# Nationalist music

Nationalist music is a style of music from the **19th and early 20th centuries** where composers express pride in their country's culture, history, and folk traditions. It often emerged during times of political unrest or national awakening, with composers using music to assert identity and resist foreign influence.

## Key Features and concepts

- Inspired by folk music, national dances, legends, and landscapes
- Incorporates melodies, rhythms, and harmonies from the composer's homeland
- Often programmatic (tells a story or depicts a scene)
- Rich orchestration and bold textures, typically for orchestra or piano

| Category | Concepts |
|---|---|
| Melody | Modal, Pentatonic, Folk-like, Ornamentation |
| Rhythm | Irregular time signatures, Syncopation, Ostinato, Rubato |
| Harmony | Chromaticism, Modulation, Augmented chords, Modal tonality |
| Texture | Homophonic, Polyphonic, Imitation |
| Structure | Programme music, Dance forms, Repeated sections |
| Timbre/Instrumentation | National instruments, Brass and percussion, Colourful orchestration |

## Key Composers and Works

- Bedřich Smetana (Czech) – Vltava (Má vlast)
- Edvard Grieg (Norwegian) – Peer Gynt Suite
- Jean Sibelius (Finnish) – Finlandia
- Antonín Dvořák (Czech) – Slavonic Dances
- Modest Mussorgsky (Russian) – Pictures at an Exhibition
- Manuel de Falla (Spanish) – Ritual Fire Dance

LIVEWORKSHEETS

- **Listening Task 1 : Sibelius – Finlandia**

Finlandia was composed by Jean Sibelius in 1899 as a covert protest against Russian censorship in Finland. Originally part of a patriotic press celebration, the piece uses powerful orchestration and a hymn-like theme to evoke national struggle and hope. It quickly became a symbol of Finnish identity and resistance. As you listen to the excerpt from Finlandia, identify and describe the musical elements that show nationalist influence.

Listening Excerpts Clip 1 – Opening Clip 2 - Finlandia hymn

| Question | Clip 1: Opening | Clip 2: Finlandia Hymn |
|---|---|---|
| a) What is the **time signature and tempo?** | | |
| b) Describe the **texture.** | | |
| c) Which **orchestral family** is most prominent, and how is it used? | | |
| d) What **dynamics** are used, and what is the emotional effect? | | |

d) How does Sibelius use the orchestra in Clip 1 to create a sense of struggle or oppression?

✎ _____

✎ _____

✎ _____

e) How does the melody and harmony in Clip 2 create a sense of unity or patriotism?

✎ _____

✎ _____

✎ _____

f) How do changes in tempo, dynamics, and orchestration help Sibelius tell a story from oppression to hope in clips 1 and then 2?

✎ _____

✎ _____

✎ _____

LIVEWORKSHEETS

- **Listening Task 2 : Dvořák – Slavonic Dance No 8**

Dvořák composed the *Slavonic Dances* in 1878 to celebrate the folk traditions of his native Bohemia, drawing inspiration from Slavic dance forms like the ***furiant*** and ***dumka***. The *furiant* is a lively Bohemian folk dance characterized by a rapid tempo and shifting accents, often alternating between 2/4 and 3/4 time-signatures, giving a **hemiola** effect. The *dumka* likewise has a mixture of 2/4 and 3/4 rhythms and features a slow, lyrical section followed by a faster, more lively section, often evoking a sense of contrasting emotions.

*Slavonic Dance No. 8* combines energetic rhythms, shifting time signatures and lyrical melodies to evoke national spirit and pride.




Listen carefully to the full performance and answer the following questions about the piece as a whole. Use musical terminology where possible.

### 1. Rhythm / Tempo

a) Identify and describe the use of *hemiola* in this piece. Where does it occur, and what is its effect?

✎ _____

✎ _____

b) What other **rhythmic** and **tempo** features contribute to the dance-like character?

✎ _____

✎ _____

LIVEWORKSHEETS

## 2. **Melody / Harmony**

a) Describe key **melodic** features

✎ _____

✎ _____

b) What **key** is the piece in, and how does Dvořák use changes in tonality?

✎ _____

✎ _____

c) What type of SCALE is heard here?




✎ _____

## 3. **Texture / Timbre**

a) How does the **texture** change throughout the piece?

✎ _____

✎ _____

b) Which instruments are featured most prominently, and how is orchestration used to create contrast?

✎ _____

✎ _____

## 4. **Dynamics / articulation**

a) How do the **dynamics** change throughout the piece?

✎ _____

✎ _____

b) Describe the variation of articulation in the piece.

✎ _____

✎ _____

LIVEWORKSHEETS