

# Beethoven Unbound

The Story of the *Eroica* Symphony

In the fall of 1802, Beethoven's anxiety over his loss of hearing reached a crisis point. Deafness would mean he could no longer play or perform in public, and also would have to withdraw from Viennese society. For a gifted composer filled with good will towards his fellow men, this was the most unjust punishment of all.

While composing a ballet score in 1801, Beethoven had absorbed the legend of the Titan Prometheus. To punish him for stealing divine fire and bringing it to men, Zeus had Prometheus chained to a rock, where each day an eagle gnawed out his liver. Prometheus regenerated himself overnight, refused to buckle under to Zeus, and endured until Hercules set him free.

This book documents the little-known story of how Beethoven drew inspiration from Prometheus' example. Transforming the music he wrote for the ballet, he surmounted his deafness, broke free of the classical mold and composed the *Eroica* Symphony, a masterpiece which changed the course of music forever.

\$15.99  
ISBN 978-1-7327011-0-6  
51599



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