

FACTFILE: GCSE MUSIC

WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC, 1600–1910



Western Classical Music, 1600–1910

Baroque Period 1600–1750

Features of the Style

- Long **melodies** are based on triads, scales and arpeggios.
- **Ornamentation**: trills are often found at cadences.
- **Sequences** are used to repeat melodic and rhythmic patterns.
- Harmony is based on **major** and **minor** keys, with **simple modulations**.
- **Driving rhythms** push the music forward.
- **Terraced dynamics** help add contrast to the piece.
- One mood throughout the entire piece.
- **Contrasts in timbres** were often used, e.g. soloist v's orchestra.
- **Contrasts in textures** were often used, e.g. polyphonic and homophonic textures.
- **Polyphonic** textures are the predominant texture in the Baroque period.

Instruments

- The **organ** and the **harpsichord** and the main keyboard instruments.
- The **orchestra** was born in this period but is not of a standard size.
- The **strings** are the largest and most developed section of the orchestra.
- New instrumental techniques developed in the strings – **pizzicato** and **tremolo**.
- The woodwind section developed too – flute, recorder, oboe and bassoon.
- The percussion section occasionally uses **timpani**.
- The brass section occasionally uses the **trumpet**.

Main Styles of Music

Sacred Vocal

- **Oratorio**: a large scale setting of a religious text for soloists, chorus (voices), and orchestra.

Secular Vocal

- **Opera** developed in Italy and could be serious or light-hearted in nature. In the Baroque opera, two main types of pieces were used in an opera – an aria and a recitative.
- An **aria** is a solo song with instrumental accompaniment. Characteristics of an aria include the use of **melisma**, **repetition**, and **sequences**.
- A **recitative** usually presented the text in free rhythm with frequent repetition of pitch.

Instrumental

- An **overture** was an orchestral piece used to quieten the audience before a larger work, e.g. an opera or an oratorio was performed.
- A Baroque **Solo Concerto** was written for soloist and orchestra (ripieno), e.g. Vivaldi's Four Seasons.

Forms and Structures

- **Ritornello Form**: recurring passage for orchestra which alternates with episodes for soloist or soloists.
- A **Cadenza**: this was introduced into the solo concerto, towards the end of a movement, and gave the soloist a chance to show off.

Composers

German: JS Bach and Handel.

Italian: Corelli, Vivaldi, and Monteverdi

Classical Period 1750–1810

Features of the Style

- **Simple, memorable melodies**, with question and answer phrasing.
- Ornaments like the **acciaccatura** and **trills** decorate the melody.
- The texture is lighter and clearer than in the Baroque period.
- The texture is **mostly homophonic** in this period – melody and accompaniment.
- Alberti bass is a commonly used piano accompaniment.
- There is more variety and contrast within a piece than in the Baroque period. A piece may have **more than one mood, more than one tempo** and a **wider range of dynamics**.
- Dynamics: composers now used **gradual changes** (crescendo/diminuendo) and more dynamic shading. Dynamics were used more expressively.
- New timbres were available as new instruments were developed.
- Harmony is based on **tonic** and **dominant chords** and **7th chords**.

Instruments

- The harpsichord fell out of use as the **piano emerges**. The piano strings are hit by hammers and as a result, can play a wider range of dynamics and expression than the harpsichord could, e.g. legato and staccato.
- Each section of the orchestra has a special role
 - The strings are the **most prominent section** in the orchestra and the upper strings have the melody.
 - Clarinets and bassoons join the woodwind section and are used to **reinforce the strings** at cadence points. Recorders fell out of use.
 - The brass section is used to bring power to loud passages, and horns often fill in the gaps in the texture.
 - Timpani used more often and help emphasize the tonic/dominant harmonies. Triangle and cymbals were also added.

Main Styles of Music

Sacred Vocal

- The oratorio continued to be popular.

Secular Vocal

- Opera continued to develop and arias became longer.

Instrumental

- **Symphony** came into development in the Classical period. It is a long, complex piece for orchestra, usually in 4 movements, to be played in a concert hall.
- **Solo Concerto**: a work for a solo instrument and an orchestra, in 3 movements, fast, slow, fast. The piano concerto was very popular in the Classical period.
- Music for small ensembles become important, e.g. Quartet, Quintet.
- The **Overture** was still used to settle the audience before a larger work, e.g. opera or oratorio, but now contains themes from the larger work it accompanies.

Forms and Structures

- Binary Form – AB, Ternary Form – ABA, Rondo Form – ABACADA
- Cadenza was introduced into the solo concerto. It was played towards the end of a movement and gave the soloist a chance to show off.

Composers

Austrian: Mozart & Haydn

German: Gluck & Beethoven

Romantic Period 1810-1900

Features of the Style

- Long, **lyrical, song-like melodies** which often featured **chromatic** movement.
- **Programme Music** became popular; music that tells a story.
- Expressive range of playing indications such as Con Fuoco, Espressivo and Dolce.
- **Rubato** used extensively to help give expression to the music.
- The texture is still **predominantly homophonic**, with polyphonic sections used to develop the music.
- Dramatic contrasts in pitch and dynamics occurred as the mechanics of woodwind and brass instruments improved.
- Harmony becomes more **discordant** and **chromatic**.

Instruments

The orchestra was now very large and occasionally contained over 100 players.

- The string section is very large, but the other sections of the orchestra are **equally as important** as the strings.
- The piccolo, cor anglais, bass clarinet and double bassoon were added to the Romantic orchestra.
- The tuba was added to the brass section.
- The percussion section expanded and now included both pitched and un-pitched instruments. Xylophones (wooden), celestes (Nutcracker Suite), glockenspiels (metal), harps, and bells all became popular with composers.

Main Styles of Music

Sacred Vocal

- Sacred vocal music was no longer as popular.

Secular Vocal

- Secular vocal music gained in popularity.
- Opera was now on a very large scale and could take 4–5 hours to perform.
- German Lied (Song) was developed by Schubert.

Instrumental

- **Symphonies** were freer in form and could contain four or more movements.
- **Solo Concerto** was now an extravagant showpiece for the virtuoso musician, e.g. Paganini in 3 movements; fast, slow, fast.
- Music for small ensembles are such as the quartet are less important.
- **Overtures** are now being performed as stand alone pieces for the concert hall.

Forms and Structures

- **Through-composed** form was more widely used. This meant that different music was used for each verse of the song.
- **Strophic form** was also popular in vocal music i.e. the same music was used for each verse.

Composers

German: Schumann, Wagner, Mendelssohn
Italian: Verdi
Russian: Tchaikovsky
Polish: Chopin
Hungarian: Liszt



Handel: 'For unto us a child is born' from *The Messiah*

Background:

George Frideric Handel was born in Halle, Germany, in 1685. He visited England in 1710 and 1712, remaining there when his former employer the Elector of Hanover became George I of England. Handel began writing oratorios – which provided a more secure income than operas – in 1729. Examples include *Esther*, *Saul* and *Israel in Egypt* but by far the most famous is *Messiah* which was written within the space of 24 days in 1741 and received its first performance in Dublin the following year.

Definitions:

Oratorio	A large-scale setting of a religious text for soloists, chorus and orchestra. It is given as a concert performance in a non-liturgical context.
Chorus	A movement from an oratorio scored in this case for the standard four-part choir consisting of sopranos, altos, tenors and basses with orchestral accompaniment.
Ritornello	The opening orchestral section which returns at the end of the movement.
Texture	Handel employs two types of texture in this chorus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Homophonic – where the parts generally move in the same rhythm forming block chords (bb. 33–37). (ii) Polyphonic – where the parts are rhythmically independent but may imitate each other or combine different melodic ideas in counterpoint (bb. 20–24).
Syllabic	When each syllable of the text is set to just one note. (sopranos, b. 7).
Melismatic	When a syllable is sung to more than one note (sopranos, bb. 15–17)
Sequence	A musical device, typical of the Baroque period, where a musical fragment is repeated either a step higher each time to form an ascending sequence (bb. 9–12) or a step lower each time producing a descending sequence (violin 1, b. 79).
Suspension	When a note is held over from a previous chord producing a dissonance which is then immediately resolved by step. Frequently used at cadence points such as the final bar.
Modulation	The process of using accidentals to move from one key to another. The chief tonal centres of this chorus are the tonic (G major), dominant (D major) and the subdominant (C major).
Repetition	A melodic device in which a motif is repeated immediately at the same pitch and in the same voice or instrument (the violin semiquavers in bb. 33–34).
Cadences	These are formed at the ends of phrases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) A perfect cadence consists of the dominant chord followed by the tonic chord (bb. 6–7). (ii) An imperfect cadence has the dominant chord preceded by the tonic chord (b. 32)
Continuo	The Baroque practice where a keyboard player (organ on the recommended recording) provides harmonic support by interpreting the figures added to the bass line.

Principal themes:

Like many of Handel's most effective choral movements, 'For unto us a child is born' consists of a weaving together of a number of musical ideas each associated with a particular line of text throughout. These are as follows:

- (a) "For unto us a child is born" – sopranos bb. 7–8

Falling fifth and rising fourth, repeated pitches, mainly syllabic.



- (b) "Unto us a son is given" – (b¹) sopranos bb. 9–12 Falling scale in quavers and ascending sequence

Musical notation for the soprano part of 'Unto us a son is given'. The notation is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of two lines of music. The first line has notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4-G4 (beamed eighth notes), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter). The lyrics 'un - to us a son is gi - ven un - to' are written below. The second line has notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4-G4 (beamed eighth notes), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter). The lyrics 'us a son is gi - ven,' are written below.

- (b²) basses bb. 24–25 descending triad

Musical notation for the bass part of 'Unto us a son is given'. The notation is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of a single line of music with the following notes: G3 (quarter), F#3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), D3 (quarter), C3 (quarter), B2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), G2 (quarter). The lyrics 'un - to us, a son is gi - ven,' are written below.

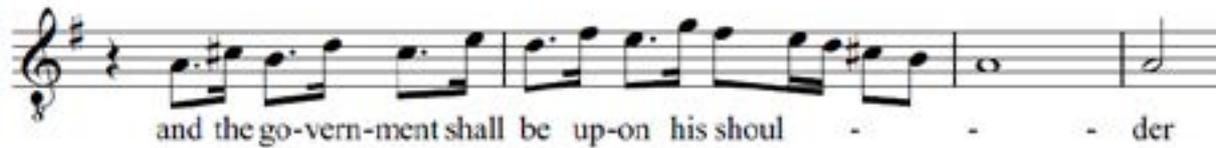
- (c) "Born" – sopranos bb. 14–18

Continuous semiquavers used in an ascending sequence, melismatic.

Musical notation for the soprano part of 'Born'. The notation is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of two lines of music. The first line has a continuous sequence of semiquavers: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F#2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F#1, E1, D1, C1, B0, A0, G0, F#0, E0, D0, C0, B-1, A-1, G-1, F#-1, E-1, D-1, C-1, B-2, A-2, G-2, F#-2, E-2, D-2, C-2, B-3, A-3, G-3, F#-3, E-3, D-3, C-3, B-4, A-4, G-4, F#-4, E-4, D-4, C-4, B-5, A-5, G-5, F#-5, E-5, D-5, C-5, B-6, A-6, G-6, F#-6, E-6, D-6, C-6, B-7, A-7, G-7, F#-7, E-7, D-7, C-7, B-8, A-8, G-8, F#-8, E-8, D-8, C-8, B-9, A-9, G-9, F#-9, E-9, D-9, C-9, B-10, A-10, G-10, F#-10, E-10, D-10, C-10, B-11, A-11, G-11, F#-11, E-11, D-11, C-11, B-12, A-12, G-12, F#-12, E-12, D-12, C-12, B-13, A-13, G-13, F#-13, E-13, D-13, C-13, B-14, A-14, G-14, F#-14, E-14, D-14, C-14, B-15, A-15, G-15, F#-15, E-15, D-15, C-15, B-16, A-16, G-16, F#-16, E-16, D-16, C-16, B-17, A-17, G-17, F#-17, E-17, D-17, C-17, B-18, A-18, G-18, F#-18, E-18, D-18, C-18, B-19, A-19, G-19, F#-19, E-19, D-19, C-19, B-20, A-20, G-20, F#-20, E-20, D-20, C-20, B-21, A-21, G-21, F#-21, E-21, D-21, C-21, B-22, A-22, G-22, F#-22, E-22, D-22, C-22, B-23, A-23, G-23, F#-23, E-23, D-23, C-23, B-24, A-24, G-24, F#-24, E-24, D-24, C-24, B-25, A-25, G-25, F#-25, E-25, D-25, C-25, B-26, A-26, G-26, F#-26, E-26, D-26, C-26, B-27, A-27, G-27, F#-27, E-27, D-27, C-27, B-28, A-28, G-28, F#-28, E-28, D-28, C-28, B-29, A-29, G-29, F#-29, E-29, D-29, C-29, B-30, A-30, G-30, F#-30, E-30, D-30, C-30, B-31, A-31, G-31, F#-31, E-31, D-31, C-31, B-32, A-32, G-32, F#-32, E-32, D-32, C-32, B-33, A-33, G-33, F#-33, E-33, D-33, C-33, B-34, A-34, G-34, F#-34, E-34, D-34, C-34, B-35, A-35, G-35, F#-35, E-35, D-35, C-35, B-36, A-36, G-36, F#-36, E-36, D-36, C-36, B-37, A-37, G-37, F#-37, E-37, D-37, C-37, B-38, A-38, G-38, F#-38, E-38, D-38, C-38, B-39, A-39, G-39, F#-39, E-39, D-39, C-39, B-40, A-40, G-40, F#-40, E-40, D-40, C-40, B-41, A-41, G-41, F#-41, E-41, D-41, C-41, B-42, A-42, G-42, F#-42, E-42, D-42, C-42, B-43, A-43, G-43, F#-43, E-43, D-43, 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D-271, C-271, B-272, A-272, G-272, F#-272, E-272, D-272, C-272, B-273, A-273, G-273, F#-273, E-273, D-273, C-273, B-274, A-274, G-274, F#-274, E-274, D-274, C-274, B-275, A-275, G-275, F#-275

- (d) “And the government shall be upon his shoulder” – tenors bb. 26–29

Dotted rhythm, ascending sequence, falling scale on “shoulder”, syllabic and melismatic.



- (e) “Wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace” – full choir bb. 33–37

Homophonic texture based on primary triads, dotted rhythm, repetition.

Analysis:

Bar	Time	Content
1	0.00	Orchestral ritornello in G major. Violin 1 introduces theme (a) which is imitated by violin 2. The rising sequential semiquaver movement in parallel sixths anticipates theme (c) and the concluding perfect cadence is preceded by syncopation and a trill.
7	0.15	“For unto us a child is born” – theme (a) – and “unto us a son is given” – theme (b ¹) – stated by the sopranos.
12	0.28	Theme (a) now in the tenors and imitated by sopranos. The sopranos melismatic extension of “born” is combined contrapuntally with theme (b ¹) in the tenors.
18	0.43	Similar to b. 12 except transposed to the dominant (D major). The altos lead followed by the basses and the final “unto us” (bb. 24–26) is set to a new descending triadic phrase (b ²).
26	1.01	“And the government” set to a rising dotted motif (d) which is sung by the tenors and imitated by the sopranos. The basses take up the same motif doubled in compound thirds by the altos and imitated by the sopranos. “And his name shall be called” becomes homophonic and leads to an imperfect cadence in D major.
33	1.18	Dotted rhythm, major tonality, homophonic use of the full choir and repeated semiquaver patterns in the violins combine to convey the majesty implied by the text: “Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God”. This presentation of theme (e) ends with an emphatic perfect cadence in D major.
38	1.30	Reintroduces earlier thematic material: (a) and (b ¹) in sopranos, tenors imitate (a) and continue with (c), (b ²) in sopranos and basses, (d) in altos and basses. Begins in dominant but returns to tonic.
49	1.57	Restatement of (e) – like b. 33 only transposed to the tonic and with the vocal parts reordered.
54	2.09	Theme (a) in imitation between tenors and sopranos.
55	2.13	As b. 12 but transposed to the subdominant – C major – and the themes allocated to different voices: (a) and (b ¹) now in the basses, altos imitate (a) and continue with (c).
61	2.27	Corresponds with b. 26 – voices enter in the same order but the ending is altered to finish with a perfect cadence in C major.
68	2.44	Restatement of “Wonderful, Counsellor “ – theme (e) from b. 33 – begins in C major but returns to the tonic.
73	2.56	Theme (a) begins in the basses but the answering sopranos are harmonised homophonically by the full choir. The theme (c) semiquavers on “born”, which are now in parallel thirds in sopranos and altos, are also accompanied by the lower voices.
80	3.13	Entries of (d) in imitation and stretto (i.e. the altos begin before the sopranos have finished). Becomes homophonic and ends with an imperfect cadence in G major.
85	3.26	“Wonderful, Counsellor “ – theme (e) – brought back in the tonic key. This is initially the same as b. 49 but the soprano melody on “the everlasting Father” is now a descending scale. This is repeated ending each time with a perfect cadence in the tonic key.
92	3.43	The material of the opening ritornello, which consists of themes (a) and (c), is reworked to provide an orchestral postlude.

Further listening:

Handel: ‘And the glory of the Lord’ from *The Messiah*

Handel: *Zadok the Priest*



Mozart: Horn Concerto No. 4 in Eb major K495, third movement

Background:

Mozart (1756–1791) was a lifelong friend of Joseph Leutgeb who was one of the leading horn players of his day. Unlike the modern instrument, the natural horn of the Classical period had no valves but accomplished players could obtain a wide range of notes using their lips and by handstopping (placing their right hand in the bell). The fanfare-like nature of many of the themes in this movement is a legacy from the days when the horn was associated with hunting and the last movements of all four horn concertos by Mozart are rondos *à la chasse* in 6/8 time.

Definitions:

Concerto	A composition for solo instrument accompanied by orchestra which is usually in three movements. It is designed to allow the soloist to display their skill.
Rondo	A musical form where the main rondo theme returns (always in the tonic key) with contrasting music in between: in its simplest form A-B-A-C-A
Sonata rondo	Strictly speaking, this movement is in sonata rondo form as theme (b), which was first heard in the dominant key, is brought back in the tonic.
Episode	A passage of music which is unrelated to the rest of the work in terms of melody and key (the minor key section beginning at b. 84).
Balanced phrasing	A typical feature of the Classical period which occurs when one phrase is answered by another phrase of equal length. The opening eight bars of this movement are good example: bb. 1–4 end on the dominant while the answering phrase (bb. 5–8) returns to the tonic.
Primary triads	Harmonisation in the Classical period tends to be based on the three primary triads (tonic, subdominant and dominant) and their inversions.
Orchestration	The chamber orchestra-like scoring of this work is also characteristic of the Classical period. Strings predominate with cellos and double basses reading from the same staff and the wind section consists of pairs of oboes and horns.
Acciaccatura	An ornament which involves squeezing in another note just before the main note (solo horn b. 7)
Dominant seventh	The dominant chord with the addition of a minor seventh above its root, e.g. Bb, D, F, Ab.
Cadenza	An improvisation for the soloist alone.
Interrupted cadence	When the anticipated perfect cadence (V-I) is replaced with a “surprise” ending (V-VI or equivalent).

Principal themes:

The rondo theme begins with an upbeat (anacrusis) and contains repeated pitches (b. 1), triadic movement (b. 2) and a lower auxiliary note (b. 3).

Theme (a) Solo horn bb. 1–8

The contrasting theme which marks the beginning of the first episode is also based on arpeggios (bb. 38–40) but also includes a falling and rising scale in b. 41.



Theme (b) Solo horn bb. 38–41

The second episode is recognisable because of the minor tonality and three repeated pitches in long note values at the start.



Theme (c) Solo horn bb. 84–91



Analysis:

Bar	Time	Content
1	0.00	Rondo theme – theme (a) – introduced by solo horn accompanied by detached string chords. First four bars modulate to the dominant (Bb) and the next four bars return to the tonic.
9	0.08	Full orchestra – <i>tutti</i> – repeats the previous eight bars at a louder dynamic level i.e. forte rather than piano.
17	0.16	The soloist returns with the second half of the rondo material which is a mixture of triadic and scalar movement.
24	0.24	A two-bar phrase, consisting of parallel thirds in violins and violas, is used in a descending sequence which leads to the dominant key via the relative minor (C minor). The horn interjections are an inversion of the auxiliary note figure from b. 3.
28	0.28	The solo horn phrase in bb. 28–29 is imitated by the first violins in bb. 30–31. The next four bars emphasise F major (the dominant of the dominant) until a descending sequence based on the inversion of b. 3 leads to the first episode.
38	0.38	The first episode – theme (b) – is presented by the solo horn in the dominant key over sustained string chords. The violins then imitate the five-bar melody while the horn adds a countermelody (bb. 42–46).
46	0.46	Four detached chords played <i>forte</i> by the full orchestra are answered by the solo horn's rising arpeggio and falling scale. The chords are heard again but now the soloist's reply is extended using repetition: bb. 56–57 and b. 58.
60	1.01	Mozart creates a feeling of anticipation by combining several musical devices: (i) an eight-bar dominant pedal in cellos, double basses and eventually violas, (ii) an ascending sequence in the first violins imitated by the seconds and (iii) a descending chromatic scale and ascending sequence in the solo horn.
68	1.09	The sense of expectancy is resolved with the return of the rondo theme and the tonic key. The first part of theme (a) appears in both its solo and orchestral form.
84	1.24	Three repeated notes announce theme (c) which begins in C minor. The first phrase ends with an imperfect cadence in C minor while the second modulates to the subdominant (Ab major).
99	1.41	Similar material to b. 24 only transposed to Ab and developed in an ascending sequence.
105	1.47	Quaver motif inverted in the solo part and then used in an ascending sequence by strings in octaves. Ends in a perfect cadence in G minor.
110	1.52	Same cadence (D-G minor) in orchestra and then with soloist – imitation between first violins and solo horn.
114	1.56	Perfect cadences treated as a descending sequence to bring the music back to Eb major for the return of the rondo theme: C-F, Bb-Eb.
121	2.03	Reprise of theme (a) in the tonic key: eight bars solo and eight bars full orchestra.
137	2.19	The second (triadic) phrase of the rondo theme is reprised this time but turns minor before modulating to the dominant.
147	2.30	Like bb. 32–37 except leading to Eb rather than Bb in preparation for the return of the first episode.
153	2.36	Theme (b) from b. 38 brought back in the tonic key (hence the sonata rondo form) with a few pitches altered. Hunting horn fanfare added when repeated by the violins.

Bar	Time	Content
161	2.44	Much the same as bb. 46–64 but ends with a pause on a dominant seventh chord which some soloists take as a cue to improvise a short cadenza to link into the final restatement of the rondo theme.
179	3.17	First phrase of theme (a) in solo horn. The orchestral repeat is extended upwards by sequence but returns to the tonic key which is emphasised with two perfect cadences. The music sounds as if there is going to be a third cadence but the tonic chord is replaced by an F7 chord.
198	3.26	A four-bar segment of the rondo theme (bb. 5–8) is played twice: first with different harmonisation ending in an interrupted cadence the second version has the expected perfect cadence.
205	3.43	Brief coda based on alternating tonic and dominant harmonies over a tonic pedal point providing an example of repetition. The soloist has impressive descending arpeggios which demonstrate the instrument's full range.

Further listening:

Mozart: Horn Concerto No. 3 in Eb major K447

Mozart: Horn Quintet in Eb major K407



Berlioz: Symphonie Fantastique, fourth movement

Background:

Berlioz (1803–1869) embodied the spirit of the Romantic period in that his music represented directly his feelings, beliefs and experiences. The *Symphonie Fantastique* in particular is an example of this ethos being a musical portrayal of the unnamed artist's emotions which equate to those of the composer after meeting the Irish actress Harriet Smithson in 1827. The vivid fourth movement, *March au Supplice*, describes how the "artist", having taken opium, dreams that he has murdered his beloved and is being marched to the scaffold to be executed. As the guillotine is about to fall, he sees her among the crowd of onlookers but it is too late.

Definitions:

Symphony	A large-scale composition for orchestra which is usually in a number of movements. The <i>Symphonie Fantastique</i> is slightly unusual in that it has five movements rather than the normal four.
Programme music	Music which is descriptive or tells a story. Nineteenth century composer frequently turned to art, literature or nature for inspiration.
Cyclic form	The <i>Symphonie Fantastique</i> is unified by a cyclic theme or <i>idée fixe</i> , which occurs in various guises in all five movements. In <i>Marche au Supplice</i> it appears in the clarinet (b. 164–168) representing the artist's beloved. The lyrical and expressive nature of this tune is characteristic of the Romantic era.
Orchestration	Berlioz used the orchestra in experimental ways and even introduced instruments which were new at the time such as cornets (which had valves before the trumpets) and the ophecleide (a tuba-like instrument except made from wood and with keys rather than valves). The use of a large orchestra with extra instruments is typical of the Romantic period.
March	A piece of military music usually in 4/4 time but in this case cut common i.e. 2/2.
Syncopation	When a weak beat of the bar is emphasised with a long note value or accent (the horns' motif in b. 2).
Countermelody	The combination of a new melody with an existing theme producing polyphonic texture (the melody, which the bassoons add at b. 25).
Inversion	When the direction of a musical phrase is reversed, e.g. the descending scale of bb. 17–22 becomes an ascending scale in bb. 49–54.
Tonality	Berlioz exploits the contrast between the generally minor tonality (G minor) and the major tonality (Bb major) of the military band-like section (b. 62). The movement ends in the tonic major (G major).
Pedal (tonic)	When a note is sustained in a bass instrument while the harmonies change above (trombone 3 bb. 62–65).
Chromatic	A scale consisting entirely of semitones (b. 113) which is common in music of the Romantic period.
Fragmentation	Breaking down a rhythmic or melodic idea into shorter segments (brass bb. 114–115).

Principal themes:

The first three bars provide several rhythmic and melodic motifs which are to assume greater importance later in the movement namely the repeated sextuplet quavers played by the timpani and the syncopated rhythm of third horn's rising scale:

(a) Horn 3 – bb. 2–3



The next significant melodic idea is the octave leap followed by a descending G minor scale in the lower strings at b. 17:

(b) Cellos and Double basses – bb. 17–24

The march theme presented by the brass at b. 62 draws on a major key version of theme (a) and the dotted rhythm of the bassoon countermelody from b. 25:

(c) Cornet 1 – bb. 62–65

The march also contains a repeated fanfare-like motif the rhythm of which is derived from b. 18:

(d) Cornet 1 – bb. 78–79

(e) The cyclic *idée fixe*, which represents the artist's sweetheart (and by association Harriet Smithson) throughout the symphony, appears as the execution is about to happen:

(e) Clarinet 1 – bb. 164–168



Analysis:

Bar	Time	Content
1	0.00	The march is heard in the distance (<i>p</i> and <i>pp</i> dynamics). Two timpanists play repeated sextuplet quavers with sponge-headed sticks (note how specific the composer's instructions are) while pizzicato double basses divided into four parts play a G minor chord. The timpani alternate with theme (a) on low horns using handstopping which produces a harsher sound than normal.
13	0.19	A sense of anticipation and the impression that the march is drawing nearer is created by the use of <i>crescendo</i> , the addition of more wind instruments and the syncopated reiteration of the dominant (D7) chord.
17	0.26	Theme (b) is first heard in unison cellos and double basses and then repeated with unison bassoons adding a countermelody featuring dotted rhythm.
32	0.50	The timpani sextuplets return as the music changes to Eb major. While the lower strings provide a new countermelody based on arpeggios and scales, theme (b) is played by the violins in octaves. After a startling wind <i>fortissimo</i> (b. 40) this is repeated.
49	1.17	Back in the tonic key theme (b) returns in unison cellos and double basses while simultaneously violins and violas play its inversion. Bassoons have another countermelody consisting of continuous staccato quavers.
62	1.37	A rising scale precedes the march theme (c) in the relative major key (Bb major). The predominance of woodwind and strings gives the impression of a military band complete with a raucous tonic pedal in the trombone. The first 8 bars end with an imperfect cadence the second 8 bars finish with a perfect cadence. A double barline indicates that the first 77 bars should be repeated.
78	4.03	The fanfare-like motif (d) is used in imitation between brass and woodwind while the sextuplet rhythm from the opening of the movement is present in the strings.
82	4.09	The descending scale (b) is shared between woodwind and the strings who alternate between <i>pizzicato</i> and <i>arco</i> .
89	4.20	Theme (c) is restated with fuller orchestration involving dotted rhythm in double basses, triplet arpeggios in violas and cellos and semiquavers in the violins.
105	4.44	Theme (d) is also repeated followed by theme (b) – like b. 82 except the descending scale of theme (b) is extended downwards forming a chromatic scale in triplet crotchets.
114	4.58	Tension is increased as the first two bars of motif (b), now doubled in thirds in the lower brass and bassoons, are used in an ascending sequence. The woodwind sextuplets and repeated grace note figures in the strings also move upwards in sequence.
123	5.13	A dramatic moment where the untuned percussion (cymbals and bass drum) enter for the first time playing on the second beat of each bar. Theme (b) in its descending and ascending form is played by the entire orchestra – apart from the <i>tremolando</i> upper strings.
135	5.33	The full strings in octaves continue with the inverted version of (b) while the wind interjection recalls b. 40.
140	5.41	This agitated passage is based entirely on dotted rhythm – derived from theme (c) – punctuated with <i>fortissimo</i> perfect cadences in G minor.

Bar	Time	Content
154	6.01	Here suspense is created by various means: (i) the repeated chords in the wind are imitated by the strings but the G minor (tonic) chord in the strings is contradicted by the unrelated Db major chord in the wind, (ii) the number of chords gradually reduces from eight to one and (iii) there is a <i>diminuendo</i> from forte to <i>pianissimo</i> .
160	6.10	The <i>fortissimo</i> outburst from the full orchestra is made all the more terrifying because of the <i>pianissimo</i> in the previous bar.
164	6.18	The solo clarinet is left with theme (e) – the <i>idée fixe</i> – but this is abruptly cut off by the loud drum roll and wind chords which bring the movement to an end in the slightly surprising key of G major.

Further listening:

Berlioz: Overture, *Le carnaval romain*

Berlioz: Overture, *Le corsaire*

