



Artist: Max Oppenheimer



MUSIC
AND BEYOND
FESTIVAL
MUSIQUE ET
AUTRES MONDES

The Symphony: Music's Greatest Journey

Lecture 1

Wednesday, October 28, 2026 at 2:00 pm

Birth of the Symphony

- Where did the symphony come from?
- What does the word "symphony" actually mean?
- The Italian opera overture and the sinfonia
- Sammartini and the independent orchestral work
- The Mannheim School and Johann Stamitz
- Early orchestras: who actually played in them?
- Fast-slow-fast
- The emergence of the four-movement plan
- The Enlightenment
- Court patronage and the rise of public concerts
- The beginnings of sonata form
- Dynamics, crescendos and orchestral effects
- When does a sinfonia become a symphony?
- Why was this new kind of music revolutionary?

Lecture 2

Wednesday, November 4, 2026 at 2:00 pm

Haydn and Mozart: The Modern Symphony Emerges

- Can entertainment become great art?
- The modern symphony emerges
- Haydn and the Esterházy court
- Why did Haydn write so many symphonies?
- The four-movement symphony
- Sonata form comes of age
- Theme and development
- Motivic thinking
- Musical argument and architecture
- Surprise, wit and humour
- Emotional contrast
- Mozart and the influence of opera
- The orchestra as a dramatic instrument
- The rise of the professional concert
- Haydn's London symphonies
- When does the symphony become "serious" art?
- What did Haydn and Mozart leave for Beethoven to expand upon?

Lecture 3

Wednesday, November 11, 2026 at 2:00 pm

Beethoven Changes Everything

- Can a symphony change history?
- Beethoven and the legacy of Haydn and Mozart
- The Enlightenment and the French Revolution
- Eroica: the symphony becomes heroic
- The artist as genius
- The composer as an independent creative figure
- Expansion of scale and duration
- Expansion of the orchestra
- The motive as the building block of an entire movement
- Music as a personal and philosophical statement
- The symphony acquires cultural prestige
- Can instrumental music express ideas without words?
- Did Beethoven make the symphony almost impossible for his successors?

Lecture 4

Wednesday, November 18, 2026 at 2:00 pm

Romantic Giants

- Beyond Beethoven: where can the symphony go next?
- The rise of Romanticism
- Freedom of musical expression
- The individual voice of the composer
- Schubert: lyricism on a monumental scale
- Berlioz: the symphony tells a story

- Mendelssohn and landscape
- Schumann and the Romantic imagination
- The orchestra expands
- New instruments and orchestral colours
- Program music
- Absolute music
- Nationalism
- Brahms and the weight of Beethoven
- Bruckner and the monumental and spiritual symphony
- Tchaikovsky and autobiography
- Dvořák and national identity
- Cyclic form and thematic transformation
- Must a symphony tell a story—or should music speak only for itself?
- How does a composer escape Beethoven's shadow?

Lecture 5

Wednesday, November 25, 2026 at 2:00 pm

Mahler, Sibelius and the End of an Era

- Can a symphony contain an entire world?
- The late-Romantic orchestra at its greatest extent
- Mahler: "A symphony must be like the world"
- Autobiography and the symphony
- Songs, folk music, marches and popular music enter the symphony
- The enormous orchestra
- The symphony as an existential statement
- Sibelius: concentration rather than expansion
- The transformation of four movements into one
- Rachmaninoff and the continuation of Romanticism
- Elgar and the English symphonic tradition
- Nielsen and the struggle for musical life
- The shadow of World War I
- Tonality begins to fracture
- The end of the Austro-German Romantic world
- How large can a symphony become?
- Does greater scale mean greater expression?
- Where can the symphony possibly go after Mahler?

Lecture 6

Wednesday, December 2, 2026 at 2:00 pm

The Symphony in the 20th and 21st Centuries

- Is the symphony dead—or has it simply changed?
- A new century: what remains after Romanticism?
- Debussy, Stravinsky and the challenge to the symphonic tradition
- Prokofiev and neoclassicism
- Shostakovich: symphony under dictatorship
- Symphony as political testimony
- Vaughan Williams and the continuing English tradition
- Ives and the American symphony
- Copland and the American orchestral sound

- Britten and the question of genre
- Messiaen and new concepts of time and colour
- Lutosławski and the post-war symphony
- The symphony in Canada
- Minimalism
- John Adams and the return of large-scale orchestral thinking
- Contemporary composers and the symphony
- Film music and the symphonic tradition
- The modern symphony orchestra
- Who writes symphonies today?
- Who commissions them?
- Who listens to them?
- Does a work have to be called a “symphony” to be symphonic?
- Is the symphony still the composer’s ultimate statement?
- Is the symphony dead?
- The changing meaning of the Symphony
- Why write a symphony?
- The symphony orchestra today