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Ludwig van Beethoven

The Classical period was marked by a deep social and political change due mainly to the French Revolution. This period was also marked by a philosophical movement, the Enlightenment, which would make religion less and less important (Yudkin, 2016), and whose ideals would also have repercussions on music. The music also evolved, not only stylistically, but socially as well. Due to a change in the economy and the appearance of new social groups, a prosperous middle class that was getting closer and closer to the favored aristocracy, felt that they also deserved privileges, and it was from then on when the public concert arose (Yudkin, 2016). Soon this new modality was reaching popularity in different places in Europe, such as London, Paris, and Vienna. Religious music, therefore, was losing importance. Towards the end of the 18th century, Vienna was on the verge of becoming the musical center of Europe, especially in terms of instrumental music and, more specifically, in the form of sonatas (Sisman, 2001). But in the years from 1770 to 1810, and in hands of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, all aspects of the structuring of the sonatas was strengthened (Mangsen et al., 2001). Beethoven, one of the musicians who acted as a bridge between classicism and romanticism, played one of the most important roles in the evolution of music. He was a reformer who used inherited classical forms to exteriorize his romantic ideal.

The German musician lived in the transit of an epoch of intersection between classicism and romanticism, and he used characteristics of the classic era, influenced by musicians as Haydn, Mozart, and Bach, to exteriorize his romanticism. Beethoven's early years in music are characterized by the piano sonatas and quartets, influenced by the violin and piano sonatas of Mozart (Kerman et al., 2001). Some works from this period, also called the Bonn period, are the *Sonata Pathétique*, and the Third Piano Concerto (Kelmant et al., 2001). Beethoven's following years, the Heroic Phase, was marked by the beginning of a personal crisis derived in part from his deafness. In this period Beethoven took the classical symphony to its highest expression and his first romantic nuances appeared, such as the importance of timbre in the orchestra (Larue et al., 2001). Some of his most characteristic works are the Third, (*Eroica*), the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, and his only opera, *Fidelio*. His last stage was characterized by an originality that broke with the characteristics of the classic period, seeing himself more towards the characteristic of romanticism. One of his most characteristic works is the Ninth Symphony, where the voice was included for the first time (Yudkin, 2016). Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn in 1770 into a family of musicians. His father, Johann van Beethoven, was a frustrated tenor and music professor who sought to bring his family forward with his son's musical talent (Kerman et al., 2001). In 1783, at the age of thirteen, Beethoven got his first job as a cembalist in the orchestra where he discovered the works of Haydn, Mozart, and Bach (Kerman et al., 2001). In the same year, Beethoven wrote his first compositions. By 1791, recommended as a virtuoso pianist, he traveled to Vienna, the musical capital of Europe, to study as Haydn's pupil, one of the most important musicians of the time. His compositions up to that moment are a reflection of the classical tradition and the teachings of his masters (Yudkin, 2016). However, the

French Revolution brought a turn in society, bringing social changes, which enriched Beethoven's musical personality and made him more popular. Beethoven became one of the best and most famous composers of the city of Vienna. In 1798 Beethoven began to suffer from tinnitus, a ringing in the ears that can lead to hearing loss (Jander, 2000). Despite his hearing problem, Beethoven took on one of the greatest challenges he set himself, composing a symphony. This symphony, The Third Symphony, had great influences from Haydn and Mozart, but nevertheless, the speed and character of the third movement revealed innovative characteristics, revealing the presence of a musician who was ahead of his time. The Third Symphony was inspired by Beethoven's admiration for Napoleon Bonaparte and the ideology of freedom, equality, and fraternity of the French Revolution (Kerman et al., 2001). This symphony is the first work of his own style, without being influenced by the characteristics of the classical tradition or by his masters and mentors. Beethoven titled this work "Heroic Symphony". In 1805 the principles of freedom and equality resounded in Beethoven and while Napoleonic troops resorted to Europe, and finally advanced to Vienna, Beethoven premiered his only opera, entitled *Fidelio* (Kerman et al. 2001). Originally called *Leonora*, *Fidelio* is a work full of heroism and revolutionary fervor (Yudkin, 2016). It is a rescue opera, a popular genre at a time when for the first time the hero was a woman, Leonora, who disguised herself as Fidelio to enter the prison and rescue her husband, who was imprisoned for political reasons (Lockwood, 2006). The music written during these years made Beethoven one of the most popular and acclaimed composers in history. In 1808, despite his growing hearing problem, Beethoven composed, conducted, and performed his longest and most remarkable concert, the Sixth Symphony, also known as the *Pastoral Symphony* (Kerman et al., 2001). A work of almost four hours within which he premieres his fourth piano concerto, the *Sinfonia Pastorale*, the *Choral Fantasy*, and the Fifth Symphony (Kerman

et al, 2001). In the Fifth Symphony, Beethoven demonstrated his abilities by using the four-note main motif throughout the work (Yudkin, 2016). He was among the first to use piccolo, trombone, and double bass in his orchestral pieces (Kerman et al., 2001) (Yudkin, 2016). This passage is characterized by a contrast previously marked by tension, until a "crescendo" is reached, which is resolved in a majestic modulation. Around 1811 he premiered his String Quartet in F minor (quartetto serioso) and the so-called Archduke Paino Trio in B. (Kerman et al.2001). But his hearing disease had progressed so much that he could no longer perceive the different tones (Jander, 2000). Humiliated and ashamed, he did not play in public anymore. Beethoven demanded a lot from himself and those around him. He was a morally strict, lonely, and tormented man. The death of his brother Kaspar, the terrible legal battle for the custody of his nephew, and his constant amorous disillusion, sharpened his depression and worsened his hearing condition (Yudkin, 2016). His music becomes more intense and complex. Between 1822 and 1824 Beethoven writes one of the most important religious compositions, the *Missa Solemnis*, dedicated to Archduke Rudolf of Austria (Kerman et al., 2001). The piece required a large mixed choir and full orchestra, and musicians who were experimented. In 1824, after thirteen years of work, Beethoven premiered his longest, most complex, and innovative symphony, The Ninth Symphony. A work of overflowing optimism that contrasts with the strong crisis that the composer was going through. It seems as if Beethoven wanted to give the world the means to face adversity. No composer had ever included the voice in a symphony and doing so with Schiller's poem sent an important message of optimism and brotherhood (Kerman et al., 2001). It included a final movement that introduced the voices of a choir, and four soloist voices (Yudkin, 2016). Beethoven dedicated the end of his life to his last string quartets and to the study of counterpoint (Yudkin, 2016). In 1827, after several months in bed, he died of liver complications (Kubba, 1996).

The symphony is one of the most characteristic musical compositions of the 18th century. Although symphonies were very popular around Europe, one of the places where they were reaching their climax was Vienna, where Beethoven spent much of his life, and where he created and shaped his musical works (Larue et al., 2001). Beethoven's symphonies are very representative. If the forms seem to be very similar and even equal superficially, the content and spirit of the music are radically different (Yudkin, 2016). With Beethoven, the importance did not only lie in the forms, the formal symmetry, or the internal balance but the content, in the expression of what he felt, (Yudkin, 2016) hence this was the distinctive feature in his works. A crucial moment in Beethoven's life, due in part to his deafness and the adversities of his life, and in the evolution of Western music, was the composition of his Third Symphony, the *Eroica*. This symphony marked a before and after since it is where Beethoven left the characteristic forms of Mozart and Haydn. From the first notes of this symphony we enter an entirely different world, we enter the world of Beethoven. This symphony had direct influence and implicit political meaning, whose origin originally reside in the figure of Napoleon Bonaparte and the ideologies of freedom, equality, and fraternity that he defended (Kentman et al, 2001). However, after Napoleon's proclamation as Emperor, Beethoven decided not to dedicate it to him (Kentman et al, 2001). The first movement of this symphony opens with dissonant chords (Larue et al, 2001). Beethoven then takes a turn and the music becomes more offensive and impetuous and is even momentarily stopped by moments of extreme exhaustion, only to resume his triumphant march again. The second movement is a funeral march, "Marcia funebre sulla morte d'un Eroe" so it is somewhat slower (Kerman et al., 2001). The symphony ends on a note of the most supreme optimism.

The Fifth Symphony is especially nourished by a revolutionary spirit. In this symphony, there is a characteristic "building of intensity, suspense, a thrilling coda, and

also mysteries" (Gibbs, 2006). The suggestive movement is innovative and also alternates two themes, "the first being sweet and lyrical, and the second more powerful" (Gibbs, 2006). Both the third and fourth movements are also combined, and there is no pause between them (Gibbs, 2006). This is the first symphony that systematically traces the progress from a minor key to a major key. Beethoven's life was full of obstacles, with struggle and triumph over adversity being one of the central messages of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

His last stage is characterized by an originality that broke with the characteristics of the classical period, becoming more characteristic of romanticism (Yudkin, 2016). The resolution of the idea of a choral symphony resulted in the Ninth Symphony, which took as its lyrics Schiller's Ode to Joy (Yudkin, 2016). The introduction of a choral and individual voice in a symphony was a real innovation. Its first long movement rises from nebulous chords, so indistinct that they seem to emerge from nowhere (Gibbs, 2006). The work then undergoes a more dynamic change, characterized by a more progressive movement (Gibbs, 2006). The Ninth Symphony is also interrupted by contradictions, characterized by violent music, referring to revolutionary violence that does not tolerate any opposition, that sweeps everything away in front of it. It denotes the struggle that succeeds against incredible obstacles and culminates in the final triumph (Gibbs, 2006). Such music had never been heard before. It was something entirely new and revolutionary. The final theme that pours out in the last part, like an explosion of a radiant sun through the clouds, is in fact, heard throughout the symphony in a variety of subtle disguises.

The courage and determination of Beethoven were obvious. He knew how to respond to every problem with more music and while he sought to express something new and profound with each piece, he also shaped himself as a person and as a musician.

His originality and dramatic power are a reflection of his own life experiences, and of the times of change and readjustment of power that Europe was going through. His work served as a bridge and starting point for the music of the romanticism era. He invited us to express our feelings and thoughts, in a creative and original way, without compromising our ideals and by revolutionizing with the truth.

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