

TRINITY LABAN SCHOOL CONCERT (KEY STAGE 2): WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT BEETHOVEN? Symphony No. 8 by Beethoven

Home Education Resource Pack

All text copyrights are held by Sarah
Freestone and Trinity Laban Conservatoire
of Music & Dance



INTRODUCTION

This Resource Pack was originally produced for schools attending our concert 'What's so good about Beethoven?' at Blackheath Halls on Thursday 7 February 2019. The concert featured a live orchestra and our presenter, Sarah Freestone, guided the students through Beethoven's Symphony No. 8. The conductor of the concert was Kwamé Ryan, who travels all over the world conducting orchestras. It's a conductor's job to keep the orchestra on track- so that everyone is playing the same part of the music, at the same speed and no one gets lost!

This resource pack has been adapted to introduce you to some of the things you would have heard in the concert. We have also included a few ideas to help you create your own Beethoven-inspired music! On pages 7 – 10, we have provided a worksheet exploring the instruments of the orchestra.



You will get the most out of this resource if you listen to our specially created playlist, 'What's so good about Beethoven?', which can be found here:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3vURISX-g9yXo4oUaXNCGUd?si=nNPYGQO-jQEiAyXExo6y1sw>

Where relevant, we have selected sections of the tracks in this playlist which are of particular interest. You can find these extracts highlighted in bold throughout this resource pack.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770 — 1827) was born in Germany in 1770. Back then, Germany was going through a time of great artistic success; it became a world leader in music, philosophy, science and literature. Beethoven was a big part of this success.

Like many composers, Beethoven was also a very talented musician and he started learning the piano when he was at school. When he became older and started to write his own music, he wrote for a wide range of musicians; powerful, large orchestras, smaller groups of one or two instruments, and even singers. He wrote a huge piece of music for an orchestra and a choir combined (his 9th and last symphony.) These performances would usually take place in churches and theatres. Unlike many composers, Beethoven was very popular whilst he was alive so lots of people wanted to hear his music.

Some of his most famous pieces were his **symphonies**. A symphony is a piece of music that is written for an orchestra. Beethoven wrote nine of these symphonies and they can be quite long — up to an hour, which is a lot of music to create.

To create enough music for his long symphonies, Beethoven was constantly exploring and challenging himself all the time in terms of what his audience expected. Sometimes, his music puzzled his audience as it sounded unusual and strange; although to us it doesn't sound quite so new!

As well as being very famous for his emotional, humorous and unpredictable music, Beethoven is also famous for being a composer who lost his hearing. Perhaps this makes his music all the more remarkable.

ABOUT THE 8TH SYMPHONY

Beethoven's 8th Symphony is the second to last symphony that Beethoven wrote. It is shorter than many of the others but is packed full of excitement, character and fun. Like many other symphonies of the time, it is made up of four **movements**. A movement in a symphony is like an episode within a T.V series.

- **I Allegro Vivace e con brio** (played very quickly, with spirit!)
- **II Allegretto scherzando** (played quite quickly - playful!)
- **III Tempo di menuetto** (the speed of a minuet - a graceful, elegant dance with three beats to the bar. It sounds a bit like a waltz.)
- **IV Allegro Vivace** (very fast! Hold tight!)

Beethoven's writing often uses short MOTIFS (a motif is a musical idea) which he then repeats, changes and extends to create something that sounds quite different. A very famous example of this is the opening of his 5th symphony — possibly one of the most famous phrases in Western classical music! **You can also find a recording of the opening of Beethoven's 5th Symphony on our 'What's so good about Beethoven?' playlist here:**

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3vURISXg9yXo4oUaX-NCGUd?si=nNPYGQOjQEiAyXExo6y1sw>



You can see that it's the same motif but the second time it sounds lower in pitch. He then continues this idea by repeating the motif (but by making it higher in pitch) and he builds up the texture like this;



You will hear this type of writing a great deal in the 8th symphony, as well as in all Beethoven's music.

CREATIVE COMPOSITION IDEA 1

Can you create your own musical motif (musical idea)?

- Choose a few different sounds, a few different notes, or a rhythm (it can be quite short)
- Make up a short melodic idea using a few notes, or a rhythm
- Try repeating it, try moving it one step higher or try moving it one step lower each time
- Try and learn this idea by repeating it, and then — if it's a melodic idea — try it all at a higher pitch, e.g. start it one note higher, or at a lower pitch;
- Try repeating it, but twice as fast or twice as slow!
- Try combining a few of the ideas above to get your perfect musical motif

The first **movement** of symphony no.8 is written in a famous musical structure called SONATA FORM.

Sonata Form is when a piece of music has three big sections; a beginning, a middle and an end. The different sections are all related and connected because some of the motifs (musical ideas) are used in every section. This is why it sounds like it all works together and makes sense!

The three big sections (The Beginning, The Middle and The End) also have their own names.

The Beginning is called the **Exposition**. The exposition is when you are first introduced to the musical ideas that the composer will use throughout the piece. Quite often, there are two musical ideas within the exposition called themes. The exposition is where we hear the first theme and a contrasting second theme.

The Middle is called the **Development** (**This starts at 2'32 on the Movement One recording from our playlist**). The development is where... music gets developed! It can go on quite a journey and end up sounding very different from the exposition.

The End is called **The Recapitulation**. (**This starts at 6'12 on the Movement One recording from our playlist**). This is basically a 'recap' of the first and second theme, as it returns towards the end of the piece.

CREATIVE COMPOSITION IDEA 2

Can you create a short piece structured in Sonata Form?

- Start by creating a simple theme. You might like to focus on something, like a colour, what you had for breakfast — anything you like!
- Once you have your first theme, you need to create a second theme. Try to make this sound different to your first theme. You could change the rhythm or choose a higher or lower sound.
- Now combine these two themes in some way, alternating or layering or extending them both.
- Now, you are ready for the whole thing! To have a go at putting this into sonata form, you might do something like the following:



In the **second movement** Beethoven writes music that we think might be based on a METRONOME. A metronome keeps a pulse, like a ticking clock, but the speed can be changed to suit whatever piece you want to practice. Musicians use metronomes a lot so they can keep playing in time and learn when they are speeding up/slowing down without noticing!

The Metronome was a recent invention at this time and its inventor was a friend of Beethoven, so he may have written this movement for him.

CREATIVE COMPOSITION IDEA 3

Can you create a short phrase that makes you think of time?

- You could create a phrase that reminds you of a ticking clock, by using a tick-tock rhythm
- You could create two different phrases that make you think first about sunrise, and then about sunset
- You could create a phrase that reminds you of an alarm clock going off, or worse... sleeping through an alarm clock going off!

As mentioned earlier, the **third movement** has been given a TEMPO marking - **Tempo di Minuetto** - which means 'In the time of a minuet'. A tempo marking is when a composer has left instructions about how fast or slow he wants his music to be played. He can also leave instructions about what character he wants the music to take.

As the third movement is in the time of a minuet, it has three beats to each bar just like a minuet. Try counting along to this — "1-2-3" — when you listen to the movement.

However, Beethoven often surprises us by changing the stresses (or emphasis) on the beats. Instead of the first beat of the bar feeling like the important beat, Beethoven chooses to emphasize the second, or even the third beat of the bar. It's quite surprising and more than a little unexpected —

Beethoven is having a little bit of fun with us in this symphony! **You can hear this from the opening of the third movement until 1'01 in the recording on our 'What's so good about Beethoven?' playlist.**

This element of surprise carries on into the **fourth movement** where Beethoven writes some very unexpected notes in the melody — they almost sound like mistakes. This gives a fun feel to the music but in fact the note is heard towards the very end of the piece and its job is to take us to a completely new key; only to have the door slammed shut again forcing the music back to the original key. It's surprising, exciting and noticeable, even to our 21st century ears! **You can hear this between 6'00 — 6'10 in the recording of the fourth movement on our 'What's so good about Beethoven?' playlist.**

TOP TIPS FOR CREATING MUSIC

- There is no right and no wrong when we make up our own music!
- Don't worry about what notes you are playing or singing — think about the sound that you want to make
- Words like fast, big, chaotic, spooky, empty, sudden, gentle, colour etc. are examples of good composing words
- If there are a collection of notes/a tune that you have created and you like, if you get a bit stuck with what to do next you can;
 - repeat it
 - repeat it but higher or lower
 - repeat it but twice as fast or twice as slow
 - play it backwards
 - play the same rhythm but with different notes
 - play it with some low notes added below (bassline)
- You could use numbers to make patterns of music. The numbers could be the number of beats you have for your tune or the notes themselves (e.g. C is 1, D is 2 etc.) You could make a tune out of any numbers you like - the time on the clock or the number of the bus that goes past your house!
- Play around with making some notes longer or shorter — this means you will be adding rhythm to your tune
- Music often sounds like a conversation. Can you have a musical conversation with questions and answers?
- Could you write words to your tune? Perhaps try writing words first and then writing music to the words

WORKSHEET: SECTIONS OF THE ORCHESTRA

The orchestra has four main sections which are defined by families of instruments. The families are **Strings, Brass, Woodwind and Percussion**. When looking at the Strings, Brass and Woodwind sections, you will see different instruments that look quite similar. The smaller the instrument, the higher it will sound — think of how you expect a violin to sound compared to a big double bass (the largest of the string instruments). Find out more about the different sections of the orchestra, below.

STRINGS

Use the following words to fill in the paragraph below:

Violin, Double Bass, Viola, Bows, Cello, Wood, Strings

The string section is made up of a group of instruments that all have

They all use to make the sound but string players can also pluck the strings. When watching an orchestra, you can see the bows moving in the same direction. String instruments are made out of

The main string instruments in an orchestra are the,
..... and

What is a bow?

A bow is the name of the wooden stick that musicians use to play string instruments. It is made up of two parts — the wooden part and the hair which comes from a horse's tail. To make a sound using the bow, string players drag the hair part of the bow across the string.



WOODWIND

The woodwind section is a group of instruments which are made of either metal or wood. Most woodwind instruments use small flat pieces of wood called reeds which are attached onto the top of the instrument to make vibrations when the musician blows on it. A flute does not use a reed, instead the musician blows over the top of the mouthpiece, like when you blow over the top of a bottle to make a sound. To change the sound of a woodwind instrument, the musician has to press different keys and change the shape of their lips as they blow on the reeds or over the mouthpiece.

Can you name the wind instruments below? There is a **flute**, a **clarinet**, an **oboe** and a **bassoon**. Keep a special look out for the instruments that have reeds!



BRASS

The brass section is made up of four main instruments: the **trumpet**, the **french horn** (also just called the horn) the **trombone** and the **tuba**. These are the metallic instruments you can see sitting behind the strings in an orchestra. Brass instruments are made of metal and are long pipes that have been bent into a shape that musicians can play. Brass instruments have buttons called valves that the brass players press to change the notes. To play these instruments, you have to blow into the mouth pieces using a lot of air. You vibrate your lips when you blow down the instrument — it's just like blowing a raspberry. Here you can see some pictures of each instrument. Can you correctly label each of them using the following words? In this Symphony you can only hear the horn and the trumpet — listen out for them! This is because the tuba and the trombone were only just being established as instruments when Beethoven was writing his 8th symphony.

TUBA

TRUMPET

FRENCH HORN

TROMBONE



PERCUSSION

The percussion section have a lot of different instruments, but the least amount of musicians to play them. To be a percussion player, or a percussionist, you have to learn to play lots of different instruments! When you next watch an orchestra, look out for the percussion players at the back changing instruments during the piece. You probably know and have played percussion instruments before. Have you ever tried a triangle, tambourine, or drum at school?

The most common instruments in the percussion section of an orchestra are called **timpani**. **Timpani** are very large drums. They can also sometimes be called Kettle drums.



This is the percussion used in Beethoven's 8th Symphony. When Beethoven was writing, percussion instruments were fairly limited — which is why you won't see percussionists jumping between instruments in this Symphony. However, composers writing in the last 100 years have included all sorts of sounds in their percussion section; from giant bells, to glass to typewriters!

Photography Credits:

Tas Kyprianou

Polly Swann