

Chamber & orchestral listening list

Twenty-four works in three steps, with one thing to listen for in each. Tick them off and write what you heard in the Listening Log. Most of these have free scores online — follow with the score open and you will hear twice as much.

CHAMBER · START HERE

- ☐ Haydn — Quartet Op. 76 No. 3, ii A hymn tune passed to each player in turn.
- ☐ Mozart — Eine kleine Nachtmusik, i How little material a whole movement needs.
- ☐ Schubert — 'Trout' Quintet, iv One tune, six variations. Name what changes.
- ☐ Mozart — Clarinet Quintet, ii One wind instrument balanced against four strings.

CHAMBER · NEXT

- ☐ Beethoven — Quartet Op. 18 No. 1, i A six-note figure that never leaves the room.
- ☐ Mendelssohn — Octet, i Eight strings written like an orchestra, by a sixteen-year-old.
- ☐ Schubert — Quartettsatz in C minor Tremolo as tension, from the first bar.
- ☐ Dvořák — 'American' Quartet, i Pentatonic tunes; the viola opens.

CHAMBER · GOING DEEPER

- ☐ Beethoven — Quartet Op. 131 Seven movements without a break. Give it time.
- ☐ Schubert — String Quintet in C, ii Two cellos, and fifteen minutes that barely move.
- ☐ Ravel — String Quartet, ii Pizzicato and cross-rhythm used as structure.
- ☐ Bartók — Quartet No. 4 Arch form, and every string effect at once.

ORCHESTRAL · START HERE

- ☐ Haydn — Symphony No. 94, ii The classical orchestra at its clearest, plus one joke.
- ☐ Grieg — 'Morning' from Peer Gynt One tune handed round the woodwind.
- ☐ Dvořák — Symphony No. 9, ii A cor anglais solo over almost nothing.
- ☐ Tchaikovsky — Nutcracker Suite Celesta, bass clarinet and harp used as characters.

ORCHESTRAL · NEXT

- ☐ Beethoven — Symphony No. 5, i Four notes, an entire movement. Track them.
- ☐ Mendelssohn — The Hebrides Sea and weather made from string figures.
- ☐ Berlioz — Symphonie fantastique, iv The orchestra enlarged, and used theatrically.
- ☐ Rimsky-Korsakov — Scheherazade, i A textbook of orchestration; the violin solo is a character.

ORCHESTRAL · GOING DEEPER

- ☐ Brahms — Symphony No. 4, iv Thirty variations over an eight-bar bass. Count them.
- ☐ Mahler — Symphony No. 1, iii A double-bass solo of a nursery tune, in the minor.
- ☐ Debussy — La Mer Orchestration without melody in the usual sense.
- ☐ Stravinsky — The Rite of Spring A bassoon at the top of its range; rhythm as the subject.

LISTEN THREE TIMES

First for the shape — where it changes. Second for the texture — who has the tune and who is accompanying. Third for one detail you can name and steal.

FIND THE SCORE

Most of this was published long enough ago that the score is free online; IMSLP is the usual place. The twentieth-century works may not be. A recording carries its own separate copyright, so borrow those from a library or a streaming service.

WRITE IT DOWN

One line per work in the Listening Log: the ensemble, what you noticed, and one idea to try in your own writing. A list you never wrote about is a list you will not remember.