LUDVIG VAN BEETHOVEN
LUDVIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770-1827)

- **AGE of REVOLUTION and RADICALIZATION**
  - The “ENLIGHTENMENT”
  - AMERICAN REVOLUTION (1775-1783)
  - FRENCH REVOLUTION (1789-1799)

- **Beethoven a Musical Revolutionary**
  - Believed music did more than “move and please” us
  - Music had power to **transform** and “lift mankind to the level of the gods.”
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• **BEETHOVEN’S PIANOS**
  • Beethoven’s primary instrument was the *pianoforte*
  • The pianoforte was invented in around 1700 by Bartolomeo Cristofori
  • The pianoforte change quite a bit during Beethoven’s lifetime, and there were *many regional styles* of piano construction
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**BEETHOVEN’S PIANOS**
- There are three examples of Beethoven-era pianos in the Beethoven Center
- Replica of a 1795 Dulcken Fortepiano
  - Has “knee pedals” that include a damper and moderator
- 1823 Broadwood & Sons Grand Fortepiano
  - Has two pedals that include a damper and an *una corda* pedal
- 1827 Jakesch Fortepiano
  - Has six (!) pedals, including a damper, single and double moderators, *una corda*, bassoon, and Turkish pedals
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• **BEETHOVEN’S LIFE MASK**
  • The Beethoven Center also has a bronze copy of Beethoven’s “life mask,” a plaster cast done of Beethoven’s face in 1812.
  • (In this version you can see the seams of the original plaster cast)
  • The Center’s version is mounted at Beethoven’s height: 5’ 4”.
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• 5 TRAGEDIES of BEETHOVEN’S LIFE
  • 1. ALCOHOLISM
    • Grandmother and father were alcoholics, and these relationships affected Beethoven’s personality.
LUDVIG VAN BEETHOVEN
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• **5 TRAGEDIES** of BEETHOVEN’S LIFE
  
  • **2. DEAFNESS**
    
    • Beethoven begins to lose hearing in 1802 and is completely deaf by 1814.
    
    • Considers suicide, but realizes he has more music to compose
    
    • Writes a **letter** (undelivered) to his brothers, which is now known as the **Heiligenstadt Testament**.
Beethoven's Heiligenstadt Testament
“Now for six years I have been a hopeless case, aggravated by senseless physicians, cheated year after year in the hope of improvement, finally compelled to face the prospect of a lasting malady (whose cure will take years, or, perhaps, be impossible)"

How could I possibly admit such an infirmity in the one sense which should have been more perfect in me than in others, a sense which I once possessed in highest perfection, a perfection such as few surely in my profession enjoy or have enjoyed—O, I cannot do it”
LUDVIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

• “I would have put an end to my life—only art withheld me, ah it seemed impossible to leave the world until I had produced all that I felt called upon me to produce, and so I endured this wretched existence...”
LUDVIG VAN BEETHOVEN  
(1770-1827)

• 5 TRAGEDIES of BEETHOVEN’S LIFE
  • 3. LOVE . . . NOT
    • Beethoven never has a happy love relationship. Falls in love with Jozefina Brunsvik, widow of Joseph, Count Deym. He proposed, but she turns him down to protect the aristocratic and guardianship of her four children.
    • Beethoven never marries.
Jozefina von Brunsvik
(1779-1821)
LUDVIG VAN BEETHOVEN  
(1770-1827)

• 5 TRAGEDIES of BEETHOVEN’S LIFE

• 4. FATHERHOOD
  • In 1815, Beethoven’s brother Carl died, leaving Beethoven co-guardian of his nine-year-old nephew Karl van Beethoven with his sister-in-law Johanna.
  • Beethoven fights for sole guardianship of the young Karl during the years 1815-1820.
  • Eventually wins sole guardianship, but turns out to be a miserable father figure.
  • Karl attempts suicide in 1826 in the Rauhenstein ruins, one of Beethoven’s favorite places.
Karl van Beethoven
(1806-1858)
Engraving of the ruins of Rauenstein castle
LUDVIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770-1827)

• 5 TRAGEDIES of BEETHOVEN’S LIFE
• 5. END of LIFE ILLNESSES
  • At the end of his life, Beethoven suffered from many illnesses including **liver and kidney damage**, and including **dropsy** (a buildup of fluid in the tissues) that resulted in abdominal swelling.
  • Beethoven’s doctors drained the swelling, but used medicine containing **lead** that might have contribute to his death.
  • Several people were allowed to take clippings of **Beethoven’s hair** as a memento—a common practice in the nineteenth century.
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(1770-1827)

• 5 TRAGEDIES of BEETHOVEN’S LIFE
  • 5. END of LIFE ILLNESSES
    • Several people were allowed to take clippings of Beethoven’s hair as a memento—a common practice in the nineteenth century.
GUEVARA LOCK OF HAIR

Located in The Ira F. Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies at SJSU
LUDVIG VAN BEETHOVEN
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- **Beethoven’s hair** has been tested to investigate his health and the reasons for his illnesses and death.
- You can read more about this in Russell Martin’s book *Beethoven’s Hair*. 