

COMPOSER Born 1833 Died 1897

Johannes Brahms

“Someone... destined to give **ideal expression** to the **spirit** of the **times.**”

ROBERT SCHUMANN ON BRAHMS IN "NEUE ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR MUSIK", 1853

Brahms stood at the culmination of a German musical heritage reaching back to Bach and Beethoven. His music blended Romanticism and the Classical tradition in works of intellectual and emotional scope, rich in melody, thrusting and dynamic.

Family encouragement

The second child of a double-bass player who had married a seamstress 17 years his senior, Brahms grew up in modest circumstances in Hamburg. Nonetheless, when Johannes revealed a precocious interest in music, his father placed him with a gifted piano teacher, Friedrich Wilhelm Cossel.

Impressed by his pupil's talent,

Cossel passed him on to Eduard Marxsen, a composer, pianist, and teacher, who encouraged Brahms to compose as well as play piano. Marxsen instilled in his pupil a reverence for the great works of Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, and Bach.



Humble birthplace

Brahms spent his infancy in this overcrowded apartment block near the docks in Hamburg. Money was in short supply and his parents struggled to support Brahms and his siblings.

As a teenager, Brahms contributed to the family finances by playing piano in Hamburg's taverns. But he aspired to a higher level of performance, and in 1853 embarked on a concert tour with Eduard Remenyi, a young violinist. This was a turning point in his life.

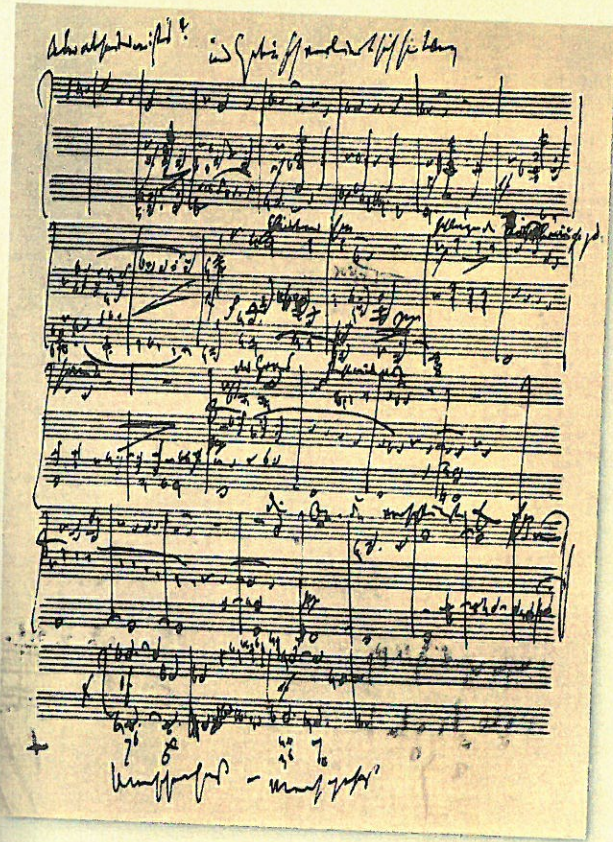
The Schumanns

Through Remenyi, Brahms met the violinist Joseph Joachim, who enthused over the "originality and power" of Brahms's compositions and introduced him to pianist and composer Franz Liszt (see p. 162). Liszt and Brahms did not get on, but an introduction to the Romantic composer Robert Schumann and his pianist wife Clara, was more successful (see p. 15).

Young Brahms

As a young man, Johannes Brahms impressed people with his physical presence as well as his musical talent. Nonetheless, he did not achieve fame until his mid-





Score of the *Alto Rhapsody*
Composed in 1869, the *Alto Rhapsody* was a wedding gift for Clara Schumann's daughter, Julie. Brahms revised scores repeatedly, in search of perfection.

The Schumanns instantly liked the young man and his music. Robert Schumann published an article entitled "New Paths" in the magazine *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (New Journal of Music), describing the 20-year-old Brahms as a "man of destiny".

In 1854, Robert Schumann's fragile mental health collapsed. After a suicide attempt, he was confined in an asylum. Brahms put his career on hold in order to aid Clara in this crisis. After Schumann's death in 1856, Brahms and Clara remained close, but whether

any physical relationship occurred is unknown. Loyalty to Clara may have stood in the way of other attachments, such as to Agathe von Siebold, to whom he was briefly engaged.

Highs and lows

Between 1857 and 1859 Brahms undertook three seasons as musical director to Count Leopold III. His emotional turmoil during this period was reflected in his First Piano Concerto of 1859. Audience response to its first performances ranged from unenthusiastic to hostile. In 1860, he launched a public attack on the New German school led by Richard Wagner and Franz Liszt. Their espousal of new forms, such as the symphonic poem, offended Brahms and others attached to Classical forms, such as the four-movement symphony and the sonata.

Brahms's piano

A renowned pianist as well as a composer, Brahms played this piano as a court musician. However, this instrument was already outdated and he preferred grand pianos.



Favourite haunt

The sign of the Red Hedgehog tavern in Vienna, where Brahms dined daily during the 1870s. Brahms maintained a modest lifestyle and regular habits.

By the 1860s, Brahms was earning a good living from concerts and composition but had no great reputation. This changed with the performance of his *German Requiem* in 1868. Inspired by his grief at the death of his mother, this large-scale choral work established Brahms as one of the leading composers of the day. Working with renewed confidence, he embarked on a series of symphonies and concertos, assuming the mantle of Beethoven. A perfectionist, he struggled to bring his works to completion, but a substantial body of work accumulated – orchestral and choral pieces, works for piano and chamber ensembles, organ preludes, and songs.

Wealth flowed from the success of his compositions and demand for his service as conductor and pianist. He sought inspiration in journeys abroad, especially to Italy. His final years were darkened by illness and the death of old friends, including Clara. Late works such as the *Four Serious Songs* of 1896 reflect on the transience of life.

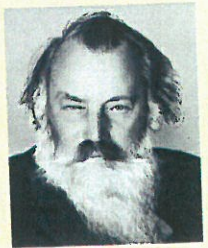
After a battle with cancer Brahms died in April 1897. He was buried in Vienna's Central Cemetery, close to the graves of Beethoven and Schubert.

KEY WORKS

- A German Requiem*, Op. 45
- Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, Op. 35
- Academic Festival Overture*, Op. 80
- Symphonies*: No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68; No. 2 in D major, Op. 78; No. 3 in F major, Op. 90; No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98
- Piano Concertos*: No. 1 in D minor, Op. 15; No. 2 in B flat major, Op. 83
- Violin Concerto in D major*, Op. 77

TIMELINE

- 7 May 1833** Born to a musician and a seamstress in Hamburg, northern Germany.
- 1843** Begins lessons in composition and piano with Viennese musician Eduard Marxsen.
- 21 September 1848** Gives his first solo piano recital in Hamburg.
- April–May 1853** On his first concert tour he meets Franz Liszt, who performs his *Scherzo*.
- September–October 1853** Visits Robert and Clara Schumann in Düsseldorf.
- February 1854** Robert Schumann is confined in an asylum. Brahms becomes Clara Schumann's closest companion.
- 29 July 1856** Death of Robert Schumann.
- September–December 1857** The first of three seasons as musical director to Count Leopold III.
- 1859** Soloist at the premiere of his First Piano Concerto, Op. 15, in Leipzig.
- 1860** Publishes a manifesto attacking the influence of the New German School of Richard Wagner and Franz Liszt.
- 1863** Completes his virtuoso piano work *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, Op. 35.
- 2 February 1865** Death of his mother.
- 10 April 1868** First performance of *German Requiem*, Op. 45, in Bremen Cathedral establishes his reputation as a major composer.
- 1869** Publishes two books of Hungarian Dances, which are a popular success.
- 1871** Takes up residence in Vienna, becoming the conductor of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde (Society of Friends of the Music of Vienna).
- 4 November 1876** The First Symphony, Op. 68, is premiered in Karlsruhe.
- 30 December 1877** The Second Symphony, Op. 78, is performed in Vienna.
- 1878** Completes his Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 77.
- 4 January 1881** First performance of the *Academic Festival Overture*, Op. 80, at the University of Breslau.
- 9 November 1881** First performance of the Second Piano Concerto, Op. 83, in Budapest, Hungary.
- 2 December 1883** First performance of the Third Symphony, Op. 90, in Vienna.
- 25 October 1885** Conducts first performance of the Fourth Symphony, Op. 98, at Meiningen.
- 1889** Records one of his Hungarian Dances on the newly invented phonograph.
- 20 May 1896** Death of Clara Schumann.
- 3 April 1897** Dies of cancer. He is buried in the Zentralfriedhof in Vienna.



BRAHMS IN HIS FINAL YEARS

"He... comes as if sent straight from God."

CLARA SCHUMANN ON BRAHMS, DIARY ENTRY, SEPTEMBER 1853



New Tones and Timbres

The 19th century was a period of unprecedented developments in the history of musical instruments. Inspired by the Industrial Revolution, craftsmen and composers used their skills and imagination to transform the way musical instruments sounded.

This surge of invention went hand in hand with composers' search for new, expressive sounds to inject greater emotional intensity into their music, and was further fuelled by the need for reliable and affordable instruments for amateurs. With the major forms of symphony, sonata, concerto, and opera firmly established, and the romantic principle of

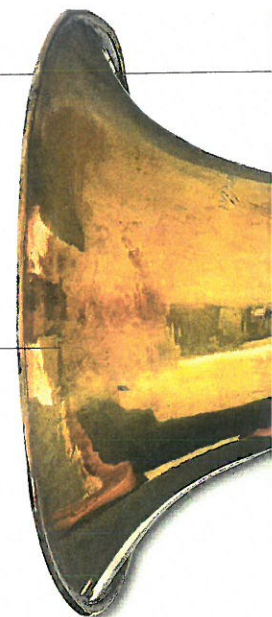
descriptive (programme) music finding acceptance, the quest for a varied palette of colours and textures was the obvious next step for composers.

Using their growing understanding of acoustics and mechanization, makers focused on developing keywork and valve systems for woodwind and brass that made an instrument's full range of notes easily playable.

Once they had been improved, unusual instruments could take solo parts in orchestral works. In 1830, for example, the soulful cor anglais (English horn) moved centre stage as sombre soloist. Its rustic quality is heard in the slow-movement dialogue with the reedy oboe used by Hector Berlioz (see below) in his *Symphonie fantastique*. The dark-hued bass clarinet featured in the 1849 opera *Le prophète* by German composer Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791–1864), while the smaller E flat clarinet screeches in the "Witches' Sabbath" finale of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. The lowest of



Bell



successful solution, and also proved useful for the trumpet and tuba. However, the simple slide mechanism of the trombone proved hard to better. There were also experiments with new mouthpieces. The cornet (similar to the trumpet but actually a post horn with valves) was popular because its deep-cupped mouthpiece allowed the performer to play fast-moving tunes more accurately.

1845 The year that the saxhorn was patented by instrument-maker Adolphe Sax in Paris.

the woodwind, the contrabassoon, adds a gravitas to the symphonies of Austrian composer Gustav Mahler (see pp.192–93), and a gruff comedic element in the 1896 symphonic poem *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* by French composer Paul Dukas (1865–1935).

Brass inventions

Improvements to brass instruments, which began in the 1700s, continued apace. The range of notes a brass instrument can play depends on the basic length and shape of the tube (conical or cylindrical), and the shape and size of the mouthpiece.

With a fixed length of tubing, it is possible to play only a certain number of notes. The crooked horn, in which extra lengths of tubing (crooks) were inserted, increased the number of playable notes. This system was cumbersome, though, so makers devised numerous solutions to lengthen the tube more efficiently.

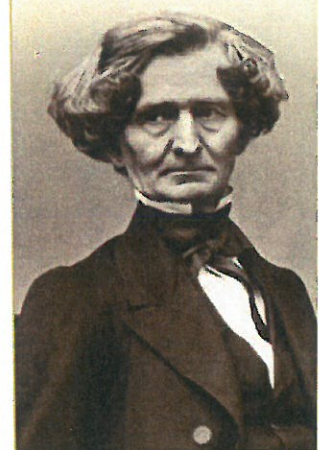
The use of valves or pistons to direct the column of air into built-in extra tubing, as required, was the most

COMPOSER (1803–69)

HECTOR BERLIOZ

Berlioz was born in France and began studying music aged 12. Defying his doctor father, he abandoned medical studies in Paris to pursue a musical career and to indulge himself in literature and passionate love affairs. His obsession with actress Harriet Smithson (her initial rejection of him inspired the *Symphonie fantastique*) led to a destructive nine-year marriage.

Berlioz's compositions were little appreciated in his lifetime, but his understanding of instrumentation and orchestral settings was revolutionary.



KEY WORKS

- Giacomo Rossini *Overture to William Tell*
- Hector Berlioz *Symphonie fantastique*
- Richard Wagner *Das Rheingold* (The Rhine Gold) from *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The Ring of the Nibelung)
- Camille Saint-Saëns *Danse Macabre*; *Symphony No. 3* (Organ), Op. 78

BEFORE

In the 17th and 18th centuries, woodwind and brass instruments had limited range and tone quality, and could be unreliable.

EARLY PERCUSSION

Percussion, generally limited to **timpani**, was often paired with **trumpets**.

LIMITATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

Woodwind instruments ◀ 124–25 had few keys and many open holes. Highly skilled players used complex "cross-fingering" to create more than the few basic notes that the tube allowed.

As for brass instruments, the **horn** and the **trumpet** had no valves, limiting their choice of notes, though **extra lengths of tubing**, known as **crooks**, could be added, to change the basic key of the instrument and extend its tonal range.



SIMPLE ONE-KEY IVORY FLUTE

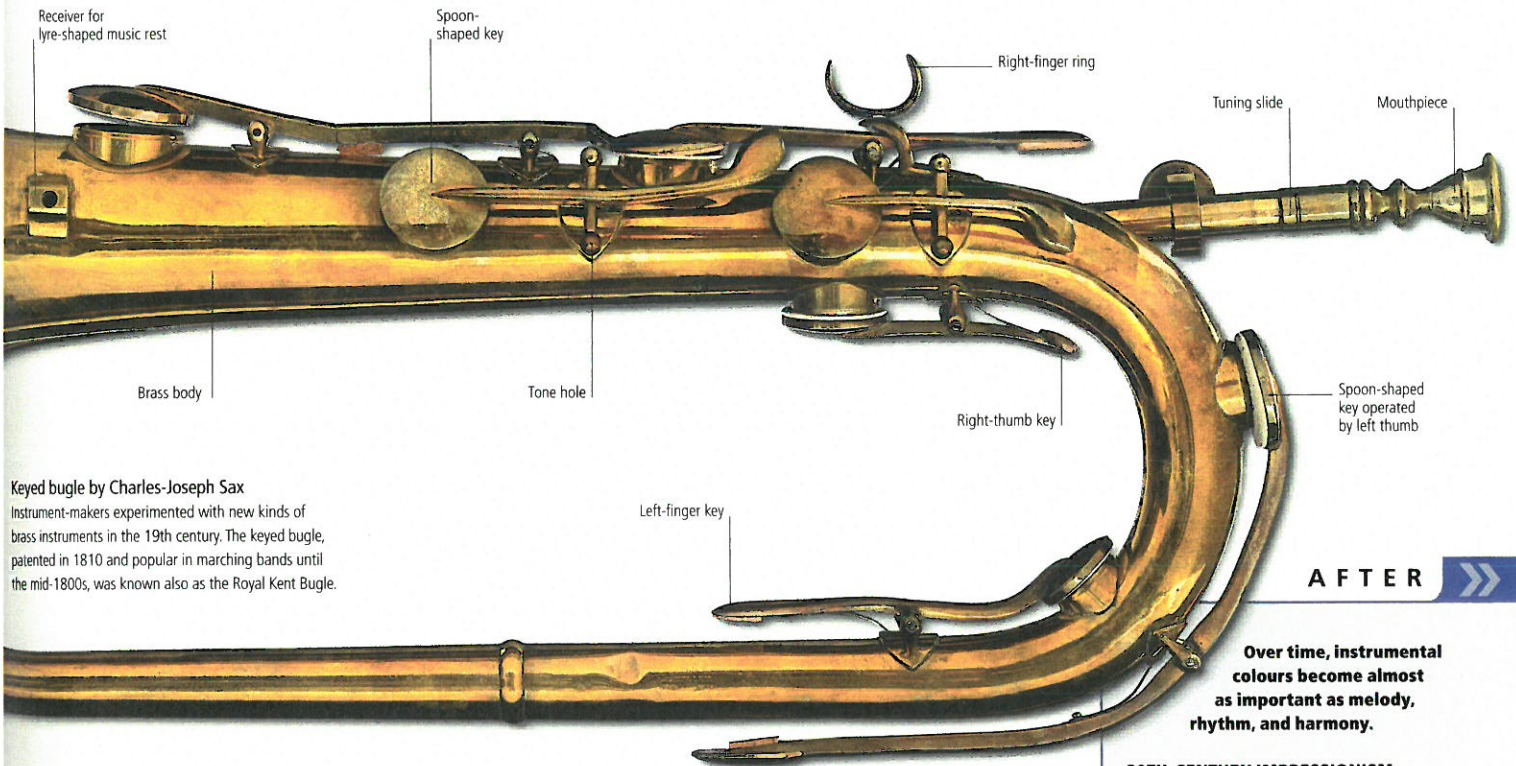
Music on the march

At one time, armies used brass instruments and drums to signal going into battle. Since the 19th century, military bands have mainly supplied music for ceremonial occasions.

Woodwind developments

At the end of the 18th century, flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons were used regularly as solo and orchestral instruments, but they were technically limited. It was difficult to play rapid passages and to move smoothly from one note to the next. Keys operated by the little fingers worked pads that opened and covered holes lower down the tube that the fingers could not reach, restricting the number of notes, and limiting the keys in which an instrument could easily be played.

A number of inventors worked to improve woodwind instruments. For example, to extend the extremes of pitch of the woodwind family, bigger and smaller versions were developed. One of the most notable of these inventors was Theobald Boehm (see opposite). His innovations were revolutionary, especially for the flute.



Keyed bugle by Charles-Joseph Sax
Instrument-makers experimented with new kinds of brass instruments in the 19th century. The keyed bugle, patented in 1810 and popular in marching bands until the mid-1800s, was known also as the Royal Kent Bugle.

AFTER

Over time, instrumental colours become almost as important as melody, rhythm, and harmony.

As well as improvements to existing instruments, new ones were invented. Some of these were short-lived, but others survived. Among the inventions of the Belgian instrument-maker Adolphe Sax (1814–94), best known for the saxophone, the brass saxhorn was very successful (see pp.200–01).

The rise of brass and marching bands demanded new instruments that were easier for amateurs to play, and in different sizes so players could change easily from one to another. For this reason other 19th-century creations,

including the flugelhorn, sousaphone, and euphonium, found enduring popularity among band members.

New sounds and effects

Many experiments were short-lived, but not the Wagner tuba. Seeking a mellow brass tone for his *Ring* cycle of operas, Richard Wagner (see p.167) devised an elliptical kind of French horn. The instrument was also used by German composer Anton Bruckner (see p.164) to great effect in his Seventh Symphony.

Inspired by new capabilities of wind and brass, string players and composers found new ways of playing their instruments. These effects are heard to mesmerizing effect in Italian Niccolò Paganini's *24 Caprices* for violin (see pp.162–63). The harp was further

6 The number of harps used by Wagner to depict the River Rhine in his opera *Das Rheingold*.

mechanized in the 19th century and features in the music of Berlioz (who used four in his *Symphonie fantastique*) and in the ballet music of Igor Tchaikovsky (see p.187).

Percussive adventures

The exponential expansion of the percussion section began in the 19th century, with the addition of side and bass drums, gongs, bells, triangle,

20TH-CENTURY IMPRESSIONISM

French Impressionist composers **204–05** focused on the unique tonal qualities of woodwind instruments.

INSTRUMENT INVENTION CONTINUED

The Heckelphone, a bass oboe invented in 1904, was heard in the 1905 opera *Salome* by Richard Strauss **222–23**

EXPERIMENTAL ELECTRICAL MUSIC

Electronics 210–11 enabled the development of new, distinctive-sounding instruments such as the vibraphone, electric guitar, and the theremin.

all, however, it was Berlioz who drove forward the imaginative use of instruments. He wrote a work entitled the *Treatise on Instrumentation*. This was a technical study of Western instruments, first published in serial

“Instrumentation is at the head of the march.”

BERLIOZ, “TREATISE ON INSTRUMENTATION”, 1843

cymbals, celeste, and xylophone. Each of these unique instruments gave composers extra sonorities to use. Berlioz, Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov (see p.181), and Tchaikovsky (see pp.182–83) had a special talent for using a range of percussion instruments to add expressive beams of light and colour to their compositions for orchestra. Above

form and then as a whole in 1843. In it, he vividly describes the special character of each instrument. His own preferences are clear, and there is little doubt that Berlioz favoured orchestral instruments. He described the oboe as “melodic, rustic, tender, and shy”, the horn “noble and melancholy”, but the organ was “jealous and intolerant”.

UNDERSTANDING MUSIC

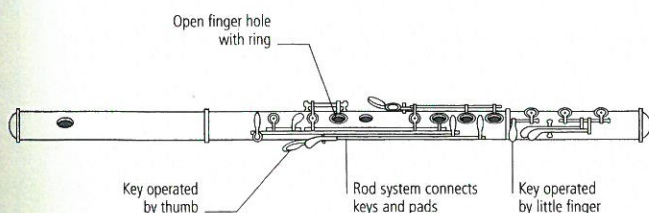
BOEHM SYSTEM

Flautist, goldsmith, and craftsman, Munich-born Theobald Boehm (1794–1881) developed a novel system of keying woodwind instruments. Boehm's invention allowed the holes to be cut in the tube at the correct acoustical position to produce notes that were perfectly in tune.

Some holes were too far apart for the fingers to reach, so Boehm created rings around the open finger holes. When

pressed down, these rings opened and closed distant holes by a coupling mechanism of rods and springs, allowing performers to play easily in most keys.

Developed in the 1830s and '40s, this solution was most successfully applied to flutes and clarinets, some of which still use a version of the Boehm System today. It inspired composers to write more elaborately for wind instruments.





BEFORE

The Classical symphony fell out of favour in the Romantic era. However, composers who continued to work in the form were able to take advantage of new orchestral developments.

THE CLASSICAL SYMPHONY

In the early 19th century, the symphonies of Beethoven << 144–45 and Franz Schubert << 156–57 followed the four-movement structure of the Classical symphony << 126–27 but the musical content became more wide-ranging melodically, harmonically, and rhythmically.

EXPRESSING EMOTION

Romanticism encouraged composers to express personal and nationalist feelings. Many turned to more flexible structures such as the tone poem << 158–59.

NEW INSTRUMENTS

The expansion of the orchestra << 120–21 from around 1800 offered greater musical variety. Instruments such as the piccolo brought piquancy to the upper register while new brass and percussion added further colours to the orchestral palette.

Symphonic Supremacy

While the impact of Romanticism tempted composers to try new musical forms, several major figures revived the Classical symphony from the 1870s. They used its large-scale, formal structure as a framework for working out new ideas.

After Schubert, most composers were using their energies in opera and song, or in music with a story (programme) inspired by literature or art. However, the symphony enjoyed a new lease of life in the hands of composers rooted in the Austro-Germanic musical tradition. These included Brahms, Bruckner, and Mahler, who embraced the creative opportunities that the larger orchestras of the age provided.

Austro-German symphonists

Johannes Brahms (1833–97) deplored the idea of programme music, and preferred music that had no descriptive element. In his four symphonies, he wrote conservatively for an orchestra, with a large group of strings, pairs of woodwind instruments, horns, trumpets, trombones, and percussion.

Their rich-hued instrumentation and strong melodies made his symphonies eternally popular.

Brahms's contemporary Anton Bruckner (1824–96) took a more innovative approach to symphonic writing and to the orchestra. An organist, who was largely self-taught as a composer, he was 40 before he tackled a symphony, but he went on to write nine. He was an admirer of Richard Wagner (1813–83), in particular his extreme harmonies, imaginative instrumental colours, and

Bruckner's Ninth

The last movement of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony was unfinished at the time of his death in 1883. Although there have been seven "completions" by other composers, it is usually performed as a three-movement work.





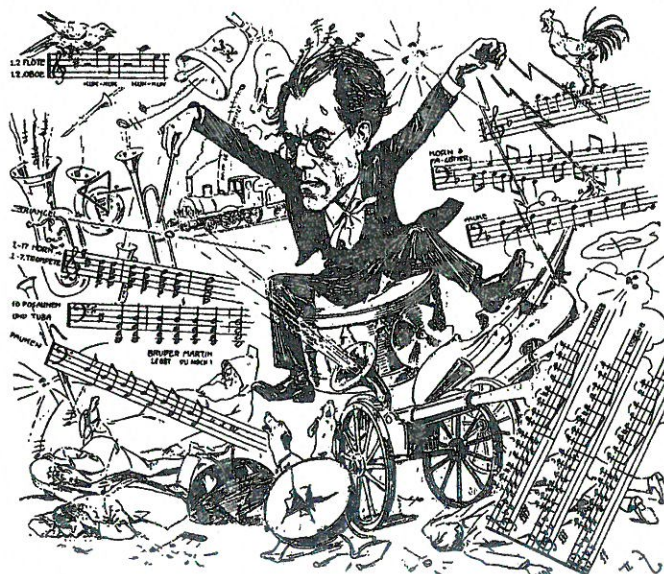
China National Symphony Orchestra
New instruments and a public eager to hear large orchestral works such as symphonies led to an increase in the number and size of professional orchestras from the late 1800s. The China National Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1956.94

extended, unfolding melodies. Bruckner incorporated Wagnerian features into his work. Rather than developing themes in the symphonic tradition of four distinct movements, he preferred to juxtapose several extended ideas in a sequence, often separating them with a pause.

These blocks of sound and abrupt changes became hallmarks of Bruckner's symphonic writing. His Fourth Symphony in E flat major, the "Romantic" – alluding to the medieval romances used by Wagner in the

Master of invention

This caricature of Gustav Mahler from a 1900 edition of *Illustrirtes Wiener Extrablatt* depicts him conducting his Symphony No. 1, "Titan". Mahler employed unexpected juxtapositions in his music to suggest parody and irony.



KEY WORKS

- Johannes Brahms** Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73
- Anton Bruckner** Symphony No. 4 in E flat major, "Romantic", WAB 104
- Gustav Mahler** Symphony No. 1 in D major, "Titan"
- César Franck** Symphony in D minor
- Camille Saint-Saëns** Symphony No. 3, "Organ", Op. 78

repetitions of a theme across the movements to bring cohesion. He relished the sounds of the newer additions to the orchestra, writing parts for all instruments.

In France, the symphony was a rarity, as grand opera was the preoccupation. César Franck's D Minor Symphony (1888) was successful, while the third (1886) of Camille Saint-Saëns's three symphonies included a large part for the organ, celebrating a revival of interest in the instrument in Paris.

Pushing the boundaries

At the point when Romanticism was in rapid decline, the Austrian conductor and composer Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) transformed the symphony. In his nine symphonies (and a part of a tenth), he created tension by using harmonic and rhythmic inventions and unusual juxtapositions of style. He used the voice in four symphonies and expanded the orchestra – the eighth symphony is called the "Symphony of a Thousand", referring to the huge orchestra and chorus that it requires.

The German folk-story anthology *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Boy's Magic Horn) was a lifelong influence on Mahler, its satire appealing to his own tendencies. Its impact is evident even in his First Symphony, the "Titan", whose innocent second-movement dance, Ländler, subtly distorts into a parody of itself. The third movement opens with a high solo double bass transforming a folk-like tune (akin to the children's song "Frère Jacques") into a spooky portent. The finale opens with an orchestral screech followed by a sinister march and yearning melody, before reaching a triumphal, brassy conclusion. Twenty-four years later, Mahler died while working on his Tenth Symphony, having pushed the form to the utmost extreme.

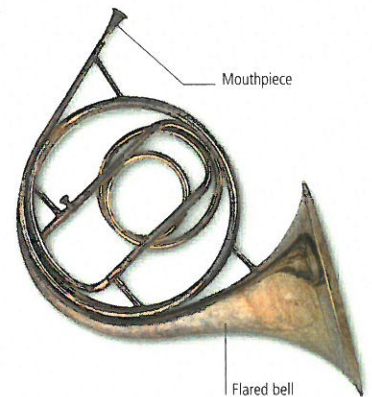
New sounds

Czech composer Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904) wrote nine symphonies, all in the Classical four-movement tradition, with occasional cyclic

music-drama *Lohengrin* – is typical. From the opening solo horn call over trembling strings, to the brass call-and-answer sequences of the third movement and the exciting finale, it forms a work of transcendent appeal.

Crook horn:

Detachable coils of tubing were added to the horn to change the length of the tube and hence its pitch, thus introducing a greater variety of brass notes to the orchestra.



Mouthpiece

Flared bell

AFTER

After 1910, symphonies in the Classical tradition became increasingly rare.

SYMPHONIC ISLANDS

In Finland, **Jean Sibelius** ◀ 184–85 wrote seven symphonies. Deviating from the symphonic norm (the seventh consists of a single movement), he explored the sounds of landscape and nature.

In Russia, **Sergey Rachmaninoff's** three symphonies are anachronistic in feel, with heart-rending melodies 222–23 ▶▶. By contrast, **Shostakovich** used the symphony to express his profound differences with the Soviet regime.

Britain clung to the symphony longer than most countries. **Edward Elgar's** are intense and brooding, while **Vaughan Williams's** have a pastoral feel 214–15 ▶▶.

UNDERSTANDING MUSIC

PROGRAMME SYMPHONIES

A longer version of the 19th-century tone poem (symphonic poem), programme symphonies are inspired by non-musical ideas, often with the aim of telling a story or producing a mood. Richard Strauss's *Sinfonia Domestica* (1903), for example, was inspired by his family life. It features children playing, parental happiness, a love scene, and an argument. Other examples include Alexander Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy* (1908), inspired by theosophy, and Sir Arthur Bliss's *A Colour Symphony* (1922) with the four movements based on the colours purple, red, blue, and green.



1 HERALD TRUMPET
Length 85 cm (33 in)

2 PICCOLO TRUMPET
Length 38 cm (15 in)

8 CORNET
Length 30 cm (12 in)

3 TRADITIONAL BUGLE
Length 30 cm (12 in)

7 BARITONE SAXHORN
Length 78 cm (31 in)

9 TUBA
Length 90 cm (35 in)

4 KEYED BUGLE
Length 49 cm (19 in)

10 BASS BUGLE
Length 62 cm (24 in)

5 FLUGELHORN
Length 42 cm (17 in)

11 TENOR VALVE TROMBONE
Length 90 cm (35 in)

6 TENOR SLIDE TROMBONE
Length 1.2 m (4 ft)

13 FRENCH HORN
Diameter of bell 27 cm (11 in)



15 ORCHESTRAL HAND HORN
Diameter of bell 29 cm (11 in)



14 VALVE HORN
Diameter of bell 30 cm (12 in)



16 HELICON
Diameter of bell 36 cm (14 in)



12 SOUSAPHONE
Diameter of bell 76 cm (30 in)



Brass Instruments

Brass instruments are of two main kinds. Trumpet types have largely cylindrical tubing, while horn types have gently flaring (conical) tubing. All are sounded by the player's lips vibrating against the mouthpiece.

1 Herald trumpet This instrument is used on ceremonial occasions, when a flag can be hung from the small rings near the flared bell and the valves. **2** Piccolo trumpet The tubing in this trumpet is exactly half the length of a standard trumpet's tubing, making it sound an octave higher. **3** Traditional bugle This 1860s French bugle is a simple conical tube made of silver. The player changes notes by varying air and lip pressure. **4** Keyed bugle The bugle has finger-operated keys, which open holes, increasing the range of notes. This one was made in Paris, France, in the 19th century. **5** Flugelhorn The trumpet-like flugelhorn is a favourite in jazz, brass band, and popular music. **6** Tenor slide trombone This style of trombone has become the modern orchestral standard. This 19th-century example was made in England. **7** Baritone saxhorn This deep-sounding saxhorn is one of a family of sizes. A player can switch between them to play in different registers, or pitches. **8** Cornet This instrument plays melodies in bands and

occasionally in the orchestra. **9** Tuba This is the largest and deepest-sounding instrument in a regular orchestral brass section. **10** Bass bugle Reaching very deep notes, the bass bugle is played in marching bands. **11** Tenor valve trombone The addition of valves in the 19th century produced a flexible instrument now popular in jazz. **12** Sousaphone Worn around the chest and shoulder, this ornate instrument was made in Wisconsin, USA, in 1929 and has a gold-plated bell interior. The diameter of the bell is unusually large at 76 cm (30 in). **13** French horn The basic tubing of the modern French horn is 3.7–4 m (12–13 ft) long. **14** Valve horn This brass German horn from 1950 has three rotary valves, which regulate air flow. **15** Orchestral hand horn Made in Paris in 1820, this ornate horn has six crooks to extend the tubing. The right hand, inserted into the bell, helps to change the pitch and timbre. **16** Helicon Worn over the shoulder, this deep-sounding instrument is played in marching bands. This helicon is from the 1890s.

BEFORE

Romantic composers often evoked powerful narratives and emotions through their music.

19TH-CENTURY ROMANTICS

Symphonie fantastique, composed by Hector Berlioz << 158 in 1830, described the story of an artist's life, while Modest Mussorgsky's << 180-81 *Night on a Bare Mountain*, dating from 1867, is an orchestral portrayal of a terrifying witches' sabbath. Edvard Grieg << 184 depicted landscape in his 1875 *Peer Gynt* suites, especially in the tranquil flute tune of "Morning" and the heavy rhythms of "In the Hall of the Mountain King".

FORESHADOWING IMPRESSIONISM

Gabriel Faure's << 165 interest in modality << 31 and his use of mild discords anticipated the unusual scales used by Debussy, which were hallmarks of his music.

Impressionism

By the late 19th century, European music was at a crossroads. Traditions were crumbling, conventional harmony was dissolving, and old forms were being pushed to breaking point. From France, a completely new approach emerged.

The Impressionist movement of the late 19th century influenced music as well as art. Composers, like painters, became preoccupied with conjuring up an atmosphere through suggestion and allusion, rather than by objectively telling a story or directly conveying an emotion. Just as, decades

earlier, painters had experimented with new techniques, composers began to depart from the harmonic system that had been in use since J.S. Bach.

refuted it. In 1908, he wrote: "I am trying to do 'something different'... what the imbeciles call 'impressionism' is a term which is as poorly used as

"Music is made up of colours and barred rhythms."

DEBUSSY TO HIS PUBLISHER, AUGUSTE DURAND, 1907

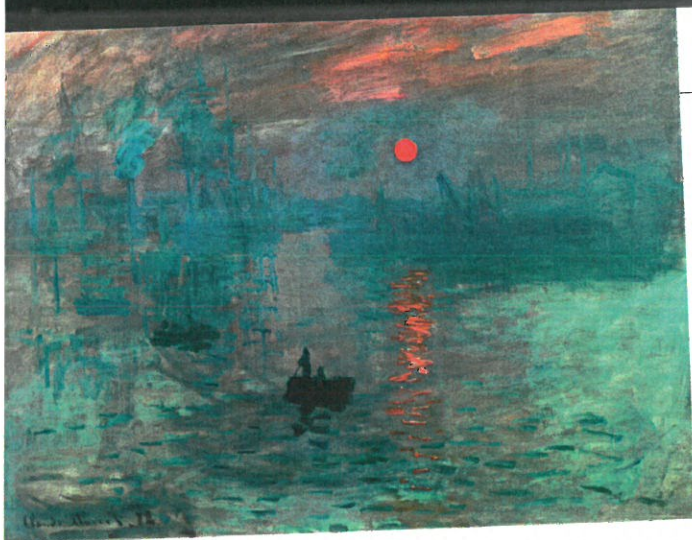
Music at Le Chat Noir

In 1874, Adolphe Willette painted *Parce, domine* (Spare, Lord, your people) for the Parisian cabaret-café Le Chat Noir. Frequented by Debussy, Satie, and many of their contemporaries in the arts, the café became a hub of Impressionism.

The press were quick to label the Parisian composer Claude Debussy (see below right) an Impressionist, but he

possible, particularly by arts critics." Debussy was naturally drawn to the piano. As an accomplished performer,





Naming a movement

When Claude Monet (1840–1926) named this 1872 painting of a sunrise at Le Havre, France, “*Impression, soleil levant*”, critics seized upon the word “Impressionism” as a label for the emerging art form.

extremes of pitch, tonal colour, dynamics, and touch, and demands staggering skill to perform.

Satie and “Les Six”

Erik Satie (1866–1925) was a lone but fascinating voice. He played the piano in the Parisian cabaret-café Le Chat Noir, an important meeting place for artists, musicians, and writers. In 1888, he published his three piano compositions, entitled *Trois Gymnopédies*. The modal

KEY WORKS

- Claude Debussy** *Clair de lune; Prélude à l'après-midi-d'un faune; La mer*
- Maurice Ravel** *Miroirs; Daphnis et Chloé, Suites Nos. 1 and 2*
- Erik Satie** *Parade; Trois Gymnopédies*
- Darius Milhaud** *Scaramouche Suite for two pianos, Op. 165b*

harmonies and repetitions of the first of the three pieces invokes a trance-like state in the listener. In 1917, Satie collaborated with artists Jean Cocteau (1889–1963) and Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) on the ballet *Parade* for the Ballets Russes, the innovative dance company run by Serge Diaghilev (1872–1929).

In 1920, Satie and Cocteau inspired a group of six composers, including Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, and Germaine Tailleferre, called “Les Six”. They were united around the anti-Impressionist idea that music should be spare and “modern”. Of the six, it was Poulenc (1899–1963) and Milhaud (1892–1974) who made the biggest impact on European composers who were, once again, going separate ways.

AFTER

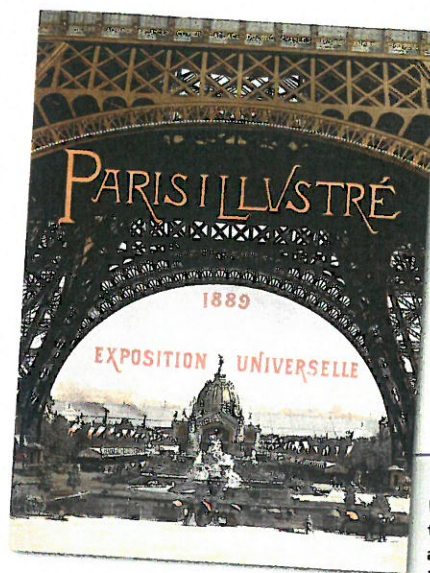
Impressionistic colours continued to feature in musical composition after the Impressionist movement had ended.

ENGLISH ORCHESTRAL COLOURING

English composer **Frederick Delius** (1862–1934), a superb orchestral colourist, used Impressionism in his 1912 **tone poem** *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*. A two-note **motif** on the clarinet imitates the song of a cuckoo, while sliding chromatic harmonies evoke an atmosphere of calm stillness. In 1933, Delius published two string pieces entitled *Aquarelles* (Watercolours).

SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

In his orchestral work *Roman trilogy*, Italian composer **Ottorino Respighi** (1879–1936) created impressions using music to evoke the sights and sounds of Italy’s capital city. Meanwhile, Polish composer **Karol Szymanowski** (1882–1937), inspired by Debussy, composed “Fountains of Arethusa”, the second of his three chamber pieces, *Myths* (1915). The rippling piano part and yearning melody create an elegant impression of flowing water.



Java comes to Paris

In 1889, an *Exposition Universelle* (World Fair) was held in Paris. Here, Claude Debussy first heard Javanese musicians playing a gamelan. The influence of this experience can be heard in his later compositions.

and colour changed music for ever. The mysterious parallel harmonies opening his 1910 piano prelude *La cathédrale engloutie* (The Sunken Cathedral) reflect his interest in medieval chanting, while the exotic-sounding pentatonic melodies (like the piano’s five black notes) evoke the sounds of the Javanese gamelan (gong orchestra; see pp.302–03). The chimes of the submerged bells ring through the texture, while the ascending melodic figure suggests the cathedral’s slow rise from the sea.

The orchestral palette offered Debussy great stimulus. The unusual combinations of instruments in his three symphonic sketches, *La mer* (The Sea, 1905), create new orchestral colours and are works of art in sound.

Fluttering moths

Debussy and his compatriot Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) were friends as well as rivals. Ravel wrote polished, sophisticated music with technical precision. In the first of his five *Miroirs* (Reflections) for piano (1904–05), he creates a dark, nocturnal atmosphere broken by the quietly intense fluttering of moths. The fourth movement, the Spanish-inspired *Alborada del gracioso* (The Jester’s Morning Song), exploits the piano’s

COMPOSER (1862–1918)

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Claude Debussy’s parents ran a china shop in a Paris suburb, but in 1871 his father was imprisoned for revolutionary activities. Despite an unconventional start in life, Debussy showed early promise as a concert pianist at the Conservatoire in Paris. In 1884, he won the Prix de Rome and studied in Italy. In 1888–89, he heard Wagnerian operas at the Bayreuth festival and was struck by their adventurous harmonies.

Debussy absorbed influences from all quarters: nature, art, and literature. He died of cancer in Paris while the city was under bombardment during World War I.



he was able to use the instrument to create in sound the textures, colours, and degrees of light and shade that artists could achieve using paint.

Revolutionary effect

As a composer, Debussy’s unique approach to the fundamentals of melody, harmony, rhythm, texture,

