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## Classical Music Mix-Up

**Borrowing musical motifs from classical compositions is becoming increasingly trendy for current composers. Just ask Alicia Keys whose album 'Songs in A minor' begins with Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata. But does classical music have a place in the hands of 21st century pop composers?**

Bass player Alex James from Britpop band Blur thinks so. He is hosting Classic FM's three-part series **When Classic Meets Pop**, beginning August 4.

Classically inspired songs such as The Farm's 'Altogether Now', Barry Manilow's 'Could It Be Magic', and Eric Carmen's 'All By Myself' will feature as Alex discusses how classical music has influenced pop.

"Why would I want to listen to Hard-fi piffing around when there is Rossini?" says Alex. "Bring me French horns, Bring me a choir. And some cannons, maybe for the end."

Referencing, and in a sense honouring, past artists within modern works is a noted element in the evolution of an art form but just how far can modern composers go before 'borrowing' from past works becomes merely a modern form of plagiarism? How far is too far?

### Hip Orchestra



Young composer Gabriel Prokofiev, the great grandson of the great Sergei Prokofiev, may have the solution.

His new piece 'Concerto For Turntables and Orchestra' features DJ Yoda as the soloist, supported by the 40-piece Heritage Orchestra - half the size of an average full 80-piece orchestra. Yoda takes samples from the orchestral instruments during the piece, keeping the overall sound organic, unified and integrated.

Whilst some rhythmic and pitch guidelines are given on the score much of the soloist's part is improvised. In many respects it is similar to the very earliest type of concerto where a lot of scope was left for improvisation.

Prokofiev even includes the solo in the score, in turn creating a new and unique notation for the turntables, which Yoda follows, a challenge for the talented DJ who is used to performing and creating music mostly on his own. The solo turntable performance is also led by a conductor alongside the orchestra.

Will Dutta, who came up with the initial idea before approaching Gabriel, believes referencing older 'classical' forms within popular works helps to bring



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classical music to a wider orchestra whilst maintaining the traditions of the 'classical' composer, keeping them both alive and relevant. "Classical composers have manipulated recorded sound long before Grandmaster Flash scratched his first record," he says. "From Edgard Varese's experiments with reel-to-reel tape to the Musique Concrete of Pierre Schaeffer's studios in the 1950s."

### Chilled out Classics



Spanish composer and classical guitarist Toni Castells also likes to mix up genres. His latest album 'Unharm'd' by London-based collective Momo features a string quartet, electric guitar, soprano, laptop, visuals and chilled out beats.

"You can't pigeon-hole what I am doing. Is it classical? No, it's a mixture. I have classical arrangements for the quartet, I have the soprano so there is the opera element in there, but there's the popular element, there are songs, and then there's the electronic element.

Photographs: Walter Reed

"I think people understand mixing genres, but the infrastructure of the music industry may not get that yet. It's not something complicated, or aloof or intellectual that I'm doing. I'm just writing music for the average person."

Hear Bob Jones' recent interview with Toni Castells before the live performance of Momo at London's Bush Hall on 23 July:



[Toni Castells interview >](#)



To listen to When Classic Meets Rock, presented by Rick Wakeman, simply click on the links below:



[Classic Meets Jazz >](#)



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