

Some Good Classical Music Composers to Know



Johann Sebastian Bach, German, 1685 - 1750

Famous works are the *Brandenburg Concerti*, the *Well-tempered clavier*, The art of fugue, his Mass in B-minor, and the St. Matthew Passion.



Ludwig van Beethoven, Austrian, 1770-1827. Became deaf in his later years and yet continued to compose awesome music!

Famous for his symphonies (like his 5th symphony), his violin concertos



Johannes Brahms, German 1833-1987

Brahms’s major works include all four of his symphonies, *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, the two piano concerti, the violin concerto and the clarinet quintet.



Frederic Chopin, Polish, 1810-1849

A composer famed for his ability at the piano, who in turn wrote the vast majority of his music for that instrument.



Sir Edward William Elgar, England, 1857-1934

Elgar’s most famous pieces are the *Pomp and Circumstance* marches (one of which became the hymn, *Land of Hope and Glory*), and the *Enigma Variations*.



George Frederic Handel, Germany (later England), 1685-1759

Pieces of his that are particular favourites of mine are his organ concerti, his *Water-music* and *Fireworks-music*, and **the Messiah**. The latter is probably his most famous work. It is a huge choral piece that includes the well-known *Hallelujah Chorus*.



(Franz) Joseph Haydn, 1732-1809

He wrote 104 symphonies, arguably creating the form as we understand it today. The last 12 of these are known as the *London symphonies*, being written on the occasion of two visits to London in the 1790s, and are very good. Haydn is also credited with the development of the string quartet into a form capable of real feeling and subtlety.



Gustav (Theodore) Holst, England, 1874-1934

Gustav Holst was an English composer of the same era as Elgar, but, like Pachelbel, is really only famous for one piece, his *Planets’ Suite*. This is a series of seven "movements", one for each of the non-Earth planets known in Holst’s day (i.e., all of the planets but Earth and Pluto).



Gustav Mahler, Austria, 1860-1911

Conductor of the Vienna Opera. Wrote several major symphonies.



(Jacob Ludwig) Felix Mendelssohn, German 1809-1847

Another composer who was famous as something of a child prodigy, He wrote five symphonies (the last of which, the *Reformation* symphony, I particularly recommend), a famous violin concerto and some famous theme music for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (the *Wedding March* from this is often used at real weddings). Mendelssohn also wrote a number of religious works, including the *St. Paul* oratorio.



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Austria, 1756-1791

Major works would include his *Requiem*, the operas *Nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Die Zauberflöte*, the clarinet concerto, the string quartets, the later piano concerti (nos. 20 onwards) and the later symphonies (numbers 36, 38, 39, 40 and 41).



Franz Peter Schubert, Austria, 1797-1828

Wrote a number of symphonies, piano sonatas, chamber music in general, including the famous *Trout Quintet*, operas (26 of them!).



Robert Alexander Schumann, Germany, 1810-1856

Wrote a great deal of music, including a piano concerto, four symphonies, song cycles, and a variety of chamber music. His third symphony (the “Rhenish”) is known as the “Queen of Symphonies” (with Beethoven's ninth being the “King”).



Dimitri Shostakovich, Russian, 1906-1975

All of his music that I have heard is full of feeling, though the feeling expressed is often bitterness, sadness, or sardonic "humour".



Jean Sibelius, Finland, 1865-1957

Finland’s most famous composer. He wrote seven symphonies, a violin concerto and a number of suites for orchestra.



Piotr Ilyitch Tchaikovsky, Russian, 1840-1893

Tchaikovsky is probably most famous for ballet music (*The Nutcracker Suite*, *Swan Lake* and the like) and the *1812 Overture*.



Antonio Lucio Vivaldi, Italy, 1678-1741

He composed much of his work for the orchestra at the girl’s orphanage in Venice where he was music master. His most famous work is undoubtedly the *Four seasons*, but his flute concerto *La Notte* is also well-known and very good listening.



Johan Pachelbel, Austrian, 1653-1706

Famous for writing Pastor’s favourite Classical music piece, *The Canon!*