

# Beethoven

*Shane Koyczan*

Listen.

His father made a habit out of hitting him.

See, some men drink, some men yell, some men hit their children.

This man did it all because I guess all men want their boys to be geniuses.

Beethoven.

Little boy living in a house where a name meant nothing.

Living in a house where mercy had to be earned through each perfect note tumbling  
up through the roof to tickle the toes of angels who's harps couldn't hold

half the passion that was held in the hands of a young boy who was hard of hearing.

Beethoven.

Who heard his father's anthem every time he put finger to ivory

it was not good enough.

So he played slowly.

Not good enough.

So he played softly.

Not good enough.

So he played strongly.

Not good enough.

And when he could play no more and his fingers cramped up like the gnarled roots  
of tree trunks

it was NOT GOOD ENOUGH.

Beethoven.

A musician without his most precious tool: his eardrums

could no longer pound out rhythms for the symphonies playing in his mind

He couldn't hear the audience's clapping

couldn't hear the people loving him

couldn't hear the women in the front row whispering

*Beethoven*

As they let the music invade their nervous system like an Armada

marching through firing canon balls detonating every molecule

in their body into explosions of heavenly sensation

Each note leaving track marks over every inch of that body

making them ache for

one

more

hit.

He was an addiction.

And Kings, Queens, it didn't matter

The man got down on his knees for no one,

but amputated the legs of his piano

so he could feel the vibrations through the floor  
The man got down on his knees for music.

And when the orchestra played his symphonies it was the echoes  
of his father's anthem repeating itself  
like a broken record,  
a broken record  
It was not good enough.  
So they played slowly.  
Not good enough.  
So they played softly.  
Not good enough.  
So they played strongly  
NOT GOOD ENOUGH.

So they tried to mock the man, make fun of the madness  
by mimicking the movements, holding their bows  
a quarter of an inch above the strings not making a sound.  
It was perfect.

You see the deaf have an intimacy with silence.  
It's there in their dreams.  
And the musicians turn to one another not knowing  
what to make of the man trying to calculate the distance  
between madness and genius, realizing that Beethoven's musical measurements  
could take you the distances reaching past the Towers of Babylon,  
turning solar systems into cymbals that crash together,  
causing comets to collide, creating crescendos that were so loud  
they shook the constellations until the stars began to fall from the sky  
and it looked like the entire universe had begun to cry,  
Distance must be an illusion.  
The man MUST be a genius.  
Beethoven.  
His thoughts moving at the speed of sound.  
Transforming emotion into music.

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And for a moment it was like joy was a tangible thing,  
like you could touch it.  
Like for the first time we could watch love and hate  
dance together in a waltz of such precision and beauty  
that we finally understood that history wasn't important  
To know the man  
all we ever had to do was  
Listen.