

Frank Bridge



Frank Bridge was born in Brighton on 26 February 1879 from a working-class family. His great-grandfather was a cordwainer. His grandfather was a shoe and boot maker. His father was William Henry Bridge (1845-1928) and Frank, the first born of William's third wife, was the 10th of his 12 children. Frank's father was a printer although his passion was for music. In middle age he abandoned lithography and turned to music as a profession, both teaching violin and as music director of the Empire Theatre, Brighton where he conducted the Brighton theatre orchestra and musical entertainment each evening from 8.00 p.m.

Young Frank was immersed in music from his earliest childhood years. His school was at York Place (now Vardean), Brighton. From the age of 12 he took violin lessons at the Brighton School of Music, played violin in the orchestra and from his earliest years began composing. He also tried his hand at other instruments, substituting for missing or indisposed musicians and making arrangements. He often conducted the orchestra whenever his father was unavailable. In 1899 Bridge, aged 17, won a composition scholarship to study at the Royal College of Music where his primary study was the violin. There he met and married a fellow violin student, Ethel Sinclair. While at the College he gained the Sul-

livan Prize and Gold Medal of the Rajah of Tagore for 'the most generally deserving pupil.' His composition studies were with the ferocious Stanford, whose heart-breaking and oppressive methods were said to have destroyed the confidence and compositional aspirations of many pupils. Bridge, however, seems to have benefited, or survived, despite Stanford's attentions. He emerged from the Bessemer furnace of Stanford's lessons with outstanding compositional skills which were then turned towards his fervently burning imagination.

On leaving the RCM, Bridge earned his living by teaching and performing. As a violin/viola player, he played in London's leading orchestras and was a member of three string quartets, and regularly coached student chamber groups at the RCM. In 1904, he performed in the British première of the newly completed Debussy *String Quartet*. In 1906 Bridge composed his own first *String Quartet* (in E minor) as an entry in a competition sponsored by the Filharmonica Accademica of Bologna, Italy. In midwinter 1909-10, Bridge composed his famous *Suite for Strings* over a few short weeks.

Bridge was a thorough craftsman whose skill as a composer was finely sharpened by the depth of his practical musicianship. He soon established a solid reputation as violist in several quartets, most notably the English String Quartet, in which he played from 1903 into the early 1920s. He was also active as a conductor around this time, as rehearsal director of the New Symphony (then recently formed) and at London's Savoy Theatre during its 1910-11 season. It was around the time of the coronation of George V in 1911 that he composed his suite *The Sea*, which appeared frequently in Promenade concert programs through the end of the 1930s. The great *String Sextet* (1912) is the culmination of this period in Bridge's creative development.

As a consequence of his professional excellence, he was often sought as 'last-minute' replacement conductor - a role which he openly disliked. These conducting engagements included Covent Garden (for Beecham) and the Promenade Concerts (for Sir Henry Wood). While Bridge felt hurt and underappreciated not to obtain a permanent conducting post, this failure was attributable in part to an exacting though at times tactless manner with musicians. Though recognizing and respecting his exceptional excellence as conductor, musicians viewed him at times as unencouraging or even abrasive on the podium.

With a decline in publishing royalties during and immediately after the Great War, Bridge's life was not easy, and he was compelled by economic hardship to spend much of his time teaching violin far and wide, leaving him little time for composing.

After 1920, Bridge took up a new direction with his music which was no longer to reach the same wide audience as did the light and more lyrical output of his pre-war Edwardian years. It is often repeated that the war with its unprecedented, irrational toll in human lives left a deep personal mark on pacifist Bridge and, by extension, his musical idiom. During this time Bridge expended considerable time and energy teaching and mentoring the young Benjamin Britten, the only pupil to whom he taught composition.

In 1922, Bridge had the good fortune of meeting millionaire American patron of the arts Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge at the home of publisher Winthrop Rogers. That summer, Bridge and his wife Ethel, along with Rogers, toured France and the West Country with Mrs. Coolidge. The Bridges and Coolidge soon established what was to become a lifelong acquaintance. Before returning to America, the influential Coolidge extended to the Bridges an invitation to the following year's Berkshire Chamber Music Festival, in western Massachusetts.

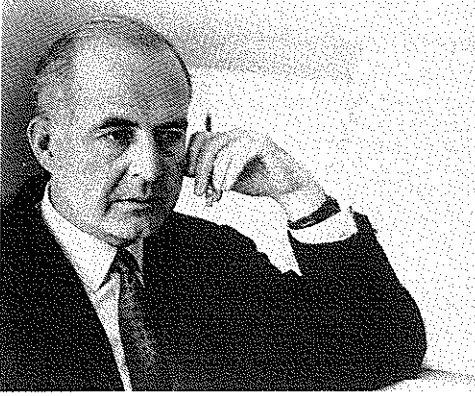


Through Coolidge's patronage and mediation, Bridge was able to bring his works to America's orchestras, touring the United States as guest conductor in 1923, also returning to visit in later years.

The more important consequence of this patronage was to enable Bridge to devote himself more exclusively to composing, though his health regrettably began to falter after 1930. Though active all his life, Bridge most preferred spending time in the company of a few close friends in the quiet retreat of the South Downs cottage near Eastbourne, where he composed many of his finest works. During the winter of 1940-41 he was at work on a large composition for string

orchestra. One very cold Friday afternoon in 1941, after pattering over his car and exchanging a friendly word with a neighbor, he came back into the house saying he felt sick, lay down for a few hours, and died of congestive heart failure early that same evening. Only a single movement *Allegro moderato* was completed of the projected work. In the wake of what was to be a new and more terrible European war, his music soon slipped into a temporary oblivion.

Samuel Barber



Samuel Osborne Barber II (March 9, 1910 – January 23, 1981) was an American composer of orchestral, opera, choral, and piano music. He was born to a well-educated, middle-class family in West Chester, Pennsylvania. He was the elder of two children and the only son of Marguerite McLeod Beatty and her physician husband, Samuel Leroy Barber. Barber, who was named for his paternal grandfather, came by his musical talent from his mother's family. From an early age, Barber was exposed to the culture of professional musicians. Most notably, his composer uncle Sidney Homer, and Homer's wife, Louise, who was a performer with the Metropolitan Opera, served as mentors. Barber began

his musical studies with piano lessons at age six and composed his first piece of music one year later. His mother, who was a pianist, took it upon herself to record her young son's compositions in manuscript format. At a very early age, Barber became profoundly interested in music, and it was apparent that he had great musical talent and ability. At the age of nine he wrote to his mother:

Dear Mother: I have written this to tell you my worrying secret. Now don't cry when you read it because it is neither yours nor my fault. I suppose I will have to tell it now without any nonsense. To begin with I was not meant to be an athlete. I was meant to be a composer, and will be I'm sure. I'll ask you one more thing.—Don't ask me to try to forget this unpleasant thing and go play football.—Please—Sometimes I've been worrying about this so much that it makes me mad (not very).

He wrote his first musical at the early age of 7 and attempted to write his first opera at the age of 10. He was an organist at the age of 12. As a teenager, Barber attended at the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he studied piano, voice, and composition beginning in 1924. Prior to his enrollment at Curtis, Barber had studied organ from age eleven and played for services at the Westminster Presbyterian Church in his hometown. In addition to his bent for piano and organ, Barber was a talented baritone. During his years at Curtis, he distinguished himself most notably as a student of composition under Rosario Scalero, who recognized Barber's genius very quickly and worked with Barber for nine years. By 1931 Barber had completed his first orchestral composition, *Overture to the School for Scandal*. The following year he left the institute to work as a composer, subsidizing his early career through singing and teaching. Additionally, he completed his studies and graduated in 1934 with a bachelor's degree in music.

Barber's first major orchestral work, *Overture to the School for Scandal*, received its world premiere with the Philadelphia Orchestra under conductor Alexander Smallens in 1933. In 1935-36 Barber received an extended Pulitzer traveling scholarship and thereafter supported himself largely by means of fellowship grants and by composing works on commission. Also in 1935 Barber won the Prix de Rome and spent some years at the American Academy in Rome in fulfillment of the prize. Barber was commissioned to write his Symphony No. 2 by the Army Air Forces while serving as a corporal during World War II. He taught briefly at the Curtis Institute, collected royalties for his works, and received Guggenheim Fellowships in 1945, 1947, and again in 1949. In 1946 he accepted a commission to compose a ballet score for Martha Graham's planned presentation of *Medea*. After completing that project, entitled *Cave of the Heart*, Barber subsequently expanded the original ballet music into seven movements for full orchestra in 1947. He reworked the score a second time in 1955, resulting in a single full-length movement called *Medea's Dance of Vengeance*. In 1949 Barber accepted a commission to compose a work for piano to be performed by Vladimir Horowitz in celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the League of Composers.

Barber's work, which is most memorable for its extremely lyrical quality, includes 103 solo songs. In many instances, the composer took his inspiration from literary illusion, turning to the celebrated Anglo-Saxon poets—James Agee, William Butler Yeats, James Joyce, and others—for text and inspiration in composing his songs. Among his more popular lyrical works, Barber's *Hermit Songs* were taken from works of Irish poetry which he adapted to music for the American soprano Leontyne Price. In 1966, on commission for the opening of the new Metropolitan Opera House at the Lincoln Center in New York City, Barber wrote the opera *Antony and Cleopatra* with Price earmarked for the starring role of Cleopatra.

In 1958 the Metropolitan Opera produced Barber's opera, *Vanessa*, a highly successful work featuring Menotti's libretto. That work won the first of two Pulitzer Prizes for Barber. He won a second Pulitzer along with a Music Critics Circle Award in 1962 for Piano Concerto No. 1, which had its premiere at the Avery Fisher Music Hall (then Philharmonic Hall) at the Lincoln Center.

Barber spent many years in isolation after the harsh rejection of his third opera *Antony and Cleopatra*. He suffered from depression, and was also beset by alcoholism. The opera was written for and premiered at the opening of the new Metropolitan Opera House on September 16, 1966. After this setback, Barber continued to write music until he was almost 70 years old. Barber's music in his later years would be lauded as reflective and contemplative, but without the morbidity or unhappiness of other composers who knew they had a limited time to live. The *Third Essay for Orchestra* (1978) was his last major work.

Barber died of cancer in 1981 in New York City at the age of 70. He was buried in Oaklands Cemetery in his hometown of West Chester, Pennsylvania.

Barber's music shows up in the movies . . .

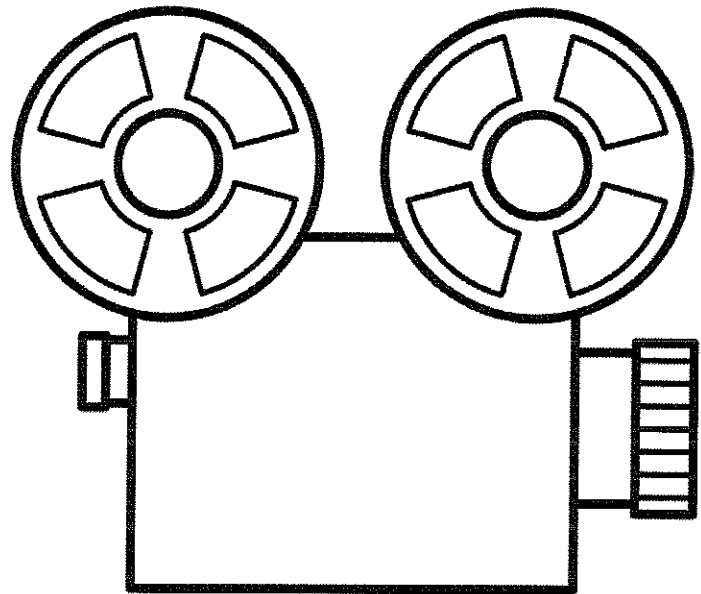
Without doubt, his most famous work is the Adagio for Strings (1936) from his String Quartet, Op. 11. This piece has a slowly unfolding melody that is simultaneously sad, comforting, compassionate, and noble. It was played at the **funeral of Princess Diana** in England. In Oliver Stone's **Platoon** (1986), Barber's Adagio for Strings (uncredited) slowly fades in at the very beginning as the fresh recruits of Bravo Company, 25th Infantry leave an airplane carrier and walk onto a hot and dusty military airfield in Vietnam in September 1967.

Toward the conclusion of David Lynch's insightful and moving **The Elephant Man** (1980), Barber's Adagio for Strings is heard as the deformed and soulful John Merrick (wonderfully interpreted by John Hurt) decides to end his life after being accepted by certain kind people from London society, protected by the London hospital, and freed from the brutishness of his former life.

In an episode of the popular **Seinfeld** television comedy show, Barber's Adagio for Strings bypasses somber contextualization and instead enhances an extended joke: The father of Seinfeld's friend George has a phobia against cooking because he once cooked bad meat for troops in Korea thinking that he could just add a lot of spices and make the food palatable and somehow healthy again.

The Adagio for Strings is also heard in the moving **Lorenzo's Oil** (1992) about a boy's miraculous cure, and **El Norte** (1983) about Mayans who escape a repressive regime to start a new life in Los Angeles. Other fine works by Barber (e.g., the String Quartet, Op. 27, Essay for Orchestra, the cello and violin concertos, the Capricorn Concerto) offer rich possibilities as film music..

In addition to composing, Barber was active in organizations that sought to help musicians and music. He was president of the International Music Council of UNESCO, where he did much to bring into focus and ameliorate the conditions of international musical problems. One of the first American composers to visit Russia (which was then a constituent republic of the Soviet Union), Barber was influential also in the successful campaign of composers against ASCAP, helping composers increase the share of royalties they receive from their compositions.



The Magic Flute opened successfully. Mozart was increasingly ill, fainting and having severe headaches, but he hung about backstage during performances to hear the audience love his opera. He kept working on the *Requiem*: "Here is my deathsong; I must not leave it incomplete."

Soon he could no longer leave his bed; they took away the *Requiem* score to keep him from working on it. He would look at his watch in the evening, to hear in his mind the aria of *The Magic Flute* that was sung at that point. The day before he died his friends came and sang for him the parts of the *Requiem* which were finished, so he could hear it.

He died December 5, 1791 of kidney disease, nervous exhaustion, and malnutrition. He was given a pauper's funeral in a storm; his grave is lost. The Emperor gave his widow a pension for life—about \$10 a month.

If Mozart had lived twice as long—as long as Haydn—he would have heard all Beethoven's works, and what other composers wrote up to the early works of Berlioz. Who can begin to guess what he would have written?

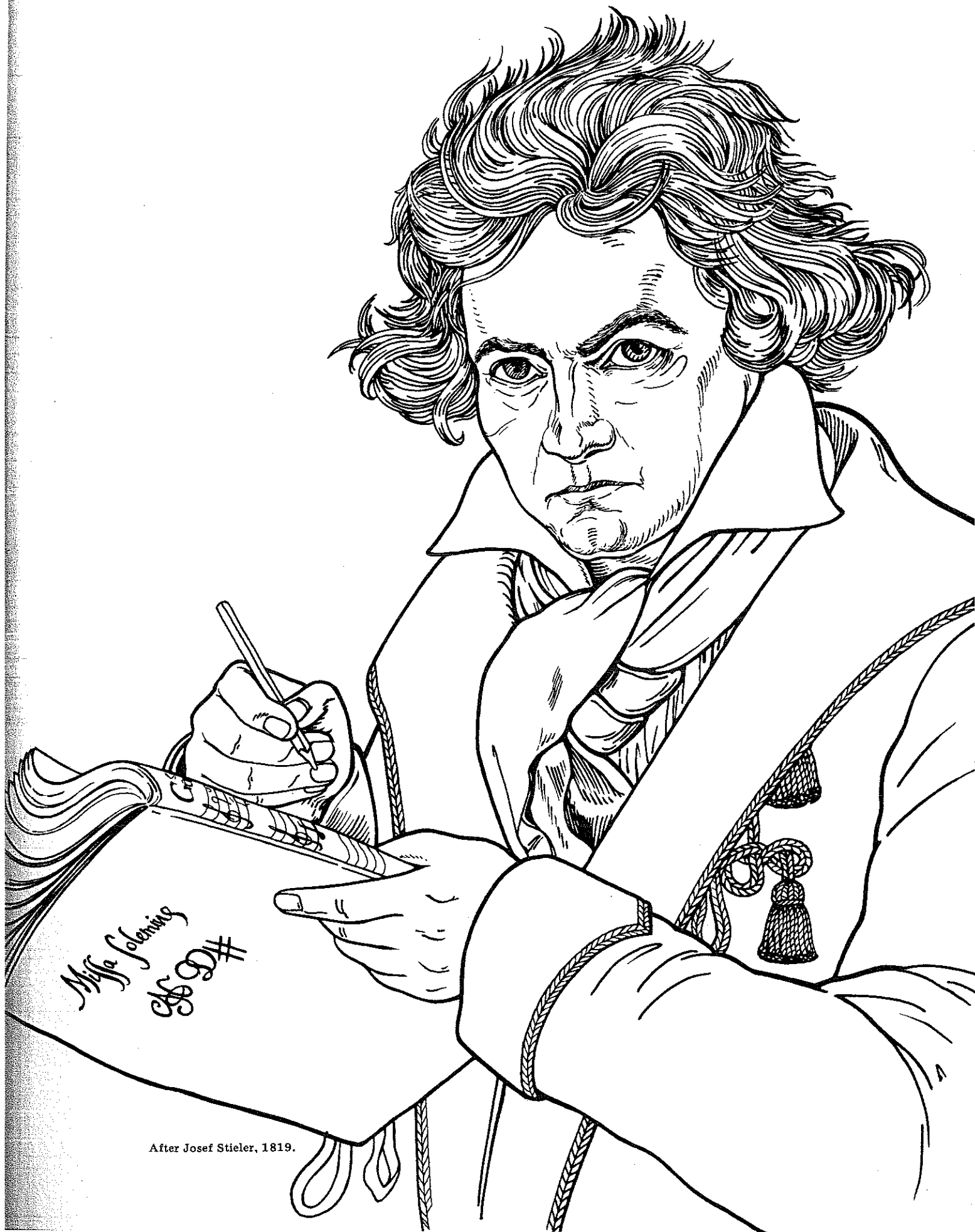
LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Beethoven was one of those rare men whose contemporaries quickly realize that they are great. Mozart heard him play as a teenager, and said, "He will make a noise in the world some day." Haydn recommended young Beethoven for a job, saying, "Beethoven will in time fill the position of one of Europe's greatest composers." People kept notes of their meetings with Beethoven, knowing that posterity would be interested. In his own lifetime he was recognized as the greatest living musician: when he died, between fifteen and twenty thousand Viennese came to honor him as his body was taken to the cemetery.

I suppose that even in the musical city of Vienna, where citizens were willing to sign a petition urging Beethoven not to disgrace the city by allowing any place else to have the premieres of his new Ninth Symphony and *Missa Solemnis*, there were not twenty thousand people who understood his music. Perhaps what they recognized in him was the personality which is reflected in the music, with its great strength and power to win tremendous battles. People writing about Beethoven compared him to a lion or a bear.

Beethoven's life was always a struggle. He was born December 16, 1770, in the small city of Bonn, where his grandfather and his father were both musicians for the reigning Elector. Grandfather was a bass singer and *kapellmeister*—a successful man whose portrait Ludwig kept and prized all his life. Father was a singer—an inventory of the Elector's musicians describes him as having "a rather stale voice"—and gave music lessons. He quickly recognized his son's musical talents, and trained him, hoping to make money, as Leopold Mozart had. But Johann van Beethoven lacked Leopold Mozart's showmanship, and Ludwig lacked Wolfgang's charm. Local well-to-do music lovers gave him financial help, cultural training, and friendship. When he was seventeen, they sent him to Vienna for further training. He went to Mozart for lessons, but within two weeks the news that his mother was dying called him back to Bonn. After her death Ludwig's father fell apart. He took to drink, and his salary had to be given to his son so that his family could survive. Ludwig became responsible for his two brothers.

In 1792 a grant from the Elector helped him return to Vienna, where he remained for the rest of his life. He took a few lessons from Haydn, who recom-



After Josef Stieler, 1819.

mended him for jobs. Although his teachers described him as "headstrong," they recognized that he was a fine pianist and perhaps the greatest improviser of the age. Local music-lovers appreciated his talents and aided him: he spent two years living in the home of Prince Lichnowsky, a Viennese music-lover who was to be a generous patron all his life.

As a composer Beethoven developed slowly. He was not ready to publish an Opus One until 1794, when he was 24. He said that musical ideas came to him continuously, but he worked them over for a long time before being satisfied. His memory, he said, was so good that he never forgot an idea. We have some of his notebooks and scores, which offer a chance to observe genius at work: with infinite pains he tinkers with his phrases until they take on the unmistakable Beethoven sound and strength.

When he composed, his friends say, he was conscious of no one: he "muttered and howled"; he could be heard "singing, yelling, stamping his feet" in an "almost frightening performance." He would forget to eat.

In general Beethoven gave little attention to his daily life. His room was always a complete mess, full of heaps of dirty clothes, manuscripts, and dirty dishes. One visitor found a full chamberpot under the grand piano. Everything was dirty. He kept deciding to change his lodging: in 35 years he lived in 71 places. His servants never suited him, and never stayed long. From time to time he would grow suspicious of them, or of his friends, and accuse them of cheating him. Sensitive and quarrelsome, he was "up in arms at the most trifling fancied slight."

But it is easy to make Beethoven sound less sociable than he actually was. After an outburst of rage he would apologize the next day, and he was ready to help his former enemies in need. He enjoyed company: he once cooked dinner for a group of friends, who urged him to stick to composing. He liked to make good coffee for friends who visited him. He enjoyed making puns, often on people's names: his puns are terrible.

He got up early in the morning to work, then after breakfast liked to walk in the fields until afternoon, when he would go to one of Vienna's coffeehouses to read the paper and gossip. In summer he liked to move out of Vienna into the country. "Nature was like food to him, he seemed really to live in it," said a friend.

A visitor who met him in 1822 describes Beethoven: "His talk and his actions . . . all radiated a truly childlike amiability, carelessness, and confidence in everyone who approached him. Even his barking tirades—like that against his Viennese contemporaries, which I have already mentioned—are only explosions of his fanciful imagination and his momentary excitement. They are uttered without haughtiness, without any feeling of bitterness and hatefulness—and are simply blustered out lightly, good-humoredly. . . . To this we must add the most cheerful recognition of merit in others, if only it be distinctive and individual. (How he speaks of Handel, Bach, Mozart!) He does not, however, where his greater works are concerned, allow others to find fault (and who would have the right to do so?) yet he never actually overvalues them; and with regard to his lesser things is more inclined, perhaps, to abandon them with a laugh than any other person. He does this the more since once he is in the vein, rough, striking witticisms, droll conceits, surprising and exciting paradoxes suggest themselves to him in a continuous flow. Hence in all seriousness I claim that he even appears to be amiable. Or if you shrink from this word, I might say that the dark, unlicked bear seems so ingenuous and confiding, growls and shakes his shaggy pelt so harmlessly and grotesquely that it is a pleasure, and one has to be kind to him, even though he were nothing but a bear in fact and had done no more than a bear's best."

The great misfortune of Beethoven's life, which cut him off from his fellow men, accounted for many of his eccentricities. When he was 28 the first symptoms of deafness appeared—a humming and buzzing in his ears. Gradually this deafness increased, obscuring all sounds. Beethoven could not hear his works performed; he could not conduct, or perform as a soloist with an orchestra; his friends had to communicate with him by writing their remarks in the small notebook he carried. Beethoven's response, as always, was to fight. Occasionally he pitied himself: we have a letter he wrote in the summer of 1802 to his brothers. He never sent this letter, usually called the Heiligenstadt Testament; it was found among his possessions after his death.

“O my fellow men, who consider me, or describe me as unfriendly, peevish or even misanthropic, how greatly do you wrong me. For you do not know the secret reason why I appear to you to be so. Ever since my childhood my heart and soul have been imbued with the tender feeling of goodwill; and I have always been ready to perform even great actions. But just think, for the last six years I have been afflicted with an incurable complaint which has been made worse by incompetent doctors. From year to year my hopes of being cured have gradually been shattered and finally I have been forced to accept the prospect of a *permanent infirmity* (the curing of which may perhaps take years or may even prove to be impossible). . . . If at times I decided just to ignore my infirmity, alas! how cruelly was I then driven back by the intensified sad experience of my poor hearing. Yet I could not bring myself to say to people: ‘Speak up, shout, for I am deaf.’ Alas! how could I possibly refer to the impairing of a *sense* which at one time I possessed in the greatest perfection, even to a degree of perfection such as assuredly few in my profession possess or have ever possessed—Oh, I cannot do it; so forgive me, if you ever see me withdrawing from your company which I used to enjoy. Moreover my misfortune pains me doubly, inasmuch as it leads to my being misjudged. For me there can be no relaxation in human society, no refined conversations, no mutual confidences. I must live quite alone and may creep into society only as often as sheer necessity demands: I must live like an outcast. If I appear in company I am overcome by a burning anxiety, a fear that I am running the risk of letting people notice my condition. . . . But how humiliated I have felt if somebody standing beside me heard the sound of a flute in the distance and *I heard nothing*, or if somebody heard a *shepherd sing* and again I heard nothing—Such experiences almost made me despair, and I was on the point of putting an end to my life—The only thing that held me back was *my art*. For indeed it seemed to me impossible to leave this world before I had produced all the works that I felt the urge to compose; and thus I have dragged on this miserable existence—a truly miserable existence . . . *Patience*—that is the virtue, I am told, which I must now choose for my guide; and I now possess it—I hope that I shall persist in my resolve to endure to the end. . . . At the early age of 28 I was obliged to become a philosopher, though this was not easy; for indeed this is more difficult for an artist than for anyone else—Almighty God, who look down into my innermost soul, you see into my heart, and you know that it is filled with love for humanity and a desire to do good. Of my fellow men, when someday you read this statement, remember that you have done me wrong; and let some unfortunate man derive comfort from the thought that he has found another equally unfortunate who, notwithstanding all the obstacles imposed by nature, yet did everything in his power to be raised to the rank of noble artists and human beings.”

In another letter Beethoven says, "Resignation, what a wretched resource! Yet it is all that is left to me." He defied life to defeat him: "I will seize Fate by the throat; it shall certainly not bend and crush me completely." He lived his life in this spirit, deferring to no man. Not for him a job as the servant of a nobleman: he treated noblemen as his equals if he respected them, and ignored the others. Nor did he cut himself off from loving people because of his deafness: we know he was in love, although we do not know the lady's name, and we know that when one of his brothers died, Beethoven took over responsibility for the raising of his nephew Karl, and gave him all his love. He managed the job poorly, having too much love and too little wisdom: the result was a great deal of grief for Beethoven.

But he rose above his suffering and defied it to create his major works. When his final illness came, Beethoven fought to live: he still had projects in mind. He died during a tremendous thunderstorm, March 16, 1827: friends report that during a thunderclap Beethoven raised himself on his bed, clenched his fist and brandished it at the sky, then fell back dead. It would have been in character. His contemporary, the Austrian poet Grillparzer spoke a funeral oration: "He . . . was possessed. Seeking one goal, caring only for one result, suffering and sacrificing for one purpose, thus did this man go through life."

CARL MARIA VON WEBER (1786-1826)

At one point in his career Carl Maria von Weber planned to write a guide to Europe for the traveling musician, which would tell all the things Weber had had to learn the hard way—how to get publicity for a concert, what hall to give it in, the quality of local musicians, and who to approach to hire them. By Weber's time there were enough traveling virtuosos to provide a market for such a book. Fewer musicians had permanent jobs with the church or a noble employer: more needed other ways of making money.

Sometime before the French Revolution began in 1789 a new attitude started to spread, which was to be called Romanticism: it influenced music, as well as the world in which the musicians worked. People rebelled against monarchs and a system in which the nobility had all the power and the money; nationalism developed as a strong force. Weber was consciously writing *German* opera and *German* music. Romantic artists tended to be multi-talented—Weber was a musician, writer, and artist—and they became stars in a way they had not been before. Audiences swooned over the great virtuosos, such as Liszt and Paganini. They loved the pale, handsome, sickly Weber as pianist and conductor. (Weber was one of the first great conductors: the idea that the conductor was the dictator of the orchestra first emerged in this period.) And Romanticism's pre-occupations provided new subjects for operas such as Weber's—the supernatural, national themes, the Orient, and the medieval world. Where Metastasian opera had demanded a happy ending with all reconciled to society's rules, opera now often took an interest in the outcast, the man who rebels against society's rules.

Weber came from a family of musical vagabonds whose lives would have appealed to Romantic artists as a good subject. His father Franz Anton (1734?-1812) was a man of many careers and talents, serving as a soldier, a steward, a musician, the manager of a traveling theatrical troupe, and a lithographer. His brother Fridolin's daughter married Mozart; somewhere in his wanderings Franz Anton became a self-made nobleman by adding the "von" to his name. His second wife, a pretty young singer, gave birth to Carl Maria, we think on November 18, 1786. He was a sickly, lame child, who may have inherited tuberculosis from his