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## Inside Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup>

To further enhance your student's educational experience with Inside the Orchestra (ISO), and to provide you with additional tools for follow up, we have created the following four session lesson plan based on **Symphony No. 5 in c minor** by **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)**.

Before you begin, we suggest that you find a recording of the complete symphony (preferably performed by a professional orchestra) from your private collection, your local public library, or online. There are many versions available through iTunes, and even some free versions in other.

### Background



Beethoven was born in Bonn, Germany and had early music instruction from his father. At the age of 22 and hoping to study with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, he moved to Vienna, Austria which, at the time, was the center of all musical activity in Europe. Though he never met Mozart, he fell in love with Vienna and spent the rest of his life there performing and composing music. In 1796, Beethoven began to lose his hearing (he was 26) and this was to shape not only the temperament of his music, but his life as well. By the time he finished composing his **5<sup>th</sup> Symphony** in 1808, he was almost completely deaf.

Beethoven was a pioneer and a revolutionary – there was a lot of that going on around at that time – he was born during the time of our American Revolution. The beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century marked the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

Even though his early musical development was in what we call the **Classical** (roughly 1750 – 1810) style of Western Europe, he paved the way with innovation for what we now refer to as the **Romantic** Era in music. The 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony is the first orchestral concert work to use a **scherzo** (which is an Italian word that literally means *joke*), replacing the **minuet** dance form for the third movement that was typical of the classical symphonies of **Mozart** and **Haydn**. It is also the first symphony to use a **piccolo**, a **contrabassoon**, and three **trombones (alto, tenor, and bass)** in addition to the full and typical complement of 2 **flutes**, 2 **oboes**, 2 **clarinets**, 2 **bassoons**, 3 **horns**, 2 **trumpets**, **timpani**, **violins**, **violas**, **cellos**, and **double basses**.

Like most symphonies, Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony has four distinct parts – like the chapters of a book. We call them **movements**. These movements are intended to fully explore the melodic material first introduced at the very beginning in interesting and contrasting ways. This is how composers create tension and release. This is also very similar to the way authors develop story and character – they create a situation, develop it for dramatic tension, and then resolve it. Composers do this with contrast in general, but develop their ideas by manipulating the tempo, key, rhythm, and orchestration.

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## Lesson Plan

### Lesson 1 – Movement 1

#### 1. Motif

- a. In the first chapter, Beethoven introduces us to his very famous four note idea – this idea has been compared to the sound of knocking on the door (is it fate?).
- b. But this is only four notes and it doesn't have a very interesting shape – much too short and simple to be considered a **melody** – we call this a **motif**.

#### 2. Phrase

- a. There are four distinct parts to the tune *Happy Birthday* – we call these parts **phrases**. This is similar to sentence structure where a sentence might be made up of a couple of different phrases or clauses.
- b. The first two **phrases** sound very similar and each has 6 notes (one for each syllable *Hap-py Birth-day to you*).
- c. The third **phrase**, where you sing the name of the honoree, has more syllables so it has more notes (*Hap-py Birth-day dear E-liz-a-beth*).
- d. The fourth **phrase** is like the first two **phrases** (6 syllables – same words).

#### 3. Melody

- a. The song *Happy Birthday* has four **phrases** which make up a single **melody**, with the birthday girl's name being the high point of the song.
- b. Listen to the first movement of Beethoven's symphony and see how he shapes his little four note motif into phrases and melodies.

Listen to the way Beethoven ends the first movement – it's very loud and the notes are very short and separated (in Italian – *staccato*)

### Lesson 2 – Movement 2

1. During the ISO performance, we explored musical opposites (contrasts) – sad (minor) and happy (major), slow and fast, rough and smooth.
2. The second movement of the 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony is a dramatic contrast to the first. It is first set up with a moment of pause and then starts out slow and soft. The notes are also very connected together (in Italian – *legato*) and the phrases are much longer than the motif of the first movement. This is a beautiful melody played first by violas and cellos.
3. During the ISO performance, the students were introduced to the idea that this movement has three beats per measure. See if your students remember this – this is also a kind of musical contrast from the first movement.

### Lesson 3 – Movement 3

1. The third movement of Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony is an innovation. Before his time, composers used a dance form known as a **minuet** for third movements. Beethoven even did this himself in his first 4 symphonies. But this movement is different – it still has three beats per measure (like a minuet) but the tempo is faster. And it has a quiet sinister quality to it. This movement is considered to be a *scherzo*.

2. The melody is introduced quietly by the basses and cellos and answered by the high strings and woodwinds. Then...all of the sudden...the noisy horns come in with something that sounds very familiar...almost like the motif in the first movement. This is a sudden interruption in the music and reminds us that we are still connected to the ideas in the first movement.
3. There is a musical game or puzzle in this movement – it is a device that was first invented in the late **renaissance** (roughly 1300 – 1650) and was perfected by the **baroque** (roughly 1650 – 1750) composers, particularly **Johann Sebastian Bach**. It is called a *fugue* and it is like a *round* (Row, row, row your boat...).
4. Play the 3<sup>rd</sup> movement straight through to the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> movement (there is no pause or silence in between – this is called *segue* or *attacca*). Ask your students to raise their hands when they hear the music change – it is palpable. During the ISO performance we asked the kids to raise their hands when they heard it - and they almost always do.

The rhythm changes (the beat pattern changes from 3 to 2), the tempo changes, and the mood changes as it goes from a sinister quality to triumphant. Like a lot of composers, Beethoven does this in part with **key** or **mode**. We didn't really talk about this during the program (it is an advanced topic) but we did talk about sad and happy music. This is an example.

#### Lesson 4 – 4<sup>th</sup> Movement

1. As we discussed, the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> movement is an innovation as well. For the first time ever, Beethoven used a **piccolo**, **contrabassoon** and **trombones** and they don't even play a note until the very beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> movement. Perhaps this movement was Beethoven's way of putting an exclamation point on the end of the **classical** era by fully embracing the larger more colorful orchestra of the **romantic** era. He was a pioneer in many respects.
2. At the end of the fourth movement listen closely for the piccolo – we didn't bring one to our ISO performance, but Beethoven thought it was pretty important – this piece has one of the most important piccolo parts in all of the orchestral literature.
3. As the entire symphony draws to a close, ask your students if they have ever had a problem finishing a story or an essay. Is it possible that Beethoven was having so much fun playing with the ending of his symphony that he couldn't decide how to finish it? Or maybe he liked all of the endings that he wrote so much that he included them all. In any event, the end of this symphony seems to not want to...well...end.