

## GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685-1759)

GAY-org frih-drick HAN-dell

## Entrance of the Queen of Sheba



### HIS LIFE

Born the same year as Johann Sebastian Bach, Handel outlived him by nine years. By age 10 he was already proficient on several instruments and regarded as a keyboard prodigy. He was known as a keyboard virtuoso all his life. Handel's father wanted him to study the law and he did spend one year pursuing a law degree. He left those studies to take a job at the Hamburg opera house and never looked back.

Handel traveled to Italy (1706-1710) and the Italians loved his compositions. He returned to Germany to work in the service of George Ludwig, the Elector of Hanover. During this time he was allowed to make a trip to England which was highly successful. A year later, he requested permission to return to England and when it was granted, he told his employer that he would "return within a reasonable time." He never returned.

In England, Queen Anne gave Handel an allowance for life. When she died in 1714, this support came to a halt. The new monarch was King George I, none other than George Ludwig, Handel's former boss whom he had left in the lurch. After a bit of initial difficulty, they renewed their relationship and Handel's allowance was not only reinstated but increased. He responded with his *Water Music* in 1717. He became the Director of the Royal Academy of Music, a newly founded opera company, in 1719. Handel composed a number of operas and oratorios, from this time through the 1740s. One of Handel's best known and loved pieces is his *Messiah*, which he composed in only three weeks. It was the last piece he conducted before his death.



House where Handel was born in the city of Halle

### THE MUSIC – ENTRANCE OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

Most of Handel's orchestra music derives from his work for the theater; the *Water Music* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks* are two major exceptions. The *Arrival of the Queen of Sheba* is an instrumental number from the oratorio *Solomon*, written in 1749. An oratorio is a dramatic poem, usually sacred, which is sung by solo voices and chorus, accompanied by an orchestra. When listening to this music, it is easy to imagine that the music is telling us to pay attention and observe the entrance of someone quite important.

### LISTEN FOR

- the alternating sound of strings and two oboes
- the sound of the harpsichord (played on this concert using the harpsichord setting of an electronic keyboard)



A HARPSICHORD

Classics for Kids

<http://www.classicsforkids.com/shows/showview.asp?ID=23>

1. About George Frideric Handel
3. Music by Royalty and Nobility



## LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

LOOD-vihg fahn BAY-toe-fen

## Symphony No. 5

I. *Allegro con brio*

### HIS LIFE



By all accounts, Beethoven had a difficult childhood. As Beethoven's first piano teacher, his alcoholic father was cruel and abusive. From early on, Beethoven found solace and fulfillment in music, having little use for school or other children his age. By age 11, Beethoven was serving in the electoral court orchestra in Bonn and at age 14 had a paying position as the deputy court organist. By age 17, his father's ability to earn a living had deteriorated so greatly that Ludwig was essentially serving as the family's breadwinner and his father's guardian. Beethoven's move to Vienna in 1792 released him somewhat from family demands and brought him to a more vibrant musical culture where he was well received, both as a piano virtuoso and a composer.

Beethoven struggled all his life with the demands of serving his art, often at the expense of the sociability and personal relationships he craved. His deafness further diminished his ability to freely communicate with others. Beethoven also desperately wanted the stability and sense of "human" life that only love, marriage, children and friends could bring. He was never successful in these efforts, and apparently knew that such a life of close personal relationships would serve as a distraction from what was most important to him: his music. His one last effort at having a family involved a bitter battle for the custody of his nephew after his brother's death. Neither uncle nor nephew was happy in the relationship but ultimately they did reconcile prior to Beethoven's final illness and death. It is said over 10,000 attended his funeral. He had become a great public figure as no other composer had before.

### THE MUSIC – I. *Allegro con brio*

It might be said that Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 has become the 'poster-child' piece for classical music, especially for young audiences. It was written during a very prolific period of Beethoven's life. This Symphony, along with No. 6 that followed, was featured on a famous concert in December of 1808. The program had four hours of Beethoven's music, much of which was being heard in public for the first time.

The first movement is a transparent example of how Beethoven could take a very small musical idea (motif) - in this case, the four notes that open the piece in a short-short-short-long rhythm - and use it as the genesis for an entire movement. Schindler claimed that Beethoven explained the opening bars of this great work as "Thus Fate knocks at the door!"

### LISTEN FOR

- the famous four-note RHYTHMIC MOTIF used throughout the first movement
- the brief oboe solo, played as if the BEAT is momentarily suspended
- the sound of all four families of orchestral instruments



To hear Classics for Kids shows about Beethoven, go to the link below and select the shows indicated.

<http://classicsforkids.com/shows/showview.asp?ID=20>

1. About Ludwig van Beethoven
4. Beethoven's Symphonies



You can watch and listen while an orchestra plays this piece at the link below.

Beethoven Symphony No. 5 I. Allegro con brio

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BE8mJAdoFFE>

**HIS LIFE**

The Russian composer Rimsky-Korsakov came from a naval family. He showed an early interest in his mother's singing and father's piano playing. When he was six he began piano lessons and created some early compositions. His heart, however, was in the family tradition of naval service and at age 12 he entered the College of Naval Cadets. While there he continued piano lessons but his greatest musical interest was opera, which he heard for the first time at 13. When Rimsky-Korsakov was 17 he was introduced to three other young Russian composers (Balakirev, Cui and Mussorgsky). These four composers plus Borodin would eventually be known as "The Five," a group of Russian composers who brought a nationalist outlook to their music. At 18, Rimsky-Korsakov completed his naval studies, and

though he was seriously pursuing music with Balakirev's encouragement, he had to leave on a military tour of two and a half years.

In 1871, he accepted the position of professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatory (now called the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory). Even though he had little formal training, his self-study and associations with other composers had brought him a reputation as a very good orchestrator. At this time he also became engaged to an excellent pianist who later became his wife. In 1873, R-K resigned his commission in the navy but also was made the Inspector of Naval Bands. For the next several years he enthusiastically pursued this newest position as well as a study of each of the instruments and their technical capabilities.



ST. PETERSBURG CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

True to the predilections of "The Five," Rimsky-Korsakov became occupied with the folk music and folk idioms of his country. He found ample opportunity to make use of them in the operas he composed, many of which were based on the literature of his countrymen. By the early 1890s, Rimsky-Korsakov was depressed and very dissatisfied with his work. In 1893, he found renewed inspiration in the work of his countryman, Tchaikovsky. After that time, opera and other pieces for voice occupied his creative energies. In 1899-1900, he composed the opera "The Tale of Tsar Saltan;" *The Flight of the Bumblebee* comes from this opera.

Other famous works by Rimsky-Korsakov include *Capriccio Espagnol* (1887); *Sheherazade* and the Russian Easter Overture (1888). He is also well known for having organized, re-worked, and in some cases very nearly rewritten the works of this friend and colleague, Modest Mussorgsky.

**THE MUSIC**

The story of the opera *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* comes from Pushkin. When Saltan chooses the youngest of three sisters to become his bride, her jealous older sisters contrive to revise some messages. Because of this, the Tsar believes his young son is a 'monster', and his response is intercepted and replaced with a message to put his wife and son in a barrel and set them out to sea! This is done, but they wash up on a magical island. The grown prince, Prince Guidon, is able to release a swan princess from a spell. She helps him reunite his parents and the two of them marry. The opera's third act depicts events on the magical island, including the revenge Prince Guidon takes on his jealous aunts by turning himself into a bumblebee and stinging them without mercy.

The Classics for Kids website has a show from March 2008 about Rimsky-Korsakov, including this piece. Visit this website <http://www.classicsforkids.com/shows/showview.asp?ID=34> and listen especially to

1. About Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov
2. The Tale of Tsar Saltan
4. The Bees and the Birds (this show also makes mention of some of the animals featured in *Peter and the Wolf*, also on this program)

**LISTEN FOR**

- the very rapid RHYTHM and TEMPO of the notes of a chromatic scale (see Activity document for more about a chromatic scale)
- the sound of different instruments (TIMBRE) taking turns with the MELODY (mostly violin, flute and clarinet)
- the string pizzicato accompaniment (plucking the strings instead of playing with the bow)

# WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

VOLF-gahng ah-mah-DAY-oos MOHT-zart

# Symphony No. 41

IV. *Molto Allegro*

## HIS LIFE

Many of us are familiar with the wunderkind that Mozart was from a very, very young age. His talents were apparent as early as three when his father began his lessons on the harpsichord. With a musical father who was only too ready to promote his young prodigy, the stories of Mozart's musical feats are well documented. Both Wolfgang and his older sister Nannerl were taken to many different countries to perform concerts and display their talents in musical contests. Wolfgang loved everything about music and took it very seriously.



In 1781, when Mozart was in his mid-20s, he freed himself from an unhappy employment situation with the archbishop in Salzburg. After that he was left, in Vienna, to earn money in a somewhat haphazard, unreliable manner. Mozart's first love was composition but it was necessary to solicit commissions or publishers for his works. Concertizing also did not provide him with steady income. He often earned income as a teacher, but it was work he resented. His married life (to Constanze Weber) was always in financial straits. Neither husband nor wife was good at household management, something required by Wolfgang's fluctuating income.

Mozart was an incredibly prolific composer as well as a great performer. He wrote over 600 pieces, including symphonies, concertos, sonatas, masses, and operas. The last piece of music Mozart worked on was the *Requiem*, a commission in secret from an unknown person. It was incomplete at his death on December 5, 1791.

His funeral at St. Stephen's in Vienna was held in the open air, in the manner of the poorest class, with only a few friends in attendance. They followed the hearse to the city gates, but a violent storm turned them back. The hearse continued, unaccompanied, to the churchyard at St. Marx. "Thus, without a note of music, forsaken by all he held dear, the remains of this prince of harmony were committed to the earth – not even in a grave of his own, but in the common pauper's grave." (Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians)

## THE MUSIC

Mozart wrote his final three symphonies in the space of the three summer months of 1788. It was a hard time in his life, filled with debt and the loss of his newborn daughter. Even so, he chose to make the last of these three symphonies (Symphony No. 41, "Jupiter") an expression of exuberance, especially the *Finale*. The four notes of the main theme have been traced back to Josquin des Prez, but are more familiar to us as the theme of Bach's Fugue in E Major from the second book of the Well-Tempered Clavier.



Mozart's main theme

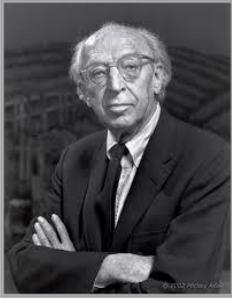


Bach's theme

Incredibly, Mozart used five separate themes in this one movement. And after introducing us to each theme, he wove them all together into a fugato. You can see a color-coded score of this at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony\\_No.\\_41\\_\(Mozart\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._41_(Mozart)).

## LISTEN FOR

- the use of the main theme plus four others as they are ultimately written into a fugato
- the bright sound of a major key (TONALITY)
- the transparent TEXTURE of a classical period orchestra

**HIS LIFE**

Aaron Copland had the good fortune to be born in New York City. After having some piano lessons from his sister, he found teacher after teacher who was able to offer him what he needed musically. He was also able to attend symphony concerts of great music. After high school graduation, he studied harmony, counterpoint and some composition with private teachers. In the summer of 1921 he went to Paris to study music with the great teacher Nadia Boulanger.

After returning to America in 1924, he soon gained prominence as an American composer. He wanted to write something that would be recognized as American in character. For a while, he added jazz idioms to his symphonic writing. Copland recognized that jazz was an easy way to be American in musical terms, but he felt all that was American in music couldn't be expressed within the limits of jazz.

During the mid-30s he felt he wanted a stronger connection between his music and the music-loving public. He set out to write in simpler terms and to explore other venues besides the concert hall. Many American composers were writing what could be thought of as more functional music for the stage, dance and ballet companies, schools, radio and film.

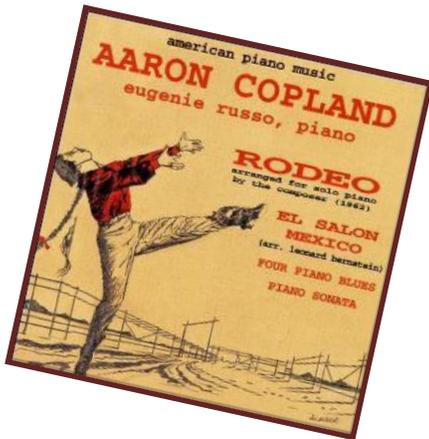
In addition to composing, conducting and performing, Copland loved to teach. He taught off and on at Harvard and was chairman of the music faculty at the Berkshire Music Center (now Tanglewood) for 25 years. His many honors and awards include a Pulitzer Prize, a Gold Medal of the National Institute of Arts, and a Presidential Medal of Freedom.



Bernstein &amp; Copland

**THE MUSIC**

The ballet *Rodeo* (here pronounced roh-DAY-oh, sounding odd to our 'Western' ears) was written in 1942. It was commissioned by the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo. Agnes de Mille choreographed it and danced the lead. The ballet is about a cowgirl trying to get a cowboy to notice her. Preceded by his ballet *Billy the Kid* (1938) and followed by *Appalachian Spring* (1844), the music from Copland's ballet is familiar to American ears, even those that have never heard the music before. This is because Copland's music captures a sound so essentially American. Copland has often used American folk or fiddle tunes as source material for his music, but in *Rodeo* they are not just sources, he uses them nearly intact. Copland used four of the five movements from the ballet when he created his symphonic suite *Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo* which is often heard in the concert hall.



The “Hoe-Down” is the final movement of both the ballet and the *Four Dance Episodes*. Its first theme has been used in popular media including commercials. The two fiddle tunes that can be heard are “Bonyparte” or “Bonaparte’s Retreat” and “Miss McLeod’s Reel.”

**LISTEN FOR**

- the sound of the violins playing traditional fiddle tunes (MUSICAL GENRE)
- the bright, flashy sound of the xylophone playing along with the violins (TIMBRE)
- the hesitant sound of the syncopated RHYTHM played by the bassoon, wood block and piano
- the brief solos played by various instruments throughout



To hear Classics for Kids radio shows about Copland go to the link below and select the shows indicated.  
<http://www.classicsforkids.com/shows/showview.asp?ID=33>

## CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1826-1918)

Clawed deh-byoo-SEE

## *Petite Suite*

IV. *Ballet*

### HIS LIFE

French composer Claude Debussy did not come from a musical family. When Debussy was nine years old his father was imprisoned because of his revolutionary activities in the Commune of 1871. Young Debussy's musical talent had made itself apparent and a piano teacher was found for him. By the age of ten he was accepted to study piano and theory at the Paris Conservatoire. Two years later, in 1874, it appeared that he was heading for a career as a virtuoso pianist. However, his poor performance on his piano exams in 1878 and 1879 meant he needed to find another musical outlet. He turned to the composition class at the Conservatoire, and at age 21 he won the second Prix de Rome. A year later he took the first Prix de Rome. This meant he could compose without needing to have other means of support for two years. Debussy and his second wife had one daughter.



### HIS MUSIC

Debussy's *Petite Suite* was originally written for piano duet (one piano, four hands) from 1886-89. It was transcribed for orchestra by a colleague of Debussy's in 1907. The music is uncharacteristically simple in relation to some of the music Debussy would come to be known for. The *Ballet* is the last of the four movements of the Suite. The sections of the ternary (A-B-A) are easy to distinguish. The A sections particularly are lively, sparkling with piccolo, triangle, cymbals. The B section contrasts with a change in meter, tempo, melody, timbre and articulation.

### LISTEN FOR

- The TONALITY of a major key throughout.
- The ternary (A-B-A) FORM
  - A sections (0:00-1:02 and 2:14-3:21):
    - the MELODY
    - a duple METER (2 beats to a measure)
    - frequent syncopated RHYTHM (off the beat) accompanying the melody
    - the frequent staccato ARTICULATION giving the music a bouncy sound
  - B section (1:02-2:14):
    - a new MELODY
    - a triple METER (3 beats to a measure)
    - a different TEMPO
    - a more lilting, smoother ARTICULATION

Enjoy a Classics for Kids radio show about Debussy

<http://www.classicsforkids.com/shows/showview.asp?ID=21>

1. About Claude Debussy (The introduction to the idea of impressionism in music is done well.)



You can watch and listen while an orchestra plays this piece at the link below.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMqCsyJKvso> (starts at 11:20)

**Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)**  
mahn-well de FY-yuh

*El Amor Brujo*: Ritual Fire Dance

### HIS LIFE

Spanish composer Manuel de Falla received his first music lessons from his mother. He was interested in both music and literature at a very young age, and by the time he was about 17, he had decided to pursue composition. Falla was a serious student. In his mid-20s, he studied with the founder of Spanish musical nationalism (Pedrell). This exposure inspired Falla to compose music that combined Spanish culture and traditions with the great European musical tradition he had studied. Falla spent a lot of time in Paris, learning from both Ravel and Debussy, and his music was well-received in concerts. *El amor brujo*, originally written as dances and then a ballet with songs, was first performed in Madrid in 1915. It was based on the primitive song of Andalusia called *cante jondo*. The concert version was written in 1916. The Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 was trying for Falla. Because of it, he ultimately accepted an invitation to move to Argentina. Continued failing health made work on compositions sporadic, and Falla died there, in Argentina.



CADIZ, SPAIN, BIRTHPLACE OF MANUEL DE FALLA

### THE MUSIC

The *Ritual Fire Dance* is one movement of Falla's well-known work, *El amore brujo* (Love, the Magician) which has many versions – the original dances and ballet with songs, a version for full orchestra, a chamber ensemble, and piano solo. A young Anadalusian gypsy and her boyfriend are haunted by the ghost of her formerly unfaithful husband. To release the ghost's hold on the couple, the gypsies dance around a fire which draws the ghost into the fire where it vanishes.

The music has great contrasts of quiet intensity and driving rhythms. A Spanish gypsy quality is created by the main MELODY with its many ornamentations and the exotic choice of TONALITY or scale. Two percussion instruments that we often associate with Spanish music – the tambourine and castenets – are not used in this piece.



### LISTEN FOR

- the quiet but intense trills that start the piece, creating energy that is ready to spiral out of control
- the MELODY, played first by the oboe has several elements that create the Spanish sound
  - the grace notes and other melodic ornaments
  - the exotic TONALITY of the melody; it does not use either a traditional major or minor scale
  - the faster TEMPO at the end, beginning about 3:45
  - the many repeated chords at the end