



YouTube Channel Classics Explained
releases new animation
Episode 23: Ravel's Bolero
Classical music meets the machine

Available FREE TO VIEW from 2pm on Saturday 18 May

Press preview: [ATTACH LINK](#)

plus additional content available to subscribers on Patreon



*"The channel is a gem."
"Your video made me cry."
"Teared up, goosebumps man."*

Now with 3.5 million views, Classics Explained releases its next eagerly-awaited animation - **Episode 23: Ravel's Bolero** "*Classical music meets the machine*" – following the release of last month's Beethoven 9th Symphony "**A message to humanity**". Founder of Classics Explained, **Ben Levy** delves into classical music's catchiest beat: *the masterpiece with no music in it*, as the composer described it, bewildered by its instant popularity. Ravel's sultry Spanish bolero synthesizes the mechanical rhythms of the industrial age with a simple hypnotically-repeated 2-bar melody, sinuously inflected with jazz and blues hues. When the *Bolero* subsequently became the erotically-charged soundtrack to Hollywood movie "10" and Torvill and Dean's iconic performance at the 1984 Olympics, Ravel clinched his seat in the hall of fame.



Was Ravel a fraud, deranged or a master of seduction? With trademark irreverence, Levy takes his viewers - mostly **18- to 34-year-old newcomers to classical music** - into the wonders of musicology, free of jargon, tackling timbre with beguiling sophistication.

The 12-minute animation follows the debonair composer's fascination with the clock-work precision of mechanics which inspired the relentless rhythm repeated on snare drum 169 times. Carrying the melody on a conveyor belt looping from one instrument to the next, Ravel's pent-up tension is brilliantly captured by Pierre Boulez's recording with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra on Sony Classical.

Following its recent relaunch, the current catalogue has attracted **more than 3.5 million views** to Classics Explained, inspiring a devoted following from 75,500 subscribers, who eagerly await the next installment.

Started during the pandemic by Ben Levy, **Classics Explained** quickly found a foothold with a surprisingly young audience, many of whom had never previously engaged in classical music. Tailored to viewers' requests, Classics Explained responds to this youthful market, giving them a new entry into classical music and feeding a previously unacknowledged hunger to engage in opera and symphonic repertoire. Levy cites Hollywood's iconic *Fantasia* as inspiration for the channel and many of the musical choices so far.

Ben Levy commented:

"We were thrilled by the outpouring of emotional responses from our viewers who have been particularly moved by our penultimate episode on Beethoven's 9th Symphony and in particular the composer's inner struggles. It only goes to highlight that – when you dig deep into the stories – the great composers of classical music weren't, as we are sometimes led to believe, superhuman; but fallible creators who often had to work hard for their art. None more so than Ravel; the dandy whose output is surprisingly small for a composer of his stature. Beleaguered by his own torment with perfectionism, this episode tells us that sometimes it is better to strip back to the basics: a beguilingly simple melody, with almost no harmonic variation and a steady pulse all culminating in genius of a very different kind".





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 22 episodes have covered amongst others Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No.2, Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, Bizet's *Carmen*, Saint-Saens's *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

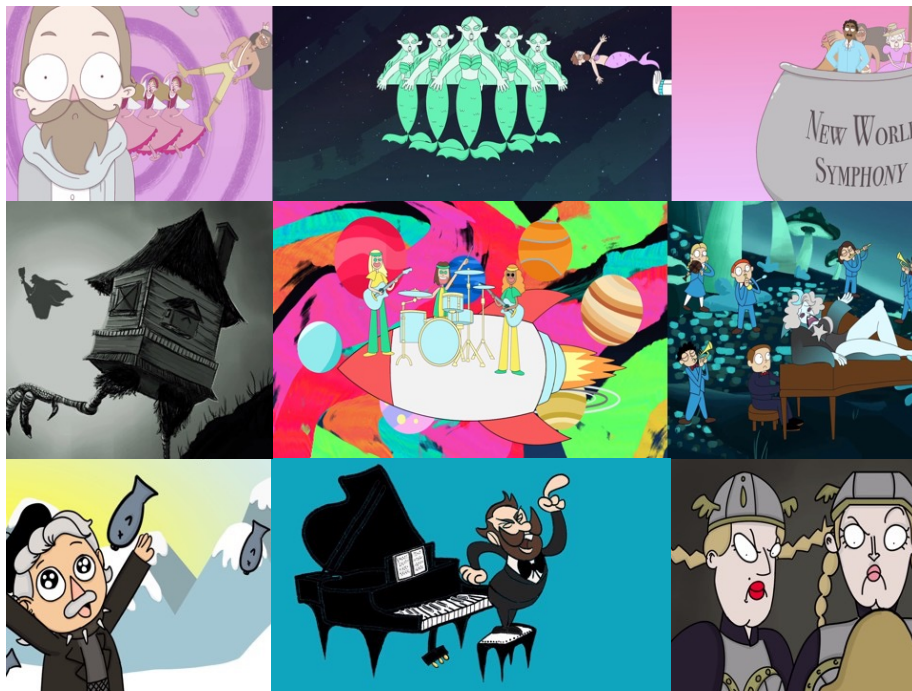
"This was very informative and the HILARIOUS beginning is a bonus! Still chuckling. I'm subscribing."



"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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