Trio in E-flat, Op. 40
Johannes Brahms

The Trio for Piano, Violin, and Horn, Op. 40 was composed in the wooded neighborhood of Lichtenthal in May 1865. The first performance of the work took place in Karlsruhe on December 7, 1865, with Brahms at the piano and Segisser on the horn (the violist is unknown).

The piece was first published in June of 1866 as a Trio for Pianoforte, Violin, and Horn or Violoncello. In 1884, Brahms wrote the publisher requesting that the piece be changed from violoncello to viola because, “with the cello it sounds dreadful, but splendid with the viola.”

The first movement of this work is unusual in that it is not in the normal sonata form that one would expect from Brahms. Rather, it contrasts slower, gentle sections in 2/4 with passages of faster, more energetic 9/8 meter, moving from the home key through numerous others. The Scherzo and Trio provides some light relief before the tragedy of the slow movement.

The inspiration for this deeply-felt slow movement has been attributed to the recent death of Brahms’ mother, made the more tragic by his inability to reconcile his parents after the break-up of their marriage. In this movement, and again in the finale, there are quotations from the love song Dort in den Weiden.

The Finale is in sonata form and takes us firmly outside to the world of the hunt; here the horn comes naturally into its own with startling “cor de chasse” effects.

Quintet in E-flat
Franz Joseph Haydn

Also known as the Keyboard Concertino in E-flat, this work was written by Haydn in the late 1750’s or early 1760’s and was published in 1766. This piece is the first in a series of thirteen that Haydn wrote which were essentially piano trios. While this piece and the second in the series both have more than three parts, they are still considered to be trio style works. The first of these simply added two horns for color, and the second a baryton, which was the instrument of the Prince of Esterházy.

Haydn wrote thirteen accompanied piano concertinos during this mid-century period, which made him the most productive composer of this genre in Vienna. During this time, Haydn’s keyboard works were distributed outside of Vienna to Leipzig (Breitkopf publishers) and Amsterdam (Hummel publishers). Surprisingly, the only copy of this work still in existence today comes from the Esterházy copyist Anonymous 23. This copy of the work was part of Haydn’s library at the time of his death.

This work distinguishes itself from other works of similar type in two ways. First, it distinguishes itself by its occasionally elaborate parts for the horns. Second, it distinguished itself by the way in which Haydn contrasts the Minuet and Trio. Normally the trio would be contrasted only by a change to the minor mode. Haydn distinguished it by not only going to the minor mode, but also dropping the horns from the trio and using irregular phrase lengths.
The *Seventh Symphony* of Beethoven is one of the most remarkable works in the repertoire. In many ways, it is remarkable that the symphony was ever written. The seventh came after a four-year hiatus from symphonic writing that many speculate was due to both the Napoleonic wars and Beethoven’s “fragile” state. The *Seventh and Eighth Symphonies* (composed at roughly the same time) came at a time in Beethoven’s life when his deafness had almost completely set in, when ill health and loneliness would most assuredly have dried up the inspiration of a lesser man.

This four-year break had benefits for Beethoven. It was a much-needed excursion for Beethoven as he further expanded his philosophy surrounding music. Beethoven was attempting to free music of its dependence on the mechanical structure that so many composers reveled in. He believed music should portray the expression of the deepest and most individual emotions of human nature. During this four-year period, Beethoven had made significant progress towards this goal, and the *Seventh Symphony* was now the product of his venture. It was rumored that Beethoven himself felt the *Seventh Symphony* was one of his best works.

The *Seventh Symphony*, dedicated to Count Moritz von Fries, was completed in July of 1812. The premiere of the work came on December 8, 1813 as part of a benefit concert for Austrian and Bavarian soldiers wounded at the battle of Hanau. The main work for the occasion was Beethoven’s “battle symphony” or *Wellington’s Victory*, a work composed for Johann Maelzel, the inventor of the metronome, and sponsor of the event. *Wellington’s Victory* was the hit of the performance, although Beethoven himself was at odds with the approval of such a shoddy piece of work. The *Seventh Symphony* was received warmly overall with the exception of the second movement which was immediately encored and is one of the more memorable and passionate in of all Beethoven’s writing.

Described by Richard Wagner as “the apotheosis of the dance,” the *Seventh Symphony* is one of Beethoven’s most joyful works. However, despite this light feeling, the symphony is the longest and most complex of all his symphonies with the exception of the Ninth. The symphony begins with a long introduction (Poco Sustintuto) that is unprecedented in length for any symphony up to this point in history. The main body of the movement introduces the dance with light dotted rhythms driving the spirit of the music. The second movement (Allegretto) is one of the saddest yet the most beautiful of Beethoven’s creations. It is said that this movement tells a story, but no one story is like another: “It is the wedding ceremony of a village couple” (Schumann), “a procession in a cathedral” (Ortigue), “a pastorale” (Indy), “a bombastic march” (Lenz). Regardless of the program, this movement has proven time and time again to be the most powerful of the work and creates the most impact among listeners. The third movement (Presto) is a Scherzo and Trio returning the feeling of dance to the music. Here the lively scherzos are interrupted by a slower, more melodic trio. The Finale is one of the most wild of Beethoven’s compositions. It was so extraordinary in Beethoven’s era that many believe that he could only write such music while intoxicated. The French writer and Beethoven biographer, Romain Rolland, has said in regard to this belief, “It was indeed the work of an intoxicated man, but one intoxicated with poetry and genius.”