

MUSIC APPRECIATION SECTION

GREAT COMPOSERS OF MUSIC

By BERT PAUL OSBON*

V. BEETHOVEN, MUSICAL GENIUS



The Boy Beethoven

PROBABLY the greatest musical genius the world has yet known was Beethoven, the great composer of symphonies. Beethoven was more than a gifted man; he was, indeed, a genius—a master genius of music.

Like many of the other composers, his early life was full of hardships, but in his struggles with these he came out victorious.

Beethoven's complete name was Ludwig van Beethoven (pronounced lood-vig vahn ba-to-v'n with *ba* accented in his last name). His father was a tenor singer who thought music the most important thing in life. When his little son was only four years old, the father began to teach him to play the harpsichord (the forerunner of the piano) and the violin, because he wanted to make him a boy musical wonder like Mozart. (See *Mozart, the Boy Prodigy* in the May, 1940, issue of *The Young Citizen*.)

In the little German city of Bonn Beethoven was born in 1770. There he spent his childhood. His family had come from the country of Belgium.

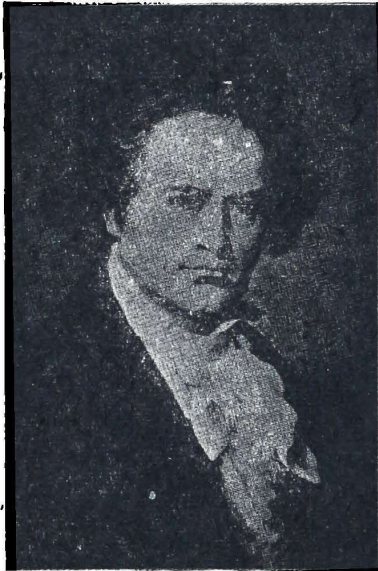
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Beethoven's grandfather was a Belgian, of the "race that Caesar knew, that won Roman praise." Better still, he was a man of fine character and good mind. He had the qualities as well as the gifts of a great man. The boy Beethoven was a true son of his grandfather, for from him the boy received a double inheritance of music and character.

I am sorry to say that Beethoven's father was not a kind father at all, and that is one of the reasons why Ludwig grew to have a strange, unhappy disposition. Even when the boy was very young, his father made him stay in his room and practice his music lesson hours and hours every day. The poor little boy was robbed of the joyous play that every child should have. It is not any wonder that Ludwig came almost to hate the very sound of music, is it?

But he was fortunate in one thing, however. His good mother loved her little son dearly, and as long as she lived she did all she could to make him happier. The poor woman had many cares and sorrows, for the father added nothing to the comfort or welfare of his family. Beethoven's mother had little to give her son except her love and understanding, and of those she gave richly. It was from his mother that Beethoven inherited much of his deep, true feeling for the good and beautiful.

Discovering his little boy's unusual capacity for music, the father, who was a man who cared only for himself and



Ludwig van Beethoven

no one else, selfishly determined to profit from his son's music-making. Therefore he had the boy well-taught in music by local teachers. But music that

should have been an enjoyment was, under the father's selfish demands, often a hard experience for the little boy. Fortunately, Ludwig's love for music was so great that even such harsh treatment failed to quench the fire of his genius.

As soon as the boy's father thought him proficient enough, he had him play in public as a boy prodigy. His mother took him on a concert tour through Holland, and at twelve years of age he was conducting an orchestra and writing music. One of the greatest events in his youth was his trip to Vienna to see the great Mozart. He played for Mozart, who was so well pleased that he turned to some friends and said, "You must keep your eyes upon him; some day he will make a noise in the world." Today we know how truly Mozart spoke!

When Beethoven was seventeen years old, his dear mother died. It only added to the heaviness of this sad blow that he now had to be both mother and father to his younger brothers, for his father's

drunkenness caused him to lose his position. But Ludwig manfully set to work to procure music pupils, and soon he was able to support both his father and brothers.

In 1792 Beethoven met another great master of music—Haydn, then over sixty years old. (See *Haydn, the Father of the Symphony* in the March, 1940, issue of *The Young Citizen*.) Haydn was so impressed with Ludwig's playing that he proposed to take him to Vienna and give him lessons himself. There Beethoven remained almost all the time until his death in 1827.

Ludwig was a strange, silent, moody boy, so you will not be surprised to learn that there are many stories told of the odd things he did when he became a man. He had a very violent temper, and sometimes would abuse his servants very rudely. Everything in his home was usually in great disorder, though strangely enough Beethoven thought himself a marvel of order and neatness.

A terrible misfortune befell Beethoven after he had reached manhood—a misfortune which, in his case especially, was the very worst that could possibly have come to him. Before he was thirty years old he began to grow deaf, and within a few years he entirely lost his hearing. Think of what that meant to one whose whole soul lived in the world of music. In spite of this handicap, we find him appearing in public concerts, conducting great orchestras, and writing wonderful musical compositions.

Beethoven's music is as great as the world has yet known. He composed many beautiful compositions called sonatas, some for the piano only, others for the piano and violin or violoncello.

Beethoven spent his life in making

music. In his nine symphonies he reached the peak of his greatness. Nine symphonies seem a small number when compared with the two hundred symphonies of Haydn and Mozart combined. But each of Beethoven's symphonies was the result of deep and serious study, of tremendous emotions. These nine symphonies, taken as a whole, are perhaps the greatest musical achievement of all time. Beethoven's nine symphonies occupy, in the musical world, a position similar to Shakespeare's immortal dramas in the world of literature.

Beethoven was often seen walking about the beautiful outskirts of Vienna. A great artist once painted a picture of Beethoven walking in the woods. When looking at this picture (which is used as one of the illustrations of this article), one can easily imagine that the composer was thinking of some of the great music he was planning to write.

To those who did not know this genius, he was a strange sort of man, a bit shabby perhaps, as he went striding through the rain, or as he sat under a tree and watched the world of nature about him. But to those who knew him, the master was a great man, not only because of his music, but because he had courage in misfortune. From him, as well as from every other truly great man of any country of the world, every boy and girl in the Philippines can learn a valuable lesson.

We cannot measure the genius of Beethoven except to say that no other musician has equaled him. Great as others have been, it is Beethoven who is their musical leader.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you spell and pronounce the name of Beethoven correctly? (Pronounced ba-to-v'n, a as in day, o as in no, and accented on the first syllable, *ba*)
2. What are the dates of Beethoven's life? (1770 to 1827)



Beethoven Walking in the Woods

3. In what town and country was he born?
 4. What was his first name?
 5. What is a genius? (See the dictionary.)
 7. What kind of a genius was Beethoven?
 8. When did the boy Beethoven begin to study music?
 9. What kind of father did Beethoven have?
 10. Why did his father want his young son to study music?
 11. From what country did Beethoven's ancestors come?
 12. Tell of the grandfather.
 13. Why did Beethoven dislike music when he was a young boy?
 14. Did he like it better later on? Why?
 15. Tell about Beethoven's mother.
 16. Tell of Beethoven's visit to Mozart?
 17. What responsibility came to
- (Please turn to page 275.)

AGE OF CHIVALRY

(Continued from page 268)

When the squire reached a man's estate, he became a knight, having received his training from his master when he was a page and a squire. He was made a knight with much ceremony, after having spent the immediate hours previous in prayer and meditation before an altar.

A knight took certain vows of chivalry which he always upheld. Yet there were peculiar contradictions in his life. Although he must respect women—that is, beautiful women of high rank—he was far from being courteous sometimes to those women not of the nobility. He must be honest and high-minded chivalry, but at other times he was often a dishonest trickster.

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were the golden age of the plate-armored knight. Such a knight was in himself an impregnable fort. He, the man inside the armor which was moulded to fit his knightly contour, was presumably the embodiment of all that was upright and brave—at certain times and under certain conditions. This high-minded chivalry was lost sight of when he was dealing with inferiors.

In the sixteenth century

the knight, tightly locked within his iron hide, was invisible alike to friend and foe, even his face being concealed by helmet and visor. Thus, in the age of chivalry, heraldic devices came to be engraved or emblazoned upon shield or surcoat, serving to identify the hidden wearer.

When a knight met a friend—especially a lady—he raised his helmet or visor. From this custom originated a man's practice now-a-days of lifting his hat to a lady or other person.

In the age of chivalry, when knight and horse were fully equipped and covered with beautiful armorial trappings, both presented a magnificent spectacle. As a matter of fact, however, when they were thus accoutered, man and beast must have been most uncomfortable.

The armor was lined with heavily padded garments, so that the heat within was intense. Then, too, the weight was most oppressive. The metal coverings of the horse's head, neck, breast, and rump, as well as the gaily colored decorative cloths, no doubt were very much in the animal's way.

Even though we are cen-
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BEETHOVEN

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Beethoven when he was seventeen years old?

18. Tell of Beethoven's visit to Haydn.
19. Was Beethoven a strange man? Why do you think so?
20. What physical misfortune came to Beethoven?
21. Name two types of musical compositions which Beethoven wrote. (Sonatas, symphonies)
22. How many symphonies did he write?
23. What can you say of his symphonies as a whole?
24. Can you learn a lesson from Beethoven? What lesson?
25. How does Beethoven compare with other composers?
26. Have you ever heard any music which Beethoven composed?
27. Can you name any music which he wrote?
28. Have you heard any of Beethoven's music over the radio?
29. On the phonograph?
30. Would you like to learn more about his wonderful music?