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Composers of Genius

In this series, we profile **Composers of Genius** from a range of eras – from the Baroque and Rococo periods via Classicism and Romanticism to the modern epoch. What kind of lives did they lead? How did they think? How did they approach their work and what makes their music so special? The programs include excerpts from their most beautiful works played by famous soloists and orchestras from all over the world.

01 Baroque Star George Frideric Handel VoD HD

George Frideric Handel is a giant among Baroque composers. The three years he spent in Italy as a young man were formative. Rome was the inspiration for ideas that would stay with him throughout his life and result in new compositions time and again. In Venice, he was so popular the locals called him “the dear Saxon”. He became a celebrity in London, where he was honored with a life-size statue during his lifetime. Despite his dizzying success, he never lost his sense of social responsibility.

02 Mendelssohn the Classical Romantic VoD HD

Felix Mendelssohn is one of the stand-out musicians of the Romantic period. As a young composer, conductor, pianist and organist, he toured numerous countries to great acclaim. His fan base was especially large and enthusiastic in Italy and England. But 50 years after his death, he fell out of favor. Critics described his music as pleasing and elegant, but lacking in depth. Mendelssohn wasn't rediscovered until the first half of the 20th century. Today he is among the most popular of the European greats.

03 Franz Liszt – The Pilgrimage Years VoD HD

Franz Liszt was one of the most productive composers of the 19th century. He composed in many different styles and genres and was a pioneer of program music. He is considered one of the greatest pianists of all time. With his companion Marie d'Agoult – the mother of his three children – he set off on his first trip to Italy in 1837. It was there that he conceived many of his most famous compositions and cemented his reputation as a virtuoso performer.

04 The Art of Chopin VoD HD

Frédéric Chopin, as the French call him, or Fryderyk Chopin, as he is known in Poland, is one of the most influential and popular pianists and composers of all time. He was raised in Warsaw as the son of a Polish mother and a French father, but moved to Paris at the age of 21. He soon strayed from well-worn compositional paths to develop his own style. His romantic-poetic piano artistry influenced generations of composers. Although many of his works sound straightforward and accessible, they are very difficult to play and represent a huge challenge for any pianist.

05 Richard Strauss and His Heroines VoD HD

Richard Strauss was one of the leading exponents of the program music of the late 19th century and wrote some of the great operas of the 20th century. He expanded the scope and timbre palette of the orchestra. Women played a key role in his life and work, first and foremost his wife Pauline de Ahna, to whom he was married for more than 55 years. She gave up her career as an opera singer for him, and supported him throughout his life. She inspired Strauss to write some of his most beautiful and ethereal songs.