

## THE MAIN FORMS OF ORCHESTRAL MUSIC



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Works for orchestra have always been the most prestigious of all forms of instrumental music. Partly because of their size and "public" nature, and partly because of the growth of both of these aspects over the last 250 years or so, the principal orchestral genres have also been in the forefront of stylistic change.

The main forms of orchestral music are the symphony, the concerto, the overture, and the symphonic poem. Additionally, orchestral suites were popular in the baroque period and reappear in the twentieth century, and composers as great as Mozart have written charming and functional but generally lightweight dance music. Each form has its own array of subgroups as well. The word *concerto*, for example, covers *concerto grosso*, solo concerto, and concertos for two or more soloists, while it overlaps with the symphony in the *symphonie concertante*. Then there are program symphonies, or multimovement programmatic works that cut across the boundaries of symphony and symphonic poem.

Distinctions can be made between types of orchestral music in two major areas: works in several movements (for example, symphonies, concertos) as opposed to single-movement works (overtures, symphonic poems), and works with programs or descriptive intentions as opposed to nonillustrative, or "absolute," music. These two sets of distinctions do not necessarily correlate with each other, although programmatic orchestral works are often in a single movement.

Confusion still surrounds the terms *form* and *genre*. *Genre* normally refers to a type of work whose name is an indication of the performing forces employed, as in the symphony and the concerto, and often the place of performance and subject matter, as in opera and oratorio. Form, on the

other hand, popularly carries with the meaning of *genre* but also a more particular meaning—that of the organizing pattern or principle operating within individual movements in any given genre. Forms that one finds in symphonies, for example, may include theme and variation; rondo; minuet and trio (itself a composite of binary forms); ternary, or ABA, form, the paramount sonata form; and all sorts of hybrid combinations. Even programmatic works in the “symphonic poem” genre may embody certain more abstract musical forms, such as sonata and rondo, and indeed, they usually do so. Most works before the twentieth century rely on, or at least refer to, certain time-honored conventions of musical organization. The remainder of this essay will maintain these distinctions between genre and form.

## SYMPHONY

The rise of the symphony was nearly coextensive with the rise of the classical style in the eighteenth century. The symphony also was an outgrowth of the establishment of concert life and the emergence of a musical public during the 1730s, when symphonies (sometimes called overtures on concert programs) were nearly always used to open and close concerts. The rest of these concerts usually featured virtuosic soloists (singers or instrumentalists) who were more often than not the motivating force behind the concert in the first place. Occasionally a concert initiated by a composer would feature more than one of his symphonies—for example, Mozart's concerts of 1 April 1784 in Vienna (Linz and Haffner Symphonies).

Scholars are still debating the specific origins of the symphony. One commonly accepted notion finds its roots in the Italian opera overture, the so-called *sinfonia avanti l'opera*, which, after being standardized by Alessandro Scarlatti in the 1680s, was always in three sections, with a fast-slow-fast ordering. At some point, perhaps as early as the 1730s, the *sinfonia* was separated from the opera to which it belonged, and was performed separately as a “concert symphony.” Evidence includes manuscript copies of symphonies by Giovanni Battista Sammartini, which include no reference to their original status as overtures. Presumably, the increasing number of concerts made more freestanding instrumental works necessary, and the role of symphonies as “overtures” to the concert as a whole made natural the appropriation of actual overtures. Yet the mechanism by which this exchange of genres took place has never been fully or adequately explained; it is perhaps something of an overstatement to say that the Italian opera *sinfonia* “gave way” to the independent symphony.

Another plausible theory finds the origins of the symphony in the concerto, specifically in the *ripieno concerto* of the early eighteenth century. These pieces are written for an orchestra that acts in a dual capacity both as full complement and as individual sections of soloists (*concertino*). This seems a fruitful line of investigation. Possible links between the symphony and the orchestral suite may be more remote, especially since symphonies nearly always followed a pattern of movements much different from those of the suite. Terminology is, of course, completely unstandardized in sources from the period; it is sometimes not clear from the sources even whether a piece labeled *sinfonia* is for orchestral or chamber performance.

The rise of the symphony in different European centers—most notably Vienna, Mannheim, and Paris—has been well charted in recent years. We now have a fair picture of the work and styles of the principal composers in these centers and their contributions to the genre. The theory, first propounded by Hugo Riemann, that the composers of the Mannheim school originated many aspects of the symphony and the classical style has now been fully refuted. Some Mannheim techniques even had Italian models. Yet, contributions to the genre by Mannheim composers such as Johann Stamitz include frequent use of a four-movement symphonic plan (as opposed to the three-movement Italian model), brilliant orchestration with much soloistic use of winds, and a celebrated style of performance honed with flashy devices like the famous “Mannheim crescendo” and “rocket” fanfare themes.

The four-movement symphony—the earliest example of which is often credited to Georg Matthias Monn in Vienna for his D-Major Symphony written in 1740—became standard by around 1770, although three-movement works continued to appear. After his Symphony no. 30 of 1765, Haydn no longer wrote three-movement symphonies, and all but Symphony No. 60 (*Il distratto*) are in four movements. In Mozart's symphonic output, Italian and Viennese influences are displayed in his use of the three- or four-movement plan, respectively; here, the only anomaly is the Symphony no. 38, K. 504 (*Prague*), a fully mature “Viennese” symphony without a minuet.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the four-movement plan was standard, with such notable exceptions as Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony, Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, Schumann's *Rhenish* Symphony, Tchaikovsky's Third Symphony, and Mahler's Second, Third, Fifth, Seventh, and Eighth Symphonies. (All of these are in five movements, except for Mahler's Third and Eighth, which are in six and two, respectively.) In the twentieth century, symphonies in more than four movements have been



written by Vaughan Williams and Shostakovich, among others, while many composers have gone back to an arrangement of three movements.

As eighteenth-century treatises on composition, by such theorists as Joseph Riepel and Heinrich Christoph Koch, began for the first time to approach instruction by focusing on genres and forms, the symphony emerged as the locus of normative formal patterns. In fact, an examination of the discussions in such treatises of first-movement form in the symphony is one way of charting the development of what the nineteenth century termed *sonata form*, the most important new formal structure of the classical period. Some modern writers go so far as to say that in the first movements of eighteenth-century symphonies one can trace the rise of the classical style itself.

Eighteenth-century treatises show that the first-movement form could be best explained in harmonic terms. The first section opens in the tonic, modulates to the dominant, and closes there; these harmonic areas may be articulated with contrasting thematic material, but themes are less forcefully described by theorists. The second section comprises two different periods of harmonic activity: the first continues the modulation, moving from the dominant to the relative or mediant minor, and perhaps touching on a few other keys along the way. The second part of the second section returns to the tonic, and restores most of the material of the first section, now all in the tonic key, where the movement ends. This threefold division within two large sections was ideal for a dramatic ordering of tonal presentation, conflict, and resolution.

Calling first-movement form *sonata form*, later writers labeled these three parts *exposition*, *development*, and *recapitulation*, terms so familiar that it is unlikely that they will ever be satisfactorily replaced, despite their inaccuracies. (Koch's terms "first principal period," "second principal period," and "third principal period" never really caught on.) Nineteenth-century writers concentrated on the thematic contents of each section, giving rise to a recipe for mixing first and second themes with a dash of modulation, spicing with a "thematic development," and rising inevitably into a full recapitulation. This recipe was modeled on Beethoven, and made the eighteenth-century composers look inadequate: after all, Haydn often did not have a different second theme, Mozart did not have "enough" development, and many other composers had "incomplete" recapitulations. Recent studies have begun to reassert the validity of looking at eighteenth-century structures on their own terms.

For the slow second movement, the same form as that of the first movement was most popular, but with fewer phrases and less expansion and

connective tissue. Occasionally these movements were in rondo form, and Haydn wrote a fair number of theme-and-variation second movements. (Koch states that Haydn was the first composer to introduce the theme and variations into the symphony.) Indeed, Haydn created a number of original designs for his symphonic slow movements, especially alternating variations on two themes and an ABA form with development, which were then taken further by Beethoven.

The minuet and trio, the symphony's only apparent debt to the orchestral suite, was the standard form for third movements in four-movement symphonies. Haydn's and Mozart's minuets are richly scored and often either humorous or passionate. Toward the end of his life, however, Haydn remarked that he wished someone would invent a "really new minuet"; the inevitable alteration of two binary forms apparently was wearing thin for him. Beethoven's fast tempos (all but the Eighth Symphony are *allegro* or faster), new structures (abandonment of binary form in the Fifth Symphony scherzo, frequent fugatos, extreme expansion of the second part of the binary in the Third and Seventh Symphonies, sonata-like expansion in the Ninth Symphony), and explosive effects (sudden *tritis*, shocking climaxes, novel use of timpani) in his symphonic scherzos may be seen as Haydn's answer.

Finales often took the form of the first movement, with a more foursquare opening theme (as in the finale of Mozart's Symphony no. 40 in G Minor), but more popular were romping rondos. Haydn and Mozart sometimes combined these two into a hybrid later called "sonata rondo," a form that was described but not named around 1800. Ideally suited to ending a symphony, the sonata rondo featured a square opening theme, often with repeats, that leads into the rest of the exposition, with a second theme in the dominant; a return to all or part of the opening theme in the tonic, in rondo fashion; a development section or an episode with a new theme; and a recapitulation, with the second theme returning in the tonic. The main theme might reappear one final time, and this appearance might occur in the coda. Both Haydn and Mozart started working with this structure in the 1770s, with their most famous examples appearing somewhat later (for example, Mozart's *Haffner* Symphony, K. 385, of 1782, and many finales of Haydn's *London* symphonies).

Almost any of Haydn's *Paris* or *London* symphonies might be taken as paradigmatic of the popular yet sophisticated classical symphony. His Symphony no. 101 (Clock, 1794), for example, begins with the dark, minor-key gestures of his typical slow introductions, employing figures that will reappear in the main theme of the movement. Employing two similar themes

in the exposition of the opening *presto*, Haydn nonetheless maintains their individuality in the development, adding contrapuntal complexities to the second theme that return with it in the far-from-literal recapitulation. The slow movement, with its “ticking” accompaniment, is a rondo with varied and reorchestrated returns of the main theme and a relatively freely structured middle section. The minuet and trio are each given a distinct profile: the former features elided phrases and strongly contrasting themes, while the latter features solo flute and bassoon over a deliberately monotonous string accompaniment. The finale is one of Haydn’s most masterful hybrids. After the typical binary theme, the remainder of the exposition follows, with a closely related second theme. A return to the theme before the development heralds a sonata rondo, here with the added twist that the return is varied and embellished. And when the theme comes back after the development, it takes the form of a fugato, followed by a coda. Thus, the exposition is never “resolved,” in terms of sonata-rondo form, yet the movement combines sonata, rondo, variation, and fugue without sacrificing coherence.

A Mozart symphony, on the other hand, is less likely to have a slow introduction; it may have as many as four different themes in the exposition (as well as a host of individual motives, as in the *Prague* and *Jupiter* symphonies); its development section will often recombine those motives in several circle-of-fifths progressions; and its slow movements and finales tend to be more oriented toward sonata form. Perhaps Mozart’s most exciting symphonic movement, the finale of the Symphony no. 41, K. 551 (*Jupiter*, 1788), perfectly sums up all of the stylistic possibilities of the late eighteenth century in a synthesis of *galant* and more “learned” (fugal) styles. The reconciliation of the classical style of motivic counterpoint and the baroque-style fugal counterpoint is fully realized in a sonata movement with a fugal passage in the exposition, double fugue in the coda, and four main thematic motives that are recombined throughout.

With Beethoven, the length and relative weight of symphonic movements changed dramatically. His first two symphonies retain the proportions of Haydn’s *London* symphonies, changing only the slow introduction so that it moves without pause into the opening *allegro*; in fact, the first theme of his First Symphony seems to conflate the themes of Mozart’s *Jupiter* and Haydn’s no. 97. But his *Eroica* (1805) is gigantically conceived; its first movement is substantially longer than the latest and longest ones by Haydn and Mozart. In its thematic and harmonic expansiveness, complex development, and level of dissonance, the movement makes a self-conscious statement about its place in the history of music. All the stories about Napoleon and the French Revolution connected with this work only add to its epic

nature. And the finale is given new stature, balancing the first movement in length, complexity, and long-range planning. The finale of the *Eroica* takes on Haydn’s alternating variation form (indeed, the whole classical variation tradition) and strikingly transforms the relationship between the two themes (a melody and its bassline) before the end of the piece. That the melodic theme, similar in design to the opening theme of the first movement, ends up in the bass during its last and most triumphal statement provides the symphony as a whole an almost narrative thread.

This type of narrative-thematic thread comes back again and again in Beethoven’s Symphonies no. 5 (struggle giving way almost palpably to triumph), no. 6 (this time made explicit with programmatic titles for each movement), and no. 9 (made explicit by the choral finale’s text). In the last, of course, the finale shatters all formal precedents and is almost a four-movement symphony in itself. It also led to the inclusion of vocalists in a number of later symphonies by Liszt, Mahler and others, and helped Wagner to justify his synthesis of the arts. Composers in succeeding generations also looked to the unprecedented motivic concentration of the Fifth Symphony’s first movement and the linking together of its scherzo and finale; the dramatic character and relatively free structure of the scherzos; the large-scale, static repetition of lyrical motives in the *Pastoral*; the rhythmic unity of the Seventh Symphony; and the mysterious opening (found in many of Bruckner’s symphonies) and overwhelming affirmations of the Ninth.

In the nineteenth century, the enormous reputation of the Beethoven symphonies, as well as the increasing size of orchestras and concert halls, put symphonies in the spotlight and caused critical response to individual symphonies to be writ large. In fact, the symphonic literature became an aesthetic battleground; the symphony’s purpose and meaning were constantly debated. Beethoven emerged as the great precursor or archetype and was hailed, paradoxically, by both sides in the aesthetic debate as the progenitor of “absolute” and “program” music (the latter stemming mainly from the *Pastoral*). It is often considered appropriate today to divide nineteenth-century composers into “conservatives” (or classicists) like Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms, and “radicals” like Berlioz and Liszt. The former were interested in retaining classical models for the formal design of each movement, while the latter cultivated program music and claimed that the symphonic repertoire needed an extramusical or poetic dimension, thus obviating the use of traditional forms; an early standard-bearer was Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* (1830). Yet this apparent dichotomy badly oversimplifies the many stylistic tendencies running through the nineteenth century. And recent research has begun to stress the



narrative aspects of “conservative” music and the formal aspect of “radical” music (Newcomb; Kaplan).

Several lines of thought may be isolated in the development of nineteenth-century symphonic style. First is the approach that champions development in its Beethovenian sense—a full exploration of motivic shapes, textures, and harmonic relationships. Then, the many melodies of the Mozart model yield, through Schubert’s lyricism, to the appearance of long, closed melodies with an associated episodic style, even in development sections where sequences may be juxtaposed. Finally, the use of thematic transformation—in which always recognizable melodies are presented in different contexts, normally based on a program—often results in looser structures based on juxtaposition, repetition, and alternation.

More than one of these approaches may appear in the works of a single composer. Mendelssohn’s Symphony no. 4 (*Italian*, 1833), for example, employs considerable repetition of themes and motives, along with a certain degree of formal freedom (a theme introduced in the development of the first movement comes back in the recapitulation) but its movements are traditionally separated and utilize various techniques of contrapuntal development. Schumann’s Symphony no. 4 (1841, revised 1851) is a fully cyclic work, without breaks between movements, in which four themes return, transformed, in several of the movements; it also features formal freedom (a monothematic first-movement exposition is followed by two new themes in the development), along with more traditional developmental procedures.

Both Brahms and Bruckner aspired to carry on the Beethovenian tradition, and each also adopted the kind of lyricism favored by Schubert, yet the results are strikingly different. Brahms’s symphonies are the epitome of various developmental techniques (Schoenberg later used the term “developing variation”), even in the expositions and in some cases throughout entire movements (Symphony no. 4), and even in those movements with gorgeous lyrical melodies. Bruckner, on the other hand, who took on a number of Wagnerian devices in his symphonies, created much more loosely structured and expansive works, featuring extensive repetition of themes, choral-like episodes, and alternation of thematic sections, especially in the slow movements (Symphony no. 4 is a good example).

Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique*, a work of exceptional importance with, however, few direct imitators, amalgamated several different symphonic tendencies. Undeniably influenced by Beethoven’s *Pastoral*, its vastly expanded and vivid orchestration immediately made it a landmark work: audiences had simply never heard that kind of sound before. In his essay on Berlioz’s symphony, Schumann attempted to make his contemporaries

understand it by referring to all the traditional forms with which it could be associated, and indeed, the first three and perhaps even four movements can be so understood. Only the *idée fixe* and the finale still remain objects of criticism, since they require the detailed program provided by Berlioz to be fully appreciated. Yet the *idée fixe*, unaltered in each movement except for rhythm and affect (though truncated in the third and fourth), fits into the lyrical conception in all but the finale. This movement juxtaposes various thematic fragments in preparation for the ultimate arrival of the witches’ dance, the principal theme of the movement, which is then worked out with several contrapuntal overlays that allude at times to traditional developmental procedures.

The “program symphony” of Berlioz led to Liszt’s works within that genre and to his invention of the “symphonic poem,” to be discussed later. And this genre in turn fueled the aesthetic debate between the “radical” forces of Liszt and Wagner, on the one side, and the self-styled keeper of the Beethovenian flame, Eduard Hanslick (and, reluctantly, Brahms), on the other. Hanslick, in *The Beautiful in Music* (1854), wrote that music must express only “musical ideas”—in his most famous phrase, “The essence of music is sound and motion.” He rejected the notion that the poetic dimension is primary. Wagner, in a well-known letter written in 1857 in defense of Liszt’s symphonic poems, answered Hanslick indirectly by upholding extramusical values and lauding the new and freer non-recapitulatory forms that resulted. The Hanslick side stressed theme, development, and form, the Wagner-Liszt side poetry, melody, and transformation. In a sense, leaving programmatic implications and personal styles aside for the moment, the differences between the two factions centered mainly on the nature of the melodies chosen, the extent to which they are either repeated and presented in different contexts or undergo development, the building of either tightly knit or more episodic structures, and the “splashiness” of the prevailing orchestral sound. Tchaikovsky, then, with his high level of repetition, episodic sonata-form structures (especially in the long, unrelated second themes), and colorful orchestration, continues the Lisztian ideals, even while writing four-movement symphonies whose underlying programs were never made explicit. (In letters, however, he frequently refers to the “content” of his symphonies.) Mahler’s symphonies, on the other hand, combine novel orchestral effects with a truly developmental style, even when traditional forms seem to be expanded dramatically. The first movement of his Symphony no. 4 (1901), for example, may be thought of as having two expositions and two recapitulations; it is certainly thematically rich and developmentally diverse.

After Mahler, the symphony was virtually abandoned by Germanic composers, although Hindemith was later to return to it. Composers of the "second Viennese school" either eschewed the genre altogether (Berg) or wrote chamber symphonies (Schoenberg and Webern, the latter a two-movement work titled *Symphony*). The richest centers of symphonic composition were in Russia, with Prokofiev and Shostakovich; in Scandinavia, with Sibelius and Nielsen; in France and later America, with Stravinsky; in England, with Elgar and Vaughan Williams; and in the United States, with Ives, Copland and Sessions, among others.

Many of these works are in some sense "neoclassical," using elements of traditional tonal organization, contrapuntal development, and sometimes a rich but newly deployed orchestral palette. Diatonic themes may be harmonized chromatically (Prokofiev, *Symphony* no. 5) or unexpectedly consonant interludes may surface between more dissonant thematic statements (Shostakovich, *Symphony* no. 5). Recognizable variants of sonata form are often present, with development sections that are lengthy and rhythmically active. Yet the lively and varied rhythmic language often acts as a substitute for other organizational features, especially in Stravinsky, whose symphonies tend to be nondevelopmental, juxtaposing various rhythmic ostinatos (as in the *Symphony* in Three Movements, 1946). While most composers continued writing in multimovement formats, even explicitly referring to older forms, a number of works comprising one movement or several movements in one have been written in the twentieth century. As many writers have noted, the multiplicity of styles in this century precludes acceptable generalizations beyond a certain point. But the very prestige and tradition of the symphony have tended to work against it, and composers have often shielded away, preferring a kind of one-movement format related to the symphonic poem or "multipiece" formats related to the suite. Or the tradition itself might be invoked to create self-parodying references that call attention to stylistic discontinuities, as in Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia* (1968), the third movement of which contains quotations from many works embedded in the frame of the third movement of Mahler's Second *Symphony*, together with spoken and chanted vocal fragments of a literary, politically relevant, or merely nonsensical nature. But the lengthier formal continuities normally implied by the label *symphony* are more often avoided entirely.

## CONCERTO

As an orchestral genre that features an opposition or contrast between a soloist or small group of instrumentalists and a larger instrumental

aggregate, the concerto has flourished since the late seventeenth century, amid ever-changing interpretations of the relationship and precise makeup of those two groups. The twelve *Concerti grossi*, Opus 6, of Arcangelo Corelli (published posthumously in 1714 but written as early as the 1680s) are the earliest examples of pieces for string orchestra and *continuo* that present a *concertino* solo grouping (two violins and cello), derived from the trio sonata, against the backdrop of the full string body, the *tutti* or *ripieno* (originally referred to as the *concerto grosso*). Writings by George Muffat, who heard Corelli's concertos in the 1680s, suggest that the solo group was considered paramount. Modern writers sometimes refer to the pieces as "orchestally amplified trio sonatas" (Hutchings, 1980).

The first eight of Corelli's Opus 6 are written in the format of the *concerto da chiesa* (church concerto), with fast and slow movements alternating, while the other four are in the more suite-like format of the *concerto da camera* (chamber concerto), with movements based on dance forms; however, the two types are not always completely distinct. The most well-known is undoubtedly his *Christmas Concerto*, no. 8, with its dramatic and rhetorically persuasive introduction, compelling contrapuntal slow first movement, lyrical aria in second place, and the moving *Pastorale* at the close. Corelli's masterful use of suspensions in the solo violins and exciting or spacious *tutti*-reinforced cadences are among the hallmarks of his style.

Giuseppe Torelli's *Concerti grossi*, Opus 8 (published in 1709), introduced many traits that became standard practice with Vivaldi and later writers of concertos. Torelli used a three-movement fast-slow-fast ordering of movements, much like the early symphony, and fully half of his collection comprises solo concertos for violin and orchestra, featuring elaborate figures for the soloist. Form in the outer movements tends to use the *ritornello* as a structural device: the *ripieno* is given the primary thematic material, which recurs between statements of similar or contrasting ideas by the *concertino*. The Corelli concertos were very loosely structured by comparison. In Torelli's Opus 8, no. 7, for solo violin and orchestra, the *ritornelli* in the first and third movements are fugal, while the solo sections introduce ever more varied, elaborate, and rhythmically active figures.

Handel adopted the Corelli model, writing concertos with varying patterns of tempo and structure. He also employed the trio-sonata *concertino* of two violins and cello in his twelve dramatic *Concerti grossi*, Opus 6 (1739), and he was probably the first to write concertos for the organ. Handel often included fugues in his concertos, and *ritornello* form as the structural focal point. His orchestra is fuller and more varied than Corelli's, calling in some cases for wind instruments.



Vivaldi, on the other hand, took the Torelli model, and Bach received it in turn from him. The sheer numbers and popularity of Vivaldi's concerto output have made him practically the locus classicus of the baroque concerto. His first collection, *L'estro armonico*, Opus 3 (published in 1712), already reveals important facets of his style: long motivic *ritornelli*, parts of which recur between solo sections, elaborate figurations for solo violins, clear modulatory schemes, many sequences, and occasional motivic interpenetration of *ritornello* and solo material. A good example of these characteristics is the first movement of the Concerto for Two Violins in A minor, Op. 3, no. 8. Freer in structure are some of his more programmatic concertos, such as the *Four Seasons*, from Opus 8. He also wrote many solo concertos, including pieces for bassoon and piccolo.

Most of J. S. Bach's concertos come from his Cöthen years (1717–1723) and include solo concertos for violin and harpsichord, the Concerto in D Minor for Two Violins, and the six *Brandenburg* Concertos. Of the latter, three are traditional *concerti grossi* with different solo groups (nos. 2, 4, 5), while the three others are *ripieno* concertos, in which the orchestra is divided into sections, or even sections within sections, that play “against” each other. In each of the *concerti grossi*, one instrument in the solo group receives extra prominence: in no. 2, in which the *concertino* consists of trumpet, flute, oboe, and violin, the trumpet stands out in virtuosity and brilliance, and in no. 4, with a *concertino* comprising two recorders and violin, the violin is most conspicuous. Partly because of its proleptic harpichord cadenza, the *Brandenburg* Concerto no. 5 in D Major has often been singled out for special mention. Its solo group (flute, violin, and harpsichord) always plays imitatively and sequentially, engaging in imaginative interplay between the motivic treble instruments and the figural harpsichord. The *tutti's ritornello*, on the other hand, provides brief, homophonic waystations on the exciting journey of the first movement. After the lyrical slow movement, in which only the solo instruments play—and in which the harpichord again has a dual role as *continuo* player and motivic participant—the finale, in ABA form, features new ways of ordering solo and *tutti* in its fugal outer sections.

Although many composers wrote concertos for a wide variety of instruments in the middle of the eighteenth century, posterity has given greatest recognition to the keyboard concertos of Bach's third son, C. P. E. Bach. And research has shown that the theorist Heinrich Christoph Koch probably used C. P. E. Bach's concertos as a model for his descriptions of first-movement concerto form. Because there is a fair amount of terminological and conceptual confusion surrounding this form, it may be helpful

to present Koch's simple formulation, which is, as was his description of symphonic first-movement form, given in harmonic terms. He saw three principal solo periods, which correspond to the three main periods of the symphony, surrounded by four *ritornello* sections. The first *tutti* is in the tonic (although it may contain a passing modulation); the first solo period modulates from tonic to dominant; the second *tutti* is in the dominant; the second solo moves to one or more related keys; the third *tutti* effects a transition from a cadence in a related key back to the tonic, where the third solo period returns with its material from the first period; the final *tutti* reiterates the tonic (with space for a cadenza). Within each solo section, the orchestra may bring in *ritornello* phrases. (Koch always refers to the orchestra as “the *ritornello*” and makes clear that *ritornelli* are of secondary importance to the solo sections.)

The terminological difficulty becomes acute in the classical period, when the concerto fully takes on the sonata style. It has become popular to adapt sonata-form terminology to concerto first-movement form, so that the opening *tutti* is called the “first exposition,” the solo entrance and modulation the “second exposition,” and the following sections proceed apace, with the recapitulation summing up both of the expositions. The problem with this idea, as Donald Francis Tovey recognized, is that the term *exposition* seems absurd for the opening *tutti*, a section that usually does not modulate and the themes of which may or may not return in the soloist's exposition. In other words, as Tovey pointed out, it really is a *ritornello*, not an exposition. Perhaps a good way around this problem would be to refer to the “opening *tutti* section,” and to “subsequent *tutti* sections,” which do, after all, appear in the expected places.

Mozart's piano concertos, the pinnacle of the genre in the eighteenth- and perhaps any—century, always find new and inventive solutions to the problem of classical concerto form. Piano concertos were Mozart's “characteristic creation,” according to Alfred Einstein, and as most of them were written for his own subscription concerts, they were the showpieces of his career in Vienna in the 1780s. They feature elegant and often virtuosic solo parts and present both dialogue and opposition between the protagonists, with dramatic ordering of tone colors and textures. Especially significant is the new prominence given to the wind instruments from the B-flat Major Concerto, K. 450 (1784), on. Second-theme groups are typically shared between piano and winds. The piano's statements of themes are continuously varied (the state of some of the autographs shows that figurations were frequently changed), and the concertos encompass forms ranging from theme and variations to sonata-rondo types, to simple ABA structures in

middle and final movements. In the first movements, Mozart's *tutti* themes may bear little or no relation to the themes of the solo exposition, as in the C-Minor Concerto, K. 491, or there may be real parallelism between *tutti* and solo, as in the G-Major K. 453. Indeed, part of the drama of the C-minor work is in the tension created between the opening *tutti* motive, which always retains its identity, even in rhythmic and melodic transformations, and the more lyrical solo themes, which always give way either to figurations or to the *tutti* motive itself.

At the same time that Mozart was writing his concertos, a kind of hybrid of concerto and symphony was making its presence felt, particularly in France, although adherents included Mannheim composers, J. C. Bach, and even Mozart and Haydn. The *symphonie concertante* is similar to the concerto *grosso* only in its use of a solo group of instruments; in format, structure, and style, it more closely resembles the classical concerto. Beautiful melodies, two or more instruments simultaneously showing off virtuosic capabilities, popular rondo finales—these features combined to make the *symphonie concertante* the rage of Parisian concert life. The term *symphonie concertante* is applied today principally to works that used the name.

With Beethoven's concertos, we enter a period in which composers began to write fewer works, but at the same time to give each one a sharply individual profile. Even though he continued to explore devices already used by Mozart, Beethoven interpreted them anew. For example, he begins the Piano Concerto no. 4, Opus 58 (1806) with the piano; Mozart had introduced the piano into the opening *ritornello* in his Concerto in E-flat Major, K. 271 (1777). Beethoven then gives the orchestra the sequel on the same pitches but in an unexpectedly remote key: the effect is extraordinary. And in the same concerto, Beethoven introduces themes that modulate within themselves each time they proceed; Mozart had already experimented with such themes in his G-Major Concerto, K. 453. But now Beethoven begins the finale with a modulating theme, so that the movement begins in the “wrong” key. And he links the second and third movements together with a transition, as he also did in his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies and the Violin Concerto. His concerto slow movements sometimes appear to “speak”—either through ethereal figurations, as in the Violin Concerto and Third Piano Concerto; or else nearly literally, in the Fourth Piano Concerto, which Liszt likened to Orpheus taming the beasts of hell.

Nineteenth-century composers in many cases dispensed with an opening *tutti* section, creating instead a “confrontation” between soloist and orchestra, which are thus on an equal footing from the beginning. Though the soloist would sometimes simply have an opening flourish and then

subside (using the precedent of Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto), Mendelssohn's G-Minor, Schumann's A-Minor, and Brahms's B-flat Major piano concertos, among others, present an almost symphonic opposition right from the start. A symphonic parallel is also suggested by the four-movement scheme of Brahms's B-flat Major Concerto. The appearance of a scherzo in second position reassigns the weight of the movements: the first movement, with its famous horn call, now becomes broadly lyrical, with the piano and orchestra sharing the same material, while the scherzo has true symphonic intensity. The slow movement continues the formal expansion of the ABA structure that Brahms had already explored in many other works and introduces another *concertante* soloist to balance the pianist. In the Violin Concerto, a solo oboe gave out the lovely melody of the slow movement; here it is a solo cello, and the cello and piano emerge as equal partners at the close. Finales still tend to be rondo-like in structure, with foursquare themes and expansive codas, and are often given a special character, as in the “Hungarian” finale of the Violin Concerto.

Another type of romantic concerto is the virtuoso showcase. Of course, technological advances in the instruments went a long way toward giving soloists a better chance of competing with an orchestra, especially in the spotlight of fiendish figurations. While the difficulties of the works by Brahms or Schumann should not be minimized, technical display “for its own sake” was routinely avoided in their works, in favor of thematically based figurations. But in works like the violin concertos of Paganini and the piano concertos of Liszt and Tchaikovsky, the almost demonic capabilities of the soloist come to the fore. This tendency derives in part from the combination of brilliance and poetry in the solo writing of Chopin's two piano concertos. Liszt's First Piano Concerto recycles and transforms its themes, while those in Tchaikovsky's concertos are merely repeated. Liszt's model spawned many imitators.

The twentieth-century concerto is as diverse as the twentieth-century symphony, and traditional forms are as frequently in evidence. Some composers have maintained classical opposition between soloist and orchestra, with sometimes ferocious solo writing (Prokofiev, Shostakovich); others have harkened back to the more continuous give-and-take of the baroque concerto (Stravinsky, Berg, Sessions); and still others have attempted not only to reinterpret or redirect the relationship between solo and *tutti* but to find new ways of deploying the *tutti* elements themselves (Bartók, Carter). Stravinsky's Violin Concerto (1931) bears a self-conscious resemblance in style to Bach's solo and double violin concertos; in his *Dumbarton Oaks* Concerto (1938) the relationship to Bach's *Brandenburg* Concerto no. 3 is



explicit. Berg's Violin Concerto (1935) is a quasi-programmatic meditation on the death of Alma Mahler's daughter, and though written using the twelve-tone method, it utilizes tonal elements (a Bach chorale). Elliott Carter's Double Concerto for Harpsichord and Piano (1961) divides the orchestra into two groups, one for each soloist, in a witty reassessment of the nature of the genre. Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra (1944) returns at times to older ideas about *concertante* instrumental writing and traditional forms; the first movement has a clear sonata structure with a "mirror" recapitulation, divides its themes between different solo instruments or groups, and has a development section that announces itself dramatically, as in "tradition-oriented" twentieth-century symphonies. Most modern concertos are marked by a brilliant polyphony and formidable technical difficulties.

## OVERTURE

The word *overture* has come to be applied to works in three categories: the single- or multimovement composition played before an opera, oratorio, or ballet; the single-movement prelude to a nonmusical dramatic work; and the single-movement concert work detached from its original context (if it ever had one) and performed alone. The first meaning applies from the seventeenth century to the present, while the second and third stem primarily from the nineteenth century. (When a three-movement overture was detached from the larger work in the eighteenth century, it was often called a symphony. Because terminology was so free in the eighteenth century, however, symphonies and suites were sometimes called overtures.) The overture might be divided into two types, based on function: the "dramatic," meaning those intended to precede a staged musical work, and the "concert," for free-standing works from a literary work or play (Temperley).

Baroque dramatic works generally began with either a French or Italian overture. The French overture, standardized by Lully in the seventeenth century, consists of two linked sections, slow and fast, the slow part being a series of stately gestures and flourishes featuring dotted rhythms, ending on a half cadence, with the following fast section normally imitative or fugal in style. Purcell and later Handel favored this form; well-known examples are the former's overture to *Dido and Aeneas* and the latter's to *Messiah*. The Italian overture is a three-movement piece with a fast-slow-fast ordering; the finales were frequently dance-like in character. A typical mid-eighteenth-century Italian-type overture is George Christoph Wagenseil's to his opera *La clemenza di Tito* (1746), which also is known on its own as a D-Major Symphony. The brightly scored opening *allegro* has considerable thematic

differentiation, the lyrical *andante* is in the relative minor, while the concluding *presto* is a short, binary piece in triple meter.

With the late eighteenth century came the standardization of the overture as a one-movement work, most often in sonata form and sometimes with a slow introduction. Mozart and Haydn both stopped writing three-movement overtures in the 1770s. In many cases, the overture led immediately into the first scene, and a special concert ending had to be provided for separate performance. Beginning with Gluck and continuing with Mozart, overtures featured a few essential musical ideas from the opera (as in *Don Giovanni*, in which the overture's introduction returns in the Stone Guest scene, and *Così fan tutte*, 1790, the overture to which contains the punchline of the opera). Haydn's oratorio *The Creation* (1801) opens with a fully programmatic orchestral introduction, the "Representation of Chaos," an extraordinary departure in the history of the overture.

Beethoven was the first composer to write overtures for occasions that traditionally had called for symphonies: the emperor's name day (*Namensfeier*, 1815) and the opening of a theater (*Die Weihe des Hauses*, 1822). Particularly significant in these cases was the concept of a concert overture with no programmatic associations; the latter even contains a double fugue. He also outdid previous composers, albeit unintentionally, by providing so many overtures (four in all) to his much-revised opera *Fidelio* (1805). But perhaps his most well-known overtures are those to the nonmusical dramas, *Coriolan* (1807, a play by Collin, not Shakespeare) and Goethe's *Egmont* (1810). In fact, Beethoven also wrote incidental music to *Egmont*, following the stunningly dramatic overture with four entr'actes, two songs, and three more orchestral movements. These include the final triumphal *Siegessymphonie*, which recalls the close of the overture.

Mendelssohn's concert overtures are held in much higher esteem than most of his symphonies, and two of them are indeed splendid. The overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was composed in 1826, when the composer was only seventeen, long before the rest of his incidental music to Shakespeare's play. Effectively contrasting the different "levels" of the story with sprightly, high-register fairyland music, hunting horns and regal chords for the duke, lyrical melodies for the highborn lovers, and buffoonery for Bottom, the piece nonetheless proceeds in an elegant sonata form. All of these moods are echoed in the later incidental music. And in Mendelssohn's *Fingal's Cave*, or *Hebrides*, Overture (1830), the agitated waves lap around the first theme group but give way to a transcendent second theme (the greatest melody he ever wrote, according to Tovey). Indeed, this juxtaposition of a rhythmically active section with a supremely lyrical one provides

the most pungent of the many special pictorial and programmatic effects Mendelssohn aimed for in his overtures.

Composers continued to write overtures throughout the nineteenth century, in many cases inspired by Mendelssohn's example. As in the past, some of these were inspired by dramas (Wagner wrote an overture to Goethe's *Faust*, for example), others were evocative in a more general way (Brahms's *Tragic Overture*), while still others were occasional pieces with brilliant effects (Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture). Some overlap begins to occur in the middle of the century between the overture and the new genre that Liszt dubbed the symphonic poem. In the second half of the century, many composers of one-movement programmatic or descriptive works preferred to use Liszt's designation for what they previously would have called overtures. Yet there were exceptions, and some preferred to create their own labels. For example, Tchaikovsky called his 1870 *Romeo and Juliet* overture an "overture-fantasy" after its last revision in 1880.

#### SYMPHONIC POEM

Liszt coined the term *symphonische Dichtung* to describe his one-movement orchestral works that were born of poetic ideas and aspired to a unique synthesis of the literary or visual and the musical. The principal technical means he used to accomplish this was thematic transformation, the presentation of a single theme in different contexts with suitable rhythmic and affective alterations. His symphonic poems were constructed in several linked sections with differing tempos, keys, and themes. Wagner was delighted that Liszt rid himself of the tyranny of the recapitulatory forms, creating new forms governed instead by the dramatic development of the subject at hand. Wagner also recognized that the roots of the genre lay in the overture and in Berlioz's program music.

Liszt began writing symphonic poems during his Weimar period (*Les Préludes*, written 1848); within six years Hanslick's treatise on the primacy of "absolute music," *The Beautiful in Music*, arrived and the stage was set for the ever-increasing polemics between the Liszt-Wagner and Hanslick-Brahms factions. Although the genre of symphonic poem did not survive as such much past the first quarter of this century, the controversy has continued. The most enduring problem is the most vexing: Can music be about something? (An excellent recent examination of this question is contained in Jacques Barzun's 1980 article.) Tovey's answer was, "It is always characters and moods that are successfully portrayed, while chronology is useless and the illustration of incidents is apt to be ridiculous unless it contrives to be

witty" (1956, 170). One could then argue that since many of Liszt's symphonic poems do not attempt to portray incidents but precisely "characters and moods," then he succeeds, especially in *Les Préludes*, with its loosely connected series of episodes alluding to the life cycle. Curiously, the dramatic or pictorial overtures of Beethoven and Mendelssohn never seem to excite the ire of the absolute-music faction, nor does Mendelssohn's constant reliance on extra-musical imagery ever weaken the assertion that he was a "conservative" composer.

The introduction by Liszt of the symphonic poem had two immediate consequences. The first was the proliferation of such pieces, especially outside Germany, by such composers as Smetana, Dvořák, members of "The Five" and Tchaikovsky in Russia. The second was the transfer of some of its traits, such as the linked-movement scheme and thematic transformation, into normally multimovement genres, such as Liszt's own piano concertos and Cesar Franck's Symphony in D Minor. But, of course, thematic transformation was hardly an innovation of Liszt; he acknowledged his debts to Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* and even composed his own "program symphonies," the *Faust* and *Dante symphonies*.

Two of the best and best-known symphonic poems are Smetana's *The Moldau* (*Vltava*) and Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*, which offer quite different approaches to the genre. Smetana's musical depiction of the course of a river in his native Bohemia carries a detailed program about the joining of two small streams into a larger river, the hunting horns and peasant dances heard on its banks, nymphs dancing by moonlight, and swirling rapids, until the mighty river flows past Prague into the Elbe. As imagery, the music is unsurpassed. Yet the wealth of detail never obscures the thematic unity of the piece, which is in effect a loose rondo with several reiterations of the principal river theme, and with rhythmic reminders of that theme running throughout the episodes.

*Romeo and Juliet*, on the other hand, bears only the Shakespearean title and the associations it implies, and is constructed in a kind of sonata form. And yet those associations are clear: the choralelike slow introduction evokes the character of Friar Laurence, the agitated first theme depicts the feuding families, and the lyrically episodic second theme represents the young lovers. Although the connection with sonata form is a loose one, the development does contrapuntally work out the inevitable clashes between the intensifying feud and the friar's attempts to solve the insoluble. The recapitulation then contains further juxtapositions of the vengeful families and the friar's futile efforts, leading to a funeral procession and the joining of the lovers after death. All of this can be read into the piece without recourse to



a more explicit program than that provided by the title; indeed, it might be argued that *The Moldau* is equally clear without Smetana's program. Both pieces describe and represent extramusical ideas, the one full of pictorial allusion and nationalistic emotion, the other an exposition of situation and unfolding of dramatic conflict.

Clearly either piece would "work" without program or title, but whether the extramusical dimension and the poetic inspiration are necessary for a complete appreciation is less clear. Hanslick allowed that one could hear in the Beethoven symphonies "impetuosity and struggle, unsatisfied longing and defiance, all supported by a consciousness of strength," yet these characteristics are not necessarily representative of specific ideas or incidents; as Beethoven himself said, the *Pastoral* symphony was "more the expression of feelings than tone-painting." The difference between representation and expression is a crucial one in this context.

Later symphonic poems continued the trends established earlier, although the only significant body of such works were Richard Strauss's tone poems (the term he preferred). Filled with the sweeping, effervescent orchestral color that was his hallmark and that demanded virtuosity, especially from the brass and wind sections, these works combine more or less detailed programs with loosely applied traditional forms. *Don Juan* may be associated with sonata form, *Till Eulenspiegel* with rondo, and *Don Quixote* with variations, and yet the pieces are at the same time episodic and narrative, with frequent transformations of their main themes. *Don Quixote* also presents an interesting combination of genres, in that it features a solo cello and viola; the first programmatic work to give some of the spotlight to a single solo instrument throughout had been Berlioz's *Harold in Italy* (1834), a "symphony with viola obbligato."

Debussy's programmatic music merits special comment. His *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894), evoking the fleeting moods and images of the Mallarmé poem, creates a delicate tracery of tone colors and textures. Despite the subtle chromatic and whole-tone nuances, the piece introduces a quasi-Wagnerian melody in the middle. But designation for Debussy's other orchestral music is problematic. The *Nocturnes* (1901), for example, are a kind of set of "characteristic pieces for orchestra," and yet no other model but the symphonic poem suggests itself as appropriate. Similarly, *La Mer* (1905), subtitled "Three Symphonic Sketches," may be thought of as three related symphonic poems or as a program symphony with descriptive titles.

The question of genre in one-movement orchestral works of the twentieth century is a tricky one because composers continue to give pieces vague designations (like "symphonic sketch") and because scoring becomes more

unusual. Can Charles Ives's *The Unanswered Question* (1906) be considered a symphonic poem? It is certainly based on a program, yet its rather small ensemble is hardly "symphonic," but rather small and spatially conceived. Roger Scruton considers the idea of program music in the early part of the century to have been crushed under the weight of its own pretensions, as expression and representation gradually become indistinguishable in programmatic works. It might be argued that Stravinsky, as one of several composers who reacted against romantic ideals and abandoned program music, nonetheless continued to write representational works in the form of ballet scores such as *Le sacre du printemps*, *Apollo*, and many others.

## SUITE

The origins of the suite, which in the baroque period was a series of pieces mostly based on dance forms and unified by their tonality, are in the fourteenth century. By the mid-seventeenth century, suites for keyboard and for various small instrumental combinations were being written throughout Europe. Perhaps the earliest suites written for a large body of instruments were those performed by the Vingr-quatre Violons du Roi, which performed at court entertainments in the mid-seventeenth century. It is not always clear, however, just what kinds of ensembles played at other entertainments of this period. But even at this early stage, suites were often created by extracting pieces from ballets and other large works; Lully, for example, wrote practically no suites per se, but arranged or had made dozens of suites of dances from his orchestral music. This practice, after more than a century of disuse, came back in favor in the nineteenth century, when most suites were made up of extracted pieces from ballets (Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* Suite being the best known).

The high points of the baroque orchestral suite are the four suites of Bach (which he called "overtures") and the two collections by Handel, the *Water Music* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks*. The first and fourth of Bach's suites were probably composed at Cöthen, while the second and third date from the later Leipzig period, perhaps for use by the *collegium musicum* that Bach directed between 1729 and 1737. Each one begins with a French overture, in which the fast section is a fully drawn fugue, although in no. 4 the counterpoint is more lighthearted. The scoring for each suite is different: in addition to string orchestra with *continuo*, the first has two oboes and bassoon; the second, a solo flute; the third, three trumpets, timpani, and two oboes; and the fourth, three trumpets, timpani, three oboes, and bassoon. The sequence of dance movements after the initial overture changes as well;

suites nos. 1 and 2 each have seven movements, while nos. 3 and 4 have five, and each has at least one dance movement unique to itself.

Bach approaches the style of Handel's suites most closely in the two with trumpets and timpani, but even here characteristic differences are apparent, Bach's textures, even to the spacing of chords, being consistently denser and more complex. The charming flute solos of the B-Minor Suite are in a style similar to that of Telemann. In the finale to this suite, the *Badinerie*, the flute embellishes the simple line played simultaneously by the violin. Bach's Suite no. 3 is perhaps the most famous, at least in part because of the air that was later arranged as the "Air on a G String" and in part because it has the most brilliant scoring of the four.

Handel's *Water Music* is probably his most immediately appealing instrumental composition. Yet there are real difficulties in establishing the original sequence of the twenty-one movements. Tempo indications and dance types are often not present in the extant sources. The three suites making up the *Water Music* were composed at different times, though all were probably performed during a royal procession on the Thames in 1717. The Suite in F Major is scored for two horns, two oboes, bassoon, and strings, that in D major for two trumpets, two horns, two oboes, bassoon, and strings, and that in G major for recorder, flute, and strings. Only the F-major suite, the longest of the three, has a real French overture. The most frequently performed is the D major, with its regal melodies and festive alterations of trumpets and horns. This piece makes up most of the extracted *Water Music* Suite that is most well known today.

The *Fireworks Music* was written to honor the peace at Aix-la-Chapelle in 1749, and it thus includes movements called *La Paix* and *La Réjouissance*. Calling for massive forces of wind and brass, it was later reorchestrated by Handel with added strings. While more coherent than the sprawling *Water Music*, it lacks some of that music's melodic sweep.

The orchestral suite virtually disappeared after the baroque period, as its place in the repertoire was taken over by larger genres like the symphony. Composers still wrote sets of dances, but such works were purely functional pieces for balls and other gatherings and tended to be all of one kind; throughout his career Mozart wrote many sets of minuets, German dances, and contredanses, but none of these sets constitutes a suite. A few composers wrote suites in the nineteenth century, for various instrumental combinations; Massenet wrote eight for orchestra.

In the early twentieth century the orchestral suite experienced a resurgence in popularity, partly as a result of neoclassical ideals. Composers began to write suites in the style of, or as an homage to, earlier composers

(such as Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin*, a 1917 piano work that he orchestrated in 1919), or in many cases took over the earlier works wholesale (Respighi's *Ancient Airs and Dances*, 1917–1931). Programmatic suites also appeared (although Holst admonished that his orchestral suite *The Planets*, 1918, contained no program music), but here the term *suite* did not usually appear in works' titles.

It is uncertain whether modern multimovement pieces that fall into no other category may be considered suites by default or if the dance component of earlier suites must still be present. The problem of the traditional tonal unity of suites in a posttonal age must also be considered. Can Schoenberg's *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, Opus 16 (1912), and Webern's *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, Opus 10 (1926), be considered suites? Each piece in each set explores tone colors and textures through atonal means, and in that sense both sets are unified in approach. A recent study by Jonathan Dunsby has perhaps offered a solution to the genre problem in these cases, by suggesting that groups of pieces published together be examined to see if they are "multi-pieces" or "collections," the former with and the latter without some integral connection. Discussions of orchestral genres in the twentieth century all run aground on precisely the same issues.

#### MISCELLANEOUS ORCHESTRAL PIECES

Few compositions for orchestra that fall outside of the major categories were written before the nineteenth century, although one finds the occasional single concerto movement—a *Konzertstück*, fantasy, or rondo—from Mozart's time on. Brahms's *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* (1873), probably the first really well-known independent set of variations for orchestra, inspired others to write such works, some of which feature a soloist. Among the latter are Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme* (1876) for cello and orchestra and Franck's *Symphonic Variations* (1886) for piano and orchestra. Many sets of variations have been written for orchestra in the twentieth century (Reger, Schoenberg, Webern, Dallapiccola, Nono, Britten, Carter).

The fantasia for orchestra, a related type, also has roots in the nineteenth century (for example, Schumann's *Fantasia for Violin and Orchestra*); a well-known example is Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* (1910). But most compositions for orchestra in the twentieth century are outside the major classifications. Many are highly individual, in a sense inventing their own categories. Orchestral music in this century has been written in a host of unconventional formats, making precise formal definitions impossible.



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THE ORCHESTRA IN  
OPERA AND BALLET

Katherine T. Rohrer

Though many music lovers today think of the orchestra primarily as a concert organization, for roughly the first century and a half of its existence it served almost exclusively to provide music for stage works. In the sixteenth century, large ensembles of wind and string instruments were included in the lavish productions of *intermedii*, which were performed between the acts of plays given on ceremonial occasions at the Florentine court. The first large opera orchestra was that for Claudio Monteverdi's first opera, *L'Orfeo* (1607); the score calls for about forty players. The first permanent orchestra is thought to have been the string ensemble in the service of the king of France, Les Vingt-quatre Violons du Roi, established by Louis XIII by 1626 and later directed by Jean-Baptiste Lully.

At times in their histories, opera and ballet have been twin arts; in France, certainly, the popularity of dance shaped the structure of opera from its very beginnings through the nineteenth century. The orchestra is an essential contributor to both forms. Instrumental music—not only in its affective or emotional content but also simply through its variety of timbres—is crucial to the development of dramatic atmosphere and tension. Just as a modern film score can tell the audience when to prepare for a shock, the operatic score can tell the audience what to feel or even indicate that the characters are feeling something different from what they are saying. The ballet score, besides providing music to accompany the dance, joins with the dancers' gestures and movements to narrate the drama.

Throughout the development of opera the orchestra has not only accompanied singers but has also contributed on its own, in overtures, ballets or other dance sequences, descriptive pieces (depicting, for example, storms, sunrises, and battles), marches, wedding music, funeral music, and