Fundamentals

Unit I, the introductory unit in this book, covers the fundamentals of music and their standard terminology. We start right away with a piece of music, the Prelude to The Valkyrie by the nineteenth-century composer Richard Wagner. Chapter 1 presents the most basic aspect of music, its organization in time or rhythm, and introduces important features of this organization: meter and tempo. Chapter 2 takes up other basic features of musical sound—pitch, dynamics, and tone color—and also the instruments of the modern orchestra. Then Chapters 3 and 4 delve into some additional complexities of pitch—scales, melody, harmony, and more—and explore how musicians use these to organize pieces of music. Chapter 5 carries the discussion one stage further, to include musical form and style.

Listening

The basic activity that leads to the love of music and to its understanding is listening to particular pieces of music again and again. Such, at least, is the premise of this book. Its pages are filled mostly with discussions of musical compositions—symphonies, concertos, operas, and the like—that people have found more and more rewarding as they have listened to them repeatedly. These discussions are meant to introduce you to the contents of these works and their aesthetic qualities: what goes on in the music, and how it affects us.

The kind of hands-on knowledge of music necessary for a music professional—for a composer or a performer—is of no special use to you as a non-professional listener. But familiarity with musical concepts and musical terms can be useful, helping you grasp more clearly what you already hear in music. Analyzing things, pinpointing things, and even simply using the right names for things all make us more actively aware of them. Sometimes, too, this process of analyzing, pinpointing, and naming can actually assist listening. We become more alert to aspects of music when they have been pointed out. And greater awareness contributes to greater appreciation of music.
A Musical Thunderstorm
by Richard Wagner

Listen, then, to what we are calling the Prelude to Unit 1. In fact its composer also called it that; it is the orchestral prelude that begins the opera *The Valkyrie* (*Die Walküre*) by Richard Wagner, which we will take up further in Chapter 18. *The Valkyrie* comes from a huge cycle of four operas Wagner composed on stories from Norse mythology. The cycle as a whole is called *The Nibelung's Ring*, and what with its gods, heroes, giants, dwarfs (Nibelungs), dragons, talking birds, and magic swords, cloaks, and potions, *The Nibelung's Ring* has served as a source of many mythic tales since Wagner—most famously J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. The title *The Valkyrie* refers to one of the “wish-maidens” of Wotan, king of the gods; they chose the souls of slain heroes to be carried off to Valhalla, heavenly home of the gods.

In the following discussion, a few of the musical terms are introduced that will be defined and discussed later and used throughout this book. The idea is not to learn these terms now but to get a feel for their use in the context of a piece of music. So listen to the music in one or, preferably, all of these three ways: (1) cold, (2) after reading the prose discussion below, and (3) while following the Listening Chart on page 5.

**Preliminaries**  Music, as we listen to it, often presents an unstable, changing profile, as Wagner's Prelude certainly does. The shifting sounds seem to summon up a story before our ears—a story of a general sort, to be sure, as the music is for instruments alone and has no words to make it specific. This music is unlikely to conjure up images of a placid spring morning or a lingering sunset over a lake. Instead the music tells of turbulence, storminess, even violence. Is it the natural turmoil of a thunderstorm, or a purely internal, psychological trouble? Both at once, as Wagner will show us—but that's a story for later on.

So the first thing to notice in listening to this Prelude is that it stamps in our minds a definite, by no means bashful, expressive *character*. Much music does the same, and we value this expressive force. The next thing to note is that the violence of this particular music does not come upon us all at once. Wagner carefully builds up to a big orchestral climax and then falls away from it. Let's examine how he manages this.

**Scale Theme**  The Prelude to *The Valkyrie* opens with a distinct musical idea, or *theme*. It is played by low *stringed instruments*, or *strings*, and takes the form of a repetitive melody marching up and down the scale. It marches to a
clear beat, arranged in a regular pattern, or meter, by threes (count: one two three | one two three); and it marches at a fairly fast speed, or tempo. Above this repeating theme other strings play, repeating over and over a single note, or pitch, in an anxious, trembling manner.

**First Climax** Gradually, with much repetition, the scale theme begins to move higher in pitch. Finally its loudness, or dynamic level, also increases; this effect is called a crescendo (cre-shén-d-o, from Italian for “growing”). When the scale theme reaches its first highpoint, brass instruments and woodwinds are heard for the first time. Especially prominent are the French horns, playing a new theme. It is two notes long and sounds like a musical lightning stroke: DA-DAAA.

**Second Climax** After this first climax—a brief, preliminary climax with a very short theme—the strings are left alone again, and the scale theme falls back in pitch. The dynamic level of the music also diminishes (diminuendo)—but not for long, for the storm is about to break out in all its fury. Now after another quick crescendo all the strings take up the scale theme. The music swirls up, and the full brass section weighs in with titanic effect. The instruments enter from low to high, first tubas, then trombones, finally trumpets, at higher and higher pitch levels. They shout out an extended version of the lightning theme first played by the horns: no longer DA-DAAA but now DA-DAAA-DA-DA-DA-DA-DAAA.

**Collapse** Suddenly, at its loudest moment, the bottom drops out of the orchestra. All that is left is a thunderous roll on the kettledrums, or timpani. The full orchestra returns to play, sporadically, the lightning theme. Now its melody has even taken on the jagged shape of a lightning bolt. While the timpani roll continues, this melody is heard four times, each time softer in dynamic level and lower in pitch. In its wake comes a survivor—the scale theme from the beginning, gradually subsiding and moving lower in pitch.

**Continuity** The Prelude does not truly come to an end; there is no full and clear stopping point, or cadence. Instead it leaves us on an unexpected pitch, one that halts the motion of the scale theme as the curtain rises and the action of the opera begins. The stage shows the inside of a gloomy, rough house in a forest, and sure enough, as the door swings open we see the storm that we have just been hearing about from the orchestra. As it calms down, a man (Siegmond) stumbles exhausted out of the storm and into an unfamiliar home; there he
The forest dwelling where Siegmund finds refuge from the storm (The Valkyrie, Act I). There is a sword in the tree, planted by Wotan, king of the gods. Siegmund will pull it out, and another famous old myth will find its way into Wagner's great epic The Nibelung's Ring.

will meet, and fall in love with, Sieglinde. Neither of them knows yet that they are brother and sister, separated when they were young children. We follow up on this fateful turn of events on page 273.

Musical Form This music is certainly stirring in its chaotic climax; Wagner was a master at using his large orchestra to such dramatic effect. But underneath the chaos his prelude reveals a clear organization, or musical form, built around its two main themes, the scale theme and the lightning-stroke theme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale theme</th>
<th>Preliminary climax: Lightning theme</th>
<th>Scale theme</th>
<th>Main climax: Lightning theme extended</th>
<th>Scale theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

We could simplify this diagram by using letters to represent the main elements of the form, A for the scale theme and B for the climaxes: A B A B' A. Throughout this book musical forms will be represented by letter diagrams of this kind.
CHAPTER 1

Rhythm, Meter, and Tempo

Music is the art of sound in time. Its temporal aspect is the most basic place to start understanding music, and this aspect is summed up by the term rhythm.

1 Rhythm

In its broadest sense, rhythm refers to the general way music unfolds in time. The primacy of rhythm in the experience of music is taken for granted in our culture—and in most other cultures as well. Rhythm is the main driving force in music both popular and classical, music of all ages and all cultures.

In a more specific sense, “a rhythm” refers to the actual arrangement of durations—long and short notes—in a particular melody or some other musical passage. Of course, the term is also used in other contexts, about quarterbacks, poems, and even paintings. But no sport and no other art handles rhythm with as much precision and refinement as music.

Beat and Accent

Beats provide the basic unit of measurement for time in music; if ordinary clock time is measured in seconds, musical time is measured in beats. When listening to a marching band or a rock band, to take two clear examples, we sense a regular recurrence of short pulses. These serve as a steady, vigorous background for other, more complicated rhythms that we discern at the same time. We can’t help beating time to the music, dancing to it, waving a hand or tapping a foot. The simple pulse being signaled by waving, tapping, or dancing is the music’s beat.

There is, however, an all-important difference between a clock ticking and a drum beating time. Mechanically produced ticks all sound exactly the same, but it is virtually impossible for people to beat time without making some beats more emphatic than others. This is called giving certain beats an accent. And accents are really what enable us to beat time, since the simplest way to do this is to alternate accented (“strong”) and unaccented (“weak”) beats in patterns such as one two | one two | one two | one two | one two three | one two three | one two three....

To beat time, then, is not only to measure time according to a regular pulse but also to organize it, at least into these simple two- and three-beat patterns.

“Rhythm might be described as, to the world of sound, what light is to the world of sight. It shapes and gives new meaning.”

Edith Sitwell, poet and critic, 1965

Access an interactive tutorial on rhythm, meter, and tempo in the e-book at bedfordstmartins.com/listen
2 Meter

Any recurring pattern of strong and weak beats, such as the ONE two and ONE two three we have referred to above, is called a meter. Meter is a strong/weak pattern repeated again and again.

Each occurrence of this repeated pattern, consisting of a principal strong beat and one or more weaker beats, is called a measure, or bar. In Western music there are only two basic kinds of meter: duple meter and triple meter.

\[ \text{Yan-kee doo-dle came to town...} \]
\[
\text{one two one two} \\
\]

\[ \text{In duple meter the beats are grouped in twos (one two | one two) or in fours (one two three four | one two three four). Duple meter is instantly familiar from marches—such as “Yankee Doodle”—which tend always to use duple meter in deference to the human anatomy (left right, left right, left right):} \]
\[
\text{Oh, say can you see... My coun-try, ’tis of thee...} \\
\text{one two three one two three one two three} \\
\]

Two other national songs, “America the Beautiful” and “God Bless America,” are in duple meter.

\[ \text{Often the main beats of duple and triple meter are subdivided into quicker pulses. This usually happens by dividing the main beat into either twos or threes. When the main beats are divided in twos, the meter is called a simple meter. Dividing the main beats in threes creates compound meters with two or three main beats and six or nine quicker ones:} \]
\[
\text{one two one two three} \\
\text{one two three | four five six | one two three | four five six | seven eight nine} \\
\]

The round “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” is in compound duple meter. While the first voice is moving at a fast six-beat clip at the words “Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,” the second voice comes in pounding out the basic duple meter, “ROW, ROW, ROW”:

\[ \text{first voice:} \]
\[
\text{Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream,} \\
1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6 \\
\text{one two one two one two one two one two one two one two one two one two} \\
\]

\[ \text{second voice:} \]
\[
\text{Row, row, row...} \\
\text{one two one two one two} \\
\]

\[ \text{Meters with five beats, seven beats, and so on have never been used widely in Western music, though they are found frequently enough in some other musical cultures. It was an unusual tour de force for nineteenth-century composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky to have featured quintuple meter, five beats to a bar, in his popular Sixth Symphony.} \]
Rhythm and Meter

*Rhythm* in the most general sense refers to the entire time aspect of music and, more specifically, a rhythm refers to the particular arrangements of long and short notes in a musical passage. In most Western music, dupe or triple *meter* serves as the regular background against which we perceive music's actual rhythms.

As the rhythm first coincides with the meter, then cuts across it independently, then even contradicts it, all kinds of variety, tension, and excitement can result. Meter is background; rhythm is foreground.

Musical notation has developed a conventional system of signs (see Appendix B) to indicate relative durations, or long and short notes; combining various signs is the way of indicating rhythms. Following are examples of well-known tunes in dupe and triple meters. Notice from the shading (even better, sing the tunes to yourself and *hear*) how the rhythm sometimes corresponds with the pulses of the meter and sometimes departs from them. The shading indicates passages of rhythm-meter correspondence:

```
Rhythm: \n\n\n\n\n\n\n\n
Glo-ry, glory halle-lu-jah, His truth is marching on.

Duple meter:

\n\n\n\n\n\n
Rhythm:

\n\n\n\n\n\n
Oh, say can you see By the dawn’s ear-ly light What so proud-ly we hailed At the twilight’s last gleam-

Triple meter:
```

The above examples should not be taken to imply that meter is always emphasized behind music's rhythms. Often the meter is not explicitly beaten out at all. It does not need to be, for the listener can almost always sense it under the surface. Naturally, meter is strongly stressed in music designed to stimulate regular body movements, such as marches, dances, and much popular music.

At the other extreme, there is *nonmetrical* music. In such music, the rhythms suggest no underlying pattern of strong and weak beats. For example, the meandering, nonmetrical rhythms of Gregorian chant contribute to the cool, otherworldly, and spiritual quality that devotees of this music cherish.

Syncopation

One way of obtaining interesting, striking effects in music is to move the accents in a foreground *rhythm* away from their normal position on the beats of the background *meter*. This may seem counterintuitive, but it works. In *syncopation,*
LISTENING EXERCISE 1

Rhythm, Meter, and Syncopation

In Unit 1 of this book, we illustrate the concepts that are introduced with listening examples drawn from the Companion DVD. Follow the timings in these Listening Exercises, which are simplified versions of the Listening Charts provided for complete compositions later in the book. The charts are explained on page xxviii.

For samples of *duple*, *triple*, and *compound meters*, listen to the following tracks on the DVD.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10, 14</td>
<td>Duple meter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Duple meter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12, 19</td>
<td>Triple meter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Compound meter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Synchronization:* In Scott Joplin’s “Maple Leaf Rag,” listen to the piano left hand, with its steady one two | one two beat in duple meter, while the right hand cuts across it with syncopations in almost every measure.

...as it is called, accents can be displaced so they go one two | one two (weak strong | weak strong) instead of the normal one two | one two (strong weak | strong weak). Or syncopation can occur when an accent is placed in *between* beats one and two, as in this Christmas ballad:

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>one two</td>
<td>one two</td>
<td>one two</td>
<td>one two</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The consistent use of syncopation is the hallmark of African American-derived popular music, from ragtime to rap. See Chapter 24, and listen to the lively, uneven, *syncopated* rhythms of Scott Joplin’s “Maple Leaf Rag” *in* Listening Exercise 1.

3 Tempo

Our discussion so far has referred to the *relative* duration of sounds—all beats are equal; some notes are twice as long as others, and so on—but nothing has been said yet about their *absolute* duration, in fractions of a second. The term for the speed of music is *tempo*; in metrical music, the tempo is the rate at which the basic, regular beats of the meter follow one another.

Tempo can be expressed exactly and measured by the *metronome*, a mechanical or electrical device that ticks out beats at any desired tempo. When composers give directions for tempo, however, they usually prefer approximate terms. Rather than freezing the music’s speed by means of a metronome, they prefer to leave some latitude for different performers. Because all European music looked to Italy when this terminology first came into use, the conventional terms for tempo are Italian:
LISTENING EXERCISE 2

Rhythm, Meter, and Tempo

A more advanced exercise: Our excerpt, from the middle of Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini, for piano and orchestra, by Sergei Rachmaninov, consists of four continuous segments in different meters and tempos, here labeled A, B, C, and D. (If you note a family likeness among the segments, that is because they are all variations on a single theme. See page 174.)

0:00 A The piano starts in **duple meter** (one *two* | one *two*). The loud orchestral interruptions are **syncopated**. (After the interruptions the meter is somewhat obscured, but it gets clearer.)
0:33 Clear duple meter by this time; then the music comes to a stop.
0:49 B No meter. The piano seems to be engaged in a meditative improvisation, as if it is dreaming up the music to come.
1:45 Orchestral instruments suggest a slow **duple meter**? Not for long.
2:24 C Slow **triple meter** (one *two three* | one *two three*)
3:47 *Ritardando* (getting slower)
3:56 D Fast **triple meter**, assertive (note one or two syncopated notes)
4:26 Faster **triple meter**

**COMMON TEMPO INDICATIONS**

| Adagio: | Slow |
| Andante: | On the slow side, but not too slow |
| Moderato: | Moderate |
| Allegretto: | On the fast side, but not too fast |
| Allegro: | Fast |
| Presto: | Very fast |

**LESS COMMON TEMPO INDICATIONS**

| Largo, Lento, Grave: | Slow, very slow |
| Larghetto: | Somewhat faster than largo |
| Andantino: | Somewhat faster than andante |
| Vivace, Vivo: | Lively |
| Molto Allegro: | Faster than allegro |
| Prestissimo: | Very fast indeed |

It's interesting that in their original meaning many of these Italian words refer not to speed itself but rather to a mood, action, or quality that can be associated with tempo only in a general way. Thus, *vivace* is close to our “vivacious,” *allegro* means “cheerful,” and *andante*, derived from the Italian word for “go,” might be translated as “walking along steadily.”

The most important terms to remember are those listed under “common tempo indications” above. Composers often use tempo indications alone as headings for major sections, called movements, in long works. People refer to the “Andante” of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, meaning a certain movement of the symphony (the second), which Beethoven specified should be played at an *andante* tempo.
Chapter 2

Pitch, Dynamics, and Tone Color

If you have taken a course in physics, you know that sound is produced by vibrations that occur when objects are struck, plucked, stroked, or agitated in some other way. These vibrations are transmitted through the air and picked up by our ears.

For the production of sound in general, almost anything will do — the single rusted hinge on a creaky door as well as the great air masses of a thunderstorm. For the production of musical sounds, the usual objects are taut strings and membranes and columns of air enclosed in pipes of various kinds. These produce relatively simple vibrations, which translate into clearly focused or, as we say, “musical” sounds. Often the membranes are alive: They are called vocal cords.

Sound-producing vibrations are very fast; the range of sound that can be heard extends from around 20 to 20,000 cycles per second. The vibrations are also very small. To be heard, they often need to be amplified, either electronically or with the aid of something physical that echoes or resonates along with the vibrating body. In a guitar or violin, the resonator is the hollow box that the strings are stretched across.

Musical sounds can be high or low, loud or soft, and can take on different qualities depending on the materials used to produce them. The musical terms for these aspects of sound are pitch, dynamics, and tone color.

1 Pitch

The scientific term for the rate of sound vibration is frequency. On the level of perception, our ears respond differently to sounds of high and low frequencies, and to very fine gradations in between. Indeed, people speak about “high” and “low” sounds quite unselfconsciously, as though they know that the latter actually have a low frequency — relatively few cycles — and the former a high frequency.

The musical term for this quality of sound, which is recognized so instinctively, is pitch. Low pitches (low frequencies) result from long vibrating elements, high pitches from short ones — a trombone sounds lower than a flute.
Noises, with their complex, unfocused vibrations, do not have pitch. Your college chorus divides up high and low pitches among four different groups of voices: sopranos (high females), altos (low females), tenors (high males), and basses (low males).

The totality of musical sounds serves as a kind of quarry from which musicians of every age and every society carve the exact building blocks they want for their music. We hear this totality in the sliding scale of a siren, starting low and going higher and higher. But musicians never (or virtually never) use the full range of pitches. Instead they select a limited number of fixed pitches from the sound continuum. These pitches are calibrated scientifically (European-style orchestras these days tune to a pitch with a frequency of 440 cycles), given names (that pitch is labeled A), and collected in scales. Scales are discussed in Chapter 3.

2 Dynamics

In scientific terminology, amplitude is the level of strength of sound vibrations—more precisely, the amount of energy they contain and convey. As big guitar amplifiers attest, very small string vibrations can be amplified until the energy in the air transmitting them rattles the eardrums.

In musical terminology, the level of sound is called its dynamics. Musicians use subtle dynamic gradations from very soft to very loud, but they have never worked out a calibrated scale of dynamics, as they have for pitch. The terms

**LISTENING EXERCISE 3**

**Pitch and Dynamics**

High and low pitch and loud and soft dynamics are heard so instinctively that they hardly need illustration. Listen, however, to the vivid way they are deployed in one of the most famous of classical compositions, the "Unfinished" Symphony by Franz Schubert. Symphonies usually consist of four separate big segments, called movements; musicologists are still baffled as to why Schubert wrote two superb movements for this work and started but never finished the rest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Pitch</th>
<th>Dynamic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:00</td>
<td>Quiet and mysterious</td>
<td>Low range</td>
<td>pp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:15</td>
<td>Rustling sounds</td>
<td>Middle range</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:22</td>
<td>Wind instruments</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:35</td>
<td>Single sharp accent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:47</td>
<td>Gets louder</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>instruments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:07</td>
<td>Sudden collapse</td>
<td></td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>crescendo,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15</td>
<td>New tune</td>
<td>First low,</td>
<td>leading to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>then high</td>
<td>f, then ff,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:52</td>
<td>Cuts off sharply; big sound</td>
<td></td>
<td>more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>accents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Similar pitch and dynamic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>effects for the rest of the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>excerpt)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:07</td>
<td>Sinking passage</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pitches,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lower and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:45</td>
<td>Ominous</td>
<td>Lowest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pitch of all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
used are only approximate. Like the indications for tempo, the terms used for
dynamics are in Italian.

The main categories are simply loud and soft, *forte* (pronounced *fór-teh*)
and *piano*, which may be qualified by expanding to “very loud” or “very soft”
and by adding the Italian word for “medium,” *mezzo* (me-so):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pianissimo</th>
<th>piano</th>
<th>mezzo piano</th>
<th>mezzo forte</th>
<th>forte</th>
<th>fortissimo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pp</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>mp</td>
<td>mf</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>ff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

very soft    soft    medium soft    medium loud    loud    very loud

Changes in dynamics can be sudden (*subito*), or they can be gradual—a soft
passage swells into a loud one (*crescendo*, “growing”), or a powerful blare
fades into quietness (*decrescendo* or *diminuendo*, “diminishing”).

3 Tone Color

At whatever pitch, and whether loud or soft, musical sounds differ in their
general *quality*, depending on the instruments or voices that produce them.
*Tone color* and *timbre* (*tám-br*) are the terms for this quality.

Tone color is produced in a more complex way (and a more astonishing
way) than pitch and dynamics. Piano strings and other sound-producing bod-
ies vibrate not only along their total length but also at the same time in half-
lengths, quarters, eighths, and so on.

**STRING VIBRATIONS**

FULL-LENGTH:  ![Diagram](image1)

HALF-LENGTH:  ![Diagram](image2)

QUARTER-LENGTH AND THREE-QUARTER-LENGTH SIMULTANEOUSLY:  ![Diagram](image3)

The diagrams above attempt to illustrate this. Musicians
call these fractional vibrations *overtones*. They are much
lower in amplitude than the main vibrations; for this
reason, we hear overtones not as distinct pitches, but
somehow as part of the string’s basic or fundamental
pitch. The amount and exact mixture of overtones are
what give a sound its characteristic tone color. A flute
has few overtones. A trumpet has many.

Musicians make no attempt to tally or describe
tone colors; about the best one can do is apply impre-
cise adjectives such as *bright*, *warm*, *ringing*, *hollow*, or
*brassy*. Yet tone color is surely the most easily recog-
nized of all musical elements. Even people who cannot
identify instruments by name can distinguish between
the smooth, rich sound of violins playing together; the
bright sound of trumpets; and the woody croaking of a
bassoon.

The most distinctive tone color of all, however,
belongs to the first, most beautiful, and most universal
of all the sources of music—the human voice.

The singing voice, the most beautiful and universal of all
sources of music: Renée Fleming, star of the Metropolitan
Opera in New York, excels in an unusually wide variety
of roles and is often heard singing popular standards.
Musical Instruments

To listen to demonstrations of individual instruments, click on Instruments of the Orchestra at bedfordstmartins.com/listen

Different voices and different instruments produce different tone colors, or timbres. Enormous numbers of devices have been invented for making music over the course of history and across the entire world, and the range of tone colors they can produce is almost endless.

This section will discuss and illustrate the instruments of Western music that make up the orchestra, and a few others. Later, in our Global Perspectives sections, we will meet some instruments from other musical traditions.

Musical instruments can be categorized into four groups: stringed instruments or strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion. Musical sound, as we know, is caused by rapid vibrations. Each of the four groups of instruments produces sound vibrations in its own distinct way.

Stringed Instruments

Stringed instruments produce their sound by means of taut strings attached to a sound box, a hollow box containing a body of air that resonates (that is, vibrates along with the strings) to amplify the string sound.

The strings themselves can be played with a bow, as with the violin and other orchestral strings; the bow is strung tightly with horsehair, which is coated with a substance called rosin so that the bow grips the strings to produce continuous sound. With guitars and harps, the strings are plucked or strummed by the fingers or a small pick. Strings can be plucked on bowed instruments, too, for special effects. This is called pizzicato (pit-tzah-cah-toe).

The Violin and Its Family

The violin is often called the most beautiful instrument used in Western music. It is also one of the most versatile of instruments; its large range covers alto and soprano registers and many much higher pitches. As a solo instrument, it can play forcefully or delicately, and it excels in both brilliant and songlike music. Violinists also play chords by bowing two or more of the four strings at once, or nearly so.

As with a guitar, the player stops the (four) violin strings with a finger—that is, presses the strings against the neck of the violin—to shorten the string length and get different pitches (see the illustrations below). Unlike a guitar, a violin has no frets, so the player has to feel for the exact places to press.

The violin is an excellent ensemble instrument, and it blends especially well with other violins. An orchestra violin section, made up of ten or more instruments playing together, can produce a strong yet sensitive and flexible tone. Hence the orchestra has traditionally relied on strings as a solid foundation for its composite sound.

Like most instruments, violins come in families, that is, in several sizes with different pitch ranges. Two other members of the violin family are basic to the orchestra. The viola is the tenor-range instrument, larger than a violin by several inches. It has a throaty quality in its lowest range, yet it fits especially smoothly into accompaniment textures. The viola’s highest register is powerful and intense.

The cello, short for violoncello, is the bass of the violin family. Cellists play seated, with the instrument propped on the floor between their knees. Unlike the viola, the
Chinese American cellist Yo-Yo Ma is perhaps this country's preeminent instrumentalist, and certainly the most versatile and most honored and admired. He has assumed the role of a national resource, playing at state occasions such as President Obama's 2009 inauguration. In 1998 he founded the Silk Road Project, a program of intercultural musical exchange along the Silk Road, the ancient trading route between China and the Mediterranean. His complete recordings to date fill ninety CDs!

cello has a rich, gorgeous sound in its low register. It is a favorite solo instrument as well as an indispensable member of the orchestra.

7 Double Bass Also called string bass or just bass, this deep instrument is used to back up the violin family in the orchestra. (However, in various details of construction the bass differs from members of the violin family; the bass actually belongs to another, older stringed instrument family, the violin family.)

Played with a bow, the double bass provides a splendid deep support for orchestral sound. It is often (in jazz, nearly always) plucked to give an especially vibrant kind of accent and to emphasize the meter.

7 Harp Harps are plucked stringed instruments with one string for each pitch available. The modern orchestral harp is a large instrument with forty-seven strings covering a wide range of pitches. In most orchestral music, the swishing, watery quality of the harp is treated as a striking occasional effect rather than as a regular timbre.

Woodwind Instruments

As the name suggests, woodwind instruments were once made of wood. Some still are, while others today are made of metal and even plastic. Sound in these instruments is created by setting up vibrations in the column of air in a tube. A series of precisely spaced holes are bored in the tube, which players open or close with their fingers or with a lever device. This channels the air into columns of different lengths, producing different pitches.

Of the main woodwind instruments, flutes, clarinets, and oboes have approximately the same range. All three are used in the orchestra because each has a quite distinct tone color, and composers can obtain a variety of effects from them. It is not hard to learn to recognize and appreciate the different sounds of these woodwinds.

7 The Flute and Its Family The flute is simply a long cylinder, held horizontally; the player sets the air vibrating by blowing across a side hole. The flute is the most agile of the woodwind instruments and also the gentlest. It nonetheless stands out clearly in the orchestra when played in its high register.
The piccolo, the smallest, highest member of the flute family, adds special sparkle to band and orchestral music. The alto flute and bass flute—larger and deeper flutes—are less frequently employed.

The recorder, a different variety of flute, is blown not at the side of the tube but through a special mouthpiece at the end. Used in older orchestral music, the recorder was superseded by the horizontal, or transverse, flute because the latter was stronger and more agile. In the late twentieth century recorders made a comeback for modern performances of old music using reconstructed period instruments. The instrument is also popular (in various family sizes) among musical amateurs today. The recorder is easy to learn and fun to play.

**Clarinet** The clarinet is a slightly conical tube made, usually, of ebony (a dark wood). The air column is not made to vibrate directly by blowing into the tube, as with the flute. The player gets sound by blowing on a reed—a small piece of cane fixed at one end—in much the same way as one can blow on a blade of grass held taut between the fingers. The vibrating reed vibrates the air within the clarinet tube itself.

Compared to the flute, the clarinet sounds richer and more flexible, more like the human voice. The clarinet is capable of warm, mellow tones and strident, shrill ones; it has an especially intriguing quality in its low register.

The small E-flat clarinet and the large bass clarinet are family members with a place in the modern orchestra. The tube of the bass clarinet is so long that it has to be bent back, like a thin black saxophone.

**Oboe** The oboe also uses a reed, like the clarinet, but it is a double reed—two reeds lashed together so that the air must be forced between them. This kind of reed gives the oboe its clearly focused, crisply clean, and sometimes plaintive sound.

The English horn is a larger, lower oboe, descending into the viola range. It is often called by the French equivalent, cor anglais; in either language, the name is all wrong, since the instrument is not a horn but an oboe, and it has nothing to do with England.
7 Bassoon The bassoon is a low (cello-range) instrument with a double reed and other characteristics similar to the oboe's. It looks somewhat bizarre: The long tube is bent double, and the reed has to be linked to the instrument by a long, narrow pipe made of metal. Of all the double-reed woodwinds, the bassoon is the most varied in expression, ranging from the mournful to the comical.

The contrabassoon, also called the double bassoon, is a very large member of the bassoon family, in the double bass range.

7 Saxophone The saxophone, invented by the Belgian instrument maker Adolphe Sax, was first used around 1840 in military bands. The instrument is sometimes included in the modern orchestra, but it really came into its own in jazz. Saxophones are close to clarinets in the way they produce sound. Both use single reeds. Since the saxophone tube is wider and made of brass, its tone is even mellower than that of the clarinet, yet at the same time more forceful. The long saxophone tube has a characteristic bent shape and a flaring bell, as its opening is called.

Most common are the alto saxophone and the tenor saxophone. But the big family also includes bass, baritone, and soprano members.

Brass Instruments

The brass instruments are the loudest of all the wind instruments because of the rather remarkable way their sound is produced. The player's lips vibrate against a small cup-shaped mouthpiece of metal. The lip vibration itself vibrates the air within the brass tube. All brass instruments have long tubes, and these are almost always coiled in one way or another. This is easy to do with the soft metal they are made from.

7 Trumpet The trumpet, highest of the main brass instruments, has a bright, strong, piercing tone that provides the ultimate excitement in band and orchestral
Two French horns, trumpet, trombone, and tuba

music alike. Pitch is controlled by three pistons, or valves, that connect auxiliary tubes with the main tube or disconnect them, so as to lengthen or shorten the vibrating air column.

French Horn The French horn has a lower, mellower, thicker tone than the trumpet. It is capable of mysterious, romantic sounds when played softly; played loudly, it can sound like a trombone. Choruses played by several French horns in harmony have a specially rich, sumptuous tone.

Trombone The tenor trombone and the bass trombone are also pitched lower than the trumpet. The pitch is controlled by a sliding mechanism (thus the term slide trombone) rather than a valve or piston, as in the trumpet and French horn.

Less bright and martial in tone than the trumpet, the trombone can produce a surprising variety of sounds, ranging from an almost vocal quality in its high register to a hard, powerful blare in the low register.

Tuba The bass tuba is typically used as a foundation for the trombone group in an orchestra. It is less flexible than other brass instruments. And like most other deep bass instruments, it is not favored for solo work.

Other Brass Instruments All the brass instruments described so far are staples of both the orchestra and the band. Many other brass instruments (and even whole families of instruments) have been invented for use in marching bands and have then sometimes found their way into the orchestra.

Among these are the cornet and the flügelhorn, both of which resemble the trumpet; the euphonium, baritone horn, and saxhorn, which are somewhere between the French horn and the tuba; and the sousaphone, a handsome bass tuba named after the great American bandmaster and march composer John Philip Sousa.

Finally there is the bugle. This simple trumpet-like instrument is very limited in the pitches it can play because it has no piston or valve mechanism. Bugles play “Taps” and military fanfares, and not much else.

Percussion Instruments

Instruments in this category produce sound by being struck (or sometimes rattled, as with the South American maraca). Some percussion instruments, such as drums and gongs, have no fixed pitch, just a striking tone color. Others, such as the vibraphone, have whole sets of wooden or metal elements tuned to regular scales.

Timpani The timpani (or kettledrums) are large hemispherical drums that can be tuned precisely to certain low pitches. Used in groups of two or more, timpani have the effect of “cementing” loud sounds when the whole orchestra plays, so they are the most widely used percussion instruments in the orchestra.

Timpani are tuned by tightening the drumhead by means of screws set around the rim. During a concert, one can often see the timpani player, when there are rests in the music, leaning over the drums, tapping them quietly to hear whether the tuning is just right.

Pitched Percussion Instruments Pitched percussion instruments are scale instruments, capable of playing melodies and consisting of whole sets of metal or wooden bars or plates struck with sticks or hammers. While they add unforgettable special sound effects to many compositions, they are not usually heard consistently throughout a piece, as the timpani are. They differ in their materials.

The glockenspiel has small steel bars. It is a high instrument with a bright, penetrating sound.
The xylophone has hardwood plates or slats. It plays as high as the glockenspiel but also lower, and it has a drier, sharper tone.

The marimba, an instrument of African and South American origins, is a xylophone with tubular resonators under each wooden slat, making the tone much mellower.

The vibraphone has metal plates, like a glockenspiel with a large range, and is furnished with a controllable electric resonating device. This gives the “vibes” an echoing, funky quality unlike that of any other instrument.

Also like the glockenspiel, the celesta has steel bars, but its sound is more delicate and silvery. This instrument, unlike the others in this section, is not played directly by a percussionist wielding hammers or sticks. The hammers are activated from a keyboard; a celesta looks like a miniature piano.

Tubular bells, or chimes, are hanging tubes that are struck with a big mallet. They sound like church bells.

7 Unpitched Percussion Instruments

In the category of percussion instruments without a fixed pitch, the following are the most frequently found in the orchestra.

Cymbals are concave metal plates, from a few inches to several feet in diameter. In orchestral music, pairs of large cymbals are clapped together to support climactic moments in the music with a grand clashing sound.

The triangle—a simple metal triangle—gives out a bright tinkle when struck.

The tam-tam is a large unpitched gong with a low, often sinister quality.

The snare drum, tenor drum, and bass drum are among the unpitched drums used in the orchestra.

The Orchestra

The orchestra has changed over the centuries, just as orchestral music has. Bach’s orchestra in the early 1700s was about a fifth the size of the orchestra required today. (See pages 114, 161, and 232 for the makeup of the orchestra at various historical periods.)

So today’s symphony orchestra has to be a fluid group. Eighty musicians or more will be on the regular roster, but some of them sit out some of the pieces on many programs. And freelancers have to be engaged for special compositions in which composers have imaginatively
LISTENING EXERCISE 4

The Orchestra in Action

Take a break from reading now and listen to The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra, a work devised by Benjamin Britten in 1946 to introduce the many tone colors of orchestral instruments. A full chart of this work is given on page 45. For now, the chart below will lead you one by one through the various sections and instruments of the orchestra.

19
0:00 Full orchestra
0:42 WOODWIND choir
1:11 BRASS choir
1:42 STRING choir
2:07 PERCUSSION
2:26 Full orchestra
20
2:50 Flutes and piccolo
3:29 Oboes
4:32 Clarinet family: bass clarinet (1:42), clarinet (1:57), and E-flat clarinet (1:46)
5:14 Bassoon
6:11 Viols
6:56 Violas
7:45 Cellos
8:43 Double bass
9:40 Harp
10:31 French horns
11:11 Trumpets
11:47 Trombones, tuba
12:48 PERCUSSION
14:43 Full orchestra

7 Brass: at least two trumpets, four French horns, two trombones, and one tuba.
7 Percussion: one to four players, who between them manage the timpani and all the other percussion instruments, moving from one to the other. For unlike the violins, for example, the percussion instruments seldom have to be played continuously throughout a piece.

There are several seating plans for orchestras; which is chosen depends on at least two factors. The conductor judges which arrangement makes the best sound in the particular hall. And some conductors feel they can control the orchestra better with one arrangement, some with another. One such seating plan is shown on page 21.

Keyboard Instruments

Though most orchestras today include a pianist, the piano is a relatively new addition to the symphony orchestra. In earlier times, the orchestra regularly included another keyboard instrument, the harpsichord.

The great advantage of keyboard instruments, of course, is that they can play more than one note at a time. A pianist, for example, can play a whole piece on a keyboard instrument without requiring any other musicians at all. Consequently the solo music that has been written for piano, harpsichord, and organ is much more extensive than (accompanied) solo music for other instruments—more extensive and ultimately more important.

7 Piano The tuned strings of a piano are struck by felt-covered hammers, activated from a keyboard. Much technological ingenuity has been devoted to the activating mechanism, or action.

The hammers must strike the string and then fall back at once, while a damping device made of felt touches the string to stop the sound instantly. All this must be done so fast that the pianist can play repeated notes as fast as the hand can move. Also, many shades of loudness and softness must lie ready under the player's fingers. This dynamic flexibility is what gave the piano its name: piano is short for pianoforte, meaning "soft-loud."

The list of virtuoso pianists who were also major composers extends from Mozart through Frédéric Chopin to Sergei Rachmaninov. In the nineteenth century, the piano became the solo instrument. At the same time, nearly every middle-class European and American household had a piano. Piano lessons served and still serve for millions of young people as an introduction to the world of music.

7 Harpsichord The harpsichord is an ancient keyboard instrument that was revived in the 1900s for the playing of Baroque music, in particular.

Like the piano, the harpsichord has a set of tuned strings activated from a keyboard, but the action is much
An organ with five (!) keyboards.
The player pulls out the white knobs (stops) to change the sets of pipes that sound.

An elaborately painted eighteenth-century harpsichord, with two keyboards

simpler. There is no damping, and instead of hammers striking the strings, little bars flip up with quills that pluck them. This means, first, that the tone is brittle and ping-y. Second, it means that the player cannot vary dynamics; when a string is plucked in this way, it always sounds the same.

Harpsichord makers compensated for this limitation in dynamics by adding one or two extra full sets of strings, controlled by an extra keyboard. One keyboard could be soft, the other loud. A mechanism allowed the keyboards to be coupled together for the loudest sound of all.

In spite of its brittle tone and its lack of flexibility in dynamics, the harpsichord can be a wonderfully expressive instrument. Good harpsichord playing requires, first and foremost, great rhythmic subtlety.

Another keyboard instrument of early times, the clavichord, has the simplest action of all. Its tone is much too quiet for concert use.

∧ Organ Called “the king of instruments,” the pipe organ is certainly the largest of them (see page 150). This instrument has to provide enough sound to fill the large spaces of churches and cathedrals on a suitably grand scale. The organ has a great many sets of tuned pipes through which a complex wind system blows air, again activated from a keyboard. The pipes have different tone colors, and most organs have more than one keyboard to control different sets of pipes. A pedal board—a big keyboard on the floor, played with the feet—controls the lowest-sounding pipes.

Each set of tuned pipes is called a stop; a moderate-sized organ has forty to fifty stops, but much bigger organs exist. One organ in Atlantic City, New Jersey, has 1,477 stops, for a total of 33,112 pipes. A large organ is capable of an almost orchestral variety of sound.
The organ is not a member of the orchestra, but because the grandest occasions call for orchestra, chorus, vocal soloists, and organ combined (e.g., Handel's Messiah at Christmastime; see page 146), a major symphony hall has to have its organ—usually an imposing sight.

Electronic Keyboard Instruments

Today keyboard or organ generally means an electronic instrument. Synthesizers simulate the sound of organs, pianos, and harpsichords—and many other sounds as well.

Modern concert music, from the 1960s on, has occasionally used electronic keyboards. On the whole, however, synthesizers have been used more to compose concert music than to play it. And of course electronic keyboards play major roles in today's popular music.

Plucked Stringed Instruments

Plucked stringed instruments figure much less in art music of the West than in Asian countries such as India and Japan, as we shall see. One exception is the orchestral harp; see page 16. The acoustic guitar and the mandolin are used very widely in Western popular music, but only occasionally in orchestras.

However, a now-obsolete plucked instrument, the lute, was of major importance in earlier times. One of the most beautiful-looking of instruments, the lute sounds rather like a gentle guitar. Large members of the lute family were the theorbo and the archlute.

Like keyboard instruments, plucked stringed instruments have been revolutionized by electronic technology. Electric guitars dominate rock music, though they have only occasionally found their way into concert music.
Scales and Melody

As we noted in Chapter 2, music generally does not use the total continuous range of musical sounds. Instead, it draws on only a limited number of fixed pitches. These pitches can be assembled in a collection called a scale. In effect, a scale is the pool of pitches available for making music.

1 Scales

There are many different scales used in the musical cultures of the world. From them, musicians everywhere build an infinite array of melodies and other musical structures. If you sing to yourself the melody of one of your favorite songs, you will have employed the pitches of a scale. But how do scales—in particular the scales basic to Western art music—work?

The Octave

Any two pitches will have a certain distance, or difference in highness and lowness, between them. Musicians call this distance an interval. Of the many different intervals used in music, one called the octave has a special character that makes it particularly important.

If successive pitches are sounded one after another—say, running from low to high up the white keys on a piano—there comes a point at which a pitch seems in some sense to “duplicate” an earlier pitch, but at a higher level. This new pitch does not sound identical to the old one, but somehow the two sounds are very similar. They blend extremely well; they almost seem to melt into each other. This is the octave.

What causes the phenomenon of octaves? Recall from Chapter 2 that when strings vibrate to produce sound, they vibrate not only along their full length but also in halves and other fractions (page 14). A vibrating string that is exactly half as long as another will reinforce the longer string’s strongest overtone. This reinforcement causes the duplication effect of octaves.

As strings go, so go vocal cords: When men and women sing along together, they automatically sing in octaves, duplicating each other’s singing an octave or two apart. If you ask them, they will say they are singing “the same song”—not many will think of adding “at different octave levels.”
Choral singing, the route by which millions of people have come to know and love music.

As a result of the phenomenon of octaves, the full continuous range of pitches that we can hear falls into a series of "duplicating" segments. We divide these octave segments into smaller intervals, thereby creating scales.

The Diatonic Scale

The scale originally used in Western music is a set of seven pitches within the octave, called the diatonic scale. Dating from ancient Greek times, the diatonic scale is still in use today. When the first of the seven pitches is repeated at a higher duplicating pitch, the total is eight—hence the name octave, meaning "eight span."

Anyone who knows the series do re mi fa sol la ti do is at home with the diatonic scale. You can count out the octave for yourself starting with the first...
do as one and ending with the second do as eight. The set of white keys on a keyboard plays this scale. Shown in the following diagram is a keyboard and diatonic scale notes running through two octaves. The scale notes (pitches) are marked with their conventional letter names. Because there are seven pitches, only the letters up to G are used before returning to A.

The Chromatic Scale

The diatonic scale was the original, basic scale of Western music. At a later period, five more pitches were added between certain of the seven pitches of the diatonic scale, making a total of twelve. This is the chromatic scale, represented by the complete set of white and black keys on a keyboard.

The chromatic scale did not make the diatonic scale obsolete. For centuries Western composers used the chromatic scale freely while favoring the diatonic scale that is embedded in it. Keyboards reflect this practice, with their chromatic notes set back and thinner, and colored differently from the diatonic ones.

These five extra pitches caused a problem for musical notation. The pitches of the diatonic scale are indicated on the lines and spaces of the staff (see the following diagram); there are no positions in between, so no place for the new five pitches. To solve this problem, symbols such as those shown in the margin were introduced. B♭ stands for B flat, the pitch inserted between A and B; C♯ stands for C sharp, the pitch between C and D, and so on. (For more detail on the notation of pitches, see Appendix B.)

Half Steps and Whole Steps

You learned before that the difference, or distance, between any two pitches is called the interval between them. There are many different intervals between the notes of the chromatic scale, depending on which two notes you choose, including the octave that encompasses them all.
For our purposes, there are only two additional interval types that need be considered:

7 The smallest interval is the half step, or semitone, which is the distance between any two successive notes of the chromatic scale. On a keyboard, a half step is the interval between the closest adjacent notes, white or black. The distance from E to F is a half step; so is the distance from C to C sharp (C♯), D to E flat (Eb), and so on.

As the smallest interval in regular use, the half step is also the smallest that most people can "hear" easily and identify. Many tunes, such as "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," end with two half steps, one half step going down and then the same one going up again ("His truth is march-ing on").

7 The whole step, or whole tone, is equivalent to two half steps: C to D, D to E, E to F♯, and so on. "Three Blind Mice" starts with two whole steps, going down.

The chromatic scale consists exclusively of half steps. The diatonic scale, instead, includes both half steps and whole steps. As you can see in the keyboard picture below, between B and C and between E and F of the diatonic scale, the interval is a half step—there is no black key separating the white keys. Between the other pairs of adjacent notes, however, the interval is twice as big—a whole step.

In this way the diatonic and chromatic scales differ in the intervals between their adjacent pitches. In the following diagram, the two scales are shown in music notation in order to highlight the differences in their interval structure. The mixing of half steps and whole steps is a defining feature of the diatonic scale.

2 Melody

A melody is an organized series of pitches. Melodies can be built from any scale. Think for a moment of pitch and time as the two coordinates of a musical graph (see the diagram on page 29). A series of single pitches played in a certain rhythm will appear as dots, high or low, on the pitch/time grid. If we connect them by a line, we get a picture of the melody's overall shape or contour. And
in fact, musicians commonly speak of “melodic line,” or simply “line,” in this connection.

Melodies come in an unlimited array of shapes, and they convey a huge variety of emotional characters. A melody in which each note is higher than the last can seem to soar; a low note can feel like a setback; a long series of repeated notes on the same pitch can seem to wait ominously. The listener develops a real interest in how the line of a satisfactory melody is going to come out.

Of all music’s structures, melody is the one that moves people the most, that seems to evoke human sentiment most directly. Familiar melodies register simple qualities of feeling instantly and strongly. These qualities vary widely: strong and assertive — like a bugle call — in “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” mournful in “Summertime” or “Yesterday,” serene in “Amazing Grace,” extroverted and cheerful in “Happy Birthday.”

**Tunes**

A simple, easily singable, catchy melody such as a folk song, or a Christmas carol, or many popular songs is a *tune*. A tune is a special kind of melody. *Melody* is a term that includes tunes, but also much else.

“The Star-Spangled Banner,” which everyone knows, illustrates the general characteristics of tunes. See the box on page 30.

**Motives and Themes**

Tunes are relatively short; longer pieces, such as symphonies, may have tunes embedded in them, but they also contain other musical material. Two terms are frequently encountered in connection with melody in longer pieces of music: *motive* and *theme*.

A *motive* is a distinctive fragment of melody, distinctive enough so that it will be easily recognized when it returns again and again within a long composition. Motives are shorter than tunes, shorter even than phrases of tunes; they can be as short as two notes. Probably the most famous motive in all music is the four-note DA-DA-DA-AAAA motive in Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony. It is heard literally hundreds of times in the symphony, sometimes up front and sometimes as a restless element in the background.

![Motive](image)

The second term, *theme*, is the most general term for the basic subject matter of longer pieces of music. *Theme* is another name for “topic”: The themes or topics of an essay you might write are the main points you announce, repeat, develop, and hammer home. A composer treats musical themes in much the same way. The theme of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony consists of the brief DA-DA-DA-AAAA motive repeated over and over at different pitches — that is, played in *sequence*. The famous theme of the last movement of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony is a full tune, which we will hear several times on the DVD (see page 35).
Characteristics of Tunes

The best way to grasp the characteristics of tunes is by singing one you know, either out loud or in your head.

7 Division into Phrases Tunes fall naturally into smaller sections, called phrases. This is, in fact, true of all melodies, but with tunes the division into phrases is particularly clear and sharp.

In tunes with words (that is, songs), phrases tend to coincide with poetic lines. Most lines in a song lyric end with a rhyming word and a punctuation mark such as a comma. These features clarify the musical phrase divisions:

And the rockers’ red glare.
The bombs bursting in air.

Singing a song requires breathing—and the natural tendency is to breathe at the end of phrases. You may not need to breathe after phrase 1 of our national anthem, but you’d better not wait any longer than phrase 2:

\[ \text{Phrase 1} \quad \text{Phrase 2} \]

Oh—say can you see The dawn’s early light

7 Balance between Phrases In many tunes, all the phrases are two, four, or eight bars long. Blues tunes, for example, usually consist of three four-measure phrases, hence the term twelve-bar blues.

Most phrases of “The Star-Spangled Banner” are two measures long (see phrase 1 and phrase 2, above). But one phrase broadens out to four measures, with a fine effect: “Oh say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave.” You don’t want to breathe in the middle of this long phrase.

Other phrase lengths—three measures, five, and so on—can certainly occur in a tune and make for welcome contrast. For a good tune, the main requirement is that we sense a balance between the phrases, in terms of phrase lengths and in other terms, too, so that taken together the phrases add up to a well-proportioned whole.

7 Parallelism and Contrast Balance between phrases can be strengthened by means of parallelism. For example, phrases can have the same notes but different words (“Oh, say can you see,” “Whose broad stripes and bright stars”). Others have the same rhythm but different pitches (“Oh, say can you see,” “By the dawn’s early light”).

Sometimes phrases have the same general melodic shape, but one phrase is slightly higher or lower than the other (“And the rockets’ red glare,” “The bombs bursting in air”). Such duplication of a phrase at two or more different pitch levels, called sequence, occurs frequently in music, and is a hallmark of certain musical styles.

Composers also take care to make some phrases contrast with their neighbors—one phrase short, another long, or one phrase low, another high (perhaps even too high, at “O’er the land of the free”). A tune with some parallel and some contrasting phrases will seem to have a satisfying coherence and yet will avoid monotony.

7 Climax and Cadence A good tune has form: a clear, purposeful beginning, a feeling of action in the middle, and a firm sense of winding down at the end.

Many tunes have a distinct high point, or climax, which their earlier portions seem to be heading toward. Feelings rise as voices soar; a melodic high point is always an emotional high point. The climax of our national anthem emphasizes what was felt to be the really crucial word in it—“free.” Patriot Francis Scott Key put that word in that place. (Key wrote the words of “The Star-Spangled Banner”—the words only, adapted to an older melody.)

Then the later part of the tune relaxes from this climax, until it reaches a solid stopping place at the end. Emotionally, this is a point of relaxation and satisfaction. In a less definite way, the music also stops at earlier points in the tune—or, if it does not fully stop, at least seems to pause. The term for these interim stopping or pausing places is cadence.

Composers can write cadences with all possible shades of solidity and finality. “And the home of the brave” is a very final-sounding cadence; “That our flag was still there” has an interim feeling. The art of making cadences is one of the most subtle and basic processes in musical composition.
LISTENING EXERCISE 5

Melody and Tune

_Division into phrases_, _parallelism_ and _contrast_ between phrases, _sequence_, _climax_, and _cadence_: These are some characteristics of tunes that we have observed in “The Star-Spangled Banner.” They are not just inert characteristics—they are what make the tune work, and they are present in tunes of all kinds. Our example is a song by George and Ira Gershwin from the Depression era, which was also the jazz era: “Who Cares?” from the musical comedy _Of Thee I Sing_ (1932).

In “The Star-Spangled Banner” the _climax_ matches the text perfectly at “free.” Here “jubilee” makes a good match for the climax, and a melodic _sequence_ fits the words “I care for you / you care for me” neatly. “Who cares?” comes at 0:57 on our recording by the great jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald, after an introduction (called the _verse_)—typical of such songs—a sort of subsidiary tune, with words that will not be repeated.

0:12  Verse: Let it rain and thunder ... (eight more lines)  Includes a long _sequence_
0:48  Tempo changes
0:57  Tune: Who cares if the sky cares to fall in the sea?  First phrase of the tune
Who cares what banks fail in Yonkers?
Long as you’ve got a kiss that conquers.
Why should I care? Life is one long jubilee,
So long as I care for you and you care for me.

1:55  Tune played by the jazz band, today’s “big band”  _Contrasting phrase_
(with saxophone _breaks_: see page 382)

_Climax_ on “jubilee”
_Free _sequence_ (“I care for you”/“You care for me”)—
_verse_
CHAPTER 4

Harmony, Texture, Tonality, and Mode

A single melody is enough to qualify as music—sometimes, indeed, as great music. When people sing in the shower and when parents sing to their babies they are producing melody, and that is all, to everyone's full satisfaction. The same was true of the early Christian Church, whose music, Gregorian chant, consisted of more than two thousand different melodies—and melodies alone.

Today, however—and this is the outcome of a long and complicated historical development—it seems very natural to us to hear melodies together with other sounds. We are accustomed to hearing a folk singer singing and playing a guitar at the same time—accompanying herself on the guitar, as we say. In church, the congregation sings the hymns while the organist supplies the accompaniment.

Two concepts of basic importance in thinking about the way pitches sound together with each other are harmony and texture.

1 Harmony

The most general word musicians use to refer to the simultaneous sounding of different pitches is harmony. The folk singer’s melody is said to be harmonized. She uses a number of standard groupings of simultaneous pitches that work well in combination. These groupings are called chords. The changing chords provide a sort of constantly shifting sound background for the melody. Any melody can be harmonized in different ways using different chords, and the overall effect of the music depends to a great extent on the nature of these chords, or the harmony in general.

In most of the music we hear, harmony is almost as basic and important an element as melody. And, like melody, harmony is a powerful stimulus to our emotional responses to music.

Consonance and Dissonance

A pair of terms used in discussions of harmony is consonance and dissonance, meaning (roughly speaking) chords that sound at rest and those that sound tense, respectively. Discord is another term for dissonance. These qualities
depend on the kinds of intervals (see page 25) that are sounding simultaneously to make up these chords. Octaves are the most consonant of intervals. Half steps are the most dissonant, as you can hear by striking any two adjacent keys on a piano at the same time.

In everyday language, *discord* implies something unpleasant; discordant human relationships are to be avoided. But music does not avoid dissonance in its technical meaning, for a little discord supplies the subtle tensions that are essential to make music flow along. A dissonant chord leaves a feeling of expectation; it requires a consonant chord following it to complete the gesture and to make the music come to a point of stability. This is called *resolution*; the dissonance is said to be *resolved*. Without dissonance, music would be bland, like food without salt or spices.

2 Texture

*Texture* is the term used to refer to the way the various sounds and melodic lines occurring simultaneously in music interact or blend with one another. The word is adopted from textiles, where it refers to the weave of the various threads—loose or tight, even or mixed. A cloth such as tweed or denim, for instance, leaves the different threads clearly visible. In fine silk the weave is so tight and smooth that the threads can be impossible to detect.

Thinking again of the pitch/time graph on page 29, we can see that it is possible to plot more than one pitch for every time slot. Melody exists in the horizontal dimension, from left to right; texture in the vertical dimension, from top to bottom. For the moment, we leave the lower dots (below the melody) unconnected.

**Monophony**

*Monophony* (mo-náh-to-nee) is the term for the simplest texture, a single unaccompanied melody: Gregorian chant; singing in the shower; “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” before the second person comes in. Simple as this texture is, some very beautiful and sophisticated *monophonic* music has been composed, just as artists have done wonderful things with line drawings: See page 323.

**Homophony and Polyphony**

When there is only one melody of real interest and it is combined with other, less prominent sounds, the texture is called *homophonic*. A harmonized melody is an example of homophonic texture; for instance, one person singing the tune of “Yesterday” while playing chords on a guitar. We might indicate a chord on the pitch/time graph by a vertical box enclosing the dots (see margin). Each box represents a chord; the sum of these boxes represents the harmony. *Homophony* can be thought of as a tight, smooth texture—like silk, among the textiles.

When two or more melodies are played or sung simultaneously, the texture is described as *polyphonic*. In *polyphony* (po-lif-o-nee), the melodies are felt to be independent and of approximately equal interest. The whole is more than the sum of the parts, however; the way the melodies play off against one another makes for the possibility of greater richness and interest than if they

"Medicine, to produce health, must know disease; music, to produce harmony, must know discord."

*Plutarch, c. 46–120 C.E.*
were played singly. In the textile analogy, polyphony would be compared to a rough fabric in which the strands are all perceptible, such as a multicolored woolen blanket.

It's also important to recognize that polyphonic music automatically has harmony. For at every moment in time, on every beat, the multiple horizontal melodies create vertical chords; those chords make harmony. A word often used for polyphonic texture is contrapuntal, which comes from the word counterpoint, the technique of writing two or more melodies that fit together.

**Imitation**

Polyphonic texture, like so many other musical elements, cannot be categorized with any precision. One useful and important distinction, however, is between imitative polyphony and non-imitative polyphony.

**Imitative polyphony** results when the various lines sounding together use the same or fairly similar melodies, with one coming in shortly after another. The simplest example of imitative polyphony is a round, such as “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” or “Frère Jacques”; the richest kind is a fugue (see Chapter 10). In the following music example, you can see that each voice enters with the same notes but in staggered fashion; the second and third voices imitate the first:

**FIRST VOICE**

Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream.

**SECOND VOICE**

Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily.

**THIRD VOICE**

Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream.

**Non-imitative polyphony** occurs when the melodies are different from one another. An example that many will know is the typical texture of a New Orleans jazz band, with the trumpet playing the main tune flanked top and bottom by the clarinet and the trombone playing exhilarating melodies of their own.

**3 Tonality and Mode**

Tonality and mode are aspects of melody as well as harmony, and as such they might have been taken up earlier. We have deferred them till last because, even more than the other basic structures of music, they require careful explanation.

**Tonality**

We start with a basic fact about melodies and tunes: Melodies nearly always give a sense of focusing around a single “home” pitch that feels more important than do all the other pitches of the scale. Usually this is do in the do re mi fa sol la ti do scale (C D E F G A B C). This pitch feels fundamental, and on it
LISTENING EXERCISE 6

Texture

A famous passage from Beethoven furnishes a clear example of monophonic, polyphonic, and homophonic textures—the initial presentation of the so-called Joy Theme in Symphony No. 9, the “Choral” Symphony. The theme, a tune known around the world, takes its name from the words set to it, an enthusiastic ode to the joy that comes from human freedom, companionship, and reverence for the deity. The words are sung by soloists and a chorus.

But before anyone sings, the theme is played several times by the orchestra, in a way that suggests that joy is emerging out of nothingness into its full realization. Beginning with utterly simple monophony, and growing successively higher and louder, it is enriched by polyphony and then reaches its grand climax in homophony.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Register</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:00</td>
<td>Joy Theme</td>
<td>Low register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:49</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>An octave higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:36</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Two octaves higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:21</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Three octaves higher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Monophony: a single melodic line; cellos and double basses playing together, with no accompaniment whatsoever

Polyphony, non-imitative: the theme with two lines of counterpoint, in low strings (cello) and a mellow wind instrument (bassoon)

Homophony: full orchestra with trumpets prominent

Our example of imitative polyphony comes from the Symphony of Psalms, another symphony with a chorus, a major work by the twentieth-century composer Igor Stravinsky.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:00</td>
<td>A slow, winding melody, unaccompanied, played by an oboe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:25</td>
<td>The same melody enters in another instrument, a flute, as the oboe continues with new material; this produces two-part imitative counterpoint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:58</td>
<td>Third entry, second flute plays in a lower register—three-part counterpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:20</td>
<td>Fourth entry, second oboe—four-part counterpoint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The melody seems to come to rest most naturally. The other notes in the melody all sound close or distant, dissonant or consonant, in reference to the fundamental note, and some of them may actually seem to lean or lead toward it.

This homing instinct that we sense in melodies can be referred to in the broadest terms as the feeling of tonality. The music in question is described as tonal. The home pitch (do) is called the tonic pitch, or simply the tonic.

The easy way to identify the tonic is to sing the whole melody through, because the last note is almost invariably it. Thus “The Star-Spangled Banner” ends on its tonic, do: “and the home of the brave.” An entire piece of music, as well as just a short melody, can give this feeling of focusing on a home pitch and wanting to end there.

Major and Minor Modes

Turn back to page 27 and the diagram for the diatonic scale, the basic scale of Western music. This diagram, of course, showed only a portion of a longer scale extending all the way up the octaves, from the lowest limits of hearing to the highest. Our portion, covering two octaves, started from C because most melodies are oriented around C (do), as we’ve just explained.
The following diagram shows another portion of the diatonic scale, starting on A (la), because another class of melodies in Western music is oriented around A, not C:

![Diatonic Scale Diagram]

Look carefully at the diagram: Moving up through the octave from C to C, you encounter a different sequence of whole and half steps than you do moving from A to A. This difference gives melodies oriented around A a quality different from those oriented around C. The term for these different ways of centering or organizing the diatonic scale is modality; the different home pitches are said to determine the different modes of music. Music with the do (C) center is in the major mode. Music with the la (A) orientation is in the minor mode.

**Keys**

Mode and key are concepts that are often confused. Let us see if we can clarify them.

We have just seen how the two modes, the major with its tonic or home pitch on C and the minor on A, are derived from the diatonic scale. However, if you use all twelve notes of the chromatic scale, you can construct both the major and the minor modes starting from any note at all. Whichever note you choose as tonic, starting from there you can pick out the correct sequence of half steps and whole steps. This is because the chromatic scale includes all possible half steps and whole steps.

Thanks to the chromatic scale, then, major and minor modes can be constructed starting on any pitch. These different positions for the modes are called keys. If the major mode is positioned on C, the music is said to be in the key of C major, or just “in C”; positioned on D, the key is D major. Likewise we have the keys of C minor, D minor, and—as there are twelve pitches in the chromatic scale—a grand total of twenty-four different keys (twelve major and twelve minor).
Listening for the Major and Minor Modes

On paper, it is easiest to show the difference between major and minor if we compare a major and minor key that have the same tonic. So yet another diagram, below, compares C major with C minor. C minor is derived by duplicating, from C to C, the minor-mode arrangement of whole and half steps from A to A that we saw in the diagram on page 36.

The difference between the modes is easy to see: Three of the scale degrees are lower in the minor (hence the term minor, of course). The arrangement of intervals is not the same when you sing up or down the scales, and this in turn makes a great difference in the feel of melodies built from these scales.

Easy to see—but hearing the difference is another matter. This comes easily to some listeners, less easily to others. As a result of the three lower scale degrees, music in the minor mode tends to sound more subdued, more clouded than music in the major. It is often said that major sounds cheerful and minor sounds sad, and this is true enough in a general way; but there are many exceptions, and in any case people can have different ideas about what constitutes sadness and cheerfulness in music.

Learning to distinguish the major and minor modes requires comparative listening. Listen especially for the third scale degree up from the tonic. “Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho” and “We Three Kings of Orient Are” are both in the minor mode. Singing them through, we can practice recognizing the characteristic minor-mode sound involving the third scale degree at the final cadence.

Compare this with the third note up from the tonic at the end of major-mode songs such as “My Country, ’Tis of Thee,” “Row, Row, Row Your Boat,” “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and many others. It sounds brighter, more positive.

Is it right to represent the major and minor modes by comedy and tragedy masks? Yes, but only in a general sense—there are many nuances between these extremes.

- Access an interactive tutorial on the major and minor modes in the e-book at bedfordstmartins.com/listen
LISTENING EXERCISE 7

Mode and Key

Modality is probably most obvious when you hear a minor mode melody (or phrase of melody) and then hear it with the mode changed to major. A short passage from the String Quartet in A Minor by Franz Schubert is a lovely illustration of this change.

0:00  *pp* A melancholy melody in the minor mode. Listen to the first violin above the rustling accompaniment in the lower string instruments.

0:47  The beginning of the melody returns, changed to the major mode.

Listen to more of the Schubert quartet for a change in key:

1:04  *ff* Agitated; back in the minor mode. Lower instruments alternate with the solo violin.

1:39  *p* A quiet cadence, still in the same key, but followed by modulation

1:56  *p* Reaching a new key, for a new theme. This theme is in the major mode, calm and sunny.

For a series of modulations to several different keys, go to a passage from Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5, the "Emperor" Concerto. Here the key changes stand out clearly because the modulations are carried out so brusquely—a Beethoven specialty.

0:00  Lively music for the piano, *f*, followed by a *f* response from the orchestra

0:28  Modulation (French horns)

*New key*: Similar music for piano, but *pp*, followed by the same orchestral response, *f*

1:03  Similar modulation (French horns). The music seems to be searching for a place to settle.

*Another new key*: piano, *p*, and orchestra, *f*, as before

1:36  The piano bursts in, *f*, in the same key but in the minor mode. It begins modulating to further new keys in a more complicated way than before.

Listening for Keys and Modulation

The major and minor modes can be said to differ from one another intrinsically, for in each mode the pitches form their own special set of intervals and interval relationships. As we have seen, C major and C minor, while sharing the same central or tonic pitch, have their own individual arrangements of half- and whole-step intervals.

Different keys, however, merely entail the same set of intervals moved to a new position within the pitch continuum. This is a significant difference, but not an intrinsic one. First base is different from second base, but only because the same sort of bag has been put in a significant new place.

As for actually *hearing* keys—that is, recognizing the different keys—for some listeners this presents an even greater problem than hearing modality, though to others it comes more easily. The important thing is not to be able to identify keys in themselves, but rather to be able to hear when keys change. For changing the key of music changes its mood or the way it feels; generations of composers have used this resource for some of their most powerful effects. Such changes of key—that is, changes of the tonic or home pitch—are called modulations. You will have many opportunities to hear the effects modulations can create; here you should try Listening Exercise 7, the most challenging one yet, listening for changes in mode and key.
CHAPTER 5

Musical Form and Musical Style

Form is a general word with a long list of dictionary definitions. As applied to the arts, form is an important concept that refers to the shape, arrangement, relationship, or organization of the various elements. In poetry, for example, the elements of form are words, phrases, meters, rhymes, and stanzas; in painting, they are lines, colors, shapes, and space.

1 Form in Music

In music, the elements of form and organization are those we have already discussed: rhythm, dynamics, tone color, melody, harmony, and texture. A musical work, whether a simple song or a symphony, is formed or organized by means of repetitions of some of these elements, and by contrasts among them. The repetitions may be strict or free (that is, exact or with some variation). The contrasts may be of many different kinds—the possibilities are virtually limitless—conveying many different kinds of feeling.

Over the centuries and all over the world, musicians have learned to create longer and more impressive pieces in this way: symphonies, operas, works for the Javanese gamelan or Japanese gagaku orchestras, and more. Each piece is a specific sound experience in a definite time span, with a beginning, middle, and end, and often with subtle routes between. Everyone knows that music can make a nice effect for a minute or two. But how does music extend itself—and hold the listener's interest—for ten minutes, or half an hour, or three whole hours at a time?

This is one of the main functions of musical form. Form is the relationship that connects those beginnings, middles, and ends.

Form and Feeling

Form in art also has a good deal to do with its emotional quality; it is a mistake to consider form as a merely structural or intellectual matter. Think of the little (or big) emotional click we get at the end of a limerick or any poem with a “punchline,” where the accumulated meanings of the words are summed up with the final rhyme. On a small scale, this is an effect to which form contributes. Similarly, when at the end of a symphony a previously heard melody comes back, with new orchestration and new harmonies, the special feeling this gives

“Music has four essential elements: rhythm, melody, harmony, and tone color. These four ingredients are the composer's materials. He works with them in the same way that any other artisan works with his materials.”

Aaron Copland, What to Listen for in Music
Form in Painting

A Madonna by Raphael Sanzio (1483–1520), built out of two cunningly nested triangles. To balance the boys at the left, the Virgin faces slightly to the right, her extended foot “echoing” their bare flesh. On a larger scale, the activity at the left is matched by a steeper landscape.

us emerges from a flood of memory; we remember the melody from before, in its earlier version. That effect, too, is created by form.

How easy is it, actually, to perceive form in music and to experience the feelings associated with form? Easy enough with a short tune, such as “The Star-Spangled Banner”—that’s what the analysis on page 30 was all about. The various phrases of this tune, with their repetitions, parallel features, contrasts, and climax, provide a microcosm of musical form in longer pieces. A large-scale composition such as a symphony is something like a greatly expanded tune, and its form is experienced in basically the same way.

To be sure, a symphony requires more from the listener—more time and more attention—than a tune does. Aware of the potential problem here, composers scale their musical effects accordingly. The larger the piece, the more strongly the composer is likely to help the memory along by emphasizing the repetitions and contrasts that determine the musical form.

Form and Forms

Like the word rhythm (see page 7), the word form has a general meaning and also a more specific one. “Form” in general refers to the organization of elements in a musical work, but “a form” refers to one of many standardized formal patterns that composers have used over the centuries. The ones treated later in this book are listed in the margin.

The fixed elements in such forms provide a welcome source of orientation for listeners, but they are always general enough to allow composers endless possibilities on the detailed level. The quality and feeling of works in the same standardized or conventional form can therefore vary greatly.

Form in Poetry

Flies:
Adam
Had ‘em.

The poet creates rhyme and meter to add a little lift, and a smile, to the prose observation “Adam had flies” (or “Ever since Adam, we’ve all suffered”—and Eve: you gotta believe!).

The Main Musical Forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>strophic form</td>
<td>55, 240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A A A . . .)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A B A form</td>
<td>141, 169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ground bass</td>
<td>87, 124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fugue</td>
<td>95, 131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ritornello form</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baroque dance form</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sonata form</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minuet form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Classical dance form)</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rondo</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>double-exposition form</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theme and variations</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Musical forms, as standardized patterns, are conventionally expressed by letter diagrams, such as A B A or a b a (small letters tend to be used for shorter sections of music). They will be used again and again in this book. More complicated forms come about through “nesting”:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
A & B & A \\
a & b & a & c & d & c & a & b & a
\end{array}
\]

Two basic factors create musical form: repetition and contrast. In A B A form, one of the simplest, the element of repetition is A and the element of contrast is B. Some sort of tune or theme or other musical section is presented at the beginning (A), then comes another section (B) that contrasts with the first, and then the first one again (A). If A returns with significant modification, this can be indicated by a prime mark: A'.

Seems clear enough. Yet the letters tell us only so much. With any particular work, what about the specific music they stand for? Is B in a different mode? A different key? Does it present material that contrasts in rhythm, texture, or tone color—or does it work its contrast by ringing changes on the original material, on A? The returns to A material in A B A' form, too, can convey very different feelings. One return can sound exciting, another unexpected, while yet another provides a sense of relief.

So diagramming forms—getting the letters right—is just a first step in music appreciation. The real point about great music is the way composers refine, modify, and personalize conventional forms for their own expressive purposes.

Musical Genres

One often hears symphonies, sonatas, and operas referred to as “forms” of music. Actually this is loose terminology, best avoided in the interests of clarity, because symphonies and other works can be composed in completely different standardized forms. Thus, the last movement of Joseph Haydn’s Symphony No. 95 is in rondo form, whereas the last movement of Hector Berlioz’s Fantastic Symphony follows no standard form whatsoever.

Form in Architecture

The central, contrasting unit of this building seems almost to flow into the unit at the right. The musical analogy would be to an interesting A B A' form, in which A comes back after B in an expanded version (A'), and that version includes some new rhythm or instrument that we first heard during B.
LISTENING EXERCISE 8

Musical Form

"The Star-Spangled Banner" has one of the simplest forms, a a b. "Oh, say can you see... the twilight's last gleaming" is a, "Whose broad stripes... gallantly streaming" is the second a, and the rest of the anthem is b. Section b makes a definite contrast with a by means of its new melody and higher range, as we've seen on page 30.

When sections of music are not identical but are considered essentially parallel, they are labeled a, a', a'', and so on. The first theme of Schubert's Quartet in A Minor is in a a' a'' form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:00</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Melancholy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:21</td>
<td>a'</td>
<td>Begins like a, but the melody lasts longer and goes higher and lower than in a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:47</td>
<td>a''</td>
<td>The beginning now turns luminously to the major mode.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Smaller form elements (a, b, a') can be nested in larger ones, marked with capital letters: A, B, A'. A more extended example comes from an all-time classical favorite, the Christmas ballet The Nutcracker by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Tchaikovsky used the Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy mainly to show off the celesta, a rare instrument (see page 20). The A B A' form of the dance breaks down into a a' b b a'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:00</td>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction: The 2/4 meter is previewed by low stringed instruments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:08</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Solo for celesta, with comments by a bass clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:23</td>
<td>a'</td>
<td>Begins like a, but the ending is different—on a new pitch and harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:37</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Contrast with a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:44</td>
<td>b</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:51</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transition: The music has a preparatory quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:07</td>
<td>A'</td>
<td>Celesta an octave higher, with a quiet new click in the violins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:22</td>
<td>a'</td>
<td>The high celesta is a very striking sound.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The new orchestration is what gives this A B A' form its prime mark—not changes in melody or harmony, as is usually the case. More strictly, the form could be marked introduction A (a a') B (b b) transition A' (a'' a'''), but this level of detail is seldom needed.

The best term for these general categories of music is genre (jahn-ruh), borrowed from French. A genre can be defined by its text (a madrigal has Italian verses of a specific kind), or by its function (a Mass is written for a Roman Catholic service), or by the performing forces (a quartet is for four singers or instrumentalists). The main genres of Western music are listed in the margin on page 43.

2 Musical Style

Style, like form, is another of those broad, general words—general but very necessary. The style of a tennis player is the particular way he or she reaches up for the serve, follows through on the forehand, rushes the net, hits the ball deep or short, and so on. A lifestyle means the whole combination of things one does and doesn't do: the food one eats, the way one dresses and talks, one's habits of thought and feeling.

The style of a work of art, similarly, is the combination of qualities that make it distinctive. One composer's style may favor jagged rhythms, simple
harmonies, and tunes to the exclusion of other types of melody. Another may prefer certain kinds of tone color or texture; still another may concentrate on a particular form. The type of emotional expression a composer cultivates is also an important determinant of musical style.

One can speak of the lifestyle of a generation as well as the lifestyle of a particular person. Similarly, a distinction can be made between the musical style of a particular composer and the style of a historical period. For example, to a large extent George Frideric Handel’s manner of writing falls within the parameters of the Baroque style of his day. But some features of Handel’s style are unique, and perhaps it is those features that embody his musical genius.

Musical Style and Lifestyle

In any historical period or place, the musical style bears some relation to the lifestyle in general; this seems self-evident. Perhaps the point is clearest with popular music, where distinct (and distinctly different) worlds are evoked by rock, rap, and country music, to say nothing of earlier styles such as 1950s rhythm and blues or 1930s swing.

Older styles of music, too, relate to total cultural situations, though how this works in detail is not fully understood. We can, however, at least suggest some of these cultural connections to music of the various historical periods. In the Prelude chapters for each time period in this book, we sketch certain aspects of the culture, history, and lifestyle of the time. We then briefly outline the musical style and, wherever possible, suggest correlations. Then the musical style is examined in more detail through individual composers and individual pieces of music in the chapters that follow.

These individual pieces are our principal concern—not history, or culture, or concepts of musical style in the abstract. Learning the basic concepts of music (as we have tried to do in this unit) is useful only insofar as it focuses and sharpens the process of listening to actual music. This book is called Listen, and it rests on the belief that the love of music depends first and foremost on careful listening to particular pieces. But such listening never happens in a cultural vacuum; for all of us it takes place in a vivid, experienced context of some kind. The general information presented here on history, culture, styles, and genres is intended to remake, in some small way, our own listening contexts—and hence reshape our listening experiences.

The Main Musical Genres

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<th>The Main Musical Genres</th>
<th>page</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Baroque concerto</td>
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<tr>
<td>concerto grosso</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>suite</td>
<td>95, 136</td>
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<td>oratorio</td>
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<td>church cantata</td>
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<td>symphony</td>
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<tr>
<td>sonata</td>
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<td>Classical concerto</td>
<td>188</td>
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<tr>
<td>string quartet</td>
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<td>lied</td>
<td>238</td>
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<td>song cycle</td>
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<td>concert overture</td>
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<td>program symphony</td>
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<td>symphonic poem</td>
<td>283</td>
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<td>opera</td>
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Subtypes of opera:

| opera seria                 | 141  |
| opera buffa                 | 194  |
| music drama                 | 270  |

Early Music Genres

Gregorian chant genres:

| antiphon                    | 51   |
| sequence                   | 53   |
| hymn                       | 66   |
| organum                    | 56   |
| motet                      | 59, 76 |
| Mass                       | 68   |
| madrigal                   | 77   |
| pavan, galliard            | 79   |
| passacaglia                | 97   |
Coming to the end of Unit I, after a lot of prose and a number of hasty musical excerpts, let's listen now to a whole composition at some length: The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra—the young of all ages—by Benjamin Britten, who was the leading English composer of the twentieth century. Follow the audio from the Companion DVD with Listening Chart 2.

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913–1976)
The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra (1946)

Benjamin Britten, an English composer who wrote a lot of music for children, undertook The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra as an educational responsibility, in order to teach listeners the timbres of orchestral instruments. We have already listened to the piece with this aim in mind. But Britten also set out to create a coherent and interesting musical composition. Listening to it again, we can review several of the concepts introduced in Unit I.

The work uses one basic theme—a short, rather bouncy tune by an earlier English composer, Henry Purcell (see page 92). Britten first displays the tune in a grand setting for full orchestra, harmonized with his own rich chords. Then he has each of the four orchestral choirs play it: woodwinds, brass, strings... but he knew he had to cheat when he got to the percussion. (The main percussion instruments are pitch-impaired and can't play tunes.) It was clever, then, to prepare for the not-very-thematic percussion statement at 2:07 by freeing up the theme a little in the preceding brass and stringed statements, and afterward to remind us of the original tune, played verbatim by the full orchestra again. (Britten makes up for his cheat by a particularly brilliant percussion episode later.)

So far, everything has been in the minor mode and in triple meter. But next comes a series of variations on the theme—versions of the theme varied in melody, rhythm, texture, mode, tempo, everything. We study the variation form on page 174. The first section of the piece has given us a theme in the minor mode and its repetitions, but the first variations already switch to the major mode. Variation 3, in a swinging triple meter, is followed at once by a variation in duple meter. Many variations—Variations 1, 3, and 4, to begin with—involve a great deal of repetition of a single motive. There are variations in fast tempo that last for hardly more than half a minute, and others in slow tempo that take nearly three times as long. Along the way, in keeping with Britten's teaching aims in the work, each variation features a particular instrument (or family of instruments) from the orchestra.

In variation form, variety is the order of the day. This central, variation section of the Young Person's Guide offers, in addition to the catalogue of instrumental sounds, an equally dazzling catalogue of the endlessly varied moods that can be represented in music.

At the end, Britten writes an extremely vigorous fugue, based on yet another version of the Purcell tune. We study fugue on page 131. For now, notice that this section of the Young Person's Guide provides an excellent example of imitative polyphony.

And our virtuoso composer has still one more trick up his sleeve: He brings the tune back triumphant just before the end, unvaried, while the fugue is still going on. Both can be heard simultaneously. This is non-imitative polyphony. The return of the tune wraps up the whole long piece very happily as a unique variety of A B A' form.
### LISTENING CHART 2

**Britten, *The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra***

17 min., 13 sec.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:00</td>
<td>THEME</td>
<td>Full orchestra</td>
<td>Note the prominent <em>sequence</em> in the middle of the Purcell tune. You will hear snatches of this in some of the variations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:23</td>
<td>Transition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:42</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td><em>WOODWIND</em> choir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:11</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td><em>BRASS</em> choir</td>
<td>Ending is changed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:42</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td><em>STRING</em> choir</td>
<td>Theme is changed further.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:07</td>
<td>PERCUSSION</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Theme&quot; only in principle; only some rhythms remain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:26</td>
<td>THEME</td>
<td>Full orchestra</td>
<td>Same as the first time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:50</td>
<td>Variation 1</td>
<td>Flutes and piccolo</td>
<td>(harp accompaniment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:29</td>
<td>Variation 2</td>
<td>Oboes</td>
<td>Beginning of the tune transformed into a slow, romantic melody in oboe 1; oboe 2 joins in two-part <em>polyphony</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:32</td>
<td>Variation 3</td>
<td>Clarinet family</td>
<td>Two clarinets trade agile figures, swinging from high to low pitches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:14</td>
<td>Variation 4</td>
<td>Bassoon</td>
<td>Typical qualities of the bassoon: <em>staccato</em> (comic effect) and <em>legato</em> (melodious)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:11</td>
<td>Variation 5</td>
<td>Violins</td>
<td>With chordal accompaniment — particularly clear <em>homophonic</em> texture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:56</td>
<td>Variation 6</td>
<td>Violas</td>
<td>Slower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:43</td>
<td>Variation 7</td>
<td>Cellos</td>
<td>Another slow, romantic melody falls into a a’ form (clarinet in the background)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:43</td>
<td>Variation 8</td>
<td>Double bass</td>
<td>Solo — humorous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:40</td>
<td>Variation 9</td>
<td>Harp</td>
<td>In the background is a string <em>tremolo</em>, caused by bowing a single note extremely rapidly, so that it sounds like a single trembling note.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:31</td>
<td>Variation 10</td>
<td>French horns</td>
<td>With snare drum, suggesting a fast military march</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:11</td>
<td>Variation 11</td>
<td>Trumpets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:47</td>
<td>Variation 12</td>
<td>Trombones, tuba</td>
<td>Typical qualities of the trombone: humorously pompous, and mysterious chords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:48</td>
<td>PERCUSSION</td>
<td></td>
<td>Timpani and bass drum (heard throughout the variation), cymbals (0:18), tambourine (0:28), triangle (0:32), snare drum (0:40), Chinese block (0:44), xylophone (0:50), caxanets (1:01), gong (1:07), whip (1:14), xylophone and triangle (1:41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:43</td>
<td>FUGUE</td>
<td>Full orchestra</td>
<td><em>Imitative polyphony</em> starts with flutes, then oboe, clarinet (same order as above!).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:30</td>
<td>THEME</td>
<td>Full orchestra</td>
<td>Climax; slower than before. The tune is superimposed on the fugue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Access Interactive Listening Chart 2 at bedfortsmartins.com/listen
day, combining poetry, drama, music, vocal virtuosity, scenic splendor, dance, and more. Spectacle was of the essence in Baroque opera—spectacular singing, to be sure, but also spectacular stage architecture, featuring amazing transformation scenes and the like. Systems of pulleys and counterweights could rapidly change the set from a palace to a magic garden, with gods and goddesses descending from the heavens in a fiery chariot. Opera offered a wealth of satisfactions, then—most obviously, no doubt, for the vocal connoisseurs of the day, the fans of great singers. They are said to have gossiped, gambled, and flirted in the boxes while waiting for the special moments when their favorites sang.

But opera’s ability to project emotion was the real basis of its appeal. First and foremost, opera offered a stage on which individual singers could step forward to express feelings in the most direct and powerful fashion. Since the singers were portraying characters in a drama, they were repeatedly thrown into situations that made it seem natural for them to experience (and express) intense emotions.

Such emotions were made all the more intense by music. Emotion could be intensified by great vocal virtuosity, too. The most obvious kind of vocal virtuosity is coloratura singing—fast, brilliant runs, scales, high notes, vocal cadenzas, and so on, stressing technique for its own sake. But the legendary singers of old moved their audiences not only by singing faster than anyone else but also by singing more beautifully, more delicately, and more emotionally.
Italian Opera Seria

The principal type of Italian Baroque opera was opera seria, or serious opera. The plots—mostly derived from ancient history, with all kinds of alterations and additions—were designed to stir up powerful emotions, such as passion, rage, grief, and triumph. Such plots gave the singers many opportunities to excel in one kind of expression or another. Opera seria consisted mainly of solo singing by sopranos and mezzo-sopranos, including castrati (see page 142). Brilliant high voices were prized above all. Tenors and basses played subordinate roles, and there were few duets or choruses.

The words of an opera are called the libretto (“little book”), and their author is the librettist. Librettists had to build up the drama as a whole from a series of brief texts, alternating with one another, for recitatives and arias.

Recitative

Recitative (reh-sih-ta-téev), from the Italian word for “recite,” is a technique of declaiming words musically in a heightened, theatrical manner. There is always an instrumental accompaniment. The singing voice closely follows the free rhythm of emotional speech; it mirrors and indeed exaggerates the natural ups and downs that occur as an actor raises his or her voice at a question, lowers it in “asides,” or cries out angrily. The composer makes no effort to organize these speechlike utterances into real melodies; the point is speechlike song.

Recitative was used for plot action, dialogue, and other places in the drama where it is particularly important for the words to be brought out. Text phrases and individual words are not ordinarily repeated any more than they would be in speech.

Most of the time, recitative accompaniment was kept to a minimum—basso continuo (typically cello and harpsichord) alone—so that the singer could interpret the dialogue or the action as spontaneously as possible. Italians at the time called recitative with continuo accompaniment secco recitative, from the Italian meaning “dry” (think of the sound of the harpsichord).

In every opera seria, however, one or two of the most excited, emotion-filled recitatives were provided with orchestral accompaniment of one kind or another. This type is called accompanied recitative.

Aria

An aria is a set piece for solo singer that has much more musical elaboration and coherence than recitative. The vocal part is more melodic, and ordinarily the accompaniment includes the orchestra, not just the continuo, as in secco recitative. Here the singer-actor is mulling over his or her emotions at some leisure, “getting his feelings out,” instead of reacting moment by moment, as in recitative. Consequently in arias the repetition of poetic phrases or words is common and, in principle, appropriate.

The standard form for the Baroque Italian opera aria is da capo form, A B A (less usual is free da capo form, A B A’). Both the words and music of A are repeated after B; da capo (“from the head”) is a direction on scores meaning repeat from the beginning. The composer wrote the music for A and B only, leaving the performers to do the rest. Indeed, the singer would do more than just repeat A. He or she would also ornament the music with improvised runs, cadenzas, and so on, so as to create an exciting enhanced effect the second time around.

*"If we can neither get [the famous castrato] Senesino, nor Carestini, then Mr. Handel desires to have a man soprano and a woman contralto, and the price (for both) must not exceed 1100 guineas, and that the persons must set out for London the latter end of August, and that no engagement must be made with one without a certainty of getting the other."*

Letter from one of Handel’s agents, 1730
The Castrato

Intimately tied up with Italian opera seria was the castrato singer (plural: castrati). The starring male roles in opera were hardly ever sung by tenors or basses but rather by men who had submitted to castration at puberty in order to preserve their voices in the soprano or alto range. At its best, the castrato voice was a prized virtuoso instrument, more powerful and brilliant than a woman’s soprano.

This practice seems an outrage to us today, as it did to everybody outside Italy at the time (and to many in Italy itself). Nevertheless, in Italy and across most of Europe—France was a notable exception—castrati were gladly accepted because of their spectacular singing and given top billing, along with women prima donnas. But the presence of frankly unnatural men in the main opera roles, which were of course usually romantic roles, made it hard to believe in the ideal of opera as serious drama in music. Contributing to the side-show quality, it was common in opera seria plots for male characters to disguise themselves as women (and vice versa). Then the male soprano voice was used for female impersonation.

The most famous castrati were international stage figures. Some were pampered stars and objects of ridicule at the same time, such as Caffarelli, who was once jailed for indecent gestures during a performance. Others led more dignified careers. Carlo Boschi, whose stage name was Farinelli, the most famous of all, was also a composer and later in life an influential figure at the royal court of Spain.

Most castrati, however, labored far from the limelight, singing in Italian churches. The last known castrato, Alessandro Moreschi, a member of the Sistine Choir in Rome who was born as late as 1858, made recordings in 1902–03; you can listen to some of them on YouTube.

You can also rent the 1994 film Farinelli, for which a virtual castrato voice was invented by digital wizardry.

For connoisseurs of the day, a great deal depended on the A repeats, since it was there that the star singers really dazzled their audiences. Many modern singers have relearned the lost improvisational art of the Baroque era, and we can recapture some of the original excitement on recordings.

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

Julius Caesar (Giulio Cesare in Egitto) (1724)

As a young man, Handel wrote a few German operas for the Hamburg opera company (most of the music is lost) and a few Italian operas for theaters in Florence and Venice. In his maturity he wrote as many as forty Italian operas for London, where he helped start a fad for imported Italian opera. Probably the most famous of them is Julius Caesar, one of a trio of Handel masterpieces written in the years 1724–25, the others being Rodelinda and Tamerlano.

Background Like most opera seria plots of the late Baroque era, Julius Caesar draws on Roman history. Cleopatra, the famous queen of Egypt, applied her formidable charms to Julius Caesar and then, after Caesar’s assassination, also to his successor Mark Antony. Shakespeare deals with the second of these famous affairs in his play Antony and Cleopatra; Handel tackles the first.

Handel’s librettist added a great deal of nonhistorical plot material. History tells that Pompey—who comes into the story because he waged war on Caesar and lost and fled to Egypt—was murdered by one of his soldiers, but
in the opera the murderer is Cleopatra's brother Ptolemy. Pompey's widow, Cornelia, is thrown into Ptolemy's harem and has to resist his advances (among others'). Her son Sextus rattles around the opera swearing vengeance on Ptolemy and finally kills him. The historical Cleopatra poisoned Ptolemy, but her character in the opera is whitewashed, and she gets to sing some of the most ravishing, seductive music while disguised as her own maid. All this gives a taste of the typical complications in an opera seria plot.

Although the role of Sextus, for mezzo-soprano, was presumably meant for a castrato, at the first performance it was sung by a woman singer who was one of Handel's regulars.

**Aria, “La giustizia”** Sextus promises revenge on Ptolemy, not for the first time, in the aria “La giustizia” (Justice). This aria is preceded or, rather, set up by a recitative (as usual). Since it makes more sense to study recitative when the words are in English, we leave that discussion until we get to Handel's *Messiah*.

The aria starts with a ritornello played by the string orchestra, like the opening section of a concerto movement (see page 121). It establishes the mood right away:

The "affect" Handel means to convey by this strenuous, vigorous music is anger, and Sextus starts up with the same music. We will hear this ritornello three more times, once in a shortened form, prior to the second A section.

Apart from this shortened ritornello, “La giustizia” is in strict A B A (da capo) form. In the A section Handel goes through the words three times, with the orchestra interjecting to allow the singer to catch her breath. (These short spacers are not marked on the Listen box.) Notice how the music tends to explode angrily on certain key words, principally by the use of coloratura (fast scales and turns), as on “ven-det-ta” (vengeance) and “tradi-tor” (traitor). Even more vivid are the sudden high notes on “pu-nil-re” (punish) and a suspense-making long note on “tradi-tor.”

There is a flamboyant effect typical of the Baroque near the end of A, where Sextus dramatically comes to a stop. After a breathless pause, he moves on to make a very forceful final cadence. Revenge is nigh!

The aria's B section introduces new words and some new keys for contrast; both features are typical in da capo arias. Otherwise it is brief and seems rather subdued—the strings drop out, leaving only the continuo as accompaniment. What the audience is waiting for is the repeat of A, where we can forget about Sextus and get to admire a display of vocal virtuosity. Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, the singer on our recording, adds brilliant improvised flourishes to the high notes on “pu-nil-re” and the long note on “tradi-tor.” When she gets to the fermata in A she fills it in with a cadenza (page 128), and her (ornamented) final cadence sweeps us away. Anyone who can carry off a feat like this, the aria seems to say, will be more than a match for Ptolemy.

Vocal cadenzas at the time were short, because they were supposed to be sung in a single breath—thus showing off virtuoso breath control as well as vocal technique and inventiveness.
### Handel, *Julius Caesar*, Aria “La giustizia”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:00</td>
<td>A RITORNELLO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:16</td>
<td>St. 1: first time</td>
<td>La giustizia ha già sull’ arco Pronto strale alla vendetta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Justice now has in its bow The arrow primed for vengeance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:50</td>
<td>St. 1: second time</td>
<td>La giustizia ... etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>To carigate a traitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:10</td>
<td>St. 1: third time</td>
<td>La giustizia ... etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:31</td>
<td>RITORNELLO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:47</td>
<td>B St. 2:</td>
<td>Quanto è tarda la saetta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The later the arrow is shot, the crueler is the pain suffered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tanto più crudele aspetta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>By a dastardly heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>La sua pena un empio cor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:15</td>
<td>A RITORNELLO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:22</td>
<td>(abbreviated)</td>
<td>La giustizia ... etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Justice ... etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*For a note on Italian pronunciation, see page 89: “La joostidzia (ah) jah sool arco.”*

### 2 Oratorio

Sacred, or religious, vocal music of the Baroque era exhibits much diversity in style and form. Most of it was written directly for church services, and so its style and form depend first of all on whether those services were of the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, or Anglican rite. Every service has places where music is appropriate, or even specified by the liturgy. In principle, each place gives rise to a different musical genre.

There are, however, two general factors that are important for all Baroque sacred-music genres — oratorio and passion, cantata, Mass, and motet. One of these factors is traditional in origin; the other is specific to the Baroque era.

7 The traditional factor is the participation of the choir. A simple point, perhaps; choral music has had a functional place in the religious music of virtually all rites and ages. For when one person utters a religious text, he or she speaks as an individual, but when a choir does so, it speaks as a united community. A church choir can be said to speak for the whole church, even for the whole of Christianity.

7 The other important fact about Baroque sacred vocal music is its strong tendency to borrow from secular vocal music — which is to say, from opera. In an era fascinated by the theater, the church grew more and more theatrical. Arias inspired by Italian opera seria appear even in Baroque settings of the Catholic Mass. Solo singers could display their vocal prowess at the same time as they were presenting parts of the divine service.

The most operatic of all religious genres was oratorio, which existed in Catholic and Protestant countries alike. An oratorio is basically an opera on a religious subject, such as an Old Testament story or the life of a saint. It has a narrative plot in several acts, real characters, and implied action — even though oratorios were not staged, but presented in concert form, that is, without scenery, costumes, or acting. Oratorio takes over such operatic features as recitatives.
If you like, jump ahead to page 222 for Ludwig van Beethoven’s String Quartet in F, Op. 135. Or go back to Listening Exercise 7 (page 38) and listen to part of a string quartet movement by the still younger Franz Schubert.

Chamber Music

The string quartet was the main but not the only genre developed at this time for small forces in relatively intimate circumstances. Chamber music is a term for music designed to be played in a room (a chamber)—in a palace drawing room or in a small hall. Chamber music can be taken as encompassing compositions for from two to nine players. Other types are the piano trio (violin, cello, piano: a favorite of Haydn) and string quintets (string quartet plus another low instrument; Mozart wrote four superb quintets with two violas, and one of Schubert’s great masterpieces is a quintet with two cellos).

Broadly speaking, what has been said above about the intimate character of the quartet applies to all chamber music, though it’s probably clear enough that a string octet must be less subtle and more orchestral than a string trio.

4 Opera Buffa

In the late eighteenth century, comic opera grew to equal in importance the serious opera that was a hallmark of the Baroque era (see page 141). Roman emperors and their courtly confidants gave way to contemporary peasant girls and soldiers; castratos were edged aside by basses specializing in comical rants and exasperations, the so-called buffo basses (buffone is Italian for “buffoon”). Happy endings were the result of tricks and schemes rather than the decrees of magnanimous princes.

Comic opera stars had to be funny; they had to act, not just sing. The new flexibility of the Classical style was perfectly suited to the unexpected and swift effects that are the essence of comedy. As much as its humor, it was this “natural,” lifelike quality of comedy that appealed to audiences of the Enlightenment. Enlightened monarch Joseph II of Austria actively promoted comic opera.

Italian comic opera was the most important, though there were also parallel developments in Germany, France, and England. Serious Italian opera was called opera seria; comic Italian opera was called opera buffa. Just as Italian
opera seria was very popular in London in Handel's time, so was Italian opera buffa in Vienna at the time of Haydn and Mozart. Thus Haydn, whose court duties with the Esterházys included running their opera house, wrote twelve comic operas—all in Italian. Mozart in his mature years wrote six: three in German and three in Italian.

The Ensemble

Baroque opera seria, as we have seen (page 141), employs two elements in alternation: recitatives for the dialogue and the action, and numbers that are fully musical—almost always arias—for static meditation and "tableaus" of emotional expression. Classical opera buffa works with the same elements, except that the fully musical numbers include ensembles as well as solo arias.

An ensemble is a number sung by two or more people. And given the Classical composers' skill in incorporating contrast into their music, they were able to make their ensembles depict the different sentiments of the participating characters simultaneously. This meant that sentiments could be presented much more swiftly and vividly: swiftly, because we don't have to wait for the characters to sing whole arias to find out what they are feeling, and vividly, because the sentiments stand out in sharp relief one against the other.

The music also depicts these sentiments in flux. For in the course of an ensemble, the action proceeds and the situation changes. And changing sentiments are usually projected by means of new musical sections with different tempos, keys, and themes. A Classical opera ensemble, then, is a sectional number for several characters in which the later sections represent new plot action and the characters' new reactions to it.

Think back to the da capo aria of Baroque opera seria (see page 141). There the return of the opening music—A in the A B A form—told us that the dramatic situation was just where it had been when the aria started. But at the end of a Classical ensemble, the drama has moved ahead by one notch or more. The music, too, has moved on to something different. The Baroque aria was essentially a static number, the Classical ensemble a dynamic one. The ensemble transformed opera into a much more dramatic genre than had been possible within the Baroque aesthetic.

Opera buffa showed contemporary people in comic situations—compare the attitudes struck by people in opera seria on page 111. In Mozart's comedy The Marriage of Figaro, a frightened page hiding in a chair (Cherubino) sees the Count trying to kiss the Countess's maid (Susanna).
Mozart wrote Don Giovanni in 1787 for Prague, the second-largest city of the Austrian Empire, where his music was enjoying a temporary spurt in popularity. While technically it counts as an opera buffa, Don Giovanni is neither a wholly comic drama nor wholly tragic. A somewhat enigmatic mixture of both—what might be called today a dark comedy—it seems to convey Mozart's feeling that events have both comical and serious dimensions, and that life's experiences cannot be pigeonholed.

Background Don Giovanni is the Italian name for Don Juan, the legendary Spanish libertine. The tale of his endless escapades and conquests is meant to stir up incredulous laughter, usually with a bawdy undertone. Certainly a subject of this kind belongs to opera buffa.

But in his compulsive, completely selfish pursuit of women, Don Giovanni ignores the rules of society, morality, and God. Hence the serious undertone of the story. He commits crimes and mortal sins—and not only against the women he seduces. He kills the father of one of his victims, the Commandant, who surprises Giovanni struggling with his daughter.

This action finally brings Don Giovanni down. Once, when he is hiding from his pursuers in a graveyard—and joking blasphemously—he is reproached by the marble statue that has been erected over the Commandant's tomb. (Yes, the statue speaks.) He arrogantly invites the statue home for dinner. The statue comes, and when Giovanni refuses to mend his ways drags him off to its home, which is hell. The somber music associated with the statue was planted ahead of time by Mozart in the orchestral overture to Don Giovanni, before the curtain rises.

Thanks to Mozart's music, our righteous satisfaction at Don Giovanni's end is mixed with a good deal of sympathy for his vengeful spirit, his bravery, and his determination to live by his own rules, not those of society, even if this dooms him. The other characters in the opera, too, awaken ambivalent feelings. They amuse us and move us at the same time.

Act I, scene iii A chorus of peasants is celebrating the marriage of Masetto and Zerlina. Don Giovanni enters with his manservant Leporello and immediately spots Zerlina. He promises Masetto various favors, and then tells him to leave—and tells Leporello to take him away by force if need be.

Aria, “Ho capito” This opera buffa aria, sung by Masetto, shows how vividly (and rapidly!) Mozart could define character in music. Singing almost entirely in very short phrases, Masettoalmost insolently tells Don Giovanni that he will leave only because he has to; great lords can always bully peasants. Then he rails at Zerlina in furious, fast asides. She has always been his ruin! He sings a very sarcastic little tune, mocking Don Giovanni's promise that he is going to make her into a fine lady:

Faccial nostro ca-va-lie-ra Ca-va-lie-ra ancora te, ca-valiera ancora te!
No doubt this fine lord will make you his fine lady, too!
Toward the end of the aria he forgets Don Giovanni and the opening music he used to address him, and thinks only of Zerlina, repeating his furious words to her and their sarcastic tune. He gets more and more worked up as he sings repeated cadences, so characteristic of the Classical style. A variation of the tune, played by the orchestra, ends this tiny aria in an angry rush.

The total effect is of a simple man (judging from the music he sings) who nonetheless feels deeply and is ready to express his anger. There is also a clear undercurrent of class conflict: Masetto the peasant versus Don Giovanni the aristocrat. Mozart was no political radical, but he himself had rebelled against court authority; and the previous opera he had written, The Marriage of Figaro, was based on a notorious French play that had been banned because of its anti-aristocratic sentiments. Two years after Don Giovanni was composed, the French Revolution broke out in Paris.

**Recitative** Next comes an amusing secco recitative, sung with just continuo accompaniment, as in Baroque opera (see page 141). The dialogue moves forward quickly, as the words are sung in speechlike, conversational rhythms. Giovanni invites Zerlina up to his villa, promising to marry her and make her into a fine lady, just as Masetto had ironically predicted.

**Duet, “Là ci darem la mano”** Operas depend on memorable tunes, as well as on musical drama. The best opera composers write melodies that are not only beautiful in themselves but also further the drama at the same time. Such a one is the most famous tune in Don Giovanni, in the following duet (an ensemble for two singers) between Don Giovanni and Zerlina.

**Section 1 (Andante)** The words of this section fall into three stanzas, which the music accommodates in an **A A' B A” coda** form. Don Giovanni sings the first stanza to a simple, unforgettable tune (A) that combines seductiveness with a delicate sense of banter:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Là ci darem la mano, Là mi dài di si; Ve-di, non è lon-ta-no; Par-tiam, ben mio, da qui.} \\
\text{There you'll give me your hand, there you'll tell me yes; You see, it isn't far—Let's go there, my dear!}
\end{align*}
\]

When Zerlina sings the same tune to the second stanza (A’), we know she is playing along, even though she hesitates (notice her tiny rhythmic changes and her reluctance to finish the tune as quickly as Giovanni—she stretches it out for two more measures).

In stanza 3 (B), Don Giovanni presses more and more ardently, while Zerlina keeps drawing back. Her reiterated “non son più forte” (“I’m weakening”) makes her sound very sorry for herself, but also coy. But when the main
Mozart, Don Giovanni: from Act I, scene iii

(Italics indicate phrases of the text that are repeated.)

ARIA: "Ho capito"

0:03 Masetto: Chino il capo, e me ne vò
(to Don Giovanni) Ghiaccio piace a voi così
Altre repliche non fò... Cavalier voi siete già,
Dubitai non posso affè, Me lo dice la bonà,
Che volete aver per me.

0:31 (aside, to Zerlina) (Briconaccia! malandrina! Fosti ognor la mia ruinà!)
(to Leporello) Vengo, vengo!
(to Zerlina) (Resta, resta! È una cosa molto onesta;
Faccia il nostro cavaliere cavaliere ancora te.)

(last seven lines repeated)

RECITATIVE
(with continuo only)

1:37 Giovanni: Ahin siam liberati,
Zerlinetta gentil, da quel scioccone.
Che ne dice, mio ben, so far pulito?

Zerlina: Signore, è mio marito!

Giovanni: Chi? colui? vi par che un onest' uomo
an nobil Cavalier, qual io mi vanto,
possa soffrir che qual visetto d'oro,
quial viso inzuccherato,
da un bifolcaccio vi sia strapazzato?

Zerlina: Ma signore, io gli diedi
Parola di sposarlo.

Giovanni: Tal parola
Non vale un zero! voi non siete fata
Per esser pasana. Un' altra sorte
Vi procuran quegli occhi bricconcelli,
Quei labretti si beli,
Quelle ditucce candide e odorose,
Parmi toccar giuntuta, e futar rose.

Zerlina: Ah, non vorrei —
Giovanni: Che non voreste?

Zerlina: Alfine
Ingnamata restar! lo so che raro
Colle donne voi altri cavalieri
siete onesi e sinceri.

Giovanni: È un' imposura
Della gente plebea! La nobiltà
Ha dipinta negli occhi l'onestà.
Orsù non perdiam tempo; in quest'istante
lo vi voglio sposar.

Zerlina: Voil?
Giovanni: Certo io.
Quel casinetto è mio, soli saremo;
E là, gioia mia, ci sposeremo.
DUET: “Là ci darem la mano”

SECTION 1 Andante, 2/4 meter

| 3:24 | Giovanni: A | Là ci darem la mano  
Là mi dirai di sì!  
Vedi, non è lontano;  
Partiam, ben mio, da qui!  
| Zerlina: A’ | Vorrei, e non vorrei;  
Mi tremo un poco il cor.  
Felice, è ver, sarei,  
Ma può burlarmi ancor.  |
|        | There [in the villa] you’ll give me your hand,  
There you’ll tell me yes!  
You see, it isn’t far—  
Let’s go there, my dear!  |
|        | I want to, yet I don’t want to;  
My heart is trembling a little;  
It’s true, I would be happy,  
But he could be joking with me.  |

| 4:09 | Giovanni: B | Vieni, miei bel dilettto!  
Mi fa pietà Masetto . . .  
Io cangierò tua sorte!  |
| Zerlina: | Come, my darling!  
I’m sorry for Masetto . . .  
I shall change your lot!  |
| 0:45 |        |        |

(repetition of phrases [both verbal and musical] from stanzas 1–3)

| 1:10 | Giovanni: A’ | Vieni, vieni! Là ci darem la mano  
Vorrei, e non vorrei . . .  
Là mi dirai di sì!  
Mi trema un poco il cor.  
Partiam, ben mio, da qui!  
Ma può burlarmi ancor.  |
| Zerlina: |       |
| 4:34 |        | Come, my darling!  
I’m sorry for Masetto . . .  
I shall change your lot!  |

| 1:41 | Giovanni: coda | Vieni, mio bel dilettto!  
Mi fa pietà Masetto . . .  
Io cangierò tua sorte!  |
| Zerlina: |       |
| 5:04 |        |        |

| 2:09 | Both: | Andiam, andiam, mio bene,  
A ristorar le pene  
D’un innocente amor.  |
| 5:33 |       | Let us go, my dear,  
And relieve the pangs  
Of an innocent love.  |

SECTION 2 Allegro, 6/8 meter

(words and music repeated)
tune comes back (A"") , repeating words from earlier, Giovanni and Zerlina share it phrase by phrase. Their words are closer together than before, and the stage director will place them physically closer together, too.

Section 2 (Allegro) Zerlina falls into Don Giovanni’s arms, echoing his “adagio” (“let’s go”). The “innocent love” they now mean to celebrate is depicted by a little rustic melody (Zerlina is a peasant girl, remember) in a faster tempo. But a not-so-innocent sensuous note is added by the orchestra after the singers’ first phrase in this section.

How neatly and charmingly an operatic ensemble can project dramatic action; this whole duet leads us step by step through Don Giovanni’s seduction line, and shows us Zerlina wavering before it. By portraying people through characteristic action or behavior—Don Giovanni winning another woman, Zerlina playing her own coy game—Mozart exposes their personalities as convincingly as any novelist or playwright.

“17 May 1788. To the Opera, Don Giovanni. Mozart’s music is agreeable and very varied.”

Diary of a Viennese opera buff, Count Zinzendorf
CHAPTER 18

Romantic Opera

The nineteenth century was a golden age of opera, which flourished all over Europe from Germany, France, and Italy to Bohemia and Russia. This was true in part because opera tied into two important Romantic themes. The first was the idea of breaking down barriers between the arts. Combining music with poetry and other forms of literature, and even with philosophy, made perfect sense to Romantic composers and their audiences. The age that produced the lied—a German song with an important poetic dimension—was also committed to the union of music and drama.

"Carve this into your head, in letters of brass: An opera must draw tears, cause horror, bring death, by means of song."

Opera composer Vincenzo Bellini, 1834

The Wolf's Glen Scene from Weber's Der Freischütz, most famous of early German Romantic operas (see page 262)
The second Romantic theme was the celebration of music as the most profound of all the arts. Opera composers and librettists began to ponder the meaning and message of their work; they came to view opera as a type of serious drama in music, not just a vehicle for song, spectacle, and entertainment, as had often been the case before. Richard Wagner is famous for embracing, publicizing, and indeed co-opting this notion. He put it into action with his "music dramas," as he called his operas—works that fascinated the later nineteenth century. Nevertheless, Wagner was not alone. Even when he was still an unknown provincial conductor, the attitudes he would build on were developing all over Europe.

In this climate many operas took their subjects from highly regarded Romantic novels, such as Ivanhoe, The Lady of the Lake, and The Bride of Lammermoor, by Sir Walter Scott. Other operas started from Romantic poems and plays by Lord Byron, or the French writer Victor Hugo (author, in his later days, of Les Misérables). Moreover, since Romantic writers looked with new enthusiasm to Shakespeare's plays, opera composers also drew on them widely. Giuseppe Verdi, to whom we now turn, set versions of Shakespeare's tragedies Macbeth and Othello as well as the comedy The Merry Wives of Windsor.

1 Verdi and Italian Opera

Verdi was the greatest of Italian opera composers and the dominant figure in nineteenth-century opera houses. For while Wagner's music dramas and his theories of opera attracted much excited attention, Verdi's operas got many more performances. Then as now, people were inevitably drawn to compare and contrast these two masters.

The heart of the contrast lies in Verdi's unswerving commitment to the human voice. In this, he was a faithful follower of the bel canto principles of Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini (see page 262). Verdi never allowed the voice to be overshadowed by the orchestra, and from early on in his career he showed a special talent for writing both beautiful, Romantic melodies and catchy tunes. Opera was a singing art to Verdi, and generations of opera lovers before, during, and after his lifetime have enthusiastically agreed with him.

But while audiences have always loved Verdi's melodies, what he himself cared most about was the dramatic quality of his operas. First and foremost, Verdi was interested in people, people placed in situations in which strong, exciting actions bring out equally strong emotions. He sought out dramatic subjects full of stirring action, and he had a genius for finding just the right vocal melody to capture a dramatic situation.

Recitative and Aria: The Orchestra

As an opera composer, Verdi never wavered in his commitment to the human voice. This does not mean, however, that the orchestra was unimportant to him. Instead it plays a much richer role in his operas than in those of any of his Italian predecessors. This was all but inevitable in the orchestra-intoxicated nineteenth century.

The role of the orchestra was especially expanded in passages of recitative or near-recitative—the relic or descendant of the recitatives of Baroque opera seria and Classical opera buffa. Italian opera still held roughly to the old division of

"I want subjects that are novel, big, beautiful, varied and bold—as bold as can be!"

Giuseppe Verdi, 1853
Early Romantic Opera

Romantic opera made its serious start in the 1820s, after the end of the Viennese Classical period. It did not, however, start in the heartland of Classical music, which was Vienna. In that city, both Beethoven and Schubert felt threatened by the popular rage for the operas of Gioachino Rossini, a young Italian whose meteoric career left a mark on the whole of Europe.

Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868)
Rossini is most famous today for crisp, elegant opera buffas in a style that is not all that far from Mozart—the immortal Barber of Seville among them. The overtures of these operas, which are popular as concert pieces, are even written in sonata form, the true trademark of Classicism in music.

But in his own day Rossini was admired equally for his serious operas, which established the style and form of Italian Romantic opera. This is sometimes called bel canto opera because of its glorification of beautiful singing (bel canto means just that—“beautiful song”). Rossini's operas provided models of Romantic emotional melodic expression, such as Desdemona's “Willow Song” from his Shakespeare opera, Otello. The same operas are also well stocked with coloratura arias, showcases for the legendary virtuoso singers of that era.

To everyone’s astonishment, Rossini gave up opera in 1829 after the success of William Tell, his greatest work.

Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848)
Donizetti, who dominated Italian bel canto opera after Rossini's sudden retirement, moved decisively in the direction of simple, sentimental arias and blood-and-thunder action music. Enormously prolific, he wrote more than sixty operas in his short lifetime.

The most famous are Lucia di Lammermoor, based on the historical novel by Scott mentioned on page 261, and Don Pasquale, a very late example of opera buffa. In the 1970s, the American soprano Beverly Sills starred in a Donizetti trilogy featuring famous queens of English history: Anna Bolena (Anne Boleyn, the ill-fated second wife of Henry VIII), Maria Stuarda (Mary Stuart—Mary, Queen of Scots), and Roberto devereux (about Queen Elizabeth I and Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex).

Vincenzo Bellini (1801–1835)
Vincenzo Bellini strikes listeners today as the most refined of the three early bel canto composers. He wrote many fewer operas than the others, and his most beautiful arias have a unique Romantic sheen. The title role in Norma, his finest work, is the final testing ground for sopranos, for it demands highly expressive singing, coloratura fireworks, and great acting, all in unusual quantities.

Verdi often expressed his admiration for the supremely melodious Bellini. All the same, he learned more from the more robust and dramatic Donizetti.

Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826)
Weber was the founder of German Romantic opera. His most important work, Der Freischütz (The Magic Bullet), has the quality of a German folklore or ballad put to music. Max, a somewhat driven young huntsman, sells his soul to the devil for seven magic bullets, but is redeemed by the sacrifice of his innocent fiancée, Agatha.

Two spiritual arias sung by Agatha in this opera show Romantic melody at its best. There are German choruses in folk-song style. A famous scene of devilish conjuration (see page 269) features sensational orchestral writing with spooky special harmonic effects.

Supernatural subject matter with a strongly moral overtone—quite unlike the historical subjects chosen by Donizetti, for example—and emphasis on the orchestra became characteristic of German Romantic opera. These features are still evident in the mature works of Richard Wagner, who started out in the 1830s as an opera composer in Weber's mold. Otherwise, Wagner's “music dramas” leave early Romantic opera far behind.

Legendary singers of the bel canto era: Pauline Viardot (1821–1910; she was also a composer), Maria Malibran (1808–1836), and Giulia Grisi (1811–1869), along with a playbill for one of their favorite showcases, the opera Norma by Vincenzo Bellini.
declamation (recitative) for the action and dialogue portions of an opera, and melody (arias) for reflective, emotional expression. (Ensembles encompassed both.) But plot action and dialogue were now always accompanied by the full orchestra. Nowhere in Verdi will you hear passages of the old recitative of Mozart, accompanied by harpsichord alone. The orchestra, also, is usually not restricted to the simple chords that were normal in earlier recitative styles; it plays more active, motivic, and excited music that points up the words and urges the singers on.

Recitative is no longer a satisfactory name for this action music in Verdi’s operas, though no other name exists. Highly melodramatic, it is always on the point of merging into a full-fledged melodic style. What distinguishes this music from actual arias is that arias are formally complete and distinct. Unlike passages of Verdian recitative, Verdian arias can be (and often are) extracted and sung separately, as concert numbers.

In arias and duets, the orchestra’s role is smaller; here, however, Verdi uses another Romantic resource, that of rich harmonies underpinning melodic high points and climaxes. Many—though by no means all—of Verdi’s arias might be described as simple strophic songs in his own exuberant style of Romantic melody. Some of his most famous music consists of timeless tunes such as the choral hymn “Va pensiero” from Nabucco, the soprano aria “Addio, del passato” from La traviata, and the tenor aria “Celeste Aida” from Aida.

GIUSEPPE VERDI
Rigoletto (1851)

Rigoletto was a daring subject for Verdi to take on, typical of his dramatic choices in its strong situations and violent emotions. For the source of this opera Verdi looked to a play by the literary lion of French Romanticism, Victor Hugo. Hugo’s Le roi s’amuse (The King Amuses Himself) scandalized Paris in 1832 with its depiction of a dissolute, womanizing king and a jester who tries to have him assassinated; it was closed by the police after one performance. When Verdi settled on it the censors, who checked every operatic project in Italy at the time, demanded many changes. (The king was demoted to a mere duke, this apparently making his immorality less offensive.) Scandalous or not, Rigoletto was an immediate success; today it ranks among the most frequently performed of operas.

The Story The scene is set during the sixteenth century at the court of Mantua in northern Italy, where Rigoletto is the hunchbacked court jester of the Duke. He is a split character, divided between cynicism and hatred for the courtiers and his shining love for his daughter, Gilda, whom he keeps hidden from sight. The dashing, immoral, and rapacious Duke has gotten wind of her, however, and wants to add her to his list of conquests. Verdi’s Duke of Mantua is descended clearly enough from Mozart’s Don Giovanni.

Through turns of plot we will not trace, the Duke manages to seduce Gilda. She falls in love with him, believing he is a student who returns her love. Rigoletto, meanwhile, can think only of revenge. He hires an assassin, Sparafucile—half comical, but still one of the most menacing characters of nineteenth-century opera—to lure the Duke to his broken-down inn on the
edge of the Mantuan marshes. Sparafucile (his name means something like "Shotgun" in Italian) does so with the aid of his sister, Maddalena.

All this, in the terms of nineteenth-century operatic tragedy, can only end very badly for poor Gilda and her father.

We pick up the action at the beginning of the final act, as Rigoletto brings Gilda to Sparafucile's hovel to see for herself the Duke's habits. The scene is split, with the Duke and Maddalena inside the house, Rigoletto and Gilda eavesdropping from outside through a crack in the wall, and Sparafucile moving in between. (We are meant to understand that father and daughter sing to each other, unheard by those inside.)

Rigoletto and Gilda outside, the Duke and Maddalena inside: two images of the quartet, one from Verdi's day, the other a modern production.
Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)

The son of a storekeeper in a tiny village in northern Italy, Verdi had a spotty education. He played church organ and conducted the band of the neighboring little town. A local merchant, Antonio Barezzi, who became a patron and almost a second father to the young man, sent him to Milan to study music.

In those days, the center of musical life in Italy was Milan’s opera house, La Scala. (It is still active and world famous today.) After several discouraging years in that city, Verdi scored a huge success with his biblical opera Nabucco (Nebuchadnezzar) when he was twenty-nine years old. For the next ten years he composed operas at a furious rate for opera houses in Italy, Paris, and London. Three great hits in the early 1830s are still his most popular works: Rigoletto, which we take up here, Il trovatore, a grisly tale set in the age of chivalry, and La traviata, about a Parisian courtesan with a noble heart. After this Verdi took more time with his operas, and his later works became richer and more subtle.

Italy was not an independent nation during Verdi’s youth. He was an ardent supporter of the Risorgimento, or Italian liberation movement, and many of his early operas had patriotic themes. The most beloved number in Nabucco was a nostalgic hymn of the Hebrew slaves in Babylon—a clear reference to the Italians under the heel of the Austrian Empire. In the year of revolution, 1848, Verdi wrote the rousing Battle of Legnano. VERDI actually became a patriotic acronym for the popular choice for king—Vittorio Emmanuele, Re d’Italia. After independence was achieved, the composer was made an honorary deputy in the first Italian parliament.

A dour character and a tough businessman, Verdi drove hard bargains with opera impresarios, bullied his librettists, and insisted on supervising the production of his new operas. After the premiere of Aida in 1871 in Cairo, Egypt—Verdi was internationally famous—he retired to a fine country estate near his birthplace and spent his later years hunting and raising livestock. He was coaxed out of retirement in the 1880s by his canny publisher and by an eminent librettist, Arrigo Boito. In his seventies, Verdi wrote his two greatest operas with Boito on Shakespearean subjects: the tragedy Otello and the comedy Falstaff.

Verdi’s first marriage, to the daughter of his early patron Barezzi, ended when his young wife and two babies died within two years. The composer bore the emotional scars of this tragedy all his life, and it may be that the many moving scenes between fathers and daughters in Verdi’s operas, including Rigoletto, served to channel his feelings about fatherhood. He later married a remarkable woman, Giuseppina Strepponi, a singer who had assisted him in his early career and starred in his first success, Nabucco. She had been Verdi’s partner for many years before their marriage.

By the time he died, at the age of eighty-eight, Verdi was a national institution, and he was mourned throughout Italy. Schools closed. Eulogies were delivered in a special session of the senate in Rome. Nearly 300,000 people saw the old man to his grave. His operas remain the most popular of all in the international repertory.

Chief Works: Twenty-four operas, including Nabucco, Macbeth, Rigoletto, Il trovatore, La traviata, Don Carlos, The Force of Destiny, Aida. Two great Shakespeare operas composed in his seventies, Otello and Falstaff. A Requiem Mass, and a few other choral works; a string quartet

Encore: After Rigoletto, listen to La traviata (Act I), Aida (Act IV), Otello (Act I).

A popular graffito of the Italian revolution: “Viva VERDI” (meaning “Long live Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy”)
**LISTEN**

*Rigoletto, from Act III, scene i*

The stage is divided, showing the inside and the outside of a sordid inn.

**RECIPIVATIVE**

The Duke enters the inn.

Gilda: (Ahi padre mio)

Duke: (Due cose, è tosto)

Sparafucile: (Quali?)

Duke: (Una stanza e del vino)

Rigoletto: (Son questi i suoi costumi)

Sparafucile: (Ob il bel zerbino!)

**ARIA**

0:29

Duke: La donna è mobile/Qual pium'al vento,

Muta d'accento/E di pensierio.

Sparafucile: Se il pensierio/E di pensierio

Rigoletto: In pianto o in riso/E menzognero.

Duke: La donna è mobile/Qual pium'al vento,

Muta d'accento/E di pensierio!

**RECIPIVATIVE**

0:55

Duke: (Ahi! dear father!)

Two things, and right now.

What?

A room and some wine.

(That's the way he does things.)

(Big spender!)

**ARIA**

1:09

Duke: Man's always wretched who believes her;

If you trust her, watch out for your heart.

Yet he'll never feel happy

Who from that breast does not drink love!

Woman is fickle . . .

Sparafucile gives the Duke a bottle of wine and glasses, then goes outside to Rigoletto.

**RECIPIVATIVE**

2:45

Sparafucile: È là il vostr' uom, viver dece, o morire?

Rigoletto: Più tardi tornher l'opra a compiere.

**QUARTET** (from midway through the last section)

3:05

Duke: La bella mano candida!

Maddalena: Scherzate voi, signore.

Duke: No, no,

Maddalena: Son brutta.

Duke: Abbracciamoli!

Gilda (outside): (Iniquo!)

Maddalena: Ebbo!

Duke: . . . d'amore ardente!

Aria and Quartet (Act III)

**Recitative** A quick rustling gesture in the orchestra signals the Duke bursting in, disguised as a military officer, and demanding service at the inn. Gilda cries out in dismay as she recognizes her “student” lover.

**Aria:** “La donna è mobile” Waiting for his drink, the Duke holds forth on the fickleness of women. (He should talk!) This brief aria is one of Verdi’s most famous and enduring tunes—one of those nineteenth-century melodies everyone knows, even if they can’t identify it. It captures perfectly the compelling energy of the Duke, sweeping all before it. The effect stems especially from the insistent repetitions, in sequence, of the short motive that opens (and dominates) the aria.

The aria is in strophic form, with each of the two strophes introduced by the orchestra. At the end of each strophe the opening words return as a refrain.
and lead the melody up to the tenor’s highest pitches. On our recording the tenor adds a brief flourish (a vocal *cadenza*; see page 128) at the end of the second stanza, finishing on his highest pitch of all.

**Recitative** Instead of pausing for applause, Verdi keeps the orchestra moving, repeating the melody of “La donna è mobile” more and more quietly in the woodwinds as Sparafucile comes out to confirm that this is the man Rigoletto wants killed. It is a small but deft touch, turning the jaunty melody of the aria a bit sinister and making it an accompaniment for a quick recitative exchange. Sparafucile exits, leaving Rigoletto and Gilda (outside still) and the Duke and Maddalena (inside) to sing an *ensemble*—in this case, a quartet.

**Quartet: “Bella figlia dell’amore” (Allegro)** This is another of Verdi’s most famous inspirations. It begins with a fast section, in which the Duke presses
his attentions on Maddalena while she jokingly resists. Meanwhile, outside, Gilda is horrified. These recitative-like exchanges are sung to a lively, continuous orchestral melody that propels the action forward—one way Verdi blurred the distinction between recitative and full-fledged melody.

Our recording skips the beginning of this section, picking it up midway through. The fast section comes to a stop on a loud, expectant chord, with all four singers joining together.

**Andante**  As a slower movement begins the Duke, never at a loss for a beautiful tune, takes the lead, pursuing Maddalena with all the suavity Verdi’s melodic genius could muster. His melody is a perfect sixteen measures, four phrases of four measures each, rising to a climax in its third, contrasting phrase: a a’ b a’.

As he finishes, the other voices start up, one by one. Each sings a distinct melody that captures perfectly the emotions at stake: Maddalena laughing at the Duke’s efforts, Gilda sobbing, and Rigoletto stern, determined, bent on revenge. We heard this kind of dramatic characterization through melody in *Don Giovanni*, in the duet of Giovanni and Zerlina (see page 197).

The Duke joins in, the four voices shift through rich, Romantic harmonies (and modulations) to come to another expectant pause, and then the Duke begins his melody again. Now, however, the others sing with him; but Verdi has skillfully managed their melodies so that each preserves its independent emotional stance in the counterpoint that results. The Andante ends with a long passage for all four voices.

**Recitative**  The lush quartet could not contrast more with what follows: a stark, brusque recitative in which Rigoletto tells his daughter to go to Verona, where he will follow. To sharpen the contrast, Verdi omits the orchestra entirely.

Alas, Gilda does not obey her father’s instructions. She returns to the scene and is murdered, in place of the Duke, during a climactic thunderstorm. Rigoletto comes back to gloat over the dead Duke, but finds instead his daughter, dying; he is left maddened with grief as the curtain falls.

### 2 Wagner and Music Drama

Richard Wagner was, after Beethoven, the most influential of all nineteenth-century composers. His strictly musical innovations, in harmony and orchestration, revolutionized instrumental music as well as opera. In terms of opera, Wagner is famous for his novel concept of the “total work of art” (*Gesamtkunstwerk*; see page 270) and his development of a special operatic technique, that of the “guiding motive” (leitmotiv).

Unlike earlier innovative composers, it seems Wagner could not just compose. He had to develop elaborate theories announcing what art, music, and opera ought to be like. (Indeed, he also theorized about politics and philosophy, with very unhappy results.) Wagner’s extreme self-consciousness as an artist was prophetic of attitudes toward art of a later period.

His theory of opera had its positive and negative sides. First, Wagner wanted to do away with all the conventions of earlier opera, especially the French and Italian varieties. Opera, he complained, had degenerated from its original form as serious drama in music—Wagner was thinking of ancient Greek drama, which he knew had been sung or at least chanted—into a mere
Richard Wagner (1813–1883)

Wagner was born in Leipzig during the turmoil of the Napoleonic Wars; his father died soon afterward. His stepfather was a fascinating actor and writer, and the boy turned into a decided intellectual. Wagner’s early interests, literature and music (his idols were Shakespeare and Beethoven), later expanded to include philosophy, mythology, and religion.

As a young man he worked as an opera conductor, and he spent an unhappy year in Paris trying to get one of his works produced at the very important opera house there. The virulent anti-French sentiments in his later writings stemmed from this experience. Back in Germany, he produced the first of his impressive operas, The Flying Dutchman and Tannhäuser, and wrote Lohengrin. Though these works basically adhere to the early Romantic opera style of Carl Maria von Weber, they already hint at the revolutionary ideal for opera that Wagner was pondering.

This he finally formulated after being exiled from Germany (and from a job) as a result of his part in the revolution of 1848–49. He wrote endless articles and books expounding his ideas—ideas that were better known than his later operas, for these were extremely difficult to stage. His book Opera and Drama set up the principles for his “music drama” The Rhinegold, the first segment of the extraordinary four-evening opera The Nibelung’s Ring. He also published a vicious essay attacking Felix Mendelssohn, who had just died, and other Jews in music. Fifty years after Wagner’s death, his anti-Semitic writings (and his operas) were taken up by the Nazis.

Wagner’s exile lasted thirteen years. His fortunes changed dramatically when he gained the support of the young, unstable, and finally mad King Ludwig II of Bavaria. Thanks to Ludwig, Wagner’s mature music dramas were at last produced (The Rhinegold, completed in 1854, was not produced until 1869). Wagner then promoted the building of a special opera house in Bayreuth, Germany, solely for his music dramas—an amazing concept. These grandiose, slow-moving works are based on myths and characterized by high-flown poetry of his own, a powerful orchestral style, and the use of leitmotivs (guiding or leading motives). To this day the opera house in Bayreuth performs only Wagner, and tickets to the yearly Wagner Festival are almost impossible to get.

A hypnotic personality, Wagner was able to spirit money out of many pockets and command the loyalty and affection of many distinguished men and women. His first marriage, to a singer, ended in divorce. His great operatic hymn to love, Tristan and Isolde, was created partly in response to his love affair with the wife of one of his patrons. His second wife, Cosima, daughter of Franz Liszt, had been married to an important conductor, Hans von Bülow, who nonetheless remained one of Wagner’s strongest supporters. Cosima’s diaries tell us about Wagner’s moods, dreams, thoughts, and musical decisions, all of which he shared with her. After the death of “the Master,” Cosima ruled Bayreuth with an iron hand.

Half con man and half visionary, bad poet and very good musician, Wagner created a storm of controversy in his lifetime that has not died down to this day. He was a major figure in the intellectual life of his time, a thinker whose ideas were highly influential not only in music but also in other arts. In this sense, at least, Wagner was the most important of the Romantic composers.

Chief Works: Early operas: The Flying Dutchman, Tannhäuser, and Lohengrin. Mature “music dramas”: Tristan and Isolde, The Mastersingers of Nuremberg (a brilliant comedy), Parsifal, and The Nibelung’s Ring, a four-opera cycle consisting of The Rhinegold, The Valkyrie, Siegfried, and The Twilight of the Gods. Siegfried Idyll, for small orchestra (based on themes from Siegfried; a surprise birthday present for Cosima after the birth of their son, also named Siegfried).

Encore: After selections from The Valkyrie, listen to “Wotan’s Farewell” from the same work (Act III); Prelude and Liebestod (love-death) from Tristan and Isolde.
concert in costume. He particularly condemned arias, which were certainly at the heart of Italian opera, as hopelessly artificial. Why should the dramatic action keep stopping to allow for stretches of pretty but undramatic singing?

**The Total Work of Art**

The positive side of Wagner’s program was the development of a new kind of opera in the 1850s, for which he reserved a special name: *music drama*. Music, in these works, shares the honors with poetry, drama, and philosophy—all furnished by Wagner himself—as well as the stage design and acting. Wagner coined the word *Gesamtkunstwerk*, meaning “total work of art,” for this powerful concept. He always insisted on the distinction between music drama and ordinary “opera.”

Since words and ideas are so important in the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the music is very closely matched to the words. Yet it is also unrelievedly emotional and intense, as Romantic doctrine required. The dramas themselves deal with weighty philosophical issues, or so at least Wagner and his admirers believed, and they do so under the symbolic cover of medieval German myths and legends.

This use of myths was another Romantic feature, one that strikingly anticipated Freud, with his emphasis on myths (for example, the myth of Oedipus) as embodiments of the deepest unconscious truths. Wagner employed the old romance of Tristan and Iseult, the saga of the Nordic god Wotan, and the Arthurian tale of Sir Perceval to present his views on love, political power, and religion, respectively. Wagner’s glorification of Germanic myths in particular made him the semi-official voice of German nationalism, which in turn paved the way for Hitler.

One of the first great conductors and a superb orchestrator, Wagner raised the orchestra to new importance in opera, giving it a role modeled on Beethoven’s symphonies with their motivic development. Leitmotivs (see below) were among the motives he used for this symphonic continuity. The orchestra was no longer used essentially as a support for the singers (which was still the situation, even in Verdi); it was now the orchestra that carried the opera along. Instead of the alternation of recitatives, arias, and ensembles in traditional opera, music drama consisted of one long orchestral web, cunningly woven in with the singing.

**Leitmotivs**

A *leitmotiv* (lē-mō-thēf)—guiding, or leading, motive—is a musical motive associated with some person, thing, idea, or symbol in the drama. By presenting and developing leitmotivs, Wagner’s orchestra guides the listener through the story.

Leitmotivs are easy to ridicule when they are used mechanically—when, for example, the orchestra obligingly sounds the Sword motive every time the hero reaches for his weapon. On the other hand, leitmotivs can suggest with
Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde* (1859)

Wagner's first completed music drama was the great love story of Tristan and Isolde, taken from medieval legend. There was already a mystical undertone to the legend, which Wagner, writing the opera's libretto, refined under the sway of Romantic thinking.

The composer was only too pleased to find support in the writings of a contemporary philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, who had made his own formulation of the Romantic insight into the central importance of music in emotional life. All human experience, said Schopenhauer, consists either of emotions and drives—which he called "the Will"—or of ideas, morals, and reason, which he downgraded by the term "Appearance." He insisted that the Will always dominates Appearance, and that our only direct, unencumbered sense of it comes through music.

"Through my music!" we can almost hear Wagner exclaiming. And in a music drama, what would exemplify the Will better than the strongest human drive that is known, sexual love?

*Tristan and Isolde* is not just a great love story, then, but something more. It is a drama that presents love as the dominant force in life, one that transcends every aspect of worldly Appearance. Many love stories hint at such transcendence, perhaps, but Wagner's story makes it explicit, on the basis of an actual philosophy that the composer espoused.

The plot shows step by step the growing power of love, and the music—with its hypnotic orchestral web of leitmotifs and Romantic harmonies of unmatched richness—grows more and more powerful, too. In Act I, love overpowers Isolde's fierce pride, which had previously made her scorn Tristan as her blood enemy, and also Tristan's chivalry, which had demanded that he escort Isolde safely to her marriage to King Mark of Cornwall, his uncle and liege lord. In Act II, love overcomes the marriage, when the pair meet in the longest un consummated love scene in all of opera. Their tryst is discovered, and Tristan is mortally wounded—but love overcomes the wound, too. In Act III he simply cannot or will not die until Isolde comes to him from over the seas. Isolde comes; Tristan dies in her arms; she sinks down in rapture and expires also. For both of them, death is not a defeat but an ecstatic expression of love.

At this point (if not earlier) the plot passes the bounds of reality—which was exactly what Wagner wanted to show. Tristan and Isolde, hardly characters anymore but stand-ins for the Will, move in a realm where conventional attitudes, the rules of society, and even life and death have lost their powers. Transcendence is a recurring theme of Romanticism; here passion becomes the ultimate experience, beyond reality. Music, which is itself beyond reality, explores the insecure borderland between love, sensuality, and death.
considerable subtlety what the hero is thinking or feeling even when he is saying something else—or saying nothing. Wagner also became very skillful in thematic transformation, the characteristic variation-like technique of the Romantic composers (see page 237). By transforming the appropriate motives, he could show a person or an idea developing and changing under the impact of dramatic action.

And since, for the Romantics, music was the undisputed language of emotion, leitmotive—being music—could state or suggest ideas in emotional terms, over and above the intellectual terms provided by mere words. This was Wagner’s theory, a logical outcome of Romantic doctrine about music. Furthermore, the complex web of leitmotive provided his long music dramas with the thematic unity that Romantic composers sought. On both counts, psychological and technical, leitmotive were guaranteed to impress audiences of the nineteenth century.

**RICHARD WAGNER**  
*The Nibelung’s Ring (1848–1874)*

Wagner’s *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The Nibelung’s Ring) is a huge music drama in four parts, stretching over four separate nights or three to five hours each. This work, a quarter-century in the making, counts as the supreme example of the Romantic tendency toward the grandiose (see page 235). The *Ring* (as it is commonly called) grew so large because of the sprawling material Wagner wanted to cover, large portions of the most famous of all Germanic or Norse legends. It involves gods and goddesses, giants and dwarfs, magical prophecies and transformations, a dragon, an invisibility cloak that lives on in *Harry Potter* novels—and, in the midst of it all, very human feelings and actions. The *Ring* counts as one of the towering artworks of all time, comparable to the Taj Mahal, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel (comparisons the megalomaniac Wagner would have enjoyed).

The first night, *Das Rheingold* (The Rhine Gold), shows us events whose consequences will be played out over the following three nights: A precious lump of gold at the bottom of the Rhine River is stolen from its rightful owners, the mermaids of the Rhine, by the dwarf Alberich, and then is taken again from him by the gods. The stolen gold, forged into the ring of Wagner’s title by the dwarfs whom Alberich commands, carries with it a curse. It makes all who possess it, even Wotan, the leader of the gods, renounce the love that could save them from its corruption. *Love* is meant here in the broadest sense, to include human compassion in all its forms. Over the following three nights of the *Ring*—*Die Walküre* (The Valkyrie), *Siegfried*, and *Götterdämmerung* (Twilight of the Gods)—generations pass. We see the gods, humans, and dwarfs—and a giant, transformed into a dragon—brought to grief by their lust for the gold. An innocence hero, Siegfried, is born who can defy the gods and their corrupt order, but even he dies through treachery arising from everyone else’s pursuit of the ring.

Wagner employs all this elaborate mythology to tell a simple modern tale. His basic theme is the moral decline of the world, brought about by greed for money and hunger for power. In the guise of Norse gods, gnomes, and warriors, one group after another of nineteenth-century society is shown destroying...
itself in the pursuit of gold. Even the renunciation of love entailed in possessing
the ring is an allegory, turning the old myth into an indictment of modern
bourgeois biases toward work and discipline and away from emotion.

_The Valkyrie (1851–56), Act I, scene_ 1

_The Valkyrie_ is the second of the four
nights of the _Ring_. Much of the opera concerns a subplot in Wagner’s tale. This
story within a story brings together Siegmund and Sieglinde, two of Wotan’s
numerous children, a brother and sister separated in early childhood. Their
irresistible attraction to each other results in an incestuous union (at the end
of Act I), doubly illicit since Sieglinde is already married to Hunding. In Act II,
Hunding fights a duel with Siegmund. Wotan, for reasons stemming from his
fateful involvement with the ring, is powerless to intervene to help his son, and
Siegmund is killed—another playing out of the gold’s curse. Sieglinde escapes,
however, to bear their child: the hero Siegfried, protagonist of the last two
nights of the _Ring_.

The first scene of Act I shows us the meeting of Siegmund and Sieglinde.
He stumbles into her dwelling, worn to exhaustion by a pack of enemies pursuing
him in a raging thunderstorm. The storm is depicted by the orchestral prelude
that opens the work; see our own Prelude on pages 4–6 and listen again to this
opening. Siegmund collapses on the hearth to the sound of a leitmotiv we
quickly come to associate with him, a descending scale that is a transformed
version of the theme of the storm. This musical connection shows us that the
storm is in Siegmund’s soul as much as it is out in the elements.

Sieglinde enters from the back room and is startled to find a stranger
unconscious on her floor. As she bends over him, concerned, the violins sound her
leitmotiv—it rises up gently and falls back—while cellos underneath continue to
play Siegmund’s. Wagner’s orchestral music has already joined the two characters.

What follows is one of the great portrayals of love at first sight in all of
opera. Or nearly at first sight: Siegmund and Sieglinde’s attentions are riveted
each other almost from the moment he regains consciousness, but the intensity
of their emotional connection grows quickly during this scene.

**General Features**  Along the way the audience witnesses the primary features
of Wagner’s revolutionary music drama.

7 The orchestra, carrying the leitmotivs, plays a role far beyond merely
accompanying the singers. It depicts for us the characters’ thoughts and
especially their feelings, even during long stretches when they are not singing. It
yields a sense of psychological depth and complexity in the characters—a
sense conveyed, in typical Romantic fashion, more by music than by words.

7 The leitmotivs hardly ever appear in exactly the same way twice but instead
are transformed slightly for each new appearance. In this way their
psychological portrayal shifts along with the drama. This probing, shifting depiction
of the characters’ feelings is one of the hallmarks of Wagnerian drama.

7 The singers, meanwhile, do not as a rule sing the leitmotivs, and their
melodies show none of the tunefulness or lyrical song forms of Verdi’s
_Rigoletto_. Instead they deliver a free-formed declamation of the words, some-
thing like recitative, that blossoms forth now and then to approach tunefulness
but never gives way to full-fledged aria.

_The First Drink_  As Sieglinde leans over him, Siegmund awakes and cries out
for a drink. She hurries outside to fill a drinking horn for him. While she does
so the orchestra takes over, building to a miniature climax before falling back;
The images evoked over the years by *The Valkyrie* and Wagner’s other operas are wonderfully diverse. Shown here are Wagner’s favorite tenor, Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld, in a typical costume of the day; Sieglinde with a drinking horn for Siegmund by book illustrator Arthur Rackham, from 1910; and a very ordinary Sieglinde and Siegmund from a *Valkyrie* production of 2003.
in its music we still hear Siegmund’s and Sieglinde’s leitmotivs. Siegmund drinks, and his eyes fix on Sieglinde for the first time. A new melody grows in the orchestra, warmly scored for solo cello and other low strings, and richly harmonized. It is the leitmotiv of their blossoming love:

Now the characters exchange information, for their benefit and the audience’s. Sieglinde tells him that she is Hunding’s wife; he tells her how he came to her home, and of the relief from his misery she has brought him: “Now the sun smiles on me anew.”

The Second Drink At this, Sieglinde spontaneously hurries to her storeroom to fill a horn with honeyed mead for him. This action, parallel to her fetching water earlier, summons from the orchestra an intensified version of its earlier climax. (See the Listen guide, first and second orchestral climaxes.)

The lovers share the mead, their eyes now fixed on each other, and the love motive sounding in the orchestra also wells up—until Siegmund roars himself with a deep sigh accompanied in the orchestra by a loud dissonant chord. He is ill-fated; misfortune follows wherever he goes (Wagner sets the crucial, repeated word Missweende to additional dissonant chords); and he would not for the world bring such misery on her (Love motive)—he must leave. Sieglinde cannot let him go. She stops him in his tracks with an impulsive admission: She is as ill-fated as he!

Communion At Sieglinde’s last word a hesitant new, warm melody begins low in the orchestra; we immediately hear it as an affirmation of the deep empathy they already feel for each other. It is played first in sequence—a favorite of Wagner’s techniques for developing his leitmotivs. Then, when Siegmund announces he will stay, the orchestra cannot restrain itself; it pours forth a lush, Romantic harmonization of the new melody, the soon-to-be lovers gazing at each other all the while. In the midst of this beautiful passage, other leitmotivs are heard: first Sieglinde’s, later the Love motive, and finally Siegmund’s drooping scale.

The passage comes to no cadence—another favorite trick of Wagner’s—but is cut off by a new, ominous leitmotiv in the low brasses. Hunding has returned, and the second scene begins.

Wagner’s drama often moves at an enormous, slow pace, and it has sometimes been criticized for this. (And lampooned, too; there is a Bugs Bunny cartoon that takes on the Ring.) In the first scene of The Valkyrie we have the sense that searching looks and sighs are stretched out to exaggerated length. Other than Sieglinde’s fetching two drinks for Siegmund, there is little stage action. At the same time, however, especially because of his orchestra with its leitmotivs, Wagner manages to pack a lot into the minimal gestures of his characters. By the end of scene i, barely a quarter-hour into the drama, we have been introduced to two protagonists and gained knowledge of their history and a subtle sense of their emotional lives. And, before our eyes and ears, their love has burgeoned.

Tuesday, July 18 Second act of Valkyrie, Frl. Scheffsky even more horrible; at lunch an excess of unainliness and gracelessness! Conference over whether to get rid of her.”

From the 2,000-page Diary of Cosima Wagner: rehearsals for the premiere of The Nibelung’s Ring at Bayreuth, 1876
**LISTEN**

Wagner, *The Valkyrie*, Act I, scene i

The inside of a dwelling, built around a huge ash tree in its midst; to the right a hearth, and behind it an inner storeroom. Siegmund, exhausted, enters from outside as the storm subsides.

0:00 Siegmund: Wess' Herd dies auch sei, hier muss ich rasten.
Whoever's hearth this may be, I must rest here.

He sinks back and lies motionless. Sieglinde enters, thinking her husband has returned; she is surprised to find instead a stranger. Hesitantly she approaches him closer and closer.


Sieglinde: Erquickung schaff ich. I'll bring some water.

1:23 Siegmund: (suddenly raises his head) Ein Quell! Ein Quell! A drink! A drink!

2:08 FIRST ORCHESTRAL CLIMAX

She quickly takes a drinking horn and goes out. She returns with the horn filled and offers it to Siegmund.

Labung biet' ich
den lechzende Gaumen:
Wasser, wie du gewollt!

Moisten your dry lips with this drink I've brought: water, as you wished!

0:51 2:59 Siegmund drinks and gives the horn back. As he nods his head in thanks, his eyes fix on her face with growing interest.

1:58 4:06 Siegmund: Kühlende Labung
gab mir der Quell,
des Müden Last machte er leicht;
erfrischt ist der Mat das Aug' erfreut des Sehens selige Lust. Wer ist's, der so mir es labt?
The water brings me cooling relief; it lightens my weary load; my heart is refreshed, my eyes relish a beautiful, glorious sight. Who is it who so revives me?

5:05 Sieglinde: Dies Haus und dies Weib sind Hundings Eigen; gastlich gönn' er dir Rast: harre, bis heim er kehrt!
This house and this wife belong to Hunding; he'll welcome you as guest; wait here until he returns!

Sieglinde: Waffenlos bin ich:
dem wunden Gast wird dein Gatte nicht wehren.
I am weaponless; a wounded guest will not threaten your husband.

Sieglinde: Die Wunden weise mir schnell!
You're wounded? Where?
Sieglinde goes to the storeroom and fills a horn with mead; she returns and offers it to Siegmund.

Surely you'll not refuse a sweet drink of honeyed mead.

Would you not taste it first?

Sieglinde drinks from the horn and gives it back. Siegmund takes a long drink, watching her all the while with growing warmth. At 1:12 he sighs deeply and his eyes sink to the ground.

Who follows you, making you flee?

He turns to leave. She calls after him impetuously.

No, remain here! Ill-fate is nothing new here, where ill-fate makes its home!

He turns back, lookssearchingly at her; she lowers her eyes in sadness and shame.

I myself named me Wehwalt—Woebound; I'll wait for Hunding.

He rests against the hearth, his eyes fixed on her; she raises her eyes to his, and they regard each other with deep emotion. At 2:16 Siegmilde starts as she hears Hunding outside.
3 Late Romantic Opera

Opera continued to flourish after Wagner and Verdi. The orchestra retained the important role it had achieved, if in different ways, with both of these composers. The Romantic emphasis on strong emotions, alongside powerful music to convey and probe them, continued.

These emotional passages now tended to break down into ever freer and more fragmentary melodic forms, and the distinction between recitative and aria, blurred in Verdi, became even harder to maintain. Wagner’s leitmotiv technique was employed in most operas, in one form or another; its dramatic power was acknowledged by composers and audiences alike.

What composers and audiences turned away from, however, was Wagner’s mythical, quasi-philosophical ideal for opera. “Music drama” in Wagner’s sense gave way to new realistic tendencies. Modern-day subjects were chosen for operas, showing up-to-date middle- or lower-class characters, rather than kings and queens, gods and heroes. A few of Verdi’s operas had already pointed in this direction, most notably *La traviata* (see page 265).

Late Romantic realistic operas typically emphasized the sordid and violent aspects of life, as far as the censorship of the day would allow—in this they carried further a tendency we can already glimpse in *Rigoletto*. A famous and masterful example is *Carmen* (1875), by the French composer Georges Bizet. Set in contemporary Spain, it tells the tale of a fiery, sexually irresistible Gypsy woman who works in a cigarette factory and a soldier who falls under her spell. Having abandoned his fiancée and deserted his regiment for her, he loses her to a devil-may-care matador; at the final climax, in a jealous rage, he stabs her to death. All this is very distant from the mythical setting, the minimal action, the lingering gazes, and the psychological probing of *The Valkyrie*.

**Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924)**

Giacomo Puccini was the main Italian opera composer after Verdi; indeed, he may be said to bring to an end the great tradition of Italian Romantic opera, which had begun a century before. Several operas Puccini composed around 1900 are perennial favorites, thanks to his special gift for short, intense vocal melodies and his canny sense of the stage.

Most of Puccini’s operas are touched by the new realistic tendencies in late Romantic opera, but they also tend to distance the audience from what would otherwise be quite harsh dramatic messages. The locales of his operas range from contemporary Japan to the American Wild West, and from Rome in 1800, under Napoleon, to Beijing in the distant past. In these remote, even exotic sites, Puccini found it easier to view realistic stories through a Romantic and sentimental lens.

Capitalizing on Romantic psychological depiction in opera, Puccini specialized in intimate portraits of helpless women in hopeless situations. Such is the actress Tosca, propositioned by the police chief of Rome as the price for her lover’s life (*Tosca*); or the poor seamstress Mimi, dying of tuberculosis (*La Bohème*); or the geisha Cho-Cho-San (*Madame Butterfly*), whose plight we take up now.
GIACOMO PUCCINI

Madame Butterfly (1904)

Puccini's Madame Butterfly, derived from a play by the American author David Belasco, has a disturbingly true-to-life story. In the wake of the opening of Japan to trade with the United States in the 1850s, a cynical young naval officer, Lieutenant Pinkerton, marries a naive fifteen-year-old geisha, Cho-Cho-San, whom he calls "Madame Butterfly." He then sails away with no intention of honoring the Japanese ceremony. Cho-Cho-San persists against all evidence in hoping he will return; but when he eventually does, he brings his "real" American wife with him, and Cho-Cho-San, now mother of Pinkerton's child, kills herself.

"Un bel di," aria from Act II  In response to her maid's doubts, Cho-Cho-San sings the opera's most famous number, "Un bel di," spinning a fantasy about Pinkerton's return. From the hills (she imagines) they will first see a little wisp of smoke, as the gunboat appears on the horizon. She sings this vision to a memorable melody that has a floating, disembodied quality in keeping with the fantasy it portrays—partly because it begins high in the soprano's range and slowly descends, partly because of its delicate orchestration.

After this melody, the aria takes on a freer formal cast. Cho-Cho-San sings varied music that mixes full-fledged melody (at "Poi la nave bianca . . .") with something closer to a recitative-like declamation (at "Mi metto là sul ciglio . . .").

But when she comes in her fantasy to the moment of remeeting Pinkerton ("Per non morire . . ."), she sings her heart out to a reprise of the aria's opening melody, now louder and with redoubled brass orchestration. It is a stroke of almost unbearable pathos, for it dramatizes the helpless growth of her fantasy. Originally linked to the hope that Pinkerton's ship would return, now the main melody expresses her joy at his return to her—which is sheer delusion. Puccini underscores the pathos when, at Cho-Cho-San's last words, the orchestra takes up the intensified melody once more to end the aria.
LISTEN

Puccini, Madame Butterfly, Aria “Un bel di” from Act II

0:00 Un bel di, vedremo
levarsi un fil di fumo
sull’estremo confin del mare;
e poi la nave appare.

0:38 Poi la nave bianca entra nel porto;
romba il suo saluto. Vedi? È venuto!
Io non gli scendo incontro—io no;

1:24 mi metto là sul ciglio del colle,
e aspetto, e aspetto gran tempo,
e non mi pesa la lunga attesa.

1:49 E uscito dalla folla cittadina
un uomo, un picciol punto,
s’avvia per la collina.

2:18 Chi sarà, chi sarà? E come sarà giunto,
che dirà, che dirà?
Chiamerà: “Butterfly” dalla lontana . . .
lo senza dar risposta
me ne starò nascosta
un po’ per cella, e un po’

2:56 per non morire al primo incontro!
Ed egli alquanto in pena chiamerà,
chiamerà: “Piccina mogliettina,
Olezz’ di verbena”—
i nomi che mi dava al suo venire.

3:40 Tutto questo avverrà, te lo prometto!
Tieni la tua paura;
io con sicura fede l’aspetto!

One beautiful day, we’ll see
a tiny thread of smoke rise up
on the horizon, out at sea;
then the ship appears.

Now the white ship sails into port;
cannons roar a welcome; see? He has come!
I don’t run to meet him—not I;
I go to the brow of the hill
and wait, and wait a long time,
but the long wait doesn’t bother me.

Out of the crowd down in the city
a man, a tiny speck,
sets out up the hill.

Who is it? Who is it? And as he comes,
what will he say? what will he say?
He’ll call out: “Butterfly” from afar . . .
Without answering
I’ll hide myself,
partly to tease him, and partly
so as not to die when we first meet!
And then he’ll be worried and call:
“Little child-wife!
Verbena blossom!”—
the names he gave me when he first came.

All this will happen, I promise you!
Don’t be afraid;
I await him knowing he’ll come!

► Study the Flashcards and Quizzes for Chapter 18 at bedfordmartins.com/listen
Chapter 19

The Late Romantics

The year 1848 in Europe was a year of failed revolutions in France, Italy, and in various of the German states. Political freedom, which for the Romantics went hand in hand with freedom of personal expression in life and art, seemed further away than ever. While not all the early Romantics lived in free societies, at least by today's standards, freedom was an ideal they could take seriously as a hope for the future. We recall Beethoven's enthusiasm for Napoleon as a revolutionary hero, reflected in the *Eroica* Symphony of 1803, one of the landmarks of nineteenth-century music. In the 1820s, artists and intellectuals thrilled to the personal role of one of them—Lord Byron, a poet—in the struggle for Greek independence. Then they lamented his death near the field of battle.

But the failure of the revolutions of 1848 symbolized the failure of Romantic aspirations. In truth, those aspirations had had little to nourish them since the days of Napoleon. Romanticism lived on, but it lived on as nostalgia.

The year 1848 is also a convenient one to demarcate the history of nineteenth-century music. Some of the greatest early Romantic composers—Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Schumann—died between the years 1847 and 1856. By a remarkable coincidence of history, too, the 1848 revolution transformed the career of Richard Wagner. Exiled from Germany for revolutionary activity, he had no opera house to compose for. Instead he turned inward and—after a long period of philosophical and musical reflection—worked out his revolutionary musical ideas. Wagner's music dramas, written from the 1850s on, came to dominate the imagination of musicians in the second half of the century, much as Beethoven's symphonies had in the first half.

Romanticism and Realism

European literature and art from the 1850s on was marked not by continuing Romanticism, but by realism. The novel, the principal literary genre of the time, grew more realistic from Dickens to Trollope and George Eliot in Britain, and from Balzac to Flaubert and Zola in France. In French painting, there was an important realist school led by Gustave Courbet. Thomas Eakins was a realist painter in America; William Dean Howells was our leading realist novelist. Most important as a stimulus to realism in the visual arts was that powerful new invention, the camera.
Realists in the arts of the nineteenth century tended toward grim or grim subject matter. The Philadelphia artist Thomas Eakins was so fascinated by surgery that he painted himself in among the students attending a class by a famous medical professor, Dr. S. D. Gross (The Gross Clinic, 1875).

There was a move toward realism in opera at the end of the nineteenth century, as we have seen (page 278). On the other hand, the myth-drenched music dramas of Wagner were as unrealistic as could be. (Wagner thought he was getting at a deeper, psychological realism.) And what would “realism” in orchestral music be like? Given music’s nature, it was perhaps inevitable that late nineteenth-century music came to function as an inspirational and emotional escape—an escape from political, economic, and social situations that were not romantic in the least.

Perhaps, too, music serves a similar function for many listeners of the twenty-first century. Significantly, concert life as we know it today, with its emphasis on great masterpieces of the past, was formed for the first time in the late nineteenth century.
1 Late Romantic Program Music

Late Romantic program music took its impetus from an important series of works called symphonic poems, composed in the 1850s by Franz Liszt. A symphonic poem is a one-movement orchestral composition with a program, in a free musical form. By using the word poem, Liszt insisted on the music's programmatic nature.

It is not often that a great virtuoso pianist such as Liszt, who started out composing études and other miniatures of the kind cultivated by Chopin and Schumann, turns himself into a major composer of large-scale orchestral works. Liszt's formula was simply to write a one-movement piece for orchestra associated in one way or another with a famous poem, play, or narrative. In its single-movement format—unlike a Berlioz program symphony—the symphonic poem is descended from the concert overture as practiced by Mendelssohn (see page 253). But unlike the concert overture, it often is formally free, showing no sign of sonata form. Symphonic poems, so-called or under some other name, became very popular in the later nineteenth century.

Among Liszt's symphonic poems are Hamlet, Orpheus, Prometheus, and Les Préludes, the last loosely connected with a poem by the French Romantic poet Alphonse de Lamartine. But except for Les Préludes, these works are heard less often today than other symphonic poems written by composers influenced by Liszt's example. The most popular of later symphonic poems are those by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and Richard Strauss (see page 340).

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY
Overture-Fantasy, Romeo and Juliet (1869, revised 1880)

Tchaikovsky wrote several symphonic poems, including one on a subject already used by Liszt and Berlioz, Shakespeare's Hamlet. Rather than symphonic poem, he preferred the descriptions symphonic fantasia or overture-fantasy for these works. They are substantial pieces in one movement, with free forms adopting some features from sonata form, rondo, and so on.

In his Romeo and Juliet, Tchaikovsky followed the outlines of the original play only in a very general way, but one can easily identify his main themes with elements in Shakespeare's drama. The surging, romantic string melody clearly stands for the love of Romeo and Juliet. The angry, agitated theme suggests the vendetta between their families, the Capulets and the Montagues. More generally, it suggests the fate that dooms the two "star-cross'd lovers," as Shakespeare calls them. The hymnlike theme heard at the very beginning of the piece (later it sounds more marchlike) seems to denote the kindly Friar Laurence, who devises a plan to help the lovers that goes fatally wrong.

Slow Introduction The slow introduction of Romeo and Juliet is already heavy with drama. As low clarinets and bassoons play the sober Hymn theme, the strings answer with an anguished-sounding passage forecasting an unhappy outcome. The wind instruments utter a series of solemn announcements, interspersed by strumming on the harp, as though someone (Friar Laurence?) was preparing to tell the tale. This sequence of events is repeated, with some variation, and then both the woodwind and string themes are briefly worked up to a climax over a dramatic drum roll.

"The kernel of a new work usually appears suddenly, in the most unexpected fashion... All the rest takes care of itself. I could never put into words the joy that seizes me when the main idea has come and when it begins to assume definite shape. You forget everything, you become a madman for all practical purposes, your insides quiver."

Tchaikovsky writes to Mme. von Meck about his composing, 1878
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Tchaikovsky was born in the Russian countryside, the son of a mining inspector, but the family moved to St. Petersburg when he was eight. In nineteenth-century Russia, a serious musical education and career were not accorded the social approval they received in Germany, France, or Italy. Many of the famous Russian composers began in other careers and only turned to music later in life, when driven by inner necessity.

Tchaikovsky was fortunate in this respect, for after working as a government clerk for only a few years, he was able to enter the brand-new St. Petersburg Conservatory, founded by another Russian composer, Anton Rubinstein. At the age of twenty-six he was made a professor at the Moscow Conservatory. Once Tchaikovsky got started, after abandoning the civil service, he composed prolifically—six symphonies, eleven operas, symphonic poems, chamber music, songs, and some of the most famous of all ballet scores: Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty, and The Nutcracker. Listen to a dance from Nutcracker on the Companion DVD.

Although his pieces may sometimes sound “Russian” to us, Tchaikovsky was not as devoted a nationalist as some other major Russian composers of the time (see page 288). Perhaps because of this, he had greater international renown than they. Of all the nineteenth-century Russian composers, Tchaikovsky had the most success in concert halls around the world. His famous Piano Concerto No. 1 was premiered in 1875 in Boston, and he toured America as a conductor in 1891.

Tchaikovsky was a depressive personality who more than once attempted suicide. He had been an extremely delicate and hypersensitive child, and as an adult he worried that his homosexuality would be discovered and exposed. In an attempt to raise himself above suspicion, he married a highly unstable young musician who was in love with him. The marriage was a fiasco; in a matter of weeks, Tchaikovsky fled and never saw his wife again. She died in an asylum.

For many years Tchaikovsky was subsidized by a wealthy, reclusive widow named Nadezhda von Meck. She not only commissioned compositions from him but actually granted him an annuity. By mutual agreement, they never met; nevertheless, they exchanged letters regularly over the thirteen years of their friendship. This strange arrangement was terminated, without explanation, by Madame von Meck.

By this time Tchaikovsky’s position was assured, and his music widely admired. In a tragic mishap, he died after drinking unboiled water during a cholera epidemic.

Chief Works: Symphonies No. 4, 5, and 6 (Pathétique); a very popular Violin Concerto and Piano Concerto • Operas: The Queen of Spades and Eugene Onegin, based on works by the Russian Romantic poet Alexander Pushkin • Symphonic poems: Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Overture 1812 (about Napoleon’s retreat from Russia in that year) • Ballet scores: Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty, The Nutcracker

Encore: After Romeo and Juliet, listen to the Nutcracker Suite; Symphony No. 4; Violin Concerto.

Allegro The tempo changes to allegro, and we hear the Vendetta or Fate theme. It is made up of a number of short, vigorous rhythmic motives, which Tchaikovsky at once begins to develop. Then the Vendetta theme returns in a climax punctuated by cymbal claps.

The highly romantic Love theme (illustrated on page 231) is first played only in part, by the English horn and violas—a mellow sound. It is halted by a curious but affecting passage built out of a little sighing figure:

After the Love theme dies down at some length, a lively development section begins (a feature suggesting sonata form). Confronted by various motives from the Vendetta theme, the Hymn theme takes on a marchlike character. We may get the impression of a battle between the forces of good and evil.
LISTENING CHART 15

Tchaikovsky, Overture-Fantasy, *Romeo and Juliet*
20 min., 25 sec.

**INTRODUCTION (Andante)**

| 0:00 | Hymn theme | Low woodwinds, pp |
| 0:35 | String motives | Anguished quality; contrapuntal |
| 1:28 | Strumming harp | With “announcements” in the high woodwinds |
| 2:09 | Hymn theme | High woodwinds with pizzicato strings. Followed by the string motives and harp; the “announcements” are now in the strings. |
| 2:00 | Buildup | Ends with drum roll, f |
| 4:45 | Preparation | Prepares for the main section; p, then crescendo |

**MAIN SECTION (Allegro)**

| 5:26 | Vendetta theme | Full orchestra, f |
| 5:51 | Development of the Vendetta theme; contrapuntal |
| 6:20 | Reaches a climax: cymbals |
| 6:33 | Vendetta theme | Full orchestra, ff |
| 6:56 | Relaxes, in a long slowdown |
| 7:44 | Prefatory statement of Love theme (English horn): phrase a “sighing” theme; muted strings, pp |
| 8:07 | |
| 8:57 | Love theme | Form is a b a, in woodwinds, with the sighing motive played by the French horn. |
| 10:05 | Harp. Cadences; the music dies down and nearly stops. |

**DEVELOPMENT**

| 11:13 | Developmental combination | Vendetta theme fragments are combined with the Hymn theme, which now sounds more like a march than a hymn. |
| 12:34 | This works up to a climax, marked by a cymbal crash. |
| 13:00 | Hymn theme | Played by trumpets; syncopated rhythm in the cymbals |

**FREE RECAPITULATION (abbreviated)**

| 13:30 | Vendetta theme | Full orchestra, ff |
| 13:56 | Sighing theme |
| 14:38 | Love theme | a b a; ecstatically in the strings, with the sighing motive again in the French horn; the last a is ff. |
| 15:47 | Fragments of the Love theme |
| 16:18 | (Love theme) | Sounds like another ecstatic statement, but is interrupted |
| 16:28 | Interruption by the Vendetta theme; conflict! Cymbals |
| 16:39 | Developmental combination | Vendetta theme fragments combined with the Hymn theme; buildup to fff |
| 17:21 | Then dies down, rather unwillingly; ends on drum roll, f |

**CODA (Moderato)**

| 17:55 | Love theme | A broken version of the Love theme, with muffled funeral drums. The music seems to be ending. |
| 18:32 | New theme | Woodwinds; ends with a transformation of the sighing motive |
| 19:31 | Love theme | Section a in a slow cadential “transcendent” version. The strumming harp of the slow introduction has returned. |
| 20:03 | Final cadences; a drum roll and solemn ending gestures |

Chart 15 at bedfordstmartins.com/listen
The Vendetta theme returns in its original form (suggesting a sonata-form recapitulation). The sighing motive and the lengthy Love theme also return, but the end of the latter is now broken up and interrupted—a clear reference to the tragic outcome of the drama. At one last appearance, the Vendetta theme is joined more explicitly than before with the Hymn theme.

*Coda (slow)* A fragment of the Love theme appears in a broken version over funeral drum taps in the timpani. This must depict the pathos of Romeo's final speeches, where he refers to his love before taking poison. A new, slow theme in the woodwinds is really a transformation of the sighing motive heard earlier.

But the mood is not entirely gloomy; as the harp strumming is resumed, the storyteller seems to derive solace and inspiration from his tale. Parts of the Love theme return in a beautiful new cadential version, surging enthusiastically upward in a way that is very typical of Tchaikovsky. Doesn't this ecstatic surge suggest that even though Romeo and Juliet are dead, their love is timeless—that their love transcends death? The influence of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* (see page 271) was felt here as everywhere in the later nineteenth century.

## 2 Nationalism

One legacy of Romanticism's passion for freedom played itself out all through the nineteenth century: the struggle for national independence. The Greeks struggled against the Turks, the Poles rose up against Russia, the Czechs revolted against Austria, and Norway broke free of Sweden.

As people all over Europe became more conscious of their national characters, they also came to prize their distinctive artistic heritages more and more. This gave rise to **nationalism** in music. The characteristic feature of this move-
ment is simply the incorporation of national folk music into concert pieces, songs, and operas. Symphonic poems or operas were based on programs or librettos that took up national themes—a hero of history such as Russia's Prince Igor; a national literary treasure such as the Finnish Lemminkaïnen legends; even a beloved river such as the Vltava (Moldau) in Bohemia. Such national themes were reinforced by actual musical themes taken from folk song. The result was music that stirred strong emotions at home, and often made an effective ambassador abroad.

Although in the nineteenth century political nationalism was certainly a major factor all over Europe, composers in Germany, Italy, and France are usually not categorized with the musical nationalists, for musical nationalism also strove to make local music independent of Europe's traditional cultural leaders. Nationalist composers often deliberately broke the traditional rules of harmony, form, and so on. They did this both in a spirit of defiance and also in an effort to develop new, genuinely local musical styles.

**Exoticism**

All this specifying of national styles had another effect: Audiences came to enjoy hearing folk music of other nations at concerts and the opera. French composers wrote Spanish music, Russians wrote Italian music, and Czechs

> "The art of music is above all other arts the expression of the soul of a nation. The composer must love the tunes of his country and they must become an integral part of him."

_Nationalist composer Ralph Vaughan Williams_
wrote American music (George Bizet’s opera Carmen, Tchaikovsky’s orchestra piece Capriccio Italien, and Antonín Dvořák’s famous New World Symphony, with its reference to spirituals). Such music cannot be called nationalistic, since its aim was not national self-definition, but it still had the effect of emphasizing the unique qualities of nations. It is usually simply called “exotic.” Puccini’s Madame Butterfly (page 279) exemplifies this trend. Puccini even studied a few samples of Japanese music to find the right exotic sound for his opera.

The Russian Kuchka

A close group of five Russian nationalist composers were nicknamed (by one of their critic friends) the kuchka—sometimes translated as the “Mighty Five,” but actually meaning a group or clique. They were an interesting and exceptionally talented group—even though they included only one trained musician, Mily Balakirev (1837–1910), Alexander Borodin (1833–1887) was a distinguished chemist, César Cui (1835–1918) an engineer, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908) a navy man, and Modest Musorgsky (1839–1881) an officer in the Russian Imperial Guard.

What held this group together was their determination to make Russian music “Russian,” their deep interest in collecting folk song, and their commitment to self-improvement as composers, relatively late in life.

MODEST MUSORGSKY
Pictures at an Exhibition (1874)

The title of this interesting work refers to a memorial exhibit of pictures by a friend of Musorgsky’s who had recently died, the Russian painter Viktor Hartmann. Like Musorgsky, Hartmann cared deeply about getting Russian themes into his work. Pictures at an Exhibition was originally written for piano solo, as a series of piano miniatures joined in a set, like Robert Schumann’s Carnaval (page 249). In 1922 the set was orchestrated by the French composer Maurice Ravel, and this is the form in which it is usually heard.

Promenade [1] To provide some overall thread or unity to a set of ten different musical pieces, Musorgsky hit upon a plan that is as simple and effective as it is ingenious. The first number, “Promenade,” does not refer to a picture, but depicts the composer strolling around the picture gallery. The same music returns several times in free variations, to show the promenader’s changes of mood as he contemplates Hartmann’s varied works.

The promenade theme recalls a Russian folk song:

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\textbf{Allegro giusto}
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Ravel orchestrated this forceful theme first for brass instruments, later for woodwinds and strings. Quintuple meter (5/4: measures 1, 3, and 5) is a distinct rarity, and having this meter alternate with 6/4 (measures 2, 4, and 6) rarer
still. The metrical oddity gives the impression of blunt, unsophisticated folk music—and perhaps also of walking back and forth without any particular destination, as one does in a gallery.

**Gnomus**  “Gnomus” is a drawing of a Russian folk-art nutcracker. The gnome’s jaws crack the nut when his legs (the handles) are pulled together; the same grotesque figure, which could frighten a little child, comes to life and dances in Tchaikovsky’s well-known Christmas ballet *The Nutcracker*. Musorgsky writes music that sounds suitably macabre, with a lurching rhythm to illustrate the gnome’s clumsy walk on his handlelegs, and striking dissonant harmonies.

The lurching rhythms and dissonance of “Gnomus” and the 5/4 meter of “Promenade” are among the features of Musorgsky’s music that break with the norms of mainstream European art music, in a self-consciously nationalistic spirit.

**Promenade**  [2] Quieter now, the promenade music suggests that the spectator is musing as he moves along . . . and we can exercise our stroller’s prerogative and skip past a number of Hartmann’s pictures, pictures that are not nationalistic in a Russian sense. Some refer to other peoples, and Musorgsky follows suit, writing music we would call exotic: “Bydlo,” which is the name of a Polish cattle-cart, and “Il Vecchio Castello,” Hartmann’s Italian title for a conventional painting of a medieval castle, complete with a troubadour serenading his lady.

**The Great Gate at Kiev** The last and longest number is also the climactic one. It illustrates—or, rather, spins a fantasy inspired by—a fabulous architectural design by Hartmann that was never executed.

Musorgsky summons up in the imagination a solemn procession with crashing cymbals, clanging bells, and chanting Russian priests. The Promenade theme is now at last incorporated into one of the musical pictures; the promenader himself has become a part of it and joins the parade. In addition, two real Russian melodies appear:

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The ending is very grandiose, for grandiosity forms an integral part of the national self-image of Russia—and, unfortunately, of many other nations.

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"A nation creates music—the composer only arranges it."

Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857), early Russian nationalist composer
Modest Musorgsky (1839–1881)

Musorgsky (pronounced moo-sorgsky) was the son of a well-to-do landowner. The social class into which he was born dictated that he become an officer in the Russian Imperial Guard. Musorgsky duly went to cadet school and joined a regiment after graduation, but he could not long ignore his deep-seated desire to become a composer.

In the meantime, the emancipation of the serfs and other political and economic changes in Russia caused the liquidation of his family estate. For a time Musorgsky tried to help run the family affairs, but in his twenties he was obliged to work at a clerical job. Meanwhile, he experimented with musical composition, struggling to master the technique of an art that he had come to late in life. It was around this time that he joined the circle of Russian nationalist composers that was dubbed the *kuchka* (the Group; see page 288).

Musorgsky never felt secure in his technique and relied on his skillful *kuchka* friend, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, to criticize his work. But his intense nationalism formed his vision of what he wanted his work to be—truly Russian music. His masterpiece, the opera *Boris Godunov*, is based on the story of the sixteenth-century tsar as told by the great Russian poet Alexander Pushkin. It hardly had the success it deserved when it was finally revised and performed in St. Petersburg. Indeed, this and other works by Musorgsky only succeeded some time later, after their orchestration had been touched up (some say glamorized) by Rimsky-Korsakov.

Musorgsky led a rather grim life; his was a personality filled with self-doubt, and his instability was a constant concern to his friends. He became an alcoholic early in life. Musorgsky died of alcoholism and epilepsy in an army hospital at the age of forty-two.

**Chief Works:** Operas: *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanshchina* • Orchestral program compositions: *Pictures at an Exhibition* (originally for piano) and *Night on Bald Mountain* • Songs, including the very impressive song cycles *The Nursery and Songs and Dances of Death*

**Encore:** After *Pictures*, listen to *Night on Bald Mountain* and *Boris Godunov*, Coronation Scene (scene ii).

3 Responses to Romanticism

Tchaikovsky’s *Romeo and Juliet* and many works of musical nationalism and exoticism reveal the continuing development of Romantic ideals well after the 1850s. But times were changing, and the new realism of literature and the arts embodied new ideals in keeping with a no-nonsense world increasingly devoted to industrialization and commerce. In the age of Victorian morality, a new work ethic gave short shrift to the heady emotion that the Romantics had insisted on conveying in their art. Romantic music came to seem out of step—or else it was prized exactly because it offered an escape, in the concert hall, to a never-never land with little connection to everyday events.

The work of the two greatest late nineteenth-century German composers can be viewed as two different responses to this situation. Johannes Brahms, though a devoted young friend of Robert Schumann, one of the most Romantic of composers, turned back to the Classicism of the Viennese masters. He saw this as a way of tempering the unbridled emotionalism of Romanticism, which he expressed only in a muted mood of restraint and resignation.

A younger composer, Gustav Mahler, reacted differently. Lament was his mode, rather than resignation; his music expresses an intense, bittersweet nostalgia for a Romanticism that seems to have lost its innocence, even its credibility. The lament for this loss is almost clamorous in Mahler’s songs and symphonies.
Other Nationalists

Nationalism enjoyed new life after 1900. Some of the most impressive nationalists were also among the earliest modernists, among them Béla Bartók in Hungary, Charles Ives in the United States, and—most important—Igor Stravinsky in Russia. We examine this new nationalism in Chapters 21 and 22, restricting ourselves here to a listing of the main late Romantic nationalists outside of Russia.

*Bohemia* Bohemia, as the Czech Republic was then called, produced two eminent national composers: Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884), who wrote the symphonic poem *Vltava* (The Moldau) and the delightful folk opera *The Bartered Bride*, and Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904), composer of the popular *Slavonic Dances* as well as important symphonies and other large-scale works. Dvořák also spurred nationalist music in a distant land he visited—the United States of America. See page 382.

*Scandinavia* The Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg (1843–1907) wrote sets of piano miniatures with titles such as *Norwegian Mountain Tunes*, which were very popular at the time; also a well-known suite of *music for Peer Gynt*, the great drama by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen.

Jean Sibelius (1865–1957), a powerful late-Romantic symphonist, produced a series of symphonic poems on the folklore of his native Finland: *The Swan of Tuonela*, *Kullervo*, *Finlandia*, and others.

*Spain* Among Spanish nationalists were Enrique Granados (1867–1916), Joaquín Turina (1882–1949), and Manuel de Falla (1876–1946), best known for his *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* for piano and orchestra. Spain was also a favorite locale for exotic compositions with a Spanish flavor written by Frenchmen—among them Bizet’s opera *Carmen* and orchestral pieces by Emmanuel Chabrier (España), Claude Debussy (*Ibéria*), and Maurice Ravel (*Boléro*).

*Great Britain* The major English nationalist in music was Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958). His *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* is a loving meditation on a psalm tune that was written by a major composer from Britain’s national heritage at the time of Queen Elizabeth I.

Less well known is Irish composer Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924), who wrote *Irish Rhapsodies* for orchestra and the opera *Shamus O’Brien*.

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The Renewal of Classicism: Brahms

Born in the dour industrial port city of Hamburg, Johannes Brahms gravitated to Vienna, the city of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. The move seems symbolic. For Brahms rejected many of the innovations of the early Romantics and went back to Classical genres, forms, and, to some extent, even Classical style.

Brahms devoted his major effort to traditional genres such as string quartets and other chamber music works, symphonies, and concertos. In these works, he found new life in the Classical forms—sonata form, theme and variations, and rondo. The only typical Romantic genre he cultivated was the miniature—the lied and the characteristic piano piece; he never contemplated grandiose works such as philosophical program symphonies or mythological operas. Almost alone among the important composers of his time, he made no special effort to pioneer new harmonies or tone colors.

What impels a great composer—and Brahms was a great composer, not a timid traditionalist—to turn back the clock in this way? One can only speculate that he could not find it in himself to copy or continue the enthusiastic, open-ended striving of the early Romantics. In the late nineteenth century, this type of response no longer rang true, and Brahms recognized it.

On the other hand, the nobility and power of Beethoven inspired him with a lifelong model. Seen in this way, Brahms’s effort was a heroic one: to temper the new richness and variety of Romantic emotion with the traditional strength and poise of Classicism.
Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

The son of an orchestral musician in Hamburg, Brahms was given piano lessons at an early age. By the time he was seven, he was studying with one of Hamburg’s finest music teachers. A little later he was playing the piano at dockside taverns and writing popular tunes.

A turning point in Brahms’s life came at the age of twenty when he met Robert and Clara Schumann. These two eminent musicians befriended and encouraged the young man and took him into their household. Robert wrote an enthusiastic article praising his music. But soon afterward, Schumann was committed to an insane asylum—a time during which Brahms and Clara (who was fourteen years his senior) became very close. In later life Brahms always sent Clara his compositions to get her comments and suggestions.

With another musician friend, Joseph Joachim, who was to become one of the great violinists of his time, the young Brahms signed a foolish manifesto condemning the advanced music of Liszt and Wagner. Thereafter he passed an uneventful bachelor existence, steadily turning out music—chamber music, songs, and piano pieces, but no program music or operas. He was forty-three before his first symphony appeared, many years after its beginnings at his desk; it seemed that he was hesitating to invoke comparison with Beethoven, whose symphonies set a standard for the genre. In fact, this symphony’s last movement contains a near-quotiation from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony that is more like a challenge. When people pointed out the similarity, Brahms snarled, “Any jackass can see that,” implying that it was the differences between the two works that mattered, not their superficial similarities.

Brahms would eventually write four magnificent symphonies, all harking back to forms used by Beethoven and even Bach, but building a restrained Romantic yearning into their expressive effect.

For a time Brahms conducted a chorus, and he wrote much choral music, including A German Requiem, a setting of sober biblical texts in German. As a conductor, he indulged his traditionalism by reviving music of Bach and even earlier composers, but he also enjoyed the popular music of his day. He wrote waltzes (Johann Strauss’s “Waltz King,” was a valued friend), folk song arrangements, and the well-known Hungarian Dances.

Chief Works: Four symphonies, Tragic Overture, and a rather comical Academic Festival Overture • Violin Concerto, Double Concerto for Violin and Cello, and two piano concertos • Much chamber music—including quartets, quintets, and sextets; a trio for French horn, violin, and piano; a beautiful quintet for clarinet and strings • Piano music and many songs • Choral music, including A German Requiem and Alto Rhapsody • Waltzes, Hungarian Dances

Encore: After the Violin Concerto, listen to the Clarinet Quintet; Symphony No. 3.

JOHANNES BRAHMS
Violin Concerto in D, Op. 77 (1878)

Concertos are always written to show off great virtuosos—who are often the composers themselves, as with Mozart, Chopin, and Liszt. Brahms wrote his one violin concerto for a close friend, Joseph Joachim, a leading violinist of the time and also a composer. Even this late in life—Brahms was then forty-five—he accepted advice about certain details of the composition from Joachim, and Joachim wrote the soloist’s cadenza for the first movement.

We can appreciate Brahms’s traditionalism as far as the Classical forms are concerned by referring to the standard movement plan for the Classical concerto, on page 189. Like Mozart, Brahms wrote his first movement in double-exposition sonata form; this must have seemed extremely stuffy to writers of Romantic concertos who had developed new and much freer forms. Also, Brahms’s last movement is a rondo—much the most common Classical way to end a concerto. If it is a relatively simple movement, by Brahms’s standards, that is because the last movements of Classical concertos were typically the lightest and least demanding on the listener.
Third Movement (Allegro giocosso, ma non troppo vivace) Giocosso means “jolly”; the first theme in this rondo, A, has a life recalling the spirited gypsy fiddling that was popular in nineteenth-century Vienna. Imitating gypsy music in this work and others counts as an exotic feature in Brahms's music (see page 287).

The solo violin plays the theme (and much else in the movement) in double stops, that is, in chords produced by bowing two violin strings simultaneously. Hard to do well, this makes a brilliant effect when done by a virtuoso.

Allegro giocosso, ma non troppo vivace

a

SOLO VIOLIN, then ORCHESTRA

The theme falls into a traditional a a b a’ form; in Brahms's hands, however, this becomes something quite subtle. Since the second a is identical to the first, except in instrumentation, the last a (a’) might be dull unless it were varied in an interesting way. Brahms manages to extend it and tighten it up at the same time, by compressing the main rhythmic figure in quicker and quicker repetitions:

a’

ORCHESTRA

These seem for a moment to disrupt or contradict the prevailing meter, a characteristic fingerprint of Brahms's style. There are other examples in this movement.

The first rondo episode, B, a theme with a fine Romantic sweep about it, begins with an emphatic upward scale played by the solo violin (high double stops in octaves). This is answered by a downward scale in the orchestra in a lower range. When the orchestra has its turn to play B, timpani are added; the upward scale is transferred down to the low register, and the downward scale up to the high register.

The second rondo episode, C, involves another shift of meter; this charming melody—which, however, soon evaporates—is in 3/4 time:

The coda presents a version of the a phrase of the main theme in 6/8 time, in a swinging march tempo. Again the timpani are prominent. Most of the transitions in this movement are rapid virtuoso scale passages by the soloist, who is also given two short cadenzas prior to the coda.

Brahms was a serious man; this is one of the few pictures of him smiling, with friends at a favorite Viennese tavern.
LISTENING CHART 16

Brahms, Violin Concerto, third movement
Rondo. 7 min., 43 sec.

0:00 A (Tune)
0:00 a Solo violin, with double stops
0:11 a Orchestra
0:22 b Solo violin
0:35 a' Orchestra
0:46 The solo violin begins the cadences ending the tune, which lead into a transition.
1:04 Fast scales prepare for B.

1:14 B (Episode 1)
1:34 Melody (emphatic upward scale) in the violin, with inverted motive below it, in the orchestra

0:20 1:38 C (Episode 2)
0:20 2:20 Lyrical tune (solo and orchestra), p
2:20 2:40 Expressive climactic section, solo
3:11 3:22 Orchestra interrupts, f.
3:27 3:35 B Scales prepare for B.

0:11 2:22 A' Starts with b' (solo)
0:11 4:43 a'' in orchestra, extended; the real feeling of “return” comes only at this point.

5:08 Short cadenza Solo, double stops again; orchestra soon enters.
5:25 Solo trills and scales; motive in low French horns
5:54 Passage of preparation: motive in low French horns

6:09 Short cadenza

6:20 Coda Mostly in 6/8 time. Starts with a marchlike transformation of phrase a (solo), over a drum beat
6:44 References to B
7:16 Final-sounding cadences
7:29 The music dies down and ends with three loud chords.

From Brahms's score of his Violin Concerto
Romantic Nostalgia: Mahler

If, like Brahms, Gustav Mahler felt ambivalent about the Romantic tradition, he expressed this ambivalence very differently. He eagerly embraced all the excesses of Romanticism that Brahms had shrunk from, writing huge program symphonies (though he vacillated on the question of distributing the programs to his audiences) and symphonies with solo and choral singing. Mahler thought of the symphony as a mode of expression universal and encompassing—"like a world" in itself, as he once put it. This connects him clearly enough to the most visionary of earlier Romantics. Again and again his works set out to encode seemingly profound metaphysical or spiritual messages.

Yet Mahler felt unable to enter freely into this Romantic world. There is an uneasy quality to his music that sets it apart from other late Romantic music. For while we may feel that the emotion expressed in Tchaikovsky's music, for example, is exaggerated, we do not feel that Tchaikovsky himself thought so. Mahler's exaggeration seems deliberate and self-conscious.

Exaggeration spills over into another characteristic feature, distortion. Mahler tends to make more or less slight distortions of melody, motive, and harmony. Sometimes these distortions put a uniquely bittersweet touch on the musical material; sometimes they amount to all-out parody. The parody does not seem harsh, however, but affectionate, nostalgic, and ultimately melancholy. Distortion for Mahler was a way of acknowledging his inability—and the inability of his generation—to recapture the lost freshness of Romantic music.

To give an example: The slow movement of his Symphony No. 1 quotes the cheerful children's round, "Frère Jacques," strangely distorted so as to sound like a funeral march. Mahler explained that this march was inspired by a well-known nursery picture of the time, The Huntsman's Funeral Procession, showing forest animals shedding crocodile tears around the casket of a hunter (see page 298). But an innocent children's song was not distorted in this way in order to mock childhood or childish things. If anything, Mahler used it to lament his own lost innocence, and that of his time.
Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)

Mahler's early life was not happy. Born in Bohemia to an abusive father, he lost five of his brothers and sisters to diphtheria, and others ended their lives in suicide or mental illness. The family lived near a military barracks, and the many marches incorporated into Mahler's music—often distorted marches—have been traced to his childhood recollections of parade music.

After studying for a time at the Vienna Conservatory, Mahler began a rising career as a conductor. His uncompromising standards and his authoritarian attitude toward the orchestra musicians led to frequent disputes with the authorities. What is more, Mahler was Jewish, and Vienna at that time was rife with anti-Semitism. Nonetheless, he was acknowledged as one of the great conductors of his day and also as a very effective musical administrator. After positions at Prague, Budapest, Hamburg, and elsewhere, he came to head such organizations as the Vienna Opera and the New York Philharmonic.

It was only in the summers that Mahler had time to compose, so it is not surprising that he produced fewer pieces (though they are very long pieces) than any other important composer. Ten symphonies, the last of them unfinished, and six song cycles for voice and orchestra are almost all he wrote. The song cycle The Song of the Earth of 1910, based on translated Chinese poems, is often called Mahler's greatest masterpiece.

Mahler's wife was a famous Viennese beauty, Alma Schindler. By a tragic irony, shortly after he wrote his grim orchestral song cycle Songs of the Death of Children, his and Alma's youngest daughter died of scarlet fever. Alma's second marriage was to the great modernist architect Walter Gropius and her third to the novelist Franz Werfel; she wrote unreliable memoirs, had affairs with other famous men, and ended up among the smart set, first in Los Angeles and then in New Jersey.

Mahler's life was clouded by psychological turmoil, and he once consulted his famous Viennese contemporary, Sigmund Freud. His disputes with the New York Philharmonic directors, which discouraged him profoundly, may have contributed to his early death.

Chief Works: Ten lengthy symphonies, several with chorus, of which the best known are the First, Fourth, and Fifth. Orchestral song cycles: The Song of the Earth, Songs of a Wayfarer, The Year's Magic Horn (for piano or orchestra), Songs of the Death of Children

Encore: After Symphony No. 1, listen to the Adagietto from Symphony No. 5; Songs of a Wayfarer.

From the score Mahler was working on at his death—the unfinished Symphony No. 10

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Gustav Mahler
Symphony No. 1 (1888)

Mahler's first symphony went through as complicated a process of genesis as any major work of music. It started out as a symphonic poem in one movement, grew to a five-movement symphony, and was finally revised into four movements. As is also true of several of his other symphonies, Symphony No. 1 includes fragments from a number of earlier songs by Mahler, songs about lost love. The program that Mahler once published for the whole symphony, but then withdrew, concerns the disillusion and distress of disappointed love, with the hero pulling himself together again in the finale.

An important general feature of Mahler's style is a special kind of counterpoint closely tied up with his very individual style of orchestration. He picks instruments out of the orchestra to play momentary solos, which are heard in counterpoint with other lines played by other "solo" instruments. The changing combinations can create a fascinating kaleidoscopic effect, for the various
Mahler's Symphony No. 8, called "Symphony of a Thousand," represents a peak in the nineteenth-century tradition of grandiose compositions (see page 235). One early performance (in Philadelphia) did indeed use 1,069 orchestral players, chorus singers, and soloists.

bright strands are not made to blend, as in most Romantic orchestration, but rather to stand out in sharp contrast to one another.

**Third Movement** (Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen—"With a solemn, measured gait; do not drag") This ironic funeral march is also a personal lament, for its trio is taken from an earlier song by Mahler about lost love. (Though the musical form of the movement is quite original, it is based on march and trio form, analogous to the Classical minuet and trio.)

**Section 1** Mahler had the extraordinary idea of making his parody funeral march out of the French round "Frère Jacques," as we have said. He distorts the familiar tune by playing it in the minor mode at a slow tempo:

![Musical notation](image)

The mournful, monotonous drumbeat that accompanies the march is derived from the ending of the tune. (Note that Mahler slightly changed that ending of "Frère Jacques" as he transformed it into his march—he wanted only so much monotony.)

The slow march itself is played first by a single muted double bass playing in its high register—a bizarre, deliberately clumsy sonority. An additional figure that Mahler appends to his version of "Frère Jacques," played by the oboe, fits so naturally that we almost accept it as part of the traditional tune. The music dies out on the drumbeat figure (played by the harp), then on a single repeated note.
Section 2 This section is a study in frustration, as fragmentary dance-music phrases that sound distorted, parodistic, and even vulgar give way to equally fragmentary recollections of the funeral march. One dance starts up in band instruments, with a faster beat provided by pizzicato strings; notice the exaggerated way in which its opening upbeat is slowed down. It is cut short by a new dance phrase—louder, more vulgar yet, scored with bass drum and cymbals. “With Parody,” Mahler wrote on the score at this point:

```
a: OBOE
   Slow... in tempo
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This phrase, too, is cut short, and a varied repetition of the material introduced so far does not proceed much further. Instead, a long, grieving cadential passage is heard over the funeral-march drumbeat. Other fragments of “Frère Jacques” are recalled. Mourning gives way to utter exhaustion.

Section 3 A note of consolation is sounded by this contrasting “trio,” which begins with warm major-mode sounds and a triplet accompaniment on the harp. (The funeral-march beat dissolves into a faster but gentler throb.) The melody introduced is the one that belonged originally to a nostalgic song about lost love. Played first by muted strings, then the oboe and solo violins, the song melody soon turns bittersweet.

The rhythm is halted by quiet but dramatic gong strokes. Flutes play a few strangely momentous new phrases, also taken from the song.

Section 4 The final section combines elements from both sections 1 and 2. Soon after the “Frère Jacques” round commences, in a strange key, a new counterpoint joins it in the trumpets—another parodistic, almost whining sound:

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TRUMPETS
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One of the dance phrases from section 2 interrupts, picking up the tempo; and when “Frère Jacques” and the trumpet tune return, the tempo picks up even more for a wild moment of near chaos. But the mourning passage that ended section 2 returns, with its constant somber drumbeat. The movement ends after another series of gong strokes.
LISTENING CHART 17

Mahler, Symphony No. 1, third movement, Funeral March

10 min., 20 sec.

**SECTION 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0:00</th>
<th>Funeral March</th>
<th>Drum beat, then four main entries of the round “Frère Jacques” (minor mode), which is the march theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:07</td>
<td>Entry 1: Double bass, muted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:28</td>
<td>Entry 2: Bassoon (a subsidiary entry follows: cellos)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:48</td>
<td>Entry 3: Tuba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:02</td>
<td>(“Additional” fragment: oboe)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15</td>
<td>Entry 4: Flute in low register</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:35</td>
<td>(“Additional” fragment). The march gradually dies away; the drumbeat finally stops.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SECTION 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2:09</th>
<th>Dance-Band Phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:09</td>
<td>33 a Oboes, p, repeated (trumpets in counterpoint); pizzicato string beat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:29</td>
<td>b Faster, mf; high (E-flat) clarinets, bass drum, and cymbals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:39</td>
<td>34 a Strings, with varied repeat (trumpets in counterpoint)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:53</td>
<td>3:24 b’ With new continuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:12</td>
<td>Conclusion Descending cadential passage, a little slower, based on a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:19</td>
<td>Return to The funeral-march drumbeat, which entered during the previous passage, continues in the background. The march dies away; the drumbeat almost stops.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SECTION 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2:00</th>
<th>Trio (Song) The rhythm gradually picks up: a gentle triplet accompaniment with a throbbing background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:53</td>
<td>5:09 A songlike melody starts in muted strings, then moves to the flute, two solo violins, clarinet, and oboe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:16</td>
<td>6:25 The trio dies away (violins).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:43</td>
<td>Gong strokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:50</td>
<td>Flutes play two new phrases, as though waiting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SECTION 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7:02</th>
<th>March Drumbeat, faster, in a new key: march (“Frère Jacques”)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:18</td>
<td>(“Additional” fragment: E-flat clarinet, strings, flute)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:36</td>
<td>0:16 March theme with new, parodistic counterpoint: trumpets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>Dance-band phrase b: clarinets, cymbals, drums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:17</td>
<td>12 March theme with new trumpet counterpoint; new sudden speedup: clarinets, ff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:37</td>
<td>39 Conclusion Descending cadential passage, based on a, with drumbeat as in section 2; slower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:38</td>
<td>0:19 (“Additional” fragment, in low range: bassoon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:38</td>
<td>1:21 The music dies down; gong strokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:53</td>
<td>1:35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Access Interactive Listening Chart 17 at bedfordstmartins.com/listen