Have you ever met anyone with a really wild, creative personality? Someone intense, impatient and impulsive; quick to fly into a temper tantrum and stubborn to a fault? Well, add a crop of wild, dark hair to that description and you have a pretty accurate portrait of the composer Ludwig van Beethoven.

Ludwig Van Beethoven is widely considered to be one of the “greatest of the great” composers. He was born in Bonn, ______, in 1770. His first music teacher was his ambitious father who was very strict and made the young Ludwig practice the piano for hours, even very late at night. His passion for music survived this unpleasant beginning and at the age of 22 he moved to Vienna where he took violin lessons and also studied with ______ composers Joseph Haydn and Anton Salieri. Beethoven quickly gained widespread recognition as a virtuoso pianist and later on as a composer and renowned music teacher. Carl Czerny and Franz Liszt were two of his few well known students.

By the time he reached his mid twenties, Beethoven began to lose his hearing and by the time he was 50 he was completely ______. He was devastated, and eventually had to give up performing. However, he never stopped composing and in fact wrote some of his most famous works when he was completely deaf. After he lost his hearing he used conversation books to communicate with his friends. Many of these are still around today and give a great insight into Beethoven’s ideas and tortured thoughts.

Beethoven composed in a variety of musical genres such as ______, chamber, piano and vocal music. His compositions include 32 piano ______, 9 ______, his only ______ Fidelio, and many other well known works. He is also regarded as one of the key composers to initiate the transition from the ______ to the ______ style of composition.

Towards the end of his life, Beethoven’s health continued to deteriorate. He also became more irrational in his behavior as he struggled to come to terms with his deafness. After a long illness, he eventually passed away in 1827 at the age of 57. He never married and had no children.

Fast Facts

Name: Ludwig Van Beethoven
Dates: 1770-1827
Country of birth: Germany
Historical Era: Classical/Romantic
Contemporary Composers: Haydn, Schubert
Contemporary Artists: Francisco de Goya
Other People/Events: Goethe, French Revolution (1789-1799), Discovery of the Rosetta Stone which lead to hieroglyph decipherment (1799), Development of the first electric cell by Alessandro Volta (1800)

Fun Fact

Despite the fact that Beethoven was completely deaf by the time he wrote his ninth symphony, he insisted on conducting the first performance. Organizers of the concert knew his lack of hearing would prove problematic for the orchestra, but were too scared of Beethoven to refuse him. They instead allowed him to think he was conducting, while positioning another conductor on stage and advising the orchestra to ignore Beethoven’s beat. It was probably a good thing because at the end of the work he was a few bars out and continued his wild conducting even though the piece had finished. He could not hear the wild applause from the audience behind him and had to be turned around by one of the performers to accept the standing ovation.