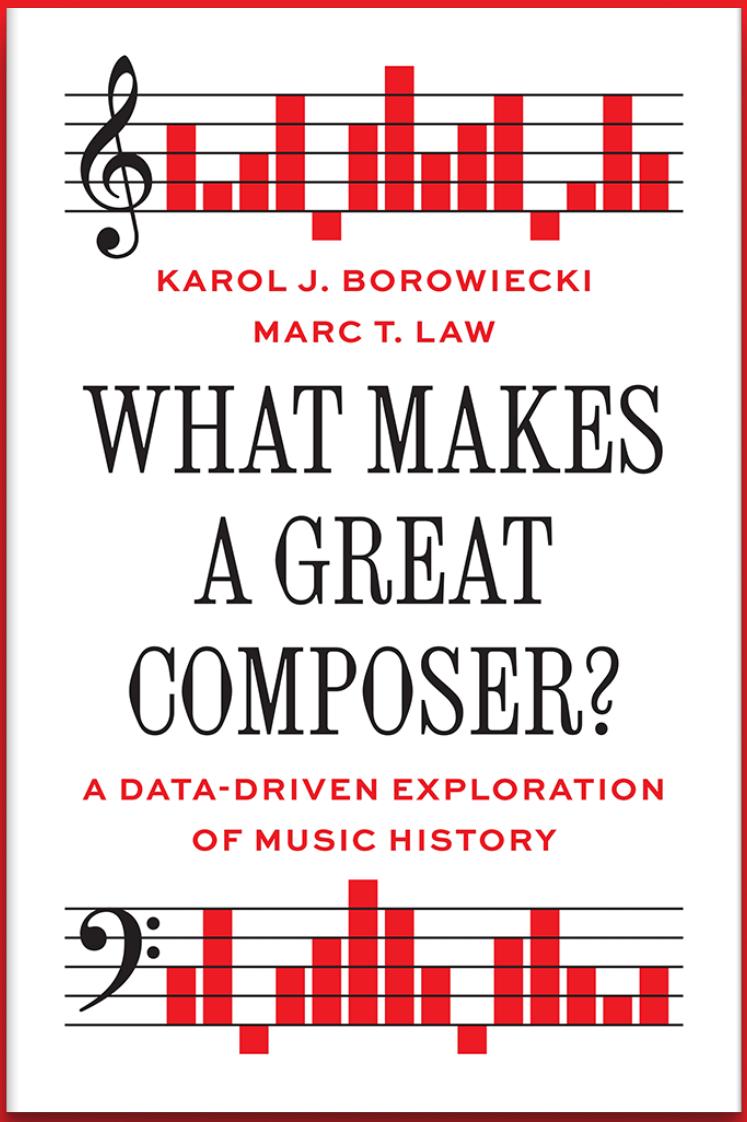
LISTENING GUIDE



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ABOUT

This listening guide accompanies *What Makes a Great Composer?* Organized by chapter, it brings together a set of musical selections that reflect the themes, examples, and arguments of the book. These selections are not meant to represent the "best" works in any definitive sense. Rather, they are intended to help readers hear some of the questions the book explores: greatness, training, institutions, cities, emotion, conflict, gender, and legacy.

For longer works, we usually recommend a single movement or excerpt, so that readers can listen alongside the chapter without needing to commit to an entire piece.

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QUICK NAVIGATION TO CHAPTERS

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LISTENING GUIDE KEY

Composer and Title

Mozart — Symphony No. 41 in C major, K. 551 ("Jupiter"), IV. Finale
The English Concert, Trevor Pinnock

Recommended Recording

A defining example of contrapuntal brilliance and formal elegance, this movement helps explain why Mozart remains central to the canon.

Why Listen

CHAPTER 1

IN SEARCH OF MUSICAL GREATNESS

This chapter introduces the book's central question: why some composers endure while others recede, and how greatness differs from reputation, productivity, or temporary fame.

Mozart — Symphony No. 41 in C major, K. 551 ("Jupiter"), IV. Finale *The English Concert, Trevor Pinnock*	A defining example of contrapuntal brilliance and formal elegance, this movement helps explain why Mozart remains central to the canon.
Salieri — Tarare, Overture *Les Talens Lyriques, Christophe Rousset*	This piece frames the opening puzzle of why Mozart remained central while Salieri receded. The point is not that Salieri's music was trivial, but that posterity came to judge these reputations differently.
Beethoven — Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major, Op. 55 ("Eroica"), I. Allegro con brio *Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, John Eliot Gardiner*	A vivid example of musical ambition, innovation, and lasting canonical influence. It also resonates with the chapter's broader concern with how Beethoven's personal struggles shaped his creative life.
Clara Schumann — Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17, II. Scherzo *Boulanger Trio*	Included to introduce the book's concern with gender, recognition, and unrealized prominence. The scherzo is compact, memorable, and immediately engaging.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING AND MEASURING THE GREATNESS OF COMPOSERS

This chapter explores greatness as a multidimensional concept. It is not just a matter of fame or a single masterpiece, but of how quantity, originality, influence, popularity, and critical acclaim combine over time. The selections below reflect different pathways to greatness, from broad and enduring achievement to narrower but still consequential forms of musical distinction.

Beethoven — Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major, Op. 55 ("Eroica"), II. Marcia funebre
Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, John Eliot Gardiner

Chosen to represent Beethoven's broad, multidimensional greatness. The funeral march shows the scale, ambition, and expressive seriousness that helped place him at the center of the canon.

Bach — The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I, Prelude and Fugue No. 22 in B-flat minor, BWV 867
András Schiff

This piece reflects Bach's extraordinary command of musical structure and detail, as well as the lasting influence his work has had on later composers.

Wagner — Tristan und Isolde, Act I Prelude
Daniel Barenboim, Berliner Philharmoniker

An example of a composer whose output was narrower in quantity but monumental in impact. Tristan und Isolde helped transform Western harmonic language.

Vivaldi — The Four Seasons, Violin Concerto in E major, RV 269 "Spring," I. Allegro
Jeanne, Lamon, Tafelmusik

A vivid illustration of brilliant and prolific achievement of a somewhat narrower kind. It captures the chapter's distinction between very high accomplishment and the broader, more varied greatness of composers such as Beethoven, Bach, and Mozart.

Dukas — The Sorcerer's Apprentice
Philharmonia Orchestra

Often remembered for this single work, Dukas illustrates how lasting fame can rest on one piece rather than a broad body of music.

Carl Orff — Carmina Burana, "O Fortuna"
Chicago Symphony Orchestra, James Levine

Like Dukas, Orff illustrates the chapter's point that a composer can be remembered overwhelmingly for one iconic work rather than for broad, multidimensional greatness across a wide body of music.

Schubert — Winterreise, D. 911, No. 1 "Gute Nacht"
Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Alfred Brendel

Illustrating the importance of posterity, Schubert's reputation grew enormously after his death, and Winterreise became one of the central works through which later generations came to understand his greatness.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIBING THE LIVES OF COMPOSERS IN DATA

This chapter traces the broad patterns of composers' lives: where they were born, where they worked, how they moved, the kinds of professional roles they held, how long they lived, and how their creative output changed over the life cycle. The selections below follow that arc, moving from early centers of composition to mobility, mixed careers, longevity, and sustained productivity across time.

John Dunstaple — Quam pulchra es
The Hilliard Ensemble, Paul Hillier

An early example of England's place in late medieval and early Renaissance polyphony. Dunstaple helps mark the chapter's starting point before the center of gravity shifts to the Low Countries.

Josquin des Prez — Ave Maria ... virgo serena
Stile Antico

Representing the Franco-Flemish school and the rise of the Low Countries as a major center of composition. Josquin is one of the clearest public-facing examples of that shift.

Monteverdi — L'Orfeo, Prologue: Toccata
New London Consort, Philip Pickett

Chosen to mark the shift to Italy and to represent the kind of musical world that made certain cities central to the history of composition.

Johann Jakob Froberger — Suite (Partita) No. 12 in C major, FbWV 612, I. [Lamento]
Sergio Vartolo

Reflecting the importance of mobility, Froberger's career crossed courts and cities, and this keyboard piece helps represent the cosmopolitan world through which he moved.

Michael Haydn — Symphony in D major, P. 38, I. Allegro molto
Slowakisches Kammerorchester, Bohdan Warchal

An example of a composer whose careers combined composition with other professional roles rather than fitting the later ideal of the fully autonomous artist.

Elliott Carter — Epigrams, No. 1
Isabelle Faust, Jean-Guihen Queyras, Pierre-Laurent Aimard

Composed at the age of 103, Epigrams offers a striking example of creative vitality at an extraordinary age. Its brevity and precision make it an ideal glimpse into Carter's late style.

Louis Spohr — Nonet in F major, Op. 31, I. Allegro
Nash Ensemble

A composer of remarkable productivity, Spohr sustained a long and active career, with works such as this nonet reflecting consistent output over time.

CHAPTER 4

SKILLS, EDUCATION, AND TRAINING

This chapter explores how composers acquired the craft behind greatness. Some examples highlight the technical control needed to write a brief piano miniature; others show the much larger demands of orchestration, long-form design, imitation, and stylistic transmission from teacher to student. The selections below are meant to make those different forms of musical training and influence audible.

Schumann — Kinderszenen, Op. 15, No. 1, "Von fremden Ländern und Menschen" *Martha Argerich*	Though it may sound simple, this piece depends on refined craft—melody, voicing, harmony, and pianistic control.
Mahler — Symphony No. 2 in C minor ("Resurrection"), Vb. "Aufersteh'n" *San Francisco Symphony, Michael Tilson Thomas*	At the opposite end of the technical spectrum from Schumann's miniature, this work demonstrates control of large forces, long-range buildup, chorus, and orchestra in a vast symphonic design.
Rimsky-Korsakov — Scheherazade, Op. 35, II. "The Tale of the Kalendar Prince" *London Symphony Orchestra, John Mauceri*	Chosen to showcase orchestration. The movement makes audible the color and instrumental imagination for which Rimsky-Korsakov became such an important model for later composers.
Stravinsky — The Rite of Spring, Part I, "Dance of the Adolescents" *National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, Sir Simon Rattle*	Chosen as a vivid example of how acquired technique can be transformed. It follows naturally from Rimsky-Korsakov, but the rhythmic violence and sonic shock belong unmistakably to Stravinsky.
J.C. Bach — Symphony in G minor, Op. 6, No. 6, I. Allegro *Academy of Ancient Music, Simon Standage*	Part of a deliberate comparison with Mozart's 25th symphony in G minor. It lets the listener hear a style that the young Mozart absorbed and reworked.
Mozart — Symphony No. 25 in G minor, K. 183, I. Allegro con brio *Jérémie Rhorer, Le Cercle de l'Harmonie*	Heard alongside J.C. Bach, this movement makes clear the chapter's point about stylistic transmission especially clear: same key, related dramatic profile, but different levels of drive, urgency, and compositional expansion.
Josquin des Prez — Tu solus qui facis mirabilia *Alamire, David Skinner*	An example of the kind of contrapuntal model later composers imitated. It helps anchor the chapter's discussion of stylistic transmission before the modern conservatory era.
Adrian Willaert — Ave Maria *Dionysos Now!, Tore Tom Denys*	Placed beside Josquin, this work shows how closely some later composers could write in an earlier master's style; this pairing lets the listener hear that phenomenon directly.

CHAPTER 5

INSTITUTIONS AND INCENTIVES

This chapter explores how composers responded to the worlds around them: churches, courts, aristocratic households, public audiences, and eventually a more market-oriented musical economy. The selections below trace how institutional settings shaped what composers wrote, how they earned a living, and how financial security or insecurity influenced creative choices.

Palestrina — Sicut cervus *Stile Antico*	An example of the older world of sacred employment and institutional demand. It gives the chapter an early anchor in church-based musical production.
Lully — Armide, Overture *Patrice Michaels Bedi, Chicago Baroque Ensemble*	Representing centralized royal patronage in France. The overture immediately evokes the ceremonial world of court opera associated with Versailles.
Haydn — Baryton Trio in D major, Hob. XI:97, I. Adagio cantabile *Geringas Baryton Trio*	Haydn wrote many baryton trios for Prince Nikolaus Esterházy, who played the instrument. This piece offers a clear example of how a patron's tastes could shape what composers wrote.
Haydn — Symphony No. 45 in F-sharp minor ("Farewell"), IV. Finale. Presto – Adagio *Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Sir Neville Marriner*	Chosen to represent salaried service under court constraint. It makes audible the composer's room for wit and communication even within a hierarchical employment relationship.
Mozart — Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor, K. 466, I. Allegro *Jan Lisiecki, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Christian Zacharias*	Chosen for the chapter's discussion of Mozart's Vienna freelance years and the relationship between income and originality. This concerto was written for one of Mozart's subscription concerts in the 1780s.
Adolphe Adam — Giselle, Waltz *Alexander Kopylov, Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra*	Adolphe Adam faced financial hardship after the collapse of the Opéra-National in 1848. He was forced to assign royalties from earlier works, including Giselle, to his creditors.
Verdi — La traviata, Act I, "Sempre libera" *Anna Netrebko, Rolando Villazón, Wiener Philharmoniker, Carlo Rizzi*	Set in an age of stronger copyright and wider circulation, this opera reflects how changing systems reshaped the rewards available to composers.

CHAPTER 6

CITIES

This chapter examines how cities shaped musical creativity by bringing composers into closer contact with teachers, rivals, performers, and other creatives, as well as the broader public. It argues that urban clustering created both benefits and costs: cities concentrated talent and infrastructure, making learning and exchange easier, but they also intensified competition and pressure. Vienna, London, and Paris emerge as especially important hubs, with Paris standing out as the most prominent center in the data. The selections below are chosen not simply because they are associated with these cities, but because they help illustrate the kinds of musical worlds these cities made possible.

VIENNA

Beethoven — Piano Sonata No. 12 in A-flat major, Op. 26, I. Andante con variazioni
Daniel Barenboim

Representing the early Beethoven who emigrated to Vienna's dense world of training, ambition, and exchange.

Hummel — Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 85, I. Allegro moderato
Solamente Naturali, Didier Talpain, Alessandro Commellato

Included to reflect the role of proximity, where composers learned from one another, competed, and developed their style within a shared musical environment.

Schubert — 4 Impromptus, Op. 90, D. 899, No. 4 in A-flat major
Alexandre Tharaud

This piece reflects the intimate, lyrical style associated with Vienna's salon culture, where music shared a sensibility with contemporary poetry - focused on mood, expression, and immediacy. rather than large-scale form.

LONDON

Handel — Water Music, Suite No. 1 in F major, HWV 348, I. Overture. Grave – Allegro
Berliner Philharmoniker, Rafael Kubelík, Wolfgang Meyer

Chosen to represent London as an early center of public ceremony, prestige, and large-scale musical life.

Haydn — Symphony No. 104 in D major, Hob. I:104 ("London"), I. Adagio –Allegro
Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Nicholas McGegan

Capturing London's importance as a destination for composers and as a center of public concerts.

Mendelssohn — The Hebrides Overture, Op. 26 ("Fingal's Cave")
London Symphony Orchestra, Claudio Abbado

Included to represent the later London concert world and the city's continuing ability to attract major composers like Felix Mendelssohn.

PARIS

Mozart — Symphony No. 31 in D major, K. 297 ("Paris"), I. Allegro assai *English Baroque Soloists, John Eliot Gardiner*	Chosen as the clearest musical emblem of Paris, the most important city in the chapter's data.
Chopin — Nocturne No. 16 in E-flat major, Op. 55 No. 2 *Daniel Barenboim*	Capturing the intimate, salon-centered side of the Parisian musical world.
Berlioz — Roman Carnival Overture, Op. 9 *RSO Ljubljana, Anton Nanut*	Included to represent the large-scale, public, orchestral side of Parisian musical life. As one of Berlioz's most successful concert works, it helped set a high standard, adding to the competitive pressure faced by other composers.

CHAPTER 7

EMOTIONS

This chapter follows Mozart, Beethoven, and Liszt through the emotional arcs reconstructed from their letters and asks whether - and how- those emotions are reflected in their music. Some works seem to invite autobiographical readings, yet the relationship between lived experience and musical expression is not always straightforward. The selections below are meant to reflect that tension.

MOZART

Mozart — Violin Sonata in E minor, K. 304, II. Tempo di menuetto
Hilary Hahn, Natalie Zhu

Written after the death of Mozart's mother in Paris, this sonata is often heard as expressing grief and longing.

Mozart — Die Zauberflöte, Act II, No. 20, "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen"
Bryn Terfel, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Sir Charles Mackerras

A counterexample: music of wit and charm written during a period when Mozart's life was clouded by illness and financial strain.

BEETHOVEN

Beethoven — String Quartet No. 15 in A minor, Op. 132, III. "Heiliger Dankgesang"
Alban Berg Quartett

Often heard as a late work shaped by Beethoven's struggle, illness, and resilience, this movement invites a connection between personal experience and musical expression.

Beethoven — Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125, IV. Finale
San Francisco Symphony, Michael Tilson Thomas

Widely associated with triumph and transcendence, this finale conveys the emotional breadth and ambition of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

LISZT

Liszt — Consolation No. 3 in D-flat major, S. 172
Alice Sara Ott

Chosen to represent the more inward and lyrical side of Liszt's emotional world, balancing the chapter's attention to personal upheaval with music of poise and calm.

Liszt — Nuages gris, S. 199
Alfred Brendel

An example of a darker, sparer, and more unsettled Liszt, revealing a side of his music marked by emotional tension and restraint.

CHAPTER 8

CONFLICT AND CHANCE

This chapter asks how wars, disasters, epidemics, and other shocks altered the conditions under which composers lived and worked. Some pieces respond directly to conflict or catastrophe; others are linked to loss, disease, or collective trauma more indirectly. Together, they suggest that external shocks could disrupt musical life, redirect creative effort, and at times even inspire new forms of expression, shaping the music that followed.

Ravel — Le Tombeau de Couperin, II. Forlane
Boston Symphony Orchestra, Seiji Ozawa

A World War I memorial work, dedicated in part to friends Ravel lost in the war, this piece reflects how personal loss could shape musical expression.

Shostakovich — Symphony No. 7 in C major, Op. 60 ("Leningrad"), I. Allegretto
Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Leonard Bernstein

Closely associated with the siege of Leningrad, this symphony has come to symbolize war, endurance, and collective resilience.

Beethoven — Wellington's Victory, Op. 91, II. Victory Symphony
Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, Antal Doráti

A wartime piece celebrating military victory, it shows how composers could respond directly to contemporary events, while also raising questions about artistic ambition and opportunism.

Tchaikovsky — 1812 Overture, Op. 49
Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, Antal Doráti

A companion to Beethoven's war piece, but from a different angle: retrospective commemoration rather than immediate battle painting.

Chopin — Polonaise in A major, Op. 40 No. 1 ("Military")
Arthur Rubinstein

With its martial character and later wartime associations in Poland, this piece reflects how music can take on political meaning over time, often gaining significance well beyond its original context.

António Fragoso — Suite romantique for Violin and Piano, III. Berceuse
Carlos Damas, Jill Lawson

Fragoso died in 1918 during the influenza pandemic, and his career ended before it had fully unfolded. This piece offers a glimpse of a composer whose promise was never fully realized.

Telemann — Die Donnerode, TWV 6:3, Pt. 1, No. 1, "Wie ist dein Name so gross"
Rheinische Kantorei, Das Kleine Konzert, Hermann Max

Written in response to the Lisbon earthquake, this work shows how composers could engage directly with natural disasters through music, giving form to collective shock and reflection.

Bach — Cantata BWV 25, Es ist nichts Gesundes an meinem Leibe, I. Chorus
Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, Ton Koopman

Centered on themes of disease and bodily suffering, this chorus reflects a world shaped by illness and recurring epidemics, with events such as the Great Plague of Marseille still fresh in collective memory.

CHAPTER 9

FEMALE COMPOSERS

This chapter asks why so few women appear in historical rankings of the greatest composers and how barriers to training, publication, performance, and recognition shaped that outcome. Some women found ways around these constraints through family support, private study, chamber genres, entrepreneurial publication, or pseudonyms. The selections below are chosen to reflect those strategies and obstacles.

Mozart / Nannerl Mozart — Symphony No. 1 in E-flat major, K. 16, II. Andante
Concentus Musicus Wien, Nikolaus Harnoncourt

This early symphony is sometimes thought to have involved Nannerl Mozart, offering a starting point for considering how women's contributions could be overlooked or obscured.

Amy Beach — Piano Concerto in C-sharp minor, Op. 45, I. Allegro moderato
Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Leonard Bernstein

A composer of exceptional promise, Amy Beach faced constraints on her training and career due to gender and marriage, yet still produced ambitious large-scale works such as this concerto.

Louise Farrenc — Nonet in E-flat major, Op. 38, II. Andante con moto
Consortium Classicum

Despite the quality of her music, Louise Farrenc faced significant barriers in getting large-scale instrumental works performed and published, making this nonet a notable achievement.

Ethel Smyth — The Wreckers, Overture
Scottish National Orchestra, Alexander Gibson

A composer of large-scale works and public ambition, Ethel Smyth encountered persistent critical and institutional resistance despite the scope of her music.

Mel Bonis — Soir-Matin, Op. 76, I. "Soir"
Champlain Trio

Mel Bonis (born Mélanie Bonis) adopted a gender-ambiguous name to navigate prejudice in the musical world, reflecting the barriers faced by women composers of her time.

Clara Schumann — Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17, III. Andante
Beaux Arts Trio

Chosen because the chapter suggests that chamber music offered women a more accessible route to performance and recognition than larger public genres.

Fanny Mendelssohn — Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, II. Andante espressivo
The Nash Ensemble

Another example of a major woman composer whose gifts found expression especially in chamber music, the genre that the chapter suggests was often more open to women than the large public forms.

CHAPTER 10

THE LEGACY OF MUSICAL GREATNESS

This chapter turns from the making of greatness to its afterlife. It asks why a small group of composers continues to dominate concert life, how canon formation is reinforced by institutions and repeated performance, and how classical techniques survive far beyond the concert hall in popular music, film, and video games. The selections below are chosen to reflect those overlapping themes: persistence in the canon, the narrowing of attention onto a few figures, and the diffusion of classical devices into later forms.

Beethoven — Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67, I. Allegro con brio *Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, John Eliot Gardiner*	A defining example of thematic development, this movement shows how a simple musical idea can be transformed into a work of lasting power, helping to anchor Beethoven at the core of the canon.
Ferdinand Ries — Symphony No. 2 in C minor, Op. 80, I. Allegro ma non troppo *Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Howard Griffiths*	Despite its craftsmanship and ambition, this work is far less frequently performed than Beethoven's, illustrating how some composers have receded from the canon while others endure.
Brahms — Symphony No. 3 in F major, Op. 90, III. Poco allegretto *Berliner Philharmoniker, Claudio Abbado*	Written in the shadow of earlier masters, this symphony reflects how composers could refine and deepen an existing tradition rather than seek entirely new directions.
Samuel Coleridge-Taylor — Hiawatha's Wedding Feast, "Onaway! Awake, beloved!" *Arthur Davies, Welsh National Opera Orchestra, Kenneth Alwyn*	Despite early success, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor did not secure a lasting place in the canon, illustrating how recognition can fade over time.
The Beatles — "Paperback Writer" *The Beatles*	Its use of imitation and layered vocal texture shows how techniques associated with classical music continue to shape popular forms.
Korngold — The Adventures of Robin Hood, "Main Title (Original Version)" *Erich Wolfgang Korngold*	Drawing on late-Romantic orchestral style, this music helped define the sound of classical Hollywood film scoring.
John Williams — The Imperial March (Darth Vader's Theme) *John Williams, London Symphony Orchestra*	This piece is a clear example of leitmotif. Its recurring theme identifies Darth Vader whenever he appears or is invoked, showing how film composers use musical ideas to build character and narrative continuity.
Nobuo Uematsu — Final Fantasy VII, "Aerith's Theme" *Distant Worlds: Music from Final Fantasy*	Through recurring themes and emotional association, this music shows how classical techniques continue to operate in video game soundtracks.
Maurice Ravel — Boléro, M. 81 *Recommended recording: Berliner Philharmoniker, Herbert von Karajan*	Built almost entirely on repetition, Boléro shows how a simple idea can gain intensity through gradual change in orchestration and texture, reminding us that creativity often emerges from finding new meaning in the familiar.