

TRINITY LABAN CONSERVATOIRE
OF MUSIC & DANCE

TRINITY LABAN SCHOOL CONCERT (KEY STAGE 2): EPIC TUNES & ALPINE HORNS

Symphony No. 1 by Johannes Brahms

Home Education Resource Pack

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Concert Presenter: Lucy Drever

Conductor: Holly Mathieson



INTRODUCTION

This Resource Pack was originally produced for schools attending our concert 'Epic Tunes and Alpine Horns!' at Blackheath Halls on Thursday 26 March 2020. The piece of music that would have been performed is Brahms Symphony No. 1. This Classroom Resource Pack has subsequently been adapted into a home education tool that can be used to provide an introduction into the world of the orchestra.

Keeping the orchestra on track is the job of the conductor — they make sure that all of the musicians on stage are playing the same part of the music at the same time so that no one gets lost! The conductor of this concert would have been Holly Mathieson. Holly is originally from New Zealand but she travels all over the world conducting orchestras.

You will get the most out of this resource if you listen to our specially created playlist, 'Epic Tunes and Alpine Horns', which can be found here:

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/00gHjn0VFOcOtB5zQ6UAie?si=07noyU_-RcW9YYr6Np4Wog

Where relevant, we have selected sections of the tracks which are of particular interest. You can find these extracts highlighted in bold throughout this resource pack.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

What is a composer? A composer is a person who writes or creates music.

Johannes Brahms (pronounced 'Brarms') was born in 1833 in Germany. He was 43 when he wrote his Symphony No. 1, and he followed in the footsteps of famous composers such as Mozart and Beethoven. Brahms wrote four of these symphonies in total throughout his life.

Brahms had a very musical family- his father played the double bass in an orchestra in Hamburg and he himself started playing the piano at the age of 7. By the time Brahms became a teenager, he had a job playing the piano at local inns (or bars as they would be known today) to help bring some extra money into the family.

Brahms was a perfectionist and often threw away his compositions if he wasn't happy with them - it took him around 15 — 20 years to write this symphony! For comparison, it took Mozart (on average) 1 week to write a symphony. Brahms lived in the shadow of the great composer Ludwig van Beethoven (who lived from 1770 — 1827) and you may have heard the famous opening to his 5th Symphony —



da da da daaa!

You can find a recording of the opening to Beethoven's 5th Symphony on our 'Epic Tunes and Alpine Horns' playlist here: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/00gHjn0VFOcOtB5zQ6UAie?si=07noyU_-RcW9YYr6Np4Wog

It took Brahms such a long time to write this piece of music because he was nervous about how good Beethoven had been before him; he said “I shall never write a symphony, you’ve no idea what it feels like with such a giant marching behind you” Brahms’s Symphony no. 1 was first performed in 1876 — when Queen Victoria was on the throne and Alexander Bell had recently conducted the first experiment with the telephone.

A SYMPHONY

What is a symphony? A symphony is a piece of music played by an orchestra. What is a movement? A movement is a part of the symphony. A symphony is like a book and the movements are the chapters within the book or an episode within a TV series. A symphony typically has four movements within it.

SYMPHONY NO. 1 BY JOHANNES BRAHMS

	What’s the movement ‘called?’*	What does that mean?
1st Movement	Un poco sostenuto Allegro Meno Allegro	A little smoothly Merry, quick or bright Less quick-slower
2nd Movement	Andante Sostenuto	Walking pace
3rd Movement	Un poco allegretto e grazioso	Moderately fast and gracefully
4th Movement	Adagio Più andante Allegro non troppo ma con brio	Slow More slowly Not too fast but lively!

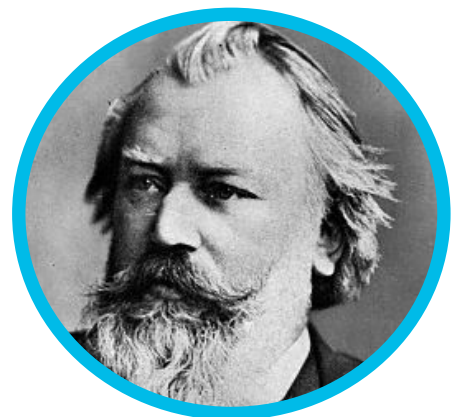
*Composers (no matter which country they are from) generally use Italian words to describe the music and they often call the movements a descriptive title such as ‘Slow’ or ‘Walking Pace.’

THE ORCHESTRA

This symphony is written for full orchestra. Within the orchestra, the instruments are divided into different sections or families.

Strings:

- Violins — there are so many violins in the orchestra (they are the largest section by far) that they are divided into two further sections: Violin 1 (first violins) and Violin 2 (second violins.) Sometimes they play exactly the same music and sometimes they play music that is slightly different. The violins are one of the smallest instruments in the orchestra and they are also one of the highest in pitch.
- Violas — like a slightly bigger violin. They are slightly lower in pitch and have a deeper tone.



- Cellos — the same basic shape as a violin but much bigger and lower in pitch. Whilst violins and double basses can be played standing up, the cello is played sitting down.
- Double basses — the biggest and lowest string instrument in the orchestra.



These instruments each have four strings and are played with a bow.

You can also play them by plucking the strings with your fingers. This is called **Pizzicato**. When the strings return to playing with their bow, this is called **Arco**.

You can find an example of string pizzicato and arco playing on our ‘Epic Tunes and Alpine Horns’ playlist (0’43 — 1’20 of Symphony No. 1, Movement 1)

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/00gHjn0VFOcOtB5zQ6UAie?si=07noyU_-RcW9YYr6Np4Wog

Woodwind:

Two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, and two bassoons. Quite often in a symphony, these instruments are showcased as soloist instruments that often have the melody (or tune.) As a group they are also used to add colour to the piece of music — to make it more interesting.

The oboe is used to tune all of the musicians on stage because it has a piercing sound that can easily be heard across the whole orchestra. The orchestra need to tune because otherwise every single note they play could sound slightly different, and that wouldn’t sound very good when they are all playing together!



Flute and Oboe

Clarinet and Bassoon

Brass:

Two trumpets, four French horns, three trombones (in this symphony the trombones only play in the 4th movement — so they have a lot of waiting around time!



The **French horn** didn't always look like the picture above. Hundreds of years ago a horn was literally the horn from an animal — such as a ram — which would have been played. The horn was originally used for hunting and communicating over large areas — a bit like a very early mobile phone. It then developed over the years into a long length of tubing made of metal.

Percussion:

Large kettle-drums called **Timpani** are the only percussion used in this piece - you can hear them at the beginning of the symphony playing a pulse (a regular beat) which adds to the dramatic sound. Other things to listen out for are the timpani rolls (drum rolls) which also add to the drama and tension.

The conductor:

The conductor is a very important part of the orchestra too! He or she leads the musicians — not just to keep them in time, but to shape the music during all of the prior rehearsals and during the concert itself. The conductor follows the composer's instructions on the **score** (which is a large book of all the musical parts for every instrument in the orchestra — a bit like the script of a play) and makes many musical decisions. This can include making decisions on the **tempo** of each movement, such as how fast or slow they are played, and the **dynamics** — how loud or quiet the music is. Have a look at a video of a conductor — can you see what they are doing with their hands and arms? Their gestures will change depending on the speed, volume or the mood of the music.



SYMPHONY NO. 1 BY JOHANNES BRAHMS

You can find recordings of this Symphony's four movements on our 'Epic Tunes and Alpine Horns' playlist here: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/00gHjn0VFOcOtB5zQ6UAie?si=07noyU_-RcW9YYr6Np4Wog

All timings from now on will refer to these recordings.

MOVEMENT ONE (QUITE SMOOTH-FAST SLOWER)

- This symphony has a dramatic start! Do you think it sounds happy or sad?
- The symphony starts in a minor key — C Minor — which adds to the feeling of drama. It can sound quite sad because it's in a minor key. Music in a major key sounds happier!
- It has a time signature of 6/8. A time signature is a set of two numbers written straight after the key signature in a piece of music. The numbers tell you how many of one kind of note there are in each bar. In a time signature of 6/8 there are six quaver, or quarter note, beats in the bar.
- At the beginning of this symphony, the notes are in two groups of 3. Listen to the timpani at the beginning of the symphony to hear what this sounds like.
- There are lots of dynamics — loud parts and quiet parts; how much difference can you hear in the first few minutes of the piece?
- The whole orchestra starts together — a thick texture, playing loud — **forte** — which gives the piece an intense feeling.
- Listen to the tune in the string section — it's played smoothly and it sounds like a **scale** going higher and higher. In music, a scale is a set of notes in order of their pitch. This then builds to a loud chord after which the orchestra changes to playing quietly — **piano**.
- At this point the woodwind section takes over the tune - listen out for the flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons playing the tune quietly. While the woodwind play the melody the strings play **pizzicato**. Listen out for this, you would have seen all the players' bows in the air, moving together!

1 and ah 2 and ah 1 and 2 and 3 and

The strings carry on playing notes in groups of three — listen out for the ‘jogging along’ theme or **motif** (a motif is a musical idea) played throughout this movement — especially on the timpani at the end.



Sometimes it's just half the motif — like the stuttering of a broken-down car trying to start up again.



Listen to the woodwind section — can you hear the big jumps, or intervals, between the notes? Listen out for this jumping **motif** (or musical idea) occurring throughout the first movement in different parts of the orchestra.



How does the music feel by the end of the first movement? The music has varied in **tempo** (speed) with many ups and downs in the **dynamics** (loud and soft bits.) In fact, the end of this movement is in a **major** — or happy — key and it ends on a soft chord — a peaceful resolution to all the drama!

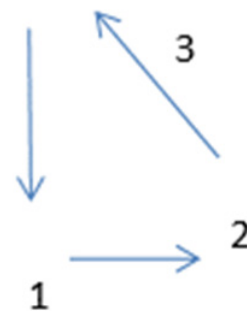
MOVEMENT TWO (MEDIUM SLOW AND SMOOTH)

- Listen to the **melody** as it passes between the instruments — can you hear when it changes?
- Listen to the **dynamics**, can you hear them getting louder and quieter? As the music goes up and down in pitch the volume often rises and falls with the melody.

- Can you hear when they move from **arco** (playing with the bow) to **pizzicato** (plucking the strings)?
- Can you follow the conductor's beat? When the music is in three beats in a bar the conductor's pattern is like a triangle - down on beat one, to the right for beat two, up on beat three.

Of course, the conductor is following the feeling of the music, not just the beat so the triangle may not be obvious.

- Listen to the ending — the musicians are instructed to play *pp* (*pianissimo* — very quiet), how quiet is this orchestra playing? Could it be any quieter?

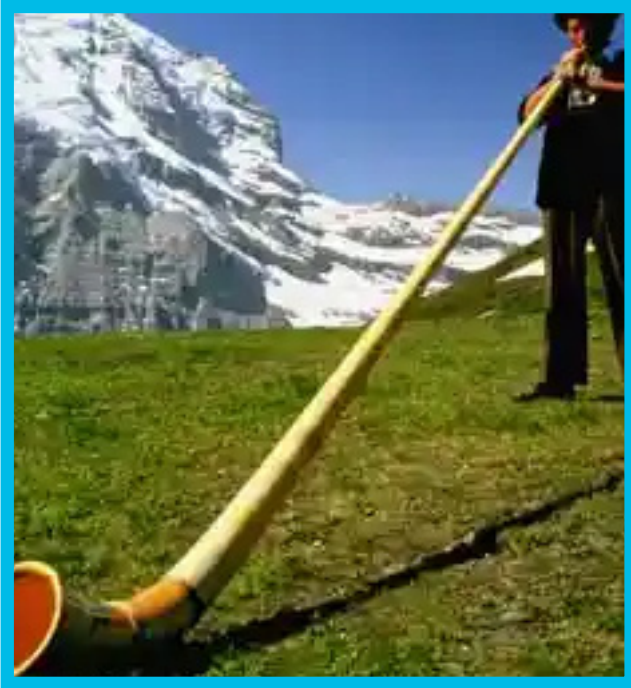


MOVEMENT THREE (QUITE FAST AND GRACEFULLY)

- This movement has a different feel to the others; it should be played 'moderately fast and gracefully'.
- It has two beats in a bar so the conductor's baton will go down on beat 1 (the 'strong' beat) and up on beat 2 of the bar.
- The woodwind section features at the beginning of this movement, with a peaceful tune starting on the clarinet.
- **Listen out for the trumpet fanfare at 3'09.** The movement returns to the peaceful feeling and ends very calmly.

MOVEMENT FOUR (SLOW-SLOWER-NOT TOO FAST, BUT LIVELY!)

- The final movement starts in a minor (or sad) key, like the beginning of the symphony, and features a melody played by **pizzicato** strings (**0'49 on the Movement Four recording**). Listen out for the orchestra building up to a drum roll on the timpani (**1'14 on the Movement Four recording**) followed by a grand tune on the French horn which was inspired by hearing a shepherd playing an Alphon (b) (**2'49 on the Movement Four recording**):



Photograph: Dallas and John Heaton/© Free Agents Limited/CORBIS

- Brahms wrote a letter to his friend (maybe girlfriend!) Clara Schumann explaining that this French Horn solo was inspired by a holiday he had recently taken in Switzerland where he had been walking through the alps and heard the Alphorn playing in the mountains.
- The same tune is then echoed on the flute, followed by the trombones — their first appearance in the symphony.
- This is then followed by Brahms’s “famous, grandly striding tune” on violins (**8’57 on the Movement Four recording**) and then played by the flutes; this is the melody that is reminiscent of Beethoven’s ‘Ode to Joy’ theme. The tempo then speeds up as the orchestra plays around with this tune.
- At **10’05 on the Movement Four recording** the grand tune returns in the string section. There is also a minor (sad) version of this melody in the lower strings. The symphony ends with a triumphant major chord.

CREATIVE WORK THAT YOU CAN DO AT HOME!

Brahms’s symphony was inspired by the music of Beethoven — especially by the ‘Ode to Joy’ tune in the 4th movement of his 9th symphony. Can you make up some music inspired by Brahms?

Create instruments using objects that you can find around the house. You could use:

1. Any tuned instruments that you might have (e.g. a recorder)
2. Anything that shakes or rattles
3. Anything that you can hit like a drum
4. Any wooden objects that you can use as woodblocks

Here are some ideas to get your composition started:

Explore the sounds of your instruments through playing freely

- If there is more than one of you, you can decide on a non-verbal start/stop signal and 'ask' each other to play freely. How good are you at watching each other 'conduct', can you stop clearly on the signals?
- If you would like, you can play the notes A B C D E on a tuned instrument (a scale of A minor — 'sad').
- Practise playing dramatically, following hand signals for loud and soft playing (dynamics).
- Explore changing the dynamics in different ways — gradually or suddenly
- Use the dramatic adjectives or the story as inspiration
- Make sure there is space for all the instruments to be heard — could you hear maracas for instance? If not, create a quieter section for them
- Don't forget to include silence, this can create tension as the listener waits for the music to start again

- Use different combinations of instruments and changes in texture to create a variety of sounds — a thick texture with many sounds at once, or a thin texture with only a few sounds or a solo

Drama

- The first movement of the symphony starts very dramatically and then goes into a quiet section. Think of some inspiring dramatic adjectives to describe how the music makes you feel and some opposite words for the quieter section. Use your dramatic words to make up a story-line for your piece. Make up some rhythms to go with the jogging along motif.

Rhythm Patterns

- Decide on a dramatic phrase and practise playing the rhythm of the phrase — make sure you match the sound to the syllables. For example, the big tune from the fourth movement has six sounds:

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

The grand stri - ding mu - sic

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. Above the staff, a sequence of numbers indicates a rhythm pattern: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4. The staff contains a melody starting with a quarter rest, followed by quarter notes on G4, A4, B4, and C5. The lyrics 'The grand stri - ding mu - sic' are written below the notes, with hyphens under 'stri - ding' and 'mu - sic' to indicate syllable alignment. The staff ends with a double bar line.

- Decide how loud your patterns will be — vary the dynamics. What tempo should your music be — how fast or slow? Decide on a speed and stick to it, there is always a temptation to speed up!
- Clap the pulse (a steady beat), then introduce the word patterns — chanting the words first and then moving on to instruments. Make sure the patterns fit with the pulse and don't speed up.
- Count to 4 to start the music: 1,2,3,4 — this establishes the tempo of the music. You can play the pulse on a cowbell or clap to help keep together.
- As with the 'free' music, you can then start to make musical decisions — create layers of sound by starting and stopping different instruments. Think of the opening of this symphony — it starts with a thick texture — the whole orchestra playing, then the texture changes, with various parts of the orchestra playing at different times. Make musical choices; be brave, be experimental!

Melody

Use your dramatic ideas to make up a melody using the notes A B C D E:

- Did some melody ideas emerge from the free playing?
- Try playing the notes going up in the scale — ABCDE

- Play the scale going down
- Mix the notes up with jumps in between — remember the 'big jumps' from the first movement of the symphony
- Use the word rhythms to inspire your melody
- Use the mood of the words or the story line to shape your melody ideas

Once you have a melody, make up an accompaniment to it. Play a rhythmic accompaniment on percussion using your word patterns.

Agree on some musical decisions:

- What tempo should it be?
- Should it be played smooth (sostenuto) or spikey (staccato)?
- What style should it be — a march, a dance?
- Imagine you are composing music for a film — make the music interpret your story
- Don't forget to use dynamic contrasts — this will add interest and drama to your piece

If you have access to a tuned instrument (or a piano app/digital keyboard) then you can also try the following:



If you play the notes A C E at the same time on tuned instruments this will give you a chord of A minor. Play the notes using the 'jogging along' rhythm, this will give you an ostinato — a pattern repeated over and over again. This can be joined by any percussion instruments of course.

Try gradually getting louder leading to a sudden stop — just like in the symphony. How will you change your piece after the stop? Try changing the instrumentation, showcasing the different sounds (or timbre) of your instruments.

If you are confident you could try to play the 'big tune' from the symphony's 4th movement:

Musical notation for the 'big tune' from the symphony's 4th movement. The notation is presented in two staves, both in treble clef and 4/4 time. The first staff contains the first four measures, and the second staff contains the next four measures, starting with a measure number '5' above the first note. The notes are labeled with letters G, C, B, C, A, G, C, D, E, D, E, C, D, G in the first staff, and C, B, C, A, G, C, D, E, F, E, C, D, C in the second staff.

For the 'bass line' play the first notes of each bar — either as a long note or with a rhythm, here's a suggestion:

Musical notation for the 'bass line' suggestion. The notation is presented in two staves, both in treble clef and 4/4 time. The first staff contains the first four measures, and the second staff contains the next four measures. The notes are labeled with letters C, C, C, A, A, A, D, D, D, D, D, D in the first staff, and C, C, C, A, A, A, D, D, D, D, D, C in the second staff.

BEING A CONDUCTOR

Here is a link to a short clip where a conductor explains what they do and how they lead the orchestra.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_6cTbyWP88
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=tioiXQ3GNWQ#>

Here are the names of some famous conductors; look them up on YouTube and compare their different conducting styles. Borrow some of their best gestures and have a go at conducting yourself.

- **Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla** (1987 —) is currently Music Director at City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Associate Conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic.
- **Sir Colin Davis** (1927 — 2013) conducted the London Symphony Orchestra for many years.
- **Marin Alsop** (1956 —) is music director of a major American orchestra, the Baltimore Symphony, and was the first woman to conduct at the Last Night of the Proms at the Royal Albert Hall in 2013.
- **Gustavo Dudamel** (1981 —) is Venezuelan and has an exciting and dynamic conducting style. He is the musical director of both the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela and the Los Angeles Philharmonic.
- **Sir Simon Rattle** (1955 —) conducted the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in the 1980s and went on to conduct the Berlin Philharmonic — one of the best orchestras in the world. He is now Music Director of the London Symphony Orchestra.
- **Leonard Bernstein** (1918 — 1990) was a very physical conductor, as well being the composer of the famous stage musical 'West Side Story'.



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