

## **Comic Relief**

An explorer was traveling through the wilds of deepest, darkest Africa with a few native porters and guides. Far off in the distance, he hears drums pounding. Well, the explorer is naturally concerned, so he consults his guides. They reassure him, "There is nothing to worry about. When the drums stop, it's time to worry."

This didn't make him feel much better, but he kept going. Gradually the drums got louder and he asked his guide again. "When the drums stop, it's time to worry" was the response he got again. Eventually the drums got so loud, the explorer would have sworn that they were right next to him.

Then all of a sudden, they stopped. With a trembling voice, he asked his guide what would happen now. With an equally trembling voice, the guide answered, "oboe solo".

## **Prelude**

In this tour, I provide you with information about the components of a formal classical music concert. This valuable information will allow you to fully enjoy the classical concert experience.

In addition, you will learn important information about modern concert etiquette. This information will permit you to follow the standard rules of etiquette for attending a classical music concert.

## **Panorama of the Classical Music Experience**

Try to imagine yourself in a place with no electricity and no modern day amenities.

It is easy to understand why, at one time, classical music concerts were considered to be the ultimate form of entertainment. Some of these concerts were more than five hours long and sometimes featured the music of only one specific composer.

## **Classical Music Perspective**

Classical music usually refers to music that was written in the Classical music period, which lasted from about 1750 to 1825. There usually is a misconception about this fact. In general, people refer to music from all periods of music history as classical music.

However, other musical periods do exist, and they include the Baroque period, the Romantic period, and the Impressionistic period.

Today, classical music refers to any music written in these styles, whether it was written yesterday or long before the actual classic period. I believe that this is because the music of the great masters has stood the test of time.

Classical music comes in a variety of forms and it is played by different kinds of groups, which are also known as ensembles. The most representative ensemble of classical music is the symphony orchestra. A frequent question I receive from students is: what is the difference between a symphony orchestra and a philharmonic orchestra?

The symphony orchestra and the philharmonic orchestra are both the same thing. They play the same repertoire, use the same instruments, and employ the same number of musicians. Symphony means sounds together and Philharmonic means love for sounds.

## **Components of Classical Music**

A classical concert is comprised of several components. These components include:

- Ensemble
- Forms
- Pre-concert lecture
- Playbill
- Intermission
- Encore

## **Ensembles**

The symphony orchestra is an ensemble made up of instruments from four different families of instruments. These families are the percussion, the brass, the woodwind and, the strings.

Notice that there are some instruments, such as the saxophone, that are not commonly used in the symphony orchestra, even though they are very popular. This is because these instruments became part of the musical scene in the latter part of the 19th century.

A typical symphony orchestra may consist of over 100 musicians. Even so, it is also common to have a smaller number of musicians participating in a concert.

Some composers will orchestrate their music according to certain guidelines dealing with style and texture.

For the most parts, music from the Baroque will use fewer musicians than music from the Romantic period.

Chamber orchestras share some of the same instruments as a typical symphony orchestra, but they have fewer musicians. They are designed to play in smaller halls rather than big concert halls. A chamber orchestra is made up of about 20 to 30 musicians.

Still, there are even smaller ensembles, such as: string quartets, brass quintets, or flute duets. Their repertoire is equally exciting and allows for more flexibility, since there are a smaller number of musicians on stage.

## **Forms of Classical Music**

In addition to Sonata-form, a variety of different forms of classical music exist. These are: concerto, tone poem, and overture.

A violin concerto is a piece that features a violin soloist with orchestral accompaniment.

A trumpet sonata is a piece which features a trumpet soloist with piano accompaniment.

A tone poem is a form of 19th century symphonic work in one movement as opposed to the four-movement symphonies of the classical period.

An overture is a short symphonic work which is usually played at the beginning of a program.

## **Before You Go**

As you get ready to attend a concert, search for information about the concert's featured music and composers. Also, keep in mind that knowing the story behind the music will make the concert an enjoyable experience.

## **Buying a Seat**

In preparation for a concert, you will discover that different seats at the concert hall provide different viewing and listening perspectives.

Orchestra seats in the front and middle sections are the most expensive. These seats allow you to have a closer look at the performers.

However, I usually recommend my students to sit further back because the sound of the orchestra is much more defined. Additionally, the seats in the balcony area are less expensive. Even so, the view is still very good.

## **Pre-concert Lecture**

Sometimes, there is a listing for a pre-concert lecture at a school or university.

This lecture will familiarize the listener with insightful information about the performance.

This is frequently becoming a regular practice for symphony concerts as well. I recommend that you always check with the venue for pre-concert lectures times. Usually, they take place 1 hour before concert time.

## **Playbill**

As you enter the theater, the ushers will provide you with a copy of the playbill. The playbill provides you with information regarding the music, the composer, and the performance. Moreover, you will find valuable discount information on dining and shopping in the area.

The playbill will tell you the order of the music being played. This will allow you to know when it is appropriate to clap.

Also, the playbill has information about when the intermission takes place.

## **Intermission**

Intermission is the moment when audience members go to the restroom, get a refreshment, or have a chance to stretch.

## **Encore**

It is common for the audience to ask a performer for more music at the end of his or her performance. Don't be surprised if you hear many audience members chanting "Encore, Encore"

The encore is like a dessert after a big meal.

## **Where To Go**

You can listen to classical music in many places. Most major cities have a major performing arts center.

These artistic venues specialize in presenting a wide variety of classical performances, ranging from off-Broadway shows, ballets, operas, and symphonic concerts.

## **Other Venues**

You can also listen to concerts in schools, universities, park festivals, churches, and sometimes museums. At any major university, there are important ensembles that perform for the student body and for the local community.

Perhaps the easiest way to find information about a concert is by reading newspapers, magazines and other printed media which include information about concert activities.

Music teachers at your school could also inform you about concert activities.

## **Concert Information**

Of course, the web is always a useful resource. By going online you can find out which concerts are sold out or still available.

The local newspaper website usually has an extensive list of concerts in the area.

## **Introduction to Etiquette**

Now that you have gained knowledge about the components of a classical concert, let's conclude our tour by learning about the standard rules of concert etiquette.

These rules have evolved through time, and have become an expected form of behavior from concert-goers.

## **Golden Rule**

First of all, the golden rule of etiquette is to use common sense. As you will discover through this lecture, all of the advice given hinges on common sense.

## **Dress Code**

Concert-goers should use common sense when selecting an outfit for a classical music concert. It is important to be respectful to the occasion.

Men should wear shirts, ties and nice shoes. A suit may also be appropriate for attending a classical music concert.

Women should wear a nice dress or evening gown; however, they should avoid hats and strong perfume by all means. Perfume is not even allowed for orchestra musicians.

I have included these pictures as a suggestion for my students as they attend some of my concerts in professional venues. If you are attending a free concert, you might be more casual in your dress attire.

## **Arrival Time**

Concert goers are suggested to arrive early to the concert hall. Being late is not fashionable; it is rude. It distracts fellow audience members from the performance. This is particularly true when you are trying to be seated after arriving late.

Plan to leave your house early and allow enough time for traffic delays and parking. Also plan your driving time accordingly, because you might be driving from another city.

## **Arriving Late**

If you do arrive late, wait by the doors until the first piece, instead of a movement, is finished. Then, the ushers will discreetly guide you to your seat.

## **Audience Talk**

Extensive talking during a concert should be avoided.

Talking distracts performers and disturbs your concert neighbors. It is ok to occasionally whisper something to your friend sitting next to you. However, please do not engage a conversation with your friend during a concert.

## **Audience Cough**

It is difficult to avoid a spontaneous cough attack during a concert. This is why I suggest that you be prepared with cough drops or lozenges. Make sure that you avoid cellophane wrappers, as they produce a very loud noise.

I learned my lesson a while back and I now come prepared with cough drops with a soft wax-paper wrapping. This type of wrapping is the least noisy.

## **Other Audience Noises**

An evening at the concert hall should focus on the music played on stage and not on noises created by the audience. Additional noises to avoid are listed below.

Avoid rustling your program, tapping your foot, bouncing your legs. Remember that you came to this concert to enjoy musical art.

Cell phones should be turned off. You will have an opportunity to check your messages during intermission.

Watches that are set to beep on the hour should also be turned off. These high-pitched beeps are distracting to everyone.

## **Attending Children's Concerts**

Take advantage of special children's concerts that have a more casual concert setting. Children appreciate them more because they are designed for children.

Children's concerts do not conform to concert etiquette. It is better to take them to the concerts that are offered for kids or to concerts that are offered at parks. This is a good way to introduce the little ones to the beauties of classical music.

## **Using Your Camera**

Refrain from taking any pictures during a musical performance.

The reason for this is that flash photography will blind the performers and we are not very fond of it.

Taking pictures after the performance is quite appropriate. As a matter of fact, we love it.

## **Audience Applause**

It is polite to applaud when the concertmaster, who is also the first violinist, enters the stage to tune the orchestra. Once this is done, then there is silence and the conductor makes his entrance to the podium.

The conductor will greet the audience and orchestra. When the audience is completely silent, the conductor will begin the performance.

Applause is always appreciated by performers, but according to standard rules of modern etiquette, there are appropriate moments to applaud.

Do not to clap between movements. These are small pauses within a major piece.

## **Applause Timing**

Always look in the playbill for information about the number of movements in a composition.

In a single movement work, it is appropriate to clap after it is completed.

In a multi-movement work, applaud after all movements are completed. This allows the piece to flow from one movement to the next.

## **Opera and Ballet Audience Applause**

Opera and ballet feature classical music that is presented in a different manner in the playbill.

Usually, opera and ballet have acts, rather than movements. There is not a clear indication of when to clap. Good etiquette for opera and ballet dictates that you can clap after a nice solo or duet.

## **Polite Considerations**

If you think you might have to leave early, it is best to make your exit at intermission.

This is less noticeable and shows a good sense of timing and concert etiquette.

Modern day etiquette standards dictate that you should never leave in the middle of a classical performance, unless it is a terrible performance.

If you have obligations that prevent you from staying through intermission, you may want to consider giving your concert tickets to someone else. You may be surprised at the number of people that would love to go to a classical concert.

## **Conclusion**

In this tour, you learned about the different components of a classical music concert and about the rules of concert etiquette. This tour has prepared you to have a complete classical musical experience, even if you have attended a classical music concert before.

I suggest that you apply this knowledge by attending concerts in your area. This experience will increase your awareness about classical music.

## **Comic Relief**

Opera is when a guy gets stabbed in the back and instead of bleeding, he sings.

## **What is Music Appreciation?**

Music appreciation is a clear perception of the aesthetic qualities of music.

Appreciating music is like stopping the clock. During that time, it seems that nothing else is more important. Try to remember a time when nothing else mattered more than what you were doing. Maybe think of talking to someone special, having a special dinner, or a special project. After it was over, you looked at the clock and were surprised of how fast time went by.

At that moment, the only thoughts in your mind belong to the present musical moment.

Listening to music is a truly pleasurable experience, just like tasting a cup of wine, eating a good meal, or talking to someone very special.

## **In Pursuit of the Language of Music**

In order to speak a language, one needs to learn the vocabulary first, which leads to learning how to speak the language.

The same applies to our music appreciation experience. Throughout our tours, you have learned about instruments of the orchestra, important contributions from major composers, and the role of the elements of music. Additionally, you have also been exposed to multimedia music clips, and supplementary resources in the library and concert hall.

The information you learned throughout our tours now enables you to speak the language of music with a good command.

## **Unraveling the Complexities of Classical Music**

The complexities of classical music make the classical listening experience difficult to enjoy at first.

Some of these complexities include:

- The duration of the work being performed.

- Some of these masterpieces take anywhere between 30 minutes to over an hour to present.
- The lack of the listener's familiarity with musical elements and terms.
- Operas are considered to be a part of the classical music repertory. Instead of English, most famous operas are sung in Italian, German and French.

## **The Facts about Popular Music**

I believe that some of the elements of popular music are easier to understand than the elements of classical music. Perhaps more than understanding the elements, what really matters is the fact that younger audiences relate to the lyrics and the rhythm of the music.

In popular music, the duration of each song is considerably shorter than any classical work. This is because development of musical themes or ideas in popular music does not occur. In popular music, the development is done through the lyrics. Often, a story is developed through the lyrics.

In contrast, classical music composers rely on the development of instrumental musical ideas. The duration of classical music is longer because the development of their musical ideas takes longer.

## **Your Goals of Listening to Music**

One of the goals of listening is to increase the ability to listen to music perceptively. In order to do so, you must apply all of the knowledge you have learned throughout this course.

Don't be afraid of casual listening. It is fine at the beginning to just become familiar with the music. Once you have developed a taste for classical music, you might listen for other qualities.

Another goal is to be educated about music: music styles, forms, terminology, and historical and cultural contexts.

Sooner or later, you will be using this knowledge to your advantage whether it is at a business meeting, a social occasion, or even a professional situation.

## **Appreciating Classical Music**

The more you know about the elements of music the more you will appreciate the experience of listening to classical music.

When I ask students about classical music, their responses are mostly unfavorable. Usually people do not like classical music because the presentation is longer and more complex than other types of music.

## **Listening Instead of Hearing**

Listening to music is much more than just hearing the sounds produced by the different instruments. Listening to music involves listening for the interaction of all the musical elements.

Hearing is just being aware that sounds do exist, but you are not really engaged in the listening experience.

## **The Listening Experience**

The music listening experience becomes exciting as the elements of music come alive during a musical performance.

It is the closest we can get to the composer's creation. By knowing the story behind, a listener can increase their sensorial experience.

Attend a concert of your favorite music to see for yourself. You probably know quite a bit about the performers and their music.

In this situation, a two-hour concert seems appropriate. You probably ask for more music after the concert is over.

The same is true of classical music. If you attend a concert and actually know some information about the music or composer, then you could have a more pleasurable experience.

## **Prescription for Music Listening Enjoyment**

Below is a list of elements that were previously covered in other modules, and that you should pay particular attention to when listening to classical music. Listening to these elements will allow you to better understand and appreciate the intricacies of classical music.

The list is not in a particular order. In order to fully enjoy a classical music, someone attending a classical concert should be familiar with the items below:

- The nature of melodies and themes
- The nature of rhythm and its patterns
- The dominant instrumental color
- The changes in dynamics levels
- The form of music

- The texture of music

## **A Different Approach**

Different people have different ways of enjoying music. I love to listen to music everywhere I go. Some people love to listen to music, while they exercise, or while they study.

From my own experience, I can tell you that people change their way of listening over time.

For instance, I used to listen to music because of its sensuous qualities. Now, I am focus more on the details of music. This allows me to understand why I like some styles of music more than others.

There are many correct ways to listen to music. I have selected three of these ways to showcase some of the music listening possibilities that exist.

1. People can listen for the interaction of musical elements. This method may be the most elevated form of listening, since it requires complete involvement in the music listening experience. You must be very proficient with all elements of music to accomplish this.
2. People can also listen for the way music affects their senses. This method of listening can be accomplished very casually. I personally know that this is a great way to enjoy music. Just sit back and listen to the music for its sensorial qualities.
3. Finally, people can also listen mainly for the lyrical content and rhythm patterns. This is a very popular method of listening to music.

## **Captivating the Listening Experience**

Unlike some of the other art forms, music requires memory involvement. This task requires the listener to remember the most important themes of a piece to see how they transform throughout its complete presentation.

Many classical composers use techniques such as inversion or repetition of the themes to create variation and unity in their compositions. They must be creative in their approach to present their musical message and attract the audience.

## **Captivating Your Listening Experience**

When you recognize the initial themes from memory, you can experience this musical transformation. Is it easy at the beginning? I don't think so.

The more you memorize and recognize the themes, the more you will enjoy the beauties of classical music. You will also become more sensitive to all kinds of music because you are now listening perceptively.

In order to fully enjoy the music experience, I cannot stress enough the concept that the listener should be involved in the listening experience.

## **Conclusion**

This tour finalizes our round of tours of the Virtual Music Conservatory. You now have all of the necessary knowledge to attend a classical music concert and enjoy the total listening experience.

In this tour, you learned:

- The components of a classical concert
- The rules of concert etiquette
- The definition of music appreciation
- The language of music
- The goals of listening to music
- The difference between listening and hearing
- Important elements to listen for during a concert
- Different ways of listening to music