

Hello music lovers! It's your friendly neighborhood music doctor bringing you some truth about classical music. Perhaps "myths" is the wrong word. Really, when we talk about classical music, we deal with misconceptions. And perhaps we, in the "classical music world", don't do a good enough job reaching out to a broader public. Remember, there are only TWO kinds of music - good and bad. Here are some too-often-made assumptions about this misunderstood genre...

1. Classical Music is not relevant

What? You may think so, but I can prove its relevance in today's society. Just because something was created a century (or more!) ago, doesn't mean it loses relevance! Take Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, a touchstone work for choir, orchestra, and soloists. Written in the mid 1930s, it sets texts from the 11th, 12, and 13th centuries. You know it! It's used at sporting events and commercials and countless other events. Just listen to the opening movement - a commentary on the whims of fortune:

["O, Fortuna" \(Oh, Fortune!\) - from Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*](#)

How many of us know that tune? How many of us can relate to its message - that luck is out of our control! And the power of the music! It drives right through the soul.

Our life events are marked with what most would label "classical" music - how about Felix Mendelssohn's [Wedding March](#), written in 1842 to accompany a production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or a countless number of Christmas carols, written centuries ago!

2. Classical Music has no power

Okay, slow down. Let's think about that for a second. We have all been moved by music's power, whether that be a pop song we connect to, or perhaps a piece of purposeful music, like a hymn or a protest song. But think about this: when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and Europe was looking for a piece of music to celebrate, they turned to Beethoven. American conductor Leonard Bernstein, lead the musicians of an international orchestra and chorus in performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, culminating in a powerful final movement - a tune we all know - Ode to Joy. In this moment, Ode to "Joy" became Ode to "Freedom." The concert, which can be found in its entirety [here](#), was broadcast in over 20 countries. The intensely powerful last part of the final movement is an amazing example of the genre's capacity to activate our collective spirit.

[Last section of 4th Movement - Ode to Freedom](#)

3. Classical music is old

HISTORY WARNING! This is one of the biggest misconceptions of the genre. Of course, this stems from our use of the word "classic"; we use it as a polite synonym for "old." The term in

question has two main uses: classical - lowercase, used as a general term for all music performed by orchestras, many choirs, opera singers, and the like, and Classical - uppercase, which pertains to a specific period in music history, roughly 1750 to 1820. Now, Johann Sebastian Bach did not proclaim on his 1750 deathbed that “Baroque music is over! Now it’s the Classical period!” And Beethoven didn’t suddenly write in his journal on an early 1820 morning, “I am so over the Classical period. Let’s all be Romantic composers now!” These are labels which my musicologist colleagues have applied to help organize the past. The reality is that each predominant compositional style slowly morphed and bled into the next. A better term might be Art Music. And guess what? Art music is still being composed today! Many of you know John Williams, the film score composer. His work is greatly influenced by Richard Wagner, a German composer of the late 1800s. Imagine a movie without a score. BORING!

Listen to these two examples - the first is Richard Wagner’s incredible musical representation of the Ride of the Valkyries - the Norse female figures who decided who lived and died in battle.

[Ride of the Valkyries](#) - composed in 1851

Now - John Williams’ iconic score from Star Wars! Listen to just a bit of the opening. Hear any similarities between this and Wagner? Triumphant brass...driving rhythms...you can’t separate it from the action of the film. Well...surprise! Wagner did it first in Opera.

[Star Wars Full Score](#) - composed in 1977

It’s pretty easy to hear how the Star Wars music is a descendent of Wagner’s iconic themes.

4. It’s too expensive

Well, it’s true that it does cost a lot of money to maintain a professional symphony orchestra. There’s a great deal of education and experience on that stage. But, because of corporate sponsorships, grants, and individual patrons of the arts who give generously, tickets to a concert can be found for \$25 or less - that’s a night at the movies for one person. And you are seeing LIVE music! There’s no studio manipulation, no lip syncing, and no safety nets. There are no do-overs. These musicians have practiced for years to perform at a level with just about zero mistakes. Take a look at this:

[American Symphony Orchestra](#) - one of the best orchestras in the US, located in NYC (an expensive city!) - tickets are as low as \$25.

[St. Louis Symphony](#) - their Family Concerts have tickets as low as \$8!!!

[The Dallas Symphony Orchestra](#) - tickets to their concerts start at \$19!

5. Classical music is for my grandparents

This one is my favorite. My wonderfully talented wife is a elementary school music educator. She hears this myth from her students CONSTANTLY when she first exposes them to “classical” music. But...after spending some time with it, learning about it, and developing a better understanding of the music, she has students asking “Can I download this on my iPod?!”

What’s the key here? I bet you know the answer! The earlier a child is exposed to something, whether that be art or poetry or dance or MUSIC, it will become part of who they are for life. And a future appreciation of classical music can be made much more likely and stronger when regular contact with music is made from birth. That is where Kindermusik can help! Believe it - involvement in Kindermusik’s programs can provide an incredible foundation for a lifetime of music appreciation. Remember, as I mentioned at the top, there are truly only two kinds of music - good and bad; help your kids learn the difference. Start them early and often. Family concerts with your local or regional symphony...sing, sing, sing and play, play, play! You can get started on the journey with Kindermusik!