

Meridian Music of the Week!

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Each week ALL our children will be listening to a piece of music as part of our music lessons. We'll be talking about it in class and discussing what we like, what we don't like and what it makes us think about. Parents/carers/family - why not join in and listen for yourself at home! All music is available **free** on YouTube as well as paid services such as iTunes and Spotify.

This week's music...



Piano Sonata No.14 1st Movement also known as 'The Moonlight Sonata' by Ludwig van Beethoven (1801)

A nice version [HERE](#) (6mins)

Watch it played on piano [HERE](#) (7mins)

Clip from the film 'Immortal Beloved' starring Gary Oldman as Beethoven [HERE](#) (4:00mins)

Want to hear some cats 'singing' it?! [HERE](#)

A Meridian children's favourite – 'Beethoven's Wig!' [HERE](#)

And relax...

Well, after a couple of weeks of music with fast **tempos** and loud **dynamics** (ask your children if they know what these words mean!) – it's time to relax a little. This is one of Ludwig van Beethoven's (pronounced 'Bay-toe-vun') most famous pieces of music. It's slow, quiet and only has a single piano in it. The perfect relaxation music after a busy day!

Ludwig van Who?..

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Germany in 1770 and, along with Mozart and Bach, became one of the most famous and popular classical composers of all time. But in his relatively short life he experienced a lot of tragedy and troubles.

He was taught piano at an early age by his father who was a choir master. But Beethoven's father (Johann) was very mean to him and forced him to practice, practice and practice again. He wanted to make a musical child star out of poor old Ludwig because he thought he could make a lot of money out of it. Johann drank too much and hit Ludwig if he made too many mistakes on the piano.



A painting of Beethoven aged 13.

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A grumpier Beethoven aged 50.

When Beethoven was 8 years old his father arranged for him to play a big concert to show him off. Unfortunately, Beethoven wasn't that good on the piano yet, so his dad put up signs telling everyone that he was only 6! It wasn't particularly successful and Papa Beethoven gave up the idea of trying to turn Ludwig into a child star. However, it didn't put Ludwig off and he continued to get better and better on the piano. By the time he was almost 17 he performed a concert in Vienna in front of the great composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (who really **had** been a child star!) Mozart enjoyed Beethoven's playing and said: "**Some day he will**

make a big noise in the world". And he certainly did!

Unfortunately, not long after he returned from Vienna, his mother died and his father lost his job because of drinking too much. Now, at just 17, Beethoven had to look after and support his family himself (he had two younger brothers).

Mr. Grumpy...

Beethoven was famously grumpy as a musician! He would fly into a rage about the smallest thing. He was also well known for being very over dramatic when conducting an orchestra. He would leap up and down, make faces and shout instructions to the musicians!

Once, he tried to conduct an orchestra while playing the piano at the same time. When there came a point in the music where the piano part stopped, he leapt up from his piano stool to start conducting. But, in his hurry, he knocked over two candlesticks that were sitting on top of the piano. The audience laughed at this and Beethoven was so furious that he stopped the music and made the orchestra start the whole thing from the beginning! He even got two choirboys to stand up and hold onto the candlesticks so that it wouldn't happen again. But, when they got to the same part of the music for the second time, Beethoven again jumped up and managed to hit one of the choirboys with his conducting baton! The boy was so frightened that he dropped the candlestick and the audience laughed even more.

By now, Ludwig was so angry and annoyed that when it came time for him to play the next piano part, he hit the piano keyboard so hard with his fingers that several of the piano strings snapped right off!



The style of 'Erard' piano that Beethoven would have used in 1801.

Beethoven's greatest tragedy...

The thing that Ludwig van Beethoven is probably most famous for is the fact that, at the age of only 28, he started to lose his hearing – becoming almost entirely deaf later in his life. A terrible tragedy for someone whose music was his whole life.

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Amazingly, it didn't stop him writing music and many of his greatest pieces of music were composed later in his life when he couldn't possibly have been able to hear them. Can you imagine that? As his hearing got worse and worse, Beethoven would play the piano with his head and ear resting on top of it – so that he could sense the vibration through the wood. His deafness caused Ludwig to become very depressed for the last years of his life and he died after a long illness at the age of 57.



Gary Oldman playing the part of Beethoven in a film. Notice him listening with his head and ear on the piano.

The Moonlight Sonata

In music, a **sonata** is simply a piece of music written for an individual instrument (in this case piano) and usually has three sections. This week's music is the first of three sections in Beethoven's 14th piano sonata. It has a very slow **tempo** (speed) and a quiet **dynamic** (volume) and the melody is surprisingly simple (many people try to learn this piece when they first start learning the piano).

It's commonly called the Moonlight Sonata – but that's not the name that Beethoven gave it. He just called it 'Sonata No.14'. It wasn't until 5 years after Beethoven's death that a music writer suggested the music made him imagine the sight of moonlight on a lake – and the name stuck!

It became very famous, even in Beethoven's lifetime – but grumpy old Ludwig wasn't always pleased about that. He used to grumble that he'd written lots of other great pieces of music - but people only ever remembered **this** one!

Some people who certainly **did** remember it were the makers of the 2019 sci-fi movie 'Ad Astra' (starring Brad Pitt). They used a version of the Moonlight Sonata as the main music for the film – you can watch a trailer for the movie with the music [HERE](#).

Does it make **YOU** think of moonlight on a lake? Or do you have **other** pictures in your mind when you listen to it? What does it make **YOU** think of?



Listen and enjoy

Mr. Mole

Music Teacher

