered its aftermath, writing his C minor *Requiem* to celebrate the 1816 anniversary of Louis XVI's execution. In his later years he wrote sacred works.



End of an era

Haydn made his last public appearance, at a performance of *The Creation* in Vienna in March 1808. This painting by Austrian artist Balthasar Wigand depicts the event.



AFTER

Composers took an increasingly flexible approach to setting sacred texts to music, bringing in new styles.

MOVING WITH THE TIMES

Composers continued to work with traditional liturgies but used up-to-date compositional techniques and novel instrumentation **164–65** >>. In his *Grande Messe des morts* (*Requiem*) of 1837, French composer **Berlioz** employed a huge chorus and orchestra, including four brass bands. In 19th-century Germany, **Mendelssohn** and **Brahms** used passages from the Bible for sacred works, and Italian composer **Verdi** brought grand-scale operatic style to choral music with his *Requiem*. From the late 19th century onwards, composers such as **Mahler** and **Vaughan Williams** occasionally added choruses to their symphonies **192–93** >>.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

From the 1820s, choral societies grew up in towns and cities, reviving existing works and encouraging composers to write new pieces.

COMPOSER Born 1756 Died 1791

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

“The **music** is not in the **notes**,
but in the **silence** between.”

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

One of the most respected, loved, and performed composers in Western classical music, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart displayed a prodigious musical talent from an early age. He went on to excel in all major musical genres, from masses and requiems to symphonies and concertos. The dramatic intensity of his operas broke new ground.

Child prodigy

Inspired by his gifted older sister Nannerl, Wolfgang was picking out chords on the piano at the age of three and composing keyboard minuets at five. Aged eight, he wrote his first symphony, as a simple entertainment piece. The children's father, Leopold, a noted violinist and composer, ruthlessly exploited his astonishingly talented children and abandoned

Master of emotion

Two key qualities earn Mozart his unique place in musical history: astonishing ability as a composer and performer combined with a profound understanding of human emotions.

his own career to promote them. Wolfgang and Nannerl performed for royalty and high society gatherings throughout Europe, including a concert at Versailles before the king and queen of France and Madame de Pompadour, the king's mistress. In 1761, Leopold wrote: “All the ladies are in love with my boy”.

While in London in 1765, Mozart's father opened up the family lodgings for lunchtime recitals at which members of the public paid to witness Wolfgang improvise on the piano, his hands covered with a cloth as they dashed along the keys.

The experiences gained on these tours, and the people Mozart met, affirmed his genius and spurred him on to even greater achievements.

As he became older, Mozart focused on composition. He received commissions and in 1772, at the age of 16, was appointed *Konzerthmeister* to Salzburg's court.



Travelling instrument

Mozart composed his late piano concertos on this piano, now on display in the Mozart Museum, Salzburg. He often had it carried to and from concert venues.





Italian tour

A three-year tour of Italy with his father from 1769 took Mozart to most of its major cities. In Milan, in 1770, he was commissioned to write his first *opera seria*, *Mitridate, re di Ponto*.

KEY

- Outward journey
- Detours made on return journey

Mozart steered instrumental music towards the brink of Romantic expressivity. He adopted the well-established forms of the concerto, sonata, and symphony with few changes, but his influence was evident in the emotionally charged content of the pieces.

Fascinated by individual instrumental colours,

Mozart relished giving woodwind and horns characterful solos. He also experimented with new combinations of instruments. The *Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola*, the *Quintet for Piano and Woodwind* (oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and horn), and the *Kegelstatt Trio* for clarinet, viola, and piano, created new sound worlds for audiences.

Mozart's 41 symphonies chart his development as a composer in their increasing musical invention, technical refinement, instrumental brilliance, and dramatic content, culminating in his final three, all written in 1788.

Though this provided an income, he was frustrated in the post, finding Salzburg – and its people – provincial. His employer, the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, gave him little opportunity to compose the elaborate choral and orchestral music to which he felt drawn. Bored, Mozart began to undertake tours once again.

Mozart's repeated absences from court infuriated the Prince-Archbishop, who eventually dismissed him. In 1781, the composer left Salzburg for the larger and more vibrant city of Vienna in search of artistic freedom, becoming one of the first freelance professional musicians. He settled in the city and married Constanze Weber, a musician's daughter, in 1782.

New musical sounds

Mozart's years in Vienna were astonishingly productive. Much of his time there was devoted to composing operas, in which his capacity for illuminating the complexities of humankind found perfect expression. He blurred the boundaries between *Singspiel* (in which music is interspersed with spoken dialogue), *opera buffa* (comic opera), and *opera seria* (serious opera).

In 1786, Lorenzo da Ponte, the librettist for three of his last four operas, inspired him to write *The Marriage of Figaro*, a masterpiece of dramatic and musical characterization, psychological insight, and sombre emotions, with playful diversions.

Magical opera

Christopher Maltman (front left) and Dina Kuznetsova perform Mozart's last opera, *The Magic Flute*, in a production by the San Francisco Opera in 2007. The opera is known for its theatrical flamboyance.

Popular pauper

Without the financial security of a salaried post, Mozart gave concerts, published music, and received commissions, particularly for opera. In 1784, he became a Freemason. But despite constant composing, his debts mounted, not helped by Constanze's poor household management. To make ends meet, he offered music lessons, took in lodgers, and borrowed.

Mozart died at the end of 1791, at the age of 35, not poisoned by his rival Antonio Salieri, as was suggested, but probably of rheumatic fever. He was buried in a pauper's grave outside the city, a practice not unusual at the time. Despite this, the obituaries unanimously proclaimed him a genius.

One of his best loved choral works, the Requiem Mass, was unfinished at the time of his death. His friend, the composer Franz Xaver Süssmayr, completed it the following year at the request of Mozart's widow.

KEY WORKS

- Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola in E flat major, K364*
- Symphony No. 35 in D major, "Haffner", K385*
- String Quartet No. 19 in C major, "Dissonance"*
- The Marriage of Figaro*
- Horn Concerto No. 4 in E flat major, K495*
- Serenade for strings in G major, "Eine kleine Nachtmusik", K525*
- The Magic Flute, K620*

"The most tremendous **genius** raised **Mozart** above all masters, in all centuries and in all the **arts**."

RICHARD WAGNER, "ON GERMAN MUSIC", 1840



TIMELINE

- **27 January 1756** Born in Salzburg, Austria
- **1761** Produces earliest keyboard compositions: *Andante, K1a*, and *Allegro, K1b* First public appearance at Salzburg University Begins playing violin.
- **1763** Begins a three-year tour of Germany, Paris, and London with his father and sister
- **1764** Arrives in London for 18-month stay Gives public concerts and performances
- **1766** Contracts rheumatic fever in Munich
- **1768** The *Singspiel Bastien und Bastienne* is premiered
- **1769** Begins three-year tour of Italy
- **1772** Appointed Konzertmeister at Salzburg
- **1773** Moves to Vienna, where he meets Haydn Composes many string quartets, symphonies, and the motet *Exsultate Jubilate*
- **1778** Visits Paris to hear his "Paris" Symphony performed
- **1779** Composes *Sinfonia Concertante* for Violin and Viola, *K364*, and *Coronation Mass*
- **1780** The opera *Idomeneo* is commissioned by the Elector of Bavaria
- **1781** Moves permanently to Vienna
- **1782** The opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio* triumphs Marries Constanze Weber Composes "Linz" Symphony
- **1783** Completes "Haffner" Symphony
- **1784** Composes piano concertos Nos 14–19 for public concert series. Becomes a Freemason
- **1785** Completes six string quartets dedicated to Haydn, including the *Dissonance*
- **1786** *The Marriage of Figaro*, *K492*, is performed in Vienna to great acclaim Composes "Kegelstatt" Trio, *K498*, and Symphony No. 38, "Prague"
- **1787** Writes "Eine kleine Nachtmusik". *Don Giovanni* is produced in Prague
- **1788** Composes final three symphonies: Nos. 39 (*K543*), 40 (*K550*), and 41 (*K551*)
- **1789** Fails to achieve commissions or post Travels to Dresden, Leipzig, Potsdam, and Berlin Plays organ at Thomaskirche in Leipzig
- **1790** *Così fan tutte*, *K588*, premieres in Vienna
- **1791** Writes Clarinet Concerto, *The Magic Flute* premieres in Vienna Dies on 5 December, leaving his Requiem Mass unfinished



MOZART WITH HIS FATHER AND SISTER

The Piano

The piano has become the foremost icon of Western music. At turns approximating a whole orchestra, or inspiring a composer's most intimate confessions, no other instrument has proved as versatile or as influential.

Meaning "soft and loud" in Italian, instrument-maker Bartolomeo Cristofori's *pianoforte* brought a new subtlety to keyboard instruments in the early 18th century. Relatively easy and intuitive to learn, and offering as wide a range of notes as an orchestra, owning a piano became an important symbol of status.

Composing for this domestic environment was lucrative, and there was soon a steady stream of sonatas, variations, and fantasias. Further possibilities opened up in the 1780s when English piano-maker John Broadwood produced a model with a far broader and longer-lasting sound. It was played by both Beethoven and Chopin.

In the Romantic age, virtuoso performers such as Liszt (see p.162) gave the piano a new role as

a solo concert instrument. Now fortified with iron, and offering such a variety of tone, pianists could astonish their audiences with piano recitals. Meanwhile, with the popularity of the upright piano, domestic music continued to thrive, catapulting composers such as Chopin, Schumann, and Grieg to international fame.

By the 20th century, the piano had embraced ragtime and jazz, while the most experimental composers, including Bartok, Schoenberg, and Busoni, used it to test out the newest musical ideas. Further developments included the prepared piano. From 1940 onwards, composers such as John Cage wrote works for pianos with metal and rubber items between the strings in order to create new, percussive sound worlds.



THREE-QUARTER VIEW



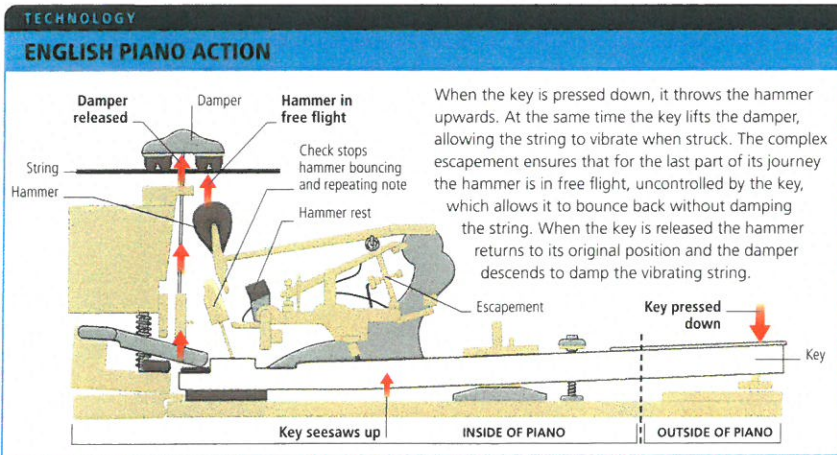
Internal strength

Until the advent of the one-piece cast iron frame, metal bracing such as this allowed greater string tension, which led to improved tuning stability, and greater volume and sustaining power.



Keyboard

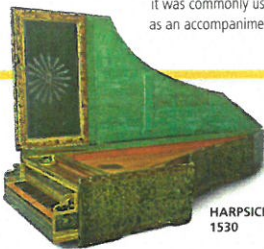
As early pianos had lighter, shallower, and narrower keys than modern instruments, students were encouraged to practise with coins balanced on the backs of their hands in order to acquire suitably gentle hands movements.



TIMELINE

16th century Harpsichord

Plucking the strings with uniform force, the harpsichord provided a penetrating but quickly decaying and somewhat monotonous sound. Solo works exist for the instrument but it was commonly used as an accompaniment.



HARPSICHORD, 1530



SQUARE PIANO

18th century Square piano

The equivalent of the modern upright piano, from the 1760s onwards the cheaper and more conveniently shaped square piano fuelled the boom in home music making, sometimes doubling as a dining room table.

1700 Cristofori piano

The first mention of the piano is in a Medici family inventory dated 1700. An extraordinary invention by Bartolomeo Cristofori, the piano spread slowly. It was expensive and not as loud as the harpsichord.

1767 PIANO WITH CRISTOFORI ACTION



18th century Beethoven

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Beethoven never owned a harpsichord. He explored the capabilities of the new piano, literally pushing them to breaking point.



BEETHOVEN PIANO SONATA OP.13

1828 Early grand piano

Early examples of grand pianos included metal bracing to allow for increased string tension and sonority, but by modern standards the sound was still quite thin and died far more quickly.

Early 19th century Chopin

Writing extensively for the piano as a solo instrument, Chopin broadened the repertoire with technically demanding sonatas and works inspired by folk dances.

Sto
This
alm
deve
tens
usec

1
V
Fr
pi
tc
a
rr
th

Stodart piano, 1828

This was the first piano to have an almost completely metal frame. It was developed in response to the increased tension of thicker strings, which were used to attain greater volume.



1853 Steinway & Sons

American-German piano manufacturer Steinway & Sons was founded in this year. They became renowned worldwide for making high-quality pianos that have won numerous awards.



LISZT

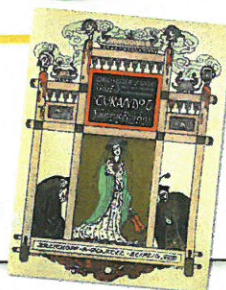
1840s Virtuoso performer

Franz Liszt's virtuosity brought the piano into the limelight. His extensive tours, invention of the piano recital, and charismatic performances from memory came to define the role of the concert pianist.

1890s Ferruccio Busoni

Pianist-composer Busoni's command of Romantic pianism and his fierce and searching intellect paved the way for the piano's journey into the 20th century.

BUSONI TITLE PAGE FOR TURANDOT



End of the 19th century Modern grand piano

By the end of the 19th century, the concert grand, with its iron frame, three pedals, and 88 keys had largely reached its present form. Further developments added little.

1960s Electric keyboards

Electronic keyboards offered musicians a new wealth of sounds beneath their fingers. Their portability and continually perfect tuning, made them ideal for the home and ubiquitous in popular music.



YAMAHA KEYBOARD

COMPOSER Born 1770 Died 1827

Ludwig van Beethoven

“I came near to **ending my own life** – only **art held me back...**”

BEETHOVEN ON HIS DEAFNESS, IN A LETTER TO HIS BROTHERS, 1802

Beethoven's titanic talent transformed our understanding of music for ever. An individual who cared little for conformity, he believed himself to be a “*Tondichter*” – a poet in sound. He epitomized the Romantic artist for whom the expression of emotions was more important than the observation of traditional structures. His musical voice speaks as persuasively to listeners today as it did during his lifetime.

Court musician

Born into a musical family in Bonn, Germany, Beethoven followed his father and grandfather into court service by becoming assistant court organist at the age of 11. The following year he became harpsichordist to the court orchestra and began composing his first works, including three sonatas, one concerto, and some short pieces, of which “Für Elise” is the best known.

Wanting to escape provincial Bonn, Beethoven went to Vienna in 1799, where his performances delighted audiences, who were astonished by his extraordinary improvisation skills.

Building on his success as a performer, Beethoven began writing numerous piano works: the first three of his five

piano concertos, and piano sonatas. Despite Beethoven's brief period of study with Haydn, these early sonatas are more in the spirit of Muzio Clementi (1752–1832), with showy pianistic writing and thicker

Romanticism personified

A towering giant in Western music, Beethoven linked the dying embers of Classicism with the dawn of a new, expressive Romanticism.

KEY WORKS

Piano Sonata in C Minor, “Pathétique”, Op. 13

Violin Sonata in F, “Spring”, Op. 24

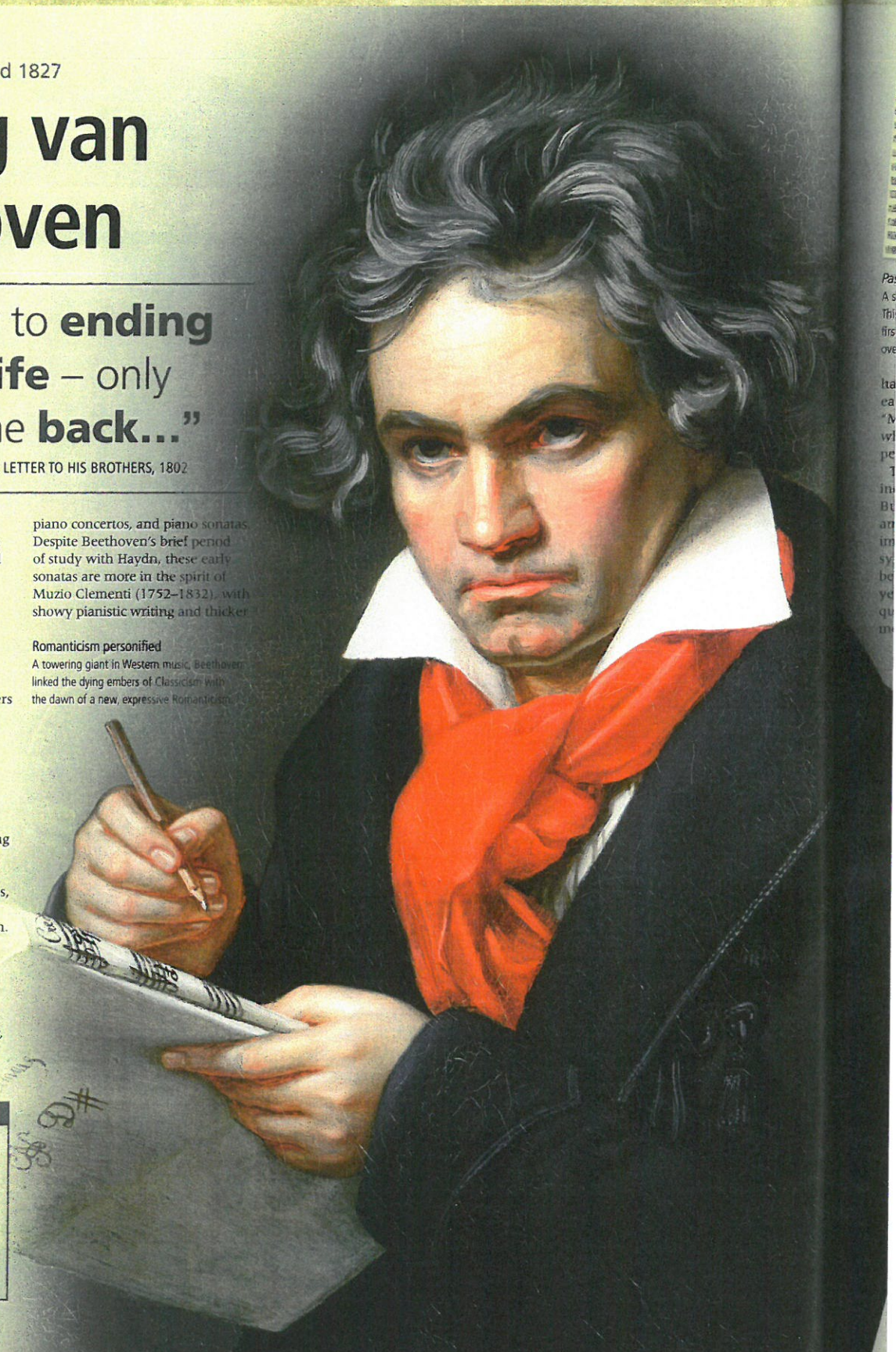
Piano Concerto No. 5 in E flat, “Emperor”, Op. 73

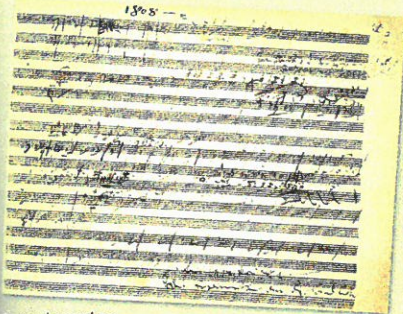
Violin Concerto in D, Op. 61

Fidelio, Op. 72

Symphony No. 9 in D, “Choral”, Op. 125

Missa Solemnis (Mass in D), Op. 123





Pastoral marathon

A sketch for Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, the *Pastoral*. This groundbreaking piece of descriptive music was first performed in Vienna in 1808, in a concert lasting over four hours.

harmonies. Later sonatas from the early period include the masterpieces "Moonlight" and "Pathétique", both of which show Beethoven's distinctively personal musical voice developing.

The chamber music of the 1790s included string trios and quartets. Building on the approach of Haydn and Mozart, Beethoven began to imbue his chamber music with a new symphonic grandeur. This was to become increasingly evident as the years went by, especially in the string quartets, which are regarded as his most intense and personal works.

Deafness strikes

In 1802, the deafness that overshadowed Beethoven's life became profoundly troubling, signalling the end of his public performances. Taking a break in the village of Heiligenstadt, he wrote a statement to his brothers in which he described his affliction as "an infirmity in the one sense which ought to be more perfect in me than in others".

Overcoming depression, however, he returned to Vienna determined to "seize fate by the throat" and embarked on a period of creativity inspired by ideas of heroism. Symphony No. 3, "Eroica", was inspired by Napoleon, whom he admired. Its scale is grand – 50 minutes – and it displays new developments in structure and instrumentation. The Fifth "Emperor" Concerto and the Fifth Symphony share the "Eroica"'s sense of nobility. The Fifth Symphony was used as a "Victory" anthem by the Allied Forces in World War II, the four-note rhythm of its opening motive representing "V" in Morse code.

Fluctuating fortunes

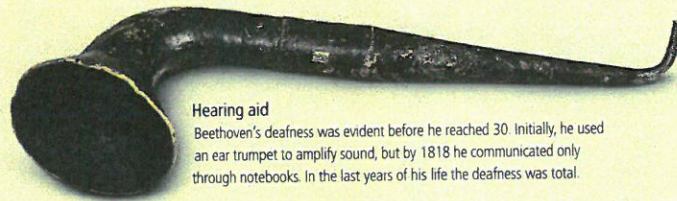
As he approached 40, Beethoven's interest in heroic themes waned. The devaluation of the Austrian currency in 1811 caused him financial uncertainty, while unsuccessful love affairs left him introspective.

In spite of these personal difficulties, his new symphonies and his only opera, *Fidelio*, which premiered in 1805, were triumphantly received. By the time of the Congress of Vienna in 1814, Beethoven was the toast of the city.

The arrival in Vienna of the Italian operatic composer Rossini changed all this. Beethoven suddenly fell from favour, and he became eccentric and uncommunicative.

New creativity

Miraculously, his indomitable spirit again triumphed over adversity. In his last years, he concentrated on

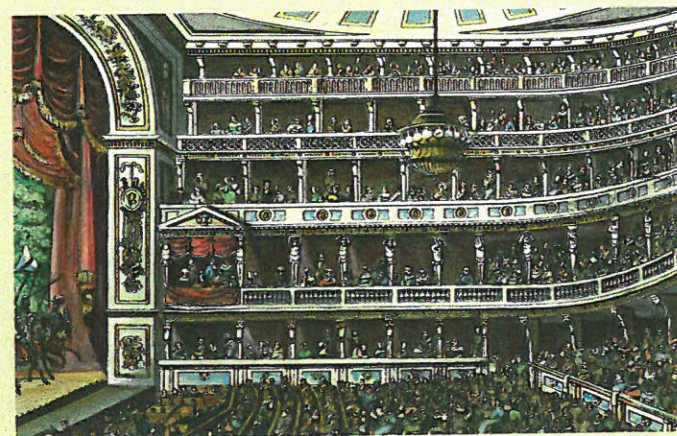


Hearing aid

Beethoven's deafness was evident before he reached 30. Initially, he used an ear trumpet to amplify sound, but by 1818 he communicated only through notebooks. In the last years of his life the deafness was total.

chamber music, producing string quartets and piano sonatas of exceptional dramatic intensity. The late quartets written in the last two years of his life, especially the "Grosse Fuge", Op. 133, first performed in 1826, are regarded as the most concentrated and deeply personal statements of all his output.

Beethoven returned to his interest in heroism, in his magnificent Ninth, the "Choral" Symphony, this time with a more compassionate spirit.



Taken as a whole, Beethoven's body of work represents the greatest evidence of man's triumph over adversity. Repeatedly recovering his spirit after periods of despair, he communicated the most profound human emotions, conveying a sense of consolation to all who listen. The portrait of Beethoven as a withdrawn individual is only partly true, and almost certainly the result of deafness. A deeply religious man, he also enjoyed company, had a sense of humour, and was kind to friends, though his relationships with women tended to be turbulent.

"[His] tirades were explosions of his fanciful imagination."

FRIEDRICH ROCHLITZ, GERMAN WRITER AND MUSIC CRITIC, 1822

Beethoven's death, from oedema and pneumonia in 1827, was widely mourned. The funeral was magnificent. Franz Schubert, a particular admirer of Beethoven, was among the torch bearers, and more than 10,000 people lined Vienna's streets to witness the procession.

Single opera

The Theater an der Wien in Vienna was the setting for the premiere of Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*, in 1805. This watercolour of the theatre dates from 1825.

TIMELINE

- **1770** Born in Bonn, capital of Cologne
- **1781** Appointed assistant court organist. Takes lessons in organ and violin.
- **1782** Becomes harpsichordist to court orchestra.
- **1783** Composes *Three Piano Sonatas*.
- **1787** Visits Vienna briefly, possibly to study with Mozart. He returns to Bonn within two weeks, greatly distressed as his mother falls ill and dies.
- **1790** Composes cantata on the death of Emperor Joseph II. This material is reused later in his only opera, *Fidelio*.
- **1792** Father dies. Moves back to Vienna to study with Haydn.
- **1794** Lessons with Haydn cease.
- **1795** Writes Piano Trios, Op. 1. Gives first public concerts in Vienna, performing Piano Concerto No. 1.
- **1796** Visits Prague to give several public concerts.
- **1798** Completes the "Pathétique" Piano Sonata.
- **1800** Symphony No. 1 and Septet in E flat are performed in Vienna. Composes Piano Concerto No. 3.
- **1801** Publishes "Moonlight" Sonata.
- **1802** Failing hearing causes severe depression. Writes the "Heiligenstadt Testament", a letter to his brothers Carl and Johann. Composes Symphony No. 2 and "Kreutzer" Violin Sonata.
- **1804** Finishes Symphony No. 3, "Eroica", writes "Waldstein" Piano Sonata.
- **1805** Composes "Appassionata" Piano Sonata; opera *Fidelio* premiered.
- **1806** Completes Violin Concerto, Symphony No. 4 and "Razumovsky" String Quartets.
- **1808** Writes Symphonies Nos. 5 and 6. Piano Concerto No. 4 and *Choral Fantasy* are premiered together in a four-hour concert.
- **1809** Composes "Emperor" Concerto.
- **1811** Completes "Archduke" Piano Trio.
- **1812** Finishes Symphonies Nos. 7 and 8.
- **1816** Writes song cycle *An die Ferne Geliebte* (To the distant beloved). On the death of his brother, Carl, he obtains custody of his ten-year-old nephew, Karl, resulting in a legal battle with his sister-in-law.
- **1818** Completes "Hammerklavier" sonata.
- **1822** Finishes his last Piano Sonata, No. 32.
- **1823** Completes *Missa Solemnis* (Mass in D) and *Diabelli Variations*.
- **1824** Premiere of Symphony No. 9, "Choral".
- **1826** Completes String Quartet, Op. 130.
- **1827** Dies from oedema and pneumonia at his home in Vienna.



PLAQUE OF BEETHOVEN IN PRAGUE