

## **Rick Steves' Europe: Symphonic Journey – [Jan 2, 2026 draft]**

**This is the teleprompter copy Rick read for the concerts that he hosts in a pre-recorded on-screen way. (Except for the concert intro and the intro to the second half, it is very close to what Rick says on stage in the live version of the concert.)**

### **Concert Intro from Rick [can be localized, 70 seconds]**

Hi, I'm Rick Steves. And I want to thank you for being here to enjoy this wonderful and unique concert. I wish I could be with you in person, but I'm thrilled to be joining your local orchestra [Name?] and wonderful conductor [Name?] virtually, up here on the big screen. I've been hosting this concert in person around the country for over a decade now. But I thought, wouldn't it be great if I could ship the scores & parts in a bag like this and make this concert available to orchestras everywhere — big and small. And, voila, I arrived at what you'll experience today: What I'm calling a "Symphony in a Suitcase," where orchestras can use inspiring video clips from my public television series, and I can join you up here and still be your tour guide. I'll be with you from start to finish as your travel partner, both in spirit and up on this big screen. It's "Europe: A Symphonic Journey." Enjoy the concert...and the trip! Now, give me just a sec, as I gotta go put on a suit and tie.

### **.1 America the Beautiful [1:30]**

1

Hi, I'm Rick Steves and I'm happy to be your travel partner during this concert for a very special journey—a Symphonic Journey through Europe. Are you ready to travel? Great, because your orchestra's about to take us to seven countries musically and I'll be your tour guide. I get to mix three of my loves: travel, history and music as, with the help of vivid images and beautiful music, we appreciate how the turmoil & triumphs 19<sup>th</sup> c Europe helped shaped the beautiful world we live in today. Our theme: Romanticism and Nationalism – the isms of 19<sup>th</sup> c. And one thing they had in common was that fundamental yearning for freedom.

We all want to be free: free from foreign oppressors, free from kings & tyrants (**right?**), and free as individuals to live creative and fulfilling lives. The music we'll hear is from the Rom Era, the 1800s.

BTW, this is not the giggly, kissy "Romantic Era" you might remember from middle school. It's an **artistic** era that followed the cerebral and logical Classical age. Romanticism was less about the \*head and more about the \*heart. It was a time when people embraced nature & championed underdog national causes...an age of common people asserting themselves...taking the reins of power.

While this is a European tour, we're starting in the United States of America where we celebrate the accomplishments of the **American** Revolution--the world's first great democratic revolution that helped inspire the flourishing of freedom in 19th century Europe...**America the Beautiful.**

### **.2 Austria: Emperor Waltz Johann Strauss, 1:45**

Wow! That just gives me chills... America the Beautiful... Patriotic goosebumps. Why? Because this music celebrates our homeland. Now, as your tour guide, my challenge: to take that wonderful--if ethnocentric--musical emotion on road. Our mission: To appreciate how others thrill same way to music of THEIR hmlnd

Every nation has its own anthems, and each is different. Our itinerary features Romantic Era music that stoked the pride of nationalities all across Europe: from Norway to Italy to England ...and we start in Austria... the Habsburg Empire, where the waltz embodies the elegance and joie de vivre of that society at peak: the late 1800s.

The Habsburgs ruled a vast empire, they loved music, and were great patrons of the arts. That's why Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms all lived and composed in the imperial capital of Vienna. Johann Strauss was the heartthrob of the Romantic period in Vienna. With his violin he could whip the audience into a frenzy, his lilting and twirling waltzes were all the rage

This piece was written to herald a political summit: Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany was meeting Emperor Franz Josef of Austria. It's titled "Emperor Waltz" – that's singular = ambiguous on purpose

[SLOW] Think about it: Kaiser Wilhelm and Franz Josef! Two Imperial egos.

Each of them were so vain, they probably thought this song was about them.

OK, the #1 hit...from 1889... by Johann Strauss Jr...the Emperor Waltz.

### **.3 Germany Prelude to Act 3 from Lohengrin Richard Wagner, 1:30**

Next, we sail up the Danube to Germany. Remember, in the mid-1800s when our next piece was composed, there was no Germany. It was a piece of real estate about the size of Montana made up of dozens of little independent German-speaking states. While fragmented, they had a dream in common: to create one, unified German-speaking nation. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century – far and wide – national-states were coalescing.

And there were wars. In the 1860s when we Americans were fighting about \*separation, Germans and Italians were fighting about \*unification. National movements were supported by stirring Romantic Music. Wannabe nations—to establish their legitimacy -- dug deep, reviving mythic themes to show off their roots. You see it in the nostalgic art and in the "neo-medieval" castles of the age. The famous castle of "mad" king Ludwig of Bavaria, Neuschwanstein, looks medieval. But it was built about the same time as the Eiffel Tower.

King Ludwig was a huge fan of the Romantic composer Rikard Wagner. In fact, many rooms in his castle were inspired by Wagnerian operas. Wagner's grand operas mixed Germanic myths, medieval traditions and Christian themes that together would define a new German nationalism and stir the souls of his countrymen to this day. Up next: the **rousing** Prelude to Act 3 from Lohengrin.

#### **.4 Cech Republic The Moldau/Vltava Bedrich Smetana [1:00]**

Like so many small European nations, the Czech Republic has struggled historically with big bully neighbors. Imagine: To the north you've got Prussia. To the south you've got Austria and the Habsburgs. And in the east... \*Russia. That's not Mr. Roger's Neighborhood.

The 19th century was a time of national awakenings. From Finland to Bulgaria – small nations were on the rise. Again, Romantic art and music championed underdog causes. And a key figure in the Czech National Revival movement was the composer Bedřich Smetana.

Our next piece, “The Moldau” gets its title from the great river that literally and emotionally connects the Czech people. But Moldau is the river's German name and the composer, Smetana, would much rather we call it by its Czech name...the Vltava. Over many difficult centuries, the Vltava helped preserve the language, the culture, and the identity of the Czech people.

The piece is like a landscape portrait. The melody flows like a stream. It starts as a tiny brook with flutes frolicking through forests and meadows. Then, as it grows bigger, more instruments join in.... We'll hear hunters in the forests, a merry gathering of peasants, and finally with rolling tympany and crashing cymbals we reach the stately capital of Prague. As you'll hear, this piece and the river it represents embodies the enduring heroic spirit of the Czech people. **To this day, Czechs get a Lump in their throat** when they hear Smetana's hauntingly beautiful melody: the **Vltava**.

#### **.5 England Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1 Edward Elgar [1:20]**

This next piece is from Great Britain and it captures the grandeur of what was the first global superpower. At the end of the 19th century, Queen Victoria ruled a quarter of the planet. Her realm was famously "the empire upon which the sun never set." Humming with newfangled inventions from the Industrial Age, with a middle class that was both educated and prosperous, Britain was on a roll.

Pomp and Circumstance by Sir Edward Elgar, seems to provide a fitting soundtrack to the confidence that was Britain's at the dawn of the 20th century. Today, we Americans know this piece because we use it at commencement ceremonies to celebrate educational triumphs. But if you happen to be ruling a vast empire or “bushwacking a brave new future for the common man”, this piece works for other triumphs as well. So now, chin up, as we travel to England with vivid images and the regal sounds of Elgar's Pomp & Circumstance March No 1.

**Welcome Back After Intermission from Rick – [about 2:00, cue to play after tuning]**

[Rick plays trumpet] This trumpet was my first real souvenir. I purchased it in communist Czechoslovakia back in 1969 — rotary valves...they're stuck now...so I play it like a bugle.

OK, it's now that I generally need to say, "Back on the bus!" [pause] But, especially with that bugle call, I imagine you're already there. [pause] I hope you're having a good trip! I'm so thankful that we're travel partners today...with all this amazing music.

BTW, as you came in, I hope you were given a copy of my 64-page travel newsletter. [show newsletter] (If you missed that, it's all on my website.)

This is a fun way to clue you in on the work my hundred colleagues and I do in Seattle — where our mission is to "equip and inspire Americans to venture beyond Orlando." [pause] We've been really busy lately: Our travel series on public television includes about 150 episodes and specials now, and they're all available anytime using "Passport" on the PBS app or streaming free on my website at [ricksteves.com](http://ricksteves.com). We also publish lots of guidebooks covering all of Europe. And each year, we take over 30,000 Americans around Europe on 40 exciting itineraries...small groups, great buses, and wonderful Rick Steves guides.

In the newsletter, I've collected some of my favorite travel writing to illustrate how — whether you're traveling on your own or with a tour — the mark of a good trip is experiences — connecting with the culture... meeting the people. People — that's what carbonates your experience. And another theme of mine lately as a tour guide is how the more understanding you bring to your sightseeing, the more you'll enjoy what you're looking at...or (when it comes to music) what you're listening to. In fact, that's what I'm demonstrating tonight as your musical tour guide.

OK, we've got lots more travels ahead: Italy, Norway, France, a big European finale...and more.

Hey, before we keep on travelin' ...Let's hear it again for all of you for supporting live classical music in your community and for this amazing orchestra! [clap!]

## **6 SPAIN Rimsky-Korsikov – Capriccio Espagnole**

This is a good time for an extra stop on our itinerary...something a bit different...a fun little side-trip. Next up, a piece [a selection from Capriccio Espagnole] by Rimsky-Korsakov—it's a SPANISH caprice by a RUSSIAN!

In the 1800s, at the same time composers were creating stirring music to support nat'l struggles, other composers were using music to explore faraway lands. It's called "musical exoticism".

This is music as travelogue...from a time when most people never travelled.  
It was a way of connecting with far-away-places...of stoking dreams of distant lands.

This artistic style—Exoticism--is by no means limited to music.

Think of French painters: Henri Matisse took us to Morocco. Paul Gauguin? He took us to Tahiti! It's telling that two of the best-known pieces of "Spanish" music (R-K's Capriccio Espagnole and Bizet's Carmen) were both composed around 1880... by non-Spanish composers, and neither had ever set foot in Spain!

In his Capriccio Espagnole—which we'll hear next—Rimsky-Korsikov utilized evocative instruments like the tambourine, castinnettes and guitar-like pizzicato strings, to give it a genuine-sounding Spanish flair. So now, hold on to your castanets as we travel musically to Spain...thanks to a Russian.

[**Scena e canta gitano & Fandango asturiano**, Imagine now, with Rimsky-Korsikov, a Gypsy song in Andalusia and a courtship dance in the NW of Spain... Hold on to your Castenets, it's from his suite: Capriccio Espagnole.]

### **.7 Italy NABUCCO OVERATURE Giuseppe Verdi 1:55**

And now on to Italy with a piece that evokes the struggle of the Italian speaking people to create their own independent country. Remember, before the 1870s, like Germany, Italy was just a bunch of little Italian-speaking states, fighting bigger powers for their rightful place on map. The dream: that the only Italian blooded king, who ruled the country of Piedmont, Victor Emmanuel, would be the 1<sup>st</sup> king of a united Italy. The Risorgimento (as the movement was called) was dangerous—you could be arrested just for flying the Italian colors of green, white, and red.

Italy's favorite music has long been Opera...with lofty melodies and so melodramatic...it's a good fit for a land with such emotion ...\*where everything is "issimo". And for Italian patriots – the operas of Giuseppe Verdi stirred natnalist spirits like that bugle call on battlefield.

When a Verdi opera came to town, people packed the house. The arias (which were like national anthems in disguise) inspired people to stand on their seats and sing with gusto, as if raising their voices in unison for Italian statehood. Even the composer's name, Verdi, became a nationalistic cry for an Italian-born king: V. E. R. D. I. ...Victor Emanuel rey di Italia...king of Italy!

This next piece was composed when Austria ruled much of the land. It's from the opera Nabucco. The plot is ancient...from the Old Testament: the Jews were conquered and then exiled from their homeland by the Babylonians. Italians could relate: in fact the famous Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves – Va Pensiero -- came to symbolize the Italian struggle... And, with so much political symbolism, this opera just barely got by the censors. By Giuseppe Verdi, here's the stirring Overture from the Opera Nabucco.

### **.8 Norway Morning Mood from Peer Gynt Edvard Grieg 1:15**

Now, we travel north to Norway – the land of my grandparents.

Until the 19<sup>th</sup> c – Norway was under the thumb of Sweden & Denmark. In fact, back then, the capital, Oslo, was actually named Kristiania ... after a Danish king. Now, if you know Norwegians like I do, you

know they have a deep-seated need to be Norwegian, distinct from the Danes & Swedes. In fact, think about this: their cultural capital: Bergen... is in the far west, in fjord country... about as far from Denmark and Sweden as you can possibly get. That's where the artists, writers, and composers gathered.

Part of Romanticism and part of Nationalism is a love of the wonder of nature. In their quest for freedom, Norwegians found inspiration in the natural beauty of their homeland.

A popular play back then was based on an old fairy tale, Pier Gynt. He was the local Huck Finn, whose misadventures were set in Norway's majestic nature. Edvard Grieg set the play to music. And this piece celebrates both the pristine majesty of fjord country as you'll see...and the pride of the Norwegian way of life. Here's Morning Mood, from Pier Gynt, by Edvard Grieg, from Norway.

## **.9 France [2:05]**

Ah, every time I hear that piece, I think of my uncle Thor from Norway and a story from my childhood. When I was just a kid—maybe 10 years old--Thor came to visit our family in Seattle. My mom insisted that I play the piano. She said: "Rick, play that song you're learning by the Norwegian composer." I dutifully played Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen by Edvard Grieg. Uncle Thor was so excited, he gave me a crisp \$20 bill! I had never seen so much money at one time. But you know, his **enthusiasm** was an even bigger gift than that \$20 bill—I think Uncle Thor planted the seed that would become this concert. Thor was demonstrating the joy of two cultures coming together through music--or maybe he was just bribing me to stop playing. I don't know.

OK, no tour of Europe (musical or otherwise) is complete without a stop in France.

France was the home of the Enlightenment, the great Rev, in so many ways...where modern Eur was born. Now in the 19<sup>th</sup> c, France was certainly independent... but its struggles were **domestic** –

It was the commoners against the aristocracy, the 99% vs. the 1%.

With its revolutions – and it took several – the French led charge in Europe to finally end the medieval “Old Regime”... that notion of Divine Monarchy: that some were born ordained by God to rule without limits and everyone else?...well, just deal with it. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> c – the revolutionary slogan, pushing for end of the Old Regime, was Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité! This “Romanticism” promoted radical ideals of political freedom. Imagine: govt actually by, for, and of the people.

Listening to French music of the 19<sup>th</sup> c, I can almost hear the rabble in the streets: I find myself cheering \*Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood... and of course... Veev la France!

Up next: By Camille Saint-Saens, Marche Militaire Francaise...the French Military March

## **.10 Ode to Joy – EU – [0:00 – 1:15 – could be all underscore, 1:15]**

Yes, in so many ways, the Europeans of the Romantic Era, the 19th century, laid the groundwork for the freedoms that we enjoy today in the 21st century. And that European passion for freedom continues. The

biggest news of our generation is the transformation of that long bickering continent into a peaceful union, the European Union.

While in practice it's tough to get that unwieldy collection of proud and distinct nations to do anything in unison, the motto of the European Union is, "United in diversity", and one thing Europe can do well together is to embrace the ideals of its official anthem. Our final stop is a piece conceived in that 19<sup>th</sup> c spirit of Revolution...set to a poem about universal brotherhood.

**This anthem is as relevant today as the day BEETHOVEN set pen to paper.** It calls on all people to **come together**, to be united **joyfully** in their diversity, and to **celebrate freedom**. Now, the finale of our Symphonic Journey: the official anthem of the European Union – Beethoven's Ode to Joy.

## **.11 Encore: Stars and Stripes**

**11**

Ok, Ok...thanks very much...thanks a lot. Danke shean, Merci, Grazie, Tusand takk, Obrigbado! Now before we do an encore, I'd like to personally thank each of you for being my travel partner and, on behalf of all the wonderful musicians on this stage, we hope you enjoyed our Symphonic Journey. In this concert, we've celebrated the joy of travel—and you know I LOVE to travel. But, for me, the happiest day is the day I return home. And my two favorite souvenirs?: a broader perspective – and a better appreciation of the place we are so blessed to call home. Now, maestro, in your stack of music, I bet you've got an appropriate encore...something to celebrate a happy cultural homecoming...

### **Program:**

- .1 America the Beautiful
- .2 Austria: A Strauss Waltz (Emperor Waltz)
- .3 Germany: Richard Wagner (Lohengrin)
- .4 Czech Republic: Die Moldau
- .5 Britain: Pomp and Circumstance
- Intermission
- .6 Spain: Rimsky-Korsakov – Capriccio Espagnole
- .7 Italian: Verdi, Nabucco
- .8 Norwegian: Morning by Grieg
- .9 French: by Saint-Saens
- .10 European Finale: Ode to Joy
- .11 Encore – Stars and Stripes