Pre-RCM Listening Assignment

“Fur Elise” by Ludwig van Beethoven

Ludwig van Beethoven was a pianist who lived in the Classical era. He is known for writing beautiful operas, symphonies, and especially piano works. Beethoven sonatas are very famous, and every advanced pianist will play them at some point.

Beethoven was on the cusp of the Classical and Romantic eras, which resulted in his music having Classical structure and Romantic ideals blended into one.

Later in life, Beethoven went completely deaf, but he continued to write music! He cut the legs off of his piano so that it was flat on the ground. He sat on the floor when he played so that he could feel the vibrations of the music. Because of the many difficulties he faced in life, his music expresses an emotional complexity and depth which isn’t found in most classical music.

Fur Elise is a short piece of piano music which Beethoven dedicated to a woman who he loved. The piece features an iconic opening theme which repeats itself several times through the piece.

1. Does this music sound the same as the other pieces we’ve listened to? Or does it sound different? If it does sound different, how would you describe the differences?

2. Using timestamps, where does the “B” section begin?

3. What images do you think of when you hear this music? Maybe you hear certain parts of music that remind you of sounds you might hear in nature, or of a character, or of a colour. Listen creatively!

4. Who are some other famous Classical Era composers?