



The Cochlear Implant User's Guide to Classical Music of the Western World

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Prelude (a musical term meaning, “to play before” or, an introductory piece)
This guide is designed to give you, the cochlear implant user, an understanding and basic knowledge of the genre known as “Classical Music.” It is my presumption, and that of other music educators, that the more you understand about the music you listen to, the more enjoyment it will bring. Edwin Gordon, a noted music educator, encourages listeners to think about music like a language. It is possible for us to enjoy listening to a foreign language speaker, but there is additional pleasure in understanding and contributing to the conversation. For the implanted listener, extracting meaning from every sound that is heard in a piece of music can be a daunting task. This guide will help demystify and decode this complex “organized sound” called music. It will take practice and, above all, perseverance. But, I think the results will be worth the effort.

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Resources

In preparing this guide, I borrowed extensively from two outstanding sources. Both are available from any bookstore, Amazon.com, or your public library, which is where I found them.

The NPR Listener's Encyclopedia of Classical Music (2006) by Ted Libbey. This wonderful book has a companion website made expressly available from Naxos, the world's largest classical music label. Once registered (free with the book), you may access over 500 musical selections. So, for example, if you are interested in Mozart, go to the entry and while you read about Mozart, you can access the website and listen to a number of musical selections by Mozart. In addition, there are recommended recordings for purchase at a later date. So, the advantage is that you can listen to a sample of music before you take a chance on buying the CD. Also, were you aware that many large bookstores have listening stations, where you can preview a CD before you buy it? And don't forget about the opportunities available on the web. More on that later.

The Story of the Orchestra (2001) by Robert Levine

This delightful little book and accompanying CD are designed for children, but the information presented is more substantial than the little cartoon illustrations might suggest. It clearly describes how an orchestra is put together, where the musicians are seated and what the individual instruments sound like. There are 37 tracks on the CD. Many of the selections are famous orchestral works written by the composers featured in the book. There are tidbits of information about each composition. (Did you know that Beethoven was totally deaf by the time he wrote his Ninth Symphony?) Especially helpful are the tracks which feature individual instruments playing solo passages before they are joined by the full orchestra. It's a good way to prime your ear before you listen to the fully orchestrated version.

Classical Music Defined

Classical is the term given to any serious art music of any time period. It is not, or ever was, considered popular music. Some musicologists believe it should really be called "concert music." The confusion lies in the fact that in the world of Western music history, there is an era from approximately 1770-1830 known as the Classical Era. (Please note that the Eastern world has its own canon of fabulous Classical music, which is very different from the music I will be discussing.) The Classical Era has to do with the compositional style of primarily three great composers; Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. But, is the music that was written before and after the Classical Era really classical music? Yes, according to the definition above. The musical eras (approximate dates), genres and their preeminent composers have been categorized as follows:

Medieval 1400	900-	Sacred Chants, Organ Preludes	Pope Gregory I, Hildegard von Bingen
Renaissance 1600	1400-	Motets, Masses	Palestrina, Gabrieli, Monteverdi
Baroque 1750	1600-	Concerti, Sonatas, Choral Cantatas	Bach, Vivaldi
Classical 1830	1750-	Sonatas, Symphonies, String Quartets, Operas, Concerti	Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven
Romantic 1910	1805-	Symphonies, Opera, Ballet, Art Songs	Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Wagner, Mahler
Modern 1999	1910-	Symphonies, Opera, Ballet, Sacred Choral Music	Debussy, Stravinsky, Gershwin, Copland, Bernstein
Contemporary	2000-	Orchestral Works, Minimalist Compositions	Glass, Reich, MacMillan,

Keep in mind that the time frames for each era are approximate, because there were always composers who overlapped between them. Think of them as evolutionary timelines that were constantly in flux. The composers I have listed are only a drop in the bucket, but will, at least, acquaint you with some of the more well known Classical music. Once you have read the introductory text to each of the lessons, spend time checking out the links I have listed for a chance to hear and, in some cases, see examples of the music performed.

LESSON ONE: Medieval Era

The earliest known serious music was written for the church of the Middle Ages. It was ***choral*** and sung unaccompanied, or ***a capella***. These chants, or ***plainsong*** as they were known, were usually sung in ***unison***, meaning all voices sang the same melody at the same time. They were later referred to as ***Gregorian chants*** after ***Pope Gregory II*** (715-31). Around 900, the organ came into use in the church. First, it was used to support singing but eventually organists developed the art of ***preluding***, or solo organ playing before the Mass began. This led to experimentation with ***harmony***, or simultaneous sounding of different tones. These additional pitches which followed the chant in a parallel fashion was called ***organum*** and paved the way for the more complex harmonies of the Renaissance. While chant was typically written and performed by monks, an unusual German abbess, ***Hildegard von Bingen*** (1098-1179), composed prolifically. Her pieces were ***quasi-improvisatory***, meaning the performance would differ depending on who was singing. While she was not well known in her day, her music has become quite popular among present day listeners.

Links:

www.anonymous4.com Go to this amazing a capella women's group's Discography and click on *The Origin of Fire* CD to hear free samples of Hildegard von Bingen's music. You will need RealTime to play it, but the website offers a free trial download.

<http://homepage.oninet.pt/862mch/rsetg.htm> For broadcast of Gregorian Chant 24/7. It offers snippets of chant, plus several links to other websites.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EL1mIX0aJeg> For a listen of the true "Basso Profondo" of the Russian tradition, check out this YouTube Site. You will not believe that a human voice can sing this low!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WpD2Cspn6g&NR=1> For a look and a listen to the lowest voices in the world.

<http://pipedreams.publicradio.org/listings/2005/0530/> This Public Radio program, hosted by Michael Barrone and produced by American Public Media, is the quintessential program about organs. This particular program features the medieval form of organum.

http://www.mp3.com/albums/321938/summary.html?tag=albums;img&om_act=convert&om_clk=artalb Hear selections from the group, **Sonus**, on their CD "Songs and Dances of the Middle Ages."

Tips:

Sacred chant is meant to be very fluid, melodic and seamless, as a way of invoking the mystery of the sacred. It takes advantage of the hard, reverberant surfaces of a church or cathedral. This means that the pulse, or beat, is almost non-existent. For that reason, it may be difficult to discern. Gregorian chant is also sung in Latin, or other foreign languages, so whenever possible try to obtain the translated lyrics from the links listed. It may be of interest to try out the links to the Basso Profondo, because the low range may be pleasant sounding and at the very least amazing! The instrumental medieval music is very rhythmic, lively and percussive, as much of it was written to accompany dance.

LESSON TWO: Renaissance Era

By the time of the Renaissance, composers like **Palestrina** (1525-94) and **Monteverdi**

(1567-1643) began experimenting with **polyphony**. This involved the simultaneous singing of two or more independent musical lines that were rhythmically independent of one another. The dominant choral music of this time was the **motet**, which emerged in France in the 13th and 14th centuries. It almost always used a sacred Latin text and sometimes another text in the language of the composer. Imagine how surprising it would be to hear two texts, many different vocal parts and several rhythms happening at the same time!

Another popular compositional technique of this era was the **antiphonal** treatment of voices and instruments. Because the cathedrals had multiple balconies and many nooks and crannies, composers would create music that

placed smaller ensembles in various parts of the cathedral for an echo or statement and response effect. **Giovanni Gabrielli** (1557-1612) was one of the most famous Venetian composers to adopt this style.

Instruments of this period were built in “families” which mimicked the human vocal ranges. So, the **viola da gamba** family included viols in different sizes which were held between the knees and were built to play the soprano, alto, tenor and bass parts of a composition. These **viol consorts**, as they were called, were extremely popular in the 17th century and later evolved into the violin, viola, cello and bass. Likewise, the brass family included the trumpet, horns, trombones and tubas. Flutes of this time were made of wood and were called **recorders**. They ranged in size from the tiny **sopranino** down to the four foot long **contrabass**. The **harpsichord**, a keyboard instrument whose strings were plucked by a series of quills attached to jacks connected to the keys, was a popular solo and orchestral instrument. The piano was developed early in the 18th century, but did not become the piano we know today until the early 19th century.

Links:

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B0000057E9/renaissancafirec>

Venetian music performed on original instruments.

<http://www.empirebrass.com/cds.html> The Empire brass has a whole CD devoted to the music of Gabrielli called “Music of Gabrielli” on the Telarc label. Their website will allow you to preview selections. If you have never heard a brass ensemble before, this one is the best place to start! They perform on modern instruments.

<http://www.piffaro.com/> Piffaro, a group from Philadelphia who perform on traditional Renaissance instruments, offers an 8 minute YouTube segment on this site. You will see and hear recorders, lutes, bagpipes, shawm and harp.

http://www.amazon.com/Venetian-Coronation-1595-Charles-Pott/dp/B00000DNTZ/ref=sr_1_4?ie=UTF8&s=music&qid=1205889576&sr=1-4

To hear a recording on period instruments and in the Renaissance Basilica of St Mark, you can listen to samples of “A Venetian Coronation 1595” by Gabrieli Consort and Players at this link.

Tips:

The music of Gabrielli sounds complex because of the use of antiphony and the combination of choir plus instruments. However, much of the Renaissance music based on dances of the time period is light and airy and you may be surprised to find your toes tapping to the beat.

LESSON THREE: Baroque Era

Music of this period was written primarily for the church and nobility. Commoners listened to “popular” music of their day. The art and architecture of this time was very ornate and complicated which was also reflected in the music. Venice was one of the most important centers of art and music during this period. It was

home to **Antonio Vivaldi** (1678-1741, nicknamed the “Red Priest” because of his flaming red hair) who composed over 500 concertos for solo instruments and orchestras. A **concerto** (**concerti**, *pl.*) is a piece that highlights a solo or small group of instruments that use an orchestra as accompaniment. They were usually of three parts, or **movements**, and occurred in this order: fast, slow, fast. Vivaldi’s most famous compositions are a set of four violin concertos called, **The Four Seasons**.

Germany was also important to the Baroque era because it was the home of **Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685-1750), a musical genius and one of the most prolific composers to have ever lived. Not only did he write copious amounts of music, but he had 20 children, as well! Five of his sons were also musicians. JS Bach was an organist and **Kapellmeister**, music director, for several Protestant churches throughout Germany. While in Leipzig his weekly duties included: writing a 30 minute **cantata**, a vocal and instrumental piece based on sacred texts, oversee the copying of the music, teach 50 music students, compose music for feast and other holy days, play for funerals and weddings, oversee the music for two other churches under his directorship. One might ponder how he managed to have so many children given these demands on his time! In the immense collection of his works you will find everything from the elaborate **Mass in B Minor** to the **Suites for Unaccompanied Cello**. His name is synonymous with the Baroque era and in fact the dates cited are those of Bach’s birth and death.

Links:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pe-MIDDfckw> this is a clip of a group called / *Musici* playing a selection of Vivaldi’s Four Seasons.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxpIDa3M5lo&NR=1> For something completely different, check out this rock and roll version of Vivaldi’s Four Seasons: Summer. Wow!

<http://mp3.rhapsody.com/yoyoma/bachunaccompaniedcellosuitesgreatperformances> this version by Yo Yo Ma is available as an MP3 download. This site also offers some free samples of the same recording.

Tips:

Much of Baroque music is very detailed and has lots of ornamentation and notes per beat. So, it may sound “busy” or cluttered on first listen. Because this is the time when the Canon (think “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” sung as a round) was perfected by JS Bach, you will hear the main melody played by many different instruments at different times. It may be difficult for even the normal ear to pick out the theme every time it is played. I would suggest checking out pieces for solo instruments to begin your introduction to this time period.

LESSON FOUR: Classical Era

Serious music finally became available to common man during this next era often called, "Age of Reason." No longer would it be confined to the Church and the Courts. Composers became interested in music theory and technique and began writing for a broader audience. It seem ludicrous to limit this guide to the Big Three, **Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven**, but within their compositions lie the quintessential examples of what we now call, "Classical Music."

Franz Joseph Haydn, (aka, "Papa Joe") was born in Austria, 1732. While Mozart was born 24 years later, Haydn outlived him and continued to compose for 20 more years. Papa Joe was well-loved as a teacher and well-respected as a composer for most of his life. His contribution to the musical canon includes over 100 symphonies, operas, concertos, religious works and smaller chamber works. He wrote music to calm, comfort and provide refreshment to the "weary and worn." Among his notable pieces are **Symphony 101 (The Clock)**, and his "**Sun**" **String Quartets**, ensembles of two violins, a viola and cello.

No doubt, you have heard stories of **Amadeus Mozart's** (1756-91) prodigious musical talents. Also from Austria, his first musical tour lasted three years! He and his father traveled to Italy, France and England. All the while, he continued to compose (often in is head) and work on his piano and violin skills, still finding time to flirt and entertain royalty. Mozart wrote in so many styles and for almost every instrument known at the time. His **symphonies**, pieces for large groups of 60-70 instruments, concertos, sonatas, string quartets and **operas** (drama with singing and orchestral accompaniment) are still favorites with today's listeners.

Ludwig von Beethoven was born in Germany in 1770 during the time of the French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon. His music, particularly the four-movement symphony, acted as a bridge between the Classical and Romantic eras. By 1802, he began to lose his hearing. He relied on what he could remember about past works and forged ahead into a new phase of emotional urgency. He transformed the symphony into an act of "moral philosophy and personal confession." His Ninth Symphony (think ba-ba-ba-baaaaaa, ba-ba-ba-baaaaaa) was written in total deafness and at its premier, Beethoven had to be turned around to see the audience's profound appreciation. In addition to his symphonies, he wrote many piano sonatas and trios, string quartets, concertos and an opera.

Links:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imv2M64t_og A chance to watch Leonard Bernstein conduct Part I of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6K4635W4roY&feature=related> Part II, with soloist and choir, of Leonard Bernstein conducting Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. This is the famous "Ode to Joy" Melody.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKhH2hRa-WQ> Performance on period (traditional) instruments by the New Trinity Baroque
<http://www.emusic.com/album/Kurt-Sanderling-Kurt-Sanderling-The-Soviet-Recordings-Haydn-H-MP3-Download/11123034.html> A chance to hear a digitally re-mastered recording by Kurt Sanderling conducting the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra.

Tips:

The symphony orchestra has finally come into its own during this time period. This means that there are many more instruments playing at the same time, placing more demands on the listener. However, watching a performance may enhance the listening experience.

LESSON FIVE: Romantic Era

This era took lessons from both the Baroque and Classical periods and took music in a new direction—one of passion, drama and fantasy. The orchestra evolved into its current form and present day seating arrangement. Composers and performers began to gain star status as the audiences became more diverse and distanced themselves from the church. **Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Wagner, and Mahler** are but a small representation of composers from this time.

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840-93) was a Russian composer who was popular with his audiences. Among the most beautiful of his works are three ballets, **Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty and The Nutcracker**. These **ballets** wove together dance, music and fairy tales into a highly entertaining art form. Unfortunately, like so many of his fellow composers, Tchaikovsky led a torturous emotional life and attempted suicide on more than one occasion.

Johannes Brahms (1833-97) was born in Germany, but settled in Vienna. His contemporaries thought highly of his compositional skills and started talking about “The Three B’s—Bach, Beethoven and Brahms.” The 20th century composers recognized his innovations and renovation of music as an abstract art form. His **First Symphony, Piano Concertos, and Requiem** (a Mass for the Dead) are among his most performed and admired works.

Richard Wagner (1813-83) was known to have an ego the size of his talent. He was the greatest German opera composer of the late 19th century and was supported lavishly by his patron, “Mad King Ludwig” of Bavaria. For 20 years, Wagner wrote the lyrics and music to a four-opera cycle known as, **The Ring of the Niebelung**. They are based on the old Germanic and Nordic sagas. (Think Vikings, breastplates and helmets with horns!) It is an epic, 16-hour event with a story that is as exciting as the music.

At the end of the Romantic Era, **Gustav Mahler** (1860-1911) was writing compositions on such a large scale that his **Eighth Symphony** was known as the “Symphony of a Thousand.” His **Symphony No. 4**, is perhaps his most lovely and optimistic and was influenced by folk music of the Austrian countryside

he was so fond of. Mahler's work had a profound influence on Leonard Bernstein, who wrote that Mahler was the "spiritual prophet" of the 20th century.

Links:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MiefzYcXGI> Perhaps you have seen a production of Tchaikovsky's **Nutcracker Suite** complete with dancers. This video offers a sneak peek into the orchestra as it plays.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxdc_SfITS4&feature=related This video offers an overview of the story line of Wagner's **Sigfried** Opera from his **Ring Cycle**.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opera> For those who want to know more about opera before heading to the show.

Tips:

Everyone should see a ballet and an opera at least once. Tchaikovsky's ballet, **Nutcracker Suite** is usual holiday fare and often performed annually in larger cities. Since the story is simple and the music fairly well known, it is a good choice for a first ballet. Opera is much more complex for a number of reasons: the story is often convoluted and intricate, it is often sung in a foreign language, and the music can be complicated. However, many opera companies offer captioning in English for their audience. It is important to become familiar with the story before attending the performance! Many opera companies will offer the plot line at their websites as well as other information that will enhance audience enjoyment.

LESSON SIX: Modern Era

With over one hundred years of orchestral music behind them, composers of this time period were willing and free to take music into new directions. Art and landscape became inspirations for some, while popular music like jazz, blues and folk, found its way into orchestral compositions of others.

French composer, **Claude Debussy**, (1862-1918) found inspiration in the impressionistic paintings of Renoir and Monet. His use of the "whole-tone" scale (every other note on the keyboard is played) gives a dreamy, magical quality to his pieces and was influenced by his listening to Asian music that came to the Paris Exposition in 1889. His symphony, **La Mer**, is very evocative of the sea, complete with mermaids and violent storms.

American composer, **Aaron Copeland**, (1900-1990) was inspired by the grandeur of the West. His ballets, **Rodeo** and **Billy the Kid**, will make you think you are ring side at the rodeo. One of his loveliest and well known compositions is a piece based on the Shaker Hymn known as **Simple Gifts**. He called his piece, **Appalachian Spring**.

His American contemporaries, **George Gershwin** (1898-1937) and **Leonard Bernstein**, (1918-1990) borrowed heavily from the jazz and folk music of the day.

Russian composer, **Igor Stravinsky**, (1882-1971) made his name as a ballet composer. He said of his own compositions, "My music is best understood by children and animals." Riots were not uncommon at the premier of many of his works. In fact, he barely escaped from one hall alive. He moved to Hollywood where he lived until he died.

Links:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiyc9Ak3EtQ> Visit this site to see a performance of Gershwin's **Rhapsody in Blue**, conducted and played by Leonard Bernstein.

<http://www.leonardbernstein.com/wss.php> The official Bernstein website.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XiLTwtuBi-o&feature=related> This is a clip of the "Simple Gifts" part of Copeland's **Appalachian Spring**. Alas, it is paired with beautiful shots of the Rockies and not the Appalachian Mountains.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4957580> For a bit of history on Debussy's **La Mer**, and the composer himself, visit this NPR site. Samples of the piece are available to listen to, as well.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OFT8fBLQt4> A short clip of Debussy's, **La Mer**, performed by an orchestra.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tGA6bpscj8> Stravinsky conducts part of his **Firebird**.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16130685> Five Modern Classical Pieces for Pop Listeners, 20th-Century Classics You Should Get to Know, *By Alex Ross*

http://www.pbs.org/wnet/gperf/genre/cinema.html#cine_vid A chance to see a bit of the Oscar- Winning animated film based on **Peter and the Wolf**.

Peter and the Wolf/The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra Deutsche Grammophon, Stereo 415921-2

This disc is a combination of two great orchestral listening experiences. **Sergiy Prokofiev** (1891-1953) wrote **Peter and the Wolf** as a narrated musical tale for children. Each of the characters in the story is represented by a different instrument with its own theme. So, for instance, the cat is a clarinet, the bird, a flute and so on. It gives the listener a chance to hear individual instruments before they all join together at the end of the story. Even though it was originally written for children, it is still enjoyed by the adults who escort them to the symphony as well. It may also afford the implanted listener a nice introduction to orchestral music. The same can be said about **Benjamin Britten's** (1913-1976) **Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra**. This narrated journey through the orchestra speaks as much about the structure of a musical piece as it does the orchestra itself. Once again, you will hear individual instruments highlighted.

There are many different recorded versions of these pieces available. Wikipedia has compiled a discography.

Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concerts Edited by Jack Gottlieb (1992) Doubleday.

Originally broadcast by the Columbia Broadcasting Corporation beginning in 1958, these concerts featured scripted lessons presented by Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic. Each lesson presents a different topic such as, "What Does Music Mean?" or "What is Classical Music?" in which the Philharmonic plays excerpts as Bernstein narrates.

Tips:

I have included a number of YouTube sites because I think it is helpful to see what you are hearing. The only caution I will give is that sometimes the video is slightly behind the music, thus giving a somewhat "out-of-sync" impression. Also, computer speakers don't usually sound as good as a high quality stereo system.

LESSON SEVEN: Contemporary Era/New Music

Since most eras are usually named after the fact, I will just refer to the serious concert music of today as the New Music or Contemporary Era. Every musical era in history has either built upon, rejected, re-invented, or improved past eras. What makes this current time period exciting is that the compositions of today are created by **living** composers!! Performers can actually collaborate with the composers. (Imagine if we could ask Beethoven how he envisioned his Ninth Symphony was to sound.) Today's orchestral music has become more complex on the one hand and yet simpler on the other. **Minimalism** is a twentieth century movement that began in the visual art world and is characterized by reducing a work down to the minimum number of lines, colors, and textures. As minimalism moved into the music world in the 1970's through the compositions of **Steve Reich** and **Philip Glass**, it manifested itself in slow, even pulses, constant harmony, and very repetitive phrases. In contrast to **Minimalism**, some composers have pushed the boundaries of what an instrument or voice is capable of executing. One such composer is the Scotsman, **James MacMillan**. His percussion concerto **Veni, Veni, Emmanuel**, was first performed in 1992 by **Evelyn Glennie**, a remarkable **deaf** musician, composer, and presenter.

Links:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IU3V6zNER4g> If there is one link that you go to, make it this one! Deaf, Scottish percussionist, **Evelyn Glennie**, conducts a short lecture on "How to Listen to Music with Your Whole Body."

<http://www.evelyn.co.uk/homepage.htm> The homepage of this remarkable woman.

<http://www.fitkin.com/> Once there, go to Music and listen and Hook and Beбето

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCZEckS5X94> This is a 2006 rehearsal of the Grand Valley State College (MI) New Music Ensemble playing **Steve Reich's Music for 18 Musicians**.

<http://www.myspace.com/stevereichmusic> To hear more music (for free) by Steve Reich, visit his MySpace site.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imbwn6iVryQ> Check this site out to hear and see a performance of piano music by the minimalist **Philip Glass**.

Tips:

New music (like new directions) may not be for everyone. However, it's important to remember that once upon a time, all music was new. Many a composer has been booed off the stage by their contemporary audiences who thought the music was too strange to their ears! But, if musical boundaries had never been stretched, Beethoven's Ninth or Stravinsky's Firebird would never have been written. As Plutarch so wisely said, "Music, to create harmony, must investigate discord."

Fine (A musical term meaning the end)

Bravo, you have finished this guide! I hope it has given you enough information to begin or continue your exploration through the wonderful world of "Classical Music." Remember, practice and persevere.