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MASTERPIECES OF WESTERN MUSIC COURSE GUIDE



Professor Jeffrey D. Lependorf
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Masterpieces of Western Music

Professor Jeffrey D. Lependorf
Columbia University



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Masterpieces of Western Music
Professor Jeffrey D. Lependorf



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About Your Professor

Jeffrey D. Lependorf

Jeffrey D. Lependorf received his undergraduate degree from Oberlin Conservatory and holds a master's and doctorate in music composition from Columbia University, where he began teaching a "Masterpieces of Western Music" course in 1986. A regular speaker at academic conferences, his scholarly work encompasses both music and literature. In addition to teaching, he serves as the

executive director of the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses, a non-profit organization serving the needs of independent literary publishers, and as the director of the Music Omi International Music Residency Program, a unique program through which exceptional musicians selected from around the world work together, collaboratively, toward exploring creative new directions for music-making. He has published in scholarly publications, including *Perspectives of New Music* and *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, and has served on the boards of the New York New Music Ensemble and Downtown Music Productions.

A composer of operas, chamber music, film scores, and music for theater, he is also a certified master of the *shakuhachi*, a traditional Japanese bamboo flute, and has helped to create a new repertoire of music for this ancient instrument. He has performed and had works performed around the globe, literally—a recording of his "Night Pond" for solo *shakuhachi* was launched into space when the shuttle *Atlantis* took off on May 15, 1997, and remained for a year aboard the Russian space station Mir.

His work has received support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Meet the Composer, New Dramatists Composer-Librettist Studio, Harvestworks Artists in Residence Program, the Margaret Jory Fairbank Copying Assistance Program of the American Music Center, Art Omi, Millay Colony for the Arts, American Opera Projects Helping Hands, National Opera Association, Arch and Bruce Brown Foundation, and others. His music has been performed by such groups as the Cassatt Quartet, Seattle Creative Orchestra, Belvoir Quartet, New Renaissance Chamber Artists, New Calliope Singers, and others, at such venues as Music at the Anthology, The Kitchen, Dance Theater Workshop, HERE, The Vineyard Theatre, Miller Theatre, Knitting Factory, Merce Cunningham Studio, Wexford Arts Center, and Roulette. Long engaged in collaborative work, he appeared for years as one half of the "Post-Artaud, Pseudo-Butoh, Performing Duo," *Cabaret of Cruelty*. His music for artist Luca Buvoli's "Not-a-Superhero: Wherever You Are Not" received two weeks of repeat performances in the Piazza San Marco in conjunction with the 1999 Venice Biennale; recent installation work with longtime collaborator Buvoli has shown at the Queens Museum of Art and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.



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Introduction

This lecture series focuses on the very best of Western music, and as we progress through these lectures, the following are two important questions that we will seek to answer as we examine the various musical selections: What makes these works masterpieces? Why highlight these works?

- These works share, for the most part, a common language, and were all composed to be listened to in the concert hall.
- The works have stood the test of time—they remain popular and can be found annually on concert programs.
- These works are loved not only by audiences, but have served as quintessential models for other composers as well.
- These works stand up to repeated listenings—in fact, the more we study them, the more they seem to yield.

In addition, the course highlights relevant details of the lives of the great composers and aids in developing a knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of Western music.



General resources for supplementary reading and reference:

The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments. 3 vols. Ed. Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan Press; New York: Grove's Dictionaries of Music, 1987.

The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians. 2nd ed., 29 vols. Ed. Stanley Sadie. New York: Grove, 2001. Also available online at www.grovemusic.com.

The New Harvard Dictionary of Music. Ed. Don Michael Randel. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986.

Grout, Donald J., and Claude V. Palisca. *A History of Western Music.* 6th ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000.

Strunk, Oliver, ed. *Source Readings in Music History.* Rev. ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996.

Lecture 1: The Red Priest and His All-Girl Orchestra

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Listen to the first movement of “The Spring” from Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*, Op. 77, in its entirety.

Consider this . . .

What musical means does Vivaldi employ in “The Spring” to create a satisfying musical composition that works equally well as “program music” (music that tells an explicit story) and as “absolute,” or pure, music?

Antonio Vivaldi: Background

Vivaldi was born in 1678 in Venice (died 1741), the son of a violinist at the Church of St. Mark. He became a noted violinist and conductor, as well as a composer, and also took up priestly duties in 1703. Affectionately nicknamed “*il prete rosso*”—the red priest—by an adoring Italian public because of his red hair, he taught at the Ospedale della Pietà (Hospice of Mercy), a school for illegitimate or wayward girls, where he created one of the most renowned orchestras in Venice. Vivaldi composed hundreds of concerti for his “all-girl orchestra” at the Conservatory of the Pietà—in 1725 he published a set of twelve favorites (Opus 8, “The Contest Between Harmony and Invention,” the first four of which were labeled *The Seasons*, “The Spring” being the first of the seasons depicted).



The Baroque Concerto

Vivaldi wrote more than 450 concerti, a genre that demonstrates several Baroque principles:

- The principle of contrast (the word “concerto” suggests both playing together, “in consort,” as well as the idea of “contest”). A concerto contrasts a small group of instruments or a soloist with the sound of the full orchestra, called the *tutti*.
- A large work built out of separate, autonomous movements, usually fast-slow-fast.

There are other contrasts as well, which we will discuss next.

“The Spring” (early 1700s)

Spring has come joyfully . . .



the birds welcome it with merry song
and the stream, in gentle breezes, flows forth with sweet murmurs.

Musical score for the second movement of Vivaldi's "The Spring" concerto. The title "Canto de gl' ucelli" is written above the staff. The music is in G major and common time. It features a vocal line with trills and a piano accompaniment with trills and a "solo" section. The dynamics range from piano to forte.

Now the sky is draped in black,
thunder and lightning announce a storm.

Musical score for the third movement of Vivaldi's "The Spring" concerto. The title "Tuoni" is written above the staff. The music is in G major and common time. It features a rapid, rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes, starting with a forte (f) dynamic.

. . . but when the storm has passed,
the little birds return to their harmonious songs.

text © Naxos

“The Spring” concerto is a solo concerto for a violin and orchestra. The first movement is composed in a “ritornello” form, what—mostly because of Vivaldi—you should expect for the first movement of any Baroque concerto.

“Ritornello” refers to a section of music that keeps “returning”; it’s a relatively simple way of holding a large piece of music together—the *ritornello* is played by the “*tutti*” (everyone).

The opening *ritornello* has two memorable themes played in the bright key of E major. Note the “echo effect,” demonstrating another one of those contrasts, known in the Baroque as “terraced dynamics.” The harpsichord makes

“Terraced dynamics” refers to the sudden change from loud to soft, or vice-versa. We don’t generally hear gradual crescendos or decrescendos in the Baroque. The reason for this is probably due to the way a harpsichord works; it can only play loud or soft.

up one half of the standard accompaniment in the Baroque, known as the “*continuo*,” always made up of a keyboard instrument, such as a harpsichord or organ, and a low sustaining instrument, which doubles the bass line, such as a viola da gamba (a precursor of the cello), a cello, or bassoon.

For the first solo display (with touches of accompaniment by two violins from the *tutti*), Vivaldi writes a violin line that imitates bird song. In fact, Vivaldi has written four sonnets, one for each season, and the music in each part of each concerto corresponds to a depiction of part of each poem. While the opening *ritornello* seems to suggest “spring has come joyfully”—represented as a raucous spring dance—the first solo depicts “the birds welcome it with merry song.”

Vivaldi gives us just a touch of the *ritornello* (the second theme of it), before launching into the next solo: “and the stream, in gentle breezes, flows forth with sweet murmurs.” Here, Vivaldi in fact has the *tutti* playing running 16th notes very softly to suggest the murmuring water. Listen closely to the bass line and you might also hear this musical stream flow gently toward a new key.

The second part of the *ritornello* returns, introducing the next solo: “Now the sky is draped in black, thunder and lightning announce a storm.” Repeated notes and virtuoso scale figures suggest lightning and stormy weather. Here, the modulation (moving to a new key center) can be heard very clearly (during the fast-ascending minor-key scales accompanied by orchestra)—follow the bass line to track the movement from key to key!

The next portion of the *ritornello* is played in a dark minor key (c-sharp minor), followed by a return of our birds from before, matching the way the poem continues: “but when the storm has passed, the little birds return to their harmonious songs.” Vivaldi returns us to the original *ritornello* and our original major key, and after a brief solo passage of rising scales, concludes the movement with a closing *tutti*.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Musical Examples

Vivaldi, Antonio. "The Spring," from Op. 77, "The Spring," movement I (3:28 min.).

Further Listening Suggestions

Vivaldi, Antonio. *The Four Seasons*. Op. 8 (same CD as above).
———. Any of Vivaldi's hundreds of concertos.

For Further Study

Everett, Paul, and Julian Rushton, eds. *Vivaldi: The Four Seasons and Other Concertos, Op. 8*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Heller, Karl. *Antonio Vivaldi*. Pompton Plains, NJ: Amadeus Press, 1997.

Landon, H.C. Robbins. *Vivaldi: Voice of the Baroque*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993.

Vivaldi, Antonio. *The Four Seasons and Other Violin Concertos in Full Score*. Trans. Eleanor Selfridge-Field. New York: Dover Publications, 1995.

Websites of Interest

Page maintained as an educational resource — www.antonio-vivaldi.org

Classical Net page index of Vivaldi's works —
www.classical.net/music/composer/works/vivaldi/index.html

Texts in English and Italian of *The Four Seasons* —
www.baroque-music-club.com/vivaldiseasons.html

Lecture 2: The Case of the Runaway Soloist

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Listen to the first movement of J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 in its entirety.

Consider this . . .

How does Bach manage to have the harpsichord simultaneously play the roles of both soloist and accompaniment in this concerto?

Johann Sebastian Bach: Background

Bach was born in 1685 in central Germany. Although by his death he was renowned through Germany as an organist, he was not particularly famous as a composer in his own day. He studied works of composers like Vivaldi to learn his craft and held a number of posts throughout Germany. He would no doubt be shocked to know that today many consider him the single greatest composer in the history of music. Bach devoted his life to music, though he also had twenty children (seven with his first wife, thirteen with his second), several of whom grew up to become noted composers themselves (in particular, C.P.E. Bach and J.C. Bach). Bach's death in 1750 marks the end of the Baroque period.



The Brandenburg Concertos (1721)

These six concerti, each written for a different combination of instruments, were composed while Bach was employed at Cöthen as the conductor of a small orchestra. They were dedicated to the Margrave Christian Ludwig of Brandenburg. Bach had gathered six of his best concerti and sent them to the Margrave in the hopes of getting a new position.

Each one of these is a “concerto grosso,” in which the *tutti* group alternates with a small consort of “soloists,” or “concertino,” rather than with a single soloist.

The Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 in D Major has a *concertino* of violin, Baroque (wooden) flute, and harpsichord. It's likely that Bach himself would have played this particular harpsichord part, which seems designed particularly to show off. Note that the harpsichord will play a double role here: it is

both a solo instrument and a part of the “*continuo*” (the combination of keyboard and low sustaining instrument providing accompaniment for most Baroque compositions).

The first movement, like the first movement of Vivaldi’s “The Spring,” follows essentially a *ritornello* format, alternating a *ritornello* (returning section) with soloistic *concertino* sections, though there are a number of surprises. As expected, the *ritornello*, which breaks into three parts, is introduced by the *tutti* (everyone). The *concertino* then enters, and we hear some wonderful examples of how Bach spins out his material using imitation and sequences; the texture of simultaneous, independent lines of music is called “counterpoint” or “polyphony.”

“Imitation” is when one instrument or line imitates the motives from another line.

A “sequence” is when a melodic pattern is reproduced on successive scale steps up or down in the same line.

When the *ritornello* (based on the first phrase of the original) returns, it sounds a bit lower; in fact, Bach has modulated—he has shifted which pitch, or “key,” we now hear as “home base”—to a key five steps away on a keyboard, the scale degree known as the “dominant.”

A solo passage, thematically similar to the one heard earlier, fixes this new key in our ears. It is followed by a *ritornello* on the middle phrase of the original *ritornello*, and again more solo material. Following this solo Bach brings back the *ritornello*, again on the middle phrase, but *now* it is in a *minor* key.

The next solo passage features fast harpsichord runs. It is followed of course by another *ritornello*, this one also on the middle phrase, and the next solo passage leads us into a central solo that introduces brand new material. It starts with the flute and violin in a quiet dialogue playing in a moody minor key. Bach gives us a new texture, sequences of detached notes in the cello, flute, and violin, and then long high notes to prepare us for the return of the *ritornello*.

A sustained pitch like this is called a “pedal point” because it is reminiscent of the way that an organ can sustain a pitch for a very long time by holding down a foot pedal. Pedal points often signal a return, and that usually means a return to the tonic key and the opening material that goes with that key.

In fact, the next passage sounds like the original *ritornello* in the original key. However, Bach is being sneaky here. He has not returned to the tonic key, but rather to the dominant key established way back near the beginning of the piece. Bach has achieved an arch from that second *ritornello* until now, but everything is still hovering, waiting to “drop” to the home key. We’re not done yet!

The piece moves into another solo section, followed—at last—by the first and second phrases of the *ritornello* in the home key, sounding especially solid and satisfying having been postponed for so long. The movement *could* end here. Here one would probably expect a solo section, still in the home key, followed by a final *ritornello* to conclude the piece, and it starts out sounding like that's what will happen, but just when the piece is nearing completion, the harpsichord takes off! Bach here begins a "*cadenza*," an improvisatory section that exists for the soloist. Remember that this is not a solo concerto, it's a *concerto grosso*, so this is absolutely unprecedented. Toward the end of the solo, a pedal point begins to assert itself, a repeated pitch in the bass, leading to, at last, a complete orchestral performance of the original *ritornello*, bringing this remarkable concerto to a decisive close.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Musical Examples

Bach, J.S. Brandenburg No. 5 (9:03 minutes),
Colonge Chamber Orchestra, Muller-Bruhl, conductor.

Further Listening Suggestions

Bach, J.S. The Brandenburg Concertos, Vol. 1 (above),
Colonge Chamber Orchestra, Muller-Bruhl, conductor.

———. The Brandenburg Concertos, Vol. 2,
Colonge Chamber Orchestra, Muller-Bruhl, conductor.

———. Violin Concertos,
Blacher, violin, Colonge Chamber Orchestra, Muller-Bruhl, conductor.

———. Harpsichord Concertos, Vol. 3,
Colonge Chamber Orchestra, Muller-Bruhl, conductor.

For Further Study

Boyd, Malcolm. *Bach: The Brandenburg Concertos*. Cambridge Music Handbooks Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

David, Hans T., Christoph Wolff, and Arthur Mendel, eds. *New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999.

Marissen, Michael. *Lutheranism, Anti-Judaism, and Bach's St. John's Passion: With an Annotated Literal Translation of the Libretto*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Williams, Peter F. *Organ Music of J.S. Bach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Wolff, Christoph. *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001.

Lecture 3: All Rise and Sing Hallelujah!

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Listen to Händel's *Messiah* in its entirety.

Consider this . . .

How does Händel use music to amplify the meaning of sung words?

George Frideric Händel: Background

Händel was born in 1685 (died 1759) in Germany, and did not come from a musical family, but his talents were so evident that his father (who was a barber-surgeon and a valet at a court near Leipzig) grudgingly let him take lessons after attempting to start him on a law career. He wrote his first opera, in Italian, when he was nineteen, and went off to Italy, where he stayed from 1706 until 1710. At the age of twenty-five he became music director at the Electoral Court of Hanover, but Händel immediately took a leave of absence to go to London, where his opera *Rinaldo* was a big hit. In 1712, he was granted another leave to go to London, and he stayed without seeking permission. Two years later, his employer, the Elector of Hanover, was named King George I of England. Legend has it that Händel avoided showing his face at court, but that eventually the king forgave him. Händel became a naturalized British subject in 1726, and when he died, he was buried in Westminster Abbey.



In the 1720s, Italian opera was all the rage in London, particularly with the upper classes, and Händel was a composing star, filling the theaters with operas like *Radamisto* and *Giulio Cesare*, but the English public began to grow tired of opera in Italian, and tastes seemed to shift in 1728 with the appearance of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, an opera in English—Händel had competition!

In the 1730s, Händel searched for a new way to pack the theaters with his music and found it in the genre known as “*oratorio*.” *Oratorio* is like opera in that it tells a story and has things like an overture, acts, and *arias*, but unlike an opera, it isn't staged (so it's cheaper to produce). They tend to use stories from the Old Testament and be sung in English, which appealed to London's pious middle class, who didn't necessarily speak Italian. Händel's *oratorios* place an emphasis on the choruses rather than on individuals singing *arias*—they favor a communal voice, and this appealed to the masses.

Messiah (1741)

The most popular of Händel's *oratorios*, his *Messiah* was premiered in Dublin and followed by a run at Covent Garden.

The work roughly tells the story of Christ, but in a series of contemplative tableaux rather than a straightforward narrative. It divides into three parts analogous to the acts of an opera:

- I. The Prophecy of His Coming and His Incarnation
- II. His Passion and Resurrection, and the Triumph of the Gospel
- III. Reflections on the Christian Victory Over Death

Messiah has fifty-three numbers: nineteen for chorus, sixteen arias with introductory recitatives, and two purely instrumental pieces.

“Ev’ry Valley”

Let’s begin listening with the number “Ev’ry Valley.” Händel makes an *aria*—called an “air” in this case—out of a simple line of text: “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low, the crooked straight and the rough places plain.” In the first phrase, note how the word “exalted” is set with many pitches on a single syllable, what is called a “*melisma*”—the word itself becomes exalted through this setting. Note also that Händel gives us the word sung simply first, so we can easily comprehend it, and that then the clever text setting comes on a repetition.

Händel treats the voice in an instrumental fashion, demanding the same agility that he might from a flute or trumpet. Note how the words “mountain” and “hill” and “low” receive musical word-painting as well. Händel has a particularly good time setting the last phrase—note how the word “plain” seems to receive a series of “smoothing out” gestures. Händel then gives the entire air shape, the real feeling of a “number,” through simple repetition.

“All We Like Sheep . . .”

Now let’s take a look at some more of Händel’s text setting by looking at the chorus “All We Like Sheep Have Gone Astray.” Listen to how the vocal lines literally go astray on the word “astray.” Note how Händel sets “we have turned every one to his own way” with a turning figure on “turned” and the voices stubbornly reiterating a single pitch on “every one to his own way.”

“Hallelujah!”

Finally, we’ll take a close look at what is undoubtedly the most famous piece for chorus ever composed, the “Hallelujah” chorus, the number that closes part II of *Messiah* and which also provides us with a veritable textbook of choral textures.

The story goes that when King George II heard the singing of “King of Kings” he rose to his feet, and his subjects followed suit. Whether he felt the music was referring to his own majesty, or whether he simply felt moved to leap up we can’t know, but the tradition of standing for the “Hallelujah” chorus remains today.

After a brief introduction played by the strings, the chorus enters with two different settings of “Hallelujah.” “Hallelujah” is exclaimed five more times, as block chords, each time higher and higher.

The chorus introduces a new theme for the words “For the lord God omnipotent reigneth.” Händel represents the idea of “omnipotence” in several different ways. First, Händel has the entire chorus sing the phrase in a powerful unison. Note how the word “omnipotent” contains a dazzling octave leap in the middle—the word itself spans the entire scale. Finally, the entire setting is now repeated at a lower pitch level: the phrase fills the entire chorus high and low. Händel now begins a fugal section with the phrase. A fugal passage like this gives the illusion of many more voices than are actually present, as if the text is reverberating throughout the choir and beyond.

In a “fugue,” a musical theme called “the subject” is presented in each voice one by one, in follow-the-leader fashion. Sections featuring different combinations of the subject, often combined with itself in counterpoint, are alternated with sections called “episodes,” made up primarily of sequences of contrasting material.

Changing the texture again, Händel presents the next phrase, “The kingdom of this world is become the Kingdom of our Lord,” in a simple choral setting (block chords), a texture known as “homophony,” first quiet and then loud. The rest of the phrase, “and he shall reign for ever and ever,” appears as a fugal passage, the concept of “for ever and ever” depicted beautifully by the accumulation of overlapping entrances of the fugue subject here.

An ascent in long notes now begins, sung by the altos and then the sopranos, on the line, “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” Basses and sopranos then follow with a restatement of “And he shall reign for ever and ever.” And now the tenors and basses sing the long notes of “King of Kings and Lord of Lords,” followed by a grand major chord on “King of Kings,” before a final, broad cadence of “Hallelujah.”

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Musical Examples

In order of play:

Händel, George Frideric. *The Messiah*, “Ev’ry Valley” (3:34 min.),
Scholars Baroque Ensemble.

———. *The Messiah*, “All We Like Sheep” (3:54 min.),
Scholars Baroque Ensemble.

———. *The Messiah*, “Hallelujah” (3:43 min.),
Scholars Baroque Ensemble.

Further Listening Suggestions

Händel, George Frideric. *Oratorio, The Best of Händel*, “Judas Maccabaeus,”
Capella Istropolitana, Edlinger, conductor.

For Further Study

Burrows, Donald, ed. *Cambridge Companion to Händel*. Cambridge
Companions to Music Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1997.

Händel, George Frideric. *The Messiah: An Oratorio, Complete: Vocal Score
SATB*. New York: Hal Leonard Company, 1993.

Harris, Ellen T. *Händel as Orpheus: Voice and Desire in the Chamber
Cantatas*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Hogwood, Christopher. *Händel*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1988.

LaRue, C. Steven. *Händel and His Singers: The Creation of the Royal
Academy Operas, 1720–1728*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Lecture 4: More Than Just a Little Night Music

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Listen to the first movement of Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* in its entirety.

Consider this . . .

How does Mozart tell a story without using any words?

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Background

Born in Salzburg in 1756 (died 1791) as a prodigy like no other—by 1762 he was an astounding virtuoso performer, and between the ages of six and fifteen he was taken around by his father and put on show in France, England, Holland, Italy, and all over Vienna and Germany. He composed his first opera at the age of twelve and composed over six hundred compositions by his death at the age of thirty-five.



Eine Kleine Nachtmusik ("A Little Night Music," 1787)

Composed in 1787 for an unknown occasion as a "serenade" (a light piece of music often performed in the background), but a masterpiece nonetheless, it was originally composed for string quartet but is generally performed today in the version Mozart created for small string ensemble.

The work has four movements and works like a tiny symphony. The first movement, written in "*sonata-allegro*" form, provides us with a perfect model of a first movement of a Classical-era composition. The first movements of virtually all Classical-era compositions, including most symphonies and solo *sonatas*, use this form. The word "*sonata*" itself refers only to an instrumental piece, while "*sonata-allegro* form" refers to the form associated with the first movements of most instrumental works from the Classical and Romantic eras. *Sonata-allegro* form provides a dynamic way of contrasting themes and their corresponding keys. There are countless variations, and the basic principles that we'll see demonstrated in the first movement of *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* can be heard in other Classical-era works as well.

In going through the First Movement of *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* bit by bit, we can view it as a kind of "Platonic ideal" of a *sonata-allegro* form. We will highlight those traits that are typical of all *sonata-allegro* forms to serve as a key to under-

standing the first movements of almost anything called a “symphony” or “*sonata*” (from the Classical period or later).

Listen to the opening. Note how robust and energetic it is; this is typical. This first theme also outlines a tonic triad, the chord that will represent “home base” for this piece. There are two more motives following this first one; all three are grouped together as the “First Theme Group,” as they are all in the same key.

Now listen to the next section until it rests momentarily. Note the rapid scales, the assertive movement of the bass line, and the strong cadence at the end followed by a pause. This is the “transition or bridge,” whose function is to take us to another key. The pause sets the stage for what will follow: material in a new key. That movement in the bass line is Mozart taking us to a new key. As we continue, note how much more relaxed the next theme, called the “second theme,” is—it’s quieter too. This is typical: second themes are generally more relaxed, more lyrical, and less assertive than first themes. The second theme also represents a second key, in this case the key known as “the dominant.” The dominant key is the major key with most pitches in common with the tonic key—it is located five steps away on the piano. It has a strong push back toward the tonic key; movement back to the tonic key will be felt as a very strong return.

The “second theme” is followed by a group of energetic themes whose purpose is to round off everything we’ve heard so far. They are known collectively as “closing themes.” There can be several closing themes. What they have in common is that they are all in the same key as the “second theme” and that they literally conclude with a strong cadence in the second key.

Listen to the beginning of the next section. See if you can tell if this is new material or material already played. If it sounds familiar it’s because the beginning of the piece is being played again, exactly as before. In fact, following the closing themes a repeat sign appears, and everything up to this point will be played through again. Everything we have heard so far makes up the first third of the composition and is known as “the exposition”; its purpose is to *expose* the themes, and the tonic key and contrasting key that go with them. Hearing the exposition twice allows us to fix the themes and the two keys into our ears. The space in between the end of the exposition and its repetition allows us to hear that we have in fact modulated to a new key by the end of the exposition, since the end of the exposition and its beginning will clearly not be the same chord. Listen for all of the things described above as you listen to the repetition of the exposition section of this *sonata-allegro* form.

“Sonata-allegro form” is essentially a “tonal” structure, one that builds a large form out of contrasting keys and their relationships.

The next section, called “the development,” can have any number of things in it; its main purpose is to explore new tonal areas using thematic material introduced in the exposition. This one is quite short, but still does what we expect of a development section: exploration. Note how it starts out sounding almost like a repetition of the exposition, but we have the feeling that things

are shifting, changing—we're modulating (exploring new keys). The principle feeling of being in a development section is one of instability; the listener may experience movement through any number of major and minor keys. A composer can choose to develop all, just a few, or even just one of the themes introduced in the exposition.

Toward the end of the development section we become aware of a sustained pitch; this is a "pedal point" on the dominant degree and signals a return to the tonic and original material. This is known as the "retransition."

What we hear next should sound familiar. It's the first theme again, in the original home key. This section is the "recapitulation" and represents a "double return," a return to the first theme and also a return to the first key. For the piece to conclude, we must now have both the first theme *and* the second theme (along with its closing themes) in the home key—all themes must now be reconciled to the same home key. For this to happen, the transition this time must *not* modulate. We can't omit it because we still need the thematic material to take us from one theme to the other, but it must be altered to end in the home key, so in the recap this "transition" or "bridge" is sometimes referred to as a "false bridge" or "circular transition."

To give the entire movement a decisive ending, Mozart adds a brief "coda," or "tail," to round things off. *Sonata-allegro* forms can frequently have an optional coda, and sometimes an optional slow introduction as well.

A "sonata-allegro" form is a narrative form—it tells the story of two contrasting keys and themes that reconcile at the end. In the middle they explore various tonal areas together, and ultimately everything works out in the end. We have a similar kind of satisfaction hearing a "sonata-allegro" form work itself out as we do reading a great novel or watching a classic film.



Mozart's memorial in Vienna

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Musical Examples

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, Movement I (5:51 min.), Capella Istropolitana, Sobotka, conductor.

Further Listening Suggestions

Symphony No. 38 in D Major (Prague),
Capella Istropolitana, Wordsworth, conductor.

The Best of Mozart, Symphony No. 40 in G Minor: Molto Allegro,
Capella Istropolitana, Wordsworth, conductor.

———, Symphony No. 41 in C Major: “Jupiter,” Menuetto: Allegro,
Capella Istropolitana, Wordsworth, conductor.

For Further Study

Gutman, Robert W. *Mozart: A Cultural Biography*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 2000.

Hildesheimer, Wolfgang. *Mozart*. Trans. Marion Faber. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1991.

Keefe, Simon P., ed. *Cambridge Companion to Mozart*. Cambridge Companion to Music Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Landon, H.C. Robbins. *1791: Mozart's Last Year*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1999.

Spaethling, Robert, ed. *Mozart's Letters, Mozart's Life*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000.

Zaslaw, Neal, and William Cowdery, eds. *The Compleat Mozart: A Guide to the Musical Works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991.

Other Resources of Interest

Movie: *Amadeus*. Warner Home Video, 1984.

Lecture 5: Magnificent Obsession: The World in Four Notes

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Listen to the first movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in its entirety.

Consider this . . .

How does Beethoven generate contrasting material from just four notes?

Ludwig van Beethoven: Background

Born in Bonn, Germany, in 1770 (died 1827), he came from a musical family and was recognized as a prodigy early on. His father forced him to practice more than he would have liked and tried to exploit him as “the next Mozart.” In fact, he was sent to Vienna to study with Mozart, but had to return right away because his mother was taken ill.

When he returned to Vienna, Mozart had died, but Beethoven was able to study with Haydn (who had been Mozart's teacher). Beethoven didn't get along with Haydn; apparently the young Beethoven was something of a fiery, impetuous youth, and he went on to study with several other people, while at the same time ingratiating himself into Viennese high society with his dazzling piano technique. He soon had affluent pupils and he was able to demand high prices for his compositions.



Beethoven's music utilizes the forms of the Classical period, such as the *sonata-allegro* form, but they seem to burst at the seams with a new energy, a foreshadowing of the Romantic period. Later in life, Beethoven began to lose his hearing and became totally deaf by 1814—some of his greatest works, such as the *Missa Solemnis* and the Symphony No. 9 were written after he had completely lost his hearing. Works of Beethoven appear on concert programs more frequently than any other composer in history, and his Fifth Symphony stands at the center of his output. It is no doubt the single most popular piece of classical music ever composed, and deservedly so.

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor (1808), First Movement

The first movement of Beethoven's 5th Symphony, like the first movement of Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, uses the *sonata-allegro* form, but Beethoven confronts our expectations with numerous surprises. From the first few opening bars of the exposition, Beethoven gives a *sonata-allegro* movement that could only be Beethoven—it is anything but conventional.

The opening motive, rhythmically three shorts and a long and just two different pitches, is more than just striking; it represents a germ of a musical idea that will now generate virtually every note that will follow. The strings play in unison and the tempo is vague—long sustained notes follow the two initial bursts of the opening motive. The opening pitches—G and Eb—do seem to sound minor (the symphony is in C minor), yet without chords to support them we can't be sure; in fact, these two pitches could have a pitch added below to make the tonic triad of C minor, but could equally work with a Bb added above, creating what would be the tonic triad in Eb major, the key in fact that Beethoven will present his second theme in. The following statement of the motive, sequenced down one step, could also be heard in either C minor or Eb major. Beethoven's first theme then has the potential to represent or embody *both* of the “contrasting” keys of this *sonata-allegro* form.

Beethoven begins stringing together longer and longer sequences of the motive, building momentum and creating a crescendo of sound that climaxes in three chords, the last of which is sustained. Imitating sequences of these lines are then piled up in imitative counterpoint to create another crescendo, culminating in a loud climax of two chords. A French horn now plays the transition, one of the shortest imaginable, consisting of only three pitches. It starts off with the rhythm of the opening motive, but leaps a larger interval, and then extends that fourth long note two times. The second theme appears, in Eb major (what is known as the “relative major”—the major key with the most pitches in common with a minor key), and as we expect, it is played more quietly and sounds more lyrical compared to the fire of the opening theme. Now, if we go back and play the transition motive a few times, followed by the second theme, we can begin to hear how the latter grows out of the former. So, although the second theme seems at first to be something brand new, in stark contrast to the first theme, we can understand that in a certain sense it is a version of the first theme, or at least grows out of it. And note how even during the exposition of the second theme that opening first theme motive keeps asserting itself.

A crescendo and loud string passage prepares us for the closing theme, which itself is made entirely out of the opening motive. That's the exposition, which will now be repeated exactly, allowing us to secure the themes and keys in our head—remember that our expectation is that the first theme is in a minor key, and that the second theme, in a major key, must both be reconciled at the end, in the recapitulation, in the same key.

The development section takes off with the opening motive played *fortissimo* by the horns and strings; it's then bounced back and forth between woodwinds and strings, but listen to the bass line and you will hear how it doesn't seem to be able to rest in any one key; it keeps modulating every few measures. Another crescendo is launched, culminating with incessant pounding versions of the motive, as if the “correct key” can't be found; it's almost frantic. A short passage of imitative counterpoint reintroduces the transition motive. Remember that the transition motive embodies the essence of both the first and second themes. Beethoven keeps reducing statements of the motive until all we are left with is a single pitch—it's the entire symphony resting on the head of a pin! Note that things keep getting quieter and quieter as

well, but the opening motive has hardly lost its potency; it keeps reasserting itself. Insistent reiterations of the opening motive constitute the retransition.

The recap begins as we would expect, but an unexpected oboe solo (a “*cadenza*”) momentarily provides a moment of rest. The transition this time is played by a bassoon instead of a horn, a bit of a surprise. In order for the transition to not take us to the second key of Eb, it must be played on different pitches than before. In Beethoven’s day, French horns did not have the valves that a modern French horn of today has, so it would not be able to play this second version of the transition.

Our second theme now does appear in the key of C, but not in C minor like we might expect; it’s now in C major (correct key, but “wrong” mode)—Beethoven reconciles both themes to the same tonic pitch, but not to the same key.

The piece continues with the expected closing themes and then Beethoven does something wholly unexpected. Rather than provide us with a simple coda to balance out the movement, a brand new theme appears—another four-note motive, this one consisting of rising quarter notes; instead of a mere coda we get what is in essence a second development section! At last, the piece comes to a close with a succession of tonic and dominant chords, reiterated to bring the entire movement to an abrupt but conclusive finish.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Musical Examples

Beethoven, Ludwig van. Symphony No. 5, Movement I (5:51 min.),
Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra, Richard Edlinger, conductor.

Further Listening Suggestions

The Best of Beethoven, Symphony No. 3 in Eb Major (*Eroica*), Op. 55,
Nicolaus Esterhazy Sinfonia, Bela Drahos, conductor.

———, Symphony No. 6 in F Major (*Pastorale*), Op. 68,
Nicolaus Esterhazy Sinfonia, Bela Drahos, conductor.

———, Symphony No. 9 in D Minor: “Choral,” Op. 125,
Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra, Richard Edlinger, conductor,
Diane Elais, contralto/Robert Holzer, bass-baritone/Gabriele Lechner,
soprano/Michael Pabst, tenor.

Beethoven: Symphonies Nos. 5 & 7, Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92,
Berlin State Opera Orchestra, Richard Strauss, conductor.

For Further Study

Cooper, Barry. *Beethoven*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Hull, Arthur Eaglefield. *Beethoven's Letters: With Explanatory Notes by A.C. Kalischer*. Trans. John South Shedlock. New York: Dover Publishing, 1994.

Kinderman, William. *Beethoven*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Lockwood, Lewis. *Beethoven: The Music and the Life*. New York:
W.W. Norton & Company, 2002.

Schindler, Anton Felix, with annotations by Donald W. Macardle. *Beethoven
as I Knew Him*. Trans. Constance Jolly. New York: Dover Publications, 1996.

Stanley, Glenn. *Cambridge Companion to Beethoven*. Cambridge
Companions to Music Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1999.

Websites of Interest

San Jose State University website maintained by the Ira F. Brilliant Center for
Beethoven Studies — www2.sjsu.edu/depts/beethoven

Lecture 6: Romanticism with a Capital “R,” or Be Careful What You Wish For

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

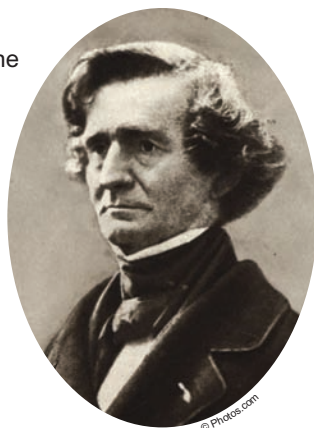
Listen to Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique* in its entirety.

Consider this . . .

Does this work seem to demonstrate art imitating life, or vice-versa?

Romanticism: Background

The period from about 1820 to 1900 is known as the “Romantic Period.” Much of the music of this period does indeed have a certain obsession with “love” or “romance,” or at least the pursuit of it. Strong outpouring of emotions and the feeling of striving or longing for the unattainable are “romantic” traits. It is during the Romantic period that composers are no longer thought of as craftsman, but rather as artists, individuals possessing talents that other “mere mortals” do not. It’s also the great age of “program music,” pieces of music that tell a story or depict nonmusical events or scenes.



Hector Berlioz: Background

He was born in 1803 (died 1869), the son of a doctor in Côte St. André, France, and was raised with very little musical training. After failing at a medical career and having his living stipend cut off by his father, he attended the Paris Conservatory and made his living as a music critic. Curiously, despite being one of the greatest orchestrators of all time (in fact, he wrote the first great treatise on orchestration), he could barely play the piano, even well into his career. In his memoirs, Berlioz gives countless examples of the way in which listeners in the Romantic era might be affected by music, yet none can compare to his own experience, as we’ll see in this orchestral masterpiece.

***Symphonie Fantastique* (1830)**

In Paris in 1827, Berlioz attended a performance of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, performed by a troupe of English actors, and became smitten with the Ophelia, played by a Harriet Smithson. Berlioz spoke little English and Harriet, whom Berlioz wrote to as “Henriette,” spoke little French; he became smitten with her, but his impassioned letters went unanswered. Berlioz, by way of wooing her, began work on what would be the first complete “program symphony” in history, ultimately a five-movement work that told a single story

in which Berlioz was the star—he wrote to a friend, “I come now to the supreme drama of my life.”

Listen to the slow introduction so you can hear the size of the Berlioz orchestra, which is more than twice the size of a Classical-era orchestra.

Berlioz’s Program for His *Symphonie Fantastique* (Preface and First Movement)

The composer wishes to describe the various states in the life of an artist, insofar as they have musical quality. Because this instrumental drama lacks the assistance of words, an advance explanation of the plan is required. The following Program, then, should be thought of as the spoken text of an opera, serving to introduce the musical movements and to explain their character and expression. At concerts in which this symphony is played, the distribution of this program to the audience is essential to the full understanding of the dramatic plan of the work.

I. Reveries—Passions

The composer imagines that a young musician, troubled by that spiritual malady which a famous writer has called “unrooted emotions,” imagines a woman who embodies the charms of the ideal being, and falls desperately in love with her. By some strange trick of fancy, the beloved vision never appears to the artist’s mind except in association with a musical idea in which he perceives the same character—impassioned, yet refined and diffident—that he attributes to this object of his love. This melodic image and its musical representation pursue him incessantly like a double *idée fixe*. It is for this reason that the tune at the beginning of the first *Allegro* recurs constantly in every movement of the symphony. The transition from a state of dreamy melancholy, interrupted by several fits of aimless joy, to one of delirious passion, with its impulses of rage and jealousy, its returning moments of tenderness, its tears, and its religious solace, forms the subject of the first movement.

Note the frequent extreme swells and how quixotically the texture changes from thin to thick.

The theme associated with “the beloved”—Berlioz’s “*idée fixe*”—appears (in fact, the first theme of what will be a fairly loose *sonata-allegro* form) amidst strings playing what sounds like a heart beating faster and faster. The *idée fixe* itself represents something new melodically—listen to how long it is! Compare it to the motive out of which Beethoven built his 5th Symphony. The melody itself is asymmetrical and contains a number of recognizable motives. This *idée fixe* will not only reappear in every movement, but it will reappear in a different guise each time—it’s not the “theme” of each movement, but it pervades each movement in one way or another, in each case representing “the beloved,” Harriet Smithson.

In the second movement, the *idée fixe* appears as a waltz melody. The program tells us that the artist finds himself at a ball—note the sound of the two harps, standard in the modern orchestra after Berlioz. The *idée fixe* appears after an introduction, as if we see the beloved across a room, and then as she begins to dance the *idée fixe* itself becomes the melody of the waltz.

The third movement presents a “country scene”; the artist goes to the country to forget his longings. This *adagio* (slow) movement features a pastoral duet between an oboe and an English horn, imitating the echoing calls of two shepherds; the movement concludes with the first shepherd’s calls going unanswered, a symbol of the artist’s loneliness. Instead, we hear a depiction of thunder by four timpani drums.

In the fourth movement, a dazzling march, the artist dreams, assisted with opium, that he has killed the beloved and is attending his own execution. The movement concludes with the musical depiction of the artist being positioned in the guillotine, seeing his beloved as he looks up, the fatal blow, two bounces of his severed head, and the cheers of the crowd!

It is in the fifth movement—“Dream of a Witches’ Sabbath”—that we see the possibilities of the program symphony come to full fruition. Feeling rejected by Harriet Smithson, Berlioz transforms her, through his *idée fixe*, into a grotesque witch. He wrote, “my revenge is not too severe.” The movement opens with depictions of “strange noises, groans, bursts of laughter and distant cries”—at one point the woodwinds are actually instructed to play as if being choked. When the *idée fixe* appears, it is played by a shrill Eb clarinet (smaller and higher than the standard Bb clarinet) and takes the form of a parody of the original lyrical theme. After a sounding of funeral bells, Berlioz introduces a theme from a Gregorian chant known as the *Dies irae* (which tells of the “day of wrath on which the ages will be changed to dust”). We hear the *Dies irae* twice as fast, in “diminution,” and then in a satirical version by the woodwinds, perhaps in both mockery of the Church and of “learned counterpoint.” Berlioz now introduces a theme representing the witches dancing in a round, and then presents this theme as a fugue; he even combines the witches’ dance with the *Dies irae*. The last minute of the movement, its finale, is introduced with an effect known as *col legno*, hitting the strings of the violins using the wood part of the bow—the effect is intended to sound like rattling bones—and the movement ends with a rousing flourish.

Berlioz and Smithson did in fact marry. Apparently, despite being depicted as a grotesque witch, she was still tickled by the advances of her starstruck composer, but it turned out to be one of the worst marriages in history; in fact, they hated each other. Perhaps some “ideals” are best left unattainable.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Musical Examples

In order of play:

Berlioz, Hector. *Symphonie Fantastique*, Movement I (13:10 min.).

———. *Symphonie Fantastique*, Movement II (6:16 min.).

———. *Symphonie Fantastique*, Movement IV (4:48 min.).

———. *Symphonie Fantastique*, Movement V (10:00 min.),
San Diego Symphony Orchestra, Yoav Talmi, conductor.

Further Listening Suggestions

The Best of Berlioz, Harold en Italie, Op. 16,
“Serenade of a Mountaineer in the Abruzzi to His Mistress.”

———, *Le Carnaval Romain*, Op. 9,
San Diego Symphony Orchestra; Golani, viola; Talmi, conductor.

Roméo et Juliette, Op. 17 (excerpts),
San Diego Master Chorale; San Diego Symphony Orchestra; Almond,
choirmaster; Talmi, conductor.

For Further Study

Barzun, Jacques. *Berlioz and His Century: An Introduction to the Age of Romanticism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Bloom, Peter. *Berlioz Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

———. *Life of Berlioz*. Musical Lives Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Cairns, David. *Berlioz: The Making of an Artist, 1803–1832, Vol. 1*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2000.

———. *Berlioz: Servitude and Greatness, Vol. 2*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2000.

———, ed. *Memoirs of Hector Berlioz*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002.

Holoman, D. Kern. *Berlioz: A Musical Biography of the Creative Genius of the Romantic Era*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 1989.

MacDonald, Hugh. *Berlioz*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Lecture 7: How to Make a Piano Sing

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Listen to Chopin's Nocturne in Db in its entirety.

Consider this . . .

What techniques does Chopin use in this piano masterpiece to give the illusion of a melody being performed by a vocalist?

Frédéric Chopin: Background

Chopin was born near Warsaw, Poland, in 1810 (died 1849), the son of a Polish mother and a French father, who taught at a secondary school for elite Polish nobility. He studied piano and composition at the Warsaw conservatory, and after a year in Vienna, settled in Paris in 1831, where he would spend the rest of his short years (Poland at this time was invaded by Russian troops and he could not return home). In 1836, he became the lover of the Baroness Aurore Dudevant, who wrote novels under the pen name George Sand. He made his living giving lessons to wealthy clients, played only occasionally at private musical evenings (“*musicales*”), and composed almost exclusively for the piano. He embodies the introspective side of “romanticism,” concentrating on piano miniatures that capture fleeting, poignant emotions.



The Nocturne: Background

The Irish composer John Field first used the term for a piano piece suggesting the evocative shimmer of night. Chopin borrowed the idea and made it his own; while Chopin was not foremost an innovator, he was simply the best at what he did—writing for the piano—and his genius surfaces in the subtleties of his harmonies and his approach to the piano.

The American painter Whistler would title a number of his paintings “nocturnes” later in the century.

One of Chopin's greatest influences was that of *bel canto* (“beautiful singing”) opera, an Italian opera style popular in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. Two of the greatest composers of *bel canto* opera were the composers Gaetano Donizetti and Vincenzo Bellini; in *bel canto* opera, all focus is on the

voice; the orchestra offers only the simplest accompaniments. A great example is the *aria* “Casta Diva” (“Chaste Goddess”) from Bellini’s *Norma*. The accompaniment sounds almost like that of a giant, orchestrated guitar, playing simple “*arpeggios*” (the pitches of a chord played one by one), providing a cushion for the voice above. The vocal line itself is long and fluid, with many vocal flourishes appearing for no other reason but to show off the beauty of an agile voice. Many *bel canto arias*, like this one, were performed as “*da capo*” *arias*; that is, they repeat (“*da capo*” literally means “to the head”) so the diva could improvise even greater vocal flourishes on the repeat (since we already know the words and repeating an *aria* will hardly move the action forward).

Nocturne in Db

Chopin’s Nocturne in Db (from his Op. 27, No. 2 – 1830s) begins much the same way as “Casta Diva,” with the left hand playing the role of Bellini’s orchestra and the right hand that of the opera diva. For the first few measures, the left hand repeats exactly the same figure, with the harmony unchanging, and the pedal of the piano held down throughout—Chopin treats the piano as what, in a certain respect, it is: a harp turned on its side. The right hand introduces over this a long, languid *bel canto*-like melody. It’s easy to imagine a lyric soprano singing this line, and it seems to call out for the sort of liberties of tempo—*rubato*—that we would expect from a soprano.

Rubato is essential for playing Chopin. For Chopin, a special kind of *rubato* (the word is also reminiscent of the word “rubber” and suggests a stretching of the tempo for expressive effect) is called for, called “*Tempo rubato*,” where the left hand remains steady while the right hand varies its tempo above, like a singer singing freely over a fixed accompaniment.

The term “*tempo rubato*” literally means to steal from one beat and give to the next, and suggests an extreme fluidity of tempo.

In the middle of the melody we hear a long “*appoggiatura*,” another technique borrowed from vocal technique, where a dissonant pitch that leans into its resolution is prolonged on a strong beat—this kind of “sitting” on a dissonance before resolution is a Chopin trademark.

For the second half of the melody, Chopin doubles the tune, mostly in parallel thirds, providing a slightly new texture, but note that the simple *arpeggiations* of the accompaniment remain constant. Chopin, using only this limited vocabulary, is nonetheless able to build a tremendous amount of tension and excitement in just a few measures.

Chopin will now play through his melody twice more, like a sort of double “*da capo*” *aria*, adding more and more embellishment with each pass. On the second pass through the melody he embeds a rising chromatic scale into the accompaniment figure that had been harmonically static under the “*appoggiatura*” figure the first time we heard the melody. This embedded figure, not falling on the downbeats, provides a three-dimensional effect, like that of barely making out an approaching figure in the dark.

Note the pianistic pyrotechnics as the melody continues. Toward the end of the B section of the melody, Chopin uses a rhythmic technique known as “*hemiola*,” where a new meter is superimposed upon the existing one momentarily. At one point, the left hand groups of six notes per chord shift to groups of four notes; we haven’t actually changed meter, but the effect is one of tremendous forward momentum as the pace of harmonic change is quickened. The actual chords here change harmony with each one of these figures as well (note the rising chromatic scale in the bass line). This is a perfect illustration of Chopin’s mastery of “passing harmonies,” chords used to connect one harmonically stable sonority to another, and usually highly chromatic (incorporating many pitches not in the key).

The last time through the melody Chopin gives us is the flashiest pianistic display of the entire composition, almost a “*cadenza*” of the sort we might expect in a piano concerto. And in the B section, we get another kind of chromatic passage over a pedal point. Through to the end of the composition, everything is heard over a low Db, the tonic pitch of the piece—note how over seven measures the music seems to sink gradually to that very same home base pitch. The last nine measures serve as a *coda*, not in function unlike the reiterated tonic and dominant chords that ended the first movement of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5. Over alternating tonic and dominant harmonies, which maintain the Db pedal point, Chopin gives a piano version of a “vocal duet.” Finally, an elegant rising scale in parallel intervals (played in groups of seven over the accompanying figures grouped in six!) brings us gently to a Db tonic triad, and the piece concludes with a simple pair of chiming chords.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Musical Examples

Chopin, Frédéric. *Nocturnes*, Vol. 1, Nocturne in Db, Op. 27, No. 2 (6:16 min.), Biret, piano.

Further Listening Suggestions

Chopin, Frédéric. *The Best of Chopin: Twenty-four Études*, Opp. 10, Szekely, piano (also Nocturnes, Waltzes, Mazurkas, and Ballades).

———. *Chill with Chopin: Prelude*, Op 28: Raindrop, Biret, piano.

For Further Study

Azoury, Pierre H. *Chopin Through His Contemporaries: Friends, Lovers and Rivals*. Contributions to the Study of Music and Dancer Series. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, Inc., 1999.

Chopin, Frédéric. *Chopin's Letters*. New York: Dover Publications, 1988.

Goldberg, Halina. *The Age of Chopin: Interdisciplinary Inquiries*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003.

Samson, Jim. *Cambridge Companion to Chopin*. Cambridge Companions to Music Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Szulc, Tad. *Chopin in Paris: The Life and Times of the Romantic Composer*. New York: De Capo Press, 2000.

Websites of Interest

The Frédéric Chopin Society of Warsaw —
www.chopin.pl/spis_tresci/index_en.html

Lecture 8: Going Forward by Looking Back

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

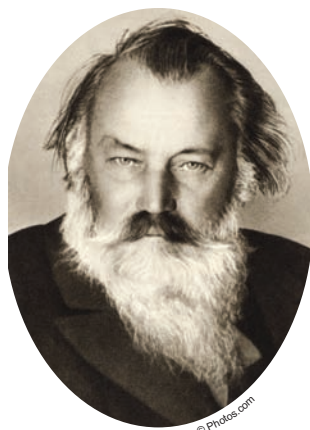
Listen to Brahms's *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Händel*.

Consider this . . .

Each of these twenty-five variations sounds like a different piece of music—how can we hear the “theme” in each of them?

Johannes Brahms: Background

Johannes Brahms was born in 1833 (died 1897) in Hamburg, the son of a musician, and started music training early. He wrote almost exclusively “absolute music”—music with no program—and mostly in the same forms of his Classical forefathers; Brahms was a traditionalist. At the age of twenty-two he became a dear friend of Clara and Robert Schumann. Schumann helped to launch his career with an enthusiastic critical review, and he stayed with Clara while Robert Schumann was in an insane asylum. While Brahms was highly regarded as a master composer by the end of his life, his younger years were spent earning money as a bar pianist. Brahms demonstrates another side of Romanticism, a newfound reverence for the past; it is during this time that the study of music history as we know it today takes root.



Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Händel (1861)

For his theme, Brahms uses a short work for keyboard by Händel, from his *Lessons* (1733). This theme takes a form known as “rounded binary,” in which two halves each repeat—it is “rounded” because some of the material from the first half returns at the end of the second half. If we skip ahead to any of the variations, we may at first have difficulty hearing the original melody, but this is because it is not actually the melody itself as we first hear it, from which Brahms creates these twenty-five variations directly. To understand how these variations work we need to imagine a “background” melody, a structural armature upon which Händel’s theme is built. If we remove the ornamentation, repeated notes, and reduce Händel’s theme down to the bare essentials, what we get is a very simple, hypothetical skeleton, and it is from this that Brahms will “project” all twenty-five variations and the final fugue.

Variation I “decorates” each of the structural “background” pitches with a “lower neighbor” tone—down and up—and otherwise follows the original chord progression of the Händel theme. Note how he cleverly throws accents off each beat to create forward motion. Note also how the filigree figures that appeared at the repeats have been “romanticized,” turned into tiny virtuoso scale figures.

Variation II presents a new texture, as well as many pitches outside of the key—if we don’t hear this as a version of our imagined “background melody,” we have little chance of hearing Händel’s theme in this variation. The texture of this variation presents a favorite of Brahms’s, the “cross-rhythm”—the right hand plays three notes for each beat while the left hand plays two—this is sometimes referred to as “two-against-three.”

In Variation III Brahms continues the idea of Variation II, in which each of our armature pitches is decorated with a lower neighbor, but this time, each of the ornamental pitches is just a half-step away, the result being a highly chromatic line—and we no longer hear the familiar chord progression of the original theme.

Variation V offers us a version of our background melody in the minor mode. The structural scale-steps no longer fall exactly where they might in relation to the Händel theme, but we can still track our theme if we bear the background “tune” in mind. Variation VI starts a series of variations in which Brahms shows his love of Bach and Händel through an astounding array of complex canons.

A canon is when one voice, or vocal line, imitates another exactly.

For the concluding Fugue, Brahms creates a fugue subject (the main motive of a fugue) from the same armature of the Händel theme that the twenty-five variations were built upon. This fugue demonstrates every fugal technique of the Baroque masters, yet could only have been written during the Romantic era. Brahms takes full advantage of the piano-playing techniques of his time, at times fleshing out single voices into massive block chords, and changing mood and texture in a manner that would have been impossible in the Baroque era, and the fugue concludes in a pyrotechnic display of virtuosity.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Musical Examples

Brahms, Johannes. *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Händel* (Variations I, II, III, V, VI, Fugue).

Further Listening Suggestions

Brahms, Johannes. *Variations: Variations on a Theme by Schumann*, Op. 9, *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, Op. 35 (1862-63), Biret, piano.

———. Concerto No. 2 in B-flat Major, Op. 83, Biret, piano.

———. Piano Pieces, Op. 116, Biret, piano.

For Further Study

Avins, Styra, ed. *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*. Trans. Josef Eisinger. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Botstein, Leon, ed. *Complete Brahms: A Guide to the Musical Works of Johannes Brahms*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999.

MacDonald, Malcolm. *Brahms*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Musgrave, Michael. *A Brahms Reader*. Boston: Yale University Press, 1999.

———. *Cambridge Companion to Brahms*. Cambridge Companions to Music Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Swafford, Jan. *Johannes Brahms: A Biography*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.

Websites of Interest

Classical Music Archives site with a timeline of Brahms's life and his works — www.classicalarchives.com/brahms.html

Lecture 9: A Tale of Love and Death

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Listen to Wagner's *Prelude to Tristan und Isolde* in its entirety.

Consider this . . .

How can we as modern listeners reconcile Wagner's beautiful music with his deplorable personal history?

Richard Wagner: Background

Richard Wagner was born in 1813 in Leipzig (died in 1883). It is not exactly clear who his real father was; it may have been the police chief Karl Freidrich or the actor and painter Ludwig Geyer. He did not start out as any sort of musical prodigy, though he did love the music of Beethoven; he was particularly interested in literature and in philosophy. He began to compose after attending the University of Leipzig; his early efforts were not very successful, though he did find himself drawn to opera. His first opera, *Die Feen* (1833-34), was a flop, and his second fared not much better, but his third, *Rienzi*, was a hit.



Public Domain

His first wife left him in 1862, and Wagner found himself in Paris, where he worked as an opera conductor and developed an intense jealousy over the success of the Jewish opera composer Meyerbeer. Wagner then moved to Dresden, where his next successful opera was produced, and even took part in the Dresden riots of 1849, but he fought on the anarchist side and was forced to live in exile in Switzerland for the next twelve years. While in Zurich, Wagner absorbed the philosophy of Schopenhauer and became enamored with Teutonic myths. He stopped composing for six years, but during this time began planning work on his great tetralogy of operas, *Der Ring das Nibelungen*. In the middle of composing *The Ring* cycle, he took a break and composed *Tristan und Isolde*, while also in the throws of an affair with Mathilde Wesendonk, the wife of his patron and benefactor, Otto Wesendonk.

Wagner completed *Tristan* in 1858 (and also ended his affair), and in 1860, with the aid of the Princess Augusta of Prussia, who admired his music, he was able to return to Germany, where he then began an affair with the wife of the conductor Hans von Bülow, Cosima (who was also the daughter of the composer Franz Liszt). In 1862, he and his first wife separated for good, and in 1864, his life seemed to be in a permanent downward spiral—no one would produce *Tristan* and his debts kept mounting. He met Ludwig II, the

young king of Bavaria, who was not only an unabashed fan, but a bit crazy as well; he gave Wagner whatever he wanted. At Wagner's request, von Bülow was made court conductor (thus allowing Wagner to continue his affair). *Tristan*, with von Bülow conducting, had its world premier in 1865. Wagner and Cosima gave birth to an illegitimate daughter that they named "Isolde." "Mad" King Ludwig also built Wagner an opera house, the Bayreuth Festspielhaus, just for the demands of Wagner's music dramas (it was in fact the first theater in history to have electric lights).

Wagner's music and anti-Semitic tracts made him a favorite composer of the Nazis, yet he wrote some of the most sublime music ever created, and some of the most influential.

Tristan und Isolde

The opera *Tristan und Isolde* (1857–59) is probably the most written-about opera in the history of music. It combines the philosophy of Schopenhauer with a medieval legend. Schopenhauer wrote about "the Will," the emotions and drives that move us through life. For Schopenhauer, the world was not a very happy place; in fact, he saw music as one of the few escapes from the gloom of everyday existence. Wagner interpreted these ideas in a somewhat extreme fashion in *Tristan*, but also focused on the power of sexual love as a primary drive. Note that this is some time before Freud!

Here's the story in a nutshell: Isolde is betrothed to King Mark of Cornwall, but Isolde falls in love with Tristan, his knight, when the two accidentally drink a love potion. Ultimately, Tristan is mortally wounded and Isolde dies in his arms, their love sealed for eternity in death. The last line of the opera is "death, eternal bliss."

Throughout the opera, Wagner uses short musical motives, later called by historians "*leitmotifs*" ("leading motives"), which are used to represent emotional states, objects, or people. These include motives associated with desire, longing, or the release only possible through death. In regard to the language of tonality, Wagner seems to push the possibilities of the major-minor tonal system to its very extreme. This is tonal music, yet theorists still argue about even what key this piece is in!

The Music

The *Prelude to Tristan und Isolde* stands as a singular achievement and continues to confound music theorists (no piece has had more written about it) while it delights audiences even today. Roughly in a large ABA form, Wagner weaves a tapestry of *leitmotifs* that will play a role throughout the opera; in particular, he creates a complex musical portrait of "longing" and "desire."

The *Prelude* opens with a combination of two *leitmotifs*. The first, played by cellos, featuring a descending chromatic scale, is associated with "desire." The second, played by an oboe, and which consists of a rising chromatic scale, is associated with "longing." The two overlap in an enigmatic chord known today as "the Tristan Chord." It is a tension-filled (dissonant) chord that clearly seeks resolution, but to where is always unclear. This whole complex is associated with love and desire, as well as the release possible in

death; we might refer to it as the “love-death” theme, the theme of the opera as a whole. This “love-death” figure, filled with longing and desire, as well as harmonic instability, is repeated twice, each time higher and higher, with long, pregnant gaps between each utterance, and ending in what can be described as a “deceptive cadence” (the phrase does come to rest, but doesn’t land where we expect).

Wagner’s ability to create music that continuously evolves while pushing strongly forward, yet suspends resolution for great periods of time, is one of his greatest gifts. Wagner’s *leitmotifs* remain so fluid that they can combine and transform into one another mellifluously. A master of thematic transformation, and writing for the orchestra, it functions here like a giant subconscious of the action on stage.

Following the “love-death” motives, the cellos now introduce a new theme, which grows organically from the material already presented; it is sometimes referred to as the “glance” *leitmotiv*. A descending version of this melody, played by the violas, appears, rounding out the first part of the *Prelude*.

The central section of the *Prelude* develops these two extended motives, balancing ascending with descending sequences, with gorgeous, surging orchestrations that perfectly depict the feeling of yearning passion. Overlapping statements of the glance motive, played louder and louder, followed by climactic horn calls, bring us back to the opening material. A three-fold sequence of the love-death *leitmotiv* returns, this time with the gaps filled in, and after a drum roll, the prelude comes to a quiet, enigmatic conclusion.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Musical Examples

Wagner, Richard. *The Classics at the Movies. Prelude to Tristan* (7:50 min.), Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, Johannes Wildner, conductor.

Further Listening Suggestions

- Wagner, Richard. *Tristan und Isolde (Furtwängler)*, Royal Opera House Chorus, Covent Garden, Philharmonia Orchestra; Wilhelm Furtwängler, conductor.
- . *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, Marek Janowski, principle performer.
- . *Lohengrin/Gotterdammerung/Siegfried Idyll (Toscanini)*, Specifically *Siegfried Idyll*, New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra; Toscanini, conductor.
- . *Parsifal*, Bayreuth Festival Chorus and Orchestra; Knappertbusch, conductor.

For Further Study

- Millington, Barry. *Wagner*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- . *The Wagner Compendium: A Guide to Wagner's Life and Music*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2001.
- Rackham, Arthur, artist, and James Spero, illustrator. *Rackham's Color Illustrations for Wagner's Ring*. New York: Dover Publications, 1991.
- Wagner, Richard. *My Life*. Originally published by Constable, 1911. New edition, 2 volumes. New York: Kessinger Publishing Company, 2004.
- . *Ring of the Nibelung (Der Ring des Nibelungen): Libretto: English & German*. Trans. Andrew Porter. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977.
- . *Tristan und Isolde: In Full Score*. Ed. Felix Mottl. New York: Dover Publications, 1973.

Lecture 10: It Takes Two, Baby

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Listen to Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* in its entirety.

Consider this . . .

How does orchestrating a work for piano change our perception of the work?

Modest Mussorgsky: Background

Mussorgsky was born in 1839 (died 1881) into a family of lesser Czarist nobility, and was raised to become an officer in the Russian Imperial Guard. The abolishment of serfdom meant the loss of his family fortune, and he was forced to find work as a government clerk. At the same time, he discovered music composition and became a member of a group of composers known as the “Mighty Five.” Only one of the five, Balakirev, had formal musical training; the others focused on nonmusical jobs: Borodin was a chemist, Rimsky-Korsokav worked for the navy, and Cui was an engineer. All sought to forge a music that was decidedly Russian.



Nationalism in Music

Throughout the nineteenth century, various nations struggled for independence. As national character was expressed in other realms, so too in music did composers seek to express their cultural heritage. They did so by using indigenous folk materials and adopting musical rhythms from the speech rhythms of their home languages.

Pictures at an Exhibition (1874, orchestrated by Ravel in 1922)

This suite of pieces, composed for piano, depict Mussorgsky's visit to a memorial exhibition of paintings, set designs, and architectural sketches by the Russian artist Victor Hartmann, who had been a friend of Mussorgsky.

A “Promenade” theme introduces the set and reappears between some of the other movements, depicting the composer himself walking between paintings, his step colored by what he sees before him. The Promenade theme presents something that even in the first few measures expresses a sound distinctly Russian. Mussorgsky uses a pentatonic (five-note) scale, like that of Russian folk music; also like Russian folk music, the tune seems to circle in one place. Part of the folk character comes from the mixing of 5/4 and 6/4

meters. Mussorgsky alternates a solo line with simple block chords, reminiscent perhaps of a Russian chorus.

In 1922, the French composer Maurice Ravel created an orchestration of this piano suite; it is this version that is universally enjoyed by concert audiences today. The resulting “collaboration” between Ravel and Mussorgsky serves to heighten the pictorial effect of the pieces even more. Ravel sets the opening solo line of the Promenade as a trumpet fanfare, and the chords following with brass instruments, then woodwinds, finally adding tremendous warmth with the addition of the string section.

The second piece in the suite, “The Gnome,” depicts a fanciful nutcracker designed by Hartmann. Mussorgsky uses angular, jerking figures to suggest the spasmodic gestures of an actual gnome. Dissonant intervals and surprising harmonies, used entirely for coloristic effect, add to this original musical portrait. Ravel’s orchestration is equally innovative; at one point we hear the violinists playing by sliding their fingers lightly up and down the necks of their instruments to produce a spooky, ghostly effect.

In the final piece, “The Great Gate of Kiev,” the original promenade theme becomes incorporated into the piece itself. Hartmann’s image was for an architectural project that was never realized, though Mussorgsky’s music allows us to experience the grandeur of the project as if it had been. The piece incorporates two actual Russian folk melodies, one suggesting the gate itself, and the other a pilgrims’ hymn; they are combined to suggest a grand procession. The full brass play the Gate theme, followed by the pilgrims’ hymn, which is played by the woodwinds. The Gate theme returns decorated by strings playing scales, followed again by the pilgrims’ hymn played by the woodwind choir. Exotic sounds suggest the magnificent image of the Great Gate. The Promenade theme returns, played by a trumpet. The Great Gate theme is now fully orchestrated with the sounds of tolling bells bringing the piece to a majestic conclusion.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Musical Examples

In order of play:

Mussorgsky, Modest. *Pictures at an Exhibition*. “Promenade” (1:26 min.), Piano edition.

———. *Pictures at an Exhibition*. “Promenade” (1:40 min.).

———. *Pictures at an Exhibition*. “The Gnome” (2:37 min.).

———. *Pictures at an Exhibition*. “Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks” (1:11 min.).

———. *Pictures at an Exhibition*. “Great Gate of Kiev” (5:03 min.), Ukraine National Symphony Orchestra; Kuchar, conductor.

Further Listening Suggestions

Mussorgsky, Modest. *Pictures at an Exhibition*. “Night on the Bare Mountain,” Ukraine National Symphony Orchestra; Kuchar, conductor.

———. Boris Godunov, Russian Chorus of Paris; French National Radio Orchestra; Dobrowen, conductor.

———. *Pictures at an Exhibition*. “Khovanshchina: Golitsin’s Exile,” Ukraine National Symphony Orchestra; Kuchar, conductor.

For Further Study

Brown, David. *Mussorgsky: His Life and Works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Emerson, Caryl. *Life of Mussorgsky*. Musical Lives Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Emerson, Caryl, and Robert W. Oldani. *Modest Mussorgsky and Boris Godunov: Myths, Realities, Reconsiderations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Leyda, Jay, and Sergei Bertensson, eds. *Mussorgsky Reader: A Life of the Modeste Petrovich Mussorgsky in Letters and Documents*. New York: De Capo Press, 1995.

Russ, Michael, and Julian Rushton, eds. *Mussorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition*. Cambridge Music Handbooks Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Lecture 11: A Quiet Revolution

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Listen to Debussy's *Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune*.

Consider this . . .

How does Debussy's music break with the traditions of the great German composers to create a unique new kind of music?

Claude Debussy: Background

Claude Debussy, born in 1862 near Paris (died in 1918), was not born into a musical family, but demonstrated great musical abilities early and was accepted into the Paris Conservatory at the age of ten nonetheless. He hated the rigor of the conservatory education he received and intentionally broke rules in his harmony-writing exercises. He visited Bayreuth to hear Wagner's music in 1888 and 1889 and remained for some time very much under the spell of the experience, although ultimately he developed mixed feelings for Wagner, referring to him as "a beautiful sunset unfortunately mistaken for a sunrise."



His music is often associated with the Impressionist painters, but he himself was actually far more aligned and influenced by a group of poets known as the Symbolists (including the poets Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Mallarmé). The Symbolists believed that artists must withdraw from society to create a pure art form that might only be understood by a select elite. They believed that artists should cultivate a passive attitude, striving for a lack of willpower. They had a particular fascination for the exotic, the artificial, and the synthetic; they believed that artists had the ability to be supersensitive to these influences. Debussy sought to transform the ideals of the Symbolists into music. He questioned the traditional rules of music; he attacked and rejected strong harmonic progressions, as well as decisive rhythmic accents. Much of his harmony has no function at all, except to add color. He also often uses unusual scales, such as the pentatonic and whole-tone.

Debussy attended the Paris exhibition of 1889, where he saw Japanese art and heard a Javanese gamelan orchestra, both of which became tremendous influences on his music. A poem by the Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé, "The Afternoon of a Faun," was the inspiration for Debussy's *Prelude to The Afternoon of a Faun*, intended, in fact, to be performed prior to a reading of the poem by Mallarmé himself.

The Influence of Mallarmé's Poetry on Debussy

Claude Debussy was inspired to write his famous "Prélude to the Afternoon of a Faun" by the lyrical poem of nearly the same name, written by Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898). Though he never gained wide recognition for his poetry in his lifetime, Stéphane Mallarmé, a provincial school teacher, is now celebrated as one of the vanguard poets of the Symbolist movement. Mallarmé and his Symbolist colleagues—Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine, and Paul Valéry—strove to express the emotions and states of mind that lie beyond normal human awareness by drawing analogies between the mind and symbols in the outer world. In doing so, Symbolist poets created allusive and enigmatic works that they hoped would be open to infinite interpretations. As Baudelaire explained, "Everything, form, movement, number, color, perfume, in the spiritual as in the natural world, is significative, reciprocal, converse, correspondent." Symbolist poetry is often vague and suggestive; it stirs the reader through its unique tonal qualities and sensuous, musical language.

Each of Mallarmé's poems revolves around a central symbol that is developed and illustrated by subordinate symbols. "The Afternoon of a Faun" (1867) is largely based on the myth of the god Pan, who chases a wood nymph named Syrinx but is unable to possess her. Mallarmé's Pan-like creature, a young faun (or satyr, who is half-man, half-goat), is relaxing in the shade on a summer day when he encounters woodland nymphs who will ultimately elude him. These lines illustrate the open-ended, dreamlike nature of the poem:

*Forgetful let me lie where summer's drouth
Sifts fine the sand and then with gaping mouth
Dream planet-struck by the grape's round wine-red star.
Nymphs, I shall see the shade that you now are.*

(trans. by Aldous Huxley)

"The Afternoon of a Faun" explores the worlds of fantasy and dreams where themes are left unresolved. Mallarmé was interested in creating poetry that was spontaneous, abstract, and experimental, not tied too intimately to any one idea or theme. Consequently, he broke with traditional poetry, which was more linear and rigid in its form. He is considered the founder of *vers libre* (free verse), a poetic style based on irregular cadences.

When Mallarmé was interviewed by the journalist Jules Huret (1864–1915) in 1891, he made a connection between the spontaneous style of his work and that of the music of his contemporaries. He said, "In music, the same transformation has occurred: the firmly developed melodies of yesteryear have made way for an infinity of shattered melodies that enrich the fabric without making us feel the cadence as strongly."

Like "The Afternoon of a Faun," Debussy's "Prelude" gives the listener an impression of a dreamlike state. The ambiguity that pervades Mallarmé's poem is also present in Debussy's work, as his "Prélude" does not follow a prescriptive form; its harmonies are unconventional, and the listener is never sure of the direction the music will take in the next chord.

Prelude to The Afternoon of a Faun (1892–94)

Commissioned by Serge Diaghilev for his Ballet Russes, it caused a riot at its premiere, but probably due more to the erotic choreography of Vaslav Nijinsky than Debussy's gentle score.

It opens with a solo flute playing a chromatic theme that has little forward energy. The chords that accompany this theme when it occurs act like marshmallow clouds of beautiful sound rather than functional harmonies—they don't seem to have any particular harmonic goal. Formally, the Prelude bears a strong resemblance to Wagner's *Prelude to Tristan*, but whereas that piece focused on prolonging resolution, this one seems to do away with the need entirely; it seems to express overall the opposite of a will; desire and longing here are expressed through sheer sensuality of sound. The flute melody changes color by being passed to the oboe and then returns to the flute. Each time the accompanying harmonies crescendo, but then simply dissipate—they don't build to any climax.

A clarinet melody featuring tinges of whole-tone scales (scales built entirely from whole-steps and lacking any sense of a tonic pitch) announces the B section. This central section features a sweeping pentatonic theme that reminds us that this piece still has ties to the Romantic era within which it was composed.

The flute and then the oboe return with the original material. Following this the flute plays over string *tremolos* (rapid vibrations of the bow over the string). A solo viola playing a chromatic line, complemented by an oboe melody, brings this section to a close. An *ostinato* (repeating figure) played by a harp begins the coda. Note how the violins and French horns play in parallel motion before coloristic brush strokes of orchestration bring the piece to a conclusion.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Musical Examples

Debussy, Claude. *Prelude to The Afternoon of the Faun* (10:35 min.), Reeth, flute; Belgian Radio and Television Philharmonic Orchestra; Rahbari, conductor.

Further Listening Suggestions

Debussy, Claude. *Prelude to The Afternoon of the Faun*. Nocturnes, Reeth, flute; Belgian Radio and Television Philharmonic Orchestra; Rahbari, conductor.

———. *Prelude to The Afternoon of the Faun*. Le Mer, Reeth, flute; Belgian Radio and Television Philharmonic Orchestra; Rahbari, conductor.

———. *Piano Favorites*. Images, Thioller, piano.

———. *Dances for harp and string quintet. Danse sacré and Danse profane*. Bodtker, harp; Vertavo Quartet.

For Further Study

Debussy, Claude. *Three Great Orchestral Works in Full Score: Prelude a l'Après-midi d'un Faune, Nocturnes, La Mer*. New York: Dover Publications, 1991.

Fulcher, Jane F. *Debussy and His World*. Bard Music Festival Series. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Hartmann, Arthur. "Claude Debussy As I Knew Him": and Other Writings by Arthur Hartmann. Eds. Samuel Hsu, Sidney Grolnic, and Mark A. Peters. London: Boydell & Brewer, Ltd., 2003.

McCombie, Elizabeth. *Mallarmé and Debussy: Unheard Music, Unseen Text*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Schmitz, E. Robert. *Piano Works of Claude Debussy*. New York: Dover Publications, 1995.

Treize, Simon. *Cambridge Companion to Debussy*. Cambridge Music Handbooks Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Lecture 12: Modernism with a Bang!

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Listen to Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* in its entirety.

Consider this . . .

How does Stravinsky create forward motive in *The Rite of Spring* without melodic development or use of an established harmonic language?

Igor Stravinsky: Background

Igor Stravinsky was born in 1882 near St. Petersburg, Russia (died 1971), the son of a famous opera bass singer at the St. Petersburg Imperial Opera. His parents wanted him to become a lawyer, and he in fact begrudgingly attended law school and received his law degree, but he became more and more interested in composing while doing so and attended private lessons twice a week with Rimsky-Korsokov. Serge Diaghilev of the Ballet Russes heard an early piece of Stravinsky's and, immediately recognizing his talent, commissioned a ballet, *The Firebird* (1910), followed by *Petroushka* (1910–11). Both of these scores demonstrate the lush orchestral palette of his teacher Rimsky-Korsokov (the composer of *Scheherazade*) and a high degree of melodic inventiveness and rhythmic vitality.



The Rite of Spring (1913)

For the next season of the Ballet Russes in Paris, Stravinsky offered Diaghilev an idea that came to him in a dream: he imagined a “death dance,” a ritual sacrifice in pagan Russia. Diaghilev knew the Parisian audiences would love this. The piece was intended to produce horror in the audience through its depiction of ritualistic brutality. The work makes use of “*khorovod*” dances (circle dances), ritual folk dances with songs usually performed by groups of two hundred to three hundred girls to bring about seasonal changes—the girls dance in large circles in a clockwise fashion. Stravinsky wished to embed these folk materials into *The Rite of Spring* as archaeological artifacts. Nijinsky planned a ballet choreography that was unprecedented in its radicalisms, with spasmodic gestures and a sacrifice depicted on stage. *The Rite of Spring* is the piece that seemed to launch modernism in a single stroke—it has as its visual art corollary the cubist paintings of Picasso.

Introduction

The introduction opens with a mysterious sound, that of the bassoon playing in its extreme register. The melody suggests a folk song and one could imagine a “standard” tonal accompaniment. Instead, Stravinsky accompanies the melody with parallel dissonant intervals. The vertical and horizontal suggest two different sound worlds. The introduction gains momentum not through typical developmental means (sequences, modulations, etc.), but through sheer accumulation of material. Many of the layers are made up of *ostinati* (repeating patterns).

“Augurs of Spring” and “Dance of the Adolescents”

Stravinsky introduces a chord that functions with no harmonic implications, but rather as a percussive effect. Stravinsky composed at the piano, and playing this arresting chord at the piano, we can see how it came about. The left hand plays an E major triad while the right hand plays an Eb chord. Throughout this work, Stravinsky devises ways to treat the entire orchestra as a giant percussion machine. The chord is played on steady pulses, but with unpredictable accents thrown in; the result is as if the meter is constantly in flux, yet the steady pulse maintains a driving forward momentum. Various layers of folk song material are introduced, each having a static quality—Stravinsky cuts between these layers, like the cut-and-splice technique of movie-making. Accumulation, rather than traditional development of materials, moves things forward.

“Game of Abduction”

Here Stravinsky heightens the frantic quality through even faster rhythms and sliding brass. Scurrying woodwinds alternate with heavy beats of the drum.

“Round Dances of Spring”

This section provides a wonderful example of how highly dissonant music can still be quite beautiful.

Amidst the frenzy of the material preceding, here Stravinsky offers a gorgeously orchestrated slow dance. A slow introduction introduces a clarinet melody amidst flute trills. Woodwinds play the slow dance rhythm and the violas reintroduce the folk song fragment played earlier by trumpets, but much slower now. At last, the brass enter for a climactic passage followed by wild interjections, before the slow introduction returns briefly to close the section.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Musical Examples

Stravinsky, Igor. *Firebird (The)/The Rite of Spring, The Rite of Spring, Pt. 1*, (16:10 min), Belgian Radio and Television Philharmonic Orchestra; Rahbari, conductor.

Further Listening Suggestions

Stravinsky, Igor. *Firebird (The)/The Rite of Spring. The Firebird*, Belgian Radio and Television Philharmonic Orchestra; Rahbari, conductor.

———. *The Best of Stravinsky. Pétrouchka and Pulcinella*, Belgian Radio and Television Philharmonic Orchestra; Rahbari, conductor.

———. *Symphony of Psalms (with Poulenc: Gloria, Concerto for Organ)*, Robert Shaw, conductor.

For Further Study

Craft, Robert. *Stravinsky: Chronicle of a Friendship*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1994.

Cross, Jonathan, ed. *Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky*. Cambridge Companions to Music Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Joseph, Charles M. *Stravinsky and Balanchine: A Journey of Invention*. Boston: Yale University Press, 2002.

———. *Stravinsky Inside Out*. Boston: Yale University Press, 2001.

Stravinsky, Igor. *Igor Stravinsky: An Autobiography (Chroniques de ma Vie)*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998.

———. *The Rite of Spring: In Full Score*. Reprint of 1965 Muzyka Edition. New York: Dover Publications, 1989.

Walsh, Stephen. *Stravinsky: A Creative Spring: Russia and France, 1882–1934*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishing Group, 1999.

Lecture 13: Kid Stuff

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Listen to Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite* in its entirety.

Consider this . . .

How does Ravel successfully speak musically to children (and to the child in all of us) while maintaining the depth of a true masterpiece in his ballet suite, *Mother Goose*?

Maurice Ravel: Background

Born in 1875 in the Basque region of France (died 1937), Ravel was encouraged to explore his musical talents as a boy and entered the Paris conservatory at the age of fourteen. Although much of his music evokes foreign places and exotic locations, he spent almost his entire life in Paris; finally, in 1928, he did tour the United States, conducting his own works, and hearing jazz performed in Harlem, a major influence on his work. He was gregarious, social, and fastidious, and his charm and focus on perfection comes out in his work.



Ma Mère l'Oye (Mother Goose), 1911

This work was originally composed as a piano duet as a gift to the children of a dear friend. Two ten-year-old pianists performed its premiere in 1910. Ravel expanded the work, adding entire new sections and orchestrating it to be used as a full ballet. The work makes use of a full orchestra, including a large battery of exotic percussion, and using harp, celeste (a set of chimes played with a small keyboard), and glockenspiel in its colorful orchestration.

“Prelude: Sleeping Beauty’s Pavane”

Ravel makes use of ancient church modes to evoke something “once upon a time.” “Modes” are types of scales, but unlike the major and minor modes that most of Western music makes use of, they do not have the strong harmonic implications of these scales. “Mode” has more to do with “mood,” and has to do with the specific way in which one moves through a scale—in fact, the same scale can be played in different ways to suggest various modes simply by starting and stopping on different pitches.

“Tom Thumb”

This movement is based on the story of Tom Thumb, one of a set of siblings sent off to be lost in the woods. Tom Thumb, knowing of the plan, leaves a trail of breadcrumbs, but they are eaten by birds. Ravel sets evenly spaced notes in rising scales of varying lengths to suggest the journey deeper and deeper into the woods. The changing meters give us the feeling of being lost—we don't know where the downbeats will fall. Ravel uses string harmonics for an uncanny imitation of birdsong. The piece ends as it begins, the rising, meandering scale figures drawing us deeper and deeper into the woods.

“Little Ugly, Empress of the Pagodas”

Based on the story of an empress cursed with ugliness who presides over a race of tiny people who play instruments made of walnut shells, Ravel was directly inspired by the music of the Javanese Gamelan, which he heard at the Paris Exhibition, in composing this movement. Built to accompany shadow-puppet plays, all of the instruments of the gamelan are tuned to play the same five-note scale. The music lacks any concept of things like modulation, or harmonic progression, in the Western sense, yet its highly complex, multi-layered rhythms create a mesmerizing and extremely elegant music.

A “gamelan” is an Indonesian orchestra that is conceived of as a single instrument.

“The Conversation Between Beauty and the Beast”

Ravel depicts Beauty as a delicate waltz, and contrasts this with a depiction of the Beast as a lumbering melody played in the lower depths of the orchestra by contra-bassoon. Ravel combines the melodies as the two dance together and Beauty declares her love. With a sweeping *glissando* on the harp, the Beast is transformed back into a handsome prince and the work concludes with a transcendent coda of harmonics and otherworldly harmonies.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Musical Examples

In order of play:

Ravel, Maurice. *Mother Goose Suite*, Koch International Classics, *Babar the Elephant/Mother Goose Suite*.

NAXOS, *Music for Kids*, CD 7, *Gamelan Gong (Indonesia)*, Kaymas Kaja Gamelan Majuli Agung.

Further Listening Suggestions

Ravel, Maurice. *Mother Goose Suite* (alternate version), Koch International Classics, *Babar the Elephant/Mother Goose Suite*. New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Meryl Streep, narrator.

———. *Bolero/Daphis et Chloel/Piano Concerto/Ma mere l'oye, Daphis et Chloe, Bolero*, Thiollier, piano; Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra; Wit, conductor.

———. *Piano Works*, Vol. 2, *Le Tombeau de Couperin: Menuet and La Valse*, Thiollier, piano.

For Further Study

Mawer, Deborah. *Cambridge Companion to Ravel*. Cambridge Companion to Music Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Nichols, Roger, ed. *Ravel Remembered*. New York: Faber & Faber, 2000.

Orenstein, Arbie, ed. *Ravel: Man and Musician*. New York: Dover Publications, 1991.

———, ed. *A Ravel Reader: Correspondence, Articles, Interviews*. New York: Dover Publications, 2003.

Ravel, Maurice. *Rapsodie Espagnole, Mother Goose Suite and Pavane for a Dead Princess: In Full Score*. New York: Dover Publications, 2001.

Websites of Interest

W.W. Norton index of composers listing on Maurice Ravel (contains musical excerpts) — www.wwnorton.com/enjoy/shorter/composers/ravel.htm

Lecture 14: The Prairies of Brooklyn

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Listen to Copland's *Appalachian Spring Suite*.

Consider this . . .

What elements of this masterpiece contribute to creating the “American sound” of Copland?

Aaron Copland: Background

Born in Brooklyn, NY, in 1900 (died 1990), the son of Jewish immigrants, he begged for a piano as a child, and then studied music composition privately. He headed for Paris as a young adult, part of a wave of expatriate Americans, including Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway, who formed an artistically active community in Paris in the 1920s. In Paris, he attended the newly created American conservatory at Fontainebleau, near Paris, where he studied music theory with Nadia Boulanger, an important teacher of many composers for many years; Boulanger encouraged Copland to develop an original style and urged him to create a uniquely American sound. While Copland's earlier works exhibit a strong sense of modernism, employing harsh dissonances, he ultimately forged a consciously accessible style that incorporated indigenous American materials, such as hymn tunes, folk songs, cowboy songs, and jazz. He softens his use of dissonance and develops an orchestral style typified by bright, transparent, “pointillistic” orchestration, a kind of American neoclassicism.



Appalachian Spring Suite (1944)

Originally commissioned as a full ballet score for the American modern dance choreographer Martha Graham, it tells the story of “a pioneer celebration in spring around a newly-built farmhouse in the Pennsylvania Hills in the early part of the last century.” Copland was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for this composition, and created the orchestral suite from the full ballet in 1945, a year after the premiere, setting it first for a chamber ensemble of thirteen instruments, and later for the full orchestra, the version most widely performed today. The work is made up of eight contrasting sections, with some themes occurring throughout to tie the suite into a whole.

Section One

The first section depicts the “introduction of the characters one by one, in a suffused light.” Copland begins by simply spelling out a tonic and dominant triad, but allows them to sound simultaneously. What would normally be quite dissonant, recalling the polytonality of Stravinsky, here, because of wide spacing in the registers of the orchestra, results in a sound not at all harsh, suggesting the warm glow of a sunrise. Copland imposed an extreme simplicity on his work from this period to appeal to the greatest possible audience and to evoke America’s wide-open spaces.

Section Two

“A sentiment both elated and religious gives the keynote of this scene.” It opens with the strings introducing an insistent rhythm—short-short-long, short-short-long—that blossoms into a lively dance. A trumpet introduces a simple hymnlike melody above this dance. The rhythm pervades the orchestra, heard first in fragments and then played forcefully. The hymn returns, played by the strings, with a flute melody added above, and the dance rhythm dissipates through the woodwinds.

Section Seven

This section is described as “calm and flowing. Scenes of daily activity for the Bride and her Farmer-husband.” Copland presents a set of five variations of a Shaker hymn melody, “’Tis the Gift to Be Simple.” The Shakers were a religious sect that flourished in the early nineteenth century. They showed their religious fervor through a curious kind of dance that literally had them “shaking with religion.”

The hymn melody is introduced by a solo clarinet. The first variation features an oboe and bassoon. The next variation presents the tune twice as slow, in “augmentation,” and features violas and trombones. In Variation 3, Copland surrounds the theme with glittering scale figures. Variation 4 offers a slower woodwind version. Finally, the fifth variation features a grand and majestic full-orchestra rendition of the Shaker hymn.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Musical Examples

Copland, Aaron. *Appalachian Spring Suite* (25:04), Nashville Chamber Orchestra; Gambill, conductor.

Further Listening Suggestions

Copland, Aaron. *Billy the Kid Suite* and *Rodeo*, Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra; Gunzenhauser, conductor.

———. *Fanfare for the Common Man*, Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra; Gunzenhauser, conductor.

For Further Study

Butterworth, Neil. *Music of Aaron Copland*. London: Toccata Press, 2001.

Copland, Aaron. *Aaron Copland: A Reader: Selected Writings, 1926–1972*. Richard Kostelanetz and Steve Silverman, eds. New York: Routledge, 2003.

———. *Music and Imagination*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 1972.

———. *What to Listen for in Music*. New York: Signet Classics, 2002.

Pollack, Howard. *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man*. Bloomington, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Websites of Interest

1. PBS feature on Aaron Copland — www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/database/copland_a.html
2. The Copland Heritage Foundation website — www.coplandhouse.org/info.asp?pb=55&pg=1