

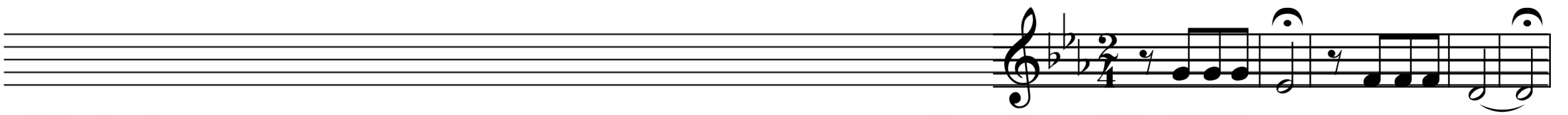
London Philharmonic Orchestra



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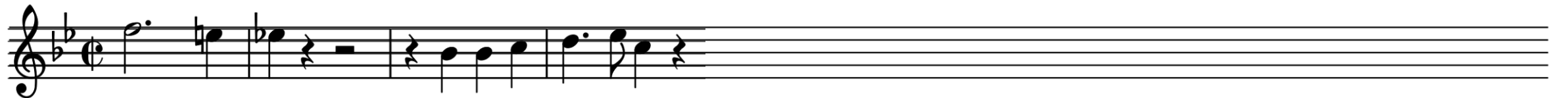


Moderato



A guide to
**The Classical
Symphony**

Andante



Classical period (c.1730–1830)

♫ Music was shaped into perfect structures, defined by a system of harmonic rules

♫ Use of balanced, regular phrasing

♫ Key composers:



Franz Joseph Haydn
(1732–1809)
'The father of the
symphony'



Wolfgang Amadeus
Mozart
(1756–1791)



Ludwig van
Beethoven
(1770–1827)

What is a **symphony**?

♩ A large piece for orchestra, often in 4 movements (sections). Typically:

♩ Movement 1: Fast, in **sonata form**

♩ Movement 2: Slow

♩ Movement 3: Dance (often **Minuet and trio**)

♩ Movement 4: Fast

Let's explore this through Beethoven's Symphony No. 5...

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Symphony No. 5 (1808)

- ♪ Also known as the ‘Fate Symphony’
- ♪ One of the best-known compositions in classical music and one of the most frequently performed symphonies
- ♪ Described as “one of the most important works of the time”



What is a **sonata form**?

- 🎵 **Sonata form** is the structure usually used in the first movement of a Classical symphony
- 🎵 It has 3 or 4 sections:
 - 🎵 **Exposition** – featuring 2 ‘subjects’ (musical ideas)
 - 🎵 **Development** – the musical ideas combine, develop, and the harmony becomes more complex
 - 🎵 **Recapitulation** – an altered repeat of the Exposition. This section takes us back to the tonic key
 - 🎵 Often there is also a **Coda** – an ending section firmly establishing the tonic/home key, ending in a big perfect cadence (V-I)

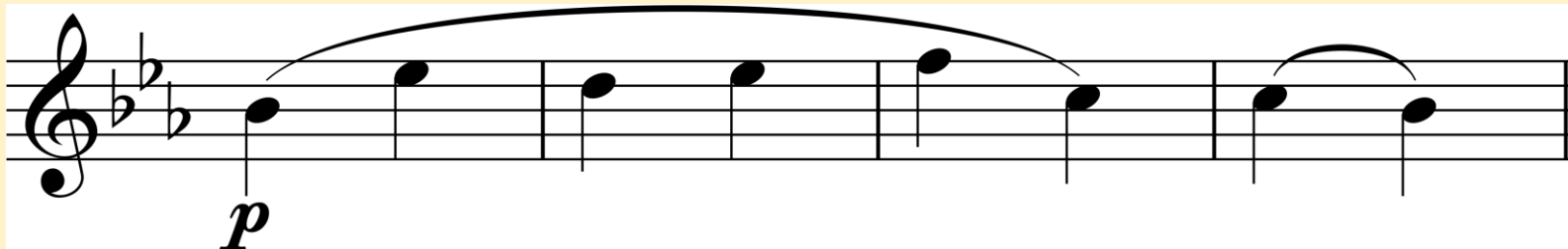
First movement – Sonata form – First Subject

- ♫ The first movement of a Classical symphony is usually in Sonata form
- ♫ This means it usually features **three** sections and **two** subjects (tunes)
- ♫ Beethoven's first subject is huge, daunting, and sounds immediately important
- ♫ It is sometimes described as the sound of fate knocking on your door
- ♫ It's extremely famous because it is so loud, dramatic and memorable
- ♫ This subject recurs throughout the piece (including in the bassline and as an accompaniment)



First movement – Sonata form – Second subject

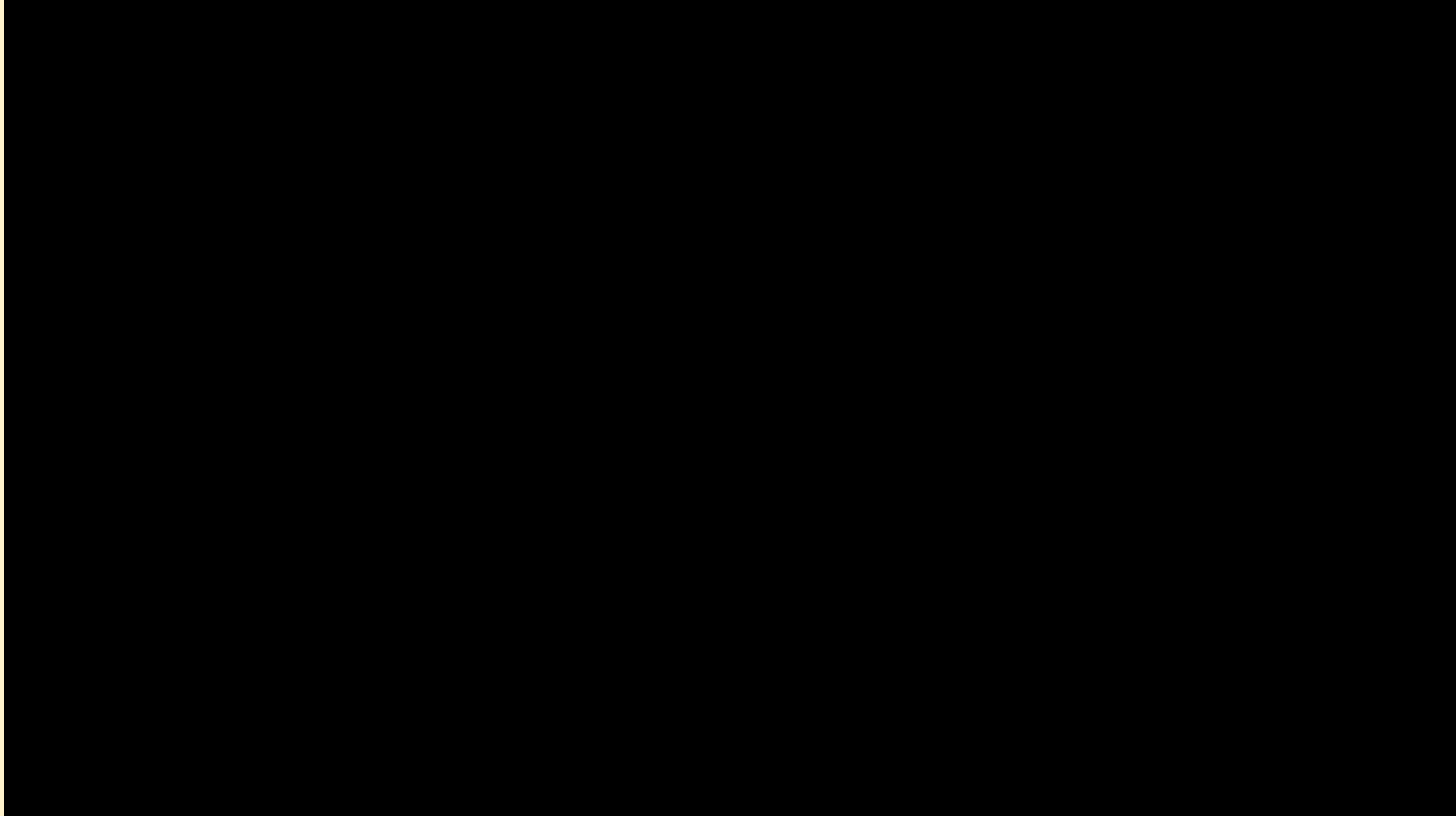
- ♩ In **sonata form**, the second subject tends to contrast with the first subject
- ♩ Beethoven's second subject is a smooth, wandering tune that moves up and down like a snake
- ♩ As it is played, you can hear the rhythm of the first subject in the bassline
- ♩ The second subject is introduced by the horns playing very loudly (*forte*)



Beethoven Symphony No.5

First movement – Sonata form

- ♩ **Exposition** (bars 1–124) – features first and second subjects
- ♩ **Development** (bars 125–253) – announced by the horns. The two subjects combine, interact and converse
- ♩ **Recapitulation** (bars 254–375) – a return to the Exposition section, but with some differences (including an additional oboe solo)
- ♩ **Coda** (bars 370–end) – an elaborate ending that helps to re-establish the key (C minor). Features many perfect cadences at the end (Chord V – I)



Beethoven Symphony No. 5: I. Allegro con brio

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Second movement

- ♩ Second movements are slow
- ♩ Beethoven's is marked **Andante con moto** (walking pace with movement)
- ♩ Second movements often features beautiful melody with **ornamentation**

Ornamentation = trills, grace notes, little 'twiddles' that decorate the melody



[Beethoven Symphony No. 5: II. Andante con moto](#)

Third movement

- ‡ Third movements are a dance
- ‡ Usually a **Minuet and Trio** – a dance in 3 with a contrasting ‘trio’ section
- ‡ Beethoven uses **Scherzo and Trio** here, which is light-hearted and fun, and also has a contrasting trio section



[Beethoven Symphony No. 5: III. Scherzo: Allegro](#)

Fourth movement

- ♯ Fourth movements are fast, flashy and fabulous!
- ♯ Often in **sonata form** or **rondo form**. (Rondo form features a theme that keeps returning, interspersed with 'episodes'. So the structure is A-B-A-C-A etc.)
- ♯ Beethoven's fourth movement is in **sonata form**
- ♯ Often ends with a large **coda** and **perfect cadences**



[Beethoven Symphony No. 5: IV. Allegro](#)

Further listening:

- Franz Joseph Haydn – Symphony No. 99 (1793)
- Louise Farrenc – Symphony No. 3 (1847)
- Johannes Brahms – Symphony No. 4 (1885)
- Antonin Dvořák – Symphony No. 9 ('From The New World') (1893)
- Gustav Mahler – Symphony No. 2 ('Resurrection') (1895)
- William Grant Still – 'Afro-American' Symphony No. 1 (1930)
- Florence Price – Symphony No. 1 (1932)
- Dmitri Shostakovich – Symphony No. 5 (1937)

As you listen, see if you can identify the structures, and how the symphony developed from the Classical to the modern period