

# Symphony Smarts

In music, the word **symphony** usually refers to a piece of orchestra music with more than one movement. A symphony is often written in a set form and has the same style as other symphonies composed around the same time. Haydn and Mozart wrote shorter, lighter sounding symphonies in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Brahms and Mahler wrote longer, heavier sounding symphonies in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Music **form** is a map of how musical ideas are laid out. A musical idea can be as short as a few notes as in the opening of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5* or as long as several measures as in Schubert's *Symphony No. 8*, the "Unfinished Symphony". A composer can develop (make changes to) his or her musical ideas. Three examples of developing musical ideas are: 1) starting them on other notes; 2) changing rhythms or notes; 3) making the ideas longer or shorter. You can figure out the form of a piece by mapping when changes are made to the musical ideas or when the ideas stay the same.

In *Premier Symphony*, "Bravata Sonata" is written in **sonata form**. Sonata form is often used in the first movement of a symphony. It is made up of three main sections called the Exposition, Development, and Recapitulation. In the **Exposition**, you hear the main musical ideas of the piece. The composer *exposes* his or her main musical ideas. In the **Development**, you hear the musical ideas change in length, rhythm, and/or key. The composer *develops* the musical ideas by exploring different variations of them. The **Recapitulation** is the place where the composer reminds you of what the original musical ideas are by playing them again.

A **round** is a form of music that allows everyone to play the same melody, but start it at different set times. When the melody overlaps, the overlapping creates harmony. The French folk song, "Frere Jacques," is an example of a round. Mahler used a minor version of "Frere Jacques" in the third movement of his *Symphony No. 1*. "A Smaller Mahler" uses a melody similar to Mahler's (only on a much smaller scale). The round starts with the bass at rehearsal letter **A**.

If you hear a melody at the beginning of a piece repeat after each time a different melody is heard, the piece is probably in **rondo form**. "Rondo Scherzando" is an example of rondo form. In the beginning you hear the main melody (call it melody "A"). In measure 9, a different melody is heard (call it melody "B"). At measure 13, melody A returns before you hear yet another different melody (call it melody "C") at measure 21. Finally, melody A comes back around to finish the movement. If you line up the order of the melodies, you get **ABACA**. The way the melody keeps coming back around makes **ABACA** a basic rondo form.

The last movement of a symphony is sometimes called the **finale**. A finale can take on many forms, including sonata form. A finale is a grand ending to a symphony that lets you know the piece is finally ready to finish. Beethoven used a chorus in addition to the orchestra in his "Finale" to *Symphony No. 9* to make it as grand as possible. This is where the famous "Ode to Joy" melody comes from.

# Student Worksheet

## **Before You Start: *Paragraphs 1 and 2***

1. What is a symphony?
2. Name one composer who wrote shorter, lighter sounding symphonies.
3. Name one composer who wrote longer, heavier sounding symphonies.
4. What is music form?
5. List three ways a musical idea can be developed:
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.

## **Brevada Sonata: *Paragraph 3***

1. What are the three main sections of sonata form?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
2. In sonata form, where do you hear musical ideas for the first time?
3. By exploring different variations of the main musical ideas, a composer \_\_\_\_\_ the main musical ideas.
4. What happens in the final section of sonata form?

## **A Smaller Mahler: *Paragraph 4***

1. What is special about how the melody in a round is composed?
2. What is one example of a song or piece that uses a round?
3. Which composer used a French folk song melody as the basis for his round?

## **Rondo Scherzando: *Paragraph 5***

1. What is the main melody in a rondo called?
2. What does the main melody do to make it a rondo?
3. What is the second melody in a rondo called?
4. Using five letters, write a basic rondo form.

## **Finally the Finale: *Paragraph 6***

1. What is a finale?
2. What did Beethoven add to the orchestra in one of his finales to make it as grand as possible?
3. What symphony contains the famous “Ode to Joy” melody? Name the composer and symphony number.

## Lesson Guide

1. Go over the first two paragraphs with students in class, playing the musical excerpts as you go.
2. Listen to one piece a week each day while working on *Premier Symphony*
3. Give a listening test at the end of weeks 3 and 6.
4. Work on *Premier Symphony* one movement at a time. After students are comfortable with the notes in each movement, take a day to go over the paragraph and questions that correspond to the movement. Have students label the sections in their music. Continue to refine and add on movements

## Suggested Listening List

1. Haydn *Symphony No. 94* in G Major (Surprise Symphony), "II. Andante"
2. Mozart *Symphony No. 25* in G minor, "I. Allegro con brio"
3. Brahms *Symphony No. 1* in C minor, "IV. Adagio - Allegro non troppo ma con brio"
4. Mahler *Symphony No. 1* (Titan), "III. Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen"
5. Beethoven *Symphony No. 5*, "I. Allegro con brio"
6. Schubert, *Symphony No. 8* (Unfinished Symphony), "I. Allegro moderato"
7. Beethoven *Symphony No. 9* (Choral Symphony), "IV. Presto"