

## Rick's Classical Music Selection

Last Update 9/7/13

Exactly what is this selection of pieces? Well, it's the complement of the other list, I suppose: the list of non-classical "albums". There can be no pretence that this is a "top ten", and not merely because there are far more than ten pieces in the list. It would be even more staggeringly stupid to attempt such a thing in the classical arena - and I would be even less competent to do it, anyway. The purpose, once again, is merely to leave a record of some pieces of music which have brought me pleasure. It is, if you will, an act of devotion.

Of course, the real truth is that compiling this selection has provided me with a spurious justification for enjoying myself listening to music whilst pretending to be engaged in a constructive exercise.

Most of the pieces in the selection will be regarded as obvious choices. I have included only a few less well known pieces. To include more obscure works would imply a depth of knowledge which I do not possess. Anyway, as was the case for the non-classical list, surprising the reader with a bunch of unknown works is no part of the purpose. And there is generally good reason for works being popular.

I feel uneasy using the description "classical". I have done so only for want of another word. All I intend by the term is to distinguish the music here from that in my other list, of "albums". It is doubly unsatisfactory that the latter can only be described as non-classical, since the logic is circular. I can only hope there is a meeting of minds as regards the distinction. The trouble is that I'm not even sure myself.

People who listen only to classical music may be inclined to refer to the "other" as "pop". Oh dear, oh dear. That will not do at all. For a start, much of it is not popular. Much of jazz is a minority taste, appealing to far fewer numbers than classical music. This is probably true even of well known "rock" outfits with a relatively strong following, such as Tool or King Crimson. And the more avant-garde reaches of non-classical music (Three Trapped Tigers? Norwegian black metal?) have only a tiny following - at present. So these genres cannot possibly be labelled "popular". I really have no idea how to classify this diverse range of styles and genres. They can be collected together only by virtue of being non-classical. So what is "classical"?

It is conventional to distinguish what I suppose I can call the High Classical period from the earlier Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque periods. But it is also conventional in musicology to distinguish the High Classical from the later Romantic and Modern forms. So restricted does the High Classical become that, of the household names, virtually just Haydn and Mozart are left, with even Beethoven being suspect. However it is also usual in common parlance to use the word "classical" to include the earlier and later periods. This the intention here. So the selection covers the Renaissance, Baroque, High Classical, Romantic and Modern periods. The temptation to distinguish the classical from the non-classical by some arbitrary date is, however, unworkable. Classical music, in the sense meant here, is still being composed (as the selection will demonstrate).

To align "classical" with "orchestral" will not do either. Classical music can be played on a single solo instrument. Moreover, the instrument in question may be an electric guitar (the Zander Zon version of Pachelbel's Canon in the videos for example). A solo piano or solo acoustic guitar could equally be classical or non-classical. And my use of the term "classical" must also include purely choral music with no instruments

at all. Otherwise the very origins of western music, the liturgical and ecclesiastical music of the medieval and renaissance periods, would be omitted - which would be totally unacceptable.

But perhaps I just invent a problem where there is none. Few would have difficulty distinguishing the classical from the non-classical in the way these terms are usually used. Perhaps only musical academics would be exercised by the above distinctions. However, the matter becomes genuinely less clear when the music of the last few decades is considered. With Philip Glass, Terry Riley or Steve Reich we have real difficulty in distinguishing the classical from the non-classical. But perhaps this is because these composers mark the point where the two have merged?

The list and commentaries below accompany the YouTube video links on the web page, and in the same order.

<p>Thomas Tallis</p> <p><i>Spem in Alium</i></p>	<p>b.1505 d.1585</p> <p>c.1570</p>	<p>Tallis might be considered England's first great composer. His working life spanned the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth. <i>Spem in Alium</i> is from his later, Elizabethan, period, and is his best known work. It is a 40 part motet and one of the prime examples of Renaissance polyphony. The work was written for eight complete choirs of five voices, each choir consisting of soprano, alto, tenor, baritone and bass. I presume that the high voices would originally have been provided by choir boys. This all-male sound can still be heard today, e.g., in recordings by King's College Choir. However it is more common for women to provide the soprano and alto voices these days. It is believed that the eight choirs would have been arranged around the listeners, producing a surround-sound effect. The music betrays this likelihood in that the song frequently passes in sequence around the choirs, and back again (reminiscent of the early playing with stereo effects in records of the late 1960s). In keeping with Christian tradition, the choirs often sing in a call-and response manner (antiphon). However all choirs contribute together at times, particularly at the finale. Polyphony consists of more than one independent melodic voice being sung at once. (To an idiot like me it means essentially the same thing as counterpoint, but for voices). Although polyphony is the hallmark of <i>Spem in Alium</i>, the simpler homophonic structure in which the different voices are in harmony rather than in counterpoint also occurs.</p> <p>What is a motet? A motet is a piece of choral music in several parts with words. This does not distinguish a motet from any polyphonic song. I had always thought the distinction was that a motet specifically had biblical or liturgical words. But apparently the temptation to link "mot" to the French for "word" is contentious. And actually there are secular medieval motets. There does seem to be a snobbish element to the word "motet", implying a piece of</p>
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		<p>work intended for the educated who seek refinement in their music, not a work for the vulgar. Compared to earlier pieces by Tallis (or anyone else?) <i>Spem in Alium</i> is almost symphonic in conception, though only about 12 minutes long (and shorter in some renditions). The title is a truncation of the first line of the song (in Latin, of course). It is quite common for songs of this period to be named by truncating the Latin first line. Unfortunately the truncation can lose the meaning - or worse, as in this case, actually be misleading. <i>Spem in Alium</i> means "faith in any other", which sounds almost heretical. But the complete line shows how misleading is this truncation: <i>Spem in alium nunquam habui praeter in te Deus Israel</i>, which means, "I have never had faith in any other than thee, God of Israel". One would have needed to be more careful in the reformation era or you might have found yourself burnt at the stake for such a slip. Another example of this sort of meaningless truncated quote is <i>Stabat Mater</i> ("the mother stands", see below under Karl Jenkins). It is said that <i>Spem in Alium</i> is not often performed, since it requires 40 singers all of whom must be capable of meeting its technical demands. I have heard it live once, performed by The Exultate Singers of Bristol, who made an excellent job of it. Unfortunately I missed their repeat performance the following year but would go out of my way to hear it again.</p>
<p>William Byrd</p> <p><i>Vigilate</i></p>	<p>b.1540 d.1623</p> <p>1589</p>	<p>Byrd was a student of Thomas Tallis. Like Tallis, liturgical Latin polyphony was the major part of his substantial output. However he gained a reputation in his own day for also assimilating Continental forms and producing music with his own stamp formed of a synthesis of English and European continental models. In the secular sphere he was also largely responsible for developing the Tudor consort and keyboard fantasia, which were almost unknown previously. Like Tallis, Byrd lived through the reformation period and dallied (to put it mildly) with Catholicism when it was not at all safe to do so. Quite apart from any religious ideals, it must have been hard to avoid since the Catholic church had the best music. The Puritans were rather kill-joys. I picked <i>Vigilate</i> because it is another I have heard sung by the Exultate Singers of Bristol and was impressed with it.</p>
<p>John Dowland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Flow My Tears (Lachrimae Pavan)</i> P.15</li> <li>• <i>Come Again</i></li> <li>• <i>Fantasia</i> P.73</li> <li>• <i>A Fancy</i> P.6</li> </ul>	<p>b.1563 d.1626</p> <p>1596</p> <p>1597</p> <p>~1600</p> <p>~1600</p>	<p>Renaissance music was not all unaccompanied choirs singing motets. The court music of Henry VIII, Elizabeth and James I was dominated by the lute, either solo or accompanying song. There was a tendency towards the sentimental: love songs and songs of yearning or melancholy. England can boast perhaps the most accomplished player of, and composer for, the lute of this period, John Dowland, though he spent a substantial number of years in France, Germany, Italy and Denmark.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The King of Denmark's Galliard</i> P.40</li> </ul>	1604	<p>This was, perhaps, because he became catholic, not a move calculated to endear him to the post-reformation English court. He seems to have been a colourful character. At the Danish court he was paid vast sums, but despite that misbehaved and was thrown out, a proto-rock-casualty. He eventually got a place at the court of James I, but only as the No.2 lutenist. One suspects that it was not relative musical merit that determined the No.1 and No.2 spots. Dowland left a substantial body of written work for the lute (at least 75 pieces, probably more) which has provided a staple repertoire for both lutenists and guitarists. Recordings of most pieces can be found in both lute and guitar forms. Transcriptions for guitar can sound better to my ears (apologies to purists) but it really depends on who is playing. The lute is an unforgiving instrument. Nothing short of absolute precision will do. But when it's perfect, the lute really is perfect. The pieces listed are quite short (as is all Dowland's music) so I have given several. <i>Flow My Tears</i> is a beautiful song, but I find the singing can distract from the playing - so also listen to it as a solo instrumental piece - either lute or guitar. There are many Dowland pieces which are referred to simply as <i>Fantasia</i> or <i>A Fancy</i> (interchangeably). Here I have given the Poulton number to uniquely identify the one I mean (after Diana Poulton who catalogued Dowland's work - there are no Opus numbers in the Renaissance). <i>Come Again</i> is another beautiful song, and in this case I would not dream of doing without the singing. I could quite happily stick in the Renaissance period and not move on - but that would mean missing out on Bach, which wouldn't do at all.</p>
<p>Claudio Monteverdi <i>Magnificat (Primo)</i></p>	<p>b.1567 d.1643 1610</p>	<p>Monteverdi is important as a transitional composer between the renaissance and the baroque. Much of his music was quite revolutionary in its day. He is particularly noteworthy as the composer of one of the first operas and it was he who made the form popular (though not with me). If the renaissance was typified by polyphony, the baroque was characterised by the basso continuo. It is the basso continuo which provides the characteristic harmonic structure of baroque music. Here I display my ignorance, but I believe the basso continuo part of much baroque music was not written down in its entirety. Rather it was indicated by the bass notes, and the musician was left to complete the appropriate chord. Often this would have been done extemporaneously by the players. One advantage of this was that the basso continuo parts were very flexible in terms of what instrument could be used - provided it could render chords (hence the clavichord was favourite, but also a lute or organ might be used). The <i>Magnificat</i> is the name given to an episode in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:46-55) starting with the word "magnificat" in Latin. Many</p>

		composers have provided musical settings of the <i>Magnificat</i> , including Giovanni Gabrieli, Vivaldi, Bach, Bruckner and Rachmaninoff, to name but a few. The revolutionary feature of Monteverdi's <i>Magnificat</i> was the unusual emphasis on solo performances set against the back-drop of both the larger choir and the instrumental accompaniment, something we would now regard as normal. Actually there are two Monteverdi <i>Magnificats</i> denoted Primo and Secondo. The video is the <i>Primo</i> version.
Henry Purcell  <i>When I am laid in earth (Dido's Lament)</i> from <i>Dido and Aeneas</i>	b.1659 d.1695  1688	How did that opera get in here? Well there had to be something by the only great English-born baroque composer. And if all opera songs were like this I'd listen to more.
Johann Pachelbel  <i>Canon and Gigue for 3 violins and basso continuo</i> <i>(The Canon in D)</i>	b.1653 d.1706  1680? 1694?	Pachelbel is often regarded as a one trick pony, though this is not true. Like most other works by Pachelbel and other pre-1700 composers, the <i>Canon in D</i> remained forgotten for centuries and was rediscovered only in the 20th century. Several decades after it was published in 1919 the piece became extremely popular. The <i>Canon in D</i> is now one of the best known classical pieces, along with the likes of <i>Air on the G String</i> . It regularly appears on popular classical compilations and has frequently been plundered or re-interpreted by players. In his lifetime Pachelbel was renowned for his chamber works but most of them were lost. Judging from the Canon this is a great pity. Who knows what gems we will never hear. The date is uncertain. It has been hypothesized that the Canon may have been composed for Johann Christoph Bach's wedding, on 23 October 1694, which Pachelbel attended. It is known that Johann Ambrosius Bach, Pachelbel, and other friends and family provided music for the occasion. And Johann Christoph Bach, the oldest brother of Johann Sebastian Bach, was a former pupil of Pachelbel.
J.S.Bach  <i>Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D major</i> <i>(BWV1068)</i>	b.1685 d.1750  1717- 1723	The second movement, the <i>Air</i> , is one of the most famous pieces of baroque music - or any classical music - particularly in the form of the arrangement by German violinist August Wilhelmj which has come to be known as <i>Air on the G String</i> . The original is not in G, note. And Wilhelmj's version is in C despite being playable entirely on the G string of a violin.
J.S.Bach <i>Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 in G Major</i> <i>(BWV1049)</i>	1721	I hope you appreciate the selfless labour I have undertaken in listening to all six Brandenburg Concertos over and over for the entirely pointless purpose of choosing the best one; as if there could be such a thing. I have finally opted for No.4 on the preposterous grounds that it is not often that recorders get the starring role. Also, there is some virtuoso violin, for which I am always a sucker. But really, consider

		<p>them all in. No.1 is the longest, being the only one with a fourth movement (which I believe was absent from an earlier version). It also features a piccolo violin, a small violin tuned a third higher than usual. No.2 is the one with the fiendish trumpet part. Originally it would not have been a valved instrument. No.3 is the one with the strange moveable feast of a second movement. No.5 features the harpsichord as the principal concertino instrument and was probably a vehicle for Bach to show off his own virtuosity. No. 6 is the one without violins, leaving the concertino to the violas. It is sometimes called "dark-hued" but "warm" would be better. The history of the Brandenburg Concertos is remarkable. The recipient and dedicatee of the concertos, the Margrave of Brandenburg, seems not to have had the musicians required to play them. So the manuscripts lay unused for 128 years until rediscovered in the Brandenburg archives in 1849. It is remarkable that the world became acquainted with the concertos only when the Baroque period had been over for a century, giving way to the true Classical era which was also ending. In the intervening time, Beethoven had been born and died, having taken music off in (several) entirely different directions. But that in no way diminishes the impact of the Brandenburgs, quite the opposite. Quality is proof against fashion.</p>
<p>J.S.Bach <i>Double Violin Concerto in D minor (BWV 1043)</i></p>	<p>1717-1723</p>	<p>If I had to choose just one piece of music for that desert island it would be this one. Quintessential Bach, the whole piece is an interweaving of the two violins - counterpoint almost all the way. It is like a conversation, except that two people speaking at once would be rude. Here the joined voices augment each other - that's what counterpoint is.</p>
<p>J.S.Bach <i>Goldberg Variations mostly G Major (BWV988)</i></p>	<p>1741 or 1742</p>	<p>This is hardcore Bach at his most mathematically complete. There is an opening aria which also forms the finale. In between there are 30 variations. Every third variation is a canon. The first canon is simple (in unison). The second canon is a "canon at the second", that is the follower imitates the leader at the second interval. And so on, to the ninth canon (at variation 27) which is a canon at the ninth. The Goldberg of the title was Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, the protégé of one Count von Keyserlingk (and later a composer in his own right). The story surrounding the commissioning of the work is disputed and the fact that Goldberg was only 14 in 1741 is odd, though he is reputed to have been an accomplished musician even then. Performances vary substantially in tempo. I prefer the brisker variety, such as by Andras Schiff or the accompanying video by Itzhak Solsky (as contrasting with the famous Glen Gould version which is slower).</p>

<p>J.S.Bach <i>The Well-Tempered Clavier: Book 1</i> <i>Book 2</i></p>	<p>1722 1742</p>	<p>I realise that I am indulging myself excessively with so much Bach, but really how could I leave out <i>The Well-Tempered Clavier</i>? This is another example of Bach's tendency for mathematical completeness. The original <i>Well-Tempered Clavier</i> of 1722 was a collection of 24 solo keyboard pieces, one in each of the 24 canonic minor and major keys, in strict chromatic sequence (C, C minor, C#, C# minor, D, D minor, E flat major,....through to B minor). Having done so, he found he had run out of keys, which must have stymied him for a bit. But after 20 years he realised he could just start again at C and write another 24, and so he did. The latter is now known as <i>The Well-Tempered Clavier: Book 2</i>, though I don't think Bach called it that. Actually the whole set is generally referred to, with suitable reverence, as <i>The 48</i>. On the web page I have included a video of an interview with Andras Schiff discussing <i>The 48</i> amongst other things. It is highly educational. I have sometimes felt rather guilty that I prefer the piano to the "authentic" keyboard instruments of Bach's day. Schiff exonerates me - do listen to what he has to say about this "elephant in the room" - the use of the modern piano. Also he reveals what I have always suspected, that the oft-claimed individual character of the keys is actually subjective. Of greatest interest is when he says that, to Bach, the important thing was not that anyone should either listen to, or play, his music. The important think was simply that it exist. This is absolutely the mathematician's view. A mathematician is uninterested in whether anyone reads his proof. He will probably never read it again himself after writing it. All that matters to the mathematician is that the proof exists. It seems that this was the way Bach thought about music; quite an insight.</p>
<p>J.S.Bach <i>St. Matthew Passion</i> (<i>BMV 244</i>)</p>	<p>1727 with revisions to 1746</p>	<p>Sacred oratorios of the Passion of Christ, i.e., the Easter story, were much in demand in the 17th and early 18th centuries. Bach's avowed purpose in life was to write the most perfect devotional music. So here was his ideal outlet. Also, Bach famously despised opera and so great oratorios such as the <i>St. Matthew Passion</i> provided an alternative opportunity for a big vocal production. Bach is believed to have written at least four settings of the Passion, but only two survive, the other being the <i>St. John Passion</i>. These works will inevitably be compared with Handel's <i>The Messiah</i>, which is almost contemporaneous. However, those who know about these things will regard the <i>St. Matthew Passion</i> as a masterpiece in a class of its own.</p>
<p>Antonio Vivaldi  <i>The Four Seasons</i></p>	<p>b.1678 d.1741  1723</p>	<p>The four seasons are actually separate compositions, each a 3-movement violin concerto in its own right, and all in a different key. Rather obviously, it is an early example of program music. The music is deliberately attempting to invoke not only a specific mood but virtually a cinematic</p>

		<p>scene, with both pastoral and climatic resonance. Rightly <i>The Four Seasons</i> were tremendously popular in Vivaldi's time as well as our own. Vivaldi had an enormous output including over 500 concertos, 46 operas, 90 pieces of chamber music and a large body of sacred choral music. Like much baroque music, Vivaldi declined sharply in popularity after his death, only to be revived big time in the 20th century.</p>
Handel	b.1685 d.1759	<p>We English like to claim Handel as our own, and surely this is justified. He was only 27 when he came to England from his native Germany and he lived the rest of his 74 years of life here. We was widely admired by his great contemporary composers, not for the complexity of his music but the opposite: for achieving magnificent effect by simple means. (Note that he was born in the same year as Bach and Domenico Scarlatti). The bulk of Handel's output were operas, more than 40 of them. So I must include something operatic - and this song, from <i>Rinaldo</i>, is so beautiful I could overlook it being opera. <i>Rinaldo</i> was the first Italian language opera composed specifically for the London stage.</p>
<i>"Lascia ch'io pianga"</i> from <i>Rinaldo</i>	1711	
Handel		<p>Without doubt if you mention the name "Handel" people will immediately think of <i>The Messiah</i> and <i>The Water Music</i>, and quite right too. <i>The Water Music</i> was composed at the request of King George I specifically to accompany him (the King) and various aristocrats on a boat excursion along the Thames. In 1717 <i>The Water Music</i> was performed more than three times on the Thames for the King and his guests. It is peculiar in structure, being arranged in three "suites" of between 5 and 11 movements each. The movements within each suite have no strict order.</p>
<i>The Water Music</i>	1717	
Handel		<p>The first performance of <i>The Messiah</i> (in Dublin) deployed a mere 32 males (men and boys), plus two female soloists as singers. The instrumental forces were comparably modest. How different it often is today with massive productions. However I did see a relatively small scale production myself a couple of years ago (by La Nuova Musica, in Bristol). It is a substantial work of some 52 movements, taking around two and a half hours to perform. It is natural to compare it with Bach's <i>St. Matthew Passion</i>, of a similar length. The singing is a nice mix of chorus and solo parts (an oratorio with biblical text). The famous <i>Hallelujah</i> chorus comes in at movement 44. There is a tradition in live performances for the audience to stand for the <i>Hallelujah</i> chorus. I really don't know why, it strikes me as rather absurd. (Are we supposed to be showing respect for The Lord?). The movement that follows is equally famous, <i>I know that my Redeemer liveth</i>.</p>
<i>The Messiah</i>	1742	

<p>Handel</p> <p><i>Music for the Royal Fireworks</i></p>	<p>1749</p>	<p>Another bit of historical misunderstanding on my part that compiling this list has given me the opportunity to correct. The King George who commissioned the <i>Music for the Royal Fireworks</i> was George II, the third monarch of Great Britain whose patronage Handel had enjoyed. In contrast, the <i>Water Music</i> was written for his Dad, George I. The <i>Fireworks</i> music was originally scored (and performed at said fireworks event) for wind instruments and percussion alone, presumably because string instruments carry less well in a large space (I'm told). However, Handel re-scored it for full orchestra after the fireworks do, which was something of fiasco, incidentally. The music went down well, but unfortunately so did the building (burnt) not to mention the recently completed London bridge (collapsed).</p>
<p>Domenico Scarlatti</p> <p><i>Harpsichord/Fortepiano Sonata L33 B minor (K87, P43)</i> <i>Sonata L23 E major (K380 P483)</i></p>	<p>b.1685 d.1757</p> <p>between 1733 and 1757</p>	<p>More famous than his composer father Alessandro Scarlatti, Domenico Scarlatti was the solo piano sonata master, producing a staggering 555 of them. This one (L33) is rather more sedate than most. I chose it for how un-baroque it sounds, so very different from Bach for example. Scarlatti's music has been catalogued by three different people, hence the three different identifiers: K (Kirkpatrick), L (Longo) and P (Pestelli). I don't know the exact date of these particular pieces.</p>
<p>Joseph Haydn</p> <p><i>Guitar Concerto in D (Originally the 8th String Quartet in E major, Op 2, No.2)</i></p>	<p>b.1732 d.1809</p> <p>1763-5</p>	<p>Of all Haydn's vast oeuvre it is particularly perverse of me to choose, of all things, a guitar concerto - since he did not write any. This piece of music was originally a string quartet in E with 5 movements. An arrangement of the work transcribed for lute, violin, viola and cello appeared in 1924. Further transcription yielded the D major guitar concerto, now with just four movements. There is a saying, "How do you tell Haydn from Mozart? - If you recognise the tune, it's Mozart". I don't know if that's generally true, but if old Haydn had written more like this one it would not be. Perhaps the first violin should be replaced by a guitar in more string quartets?</p>
<p>Joseph Haydn</p> <p><i>Symphony No.104 D major The London Symphony</i></p>	<p>b.1732 d.1809</p> <p>1795</p>	<p>It is an obligation, of course, to include a Haydn symphony, since he is generally regarded as the father of the modern symphony - albeit far shorter in length than the epics that symphonies were to become under Beethoven's hand. This is one of his later ones. I confess to knowing little of Haydn's work, but there is a vast amount to go at, including 108 symphonies, 38 concertos, 14 operas, 14 masses, 45 piano trios, 62 piano sonatas and 83 string quartets. Did he ever sleep?</p>
<p>Mozart</p> <p><i>Symphony No. 40 G minor (K550)</i> <i>The Great G minor Symphony</i></p>	<p>b.1756 d.1791</p> <p>1788</p>	

Mozart <i>Clarinet Quintet K581</i> <i>A major</i>	1789	
Fernando Carulli <i>Guitar Concerto in A</i> <i>(Op 8)</i>	b.1770 d.1841	
Beethoven <i>Piano Sonata No. 14</i> <i>C-sharp minor</i> <i>(Op 27, No. 2)</i> <i>The Moonlight Sonata</i>	b.1770 d.1827  1801	The 14th piano sonata acquired its common name, <i>The Moonlight Sonata</i> , only after Beethoven's death, being named by a music critic. In fact I don't think Beethoven was responsible for any of the popular names which his music has acquired, most of which were posthumous. The first, slow, movement will be familiar to all, having being comprehensively mangled by generations of children attempting to learn to play the piano. It really is an exceptionally beautiful movement. Some people seem to find it rather funereal, but I think a better word is 'contemplative'. Old Ludwig saves the fireworks for the last movement.
Beethoven <i>Violin Concerto in D</i> <i>(Op 61)</i>	1806	
Beethoven <i>Piano Sonata No. 23</i> <i>F minor (Op 57)</i> <i>Appassionata</i>	1807	Like the Moonlight Sonata, the 23rd piano sonata was given its now familiar name, <i>Appassionata</i> , only after Beethoven's death. "Tempestuous" is the word often applied.
Beethoven <i>Symphony 5</i> <i>C minor (Op 67)</i>	1808	Is that the hand of Fate I hear at my door? It was, perhaps, Beethoven who started the whole thing about the artist as tortured soul. Before that, they'd just been servants. That's what Bach was, and Mozart. And nobody is interested in a servant's soul, tortured or otherwise. But you've only got to glance at a picture of the scowling Beethoven to see that he was no man's servant - unless, of course, he was the servant of Fate. Aficionados of rock music sometimes play a game "spot the intro". Well, Old Ludwig has the most widely and instantly recognised introductory riff of them all. Da da da daaaa, da da da daaaa! The fifth symphony premiered at the same concert as the sixth (the <i>Pastoral Symphony</i> ). They could hardly be more different. The fifth, together with the third symphony ( <i>Eroica</i> ), motivate Beethoven's middle period being referred to as his heroic period. These two works in particular, plus the violin concerto and the <i>Appassionata</i> piano sonata, established his lasting

		<p>reputation. But the fifth symphony is the one that has attracted the superlatives. It broke most emphatically with tradition. Whilst the <i>Eroica</i> is certainly heroic in length, it is largely classical in style, albeit with presages of the Romantic. But the fifth is a more revolutionary affair. The feeling of it is both curiously abstract whilst simultaneously one of internal strife, or perhaps struggle against fate. It is more Romantic in spirit than anything that had come before.</p>
<p>Beethoven</p> <p><i>Piano Concerto No. 5</i> <i>E flat major (Op 73)</i> <i>The Emperor</i></p>	1812	<p>I used to think that Beethoven himself had attached the sobriquet <i>The Emperor</i> to this, his 5th, and last, piano concerto. I knew that Beethoven had initially approved of Napoleon, on the grounds that he admired the ideals of the French Revolution, and viewed the early Napoleon as their embodiment. But, of course, Beethoven would have no truck with Emperors so it would make no sense for him to use such an epithet. Actually, the nickname <i>The Emperor</i> was coined by an English music critic and refers to the majesty of the music, not the presumption of Napoleon. I was getting confused with the story of <i>The Eroica</i> (the 3rd symphony) which Beethoven had originally conceived of dedicating to Bonaparte. He did not, for the excellent reason that he could earn a fee by dedicating it instead to a nobleman in his own country. In the event, Napoleon declared himself emperor and Beethoven fell out of love with him most emphatically. And this was in 1808, so <i>The Emperor</i> concerto of 1812 has no connection with Napoleon at all. Well, that's cleared that up! And now for the music itself...well, just listen to it.</p>
<p>Beethoven</p> <p><i>Symphony 9 D minor</i></p>	1824	<p>Oh heck. It's got to go in, but what am I supposed to say? Here are some words and phrases.</p> <p>Epic, Monumental, Blockbuster, Emotional mangle, Joyous, Life affirming, Staggering culmination of a musical life, Bid for immortality, Religious?, Atheistic?, A declaration in favour of universal brotherhood?, A manifesto for artistic freedom?, A secular hymn, or a religious exhortation?, A magnificent gesture of musical pride (Debussy)?, A mounting wave of Elysian delirium? (Richard Taruskin).</p> <p>What it is not is dull, derivative or ordinary. It's a masterpiece which will mean something personal and different to everyone who approaches it, standing for whatever we view as the best and most exalted about humanity. Oops, sorry, it rather invites going into pretentious mode. Old Ludwig was darn good at tunes. The ninth has some real winners. But admiring the ninth on the strength of its tunes would be rather like appreciating a Ferrari only for the quality of its paintwork. It is long even for a symphony (around 70 minutes). Each movement of the ninth is comparable in length to the whole of a Haydn symphony. Beethoven was completely deaf by the time the</p>

		ninth was premiered. ("Beethoven never heard the ninth symphony" - Discuss). Nevertheless, he insisted on conducting the premier. He seems not to have had Dame Evelyn Glennie's ability to perform unhampered by deafness. He was well out of synch with the orchestra throughout, and was still conducting when they had finished. Fortunately there was a second conductor who had taken the precaution of warning the orchestra to ignore Ludwig, poor chap. And, for anyone else, that would have been quite enough for one lifetime. But not for Beethoven, oh no...
Beethoven <i>String Quartet No 14 in C sharp minor (Op 131)</i>	1826	In the last two years before his death in 1827 Beethoven wrote six string quartets. His health was failing, and he was, of course, completely deaf. These pieces were a strange departure from his earlier work. The old Ludwig of the <i>Moonlight Sonata</i> and the <i>Pastoral Symphony</i> was no more. Despite Beethoven's huge reputation by this time, these last quartets were received with incomprehension by almost everyone, the public and music critics alike. It was rather like when Einstein published the General Theory of Relativity in 1916 - only three people understood it. Few understood these quartets. The feeling of the more informed and open minded critics was that "there is something going on here, but we don't know what it is". When faced with the monstrous dissonance but terrifying grandeur of the <i>Grosse Fuge</i> (string quartet opus 133) the difficulty felt by Beethoven's contemporaries is easy to understand. However, Schubert understood what was going on. He had one of those moments that musicians sometimes have when he first heard quartet No.14. He is recorded as saying, "what's left for the rest of us to write now?" Many blues guitarists felt the same way in the 60s after first hearing Hendrix. And string quartet No.14 in C sharp minor was Beethoven's own favourite piece, his "most perfect single work". So here it is.
Hector Berlioz <i>Symphonie Fantastique</i>	b.1803 d.1869  1830	
Frederic Chopin <i>Études Opus 10</i>	b.1810 d.1849  1829- 1832	This is the first set of a dozen etudes by Chopin, the first written when he was still a teenager. "Etude" means "study" and in the musical context is usually taken to mean an exercise in some particular technique - in other words a teaching device, though often with the implication of something especially tricky. But Chopin gave the term a different nuance, as a type of musical composition in its own right.

Max Bruch  <i>1st Violin Concerto G minor (Op 26)</i>	b.1838 d.1920  1866	This is one of my absolute favourites. For some time Bruch was regarded as rather a one-trick pony. This is certainly unfair. His second violin concerto is also very good, some people prefer it to the first (though the 3rd is certainly not as good as either). This is one of those pieces which carry you all the way through, with never a lapse of attention.
Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky  <i>Pictures at an Exhibition</i>	b.1839 d.1881  1874	Now be careful. We are talking of the solo piano version here - not one of the many orchestrated versions (the most famous being by Ravel), nor, of course, Emersonm, Lake and Palmer - though I prefer their version to Ravel's. But the solo piano version is the tops. It would be better to call it the Forte version, since the loud pedal is down most of the way. The instrument takes a good pounding in this piece. It is strictly for the virtuoso pianist. For humans there are scores for two or three pianos to make it more approachable. It consists of ten movements, each with a title which we may consider to be a picture in this imaginary exhibition (titles like "Gnome", "Old Castle" and "Baba Yaga (the witch)". The picture movements are interspersed with a truly great theme or aria, Promenade, which, of course, represents our making our way around the exhibition. The final movement, <i>The Bogatyr Gates</i> (the Great Gates of Kiev), returns over and over again to the Promenade theme, but now becoming increasingly exalted and amplified, grander and grander. The climax is almost unbearably powerful, a true apotheosis. It's hard to believe that this music is delivered on just one piano. The history of the piece was troubled, as was Mussorgsky (who died a hopeless alcoholic). The score was not published until after Mussorgsky's death, and even then only an incomplete version. The complete version was published first in 1931.
Tchaikovsky  <i>Piano Concerto No. 1 B flat minor (Op 23)</i>	b.1840 d.1893  1875	Absolutely everyone recognises the intro, frequently plundered as Holywood film music in the 40s & 50s. It's all emotion. Those crashing piano chords - bang!bang!bang!... bang!bang!bang!
Tchaikovsky  <i>Symphony No. 4 F minor (Op 36)</i>	b.1840 d.1893  1878	Silly people think that if you are feeling down you should brighten yourself up with some happy music. These people are twits. Anyone who has suffered even just a little depression will know that, in such a mood, happy music is merely meaningless or irritating. No, the depressive needs great dollops of heart twisting, high tension, angst ("Rather than a little pain, I would be thief to the organ chords of grief"). I listened to Tchaikovsky 4 a lot as teenager, probably for that reason. Sometime in the last 40 years my vinyl copy went astray. I hadn't listened to it for decades before compiling this list - another benefit of so doing. My opinion hasn't changed. It's a belter. This is full on

		Romantic mode. Searing waves of emotion from the opening A-flat blast fanfare on the horns and right through the long (but not over-long) 1st movement. I don't know if my amateur musicology is right, but I think the 4th symphony marks the point when Tchaikovsky finally gave up trying to apply the strict Western/classical form and instead just let it all hang out. The result is driven by melody and emotion, rather than structure and intellect. As a result, Tchaikovsky has been accused of being shallow. But isn't this just a pejorative description of a composer abandoning the classical strictures and giving himself over entirely to the Romantic ideal? So he wasn't Bach or Mozart.
Antonin Dvorak	b.1841 d.1904	
<i>Symphony No.9 E minor, Op 95 "The New World Symphony"</i>	1893	
Erik Satie	b.1866 d.1925	I met Erik Satie once. Well, I say "met" - I mean he passed me in the street. It was just round the corner from his house in Honfleur. He looked me in the eye as he passed right by me and said "Bonjour, Monsieur", to which I politely replied. The episode is remarkable because, as you see from the dates on the left, he died in 1925 - and, no, I'm not that old, not by a long way. It was in the mid 1990s. I must ask my son if he remembers the event. He was there. So was my wife, but she was busy buying une jambon fromage bagette at the time. I suppose it's just possible it was not him, though it looked like him and he was wearing the clothes of his period. He was an odd chap and his music is likewise. There is nothing quite like Satie. These pieces are haunting. Appropriate words might be "gentle", "atmospheric", "eccentric", "ineffable", "delicate", "subtle". The words <i>Gymnopedies</i> and <i>Gnossiennes</i> are as tantalising to grasp as the tunes. They have no strict meaning but are most redolent...of something. The playing instructions include advice such as: "painfully", "sadly", "gravely", "with a rigorous sadness" and "with astonishment".
<i>Trois Gymnopedies Gnossiennes Nos. 1-3 Gnossiennes Nos. 4-6</i>	1888 1893 1889- 1897	
Edward Elgar	b.1857 d.1934	Elgar was the finest English composer since Handel. From humble origins, he was slow to achieve recognition but did so first with the <i>Enigma Variations</i> . He remained popular thereafter in his lifetime and today is regarded as <i>the</i> quintessentially English composer. His works are redolent of empire, of pomp and circumstance. The Land of Hope & Glory, from the Pomp and Circumstance Marches, is the regular audience rouser at the annual UK Last Night of the Proms.
<i>Enigma Variations (OP 36)</i>	1899	

<p>Edward Elgar</p> <p><i>Cello Concerto E minor (Op. 85)</i></p>	<p>1919</p>	<p>Whilst most of Elgar's music after the Enigma Variations became immediately popular, the cello concerto was an exception. It had a disastrous premiere, due largely to the conductor who favoured other works on the programme and left the concerto with little time to rehearse. In fact the cello concerto remained relatively unknown by the public until the 1960s when the recording by Jacqueline du Pré brought it to prominence. The accompanying video is of Jacqueline du Pré in this era (lamentably she stopped performing in 1973 due to having MS). It's amazing how pieces as striking as this can fail, initially, to gain recognition. It's emotive, powerful and easy to appreciate. Those downward glissandos get you every time.</p>
<p>Sergei Rachmaninoff</p> <p><i>Piano Concerto No.2 C minor (Op 18)</i></p>	<p>b.1873 d.1943</p> <p>1901</p>	<p>After deciding to put this one in I discovered that the Rachmaninoff <i>Piano Concerto No.2</i> is the current No.1 in the Classic FM poll of listeners (2012). Rachmaninoff was the last of the great Romantic composers (arguably with Elgar). He was one of the most accomplished pianists of his day. Not surprisingly, therefore, some of his best compositions were for the piano. His influences were Russian but he forged his own style as any serious composer must. I cannot resist another opportunity to demonstrate how stupid and snobbish, and plain wrong, music critics can be. The 1954 edition of the Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians dismissed Rachmaninoff's music as "monotonous in texture ... consisting mainly of artificial and gushing tunes" and predicted that his popular success was "not likely to last".</p>
<p>Jean Sibelius</p> <p><i>Violin Concerto D minor, Op 47</i></p>	<p>b.1865 d.1957</p> <p>1904</p>	<p>Ask people to list their favourite violin concertos and this one is likely to be near the top (along with Bruch, Beethoven, the Bach double and Tchaikovsky). It's got the tunes. It's got the virtuoso fireworks. It's got the heart rending top register wailing. It's a winner.</p>
<p>Vaughan Williams</p> <p><i>Fantasia on a theme by Thomas Tallis</i></p>	<p>b.1872 d.1958</p> <p>1910</p>	<p>In poll after poll, this piece vies with <i>The Lark Ascending</i> and Elgar for Top of the Classical Pops status in England. But it was not always thus. Like <i>The Lark Ascending</i> the critics were less than enthusiastic at first, and the <i>Tallis Fantasia</i> remained unrecorded for 26 years. I will borrow the words of Rob Young, writing in The Guardian on the occasion of the century of the premiere of this Fantasia. "A century ago, on the evening of 6 September 1910, a 2,000-strong audience at the Three Choirs festival crammed into the pews of Gloucester cathedral to hear Elgar's oratorio The Dream of Gerontius, one of the most popular contemporary English works since its 1900 premiere. But between them and their devotion stood the unfamiliar figure of Ralph Vaughan Williams, aged 37, nervously preparing to conduct the world premiere of his just-completed work, the Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis. "A queer, mad</p>

		<p>work by an odd fellow from Chelsea," the cathedral's organist had called it, but despite remaining unrecorded until 1936, the Tallis Fantasia has come to join the crowning glories of English orchestral music. Its innate gravitas has not diminished its popular appeal. That historic 1910 concert, with its double bill of fresh-minted masterpieces, also marked a fork in the road. Today, Elgar and Vaughan Williams are commonly considered part of the same patriotic British pomp'n'pastoral breed, but the reality is more complicated. Elgar's <i>Gerontius</i> is a lengthy work suffused with the composer's Catholic faith, describing the itinerary of a soul towards final judgment. Vaughan Williams, on the other hand, was a humanist, agnostic radical. Lasting 19 minutes, the <i>Fantasia</i> contained no obvious theological overtones, yet its abstract unpickings of a tune by an almost forgotten Elizabethan composer seemed designed to resonate within the cathedral arches. Most critics found it indigestible. "It is a grave work," wrote the <i>Musical Times</i>'s anonymous correspondent, "exhibiting power and much charm of the contemplative kind, but it appears overlong for the subject-matter." The only thing on which I would disagree with Rob Young is referring to Thomas Tallis as 'almost forgotten'. Perhaps that might have been true in 1910, but certainly not now.</p>
<p>Vaughan Williams <i>The Lark Ascending</i></p>	<p>1914 And 1920</p>	<p>I had not realised until I looked it up that there was a violin plus piano version first (in 1914) prior to the now more familiar concerto (orchestral) version (in 1920). <i>The Lark Ascending</i> is a perennial favourite in English speaking countries around the world, constantly coming top of popularity polls. I believe the critics were a bit sniffy about it when it was premiered. Its form is neither traditional nor modern. Intensely lyrical, it's a law unto itself. If this were the only Vaughan Williams music you had ever heard, you'd probably recognise most of his other works. Not because they are similar, but just because of his characteristic string sound.</p>
<p>Gustav Holst <i>The Planets</i></p>	<p>b.1874 d.1934  1916</p>	<p><i>The Planets</i> was Holst's only work to become popular in his lifetime (other than, of course, <i>In the Bleak Midwinter</i>). As a shy man and no self-publicist, Holst did not achieve the same level of recognition as his near-contemporaries in England, Elgar and Vaughan Williams. Nevertheless Vaughan Williams held him in great regard. The suite has seven parts, one for each of the planets. The impetus was astrological, not astronomical, and hence Earth is not included. Nor was Pluto included since it was not discovered until 1930 (and has now been demoted to an planetesimal in any case). Like many non-classical musicians with just one outstanding success, Holst came to resent the popularity of <i>The Planets</i> because he thought it</p>

		detracted attention from his other work. His other work did have the reputation of being rather austere.
Gustav Holst <i>Egdon Heath</i>	1927	Holst considered Egdon Heath to be his best work. I quote, "Egdon Heath is a fictitious area of Thomas Hardy's Wessex inhabited sparsely by the people who cut the furze (gorse) that grows there. The entire action of Hardy's novel <i>The Return of the Native</i> takes place on Egdon Heath, and it also features in <i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i> and the short story <i>The Withered Arm</i> (1888). The area is rife with witchcraft and superstition". Hardy himself describes this fictitious Heath thus, "The untameable, Ishmaelish thing that Egdon now was it had always been. Civilization was its enemy: and ever since the beginning of vegetation its soil had worn the same antique brown dress, the natural and invariable garment of the particular formation. . . . The great inviolate place had an ancient permanence which the sea cannot claim". Holst's piece is very much a musical rendition of this description.
Carl Orff <i>Carmina Burana</i>	1937	I struggled with my conscience before including this. One has to be suspicious of anything coming out of 1930s Germany. The issue of Carl Orff's closeness to the Nazis is subject to dispute, or at least uncertainty. He certainly had artistic connections with Richard Strauss and Friedrich Nietzsche. And the opening and closing aria of <i>Carmina Burana</i> do sound very Wagnerian. However I don't think we can condemn him on the strength of the musical genre. And he certainly had Jewish friends, so did not appear to be a natural anti-Semite. It could be argued, of course, that his personal life and beliefs should have no bearing on the status of his music in any case. That I do not entirely subscribe to this view is proved by the fact that I will not even consider including Wagner here. (I don't like Wagner's music anyway, so this is no sacrifice to me. I realise that this is the ultimate sacrilege to some people, to whom I apologise. My musical taste is very much open to question. However, Wagner's anti-Semitism is not). The suspicion surrounding Carl Orff is due to the great popularity of <i>Carmina Burana</i> immediately it was premiered in Frankfurt - not least by the Nazis. This was compounded by Orff's supplying of a musical accompaniment to <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , apparently at the request of the Nazi Party. I suspect the truth is simply that if you wanted to remain in Germany and alive at that time, you had to collaborate to some degree. Probably Carl Orff was just your average German. <i>Carmina Burana</i> is the name of a medieval illuminated manuscript, written in a mixture of Latin and medieval German (Middle High German to be precise, 11th and 12th century), even with some Old French. Unlike most illuminates manuscripts of the period, the subject is not religious. The text is not merely secular but downright

		<p>bawdy, irreverent and satirical. I suppose <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> might be a rough analogy. Of course its the work of students. It would be, wouldn't it. The Catholic Church comes in for a pasting (e.g., drunken abbots in a pub) and even the Nazis's thought some parts a bit too racy. Orff's <i>Carmina Burana</i> sets 24 of the 254 poems/texts of the original to music. No prizes for interpreting what the music for <i>Si puer cum puellula</i> (If a boy with a girl...) is meant to represent, climaxing in those final bass drum strokes.</p>
<p>Joaquín Rodrigo</p> <p><i>Concierto de Aranjuez</i></p>	<p>b.1901 d.1999</p> <p>1939</p>	<p>Rodrigo was blind from infancy. He was a pianist, not a guitarist. And yet, in the opinion of Xuefei Yang, one of the most stunning guitarists around, the <i>Concierto de Aranjuez</i> is simply the best guitar concerto there is. I suppose, being Spanish, knowledge of the guitar was in Rodrigo's blood. The fantastically lyrical second movement is known to everyone, having formed the basis of pop songs and backing music in various settings. Several notable performers (including Miles Davis) have felt the pull of this piece and given it their own heartfelt interpretation. In common with many other people I thought the piece was much older, it has such a romantic feel. But despite that, the second movement was actually inspired by Rodrigo's wife's miscarriage, not by romantic love. As for the lasting qualities of the <i>Concierto de Aranjuez</i>, I quote a 2006 review by Max Dudious: "We are faced with the mystery of existence, and its corollary, death. And sometimes this comes with a burst of white light (as in Dante and, I think, Mahler), and possibly the feeling of what true mystics call "Universal Love," or good will toward all. The adagio movement of Rodrigo's <i>Concierto Aranjuez</i> was his attempt to be at one with the eternal. This wonderful guitar concerto, written between the Spanish Civil War and WWII, is full of humanistic good will. It is firmly rooted in the Spanish flamenco stylistic idiom, yet is so universal it pops up as jazz, as brass band music, and as the sound track for car advertisements. It is another twentieth century masterpiece deserving of high stature, I feel. And it is this connection with the largest, saddest questions that elevates it from a mere tour de force guitar concerto, such as Rodrigo's <i>Fantasia Para Un Gentilhombre</i>. It was this connection that raised the work in my esteem. Though he wrote lots of music, Rodrigo would never again reach the heights that the <i>Concierto de Aranjuez</i> attained, would never quite find the way of reaching behind the intellectual defenses into the core being of the audience with such force."</p>

<p>Henryk Gorecki</p> <p><i>3rd Symphony (Symphony of Sorrowful Songs)</i></p>	<p>b.1933 d.2010</p> <p>1976</p>	<p>I was surprised to discover that this work was finished as early as 1976. Like almost everyone else I only became aware of it when it became a smash hit circa 1992-93. It was top of the classical charts for a very long period, and even climbed high in the mainstream UK charts - extremely unusual for a classical piece and probably unique for a contemporary classical piece (I can only recall <i>The Four Seasons</i> doing something similar). I believe the work was trashed by the critics when it was premiered. And since it became popular, people have been taking a poke at it again (but that will be the English distaste at success). It is not a piece for someone in a hurry. The first movement in particular has a slow, slow, slow build. It fits right into the 20th century minimalist school in that - well - it's pretty darn minimal. It is sustained weeping. But oddly quite uplifting at the same time. It is driven by a solo soprano, without whom there would be nothing to grasp at all. But that must be deliberate given the subject matter. I can do no better than quote here: "A solo soprano sings a different Polish text in each of the three movements. The first is a 15th-century Polish lament of Mary, mother of Jesus, the second a message written on the wall of a Gestapo cell during World War II, and the third a Silesian folk song of a mother searching for her son killed in the Silesian uprisings. The first and third movements are written from the perspective of a parent who has lost a child, and the second movement from that of a child separated from a parent. The dominant themes of the symphony are motherhood and separation through war."</p>
<p>Philip Glass</p> <p><i>1st Violin Concerto</i></p>	<p>b.1937</p> <p>1987</p>	<p>Apparently Philip Glass does not like being labelled a minimalist (grouping him together with Terry Riley and Steve Reich). That's understandable, I suppose, though it sounds like a reasonable term to me. He prefers the description "composer of music with repetitive structures". The 1st violin concerto (I think he has two) is probably his most popular work. To quote the man himself, "It's popular, it's supposed to be — it's for my Dad. I thought, let me write a piece that my father would have liked. A very smart nice man who had no education in music whatsoever, but the kind of person who fills up concert halls".</p>
<p>Sir John Tavener</p> <p><i>The Protecting Veil</i></p>	<p>b.1944</p> <p>1988</p>	<p>Tavener is a devote Christian. Almost all his works are a reflection of his adherence to Orthodoxy (specifically, Russian Orthodoxy). He is particularly drawn to the associated liturgical traditions and mysticism. This has formed the overt subject matter of much of his music as well as its motivation and tonal structure. Despite this, his music is decidedly modern. Like Glass, Tavener belongs to the 20th century minimalist camp. <i>The Protecting Veil</i> was commissioned by the BCC for the 1989 proms season. It refers to the Orthodox feast of the Protecting Veil of the</p>

		<p>Mother of God. This commemorates the apparition of Mary in 10th century Constantinople at a time when the Greek city was in grave danger of imminent invasion by the Saracens. The vision saw Mary spreading her Veil as a protective shelter over the Christians, and the Saracens were then successfully repulsed.</p>
<p>Karl Jenkins</p> <p><i>The Armed Man</i></p>	<p>b.1944</p> <p>2000</p>	<p>Karl Jenkins, together with Mussorgsky, are the only two composers to feature in both this classical selection and the non-classical list of great albums. Moreover, in the latter Jenkins features in both his Soft Machine and Adiemus guises. Fittingly, then, he is the UK's best selling living classical composer - by far. He is hugely popular, perhaps because of the ready accessibility of his music. (Ironically it is his classical music which is accessible whereas his work with Soft Machine was always a minority taste, nicely illustrating my point about not being able to refer to non-classical music as 'popular'). Jenkins was voted most popular living composer by Classic FM listeners in 2008, and <i>The Armed Man</i> regularly features in the top twenty most popular classical pieces in Classic FM's yearly Hall of Fame polls. It is The piece was commissioned by the Royal Armouries Museum for the Millennium celebrations. It is anti-war. Its structure is based on the Catholic Mass. Jenkins has come in for some stick from music critics. I have read some astonishingly condemnatory reviews, comparing the simplicity of Jenkin's compositions unfavourably with other contemporary composers. How much of this may be a reaction against his emphatic commercial success I cannot guess. But the bottom line is this: if you like it, then listen to it. Critics are irrelevant. Even if they are right, you will find out soon enough by repeated listening. But critics often make howlers.</p>