

# TOEFL Listening Lesson 5

**Setting:** A college-level *History of Music* class.

## Questions

**1: What is the main topic of the discussion?**

- A. The influence of modern technology on music education
- B. A comparison of classical and modern musical instruments and styles
- C. How digital music is replacing classical compositions
- D. The history of musical notation systems

**2: What example does the professor use to highlight differences between classical and modern instruments?**

- A. Piano and synthesizer
- B. Harp and electric bass
- C. Violin and electric guitar
- D. Flute and drum kit

**3: According to the professor, how has percussion changed from classical to modern music?**

- A. It has become less important in modern compositions
- B. It uses fewer instruments in modern settings
- C. It shifted from a central role to a background role
- D. It became more central and diverse in modern music

**4: Why does the professor mention earbuds and concert halls?**

- A. To show how the volume of music has increased
- B. To explain how the role of composers has changed
- C. To illustrate the shift in how audiences experience music
- D. To compare different listening environments for music students

**5: Why does the professor say that some modern composers blend both classical and modern styles?**

- A. To show that modern composers are unsure of their musical identity
- B. To emphasize that the evolution of music is not strictly one-directional
- C. To suggest that classical music is superior to modern music
- D. To encourage students to compose with classical instruments

## Script

### **Professor:**

All right, before we dive into today's topic, let me ask a quick question—what instruments do you all associate with classical music?

### **Male Student:**

Violins. Definitely violins.

### **Female Student:**

Maybe piano? And, like, harpsichord?

### **Professor:**

Exactly. String instruments, piano, woodwinds—these were central to orchestras during the Classical period. Now, contrast that with modern music. What do we think of?

### **Male Student:**

Electric guitar, drums, synthesizers...

### **Professor:**

Right. We've moved from acoustic to amplified, and from orchestral compositions to digital production. This shift in instrumentation also changed the way music is composed and performed.

Let's take the violin and the electric guitar as examples. Both are string instruments, but their roles in music couldn't be more different. The violin evolved over centuries, refined for nuance and tone. It's at home in symphonies, quartets—settings where subtlety matters. The electric guitar, though, thrives on distortion, effects, and volume.

**Female Student:**

Yeah, and with guitars, performers can kind of shape the sound themselves, like with pedals?

**Professor:**

Exactly. The electric guitar isn't just played—it's sculpted. This brings us to an important point: modern instruments often allow for more individual expression, even improvisation, whereas classical instruments usually serve a tightly composed structure.

Let's also consider percussion. Classical music has timpani and cymbals, but modern music exploded with drum kits, electronic beats, sampled rhythms. This changed the role of rhythm in music—from support to a central element.

**Male Student:**

And recording technology changed everything too, right? I mean, now you don't have to be in a concert hall to hear something.

**Professor:**

Very true. Classical music was meant to be experienced live. But today's music is mostly created with the assumption it'll be recorded and played back digitally. This changes composition, performance, even the way musicians think about their audience.

So we've gone from concert halls to earbuds, from sheet music to mixing software. And yet, many elements persist. Scales, harmony, form—all still matter. Even sampling often draws from classical sources.

One last point—some modern composers blend both worlds. They use traditional instruments but experiment with structure, or vice versa. So this evolution isn't linear. It's dynamic.

Any final thoughts?

**Female Student:**

It's cool how much it's changed, but also how much has stayed the same.

**Professor:**

Exactly. The tools evolve, but the purpose—communicating emotion and experience—remains remarkably consistent.

## Answers

1: What is the main topic of the discussion?

☒ **Correct answer:** B. A comparison of classical and modern musical instruments and styles

2: What example does the professor use to highlight differences between classical and modern instruments?

☒ **Correct answer:** C. Violin and electric guitar

3: According to the professor, how has percussion changed from classical to modern music?

☒ **Correct answer:** D. It became more central and diverse in modern music

4: Why does the professor mention earbuds and concert halls?

☒ **Correct answer:** C. To illustrate the shift in how audiences experience music

5: Why does the professor say that some modern composers blend both classical and modern styles?

☒ **Correct answer:** B. To emphasize that the evolution of music is not strictly one-directional