LIVING WITH DEAFNESS



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In this artistic interpretation of Beethoven conducting his 9th Symphony, we do not see that the composer/conducter is several measures off. That is because he does not realize that he and the orchestra are not in sync. Beethoven, by this point in his career, is deaf. Image online via "The Skibbereen Eagle."

To protect himself from the outward effects of his growing deafness, <u>Beethoven</u> stopped going out with friends. Because he could not hear well, people thought him rude when he didn't properly respond to questions or comments. Very few actually knew what was happening to him.

Nothing he tried restored his hearing. Was there no cure for him? If so, what would that mean? Filled with despair, Beethoven searched for peace and quiet in the countryside. Perhaps he could find a cure outside Vienna.

Beethoven's <u>move to Heiligenstadt</u>, a village outside the city, would change things for him. While <u>there</u>, he poured-out his heart in a cathartic, <u>never-sent letter</u> to his brothers. Known today as the <u>Heiligenstadt Testament</u>, it is filled with the composer's anguished questions and worries.

On his return to Vienna, Beethoven began to <u>compose a symphony</u> he'd originally planned to dedicate to Napoleon. <u>Instead</u>, he called it the "<u>Eroica</u>" - Symphony No. 3 in E flat major. A <u>complex work</u>, it eclipsed the earlier two symphonies.

Beethoven wrote that he was coming closer to his goal - which remained undefined to others.

After *Eroica*, which Beethoven premiered in 1804, the maestro's symphanies were like those never-before conceived. Reaching his peak as a composer, he struggled even more with the world around him.

It wasn't just his deafness that was an issue.

At the age of 35, Beethoven pulled himself back from the edge of potential suicide. Instead of allowing deafness to <u>overwhelm him</u>, he began a period of prodigious - and brilliant - composition.

In the early nineteenth century, Europe was in chaos. Beethoven appreciated the ideals of the French Revolution - liberty, truth, justice - and wrote an opera to honor them. In a groundbreaking move, he created a female lead. Unfortunately, *Leonore* opened to a small crowd.

<u>Prince Karl Lichnowsky</u>, Beethoven's patron and friend, believed problems with the work could explain its initial lack of success. It was - he told Beethoven - too sophisticated, too long and too drama-lacking.

Beethoven blamed everything on the tenor soloist. How could the public really want an opera with more drama and less music? Apt to "chuck" the whole work, Beethoven resisted his impulses. His friends urged him not to condemn but refine it.

In <u>the edited work</u>, Beethoven reduced the size of the score and featured new musical techniques. Still ... the audience did not show up. <u>Crushed by</u> the lack of pay and attention, the maestro locked his opera away - for a time.

Leonore, the opera, was not Beethoven's only rejection. Although he kept searching for a wife, most often with his piano students, he never found one. Despite the many letters he wrote to various women, and despite their feelings of affection for him, the maestro could find no one who agreed to marry him.

<u>Countess Josephine Deym</u>, a young widow, was one of the women to whom Beethoven wrote touching letters. Although she enjoyed his company, and adored his music, marriage was a different issue. She admired and respected Ludwig but may not have loved him.

Worried about her children's future, she wasn't sure that marriage to a musician (who was also going deaf) was right for her. He felt that his deafness (as well as his financial situation) was causing him to lose on the romantic front.

His brother Karl, however, found love ... with a woman Ludwig did not like. Johanna was expecting a child before she and Karl were married, which made things worse for Ludwig. He began to treat both his brother, and his fiancé, with considerable rudeness.

Intolerant of anyone who did not live up to his high moral standards, Beethoven felt more and more isolated from those around him. He harnessed his emotions to great effect, however, with the *Appassionata* (his powerful Piano Sonata No. 23 in F minor, opus 57) which contains one of his 5th-Symphony themes.

A mood of desperation, yet determination, flows through every bar of the *Appassionata's* first movement. Beethoven, as he had done before and would do again, was <u>transforming</u> his internal emotions into stunning music.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/LIVING-WITH-DEAFNESS-Beethoven

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/LIVING-WITH-DEAFNESS-Beethoven

Media Stream



Beethoven in 1803

 $\label{lem:contraction} Portrait of Beethoven, in 1803, by C. Horneman. \ Maintained at Beethoven-Haus Bonn, Collection H.C. Bodmer. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.$

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beethoven-in-1803



Beethoven's Heiligenstadt House - Street View

Front elevation view of Beethoven's house in Heiligenstadt. Online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beethoven-s-Heiligenstadt-House-Street-View



<u>Beethoven Signature - Heiligenstadt Testament</u>

Facsimile image, Heiligenstadt Testament, online courtesy "Mad About Beethoven." View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beethoven-Signature-Heiligenstadt-Testament



<u>Heiligenstadt House - Rear View</u> Vintage postcard, online courtesy Half-Time Scores.

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Heiligenstadt-House-Rear-View



Eroica - Original Score

Image of Beethoven's original score of the *Eroica*, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Eroica-Original-Score



Beethoven in 1804

Top portion of an 1804 painting, by W.J. Mähler, of Beethoven - now maintained at the Archiv für Kunst und Geschichte, Berlin. Online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beethoven-in-1804



Prince Karl Lichnowsky

Image of Prince Karl Lichnowsky, online courtesy Beethoven-Haus, Bonn.

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Beethoven in Despair

Clip from "Beethoven," a 2005 <u>BBC television</u> production, featuring <u>Charles Hazlewood</u> and starring Paul Rhys as Beethoven. Copyright, BBC, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

Online, courtesy BBC Worldwide Channel at YouTube.

Director:

Ursula Macfarlane

Key Cast Members:

Paul Rhys

Ludwig van Beethoven

Jack Shepherd

Joseph Haydn

David Bamber

Prince Lichnowsky

Alice Eve

Countess Giulietta Guicciardi

Nicholas Farrell

Stephan von Breuning

Tom Goodman-Hill

Anton Schindler

Gareth David-Lloyd

Older Karl

Casper Harvey

Young Karl

Sarah Hadland

Johanna van Beethoven

Christian Coulson

Archduke Rudolph

Charles Hazlewood

Himself - Presenter

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<u>Beethoven - Overcoming Despair with Work</u>

Clip from "Beethoven," a 2005 <u>BBC television</u> production, featuring <u>Charles Hazlewood</u> and starring Paul Rhys as Beethoven. Copyright, BBC, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

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Christian Coulson

Archduke Rudolph

Charles Hazlewood

Himself - Presenter

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Beethoven - Third Symphony, Eroica, Part 1

Herbert von Karajan, conducting the Berlin Philharmonic as they perform Beethoven's Third Symphony - The *Eroica*. Online, courtesy YouTube.

Quoted passages, describing the Third Symphony, from "<u>Keeping Score</u>," with Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony. Online, courtesy PBS.

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beethoven-Third-Symphony-Eroica-Part-1





Beethoven - Eroica, Part 2

Eroica, part two, by the Berlin Philharmonic, with Karajan conducting. Online, courtesy YouTube.

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beethoven-Eroica-Part-2



Beethoven - Fidelio - Overture

Overture to Fidelio, by Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic. Online, courtesy A&E and YouTube.

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beethoven-Fidelio-Overture



Beethoven - Appassionata, First Movement

First movement of the *Appassionata*, performed by Sviatoslav Richter. Online, courtesy YouTube.

Quoted passage from "Beethoven's Carefully Choreographed Violence," by Ted Libbey. Online, courtesy NPR.

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