

The Symphony

author: Robert Greenberg, The Great Courses

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Synopsis

author	Robert Greenberg, The Great Courses
readBy	Robert Greenberg
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From its humble beginnings in the 17th-century Italian opera overture and the Baroque ripieno concerto, the symphony has evolved into one of the longest lived, and perhaps the most expressively inclusive, genres of instrumental music. Along the way, it has embraced nearly every trend to be found in Western concert music.

In this series of twenty-four 45-minute lectures, Professor Greenberg guides you on a survey of the symphony. You'll listen to selections from the greatest symphonies by many of the greatest composers of the past 300 years. You'll also hear selections from some overlooked works that, undeservedly, have been forgotten by contemporary audiences.

Your tour of the symphony includes

- an examination of how the simultaneous development of the orchestra and the opera were crucial to the birth of the symphony as a genre;
- a look at the earliest true symphonies that were exponents of the galant style that emerged in the period between the High Baroque and Viennese Classicism;
- an exploration of Haydn and Mozart, the titans of the Classical age;
- the sublime and iconoclastic Beethoven and his Fifth Symphony;
- a study of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, which combined the extreme emotions and drama of the opera house with an explicit, intimately autobiographical narrative; and
- national developments in France, Russia, Vienna, Bohemia, Scandinavia, America, and Great Britain.

The course concludes with an investigation of Dmitri Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony, which became, in Professor Greenberg's words, "a model for what the new, post-Stalin Soviet music might aspire to be—a more personally expressive, less explicitly programmatic work, one that both engaged and challenged its listeners."

Reader's comments

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