



hooked on Classics

In which Vicki and Ergo revisit the 1970's phenomenon of Hooked On Classics, classical cover versions as well as all things light, orchestral and popular. Features a medley of the best of this fine mulch of classical music with a disco beat, as well as some tangential visits to the world of amateur orchestras. Features Portsmouth Sinfonia, The Swingle Singers, John Oswald and Wendy Carlos, amongst others.

There are many reasons for using classical music in sampling. Much sample based music tends to confine itself to 20th century popular music as source material, but it is infinitely more fascinating to go further and further back in time in search of new juxtapositions of sounds to play with and edit.

The symphony orchestra is possibly the most versatile musical unit in history, rich in possible permutations, combinations and endless sonorities. To have access to this world of sound is a real treasure trove of possibilities for samplers.

Two different approaches to the use of classical music (a real blanket - and often incorrect - term that encompasses an astonishingly wide range of music over hundreds of years) are (i) to use a piece of classical music for its familiarity to us, changing the context to often humorous effect, and (ii) using classical, particularly orchestral classical, music to enhance and expand the range of sonorities and textures available to the composer. On the simplest level that might mean: "Here I have composition, wouldn't it be nice to have some violins over that section". So you might take a few notes from Vivaldi's Four Seasons, then manipulate them through pitch-shifting, time-stretching, etc., to fit in and complement the rest of the composition.

Try both approaches. You might try to mix Tchaikovsky's "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" with an acid-house beat. Then see what you can do with, say, taking small phrases of Johann Strauss' "Emperor Waltz" and building a new composition using small fragments of the sound.

The latter approach is one of the more exciting possibilities of sound collage. With the developments in computer technology it is possible to endlessly manipulate small fragments of sound into an array of new forms and contortions, making the approach of computer music more like painting with sound - with the whole world of music as colours in the palette that can be continually mixed into new shades.