

## **IQBT Beginner's Guide: Classic Music**

Written by Clark Smith

Edited by Fred Morlan

Last updated: August 4, 2020

Underlined portions of composer's names are usually required for a correct answer

Works **highlighted** are the most popular and/or important in questions

Operas, ballets, and musicals are largely omitted; see separate lists for these genres (to be developed)

**Psalms** (Biblical texts often set to music)

**Gregorian Chant** (monophonic chant tradition named after a "Great" pope)

**Polyphony** – the use of multiple melodic lines in a single piece

Exemplified by the music of Giovanni **Palestrina**

**Hildegard** von Bingen (German abbess, called the "Sibyl on the Rhine")

*Ordo Virtutum* - earliest known musical morality play

**Johann Pachelbel** (German, Baroque)

**Canon in D** - cello plays bassline under three violins playing in a round; popular at weddings and originally paired with a gigue ("zheeg")

**Antonio Vivaldi** (Italian, Baroque "Red Priest" – was a Roman Catholic priest)

**The Four Seasons** - set of four violin concertos from *The Contest Between Harmony and Invention*, each paired with a sonnet

**Johann Sebastian Bach** (German, Baroque)

**Brandenburg Concertos** - six concerti grossi dedicated to margrave of namesake principality

**The Well-Tempered Clavier** - two books of alternating preludes and fugues in every major and minor key

**Goldberg Variations** - harpsichord collection written to help Count Kaiserling sleep

**Other notable works:** *The Musical Offering*; *Six Suites for Solo Cello* - favorites of Yo-Yo Ma; *Partitas and Sonatas for Solo Violin*; *St Matthew Passion* - oratorio noted for a string "halo effect" under every word spoken by Jesus; *Mass in B minor*; *Art of Fugue* - contains four canons, and fourteen "contrapunctus" movements each exemplifying the title genre

**George Frederic Handel** (German-born, longtime English resident, Baroque)

**Messiah** - oratorio during whose "Hallelujah Chorus" it is customary to stand up

**Water Music** - three suites written for George I and most likely intended for performance on barges on the Thames River

*Other work: Music for the Royal Fireworks* - written for a failed ceremony celebrating the signing of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle

**Franz Joseph Haydn** (Austrian, Classical)

"Father of the Symphony" and "Father of the String Quartet" patronized by the Esterhazy family

**Symphony No. 45, "Farewell"** - *Sturm und Drang* symphony, during the finale of which musicians extinguish candles and leave stages; demonstrated composer's desire to leave *Esterhaza*.

**No 94, "Surprise"** - named for the sudden *tutti fortissimo* chord in its slow second movement

**Other notable works:** *Paris Symphonies, No 82-87*; *London Symphonies, No 93-104*; *Sun Quartets* - named for the cover image used for these string quartets

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** (Austrian, Classical)

**“Eine Kleine Nachtmusik”** - “a little serenade” opening with a Mannheim rocket

**Symphony No 41, “Jupiter”** - final symphony by Mozart, which closes with a five-voice fugato

**Requiem in D minor** - sacred work completed by Franz Sussmayr (who created its “Sanctus” and “Agnus Dei”)

**Other notable works:** *Symphony No 25, “Little G minor”; Symphony No 40, “Great G minor*

**Ludwig van Beethoven** (German, Classical)

**Symphony No 3, “Eroica”** - symphony with a movement two “funeral march” dedicated “to the memory of a great man”

**Symphony No 5** - first movement based on “fate knocking at the door” short-short-short-long motif

**Symphony No 6, “Pastoral”** - Programmatic symphony featuring a “Scene by the Brook” and 4th movement “Thunderstorm”

**Symphony No 9, “Choral”** - finale features setting of Fredrich Schiller’s “Ode to Joy”

**Piano Sonata No 14, quasi una fantasia, “Moonlight”** - sonata which Ludwig Rellstab nicknamed for a phenomenon observed on the waters of Lake Lucerne

**Fur Elise**- bagatelle/albumblatt which may depict Therese Malfatti in the 3/8 opening alternation of sixteenth-note Es and D-sharps

**Other notable work:** *Kreutzer Sonata* - originally dedicated to black musician George Bridgetower until he slighted a woman the composer liked

**Franz Schubert** (Austrian, Romantic)

**Symphony No 6, “Little C major”** - so called to distinguish it from composer’s ninth

**Symphony No 8, “Unfinished”** - usually completed with edited content from composer’s *Incidental Music to Rosamunde*

**Symphony No 9, “Great C major”** - Schumann praised its “heavenly length”; was very long (nearly an hour long) for its time

**Piano Quintet in A major, “Trout” Quintet** - based on the composer’s earlier lied (art song) “Die Forelle”

**Other notable works:** *String Quartet No 14 in D minor, “Death and the Maiden”; “Der Erlkönig”; Winterreise*

**Hector Berlioz** (French, Romantic)

**Symphonie Fantastique**- five-movement symphony depicting an opium trip and featuring an “idée fixe” representing the composer’s love for Harriet Smithson

**Harold in Italy** - symphony with viola solo part rejected by Paganini for excessive number of rests

**Felix Mendelssohn** (German, Romantic)

**Symphony No 5, “Reformation”** - symphony written for 300th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, whose finale opens with solo flute quoting Martin Luther’s “A Mighty Fortress is Our God”

**Incidental Music to A Midsummer Night’s Dream** - Contains famed Overture and **“Wedding March”**

**Other notable works:** *Violin Concerto in E minor; String Octet in E-flat major; Symphony No 3, “Scottish”; Symphony No 4, “Italian”*

**Frederic Chopin** (Polish, Romantic)

**Etudes - “Revolutionary” Etude** - written to commemorate the bombing of Warsaw

**Preludes - “Raindrop” Prelude** - so nicknamed for the repetition of an A

**Minute Waltz** - legendarily inspired by (female) lover George Sand’s dog chasing its own tail

**Piano Sonata No 2 in B-flat minor**-contains the famed **“funeral march”**

**Robert Schumann** (German, Romantic)

**Carnaval** - contains movements contrasting composer's alter egos Florestan and Eusebius

**Scenes from Childhood / Kinderszenen ("kin-dust-SANE-in")** - 13 short piano works, including the composer's popular "Traumerei" ("Dreaming")

**Other notable works:** *Symphony No 1, "Spring"; Symphony No 3, "Rhenish"; Piano Concerto in A minor; Dichterliebe*

**Clara Schumann** (or **Clara Wieck**; German, Romantic)

Wife of Robert; a pianist who had a close relationship with Johannes Brahms after her husband was committed to an asylum

Also composed; her works include a piano concerto

**Franz Liszt** (Hungarian, Romantic)

As touring pianist, created "Lisztomania" among followers

**Hungarian Rhapsodies** - difficult pieces on largely Hungarian themes; second, which consists of a *lassan* and *friska*, is most popular

**Other notable work:** *Transcendental Etudes*

**Giuseppe Verdi** (Italian, Romantic) – best known for operas

*Requiem* - tenor solo "Ingemisco" within its famed second movement "Dies Irae"

**Johann Strauss II** ("the second"; also "Strauss the younger"; Austrian)

Known as the "Waltz King"

**"The Blue Danube"** - waltz that typically serves as the Vienna New Year's Concert encore piece, popularized by the docking scene in *2001: A Space Odyssey*

**Johannes Brahms** (German, Romantic)

**Wiegenlied (Lullaby)** - theme features "D-C sharp-D" motif used in composer's second symphony; dedicated to Bertha Faber

**A German Requiem** - written for the composer's mother, using text from the Luther Bible

**Hungarian Dances** - set of 21 tunes based on Hungarian themes; originally for piano four hands; most popular are 1st and 5th entry

**Other notable work:** *Symphony No. 1*

**Camille Saint-Saens** (French, Romantic)

**The Carnival of the Animals**

"The Swan" - made into a ballet excerpt choreographed by Michel Fokine

"Fossils" - xylophones represent rattling bones, as in the composer's *Danse Macabre*

(see below)

**Danse Macabre** - depiction of a "Dance of Death"; features harp playing 12 notes to mark stroke of midnight and a solo violin tuned *scordatura*

**Modest Mussorgsky** (Russian, member of "Mighty Five")

**Night on Bald Mountain** - inspired by Gogol's "St John's Eve," depicts a witches' sabbath on title landform

**Pictures at an Exhibition** - collection inspired by paintings of Viktor Hartmann, orchestrated by Maurice Ravel

**Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky** (Russian, Romantic)

**1812 Overture** - celebrates failure of Napoleon's invasion of Russia, with finale featuring cannons

**Other notable works:** *Violin Concerto in D major; Piano Concerto No 1 in B-flat minor; Symphony No 6, "Pathetique"*

**Antonin Dvorak** (Czech, Romantic)

**Symphony No 9, "From the New World"** - inspired by Native American music and black spirituals; its Largo inspired hymn "Goin' Home"

**Other notable works** *String Quartet No 12, "American"*

**Edvard Grieg** (Norwegian, Romantic)

**Peer Gynt Suites - "In the Hall of the Mountain King"** - accelerates and crescendos to depict a chase by trolls up until a sunrise stops them

Also included "Morning Mood" and "Anitra's Dance" - a *tempo di mazurka* piece punctuated by the triangle, depicting a dancing Bedouin princess

**Other notable works:** *Piano Concerto in A minor*, *Lyric Pieces*

**Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov** (Russian, member of "Mighty Five")

*Scheherazade* - suite inspired by the *Arabian Nights*

**"Flight of the Bumblebee"** - excerpt from *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* filled with runs of chromatic sixteenths

**John Philip Sousa** (American "March King")

**"The Stars and Stripes Forever"** - National March of the U.S. with noted solo for piccolo

**Edward Elgar** (English, Romantic)

**Pomp and Circumstance Marches** - best-known for 1st march ("The Land of Hope and Glory"), which is often used in graduation ceremonies

**Enigma Variations** - variations on a "hidden" theme, each picturing a friend (or the composer himself)

**Other notable work:** *Cello Concerto in E minor*

**Gustav Mahler** (Austrian, Late Romantic)

"Songs on the Death of Children" to poems by Friedrich Ruckert

*Symphony No 1, "Titan"* - contains funeral march based on "Frere Jacques"

**Symphony No 2, "Resurrection"** - ends with a setting of a (modified) poem by Klopstock which titles this symphony

**Symphony No 6, "Tragic"** - features three "hammer blows of fate" performed with a giant mallet

**Symphony No 8, "Symphony of a Thousand"** - symphony based on hymn *Veni Creator*

*Spiritus* and Part II of Goethe's *Faust*, named for the immense size of its premiering ensemble

**Other notable works:** *Kindertotenlieder*, *Symphony No 1, "Titan"*, *Song of the Earth (Das Lied von der Erde)*

**Claude Debussy** (French, Impressionist/Symbolist)

*Suite Bergamasque* - so named after mentioned of "bergamaskers" in Verlaine's "Clair de Lune"

**"Clair de Lune"** - 9/8 song based on a poem by Paul Verlaine

**Other notable work:** *La mer*

**Richard Strauss** (German, late Romantic)

**Also Sprach Zarathustra** - opens with a "Sunrise" movement, in which a trumpet plays a rising C-G-C motif, popularized by the opening of *2001: A Space Odyssey*

**Paul Dukas** (French)

**The Sorcerer's Apprentice** - tone poem based on Goethe poem, popularized by Disney's *Fantasia*

**Jean Sibelius** (Finnish, Late Romantic)

**Finlandia** - nationalistic tone poem performed under other titles to avoid Russian censorship

**Other notable works:** *Violin Concerto in D minor*

**Scott Joplin** (black American ragtime composer)

**Maple Leaf Rag** - titled for a club in Sedalia, Missouri

**The Entertainer** - inspired by "James Brown and his Mandolin Club"

**Gustav Holst** (English, Late Romantic)

***The Planets*** - astrologically-based suite

Key movements include “Mars, the Bringer of War” (militaristic opener in 5/4, with strings playing *col legno*) and “Neptune, the Mystic” (closes the suite; itself closes with doors closing on women’s choir, creating a “fade out” effect)

**Maurice Ravel** (French, Impressionist)

***Bolero*** - commissioned by Ida Rubinstein, and known for its incessant snare ostinato

**Bela Bartok** (Hungarian ethnomusicologist)

Collected his home country’s folk music alongside fellow composer Zoltan Kodaly

***Concerto for Orchestra*** - piece highlighting the entire orchestra that features a “Game of Pairs”

**Other notable work:** *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*

**Igor Stravinsky** (Russian, with “Russian,” “neoclassical,” and “serialist” periods)

***The Rite of Spring*** - ballet that caused riot at its Parisian premiere

***The Firebird*** - ballet depicting Russian legend of Ivan Tsarevich slaying Kashchei the Deathless with help of title creature

**Sergei Prokofiev** (Russian (Soviet), modernist and neoclassical)

***Peter and the Wolf*** - “symphonic fairy tale for children” that uses a string quartet to depict the first title character and a trio of horns to represent the second; the Grandfather is notably depicted with the bassoon

**George Gershwin** (American)

***Rhapsody in Blue*** - jazzy composition premiered by Paul Whiteman’s jazz band

***An American in Paris*** - tone poem featuring four taxi horns and a noted tuba solo; inspired a 1951 musical film of the same name starring Gene Kelly

**Aaron Copland** (American, queer, modernist)

***Appalachian Spring*** - ballet containing variations on Shaker hymn “Simple Gifts”

*Rodeo* - ballet starring a cowgirl, roper, wrangler, & rancher’s daughter; ends with a “Hoe-Down”

***Fanfare for the Common Man*** - commissioned by Eugene Goossens to commemorate WWII servicemen

**Other notable work:** *A Lincoln Portrait*

**Dmitri Shostakovich** (Russian, oft-accused of “formalism”)

***Symphony No 7, “Leningrad”*** - symphony with a 22-bar “invasion” theme

**Other notable work:** *Symphony No 5*

**John Cage** (American, Buddhist, queer, avant-garde)

***4’33”*** (“four minutes, thirty-three seconds”) - silent piano piece premiered by David Tudor

**Benjamin Britten** (British, queer, modernist)

***The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra*** - based on theme by Purcell, with narration introducing each of the featured instruments

**John (Coolidge) Adams** (American, (post)minimalist)

***On the Transmigration of Souls*** - winner of the 2003 Pulitzer; commemorates 9/11 victims, and opens with young boy repeating the word “missing”

**Other notable work:** *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*

## **Further resources:**

<https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic>

<https://www.naxos.com/education/glossary.asp>

<https://www.classicalarchives.com>

<https://www.musictheory.net>

<http://ai.stanford.edu/~csewell/culture/>

<https://www.naqt.com/you-gotta-know/>

Alex Ross - The Rest is Noise (book)

Harold C Schonberg - Lives of the Great Composers (book)