

A New Song: A Guide to Quality Classical Music

Suggestions for Getting Started

1. Learn about the music
2. LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN!
3. Attend live concerts
4. Watch classical concerts on public television

Ideas for Listening

- a. Use the suggested list of recordings
- b. Join a good mail-order music club

International Preview Society	Musical Heritage Society
P.O. Box 91406	1710 Highway 35
Indianapolis, IN 46291	Ocean, NJ 07712
- c. Select a recording with a good orchestra or famous concert artist
- d. Listen to a classical music radio station

Suggested List of “Classical” Recordings

The bolded selections are recommended as especially good starters. The basic list and annotations were provided from the book, *Rock—Making Musical Choices* by Richard Peck and *The Basic Classics: A Guide to Favorite Works of Classical Music For Your Family Library* by Jay-Martin and Dianne Pinner.

ADAIGO FOR STRINGS, Samuel Barber

A serene and somber composition, Barber’s famous adagio is among the best-loved works of 20th century music.

CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA, Bela Bartok

This brilliant 1943 work shows off the brass, woodwind, and percussion instruments (and your stereo system, too!)

MOONLIGHT SONATA, Ludwig van Beethoven

This is a slow, melodic piano piece that almost everyone will know.

SYMPHONY NO. 5, Ludwig van Beethoven

Symphony No. 5 is the most famous major work of this well-known composer. Recurring themes make this piece an easy introduction to “classical music.”

THE ROMAN CARNIVAL OVERTURE, Hector Berlioz

This piece was written as the prelude to the second act of an opera, but today it is usually performed as a separate piece.

SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE, Hector Berlioz

One writer described Symphonie Fantastique as a showcase for orchestra and a “fantasized autobiography in sound.” Originally it was titled Episode in the Life of an Artist and was written to impress a young, Irish Shakespearean actress, whom Berlioz later married.

POLOVETSIAN DANCES, Alexander Borodin

Borodin wrote treatises on chemistry and lectured on medicine. He spent seventeen years writing an opera that he never finished. The Polovetsian Dances from this opera, however, is lively music that has earned Borodin a place in the history of music, even though his scientific efforts are forgotten.

ACADEMIC FESTIVAL OVERTURE, Johannes Brahms

The University of Bresla conferred an honorary doctor’s degree on Brahms, who wrote and conducted the premier performance of this piece in the school’s honor.

HUNGARIAN DANCES, Johannes Brahms

Brahms wrote these as piano duets. The original melodies are old folks songs. Brahms arranged several of them for orchestra, which is how we generally hear them today.

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 1 IN D MINOR, Johannes Brahms

This is a strongly emotional work with a particularly lovely adagio (slow) movement. Highly recommended.

YOUNG PERSON’S GUIDE TO THE ORCHESTRA, Benjamin Britten

This well-known symphonic work introduces each section of the orchestra in an exciting set of variations. Even the timpani gets the melody!

SCOTTISH FANTASY, Max Bruch

When called by its full title, “Fantasy for Violin with Orchestra and Harp, freely using Scottish Folk-Melodies,” this work is properly labeled. The music is lovely; the listener can almost visualize the ruins of an old castle. Highly recommended.

APPALACHIAN SPRING, Aaron Copland

Written in 1944, this composition has many beautiful moments. The following description was in the program when the piece was first performed: “Spring was celebrated by a man and a woman building a house with joy and love and prayer; by a revivalist and his followers in their shouts of exultation; by a pioneering woman” Highly recommended.

FANFARE FOR THE COMMON MAN, Aaron Copland

Fanfare is dramatic, “Olympic sounding” music. This relatively brief piece is a favorite of many.

RODEO, Aaron Copland

Capturing sounds and excitement from the West, Copland has given us an entertaining work. You will hear “sound pictures” of exactly what you might expect from a work of this title.

NEW WORLD SYMPHONY (NO. 5), Anton Dvorak

Called more correctly, “From the New World”, this work is an interesting description of America by a Czech who spent several years in the United States. Dvorak weaves several familiar tunes, including “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” “Going Home,” and “Hot Cross Buns,” into this piece.

GRAND CANYON SUITE, Ferde Grofe

After a visit to the Grand Canyon, Grofe recorded his impressions musically in a series of movements entitled, “Sunrise,” “Painted Desert,” “On the Trail,” and “Sunset and Cloudburst.” This is an exciting piece with much emotion and many “sound descriptions.”

THE MESSIAH, George Frederick Handel

Probably the best known of all the oratorios, The Messiah, has many familiar melodies and a text drawn from Scripture. Every Christian should be able to receive great spiritual benefit and encouragement from both the words and the music.

WATER MUSIC, George Frederick Handel

In the 1700's, King George I of England held “water parties” during which his guests would be entertained on the water on large, flat barges. On one barge was a small orchestra. Handel’s Water Music was written to be performed for these occasions. This is light baroque music with the sound quality one might expect at a court party.

HUNGARIAN RHAPSODY (NO. 2), Franz Liszt

Liszt wrote this piece for the virtuoso pianist, and it is at its best when performed on the piano. There is also an orchestral setting of this popular piece.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM, Felix Mendelssohn

Originally written as incidental music to Shakespeare’s play and later put together as a suite, this work, which includes the traditional “Wedding March,” contains some of the most familiar music of the classics.

EINE KLEINE NACHTMUSIK, Wolfgang A. Mozart

The title may be translated “a little night music.” Mozart is known for elegance. This serenade for strings is for a festive occasion and shows the delicacy of eighteenth-century classical music.

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION, Modest Mussorgsky

An exhibition of the works of Victor Hartmann, a painter and architect, was held the year after his death. Ten of the works inspired his friend Mussorgsky to write a set of tone

poems. Possibly the best known, “The Great Gate of Kiev,” is a massive, impressive composition. Highly recommended.

CANON IN D MAJOR, Johann Pachelbel

This music accompanies portions of one of the breathtaking films at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. It is a pleasant, easy-to-remember work that many enjoy.

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2 IN C MINOR, Sergei Rachmaninoff

Known for his soaring melodies and rich, lush sounds, Rachmaninoff is a favorite of many. This is one of his most popular pieces.

SCHEHERAZADE, Nicolas Rimsky-Korsakoff

The sultan boasts that none of his wives have ever been unfaithful to him for they have all been put to death after their wedding night. But Scheherazade tells the sultan a story on their wedding night and will not tell him the ending until the next night. She thus remains alive, as the piece says, “A Thousand and One Nights.” The stories of Sinbad and Prince Kalendar come from this old collection of tales.

CONCERTO DE ARANJUEZ, Joaquin Rodrigo

Written in 1940, this guitar concerto features a rich orchestral score and guitar passages of great technical difficulty. Listen particularly to the adagio (slow) movement. Highly recommended.

THE ORGAN SYMPHONY NO. 3 IN C MINOR, Camille Saint-Saens

The Philharmonic Society of London commissioned Saint-Saens to write this piece. Featuring two pianos and an organ, it is a dynamic piece that reaches grand proportions and a majestic finish.

FINLANDIA, Jean Sibelius

At the end of the nineteenth century, Finland was seeking independence from Russia. Sibelius wrote this symphonic poem about his native country. One especially beautiful part of this work is the musical accompaniment for the hymn “Be Still My Soul.”

THE MOLDAU, Bedrich Smetana

The Moldau is a river in Bohemia. This piece describes a trip down the river from the beginning of the stream past cities, over rapids, by small villages, majestic castles, and finally out to sea. It is interesting to follow the piece, looking for these musical pictures.

THE BLUE DANUBE and **TALES FROM THE VIENNA WOODS**, Johann Strauss

These are familiar works from Strauss. Those who like the waltzes of this Austrian master will enjoy both.

TILL EULENSPIEGEL, Richard Strauss

This symphonic poem describes the comic escapades of a legendary medieval rogue.

FIREBIRD SUITE, Igor Stravinsky

Stravinsky's work is a very dramatic piece, one that many enjoy. It is based on the old legend of the bird that dies in flames but arises from its ashes.

1812 OVERTURE, Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky

This piece commemorates the Russian Battle of Borodine in 1812, which ended with Napoleon's flight from Moscow after the city was set aflame. Originally the work was to be performed in a public square in front of a cathedral. At the end of the piece, the bells of the cathedral and other bells of the city were to be rung and cannons to be fired.

Although these sounds are only imitated for the concert hall or on recording, it makes for a stirring finish!

NUTCRACKER SUITE, Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky

The overture is familiar to almost everyone. A number of other parts of this work will also be familiar, including the "Russian Dance" and "Waltz of the Flowers." Reading the story associated with this work and then listening to the music will help you enjoy this piece more.

PIANO CONCERTO IN B-FLAT MINOR, Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky

This is a brilliant piece that demands a skilled pianist. The familiar first theme has been "lifted" and used in more popular pieces than any other classical work.

ROMEO AND JULIET, Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky

This overture, based on Shakespeare's tale, has a familiar love theme. It also presents the contrasts of the two feuding families portrayed in the play.

SWAN LAKE and SLEEPING BEAUTY, Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky

These two works offer exciting beautiful music. Many of the themes are familiar, and the story is interesting to follow.

AIDA: GRAND MARCH, Giuseppe Verdi

Returning victorious to Egypt, the army marches into the city carrying the spoils and leading the prisoners to the accompaniment of this stirring march.