



Recommended Listening List 2

Click the titles to listen on YouTube. Happy listening!

Music Written for Children

Carnival of the Animals (1886), Camille Saint-Saëns

*In this suite of short pieces Saint-Saëns has a lot of fun portraying different animals with music - listen out for the double bass which plays the part of the big stomping **Elephant**, and the strange and beautiful glass harmonica that helps depict the otherworldly underwater landscape in **Aquarium**. There are a couple of unlikely 'animals' in this carnival too, including the **Fossils**, where xylophones are used to create the sound of bones knocking together, and **Persons with Long Ears**, which is said to be Saint-Saëns' mocking depiction of music critics!*

Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra (1946), Benjamin Britten

In this piece Britten takes the listener on a journey through the orchestra with the help of a narrator, introducing us to each section individually. An absolute must!

Orchestral Music

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major, Mvt. I Prelude (1721), J.S. Bach

Three hundred years ago when Bach was alive most musicians were employed by royalty or nobility, and were more like servants than artists. Bach wrote his Brandenburg Concertos, now considered among the greatest music of the era, for one such nobleman, who never even bothered to have the score performed! Have a listen and hear just what he missed out on.

Symphony No. 5, Mvt. I (1808), Ludwig van Beethoven

The opening 'short-short-short-long' motif becomes an obsession of the music, appearing in almost every bar of the movement. Try and count how many times it is heard! It is one of the most recognisable motifs in western music, and it has been said to represent 'fate knocking on the door', written as Beethoven's hearing began to fade. For the last decade of his life he continued to write incredible music despite being almost totally deaf.

The Hebrides (1830), Felix Mendelssohn

When the German composer Mendelssohn visited Scotland in 1829 he fell in love with the dramatic landscape, and was inspired to write this piece, sketching down the opening melody while visiting Fingal's Cave on the island of Staffa. The music is intended to evoke the wild and beautiful scenery he saw, and the feelings of isolation and solitude he felt while there.

Vltava (1875), Bedřich Smetana

The Vltava is a river that runs through Bohemia, and in this piece native Bohemian composer Smetana depicts a fantastical journey along the river, from its source at two springs, which join into a single current, growing as it moves through woods and meadows, passing a peasant wedding, mermaids, dramatic landscapes, and ruins and rapids, before moving into Prague and passing the majestic churches and castles.

1812 Overture (1880), Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

This famously festive piece grows to a thunderous climax complete with a part for cannon!

Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis (1910), Ralph Vaughan Williams

Tallis was an English composer who lived in the 1500s, and here fellow Englishman Vaughan Williams turns one of his melodies into this haunting and incredibly beautiful piece for large string orchestra.

Second Suite for Military Band, Mvt. IV "Fantasia on the Dargason" (1922), Gustav Holst

This isn't actually a piece for orchestra, but rather for a military or wind band - similarly-sized ensembles that replace the orchestra's string instruments with more woodwind and brass. The dargason is a fast dance tune which rattles along at an exciting pace, but do you recognise the other, more stately and much more famous melody which enters and combines with it midway through the movement?

Atmosphères (1961), György Ligeti

Did you know an orchestra could make this sound? Here there are no melodies, or easily identifiable harmony or rhythm, but instead dense sound textures, shifting and shimmering. Stanley Kubrick used this piece (without permission - naughty!) in his film 2001: A Space Odyssey to accompany mysterious scenes set in deep space - it certainly sounds otherworldly to us!

Violin Concerto "Concentric Paths", Mvt. I "Rings" (2005), Thomas Adès

Did you know that a violin could play that fast or high? Music doesn't get much more difficult to play than this! Hear how the music seems to spin around itself in tighter and tighter circles, then relaxes and spreads out before beginning to whirl faster and faster again - we think it's amazing.

Choral Music

Spem in Alium (1570), Thomas Tallis

Here Tallis (the same composer who Vaughan Williams borrowed from in his Fantasia) has written a motet for a whopping 40 different parts! The result is a choral piece that is incredibly dense, rich and lush, and builds to astonishingly huge climaxes.

The Gallant Weaver (1997), J. Macmillan

Can you hear how Macmillan 'weaves' vocal lines together in a way that reflects the subject of the words?