



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

Quartet No. 15 in A minor, op. 132 (1825)

Beethoven had started sketching his fifteenth quartet during a period of ill health—he was stricken with serious intestinal inflammation. Dr. Anton Braunhofer put Beethoven on a strict regimen: “No wine; no coffee; no spices of any kind...” He did recommend “fresh air” as well as “natural milk” to restore the composer. This background on Beethoven’s health may seem superfluous, but it is intricately woven into the texture of the piece itself, as it is with many of Beethoven’s later works. The quartet lacks a specific programmatic storyline, but it follows a common theme in the later works of progressing from despair to triumph (think of the moody opening to the Ninth Symphony, moving to the ecstatic “Ode to Joy”). Noted Beethoven scholar Maynard Solomon wrote that in the A minor quartet, “the music appears to become an implicit agency of healing, a talisman against death.”

LISTEN FOR:

- 1. Assai sostenuto-Allegro in A minor:** The first movement is in *sonata form*, a three-part form popular in the classical and romantic eras. Sonata form consists of an *exposition* (which exposes the main themes), a *development* (which develops and plays around with the themes), and a *recapitulation* (in which the themes are re-stated decisively and with finality). Like many of Beethoven’s works, the exposition is based on several short motives: (1) a slow moving motive in half-steps; (2) a mournful violin line with dotted rhythms; (3) an imitative gesture; and (4) a lyrical violin line over galloping triplets. The development section focuses on the first two motives, before the themes come together again in the recapitulation. **Listen for:** Restlessness and a sense of process—fragments of ideas in these short motives that struggle to find coherence.
- 2. Allegro ma non tanto in A major:** The second movement begins with an unusual gesture on the leading tone of the scale (G# in the key of A), giving it an instant sense of unease and yearning for the home key. The minuet and trio also has a nervous energy due to the figuration and interlocking rhythmic gestures that disrupt a stable sense of meter. **Listen for:** The way a brief, ominous, frightening flash in the lower strings interrupts the trio section.
- 3. Molto Adagio-Andante:** The centerpiece of the quartet is this movement, subtitled “A Sacred Song of Thanks from One Made Well, to the Divine,” using a hymn-like structure that captures a breathless and otherworldly sense of peace. It uses the Lydian mode, a medieval Church mode, to give it piety and solemnity. **Listen for:** How Beethoven alternates these hymn-like sections with more active and rhythmically dense sections, marked in the score as “feeling new strength.”
- 4. Alla Marcia, assai vivace in A major:** Beethoven follows the centerpiece of the work with a somewhat unemotional, delicately simple march. It seems a little uncertain, and leads to a long passage that introduces the final movement.
- 5. Allegro appassionato-Presto in A minor:** The final movement moves slowly from dark to light; the musical material anxiously yearns to begin again, with returns to the opening theme that are characteristic of its sonata-rondo (ABACABA) form. Just as in the minuet and trio, anxious figuration metrically disrupts this movement’s dancelike lilt. Triumph is hard-won over the adversity of this unstable meter, but glorious when it arrives.

Recommended Recording:
Beethoven: The String Quartets,
Emerson String Quartet





LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

Leonore Overture No. 3, Op. 72b (1805)

Beethoven's penchant for musical grandeur and drama should have served him well in the opera house—and yet, the vaunted composer struggled to find an appropriate overture for his first and only opera, *Fidelio*. An overture is like a film trailer — giving the audience a taste of the most important scenes and memorable themes without giving away the whole plot. Yet, Beethoven's overtures kept overtaking the opera — he went through four versions before finding the right opening. While some of the different drafts weren't suitable for the opera house, the third iteration has found a home in the concert hall, where it can stand alone — distilling the essence of the opera without any fear of spoiling the ending or overshadowing the first scenes that follow.

The opera tells the story of Leonore, a woman who disguises herself as a guard in order to rescue her husband Florestan from a political prison. Beethoven structures this overture almost like a symphonic movement in *sonata form*, rather than the series of vignettes found in most overtures.

Recommended Recording:

Beethoven: *Symphony no. 8*;
Overtures: "Coriolan," "Fidelio,"
"Leonore No. 3," The Berliner
Philharmoniker, Herbert von
Karajan, conducting

LISTEN FOR:

1. Adagio: The passage at the beginning that takes us down into the gloomy depths of the prison. The clarinet and bassoon give us the themes from Florestan's dungeon aria, accompanied by the strings.
2. The Allegro begins at the opposite end of the dynamic spectrum from the opening—a delicate pianissimo, with the theme in the cellos and violins. This section continues to elaborate and develop the themes, reaching a dramatic and powerful conclusion with offstage trumpet calls triggering the recapitulation.
3. The third section opens with a flute solo, a song of thanksgiving for Florestan's deliverance from prison. This section triumphantly reprises the themes from the introduction. The grandeur of this ending gives us a clue to why this overture didn't work—how do we move from this exuberant finale (that gives away Leonore's success) back to the very beginning of the opera?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Before the Concert

1. Beethoven's health is inextricably bound up with his late works — can you hear something as abstract as illness in the music itself? How might disease have impacted the compositional process?
2. Can you hear the three major sections of *sonata form* in both works?

After the Concert

1. Both of these pieces feature songs of Thanksgiving—how does Beethoven depict gratitude in music? How does Beethoven's gratitude in the quartet differ from Florestan's in the overture?
2. Likewise, both pieces depict intense struggles, giving us a sense of a dramatic plot even without words. What musical devices convey this kind of intensity?



Recommended Recording:

Rameau: *Les Boreades Dardanus Suites*, Orchestra of the 18th Century, and Franz Brüggen, conducting

JEAN-PHILIPPE RAMEAU (1683–1764)

Suite from *Dardanus* (1739)

Sea monsters are not always the best addition to a plot — just ask Jean-Philippe Rameau. The mythical creatures nearly sunk Rameau's opera *Dardanus*, and not even the music could save the absurd **libretto** (text of the opera). The plot centers on Dardanus, who wins the hand of a Phrygian princess in the midst of a brutal war (and relentless sea monster attacks). There are other forces at work, as well — a sorcerer named Isménor and the gods continually meddle and tamper with our hero. Rameau tried to incorporate more instrumental music to balance out the more ludicrous moments, but this only crowded the work; as one critic remarked, the 1744 revival was “so laden with music that for three whole hours the orchestral players do not even have time to sneeze.” Perhaps due to this musical abundance, many of Rameau's works function perfectly well as concert music out of context, as we will hear today.

LISTEN FOR:

1. The **Overture** opens with the gallant, regal dotted rhythms associated with the French overture, a musical form with a slow, stately opening followed by a sprightly second section.
2. **Entre Pour Les Guerriers** The minor-hued second movement is full of gravitas and splendor. The title translates to “Entrance of the Warriors”—can you hear a military parade?
3. **Bruit de guerre** The third movement is called the “Sounds of War,” and gets off to a galloping start with rapid, fluttering string parts. Does it sound like a battle in progress?
4. **Chaconne** The final movement is a theme and variations form called the **chaconne**, with a repeating bass line that serves as a foundation for figuration and decoration. The longest movement, this finale brings the work to a dignified close. How many variations can you detect?



Recommended Recording:

Rameau: *Les Boreades Dardanus Suites*, Orchestra of the 18th Century, and Franz Brüggen, conducting

CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD von GLUCK (1714–1787)

Don Juan: Ballet Music (1761)

Don Juan, ou Le Festin de Pierre (Don Juan, or the Stone Guest's Banquet) follows the titular character's descent into hell after murdering the father of his lover in a duel.

The music stood alone, even in its time — choreographer Gasparo Angiolini remarked in the program for the premiere that Gluck's music was self-sufficient due to its gestural style that powerfully conveys the sense of the plot. Today, the music *must* stand alone, because the original choreography has been lost. Though the work begins in a sunnier place — with major harmonies and elegant dance forms such as the gavotte — the work becomes more agitated in the fifth movement of the suite, with darker harmonies that begin to foreshadow the final, dramatic descent into hell.

Listen for: Don Juan's shift into high drama, with the swirling, furious figuration in the strings and fateful use of the brass. The most striking sections of this suite incorporate elements of a musical style known as **Sturm und Drang** (Storm and Stress), known for rapid scalar passages, leaping figures, nervous tremolo, and dissonant and dark harmonies.



Recommended Recording:

Mozart: *Symphonien Nos. 35-41*,
Berlin Philharmoniker, Karl Böhm,
conducting

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

Symphony No. 36 “Linz” (1783)

Usually the first year of marriage is full of newlywed bliss, but Mozart and his bride Constanze Weber had to contend with Leopold Mozart’s fatherly disapproval of their union. The couple traveled from Vienna to Salzburg in an attempt to win over Papa Mozart, but the visit was awkward and Leopold was not swayed. And so on October 30th, the couple moved on to Linz to stay with Count Thun-Hohenstein (a family friend). Mozart wrote excitedly to his father upon his arrival of their host’s hospitality and kindness; however, there was an unexpected time crunch: “On Tuesday, November 4, there will be an academy [concert] in the theater here and, as I have not a single symphony with me, I am writing a new one at breakneck speed.”

LISTEN FOR:

1. The **Allegro spiritoso** begins with a slow introduction, a technique popularized by Haydn. This is the first time Mozart had used the device in a symphony, to build suspense at the outset. The Allegro has a slight hint of a military march, but it is still festive and bright.
2. The **Adagio** second movement may have just been a typical lilting, graceful slow movement. However, Mozart incorporates trumpets and drums—another symphonic first for the composer.
3. **Minuet and Trio** The third movement is “conventionally pompous,” as one writer described it, with a charming oboe and bassoon duet in the trio.
4. The **Finale**, with the instruction to play “as fast as possible,” is incredibly exuberant.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Before the Concert

1. All three pieces exist in an atmosphere of intense drama — from sea monsters to damnation to the blistering disapproval of one’s father and a tight deadline. Which of the three do you think is the most *musically* intense?

After the Concert

2. The one reviewer described having so much music that the performers couldn’t pause to sneeze — was the Rameau the busiest of the three pieces today, to your ears?
3. Mozart’s symphony sounds surprisingly sophisticated, cohesive, and worked-out, even though he wrote it in a rush. How might the piece have improved with even more time to write and revise?



FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)

Violin Concerto in E minor, op 64 (1844)

Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor is one of the most beloved in the violin repertoire, and one of the most popular works in the composer's oeuvre (collection). Mendelssohn's sketches suggest that he had a strong sense of direction for the work early on, and continuously refined the music for six years with the input of violinist Ferdinand David. Mendelssohn loathed some of the vapid, flashier showpieces of the 19th century, which he referred to as "juggler's tricks and rope dancer's feats" — he wanted technicality and virtuosity, but without sacrificing artistry.

Though Mendelssohn largely follows the stylistic conventions of the day — concertos were usually three movements in a fast-slow-fast structure, with common forms for each of the internal movements — the work is notable for several formal innovations. The first movement of a concerto is usually in a variation of **sonata form**, which consists of three major sections:

Recommended Recording:

Mendelssohn: *Violin Concerto* /
Shostakovich: *Violin Concerto*
No. 7, Hilary Hahn with the Oslo
Philharmonic Orchestra, Hugh
Wolff, conducting

1. **Exposition** (which exposes the major musical themes)
 - Concertos generally employ a **double exposition**, in which the orchestra presents all of the main themes first, and then the soloist joins in and adds elaborate flourishes to a repeat of the opening material
2. **Development** (which develops those themes)
3. **Recapitulation** (a re-statement of the opening themes with more finality).
 - A final **Cadenza** (an ornamental, virtuosic passage for the soloist) serves usually follows as a sort of **Coda** (tail or tag) for the work

Instead of the **double exposition**, Mendelssohn introduces the soloist in the third bar — the orchestra has barely set up its accompaniment the key of E minor before we're swept up in the violinist's first theme. And so, the violinist and orchestra discover the themes together for the audience. Another big shakeup occurs at the **cadenza**, placed as a transition from the **development** section to the **recapitulation**, instead of as a final showcase for the performer. This seemingly simple shift in placement allows the soloist to create the most dramatic moment in the work's structure, rather than serving as an afterthought to the main action. The exuberant cadenza excitedly spills over into the orchestra's recapitulation — the violinist hangs on to the arpeggiated figures even as the orchestra launches back into the opening theme.

The second movement is a beautifully lyrical, slow, ternary (ABA) movement — the tender melody shows the influence of vocal writing, a "song without words." After a final transition, the violinist launches into a swift, sparkling finale (hold on to your seats — this movement takes off at a breakneck speed). All three movements are played **attaca** (attached) — connected by short transitions that present the entire work as one single, continuous flow of music that has captivated audiences since the work's premiere in 1845.





WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550 (1788)

Few works the classical canon engender such polar opposite reactions as Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550 of 1788. Robert Schumann referred to it as a work of "weightless, Hellenic grace," whereas musicologist Charles Rosen called it a work of "passion, violence, and grief." The work pulses with urgency and energy, at turns dramatic and sweet — and conductors have found success with a number of different interpretations of the work. Nineteenth century authors placed the work firmly in the Classical style — viewing it as the epitome of elegance, refinement, and Enlightenment-era thinking — whereas twentieth century authors began to see the proto-Romanticism of the work, with its drama and heft. Three of the four movements are in **sonata form**, as described above (the only exception is the Minuet).

Recommended Recording:

Symphony No. 40 in G minor
/ *Ballet Music from Idomeneo*,
Apollo's Fire, Jeanette Sorrell,
conducting

LISTEN FOR:

- 1. Molto allegro** Like the Mendelssohn, the very first notes establish the nervous accompaniment, not a soaring melody — but the theme quickly arrives at the end of the first bar in the violins. The opening to this symphony is simple, hesitant, and iconic — the violins seem to stumble and repeat themselves before they can get going. **Listen for:** how the development changes keys wildly — the end of the exposition takes us to B-flat major (as it should, according to sonata form) — but then the development shifts back to G minor, and then slips down, disconcertingly, to F-sharp minor, an extremely unusual choice in 1788.
- 2. Andante** The tender second movement is poignant enough to give pause to the listener: although it is in a major key, it almost does not sound like it at times. **Listen for:** the opening of the movement, the way different musical entrances interrupt and pile on top of each other, expanding, causing slight dissonance, and then resolving.
- 3. Menuetto, Allegretto-Trio** Although the minuet is a dance form, there is little dancing to be had here. The movement is relentless, dissonant, dark, and seemingly at war with itself. **Listen for:** The opening, which uses a rhythmic technique called a hemiola (using three equal beats in the space of two in the musical meter) as well as unusual-for-the-time three-bar phrases (four was more common).
- 4. Finale, Allegro assai** The movement is incredibly turbulent — Michael Steinberg wrote of the finale that it "brings the voyager safely — if bruised — into port." **Listen for:** the opening gesture, referred to as a "Mannheim Rocket" — a rapidly ascending broken chord pattern from the low to high ranges of the orchestra (in this case, outlining the G minor chord of the home key).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Before the Concert

- 1. Sonata form** is based largely on one's melodies (in contrast, most pop songs follow standard *harmonic* progressions). Could a composer write a sonata form if their music was less melodic and based more on mood, gesture, or general atmosphere?

After the Concert

- 1.** Did Mendelssohn, in fact, succeed in writing a virtuosic concerto without resorting to "juggler's tricks and rope dancer's feats?" What takes a showy work from superficial to artful?
- 2.** Which Mozart interpretation do you prefer — the "weightless, Hellenic grace," or the 'passion, violence and grief?' Which one did the orchestra perform this morning?



EDWARD ELGAR (1857–1934)

Symphony No. 2 in E-flat Major, Op. 63 (1911)

Elgar called this symphony the “passionate pilgrimage of the soul.” The symphony was officially dedicated to Edward VII—who had died in May of 1910, ending the Edwardian Era. This was a time of rapid change in England, as it found its military and technical achievements challenged by other nations, Suffragettes fighting for social change, and the growing international unrest that would culminate in World War I.

In light of this turbulent time, it’s no wonder that Elgar wrote the most dramatic moments of the symphony first. As his friend Charles Sanford Terry wrote: “In every movement its form and above all its climax were clearly in Elgar’s mind. Indeed, as he has often told me, it is the climax which he invariably settles first. But withal there is a great mass of fluctuating material which might fit into the work as it developed in his mind to finality – for it had been created in the same “oven” which had cast them all. Nothing satisfied him until itself and its context seemed, as he said, inevitable.”

Despite the official dedication, Elgar wrote to his loved ones that the symphony represented everything that had personally happened to him from April 1909 to February 1911—the resulting symphony is part travelogue, part emotional tribute to dear friendships. The words “Venice and Tintagel” are inscribed in the score, representing the composer’s travels and an inspiration for some of the important moments in the work.

At the bottom of the first page, Elgar also wrote the first line of “Song,” a poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley: “Rarely, rarely, comest thou, Spirit of Delight!” Elgar said of the poem: “To get near the mood of the symphony the whole of Shelley’s poem may be read, but the music does not illustrate the whole of the poem, neither does the poem entirely elucidate the music.” So let us elucidate the specific inspiration below:

1. Allegro vivace e nobilmente The symphony opens with what is known as the ‘Spirit of Delight’ theme (referencing the line from Shelly), a descending motif. The second group of themes is lyrical, with wistful cello, leading to a surprising, shattering climactic moment. Elgar describes this moment as, “a sort of malign influence wandering through the summer night in the garden. The entire passage might be a scene in a garden at night when the ghost of some memories comes through it—it makes me shiver...” There is a “ghost” motive that interrupts the reverie—can you hear it? **Listen for:** how the whole movement is constructed using small motives that then expand and transform into each other. The musical tapestry is a series of interlocking ideas—can you hear how they are cooked “in the same oven,” as Terry wrote?

2. Larghetto The second movement opens with a reflection on St. Mark’s Cathedral in Venice before moving to a somber funeral march. Although this movement could be read in honor of King Edward VII, it’s also a reflection of personal tragedy, as well: Elgar had lost two close friends while working on the symphony. **Listen for:** A “sigh” motive in the woodwinds as the march draws to a close. It then becomes much more agitated, then the sigh motive reappears before we return to the opening march theme.

Recommended Recording:

Symphonies 1 and 2 London
Philharmonic Orchestra,
Sir Georg Solti, conducting





CONTINUED:

EDWARD ELGAR

Symphony No. 2 in E-flat Major, Op. 63 (1911)

3. Rondo The inspiration for this movement is the Piazza San Marco in Venice—immediately outside St. Mark’s Cathedral. This movement steps out from the shade of the basilica to sunshine of the square. **Listen for:** A pastoral theme appears midway through the movement, later to be interrupted with the “ghost” theme from the first movement—a sudden striking outburst. Elgar described this dramatic moment to an orchestra this way: “I want you to imagine that my music represents a man in a high fever. Some of you may know the dreadful beating that goes on in the brain; it seems to drive out every coherent thought. This hammering must gradually overwhelm everything.”

4. Moderato e maestoso As Ian Lace wrote of this movement: “The first movement may be viewed as a conflict between past and future, while the Second movement speaks of sorrow and remembrance, and the Third of manic despair. The Finale turns to look back over golden years that would never return. It is a movement full of confidence, colour, and aspiration.” One noble theme in this movement is nicknamed “Hans Himself,” referring to his close friend and conductor Hans Richter. **Listen for:** How Elgar brings back the “Spirit of Delight” motive from the first movement toward the end.

Despite such compelling, emotional source material, the premiere of the Second Symphony was not a success. Ticket prices were high for the concert, and the hall was only half-full. In addition, the work does not end triumphantly, looking ahead to the Coronation of King George V a month later. Instead, it seems to hover over the past, nostalgic and introspective. The end of the work, in particular, lacked pomp or glory, sending audiences out softly, questioning what was to come.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Before the Concert

1. If most of the musical material for a movement was baked “in the same oven,” what does this suggest about the similarities between the various musical building blocks of the work?
2. Whose sigh do you think is depicted in the second movement?
3. What do you think the “Spirit of Delight” represents in the context of this symphony?

After the Concert

1. How is the third movement’s outburst a reflection of illness? What musical techniques create the fever and madness?
2. To return to the oven metaphor, are there any motives that you felt were half-baked, or were all of them golden-brown?



SAMUEL BARBER (1910–1981)

Cello Concerto, Op. 22 (1945)

When Barber received a commission from Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra to write a cello concerto for Russian expatriate Raya Garbousova, he was still serving his commission in World War II, on active duty with the U.S. Army. Garbousova had studied with Pablo Casals, and so Barber began by asking her to play through her entire repertoire for him—he wanted to get a sense of her performance style and the sound of her particular instrument. The two collaborated closely from the work's inception—Barber valued her input, and they made changes up until the very last minute.

By the time Barber was discharged from the military, the work was complete. Gian Carlo Menotti, Barber's partner and a composer in his own right, wrote of the piece: "Sam has just finished a wow of a cello concerto which will make the cellist's hair stand." A New York Herald Tribune review by Virgil Thompson was slightly less enthusiastic, if generally positive: "It is full of reasonably good tunes...the working up of these into a richly romantic, well-sustained structure is musical, masterful, thoughtful and not without a certain Brahms-like grandeur..." The concerto consists of three movements, in the classic fast-slow-fast scheme:

- 1. Allegro moderato** The first movement begins with a *syncopated* motif—one in which there is an interruption of the regular flow of the rhythm, placing accents or rhythmic stresses in places other than the main beat. The theme is jaunty, but the main theme introduced by the flute and English horn is more expressive and lyrical. The cellist enters and delivers a kind of *cadenza* (an ornamental passage by the soloist allowing for virtuosity and technical display, usually reserved for a climactic point near the end of a movement). The cello in this movement is expansive, showing the range of the instrument and the endurance of the player. The final cadenza is even more ornate than the first, with sweeping cello lines in all sorts of different moods and styles.
- 2. Andante sostenuto** The second movement opens over a subdued bass line and some wistful flutes. The cello begins a conversation with the oboe, and the two instruments weave together, trading measures over a tender *siciliano rhythm*. The siciliano was a slow Baroque dance form in 6/8 time, often associated with a pastoral feeling and a gently pulsing rhythmic accompaniment. The cello propels us to a moment of intensity toward the end, but the movement draws to a gentle close.
- 3. Molto allegro e appassionato** The final movement is mercurial, presenting a wide variety of themes and moods. **Listen for:** The dramatic pause followed by a funereal cello line over a serious repeating bass line. What starts as melancholic intoning becomes a passionate cry from the orchestra, subdued by the cello. This section is so intense that a legend arose that Barber wrote this movement on the August 6th, 1945, the day Hiroshima was bombed. Whether or not this story is true, it speaks to the intensity of this climactic moment. The soloist and orchestra do regain their footing, becoming playfully conversational. And yet, the mournful section returns before a final cadenza.

Recommended Recording:

*Samuel Barber: Cello Concerto/
Sonata* Christian Poltera, cello,
Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra,
Andrew Litton, conducting



**ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK** (1841–1904)**Symphony No. 8 in G Major (1889)**

Dvořák's Eighth symphony represented a powerful and palpable homecoming and assertion of Bohemian values for the Czech composer. Written at the composer's summer home in Vysoká in the Czech countryside, the music of the symphony is a bucolic celebration of his homeland, reveling in depictions of nature and references to folk songs and dances. The surroundings were apparently inspiring: Dvořák wrote of the process, "Melodies simply pour out of me." Indeed, composition moved at a swift pace — he wrote the first movement in two weeks, the second movement in one week, and the last two movements in just a few days. Despite the brevity of the compositional process, the work has endured in the repertoire, particularly loved by cellists who get many of the most soaring and memorable melodies in the work.

Recommended Recording:

Dvorak: Symphonies Nos 8 & 9
"From the New World"
The Cleveland Orchestra,
George Szell, conducting

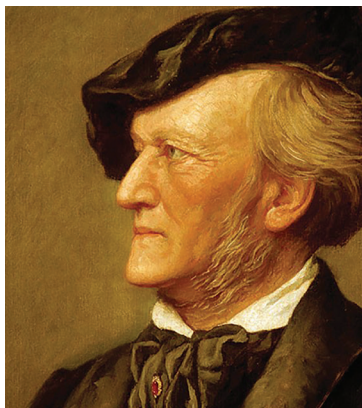
- 1. Allegro con brio** Although the symphony is listed in G major, the work begins in G minor with a stately and slightly melancholic cello line. The opening cello line appears before each of the three major sections, marking important moments in the form and creating signposts that can help reorient the listener. **Listen for:** How Dvořák uses wind instruments such as the flute to imitate different bird calls in the orchestra.
- 2. Adagio** is a study in contrasts — alternating between C major and C minor, somber and gently pleasant, strings and winds. Notice how the introduction brings in several sweeping, rising melodies that ebb away gently, falling in dynamic and energy before introducing a clarinet duet that also seems to gently evoke birdcalls. This movement seems to depict a scene in Dvořák's garden at Vysoká. **Listen for:** The sudden rumbling of the timpani that seem to suggest a moment of thunder. This moment quickly passes for more playful, sunny textures.
- 3. Allegretto-grazioso — Molto vivace** The opening is a graceful waltz, but notice the shape of the melody — it incorporates a great deal of **chromaticism** (a technique of adding color and interest by using notes from outside the major or minor key). The trio section's melody sounds a bit more like a Bohemian folk dance, with a melody taken from Dvořák's comic opera *The Stubborn Lovers*.
- 4. Allegro ma non troppo** During an early rehearsal of the work, conductor Rafael Kubelik said "Gentlemen, in Bohemia the trumpets never call to battle — they always call to the dance!" After this opening, we hear a graceful cello theme based on a folk melody which, despite its simplicity and refinement, took Dvořák nine drafts to perfect! This movement is in a theme and variations format, so you'll hear how the theme transforms through several characters ranging from martial to grand to exuberant. **Listen for:** The final **coda** (tail or tag) full of brass and timpani to create an exciting finale.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**Before the Concert**

- How can cellists make their own mark and create their own interpretation of the work while still respecting the original vision of Barber and Garbousova? What can they change, and what must stay the same in any performance of the work?
- Why do you think composers borrow musical material from themselves, as Dvořák did in the third movement?

After the Concert

- Do the trumpets in the finale of the Dvořák manage to call you to the dance?
- What do the intense outbursts in the cello concerto represent to you? Do they have different meanings in different movements?



Recommended Recording:

Tristan und Isolde, Bayreuth
Festival Orchestra, Birgit Nilsson,
conducting

RICHARD WAGNER (1813–1883)

Prelude and Liebestod from *Tristan und Isolde* (1857–1859)

Wagner's opera, *Tristan und Isolde*, is one of the most intense examples of the power of music to convey drama and emotion in all of history. The titular characters, taken from a medieval Germanic legend, are often compared to Romeo and Juliet—doomed lovers who can only truly be together in death. Wagner's music does not simply carry the words of the **libretto** (literally "little book," the entire sung text of an opera); it conveys and reflects inner turmoil, anguish, ecstasy, and longing.

Despite this richness of expression, Richard Wagner has always been a polarizing figure in the history of music. Pianist and composer Clara Schumann's reaction to *Tristan und Isolde* is a perfect example of the loathing Wagner could engender: "It is the most repulsive thing I ever saw or heard in my life. To have to sit through a whole evening watching, listening to such love-lunacy till every feeling of decency was outraged, and to see not only the audience but also the musicians delighted with it was — I may well say — the saddest experience of my whole artistic career." Johannes Brahms seemed to share this opinion, when he wrote: "If I look at the score in the morning, I am cross for the rest of the day."

Perhaps one of the reasons Brahms was so cross is at the very beginning of the work. The cellos open on a held note approached by an upward leap, then slide languidly downward, joined by oboes, bassoons, and English horn on the third note. The resulting chord is neither quite consonant nor grotesquely dissonant, a sonority so famous that it is called the **Tristan chord** to this day.



The chord is full of yearning—seemingly wanting to go somewhere. Yet Wagner consistently moves laterally, instead of coming to a satisfying resolution—continual searching instead of relief. Notice how immediately after the first chord, the "resolution" seems like an open-ended question mark rather than a period to close the sentence. The **Tristan chord** only finds closure at the very end of the opera—the closing Liebestod (Love-Death).

Tristan has suffered a fatal blow by a knight's sword, and returns to his fortress to die in peace. Isolde arrives to find him, and dreams of reuniting with Tristan in death (though the libretto is ambiguous on this front—she does not appear to try to take her own life, but seems to pass away of a broken heart instead). The music swells with her lovesick images of death as sinking into supreme bliss, because she will join her beloved. The resolution of the chord takes place at the moment of Isolde's death, and leaves the breathless listeners to reflect on the meaning of the tragedy—and of resolution.





LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1927)

Symphony No. 3 (“Eroica”) (1803)

The title, “Heroic Symphony, Composed to Celebrate the Memory of a Great Man,” sets listeners up to expect grandeur, triumph, and military marches, and Beethoven’s third symphony does not disappoint. Beethoven originally dedicated the work to Napoleon Bonaparte, but the dictator’s lust for power was too great — when he crowned himself Emperor, an angry and disillusioned Beethoven tore up the title page and gave it its more generic moniker (or name). Yet the triumph over adversity we hear in the symphonic texture may not have been purely military — Beethoven composed the work only a few short months after writing the *Heiligenstadt Testament*, a document which details his near-suicidal despair at his growing deafness and his decision to persevere and continue to dedicate his life to music. The triumph in this symphony is Beethoven’s triumph more than it is some idealized military hero.

Recommended Recording:

Beethoven: *Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 55 — Eroica* The Cleveland Orchestra, George Szell, conducting

- 1. Allegro con Brio:** This movement is notable for its scope — lasting longer than some classical symphonies. Everything was scaled up in proportion — including the massive development section which seemingly refuses to come home for the recapitulation. **Listen for:** The opening motive in the cellos. It’s not much of a melody — merely outlining the E-flat major triad — but it takes an unexpected stumble to C# which is then left without resolution to close the phrase, almost as if the note were a mistake. The C# is only “explained” in the development, where it’s appearance marks the introduction of an entirely new theme — a resolution that comes far later in the music, and a device that no doubt inspired Wagner half a century later.
- 2. Marcia funebre — Adagio assai:** This second movement has an unusual sense of finality and somber weight — we have a funeral march, but what great man do we commemorate? How are we to interpret the placement — followed by two more symphonic movements — rather than as a sobering end to the work? **Listen for:** Two interludes that introduce other elements to our gloom and grief — the first seems to part the clouds for a moment to let a ray of sunlight shine on the procession. The second takes a melodic thread and spins it into a vast, complex, intricately-woven fugue.
- 3. Allegro vivace:** The third movement is shocking after the previous mood — moving into a brilliant scherzo movement. **Listen for:** The perpetual motion of the opening, and the way the themes seem to chase each other around the orchestra before a spectacular statement of the same material. This is a signature of Beethoven’s style — taking a deceptively simple motive and transforming it into something remarkably grand.
- 4. Allegro molto:** For the finale, Beethoven breathlessly sweeps us into the movement proper, a theme and variations built on a sweet, simple bassline given in pizzicato strings and winds, punctuated with a few surprising loud, bold knocks. The variations create dense, complex, intricately woven textures with staggered entrances, virtuosic flute playing, a dancelike section in a major key, and a hymn full of splendor. **Listen for:** The final coda (tag or tail), which continues to explore new ideas even as it tries to wrap things up.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Before the Concert

1. What are some musical devices that allow a composer to tell the story of an opera without words?

After the Concert

1. Is the resolution of the suspended musical material apparent in these two works, or does it only become clear after analysis of the score?
2. Do you hear a story in the Eroica? Does the placement of the funeral march disrupt a sense of plot?