

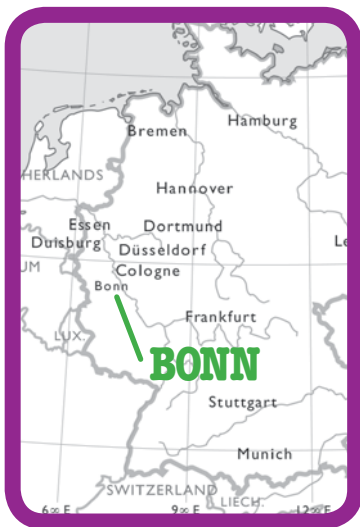
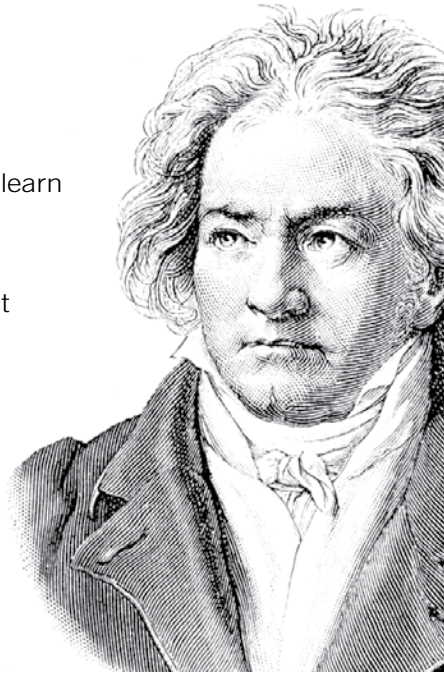
Ludwig Van Beethoven

ABOUT BEETHOVEN

Ludwig van Beethoven was born December 16, 1770 in Bonn, Germany. He began to learn to play the piano at a very young age and was encouraged by his father to practice for hours, hoping that he would become a famous musician.

When he was 16, Beethoven traveled to Vienna, the cultural center of Europe at that time, where he met the greatest composer of the Classical period, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. When he was a young man, Beethoven became a student of another Classical master, Franz Joseph Haydn. He incorporated much of what he had learned from these composers into his own music, but he also developed his own style, which was powerful and passionate, ushering in the Romantic era of classical music.

Beethoven began losing his hearing when he was nearly 30 years old and was almost completely deaf by the time he was 44. This was an incredible challenge for him, personally and musically. He felt incredibly isolated and alone. Still, he continued to compose and wrote some of his most influential pieces after he had become deaf.



THE NINTH SYMPHONY

Beethoven lived during the Age of the Enlightenment, a time of great change in Europe when people questioned whether traditional institutions, customs and morals were right. He was inspired by the ideals of freedom and equality that were on display during the French Revolution, and his Ninth Symphony celebrates the ideas of brotherhood and fraternity.

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was first performed on May 7, 1824, after he had completely lost his hearing. Even though he couldn't hear, Beethoven insisted on conducting the piece himself. At the end, the audience applauded wildly, but Beethoven didn't know the piece had finished until one of the soloists "plucked him by the sleeve and directed his attention to the clapping hands and waving hats and handkerchiefs...then he turned to the audience and bowed."





LISTEN BEFORE THE CONCERT!

The symphony has four movements—take a look below to learn about important parts in each movement. Look for this icon to listen to tracks on Spotify®.


Just click the icon! Free account required.

MOVEMENT 1

Allegro ma non troppo

Notice the unique way the symphony begins, growing gradually from absolute silence to a bold, dramatic sound.


Why do you think Beethoven began the movement this way? Does this represent his struggle with his hearing loss?

 Listen to 0:00-0:59.

MOVEMENT 2

[Say: SCARE-tzo]


Scherzo: Molto vivace

This movement is called *Scherzo*, which means “joking or playful” in Italian. 

Listen for the playful tone of the music between 4:59-6:11. Can you hear it in the rhythm? Or can you hear it in the speed of the notes and the relationship between instruments?



MOVEMENT 3

Adagio molto e cantabile

Notice how this movement is much slower than the others. Each note moves with deliberation. Why do you think Beethoven chose to do that? How does this music make you feel?  Listen to 1:45-2:30.

MOVEMENT 4

Presto: Allegro assai

This movement contains the famous theme “Ode to Joy.”  Listen for its first appearance at 3:00. This movement is also unique because it involves a chorus and soloists.  Listen at 8:07 for the chorus.

The first portion of the text, from a poem by Friedrich Schiller, personifies Joy and describes the “intoxicating,” spiritual feeling that joy gives. Schiller also states that, in a new age, the old ways will no longer divide people and that, with joy, “all men become brothers.”

*Joy, brilliant spark of the gods,
daughters of Elysium,
heavenly being,
we enter your sanctuary
intoxicated with fire.*

*Your spells reunite
that which was strictly
divided by convention;
all men become brothers
where your gentle wing rests.*

Over the last 200 years, “Ode to Joy” has become an appeal for people to come together with a common voice! Did you know that it was first called “Ode to Freedom”? Do you think that the poem still speaks to people who yearn to be free from barriers, divisions, and oppression? Does it speak to you?



PREPARE FOR YOUR VISIT

If this is your first time visiting Symphony Center, there are a few important pieces of information we would like to share with you to help you enjoy your experience.

You will most likely enter Symphony Center at 220 S. Michigan Avenue. Before you enter, look up to see the names of five composers engraved in the stone façade above the arched windows on the second floor: Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and Wagner. These composers were cornerstones of the orchestral tradition when Orchestra Hall was built in 1904, and it is not a coincidence that Beethoven is at the center.

When you enter the building, a friendly CSO usher may greet you. Look for them in the red jackets. They can help you find your seats, direct you to the closest restroom or water fountain and answer many questions you may have. If you have time before or after the concert, walk down the Arcade on the first floor to see the Rotunda and view portraits of the musicians.

When you enter Orchestra Hall to find your seats, you will notice musicians warming up on stage. A few minutes before concert time, the Chicago Symphony Chorus will proceed in and take their seats.

Just before the concert is scheduled to start, the concertmaster (first chair of the first violin section) will take the stage and direct the principal oboist to lead the orchestra in tuning. When the orchestra is ready the lights will come down and the conductor, Maestro Riccardo Muti, and four vocal soloists will enter. And then the concert starts!

Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 is approximately seventy minutes long and is made up of four movements. The concert will be performed without an intermission. It is customary to hold your applause until the very end of the concert. You will know the performance is over when the conductor turns to face the audience.

Look in your program book for a listing of the musicians of the CSO, bios of select musicians, English translations of the text for the choral sections of the symphony and much more.

If you have questions about your upcoming visit to Symphony Center, please contact the Negaunee Music Institute at 312-294-3410 or institute@csso.org.

ABOUT THE CSO

Founded in 1891, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is considered one of the greatest orchestras in the world. It is made up of 108 of the best musicians from across the globe who come to Chicago just to play in our amazing orchestra.

The orchestra is led by Music Director Riccardo Muti, a renowned Italian conductor who leads concerts throughout the year and who helps to plan the music that the orchestra will play. The CSO performs more than 150 concerts each year at Symphony Center, as well as summer performances at the Ravinia Festival in Highland Park and sold-out tour performances in the United States and around the world.

Through the Negaunee Music Institute, the CSO engages nearly 200,000 Chicago-area residents annually. Music lovers outside Chicago enjoy the sounds of the CSO through its weekly CSO Radio Broadcast Series on 98.7 FM and recordings on its in-house record label, CSO Resound.