

Music 320

Ludwig van Beethoven

Middle and Late periods

Second Period (1800-15 or 16)

- Beethoven's best known works are from this period (e.g. Symphonies 3,5,6, 4th piano concerto)
- characterized by various kinds of **expansion**
 - expansion of time; e.g. **Eroica Symphony** is about 50% longer than Symphony 1 or 2
 - lengthen development: lots of counterpoint, fugues etc. (form within form)
 - lengthen coda (often functions as another development section)
 - other expansion: instruments used (greater variety and number), virtuosity level required of performers
- Other experiments:
 - reprise ideas from earlier movements in later ones
 - also blurred lines between movements, e.g. Symphony No. 5 scherzo and finale: tends to obscure form
- Example: Symphony No. 5 in C Minor
 - opening gesture often called a “fate motive;” Beethoven frequently used 4-note motives
 - innovations:
 - tonal ambiguity: opening is monophonic
 - motive is ubiquitous; very propulsive rhythm
 - recap has second theme in Major
 - very long coda: Expo 124 bars, Dev 123, Recap 126, Coda 139: very different from classical era proportions
 - 2nd movement is example of the “other” kind of melody: long, spun out

Final Period (~1816-1827) “Contrapuntal”

- totally deaf, withdrawn from the world; introverted, eccentric
- not as musically prolific as middle period, but still a few important works (9th Sym, late quartets); mostly very abstract works: audiences didn't understand them, felt alienated by them
- Beethoven studied counterpoint of Baroque composers (Handel esp.); more counterpoint in the late works than ever, esp fugue as a development technique
- Virtuosity and endurance demands are great
- Expansion still a factor; this is the limit of what form can bear (length)
- Example: 9th symphony “Ultimate Heroic Symphony:” (Mahler-like proportions)
 - takes over an hour, lots of counterpoint techniques used for expansion;
 - finale has no clear form, but uses reprises from other mvts.

- adds chorus (influence of Handel?) and vocal soloists as well as huge orchestra
- Symbolic representation of journey from darkness to light: journey to Elysium, or the place where the blessed go after death: no accident that [Schiller's Ode to Joy](#) is text for final mvt.
- Other Late Works:
 - consciously avoided tradition, e.g. late string quartets
 - almost all are works are other than the usual 4 movements
 - strayed from traditional forms, ideas develop organically, less repetition
 - lost his audience somewhat because these works were hard to understand; but later composers (2nd half of century) will look back on these as model