



YouTube channel **Classics Explained is back by popular demand with a new series of animated films, as it racks up 2.9 million views and 66,700 global subscribers**



Now available to watch
***Carmen**, the spiciest opera ever written*

March
Beethoven 9

April
Ravel's Bolero

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Classics Explained has relaunched with a new series of animated shorts, free to view. Started during the pandemic, **Classics Explained** quickly found a foothold with a **surprisingly youthful audience – the 18 to 34-year-olds**, many of whom had never previously engaged in classical music. Their current catalogue of 20 shorts has attracted 2.9 million views and a devoted following from 66,700 subscribers, who eagerly await the next installments. Next up is the "*spiciest opera ever written*" **Carmen** by Bizet launched on **Friday 9 February** ahead of Valentine's Day.



Carmen

Ahead of the Royal Opera's run at Covent Garden, Classics Explained takes on the **Carmen** in a 17-minute whistle-stop tour of the opera. Working in a cigarette factory by day and smuggling by night, this *femme fatale* has a penchant for arrogant bullfighters and disobedient soldiers. Breaking all the rules, she is an indomitable fiery free-spirit exuding gypsy passion with her devil-may-care, Habanera song full of seductive, demonic chromaticism:

*"Love is a gypsy child,
It has never, never known a law,
If you don't love me, I love you,
If I love you, be on your guard!"*

An all-too familiar story of obsessive love and destructive jealousy, not even Carmen's tarot-reading skills can save her from her own inevitable demise. Carmen broke the mould when it premiered at Paris' Opera-Comique to a luke-warm reception, but it quickly caught on after the composer's untimely death at the age of 36.

Brilliantly told with memorable melodies and glittering orchestration, the opera (to the soundtrack of Angela Gheorghiu and Roberto Alagna's 2003 Warner recording) is a fun reminder that the worst behaviour has the best soundtrack. As Tchaikovsky predicted, Carmen with its many catchy tunes has remained a firm favourite in opera houses ever since.

Classics Explained

Shedding all jargon and pretention often associated with the appreciation of classical music, Classics Explained provides fast-paced video guides for the uninitiated (and also converts) eager to explore the personal and socio-political backstories to great pieces of music, often with a satirical spin. In a category of "edutainment" alongside *Horrible Histories*, these are witty, sophisticated shorts, that demystify the genre with a healthy dose of irreverence.

Launched by Benjamin Levy 3 years ago, the shorts have gradually grown in length from 5 minutes to 20 minutes, with additional separate mini-documentaries of musical analysis from Levy demonstrating on the piano on request from viewers.

As Levy explains,

"We're a YouTube channel that digs into the stories behind the great works of classical music, and explores what inspired the composers to greatness. Whether it's a tumultuous love life, political turmoil or simply a tight deadline, the one thing they all have in common is an all-too-relatable humanity. These stories free this brilliant music from stuffy, unapproachable academic language and puts it back where it is supposed to be: in our life."



So far, the 20 episodes have covered amongst others Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No.2, Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, Saint-Saens' *Carnival of the Animals*, Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, Prokofiev's *Romeo & Juliet*, Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Mozart's *Magic Flute* and more.

Comments from the viewers include:

"I love you ClassicsExplained! Your content is among my favorite on YouTube! I'd love to see a video on the firebird sometime! please keep up the fantastic work!"

"Please please please NEVER stop making these videos"

"I'm in love with this channel.....You never cease to cheer me up"

"You've treated the genuine sadness of Rachmaninov's story respectfully whilst still incorporating a good level of comedy. This may be my new favourite episode"

"Thank you so much! Your channel has opened the doors to classical music for me. Now rarely a day goes by without some classics."
Saint-Saens

"This was very informative and the HILARIOUS beginning is a bonus! Still chuckling. I'm subscribing."

"I'm stoked. I've been binge watching this series with my 4 year old daughter"





Benjamin Levy

Based in London, UK, Benjamin Levy's prodigious curiosity for art, music and culture has led him into a number of different projects. He has contributed to widely-published exhibition catalogues for the V&A and other institutions, has written several books, and as a consulting expert, has researched and written on everything from the social history of 20th Century London to Russian stage design for an auction house. He is the creator, researcher, writer, and voice for Classics Explained.

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