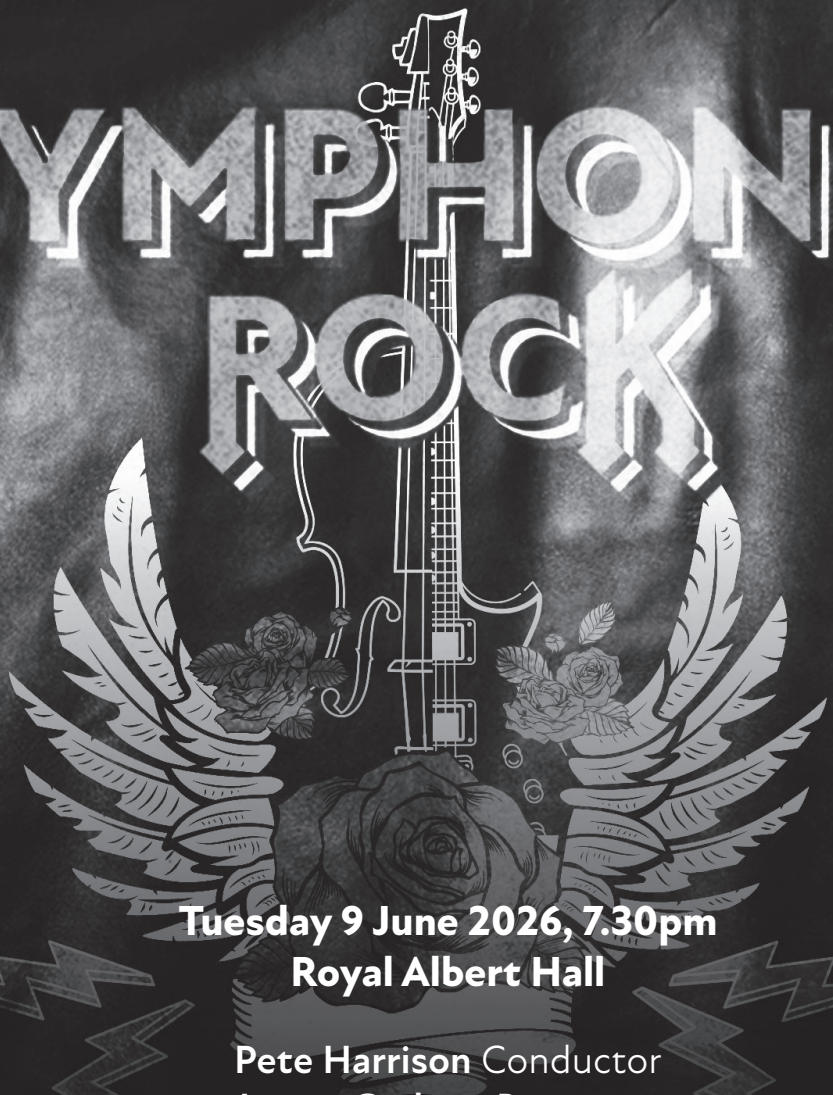
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SYMPHONIC ROCK



Tuesday 9 June 2026, 7.30pm
Royal Albert Hall

Pete Harrison Conductor
Leona Graham Presenter
Symphonic Voices
Katie Birtill, Sara Brimer Davey, Cameron Bernard Jones, Emma Kershaw, Tom Pearce, Laura Tebbutt, Steve Trowell and James Spilling
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

ROYAL ALBERT HALL

Associate Orchestra at the **Royal Albert Hall**

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Symphonic Rock

Tonight's programme



Fanfare for the Common Man
Emerson, Lake & Palmer

Layla
Derek and the Dominos

Bat Out of Hell
Meat Loaf

Born to Run
Bruce Springsteen

Ozzy Osbourne Medley
Paranoid, Iron Man, Crazy Train
Black Sabbath/Ozzy Osbourne

Pour Some Sugar on Me
Def Leppard

Smoke on the Water
Deep Purple

Life on Mars?
David Bowie

Sweet Child O' Mine
Guns N' Roses

The Best
Tina Turner

Bohemian Rhapsody
Queen

– Interval: 25 minutes –

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Jump
Van Halen

(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction
The Rolling Stones

The Chain
Fleetwood Mac

Mr Blue Sky
Electric Light Orchestra

Another Brick in the Wall
Pink Floyd

Total Eclipse of the Heart
Bonnie Tyler

I Don't Want to Miss a Thing
Aerosmith

Thunderstruck
AC/DC

Stairway to Heaven
Led Zeppelin

Livin' on a Prayer
Bon Jovi

Front of House Audio: Tom Marshall
Lighting Designer: Richard Rhys Thomas
SFX and Pyrotechnics: JustFX

Symphonic Rock

Programme notes



Welcome to tonight's performance, where the boundary between the orchestra pit and the stadium stage completely dissolves. While classical music and classic rock might not seem like obvious bedfellows, they share similar DNA: a reliance on grand dynamics, architectural precision, and raw emotional storytelling.

These custom orchestral arrangements allow us to deconstruct the inner machinery of these legendary tracks. You will hear how the driving, mechanical tension of heavy metal naturally mirrors the ominous, chromatic leitmotifs of classical composers like Gustav Holst or Richard Wagner. From the multi-movement, operatic architecture of Queen to the widescreen, cinematic 'wall of sound' pioneered by Bruce Springsteen, tonight proves that these rock masterpieces don't just survive a symphonic makeover – they demand it.

Fanfare for the Common Man

Emerson, Lake & Palmer

Aaron Copland, arranged by Keith Noel Emerson / Gregory Lake / Carl Frederick Palmer, arr. Mike Townend; Published by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishing Ltd

Originally a 1942 composition by American composer Aaron Copland, this reinterpretation by prog rock giants ELP (Emerson, Lake & Palmer) is a masterclass in blending classical bombast with progressive rock power. The track naturally lends itself to an orchestral arrangement because its foundation is built on a majestic, brass-led theme designed to evoke a sense of scale and heroism.

Keith Emerson's use of the Yamaha GX-1 synthesiser essentially mimicked the textures of a full orchestra, while Carl Palmer's percussion provided a rhythmic weight that mirrors a symphonic section. Because *Fanfare for the Common Man*'s melody is so inherently expansive, returning it to an orchestral setting allows the soaring fanfares and intricate motifs to regain their original acoustic grandeur – while retaining the high-energy drive of the 1977 arrangement.

Layla

Derek and the Dominos

Eric Clapton / James Beck, arr. Mike Townend; Published by Throat Music Ltd

Blessed with one of the most iconic riffs in rock history, *Layla* was originally released on Derek and the Dominos' 1970 album *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs*. The song was inspired by Eric Clapton's unrequited love for Pattie Boyd, the wife of his friend George Harrison. It's also inherently symphonic, moving from a high-velocity rock movement into a contemplative, seven-minute piano coda in its original version. This shift mirrors a classical concerto's transition from tension to resolution, making it a natural fit for an orchestra. The legendary opening guitar riff translates seamlessly into a powerful brass or string section, while the intricate, layered slide-guitar melodies provide a rich harmonic foundation for a full violin section to explore, heightening the song's raw, tragic emotional core.

Bat Out of Hell

Meat Loaf

Jim Steinman, arr. Mike Townend; Published by Carlin Music Delaware Llc

Composer and producer Jim Steinman's successful partnership with Meat Loaf saw the release of this career-defining song. *Bat Out of Hell* is essentially a 'rock opera' condensed into a single track, possessing a theatrical DNA that screams out for symphonic accompaniment. The song's sheer kinetic energy – mimicking a motorcycle hurtling through the gates of hell – thrives on the massive, sweeping scales that an orchestra at full throttle in the Royal Albert Hall can provide.

By replacing the studio layers with a wall of soaring violins and aggressive brass, the track's bombastic, almost Wagnerian ambitions are fully realised. An orchestra amplifies the heart-stopping tension of the build-ups and the explosive release of the choruses, turning a rock masterpiece into a visceral, three-dimensional cinematic experience.

Born to Run

Bruce Springsteen

Bruce Springsteen, arr. Martin Williams; Published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing (UK) Limited

Bruce Springsteen's breakthrough 1975 hit is the definitive 'wall of sound' epic, originally constructed with a density that mirrored the cacophony of sounds you hear on a city street. While other tracks rely on singular themes, Springsteen's masterpiece is built on a complex lattice of glockenspiel, soaring saxophone and operatic vocal tiers that the RPO will deconstruct and magnify.

Tonight's orchestral arrangement will allow you to hear *Born to Run*'s inner machinery – the frantic, filmic strings mirror the desperation of the lyrics, while the brass section elevates the song's blue-collar aspirations into something transcendent. It transforms a rock anthem into an expansive, panoramic portrait of the American dream.

Ozzy Osbourne Medley

Paranoid, Iron Man, Crazy Train

Black Sabbath/Ozzy Osbourne

Paranoid and Iron Man: Terrence Butler / F Frank Iommi / John 'Ozzy' Osbourne / William T Ward, arr. Teresa Barlow; Published by Westminster Music Ltd
Crazy Train: Robert John Daisley / Ozzy Osbourne / Randy Rhoads, arr. Teresa Barlow; Published by Universal/MCA Music Limited

Of the three tracks that make up tonight's tribute to the late 'Prince of Darkness', Ozzy Osbourne, lead vocalist of Black Sabbath, *Paranoid* and *Iron Man* are part of the bedrock of heavy metal. In a musical trick of which Wagner or Holst would have been proud, *Iron Man*'s heavy, chromatic riff serves as the 'leitmotif' for a traveller who turns to steel while witnessing the future. The song's plodding, ominous tempo provides a narrative weight that perfectly mirrors the protagonist's metallic, vengeful march. *Paranoid*, meanwhile, centres on a man's internal struggle with alienation and depression. Its rapid-fire, spiralling riff creates a relentless mechanical pulse that mirrors a mind racing in circles.

Crazy Train is an Ozzy Osbourne solo effort, released after his tenure with Black Sabbath. It's also perhaps the most 'symphonic' of the three; the late Randy Rhoads, a student of classical guitar, infused the track with minor-key scales and a sophisticated harmonic structure. This arrangement brings out the gothic drama of the main riff and transforms the bridge into a soaring, multi-layered concerto, proving that the roots of heavy metal and classical music are more intertwined than they appear.

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Pour Some Sugar on Me

Def Leppard

Richard John Cyril Allen / Stephen Maynard Clark / Philip Kenneth Collen / Joseph Elliott / Robert John 'Mutt' Lange / Richard Savage, arr. Teresa Barlow; Published by BMG Rights Management (UK) Limited / Sony/ATV Music Publishing (UK) Limited / Universal Music Publishing Limited

Perhaps their signature song, Def Leppard's 1987 single is fundamentally a pop-metal anthem, but its sophistication lies in its layering and structure rather than overt classical influence. Def Leppard and producer Mutt Lange constructed the track with meticulous vocal stacking, rhythmic tension and dynamic buildup, giving it an almost architectural precision.

A late, last-minute addition to their award-winning fourth studio album, *Hysteria*, *Pour Some Sugar on Me*'s chant-like hooks and shifting textures translate well to an orchestral arrangement. Dramatic pauses, escalating choruses and interlocking guitar lines are joined by brass fanfares and epic string passages, bringing a symphonic twist to this infectious arena-rock anthem.

Smoke on the Water

Deep Purple

Ritchie Blackmore / Ian Gillan / Roger David Glover / Jon Lord / Ian Anderson Paice, arr. David Arnold; Published by EMI Music Publishing Ltd

Deep Purple pioneered the 'symphonic rock' genre, most notably through keyboardist Jon Lord's classical training. Their 1969 *Concerto for Group and Orchestra* was a groundbreaking collaboration with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and composer/conductor Malcolm Arnold. Lord frequently integrated Bach-inspired organ fugues and Baroque flourishes into their heavy-metal framework, bridges that defined the genre's sophistication.

But what of the iconic *Smoke on the Water*? While that four-note blues scale is perhaps the most famous riff in rock history, the song is actually a vivid piece of musical journalism. The lyrics meticulously document the 1971 burning of the Montreux Casino during a Frank Zappa concert, an event the band witnessed from across Lake Geneva. Musically, it is a masterclass in dynamic tension; Ian Paice's jazz-influenced drumming and Roger Glover's driving bass create a sophisticated 'pocket' that elevates *Smoke on the Water* far above any standard hard-rock slog.

Life on Mars?

David Bowie

David Bowie, arr. Martin Nygård Jørgensen; Published by BMG Rights Management (UK) Limited / Warner Chappell Music Ltd / EMI Music Publishing Ltd

One of David Bowie's most sophisticated compositions (and that's saying something), *Life on Mars?* is a masterpiece of cinematic glam rock that functions like a miniature surrealist opera. The track's emotional weight rests on Mick Ronson's breathtaking string arrangement, which eschews standard pop pads for soaring, dissonant flourishes reminiscent of late-Romantic symphonies.

The song's complex harmonic shifts and dramatic modulations are fully realised, transforming a tale of adolescent escapism into a panoramic, world-class orchestral event that feels both heartbreakingly intimate and cosmically vast. While *Life on Mars?* was conceived as a parody of Frank Sinatra's *My Way*, its lyrics could hardly be more different, combining surreal imagery with the story of a young girl seeking escape from her everyday life.

Sweet Child O' Mine

Guns N' Roses

Steven Adler / Duff Rose McKagan / W Axl Rose / Slash / Izzy Stradlin, arr. Jessica Cox; Published by Warner Chappell Artemis Music Limited / Universal/MCA Music Limited

Formed in 1985, legendary American band Guns N' Roses provided one of the defining moments of 1980s rock with *Sweet Child O' Mine*. Taken from their debut album and the band's only single to top the US Billboard Hot 100 chart, the song is a masterclass in tension, famously opening with a circular, neo-classical guitar figure that Slash originally intended as a technical exercise. This intricate melody provides a delicate counterpoint to the song's hard-rock swagger and gritty vocal delivery. The track's brilliance lies in its shifting dynamics – moving from a tender, melodic tribute to a frantic, high-energy finale. These layered textures and the iconic 'Where do we go now?' breakdown offer a rich, multidimensional landscape that is perfect for symphonic expansion.

The Best

Tina Turner

Mike Chapman / Holly Knight, arr. Mike Townend; Published by Mike Chapman Publishing Enterprises / Knighty-Knight Music / BMG Rights Management (UK) Ltd

(Simply) *The Best* was originally a hit for Bonnie Tyler in 1988 (of whom more in a moment), but Tina Turner set down arguably the song's definitive version the following year. It became one of Turner's most recognisable tunes, often considered synonymous with the singer's name – and a huge worldwide hit. And it's a masterclass in steadily building emotional power and grand melodic payoff.

Turner's vocal line is broad, declarative, and highly singable, which suits a broad string treatment with dramatic brass accents. The chord progression gradually develops tension and then resolves it in a way that naturally mirrors orchestral dynamics. Its anthemic chorus becomes genuinely majestic with full symphonic backing, while quieter verses allow space for woodwinds and restrained piano before the arrangement expands into a triumphant finale.

Bohemian Rhapsody

Queen

Freddie Mercury, arr. Matthew Freeman; Published by EMI Music Publishing Ltd

A defining moment of the 1970s, Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody* is the ultimate rock-opera hybrid, structured not as a standard pop song but as a multi-movement suite. Freddie Mercury's track is infused with influences from the bel canto operatic tradition and employs dramatic shifts in tempo and key that mirror a classical stage production. The central operatic section is a marvel of studio engineering (all the more impressive in the pre-digital era), featuring over 180 layers of vocals to simulate a full choral ensemble, complete with echoes of *The Barber of Seville* and other Italian comic operas.

Beyond the vocal theatrics, the song follows a narrative arc common in 19th-century programme music: a sombre ballad introduction, a chaotic mid-section representing external judgment, and a high-octane hard-rock 'aria' of rebellion. This sophisticated architecture, devoid of a traditional chorus, relies on harmonic complexity and grand instrumental flourishes. When set to an orchestra, the track's inherently Wagnerian scale is fully unveiled, proving it to be a modern classical masterpiece hidden within a rock record.

Interval

Jump

Van Halen

David Lee Roth / Alex Van Halen / Edward Van Halen, arr. Teresa Barlow;
Published by Warner Chappell North America Limited / Universal/MCA Music Limited

Formed in California in 1972, the influential hard rock band Van Halen became renowned for their electrifying performances, as well as for the groundbreaking guitar virtuosity of Eddie Van Halen. *Jump* is fuelled by a defiant, stadium-ready optimism that centres on that unmistakable Oberheim synthesiser hook. This bright, brassy motif serves as a perfect fanfare, which a full orchestral horn section can replicate with massive power. The song's rhythmic drive, coupled with its celebratory major-key melody, creates a collective lift that is infectious in a live setting. By replacing the high-energy synth with a wealth of symphonic sound, the track's triumphant spirit becomes even more panoramic and grand.

(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction

The Rolling Stones

Mick Jagger / Keith Richards, arr. Jen Green; Published by Onward Music Ltd / ABKCO Music Ltd / Westminster Music Ltd

One of the most iconic and enduring rock bands in history, The Rolling Stones' blues-inspired sound and rebellious image inspired a catalogue of classic songs that helped define modern rock music. Whilst the brash, ballsy and bluesy style of the Stones might not immediately conjure images of a symphony orchestra, their breakthrough 1965 single *(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction* translates surprisingly well into the classical concert hall, given that its strength lies in structure and rhythmic insistence rather than texture alone.

The Stones built the song around Keith Richards' iconic fuzz riff, which was, tellingly, originally envisaged as a horn solo. The verses have a tight, almost spoken rhythm that sits well over muted strings or pizzicato figures, while the chorus has natural dynamic lift suited to full orchestral swell.

The Chain

Fleetwood Mac

Lindsey Buckingham / Michael John Fleetwood / Christine McVie / John Graham McVie / Stevie Nicks, arr. Teresa Barlow; Published by Recognition South Songs / Kobalt Music Publishing Ltd / Reach Global Inc / Universal/MCA Music Limited / BMG Rights Management (UK) Limited / Universal Music Publishing MGB Limited

Fleetwood Mac's blend of rock, pop and folk influences created a distinctive sound that made them one of the defining bands of the 1970s. Opening side two of their iconic 1977 album *Rumours*, *The Chain* is a masterclass in modular songwriting and slow-build emotional intensity. Built from fragments of rejected material, it gradually assembles into a unified dramatic arc. The opening features intimate vocal interplay and sparse instrumentation, before a descending bass motif introduces tension. The track's most famous section – John McVie's bass break – anchors a rhythmic pivot into a driving groove, and the final section explodes as interlocked guitars and drums create forward momentum. Its structure mirrors rupture and unity – both musically and, famously, within the band's fractured romantic relationships.

Mr Blue Sky

Electric Light Orchestra

Jeff Lynne, arr. Martin Williams; Published by EMI Music Publishing Ltd

As the name implies, Electric Light Orchestra (ELO) was founded with the explicit goal of picking up

where The Beatles' *I Am the Walrus* left off, fusing modern rock with classical instrumentation. Led by Jeff Lynne (who'd sat in on a recording session for the Fab Four's *White Album* as an impressionable 20-year-old), the band integrated cellos and violins as core rhythmic components rather than mere background textures.

This symphonic foundation is most evident in their uplifting 1978 single *Mr Blue Sky*, which functions like a pop-concerto. The song forms the final part of the *Concerto for a Rainy Day* suite on ELO's *Out of the Blue* album and remains an anthem for joy and positivity. Its rigorous, staccato arrangement and grand choral climax mirror the structure of a light operetta, proving that high-concept orchestral theory can be translated into a buoyant, universally accessible anthem.

Another Brick in the Wall

Pink Floyd

George Roger Waters, arr. Martin Williams; Published by Sentric Music Limited

Pink Floyd's first single for over a decade (and a centrepiece of their extraordinary concept album *The Wall*), *Another Brick in the Wall* is a masterpiece of protest and production, famously featuring a choir of schoolboys from Islington Green School. This collaborative layer adds a haunting, communal weight to Roger Waters' hard-bitten lyrics about the unyielding British education system.

To achieve the iconic effect of the vocals, producer Bob Ezrin used a technique known as ADT (Artificial Double Tracking) and layered the small group of students multiple times to simulate a massive, defiant assembly. David Gilmour's guitar solo, meanwhile, is an object lesson in melodic phrasing and restrained aggression. It avoids flashy shredding in favour of long, sustained bends and rhythmic stabs that cut through the pulsating bassline. This blend of funk-inspired groove and progressive rock atmosphere allowed the song to become a global anthem, bridging the gap between high-concept art rock and mainstream radio appeal.

Total Eclipse of the Heart

Bonnie Tyler

James Richard Steinman, arr. Teresa Barlow; Published by BMG Rights Management (UK) Limited

Bonnie Tyler's 1983 single is the pinnacle of 'Wagnerian Rock', a term coined by producer Jim Steinman to describe the genre's bombastic, highly theatrical style – all sweeping orchestral arrangements, driving rock instrumentation, and deep emotional intensity.

Total Eclipse of the Heart's unique power lies in its dynamic extremes, shifting from a fragile, intimate whisper to a choir-backed explosion of sound. Musically, its relentless buildup and dramatic key changes create a sense of mounting desperation, enhanced by Bonnie Tyler's visceral vocal performance. In an orchestral setting, the piano's gothic pulse can be replaced by a dark, rhythmic thrum of cellos and timpani, eventually erupting into a towering brass section that amplifies the song's inherent theatricality and emotional devastation.

I Don't Want to Miss a Thing

Aerosmith

Diane Warren, arr. Martin Nygård Jørgensen; Published by BMG Rights Management (UK) Limited

Originally written by power-ballad virtuoso Diane Warren, *I Don't Want to Miss a Thing* was a stylistic departure for Aerosmith, marking their first and only US number one hit. Released in 1998 for the *Armageddon* film soundtrack (in which lead singer Steven Tyler's daughter Liv Tyler starred, along with

Bruce Willis and Ben Affleck), the track trades the band's signature gritty, blues-rock swagger for a high-gloss, symphonic arrangement.

The song's power comes from the contrast between the lush string section and Steven Tyler's raw, emotive rasp. Within the Aerosmith timeline, it solidified their transition from hard-rock legends to versatile global superstars capable of dominating Top 40 radio. In an orchestral setting, those luscious strings can naturally swell to match the song's massive, soaring climax.

Thunderstruck

AC/DC

Angus McKinnon Young / Malcolm Mitchell Young, arr. Jessica Cox; Published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing (UK) Limited

The definitive high-voltage anthem, 1990's *Thunderstruck* gave AC/DC a fresh lease of life, carrying the hard-rock titans from the 1970s and '80s into the modern era. Its genesis lies in Angus Young's quest for a guitar pattern that captured the intensity of lightning; he developed the signature fretboard-tapping motif that drives the entire track. Unlike their standard blues-shuffle style, this song leans into a relentless, percussive energy that feels almost mechanical in its precision. Those iconic opening 'thunder' arpeggios, meanwhile, are among the most recognised riffs in rock – and a favourite among beginner guitarists.

Stairway to Heaven

Led Zeppelin

Jimmy Page / Robert A Plant, arr. Mike Townend; Published by Warner Chappell North America Limited

Where to start with *Stairway to Heaven*? With several superlatives, perhaps. After all, it's arguably the most famous song never released as a single, and definitely the most requested track in radio history. More than all this, though, *Stairway to Heaven* is an utterly absorbing, fantastical epic, heavy on mythology, drama and sheer 1970s rock magnificence.

The song's sophistication lies in its progressive structure, which mirrors a slow, deliberate ascent. It begins as a Renaissance-style folk piece, utilising acoustic guitars and recorders in A minor, which provides a pastoral, archaic atmosphere. Later, the track flawlessly shifts from a quiet folk ballad into a mid-tempo electric groove, gradually increasing in volume and complexity. Jimmy Page's iconic guitar solo serves as the song's emotional peak, ushering in the hard-rock finale.

Livin' on a Prayer

Bon Jovi

Jon Bon Jovi / Desmond Child / Richard S Sambora, arr. Mike Townend; Published by Universal Music Publishing Limited / Universal/MCA Music Limited / Sony/ATV Music Publishing (UK) Limited

Bon Jovi's 1986 hit is a monumental anthem of working-class resilience, powered by an explosive tension-and-release structure. Its true genius lies in its harmonic drama – specifically the legendary, truck-driver's gear-shift modulation into the final chorus that instantly triggers collective euphoria.

Translated into an orchestral arrangement, this raw rock energy becomes a powerful, anthemic epic. The iconic, rhythmic talk-box intro easily transfers to a stabbing, staccato brass section, while the driving bassline finds a thunderous home in the cellos and timpani. When that final key change hits, a soaring wall of strings replaces the vocal straining, transforming a gritty rock song into a majestic, towering symphony of human triumph.

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