Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Beethoven's Three Style Periods

to 1802

• reminiscent of Haydn (developing motives, animating texture contrapuntally)
• some expansion of forms (e.g. four movements in piano sonatas; scherzo instead of minuet & trio)
• piano style influenced by London pianoforte school (Clementi, Dussek, et al)
• regular forms in first two symphonies; second symphony features expanded scale (long introduction, coda)
• dynamic shading

It is well to mingle with aristocrats, but one must know how to impress them.

1803–1816...

• Eroica Symphony—unprecedented length and complexity; distorted and extended forms innovations (e.g. "new theme introduced in the development") dramatization of themes
• Fidelio—shares "revolutionary" atmosphere with the Third Symphony
• Rasumovsky quartets—("Oh, they are not for you, but for a later age") first examples of Beethoven's characteristic expression in the medium of string quartet extreme range, extensions of harmony, rhythmic intensity
• Symphonies—motivic development throughout harmonic innovations (e.g. parallelisms, remote modulations) expanded orchestration (incl. piccolo, contrabassoon, trombones) programmatic Sixth Symphony ("expression of feelings rather than depiction")
• Piano works—formal schemes stretched in all directions thundering low chords expanded expressive range virtuosity

1816–1827

• deliberately worked out themes and motives to their utmost (e.g. variation technique)
• blurring of lines of division between phrases (continuity)
• improvisatory character
• fugal texture (e.g. finale of the Ninth Symphony)
• new sonorities (experimental character, extended ranges, unusual orchestration)
• cyclical tendencies in forms, plan of "the whole"