

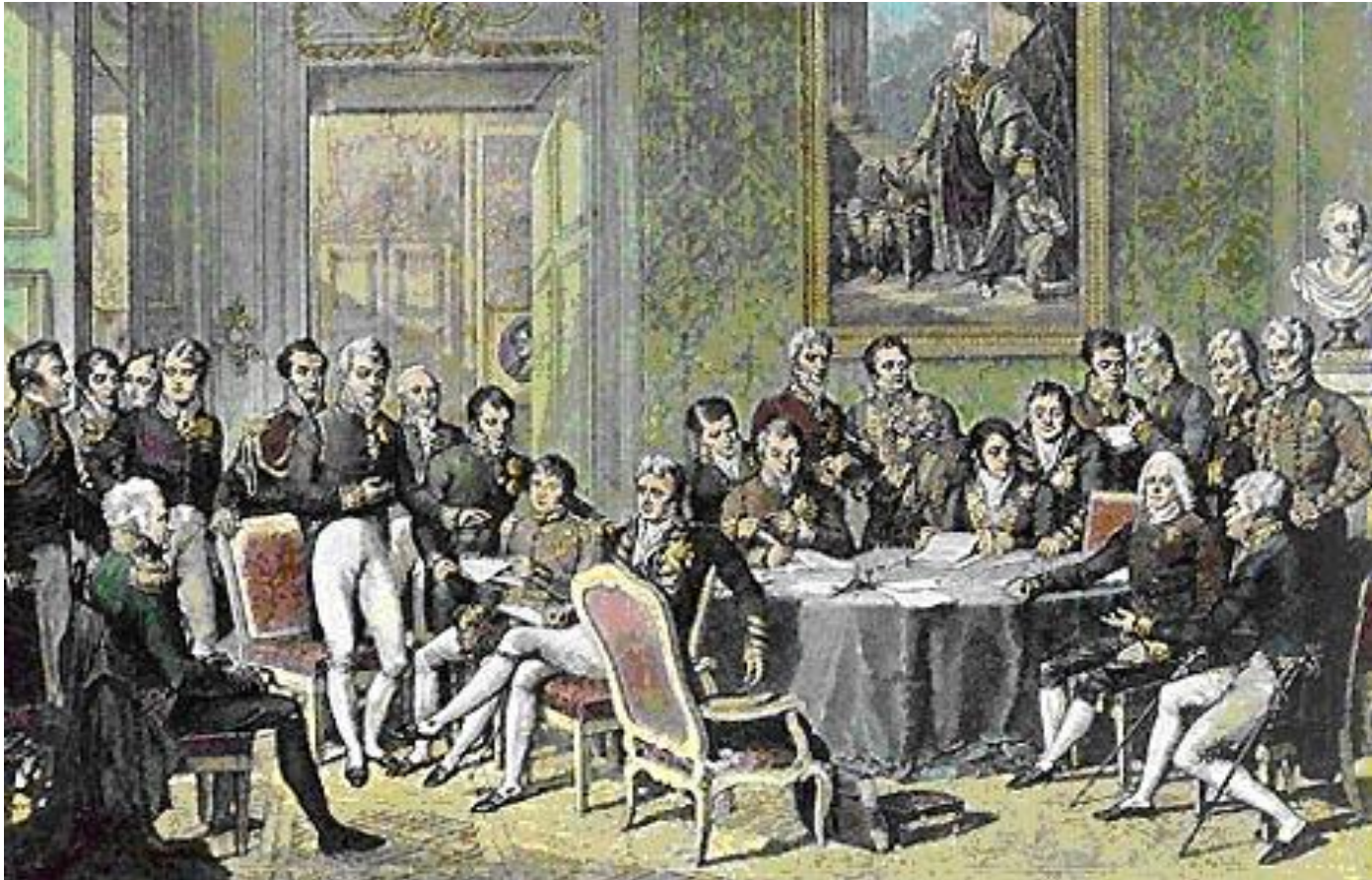
# DT501/1 History of Music: Classical/Romantic

Dr Adrian Smith

Lecture 13: Beethoven: Late Style and  
Legacy

# Beethoven's 'Fallow' Period: 1813–1817

- A period of prolonged psychological distress and reduced creative capacity.
  - deafness gets worse, seeks cures for physical ailments at Teplitz, Rarlsbad and Franzensbrunn
  - writes the 'Immortal Beloved' letter at Teplitz (1812)
  - intervenes in his brother Karl's affair with his house keeper (1812)
  - financial worries
- Coincides with important historical events.
  - 1812: Napoleon's disastrous invasion of Russia
  - June 1813: Wellington defeats Napoleon at Vittoria in Spain.
  - April 1814: Napoleon forced to abdicate and exiled to Elba
  - August 1814 – June 1815: Congress of Vienna
  - Napoleon's escape from Elba, the 'Hundred Days', and final defeat at Waterloo.



The Congress of Vienna 1814 –1815

# Beethoven's 'Unheroic' Period?: 1813–1817

- Composes a number of trivial works to achieve popular appeal
  - *Wellington's Sieg* 'The Battle Symphony' : a bombastic orchestral piece commissioned to celebrate Wellington's victory over Napoleon at Vittoria.
  - *Der glorreiche Augenblick*: a cantata intended to be performed at the Congress of Vienna to celebrate imperial restoration across Europe after the defeat of Napoleon.
- These works challenge easy assumptions of the Beethoven hero 'myth' and demonstrate a yearning for public approval and acclaim.
- Significant works of the 'fallow' period
  - revision of *Leonore*, reconstructed as *Fidelio*
  - Piano Sonatas Op. 90 and Op. 101
  - two cello sonatas, op. 102
  - *An die ferne Geliebte*, Beethoven's only song cycle

# The Late Style

- Inwardness – language becomes more introspective, abstract and at times austere.
- Musical Space – the dynamic, goal-directed structures of his middle works give way to a new conception of musical space. Works become much longer and are often punctuated by lengthy passages of a quasi-improvisatory character.
- Counterpoint – intense engagement with the music of earlier composers particularly Handel and Bach. Fugue becomes the dominant technical device of the latter period.
- Extreme contrast – the sublime and the grotesque, the complex and the naïve.
- Formal innovations – dividing lines both within and between movements become more blurred. Resemblance to Classical forms becomes very distant.
- New Sonorities – exploration of new harmonic sonorities as a result of counterpoint, expanded registers of the piano, orchestral effects.

# Landmarks of the Late Period

- 1818: Piano Sonata No. 29, in B-flat major, Op. 106 *Hammerklavier*
- 1820: Piano Sonata No. 30, in E major, Op. 109
- 1821: Piano Sonata No. 31, in A-flat major, Op. 110
- 1822: Piano Sonata No. 32, in C minor, Op. 111
- 1819–23: ‘Diabelli’ Variations, Op. 120
- 1819–23: *Missa solemnis*
- 1822–24: Symphony No. 9
- 1824: Famous Premiere of the Ninth Symphony
- 1824–25: String Quartet No. 12 in E-flat Major, Op. 127
- 1825: String Quartet No. 13 in B-flat Major, Op. 130
- 1826: Nephew Carl attempts suicide
- 1826: String Quartet No. 14 in C-sharp Minor, Op. 131; String Quartet No. 15 in A-Minor, Op. 132; Grosse Fugue in B-flat Major, Op. 133; String Quartet No. 16 in F Major, Op. 131
- 1827: Death of Beethoven on March 26

# Prescribed Listening

Ludwig van Beethoven:

Piano Sonata No. 29 in B-flat Major, 'Hammerklavier', Op. 106  
(last movement)

Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125 (last movement)

# Prescribed Reading

Chapter 24: 'Revolution and Change' in *Norton History of Western Music*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition (New York: WW Norton and Co, 2014), pp. 560–585.

For the keen student:

Charles Rosen: *The Classical Style* (New York: WW Norton and Co, 1997), pp. 449–512. A difficult chapter but worth tackling even if you don't understand everything