



Tubist, Játik Clark

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PICTURES & REFLECTIONS

Program Notes

JOHN WILLIAMS - DEVIL'S DANCE

John Williams's "Devil Dance" comes from the 1987 movie *The Witches of Eastwick*, an adaptation of John Updike's 1984 novel of the same name. The film follows three women who accidentally form a coven and summon a devil in the shape of a dashing handsome man, who they must then deal with. In addition to a delightfully dark sense of humor, the film was particularly noted for its musical score. Composed by John Williams, the original score received a nomination for best original score at the 1988 Academy Awards and the best original instrumental background score at the Grammys the same year. Williams's score was also the winner of the 1988 BMI (Broadcast Music, INC) Film Music Award. Although the concert hall and the movie theater have some key differences, the scores that capture our attention in film are more intertwined with the music that captures our attention in a symphony concert than we might realize.

Although early films (circa 1890) were silent, in the sense that they did not include sound on the actual film itself, the score was still a prominent part of the filmgoing experience. Despite the initial predominance of mechanical instruments, a preference for live musical accompaniment quickly became standard for the film-going audiences. As musicologist Mervyn Cooke explains, the live music acted as "a better medium for humanizing the two-dimensional, monochrome and speechless moving image." These early accompaniments usually relied on a piano or reed organ player, who often played for the entire duration of the film and drew on Romantic opera conventions with the occasional well-timed use of a popular melody. By WWI, the musical accompaniments became increasingly grandiose and complex, including using more advanced cinema organs and the use of ensembles rather than soloists. As the musical aspects of film music developed, so too did their importance in film's larger story-telling elements. Large collections of pre-composed film music could be purchased that had stock music for any number of emotional or plot ideas, and directors would often pick which pieces to play and when to maximize the music's effects in a given scene.

By the late 1920s, recording technology had progressed extensively and now allowed sound to be recorded on the same celluloid film as the image. Although European in origin, by 1930, all of the American Hollywood film studios had adopted the same recording process. Despite the initial excitement of this technology, it still came with limitations, especially when considering the score. Sound would need to be recorded

JOHN WILLIAMS - DEVIL'S DANCE (CONT.)

at the same time as the visual, making musical cues a much more difficult prospect than dialogue. In the early 1930s, technology progressed yet again to allow for sound to be dubbed over prerecorded material, allowing for bigger and more grandiose ensembles and scoring. During this time, nearly all of the Hollywood studios developed large music departments, and many of them began to develop a style of film composition that resembled elements of classical music. One of the composers to help solidify Hollywood's style was the Austrian emigre composer Erich Korngold. While still living in Austria, Korngold's musical background emphasized operatic compositions, so when he moved to LA, his knowledge of putting music with a dramatic narrative worked perfectly in the Warner Brothers studio. Korngold became an incredibly important film composer during this time, and made use of a full orchestra, matching the music to the action on the screen, and continuing the tradition of leitmotifs - a musical theme associated with each character. Korngold's score for *The Adventures of Robin Hood* from 1938, for example, uses these techniques in a way that was particularly effective when the film was first released. Korngold's music has also been performed in the concert hall, including by the PCSO! Korngold's son and daughter-in-law moved to Portland in 1991 to be closer to their daughter and in 2018, the PCSO performed several of his compositions with Korngold's granddaughter in attendance.

Classical music's influence on film music does not stop at Korngold, though. Film music has often used classical music in the movies, including using selections for the soloist to play during the silent film era, and by the latter part of the 20th century, directors had become increasingly conscientious about the incorporation of classical music into film in ways that left a lasting impression. For example, Stanley Kubrick's use of Krzysztof Penderecki's, Bela Bartok's, and György Ligeti's music in *The Shining* (1980) helped define the sonic world of horror films through the use of modernist works that were more experimental in nature. The shrieky, high-pitched violins were particularly effective for this genre and you can hear similar aesthetics still in many modern horror films. The film composer Abel Korzeniowski, who wrote music for movies like *The Nun* (2018), was even one of Penderecki's compositional students.

JOHN WILLIAMS - DEVIL'S DANCE (CONT.)

Despite these crossovers, not everyone has always thought of film music as much more than catchy tunes. John Williams, however, has been a big proponent of treating film music in the same way as classical music like symphonies. In addition to writing beloved scores for films like E.T.: The Extra-terrestrial (1982), Jaws (1975), and the music for the Star Wars series, Williams championed film music as a form of art music during his tenure as the music director of the Boston Pops Orchestra starting in 1980. Williams immediately began to program film music on the orchestra's concerts (including his own music) and also to commission new arrangements of film music that emphasized musical complexity rather than shearing them down to only their most recognizable tunes. In other words, he treated the commissions for new arrangements of film music as though they were a symphony.

Given his attitude towards film music, it likely isn't surprising to see Williams's music be performed on an orchestral concert program. Throughout this piece, you will hear his approach to film music through the rich textures, using each instrument and their timbres with precise intention and his development of thematic material that he passes between different instrument groups. The latter would not be uncommon even in Beethoven symphonies. But Williams keeps the pieces fun with catchy and engaging tunes. And, if you listen particularly closely, you might even hear a snippet of a familiar theme from a galaxy far, far away.

MICHAEL DAUGHERTY - REFLECTIONS ON THE MISSISSIPPI

The natural world has often been a muse and fascination for a variety of artists. Nature makes up the subject of numerous famous paintings, such as Claude Monet's Water Lilies, Katsushika Hokusai's The Great Wave off Kanagawa, or just about anything by the flower enthusiast Georgia O'Keefe. That is, of course, just to name a few. Nature as an artistic subject also saw a particular resurgence during the 19th century, especially as a response to the increasing emphasis on urban and city living during the industrial revolution. In addition to inclusions of natural depictions in a variety of paintings, literature, and other mediums, nature as a muse also found its way into the musical realm.

MICHAEL DAUGHERTY - REFLECTIONS ON THE MISSISSIPPI (CONT.)

For musicians and composers, approaches to the natural world have been as varied as, well, nature itself. Some have opted for more literal interpretations of what nature sounds like. For example, Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel's technically challenging piano piece "September" from *Das Jahr* (1841) includes repeated circular motives meant to imitate the sound of a bubbling brook she saw on a family vacation. Ludwig van Beethoven's sixth symphony (1808), nicknamed the "Pastoral" Symphony, also has movements that musically depict a scene of the European countryside that Beethoven calls specific attention to in programmatic materials. The symphony's slow movement is labeled as "scene by the brook" and includes a woodwind section towards the end that mimics bird calls. 20th century French composer Olivier Messiaen also had a particular fondness for birdsongs and incorporated many of them into various works, such as "Oiseaux Exotiques" (1956) or "exotic birds." His *Quartet for the End of Time* (1940) also includes bird-like sounds in the piece's third movement that consists only of a clarinet part. For composers like Mendelssohn-Hensel, Beethoven, and Messiaen, inspiration from nature has compelled them to recreate sounds or scenes from nature with otherwise expected musical instruments.

By the mid-20th century, technological advancements in music (and in general) allowed for more experimental approaches to nature. Around the end of the 1940s, composers such as Pierre Schaeffer and Luc Ferrari began to incorporate pre-recorded sounds into pieces of music, or in some cases, as the music itself. Including these sounds became known as *musique concrete*, and for Schaeffer and Ferrari, sounds from the natural world were particularly enticing. Seeing that Ferrari also studied with Messiaen, this particular interest is perhaps not difficult to understand. But the use of recording technology allowed for the incorporation of more literal natural sounds, rather than just their representations. For Schaeffer, recording non-musical sounds and detaching them from their original source was of particular interest (if you want to impress your friends, the theoretical term for this idea is "schizophonia"). In this way of thinking about sound and nature, the sound itself predominates our sensory experience.

MICHAEL DAUGHERTY - REFLECTIONS ON THE MISSISSIPPI (CONT.)

Of course, not all composers before or since those like Schaeffer have opted for such a theoretical or experimental approach to the natural world in music. The examples here demonstrate only some of the ways in which composers have thought about nature and how it has been used in music. In pieces like *Reflections on the Mississippi*, Daugherty opts to emphasize the role of the natural world through a tuba solo, rather than pre-recorded sounds. From his own program notes, Daugherty describes each movement as a musical representation of the Mississippi River at different locations and times. According to Daugherty, the first movement “Mist” describes the composer’s own contemplations of the Mississippi River during the sunrise on a foggy morning while the second movement, “fury,” depicts the river’s more tumultuous side and draws on literary depictions from William Faulkner’s 1927 novel *The Sound of Fury*. The third movement, “prayer,” moves back to some of Daugherty’s own experiences of the river’s calmness from a high vista, before moving into the lively fourth movement, “steamboat,” that takes us back in time down the river in the style of Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*. This last movement recalls elements of Zydeco music in a New Orleans-inspired virtuosic finale.

Daugherty’s approach then differs from some of the ways in which previous composers have discussed nature. He does not opt for pre-recorded sounds like Schaeffer, but he does more than just create sonic representations of the natural world as the composer has experienced it. Of course, that is part of it, but Daugherty also invites us to experience the nature of the Mississippi in both historical and, in some cases, fantasized manners. We are invited to listen to the ways in which the landscape changes based on time of day, geographical location, and even historical period. By drawing on these different elements, Daugherty provides an in-depth look at the Mississippi as a natural landscape while simultaneously recognizing nature’s constant movement and change. We are invited to think about how these elements affect our understanding of nature, but also how ideas about it have been shaped by historical and cultural imaginations (e.g. through literature like *Huck Finn*) as well as our own experiences.

MUSSORGSKY - PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

Can music tell us stories? And, if so, how exactly do we know what stories the music is trying to tell us? For many, the use of narrative in music has focused on some kind of text: either as a literal interpretation of it or using it as a general narrative guideline. Modest Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* offers another way to consider narrative inspiration in music by drawing on ideas taken from pieces of visual artwork. Written in 1847, *Pictures* was originally written as a piano suite. It has since been arranged by a number of people, including Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) whose arrangement for orchestra you will hear at today's concert.

For some composers, the idea of creating a narrative has been tied to a number of different techniques. Some of the early forms of musical storytelling involve helping the audience to create a visual image in their head that is ushered in through both music and text. For example, Madrigals, a form of 16th century secular vocal music that originated in Italy, were especially ripe for this kind of musical narrative. Madrigals were written for multiple voices, so they usually harmonized with one another and were sung as a form of entertainment amongst family and friends. Because of their use of a text, "word-painting" (also sometimes referred to as "madrigalisms") was an important point of composition for many. This technique involved creating literal musical depictions of what the text is saying. For example, the music ascending while the vocal line says something about moving up would be one way that the music would literally and musically illustrate the text of the song in order to tell the story depicted in the accompanying lyrics.

But having a narrative within music, or a story that the composer tells, did not always need to rely on a sung or otherwise vocalized text that was part of the music. Ludwig van Beethoven began to weave stories and ideas into his symphonies, such as his Symphony No. 3, the "Eroica" symphony, which broadly depicted a non-specific story of a hero's journey as they traveled from darkness to lightness. And, as discussed in the previous program note, Beethoven's Symphony No. 6, the "Pastoral" symphony was one of the early examples of an otherwise instrumental genre of music to include small amounts of text that gave the audience an idea of what the piece was meant to be or represent. In Beethoven's case, his third and sixth symphonies explored the potential for

MUSSORGSKY - PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

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instrumental music as a narrative genre while still keeping the possible interpretations open.

Once the exploration of narrative in instrumental music began, later composers took the idea of story-telling to greater lengths. This type of music became known as “program music,” or music that told a specific story and was sometimes, although not always, accompanied by program notes that told the story in the music. Pieces like Hector Berlioz’s *Symphony Fantastique* is a prime example of a work that helped develop programmatic compositional styles. Berlioz’s symphony tells a dark and twisted story in six movements about the main character’s obsession with his “beloved,” who does not return his affections, and eventually ends with an opium-induced dream in which she joins a group of witches and kills him (how this has not yet been turned into a movie has been an unanswerable question for me). The entire story for the piece is written down into program notes that break the narrative up by each individual movement. The program notes for the piece, which are usually made available to audiences even today, are specific and do not include the vague ambiguity that some earlier programmatic works have.

Other genres also developed out of program music, such as the symphonic poem. This form was particularly popular during the 19th and early 20th centuries and is mostly associated with orchestral ensembles. Symphonic poems often consist of only one movement, and although they share certain characteristics with opera, there is no sung or otherwise vocalized text. They are, however, usually based on a literary text of some kind. The composer Franz Liszt was particularly well-known for his work with symphonic poems. Examples like these and those discussed above demonstrate that the idea of building a narrative within music has a number of possible approaches. And these approaches can include a vast spectrum of narrative specificity, from “setting a scene” to a completely detailed story that includes text from the author.

These examples of narratives in music often rely on a kind of text, either to be read alongside the piece or as the composer’s inspiration.

MUSSORGSKY - PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

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Mussorgsky's piece, which you will hear at today's concert, will take a slightly different form of narrative inspiration. It is not based on an outside text, or even one that the composer has written himself. Instead, each of the piece's movements are based around pieces of artwork. These movements are believed to be based on an art exhibition for Mussorgsky's friend Viktor Hartmann, who died in 1873 - only a year earlier than the piece was written. There has been some debate as to which exact pieces Mussorgsky used as inspiration and several have likely been lost to history, leaving the audience to only guess at what the visual image would be. But, what makes Pictures at an Exhibition more than another piece in a lineage of instrumental narrative music and more than a synesthetic adaptation of visual art is that the experience is more than just looking at, or hearing, the art depicted. The piece is meant to portray not just the art but the entire experience of a gallery walk. The short "promenade" movements throughout the piece are not just fun interludes, but rather depict the experience of walking around the gallery in between looking at the portraits. In this way, Mussorgsky both creates an extra-musical narrative and allows the audience to experience the gallery rather than just the paintings in a sort of musically based virtual reality experience. As you listen today, take a moment and consider what kinds of images you "see" in the music and envision a lovely stroll through the gallery between each of the musical paintings.