

Did you know?



The BBC Proms: Promenade through Stravinsky, Schumann, Sibelius, and Sci-Fi film music.

The Proms (or to use their full name, The BBC Promenade Concerts) have become a well-established feature of British cultural life since their founding by Henry Wood in 1895. From mid-

July to mid-September there are over 90 daily concerts, which are organized and broadcast by the BBC, in the Royal Albert Hall and Cadogan Hall in London, and outdoor concerts 'Proms in the Park' events across the UK. The final concert 'The last night of the Proms' is a riotous celebration of British patriotism ending with a rousing rendition of *Land of Hope and Glory, Rule, Britannia!, Jerusalem, God Save the Queen and Auld Lang Syne*. And lots of flag-waving!

The concerts were originally devised nearly one hundred and twenty-five years ago to encourage more people to listen to classical music. Offering low-priced tickets and allowing promenading, i.e. walking around during concerts and permitting eating, smoking and drinking, the aim was to create an informal atmosphere where the audience felt at ease during the music. These days the tickets for the 1,000 promenaders in the standing area are significantly cheaper than in the rest of the auditorium – although eating, smoking and drinking are no longer allowed.

Every year there are always the staples of the classical world such as Schubert, Chopin, and Beethoven, but many contemporary, and under-performed pieces of work are also played. British composers like Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Holst also feature. But there have also been some controversial inclusions. Back in 1912, Schoenberg's *Orchestral pieces* was met with 'emphatic hissing'. In 1969, the audience responded to Sir Peter Maxwell Davies' *Worldes Blis* by sitting with covered ears or leaving the auditorium. In 1970, Soft Machine, a psychedelic rock band were the first 'pop' band to play and not surprisingly, caused some raised eyebrows. In 2007, musical-theatre star Michael Ball's inclusion led to accusations of dumbing down.

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Did you know?

This year, audiences can hear cult soundtracks from popular science fiction films – giving a platform to other kinds of orchestral work. There will also be a prom dedicated to the summer of 1969: the year of Woodstock, the first moon-landing and the Beatle's final album. In 2019, the very first piece of the first prom is a world premiere by Canadian Zoshi di Castri; her piece is entitled *Long is the journey – short is the memory*. And this opens the two-month season of concerts which has many of the old favourites as well: Mozart, Haydn, Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky, Strauss and all the rest!

If you would like to see the programme for this year's BBC Proms, then click here: <https://www.royalalberthall.com/tickets/proms/bbc-proms-2019/>

Have a look at a four-minute romp through last year's Proms here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IISpqIZI3nY>

And here is a rousing rendition of *Jerusalem, God Save the Queen* and *Auld Lang Syne* from the Last Night of the Proms in the Royal Albert Hall in 2011. Watch the flag-waving!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sgd9nYqVz2s&frags=pl%2Cwn>

If you would like to use the **BBC Proms** as a topic in your lesson, then we have provided you with an activity at A2 level. You'll find it in the following **Teacher's notes** and on the **Worksheet**.

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Teacher's notes

BBC Proms (Level A2.2 and above, 15+ mins)

- Make sure you have a copy of **BBC Proms**, one for each student.
- On the board write: *BBC Proms* and ask students if anyone knows what this is.
- Explain that it is a season of classical concerts organized by the BBC taking place in Britain every year. *Proms* initially referred to outdoor *promenade concerts* where people walked around during the concert. In the context of BBC Proms, *promming* refers to the use of the standing areas inside the hall (the Arena and Gallery) for which ticket prices are much lower than for the seating.
- If possible, play the four-minute clip of 2018's BBC Proms above.
- Give each student a copy of **BBC Proms** and tell them to complete the quiz. Help as necessary with unknown vocabulary.
- Ask students to compare their answers with a partner.
- Check answers together in class.
- Key: 1a, 2b, 3b, 4c, 5a, 6c, 7a, 8c

If you have time, ask students to find a piece of classical music on their phones and ask them to play a one-minute excerpt to the class. You could suggest the following: Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy, Elgar, Fauré, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Orff, Strauss, Stravinsky, Verdi, Vivaldi, Wagner. They are all very different and elicit different moods in the listener. After each short piece ask students what they think of it and how it makes them feel.

You could also organize a "Last Night of the Proms" in the classroom. Print out the words of *Jerusalem*, *God Save the Queen* and *Auld Lang Syne*, (or just choose one of the songs) play the video above and then sing along!

BBC Proms

The BBC Proms are a season of classical music concerts in the United Kingdom.

Choose the correct answer to each question.

1 In which UK city do most of the Proms concerts take place?

- a London b Manchester c Edinburgh

2 In which location are most of the concerts played?

- a Trafalgar Square
b Royal Albert Hall
c Buckingham Palace

3 How many weeks do the Proms last?

- a 4 weeks b 8 weeks c 12 weeks

4 When do the Proms take place?

- a winter b spring c summer

5 The cheapest tickets at the Proms cost...

- a £6 b £16 c £26

6 There are special concerts for ...

- a foreigners b dogs c children

7 In 2019 some German musicians will be playing, including:

- a Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra
b Mannheim Children's Choir
c Rammstein

8 How many concerts are there in total?

- a over 30 b over 60 c over 90

When you have answered the questions, compare your answers with a partner.