



2020 Classical Music New Year's Resolution: Symphonic Music

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Of all sub-genres of classical music, I find symphonic and orchestral music to be the easiest to listen to if you are just starting to reach out into classical music. While this is simply my opinion, I believe this to be true on the basis that there is little to no plot to keep your attention pulled from the music itself while also fueling one's excitement and imagination. While the idea of multi-movement works that last longer than 15 minutes can seem a bit off-putting and intimidating, not all orchestral pieces

fit that model. While today's post may list off titles, terminology, and general etiquette, don't get discouraged. Please feel free to contact me if you need any clarification!

On Tuesday, January 7th, I posted a preliminary post to this New Year's Resolutions series! The blog is titled 2020 Classical Music New Year's Resolutions: Getting Started. I highly suggest giving that post a read through before this one, if you haven't done so already. In Getting Started, I give tips on how to get involved in classical music on a general scale and where to look to find recordings. Before digging into today's topic, I have decided to work on a project that will wrap up this New Year's Resolutions series and provide you with a tangible experience to help guide boost your classical music knowledge. This project is still in the works, and I will keep you updated as it progresses.

Today's post will include some symphonic and orchestral works for you to listen to in getting started with this genre. My goal is to provide you with enough of an array for you to be able to delve deeper on your own. After that, I will give you some tips and tricks when attending live concerts. So, without further delay, let's begin!

Listen to the Music

Getting excited about symphonic and orchestral music starts with listening to some of the world's greatest works! If you are a Spotify user (such as myself), I have designed a playlist for you to follow. You can either click [here](#) or you can click on the Spotify icon at the top of this blog. For those of you who prefer a different service, I have a list typed below with links to YouTube videos for you to follow. Several of the works are single movements from a larger multi-movement work. I have extracted these movements because they are either the most recognizable of the entire work or the most exciting. If you decide you'd like to listen to the whole work (which I highly suggest if you really like the movement), feel free to search for the works name full name without the movement listed (ex. Mahler Symphony No. 2 or Elgar *Enigma Variations*).

- Arcangelo Corelli – Concerto Grosso, Op. 6, No. 4 in D Major: I. Adagio – Allegro
- George Gershwin – *An American in Paris*
- Ludwig van Beethoven – Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67: 1. Allegro con brio
- Claude Debussy – *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*
- Felix Mendelssohn – *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (concert overture), Op. 21
- Richard Strauss – *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche*, Op. 28, TrV 171
- Edward Elgar – *Variations on an Original Theme* (“Enigma”) (a.k.a. *Enigma Variations*): IX. Nimrod
- Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky – Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor, Op. 23: I. Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso
- Gustav Mahler – Symphony No. 2 (“Resurrection”): I. Allegro maestoso
- Jean Sibelius – Violin Concerto in D Minor, Op. 47: I. Allegro moderato
- Arnold Schoenberg – *Gurrelieder*: I. Orchestral Prelude
- Camille Saint-Saëns – *Danse macabre*, Op. 40
- Sergei Prokofiev – *Lieutenant Kijé*, Op. 60: IV. Troika
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart – Symphony No. 40 in G Minor, K. 550: I. Allegro moderato

- Francis Poulenc – Concerto in G Minor for Organ, Strings, and Timpani, FP 93: II. Allegro giocoso
- John Adams – *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*
- Samuel Barber – Adagio for Strings
- Ralph Vaughan Williams – *The Lark Ascending*
- Franz Joseph Haydn – Symphony No. 45 in F-sharp Minor, H. 1 (“Farewell”): Adagio
- Maurice Ravel – Piano Concerto in G Major, M. 83: II. Adagio assai
- Antonín Dvořák – Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, B. 178: IV. Allegro con fuoco
- Dmitri Shostakovich – Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Major, Op. 102: 1. Allegro

Attending a Live Performance

Of course, listening to a recording and going to see an orchestra perform live are not the same, but sometimes going to see a live performance can be intimidating and expensive. You may ask yourself, “How am I supposed to dress?”, “When am I allowed to clap?”, or “How long is the concert?”. Furthermore, you may also ask how you could possibly afford to go to these concerts when tickets say they cost no less than \$60. Let me answer some of those questions for you.

Buying a Ticket

While I was obtaining my masters degree, I worked for the call center end of Philadelphia’s Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts. It is here that I learned a great deal about their ticketing policies and programs as well as what many other performing arts organizations do. More often than not, most professional orchestras have several options in place for you to be able to afford a ticket that’s not the standard selling price. If you are a student, there are usually a few options provided by the orchestra for you to take. The important thing for you to do is call, email, or visit the organizations box office to ask if there are any student pricing options. For example, the Philadelphia Orchestra has a student subscription option called eZseatU and a student rush option. Typically rush, for all orchestras, refers to a specific period of time the box office is giving away tickets the day of the performance. At least with the Philadelphia Orchestra, their Student Rush is different than Community Rush (which I will explain in a minute). If you are a student at a school in the city or area the orchestra belongs to, check with your department to see if they have any programs or offers they have with the orchestra. (Sometimes this route involves free tickets!)

Community rush, or a similar name, is a program offered by most professional orchestras on the day of the performance. Each participating box office will allot a specific amount of time dedicated to selling these tickets at a highly discounted rate in an attempt to sell more seats. Not every performance is offered in these programs, so visit the orchestra’s website or contact the box office to see which performances have rush. If the orchestra doesn’t have a rush program, ask to subscribe to their e-Club. It is free of charge and can often give you discounts on upcoming performances. Finally, I’d suggest following the orchestra on any social media you can find them on. By being on their email list and seeing their posts, you’re more than likely to catch a promotion at least once a month for a performance you may want to see!

Etiquette and Attendance Practices

If you’ve never been to a professional orchestra concert, certain practices and traditions can seem a little different than other performances you may have gone to. It’s important to be aware of them

before attending a concert for both your enjoyment and for the enjoyment of your fellow audience members.

Dress and attire: For starters, you are about to go to a concert where you will be sitting for the better part of two hours in seats, while padded, that don't often have the leg room you're looking for. To compensate, you will want to dress comfortably while still dressing appropriately. My suggestion as a base line is no less casual than a clean, unripped pair of jeans with a clean dress shirt or blouse. Don't feel under-dressed if you see men in tuxedos or suits and women in ornate dresses and jewelry. If they are comfortable wearing those outfits, then there is nothing wrong with your more casual attire. However, if you are attending a gala where part of the gala is a concert, dress how the invitation states (usually black tie).

Finding your seat: For some of the more professional orchestras, slight details on your ticket will notify you where to go. After looking for the floor your seats are on, look to see if a door number or letter is listed. Before extending your tickets to be scanned by the usher, ask them if they could point you in the right direction. Sometimes ushers are so busy scanning tickets, they miss seeing if you are in the right place. If they have a floating usher a little further away from the doors, see them first before getting in line just to find out you were at the wrong door. Once you're at the correct door, ushers are always around to show you where your seats are.

Food and beverages: Do not bring food or beverages with you into the hall! This is a good habit to get in to since most symphony orchestra concerts do not allow them in. On special occasions or for more relaxed concerts, the venue will allow you to bring food and drinks into the hall, but always check with an usher before bringing anything in. If the venue has a bar and/or concessions, do not assume you can bring anything back into the hall. Once again, ask an usher or front-of-house staff member to see if they are allowed when entering or reentering the hall. Furthermore, food that is wrapped is incredibly distracting if you are trying to open it during the music. This also goes for cough drops or mints. Please have them unwrapped in some way or wait until the movement or piece is over to unwrap them. Cough drops, if you're sick, are okay to have, but be mindful of your fellow audience members if you must unwrap it.

Clapping: Clapping is one of the oldest forms of showing approval. There are certain times to clap while at a concert. The first is when the concertmaster appears to tune the orchestra. The concert master is that performance's leading violinist, and they will enter alone once the concert is about to begin. Next the conductor will follow when the orchestra has tuned. Always clap when the conductor makes their way to the podium. If there is a soloist for the piece, the conductor will walk behind the soloist. This is also an appropriate time to clap. During the performance, there are several rules about when to clap. Generally, there is no clapping between movements of a multi-movement work. On the rare occasion that the movement performed was performed spectacularly, the audience may erupt into applause. If you really enjoyed the movement you just heard and nobody else is applauding the movement, feel free to quietly tap your hand on your thigh to avoid calling attention to yourself. This is also particularly important if the orchestra is producing a live recording of the piece. The conductor or announcer will inform you if that night's concert is being professionally recorded, and in that instance, please hold the applause until after each work is finished.

Phones and photography: Turn off your phones and store them away! Phones are incredibly distracting for those around you if they're trying to enjoy the concert in a darkened hall. Furthermore, there is nothing more disheartening when a phone rings during high-emotion moments or during the silence surrounding the music. Once you sit down, put your phone on vibrate at the very least. Some orchestras are now promoting using apps during certain concerts or pieces in replacement of program booklets. This is the only appropriate time to have the phone out. Typically, these apps will

dim your brightness automatically in order to be less distracting. Being excited about attending these concerts is perfectly natural and valid! Taking photos of the stage or you are acceptable until the lights are dimmed. Once the lights are dimmed, photography is no longer permitted as it becomes a violation against the policies of the organization. An announcer will often inform you of this once the lights have dimmed, but it's good to be aware.

Leaving: Unless it is an emergency, do not leave the performance during a half of the concert. If you have lost interest or need to be somewhere else, leave during the intermission so you are not distracting to your fellow audience members or the performers. Often, the second half of the program contains a larger work that spans the time of the entire half. Be courteous to your fellow audience members and allow them to enjoy the concert even if you lost interest.