

KEYBOARD KIDS COMPANION

CREATED BY TEACHERS. *Approved by kids!*

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HAPPY 250TH BIRTHDAY, LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN!

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn, Germany on December 16, 1770. His family background was Dutch; the name Beethoven means “beet garden.” He wrote some of the most famous compositions of all times. Beethoven changed the way people thought about composing, and about how to play piano with more sound colors and more expression. He first became famous for his piano playing. He was even better at improvising than performing published music.

Ludwig had his first music lessons when he was four. His first teacher, his father, was more than strict—he was mean. However, Ludwig still loved music. He learned to play piano, violin, and organ. At age seven, he started lessons with Christian Gottlob Neefe. Neefe taught him music and about great books. By age ten, Beethoven’s first compositions were published, and by twelve, he was working as an organist and publishing music to help support his family.

Beethoven was short and had big, wild hair, not neat pigtailed that were in style. He could be rude and short-tempered. He had to move often; his landlords and neighbors didn’t like how messy and noisy he was. He even poured water on his head to stay awake while working. Beethoven’s downstairs neighbors weren’t very happy when water poured through their ceiling!

Maybe he was messy and rude because he didn’t feel well. He had lots of stomachaches, and when he was older, he became almost deaf. Several years ago, scientists studied some of Beethoven’s hair with special computers. They found that he had lead poisoning. It could help explain Beethoven’s health problems, and even why he lost so much of his hearing.

He was in love several times but never married. He had two brothers, Caspar and Johann. After Caspar died, Beethoven took care of Caspar’s son, Karl, for several years.

Beethoven moved to Vienna, Austria, the musical capital of the world at that time, where he met Mozart. Beethoven studied composition with Franz Josef Haydn in Vienna. Beethoven was also a teacher. His most famous student, Carl Czerny, composed many beautiful exercises still played all over the world today. Beethoven took his nephew Karl to Czerny for piano lessons.

He liked strong coffee, and macaroni and cheese. He started working very early in the mornings. He loved trees and flowers. He liked taking walks, and always carried manuscript paper. Some of his most famous melodies came to him during his walks, and he jotted them down right away. He spent a lot of time rewriting until his music sounded exactly as he wanted.

He often ate with a student at an inn called “The Swan.” Clementi also ate there with a student. The two pretended not to see each other, even though they wanted to meet; the manners of the time were for the more famous person to speak first. Neither one would! Beethoven liked going to coffeehouses and beer gardens in the afternoon, and he went to bed by ten at night. He often visited his royal friends and played the piano for them.



Beethoven lived during the Classical period in music history, but some of his music was so unusual that his work helped to start the Romantic period of music. Some of his harmonies were very strange for the time in which he lived. Because he was searching for color variety and bigger sounds in music, he added instruments to the orchestra. He wanted more sounds from the piano and begged piano manufacturers to move from small, delicate instruments to producing stronger, larger ones. And they did. His 32 piano sonatas are some of the greatest works ever written for piano. His first two symphonies were very much like those of composers before him. But by his third symphony, the “Eroica,” Beethoven was changing the form and style traditions of symphonies.

Beethoven died on March 26, 1827 at the age of 56. Many people in Vienna came out to pay their respects. Mozart’s *Requiem* was played for the funeral of Beethoven, the composer who moved the world to the next generation of music.

SOME FAMOUS COMPOSITIONS BY BEETHOVEN ...LISTEN!

- Für Elise** Leon Fleisher, piano
youtu.be/VL6HTVdzzAA
- Symphony No. 5** Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra
youtu.be/olMPeiqiic
- Sonata Op. 27, No. 2 “Moonlight”** Evgeny Kissin, piano
youtu.be/yuCIAvo4Del
- Symphony No. 3 “Eroica”** Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra
youtu.be/KEQlwm4eNoc



Scherzo *A Musical Joke*

Q. Why couldn’t Beethoven find his composition teacher?

A. He was Hay - dn! (He was hid - in'!)

The Beethoven Factor during COVID-10

Beethoven influenced the world with his amazing compositions, but also with his strong “can do” spirit. He had a great deal of sadness in his personal life and poor health that even took away most of his hearing. But Beethoven continued to create some of the world’s favorite music until the end of his life. Using Beethoven as an example, there has even been a book written about how we can grow stronger and be better than ever when we have big challenges.

Our lives have become very different in 2020. What lessons can you learn from this time of social distancing due to the coronavirus? How can we work better? How can we become more creative? What changed about your piano lessons and practicing?

In Maryland, these students and their teachers (pictured) got together for Zoom Recitals. The Recital Halls were closed, but Zoom was is not! Relatives from all over the world were able to join. It was so much fun that even after in-person recitals are possible in the future, all events will continue to be livestreamed as well.



A Water Music Festival produced on Zoom celebrated the Summer 2020 season. Everyone chose program music* with a title related to water. Students chose virtual backgrounds to illustrate the compositions’ titles.

*Program Music: Instrumental music that tells a story or brings a picture to mind. The term likely started with Liszt, but we hear examples before that time, such as Beethoven’s Symphony No. 6 (“Pastoral”). Beethoven composes sounds like bird songs, a storm, and other sounds from the countryside. LISTEN: youtu.be/iQGm0H9I9I4

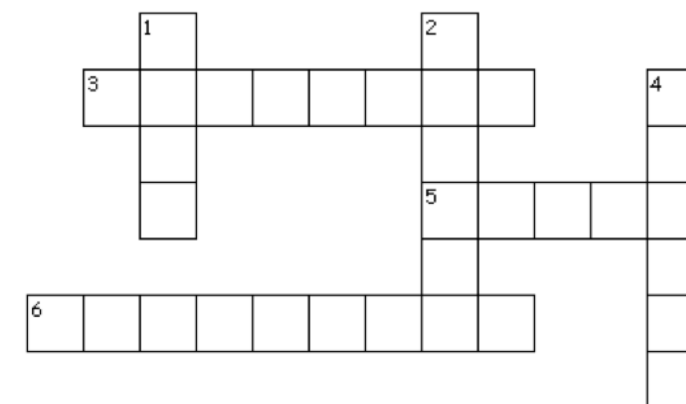
Read Beethoven’s story on the opposite page for the answers to this puzzle.

DOWN

1. City where Beethoven was born
2. Musical capital of Europe where he moved
4. Beethoven’s most famous student

ACROSS

3. Period in music history his work helped to start
5. Beethoven’s piano teacher
6. Period in music history when he was born



One of the world’s favorite melodies is found in the last movement of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. You may have played an arrangement in one of your piano books. It has become a message of hope in 2020. Can you guess what it is? Unscramble the letters to find the answer to this theme’s nickname.

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