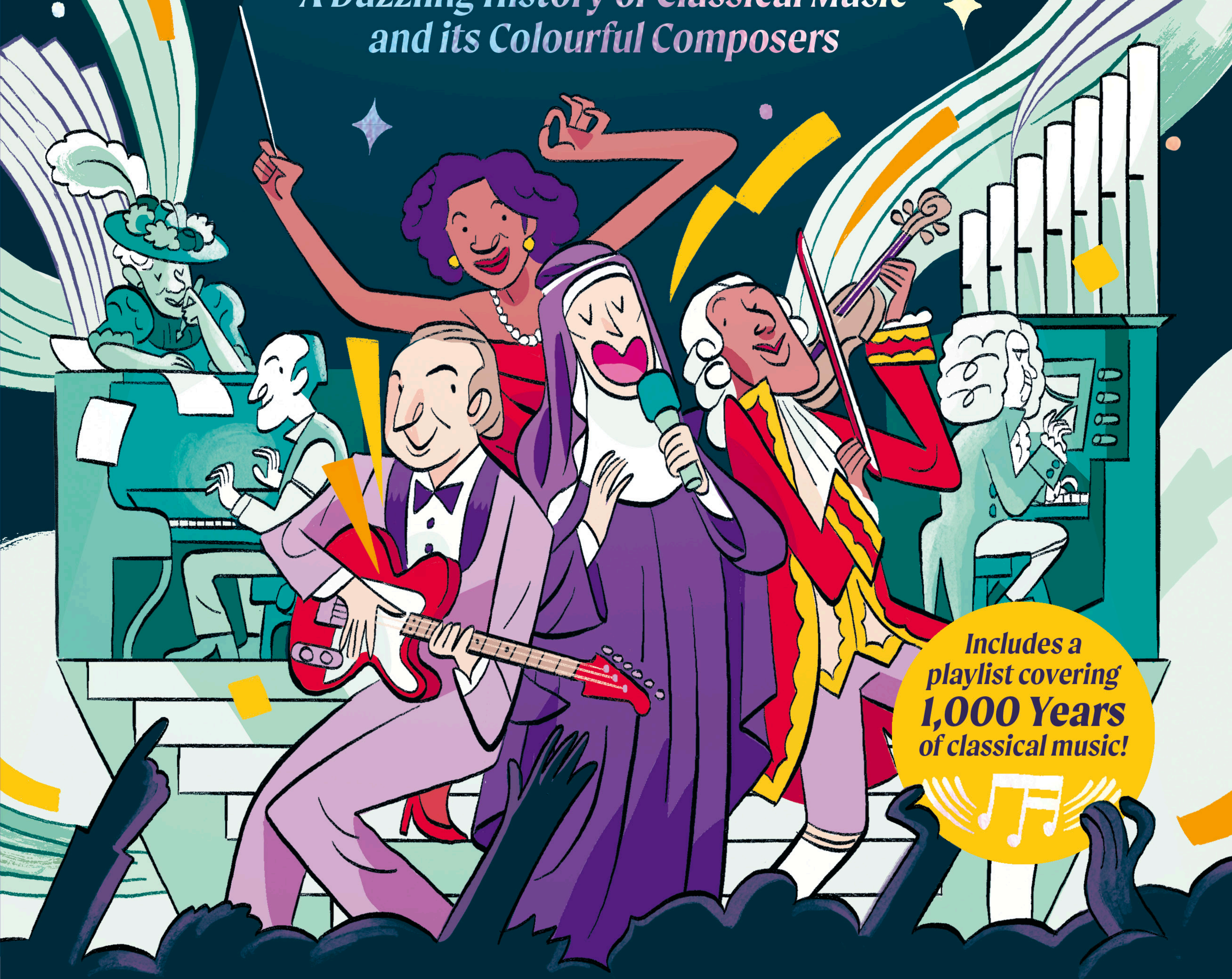
RAISING THE ROOF!

A Dazzling History of Classical Music and its Colourful Composers



Includes a playlist covering **1,000 Years** *of classical music!*

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SYMPHONY

The symphony has changed over the centuries, but it is essentially an extended piece of music for a large group of players. The word itself comes from the Greek, meaning 'sounding together'. It is often a composer's statement piece because the size and scale of the music make it hard to pull off.

A symphony is played by an orchestra, with tens or hundreds of people. There are lots of sections, called movements, each with their own tempo. It's like a painting on a huge canvas, or writing a novel with many characters and chapters. The opening movement is often loud and dramatic, while the second movement is slower and gentler. Movements provide contrast – with highs and lows, moments of tension and release, building to an ultimate finale.

LISTENING TIP

Keep your ears focused in the starting moments, as you can then trace how the original ideas are woven through the piece as it progresses.

Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony no. 9, 4th movement

Never one to shy away from large orchestras, Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) featured an entire choir (one of *the* first times human voices were included in a symphony). In the fourth movement, they sing 'Ode to Joy', a hymn celebrating togetherness among humanity.



Alice Mary Smith's Symphony no. 1 in C minor, 4th movement

The first known symphony written by a British woman, aged just 24, Alice Mary Smith (1839–1884) looks back towards the clarity and elegance of the 1700s, avoiding the emotion and excess that many writers of her time embraced.

Amy Beach's 'Gaelic' Symphony in E minor, 2nd movement

An American prodigy who was writing music aged four, Amy Beach's (1867–1944) 'Gaelic' Symphony draws on traditional English, Scottish and Irish melodies.



Philip Glass's *Heroes* and *Low*

Philip Glass (1937–present) is celebrated for bringing together different musical styles. With *Heroes* and *Low*, Glass wrote two symphonies inspired by albums from pop and mainstream music stars David Bowie and Brian Eno.

1600s

The term 'symphony' is often used to refer to a large combination of instruments playing in various settings.

1672

The first recorded public concert is held at composer John Banister's (c. 1625–1679) home in London, paving the way for public concerts in taverns and coffeehouses.

1700s

Orchestra music develops outside of the opera house. A three-movement structure is created, with a fast opening, a slow central section, and a fast ending.

1748

The first building designed for public concerts is opened in Oxford, UK: the Holywell Music Room.

1775

London's first purpose-built concert hall opens: the Hanover Square Rooms.

1800s

We start to see more programme music, pieces that tell specific stories. The orchestra gets bigger, and new instruments are invented.

1900s

Symphonies expand in scope, with single-movement and even ten-movement symphonies!

Present

A symphony is an extended piece for orchestra. There is not a specific number of movements or instruments.

1098–1179 Hildegard of Bingen

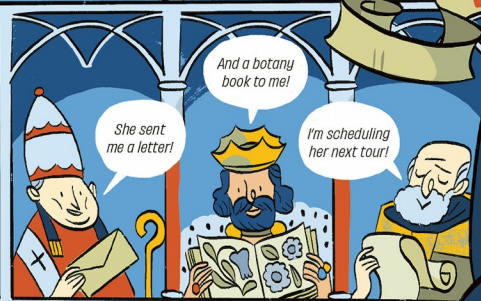
Here's someone who was, in every sense, a visionary. Hildegard of Bingen had visions of God and wrote them down as poems and music.

Music was just one part of a lifetime of interests. Hildegard of Bingen – named after the German town she came from – was (deep breath) a nun, diplomat, writer, leader, adviser, plant expert, scientist, public speaker… and a composer. But it all came back to faith. Hildegard became a nun aged 15 and later created her own monastery with 18 sisters. As if that wasn't enough, Hildegard then developed her own language and alphabet, possibly to help bring her nuns together. She used her talents – for music and for words – to unite people. It was all ultimately about expression. Hildegard wrote books on natural history, plants and medicine, and was even the first person to write a morality play, a drama where good battles evil (think *Star Wars*, but in the 1100s). That made her the 'influencer' of the time! She became a pen pal of popes, kings, emperors and archbishops, and was herself a major public leader: she went on at least four public speaking tours of Germany. This was bold stuff, given that women of the time were not allowed to travel as preacher-teachers; she was in many ways an early feminist, championing the rights of women and dealing with men on an equal footing. No wonder why, in the centuries after her death, Hildegard was considered for sainthood by no less than four different popes!

LISTEN!

***A Feather on the Breath of God* sung by Gothic Voices**

Hildegard was a little-known name even in musical circles, until early music became widely performed and recorded from the 1970s onwards. One of the standouts is this album, released in 1985.



Hildegard's Sound

Her music is often monophonic – a single line, a tune on its own (*mono* means one, *phonic* means sound). This creates a sense of calm, perfect for a focused, intense contemplation of faith. Hildegard wrote mostly sacred plainchant (where people all sing the same line, with religious texts used for the words), intended for use in church: her abbey consisted of 50 nuns who all had trained voices and would sing daily. It's believed a Benedictine nun at the time would sing for eight hours each day! With an in-house choir, then, an abbey provided an ideal testing ground for new music. Music becomes a form of prayer, and having everyone sing the same line creates a powerful symbol of togetherness through faith.

Learning by Ear

The Greeks were the first to use letters of the alphabet to represent different notes. Yet until the Middle Ages, almost all music was passed down the generations by mouth, instead of being written down. There was a lot to learn: in the 600s, monks in churches are estimated to have memorised 80 hours of music, all by ear! By the 900s, it took around 10 years to teach a young chorister all the pieces they'd need to know for future services. And you think school is intense…

Richard Wagner

1813–1883

Wagner had a lot to say and did things his way. He pushed music to its limits and revolutionised storytelling – but he is also a controversial figure.

Richard Wagner wrote the libretto (text) and the music for his operas, making him composer, poet, producer, philosopher and more. His ultimate aim was to create a 'total work of art', where every aspect of an opera helped tell the story. He created epic dramas with huge orchestras, a lush sound and powerful singers.

Born in Leipzig, Germany, Wagner is believed to be the son of an actor, who put him on the stage while he was still a child. Wagner's early aims were to become a playwright. By the age of 20, he had written his first opera.

Over time, Wagner's music almost became a religion, with devoted disciples (and equally vocal critics). Key to this Wagner cult was his very own festival, for which he built his own theatre in the German town of Bayreuth, particularly to showcase his epic masterpiece the Ring Cycle, a collection of four operas performed over four nights. It takes around 15 hours to perform in full, but that's nothing compared to the 26 years Wagner took to write it!

Perhaps unsurprisingly for someone with such ambition, Wagner had a huge ego. At parties, he screamed at the top of his voice if he felt he wasn't getting enough attention. He gambled violently, and once even staked his mum's pension (thankfully he won the bet, so didn't have to give all her money away). Wagner did things his way, pushing music to its limits, challenging tradition and redefining what drama could be.

To Listen or Not to Listen...

Can we separate a person from their music? Can we enjoy music written by someone who had political and social views so against everything we believe in today? Wagner is the prime subject of such questions. In 1850, he published a pamphlet that was openly antisemitic (racist towards Jews). Later, 1930s Nazi Germany took antisemitism to horrifying extremes in the Holocaust, and Wagner was one of the favourite composers of Nazi leader Adolf Hitler. Wagner's operas speak of German mythical heroes, struggles and nationhood; little wonder they appealed to the Nazis. Should this mean we avoid his music?



LISTEN!

Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*

Wagner wrote this sensuous opera – a love story – while he himself was falling in love. He translates his yearning heart into music of great longing and emotional tension, full of clashes without resolution, questions without answers.

Wagner's Sound

His music is often heavy and rich, perhaps to match his surroundings: he liked to work in a room pumped full of thick perfume. His operas try to do the same; the music is indulgent, sensuous and sometimes almost overpowering. Wagner was also one of the main developers of the leitmotif (where a character has their own theme).

George Gershwin

1898–1937

He brought jazz into the concert hall and popular song into the opera house. Who needs genres and labels?

Nowhere is this clearer than in *Rhapsody in Blue*, where a classical orchestra plays with more than a *hint* of jazz. It channels the energy of New York City, where George Gershwin lived. He sat writing it in his flat, surrounded by the jangling of cars and trains (some parts were actually written while he travelled in a train carriage), and the clickety-clack of those rhythms slipped into the music. It paints a picture of a composer in New York in his mid-20s. It made Gershwin world-famous.

With hit musicals, concert pieces, film scores and pop songs pouring out of him, Gershwin became one of the biggest musical celebrities of the 1920s. Some say that he was the richest composer of all time, which is quite a rise for someone who as a boy spent most of his time roller skating and playing in the streets.

Nobody in the Gershwin family was a musician – in fact, his father ran a Turkish bathhouse in Harlem. A lot of what Gershwin knew, he had taught himself. He had to buy five books about concerti before writing his own, as he didn't know what a concerto was. When his parents bought a piano, it was for his older brother, Ira. Yet it was George who shocked the family by immediately taking to the keys and playing tunes by ear (without the help of sheet music). Ira ended up becoming George's great collaborator, writing lyrics to his music: it was a sibling partnership.

Gershwin's Sound

Gershwin died at the tragically young age of 38, so his music never stopped having that distinctive youthful exuberance. It's the life and soul of the party, channelling the energy of the USA in the 1920s and the sheer joy of music-making.



LISTEN!

An American in Paris

On a visit to Paris in 1928, Gershwin ended up writing a piece about it. He went around the local markets to purchase French taxi horns for use in the work's first performance in New York. It's a musical postcard!

Piano Addiction

Gershwin became a phenomenal pianist, regularly playing for four hours at a time. Fellow composer Harold Arlen (who wrote the melody to the much-loved song 'Over the Rainbow', for the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*), recalled how Gershwin would ring the doorbell, rush through to play his piano, and only then say hello! The way he composed was to doodle at the piano, something he sometimes also did in the middle of interviews.