

# Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 3, “Eroica”* (1803-1804)

## Abstract

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Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was born in Bonn, the capital and princely residence of the Electorate of Cologne. He gave his first public piano recital at age seven and at age 14 was employed as organist at the Elector’s court. In 1792, he moved to Vienna, the capital of European music at the time, where he studied composition with Joseph Haydn. Beethoven would spend the rest of his life in Austria, where he witnessed the conquest of Vienna by the French during the Napoleonic Wars twice. Beethoven initially made a name for himself as a pianist but soon gained noble patronage for his compositions as well. Beginning in 1798, his hearing began to deteriorate, and by 1815 he had almost completely lost his ability to hear. While his hearing loss meant that he struggled to perform publicly and thus lost a significant part of his income, he was able to continue composing until his death. His works marked the transition from the Classical period to the Romantic era in Western music and remain among the most frequently performed works in classical music today.

Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 3*, completed in 1804, is considered the composition which most clearly marked Beethoven’s transition from the Classical to the Romantic style. Its first public performance took place in 1804 at the Vienna residence of Prince Lobkowitz, to whom the symphony was dedicated. Beethoven’s first biographer claimed that the composer had originally dedicated this symphony to Napoleon Bonaparte, whom he admired as the embodiment of the republican, democratic ideals proclaimed by the French Revolution, and that Beethoven angrily changed the dedication when Napoleon declared himself emperor. While Beethoven’s disappointment in Napoleon is documented and the title page of the original score does show an erasure, it is unlikely that he changed the dedication since Lobkowitz had paid him for the symphony. Beethoven did add “written for Bonaparte” to the manuscript’s title page and informed his publishers that it was titled “Bonaparte,” however. Later editions of the score referred to it as the “Sinfonia Eroica written for an unknown hero,” and today it is known as the *Eroica*. This excerpt is the opening movement.

## Source

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Source: Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 3 “Eroica”* – Allegro con brio, 1803-1804. Performed by the Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam conducted by Eugen Jochum, Philips Records, 1969. Available from the Internet Archive, Unlocked Recordings [urn:discogs:release:8605397], [https://archive.org/details/lp\\_eroica-symphony-no-3\\_ludwig-van-beethoven-concertgebouworkest-e](https://archive.org/details/lp_eroica-symphony-no-3_ludwig-van-beethoven-concertgebouworkest-e)

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