



Recommended Listening List 1

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Music Written for Children

Friday Afternoons (1933-35), Benjamin Britten

*Britten composed these songs for pupils at a school where his brother was headmaster. They are a fun to listen to but even more fun to sing along with! Listen out for the imitation of birdcalls in **Cuckoo**, and how the same short simple tune is arranged in different ways in **Old Abram Brown**.*

Peter and the Wolf (1936), Sergei Prokofiev

Prokofiev wrote this piece in just four days! The story is told by a narrator and an orchestra, where various instruments play different characters - Peter is portrayed by the string instruments (violin, viola, cello, double bass), the flutes are the birds, the clarinets are the cat, the oboes are the duck, and the big bad wolf is played by the french horns. When you listen to the piece can you think why Prokofiev might have chosen to give these characters to those instruments in particular?

Orchestral Music

The Four Seasons, particularly **Spring Mvt. I**, and **Winter Mvt. I** (1720), Antonio Vivaldi

*In this cycle of four violin concertos (for solo violin and accompanying orchestra), each comprised of three movements (self-contained sections of music within a larger work, usually separated by a pause) Vivaldi takes us on a journey through the year, vividly depicting the seasons through music. Picture flowers growing and birds singing in the sunny first movement of **Spring**, and imagine taking a walk in the countryside on a gorgeous snowy day in **Winter**. By contrast, can you hear the thunderstorm that's evoked in the final movement of **Summer**?*

Symphony No. 40, Mvt I (1788), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Mozart is probably the most famous composer to have ever lived, and this is one of his most famous pieces - do you recognise the tune?

Symphony No. 6 "Pastoral", Mvt III (1808), Ludwig van Beethoven

This symphony was first performed at the same legendary four-hour-long concert in Vienna at which Beethoven premiered his 5th. The third movement depicts a 'merry gathering of country folk' - can you hear their happy dancing?

Symphonie Fantastique, particularly **Mvt. IV "March to the Scaffold"** (1830), Hector Berlioz

Berlioz was a French composer known for writing huge, extravagant music, and this symphony is no exception. The whole work tells the story of a man driven mad by unrequited love, who imagines his own execution and descent into a supernatural underworld - it's dramatic stuff! In the fourth movement we hear him being led to the guillotine and having his head chopped off - listen out for his severed head bouncing into the basket, heard as a series of descending notes in pizzicato cellos.

Kamarinskaya (1848), Mikhail Glinka

This piece mixes together two Russian folk tunes; a slow bridal song and an energetic dance - can you hear where one moves into the other, and when they combine at the end?

La Mer (1905), Claude Debussy

It's the sea! Vividly portrayed by Debussy with sensuous harmonies, exciting rhythms and adventurous combinations of instruments - can you hear the undulating waves and whistling wind?

The Planets, particularly **Mars, the Bringer of War** (1918), Gustav Holst

In this epic work Holst devotes a movement to each of the planets and their astrological character. Hence, Mars is 'the bringer of war', and the subject of this huge and terrifying opening movement, its military character evoked by booming percussion and roaring brass.

Petrushka, Tableau I: The Shrovetide Fair (1947 version), Igor Stravinsky

Stravinsky is probably the most important composer of the last century, credited with helping to elevate rhythm as an aspect of music of equal importance to harmony and melody. His music for the opening scene of the ballet Petrushka depicts a bustling market scene, and gives a taster of his exciting and distinctive style.

Short Ride in a Fast Machine (1986), John Adams

This quick and exhilarating piece goes at quite a pace - try and keep up!

The Four Seasons Recomposed, particularly **Spring 1** and **Winter 1** (2012), Max Richter

*Here Richter has taken Vivaldi's violin concertos discussed earlier and 'recomposed' them into a modern and much more spacious and minimal set of new pieces. Can you hear how the material from the first movement of Vivaldi's **Spring** has been chopped up into a new musical texture and set against new harmonies in **Spring 1**? And what do you think he has done to the music from the first movement of **Winter**?*

Choral Music

La Guerre (1928), Clément Janequin

Written to celebrate the victory of the French over the Swiss at the Battle of Marignano, Janequin cleverly uses the human voice to depict the sounds of the battlefield, complete with firing cannons, galloping horses and the cries of injured men.

Sleep (2000), Eric Whitacre

This is just beautiful. Have a listen!