Ludwig Van Beethoven

1770 – 1827 📅

Notable Pieces 🎚️

Symphony No. 5
Für Elise
Moonlight Sonata

Ludwig van
Beethoven ✓ Follow

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) was a German composer and pianist, widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in Western classical music. His works, including symphonies, sonatas, and string quartets, transformed the landscape of classical music. Despite losing his hearing in his late 20s, Beethoven continued to compose some of his most celebrated pieces, such as the *Ninth Symphony* and *Moonlight Sonata*. His music bridged the Classical and Romantic eras, shaping the future of music.
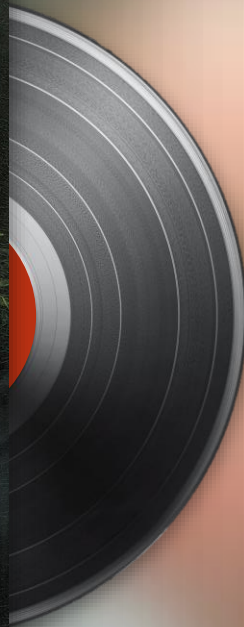
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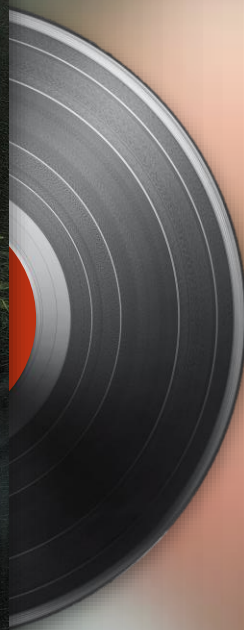
Moonlight Sonata, Op. 27...
Ludwig van Beethoven

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Beethoven

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1801

Symphony No. 9 – 'Ode to Joy'

Ludwig van Beethoven

Musical Elements

'Ode to Joy' is in 4/4 time. In this version, the tempo is andante, and the dynamics is mezzo piano/forte. The texture is homophonic (melody & accompaniment). In Beethoven's 9th Symphony, the form/structure is theme & variation form.

Melody

The melody in 'Ode to Joy' contains the first five scale degrees of the G major scale only (G A B C D):

Piano

Guitar

G major scale "G shape"

The melodic movement is conjunct – notes move up or down by step – and scalic – a melody that follows the order of a scale. The melodic structure is A A' B A'. AABA structures are common across many genres.

Chords

'Ode to Joy' uses just three chords:
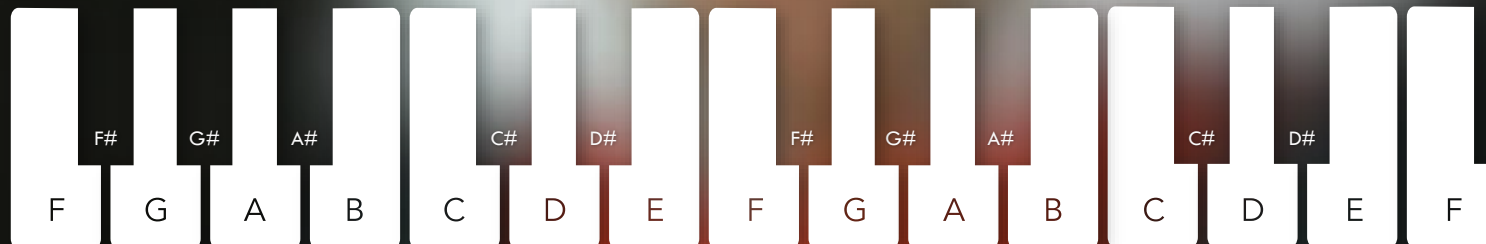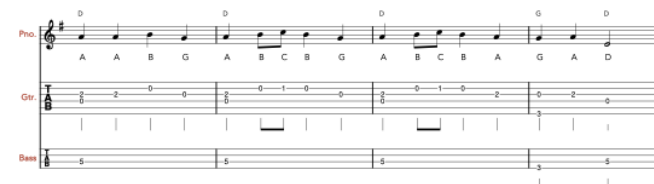

G	D/F#	D
G B D	F# A D	D F# A

The harmony of the of 'Ode to Joy' uses just the I (tonic) and the V (dominant) chords. There is a half cadence (I – V) at bar 4^3 and 12^3, and a perfect cadence (V – I) at bars 8^3 and 16^3.

Theme

Bagatelle No. 25, WoO. 59 – Für Elise
Ludwig van Beethoven

Musical Elements

'Für Elise' is in 3/4 time. In this version, the tempo is allegro, and the dynamics is mezzo piano. The texture is homophonic (melody & accompaniment). In Für Elise, the form/structure is rondo form (ABACA).

Melody

The melody in 'Für Elise' is made up from a mixture of the A natural minor scale (A B C D E F G A) and the A harmonic minor scale (A B C D E F G# A):

Piano

Guitar

C major scale "A shape"

The melodic structure in the A section of 'Für Elise' is A A' B A'. AABA structures are common across many genres. The melody also uses D#, which in the key A minor, is a chromatic/non-diatonic note.

Chords

'Für Elise' uses just four chords:

Am	E	C	G
A C E	E G# B	C E G	G B D

The harmony centers around the tonic (Am), and often alternates to the dominant chord (E). The B section of the melodic structure uses the progression C – G – Am – E, which ends with a half cadence (I – V). The piece ultimately ends with a perfect cadence (V – I).
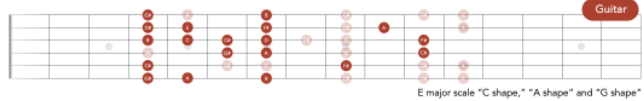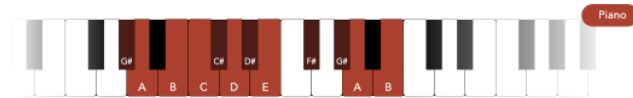
Moonlight Sonata
Ludwig van Beethoven

Musical Elements

'Moonlight Sonata' is in 2/2 time, also known as "split common time." The tempo is adagio (69bpm). The dynamics – of the first movement – is pianissimo throughout. The texture is homophonic (melody & accompaniment). The form/structure is sonata form.

Melody

The melody of 'Moonlight Sonata' is made from notes of the C# minor scale (C# D# E F# G# A B):
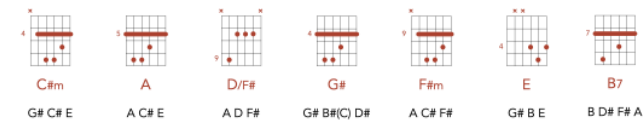

E major scale "C shape", "A shape" and "G shape"

The melodic movement is disjunct throughout. The melody is constructed of chord notes and played as arpeggios. There is a rhythmic ostinato that runs throughout made up of triplets.

Chords

'Moonlight Sonata' uses seven chords:

C#m	A	D/F#	G#	F#m	E	B7
G# C# E	A C# E	A D F#	G# B#(C) D#	A C# F#	G# B E	B D# F# A

The first four bars start with the tonic (i), C#m, and ends on the dominant (V), G#. This produces a half cadence. The next four bars modulates - changes to another key/tonal center. It starts again with C#m and modulates to E major – the relative major of C# minor. This is emphasised by a perfect cadence (V – I), B7 – E.

Movement 1