

# The Development of the Symphony

## THE SYMPHONY IN SUMMARY

In its most traditional form, as standardised during the Classical Period, the Symphony is a large-scale work written for Orchestra.

It usually comprises of 4 movements:

- I. **Fast**, vigorous, dramatic. Sometimes with a slow introduction
- II. **Slow**, lyrical
- III. **Dance-like**; courtly and refined, or a peasant style country dance
- IV. **Fast**, brilliant, heroic. Lighter in mood than Movement I

## BEGINNINGS

The term *Symphony* comes from the Greek *Syn-phonē* meaning 'sounding together'.

Its beginnings were in the Baroque Period (1600-1750) in the form of the **Italian Overture**. These were made popular by composers as the opening of their operas and were called the **Sinfonia** or **Opera Sinfonia** at the time.

They had a structure of 3 parts, usually in a Quick-Slow-Quick and Dance-like form.

Sinfonias occasionally were performed separately at concerts and in time, became their own form without any connection to an Opera.

The **Concerto Grosso** genre of the Baroque Period also has some connection to development of the Symphony, especially where there was no use of soloists as in Brandenburg Concerto No.3 by J.S. Bach.

It also has a 3-movement form of **Quick-Slow-Quick**.

The Symphony is considered to have become fully established during the Classical Period (1750-1820).

# The Development of the Symphony

## THE BAROQUE PERIOD ORCHESTRA

In the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, orchestral forces and layout were likely to be very fluid, with instrumentation dependant on who was available rather than what the composer wrote for.

Instruments such as horns, timpani and trumpets were generally not written in the score to begin with. However, should they be available for a performance, were added in to reinforce the tonic and dominant, in addition to creating dramatic effect. It was generally understood that oboes and bassoons would double the strings if specific parts were not written. Violas were also not written for frequently, but if available, would double the bass part.

It was during Haydn's time that it became more common for all these instruments to be specifically written for.

It is likely that an orchestra would have been set up something like this during the time of JS Bach. Note the central position of the harpsichord. It was there that the composer would have sat and directed the performance. The harpsichord was the core of the continuo section outlining the harmonic structure of the work.



BAROQUE PERIOD

Note: Orchestral layouts were not standardised in this era and there were many variations depending on the composer, location, and repertoire. This diagram gives some indication of the instrumentation and relative number of musicians.

## THE CLASSICAL PERIOD ORCHESTRA



CLASSICAL PERIOD

Note: Orchestral layouts were not standardised in this era and there were many variations depending on the composer, location, and repertoire. This diagram gives some indication of the instrumentation and relative number of musicians.

By the time of Haydn and Mozart, orchestral forces were generally a little larger, although still somewhat fluid depending on the situation.

It is considered to still have been common for the composer to direct from a keyboard instrument in the middle of the ensemble. This was often not written in the score and nowadays is rarely performed as such. If direction was not coming from the keyboard instrument, then it would be from the 1st violinist (the Concertmaster).

Orchestral layout was unstandardised, with a wide variety of arrangements possible. It is thought that Haydn is responsible for the amphitheatre arrangement we are familiar with today. This is said to be the layout he used for his London concerts in 1791–93.

*Note the antiphonal viola/celli/basses as opposed to the modern layout where they stay together in their section.*

# Development of the Symphony – Classical

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CLASSICAL SYMPHONY (1750-1825)

COMPOSED FOR BENEFACTORS	Symphonies were plentiful as they were written for patrons and employers as commissions or for a specific occasion. Performances were generally at aristocratic residences but later, composers began to create their own performance opportunities through subscription concerts.
DURATION	20 - 45 minutes.
4 MOVEMENTS. STANDARDISED STRUCTURE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fast and Dramatic. Sonata form. Sometimes with a slow introduction.</li> <li>2. Slow and lyrical. Ternary or Theme and Variations form.</li> <li>3. Dancelike. Minuet and Trio form.</li> <li>4. Fast and brilliant. Sonata or Sonata-Rondo form.</li> </ol>
BALANCED MUSICAL PHRASES. REFINED AND CONTROLLED FEELING	Classical Symphonies were generally clearly structured and able to be understood by educated audiences on first hearing. Phrases were balanced with a sense of question and answer. Symphonies felt symmetrical with a clear structure, this contributed to the desired feeling of refinement and restraint in the music of the Classical Period.
STANDARDISED ORCHESTRA	<p>The string section remains most prominent with woodwinds and horns now developing a bigger role. Trumpets and Timpani were used if available although were often not written in the score. Their main function was to reinforce the tonic and dominant and for their added dramatic effect.</p> <p>Strings: 1st Violin, 2nd Violin, Viola, Cello and Double Bass  Woodwinds: 2 Flutes, 2 Oboes, 2 Clarinets (later), 2 Bassoons  Brass: 2 Trumpets, 2 French Horns  Percussion: 2 Timpani</p>
TUNEFUL MELODIES	Easy to sing and recognise.
HOMOPHONIC TEXTURE	Usually a melody with accompaniment. Later in the era, texture could also be flexible, with some polyphonic sections within a movement.
AFFECT: CONTRAST OF MOOD	In contrast to the single affect desired within a movement of Baroque Period works, the Classical Symphony (especially those by Mozart) included a contrasting second theme (or theme group) in Sonata form movements. They were generally lyrical and with a gentler mood than the more dramatic or forceful first theme group. Haydn often composes in a monothematic style but still created contrast of mood through his treatment of the theme.
INFLUENTIAL COMPOSERS	Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809) Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791)

# Development of the Symphony – Classical

## SOCIAL, POLITICAL, CULTURAL BACKGROUND (1750-1825)

NEOCLASSICISM	Architects, composers and artists sought to represent the clean lines, balanced structure and high ideals of the Ancient Greeks and Romans.
REVOLUTIONS	The French Revolution, American Revolution and Napoleonic Wars occurred during this time period. This led to the decrease of power in the aristocracy and led to a larger, stronger Middle Class.
NEW MIDDLE CLASS	The Middle Class earned more money and had greater power of influence in society. They organised public concerts which gave more people access to classical music outside of religious services. Until this time, access was restricted to the aristocracy as they regularly held palace concerts.
DEVELOPMENT OF THE FREELANCE COMPOSER	Due to the Middle Class having more money and time for culture and the arts, composers were now more able to work as freelancers, rather than for a Church or Aristocratic employer. Many of the Middle Class now learned musical instruments which led to a higher demand for compositions for amateur musicians.

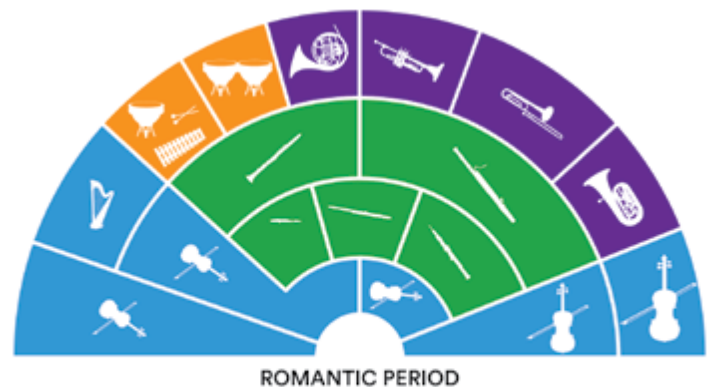
# Development of the Symphony – Romantic

Defined by a fervent emphasis on individualism, heightened emotional expression, and a profound connection with nature, the Romantic Period witnessed composers such as Beethoven and Chopin conveying intense emotions through their musical compositions. Their works, marked by dramatic contrasts and evocative melodies, reflected the spirit of the age. The Romantic Period is distinguished by its rebellion against established norms, epitomising a cultural shift that embraced untamed creativity and celebrated the potency of human expression through both written and musical forms.

## THE ROMANTIC PERIOD (C.1820 – 1900)

### THE ROMANTIC PERIOD ORCHESTRA

The Symphony was expanded during the Romantic Period. In general, the traditional forms used in the classical period remained as a structure but were developed and expanded to suit the creative interest of the composer.



Note: Orchestral layouts were not standardised in this era and there were many variations depending on the composer, location, and repertoire. This diagram gives some indication of the instrumentation and relative number of musicians.



*The Theater An Der Wien, Vienna where Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> symphonies were performed.*

# Development of the Symphony – Romantic

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A ROMANTIC PERIOD SYMPHONY (C. 1820-1900)

WRITTEN WHEN THE COMPOSER WAS INSPIRED	The composer was able to write what they wished when they wished. The works were often longer and more developed as the composers often did not have a specific deadline.
DURATION	40-70+ minutes in duration.
INDIVIDUALITY OF STYLE	Composers were able to express their personality and ideas.
EXPRESSION & EMOTION	The music aims to express much emotion – especially about love and longing.
RICH SOUND- EXPRESSIVE TONE COLOUR	Romantic composers used tone colour (timbre) to express mood and atmosphere. This may include unusual techniques on the instrument (e.g. <i>col legno</i> ), different instrument combinations and/or additions of new instruments (e.g. piccolo, contrabassoon).
FOUR MOVEMENTS & MORE FLEXIBILITY	Most Romantic symphonies still contained 4 movements, but the formula of tempo and mood was more flexible. The composer was not restricted in their expression by defined tempo and mood of the movements and forms were often expanded with more thematic material and greater development of themes.
LARGER ORCHESTRA	Orchestras expanded to up around 100 performers, from around 60 in the Classical Period including: Addition of piccolo, bass clarinet and contrabassoon to the woodwind section which expanded the pitch range and timbre available. Expanded brass instruments e.g. 4 horns, 2-3 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba. The addition of valves to brass instruments expanded the range of notes available and made it easier for trumpets and horns to deal with intricate melodies. More percussion instruments were added e.g. up to 4 timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle.
MORE FLEXIBLE ORCHESTRATION	Sections of the orchestra are written more equally. The orchestra of the Classical Period remains as a core group although with a greater number of players, and the composer can add whatever extra instruments they wish.
EXPANDED RANGE OF PITCH, DYNAMICS & TEMPO	Orchestras introduced instruments at the extremes of high and low pitch such as the piccolo and contrabassoon. Composers demanded a wider range of dynamics from <i>pppp</i> to <i>ffff</i> . Changes of mood were often depicted by fluctuations of tempo. Composers utilised <i>accelerando</i> and <i>decelerando</i> and <i>rubato</i> *.
CHROMATIC HARMONY	Composers added chords that were not found in the major or minor key of the composition. This helped to add colour and mood to the music. There was a lessened sense of the tonic key and more emphasis on instability of tonality.
USE OF *RUBATO	The slight holding back or pressing forward of tempo for expressive purposes.
INFLUENTIAL COMPOSERS	Beethoven, Mendelssohn (early Romantic), Brahms, Berlioz, Bruckner, Tchaikovsky.



# Development of the Symphony – Romantic

## SOCIAL, POLITICAL, CULTURAL BACKGROUND (1820-1900)

<p>ROMANTICISM</p>	<p>A cultural movement that stressed emotion, imagination, and individuality. It was in a way, a reaction against the neo-classicism of the Classical Period.</p>
<p>NATIONALISM</p>	<p>Composers deliberately created music with a specific national identity, through the use of folk songs, dances, stylistic influence, legends and history of their homelands.</p>
<p>PROGRAMMATIC ELEMENTS</p>	<p>The music often depicted a story, poem, idea or scene. This also added to the emotive feel of Romantic music.</p>
<p>THE ROLE OF THE CONDUCTOR</p>	<p>The conductor was now positioned from the podium, using a baton. This was introduced primarily by Mendelssohn in 1835. Before that, either the concertmaster directed from their position at the front of the 1st Violins, or the composer directed from a keyboard instrument (harpsichord or forte-piano). It was even known for the composer to sit at a desk, facing the orchestra, and in tricky corners or if the orchestra needed extra help, would stand and direct for short periods of time.</p>
<p>MUSIC CONCERT SOCIETIES</p>	<p>The growing middle-class led to a greater demand for public concerts and they created Music Concert Societies to help develop this.</p> <p>Many of the major orchestras in Europe and the United States began as Concert Societies. The London Philharmonic was formed in 1813 by a society of professional musicians. A few more formed mid-century: the Vienna Philharmonic in 1841 and the New York Philharmonic in 1842. Many more in Europe and the US came together toward the end of the century.</p> <p>The orchestras become an integral part of cultural life in their cities. They helped develop support of performing venues, conservatories to train musicians, and administrative support, governmental, and private patronage.</p>

# Development of the Symphony – Romantic

Music is not created in a vacuum, but rather it reflects the politics, culture and struggles of the time and place in which it is created.

## NATIONALISM

Nationalism is a term used to describe a sense of national consciousness, exalting one's nation above all others, and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations.

As a musical movement, nationalism emerged early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in connection with political independence movements, and was characterised by an emphasis on national musical elements such as the use of folk songs, folk dances or rhythms, or on the adoption of nationalist subjects for operas, symphonic poems, or other forms of music. Nationalist music can be either Absolute or Program Music.

The addition of folk songs, folk dances and rhythms injected a new variety of tonal, rhythmic, harmonic, and formal characteristics to the music of the time. Nationalistic music falls into one of three categories:

1. Music based on folk tunes, melodies and folk rhythms
2. Music based on folk tales or legends
3. Expression of patriotic love for a country; by utilising musical elements to depict its 'natural landscape'.



# Development of the Symphony – 20<sup>th</sup> Century

## THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SYMPHONY

The Twentieth Century saw further diversification in the style and content of works which composers labelled “symphonies” - the idea that the “symphony” was a definite form which had certain standards was eroded, and the symphony instead came to be any major orchestral work which its composer saw fit to label as such.

Some composers such as Prokofiev, Shostakovich and Vaughan-Williams continued to write in more or less the traditional form.

## TWENTIETH CENTURY ORCHESTRAL MUSIC (1900-2000)

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century saw such an explosion of change that it is much more difficult to define than any other era.

Musical styles were often a reaction against the Romanticism of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and featured experimentation and exploration of what defines music. Some composers continued to write in a more romantic or traditional style and others completely broke through the boundaries of what was considered ‘classical’ music.

Essentially, in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, composers were free to pursue any style they wished.

INSTRUMENTATION	
DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERCUSSION SECTION	As a result of the desire for more unusual timbres, more rhythmic drive and power, nationalistic Russian music, folk, jazz and World influenced music, the percussion section increased dramatically throughout the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century.
ELECTRONIC INSTRUMENTS	Appeared in the 1950s and 60s due to the development of tape studios, synthesisers and computers. “Electronic instruments let composers control tone colour (timbre), duration, dynamics and pitch with unprecedented precision.” (Kamien). Some compositions are for electronic instruments alone and some are combined with live performers on acoustic instruments.
UNUSUAL SCORING	Composers such as Bartok and Stravinsky composed for new combinations of instrument, often as chamber music. Examples are Bartok’s <i>Music for Strings, Percussion and Celeste</i> and Stravinsky’s <i>L’histoire du Soldat</i> .

# Development of the Symphony – 20<sup>th</sup> Century

ELEMENTS OF MUSIC	
DYNAMICS	Extreme range of dynamics.
MELODY	Often difficult to sing, longs of leaps and chromatic notes.
RHYTHM	Increasing emphasis on irregularity and unpredictability including the use of syncopation, free rhythm and ostinato.
METRE	Rapid changes of metre, irregular metres, and unusual groupings of beats.
TIMBRE	Extremes of range, uncommon playing techniques to achieve new sounds. More percussive and noise-like sounds. Less emphasis on blended sound and more about hearing each instrument.
HARMONY	Often a changing or even lack of tonal centre. Greater use of dissonance. New chord structures and the emergence of the tone cluster and 12-tone system.

STYLES AND ARTISTIC MOVEMENTS	
20 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY NEOCLASSICISM	<p>Composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Neoclassical style sought to return to the simplicity and elegance of the Classical Period. Others looked even further back to the Baroque Period and earlier, adopting the modal system instead of modern scales and forms such as the Gavotte, Fugue, Toccata and Passacaglia.</p> <p>Neoclassicism is considered a reworking of style, form or techniques characteristic of any period that pre-dated the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Their music was still very much 20<sup>th</sup> Century however, with harmonic and rhythmic twists that would have been highly unusual in the original periods.</p>
INFLUENTIAL 20 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY NEOCLASSICAL COMPOSERS	Prokofiev, Britten, Stravinsky.
OTHER KEY STYLES IN THE 20 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY INCLUDE	<p>Impressionism</p> <p>Jazz, Folk and World Music Influences</p> <p>Serialism</p> <p>Aleatoric Music</p> <p>Minimalism</p> <p>Expressionism</p>
INFLUENTIAL COMPOSERS	<p>Debussy</p> <p>Stravinsky</p> <p>Prokofiev</p> <p>Bartok</p> <p>Schoenberg</p>

# Development of the Symphony – 20<sup>th</sup> Century

## SOCIAL, POLITICAL, CULTURAL BACKGROUND (1900-2000)

WAR	<p>The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was greatly influenced by two World Wars (1914 – 1918; 1939 – 1945) and the Russian Revolution. The second half saw the Cold War between the USA and the Soviet Union and the dissolution of colonial empires.</p> <p>Weapons of unprecedented force, and the economic hardships during and between wars influenced the psyche of the people, including composers who used this conflict and violence as a stimulus for their writing.</p>
TECHNOLOGY	<p>Sound recordings, movies, computers and space technology dramatically increased the ease and rate of transfer of information.</p> <p>Music was able to be recorded and broadcast, meaning that new styles and trends spread more rapidly than ever before.</p>
DIVERSITY	<p>The great variety of musical styles in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century reflected the diversity of the life at the time. More people were free to choose where and how to live. The development of the car, aeroplane, telephone, record players and movies made the world more accessible and expanded the range of experiences.</p> <p>Many composers were influenced by the traditional music of other regions such as Asia, Africa and India.</p>
USA	<p>The USA, particularly the city of New York, became one of the great music centres of the world. Classical music was no longer only the domain of Western Europe. Jazz, a uniquely American music, emerged and spread rapidly and also influenced the classical music of the time with its strong and syncopated rhythmic feel and ‘blue’ notes.</p>