

Explore the Orchestra: Midnight Magic

Notes on Music for Teachers

STILL William Grant Orchestra Suite 'Wood Notes' III Moon Dusk

[\(17\) III. Moon Dusk: Slowly and expressively - YouTube](#)

This piece of music was inspired by William Still's love of nature and K. Mitchell Pilcher's poetry. Wood Notes is a four-movement orchestral suite. The piece is written in Still's classic American style, with warm melodies and rich textures creating a beautiful piece of music. Scored for full orchestra, Wood Notes uses many voices from the ensemble to create both a pastoral and impressionistic atmosphere. The work first premiered in 1948 with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Moon Dusk is the slowest movement in the suite, with an elongated woodwind opening which remains at the heart of the movement. Listen out for the swirling strings which accompany the woodwinds as they explore the theme. An oboe solo brings the music into its pastoral side which is followed by a soft violin solo. As the music grows to its climax, the themes move between voices creating an intriguing effect. The piece ends quietly.

MONTGOMERY Jessie Starburst

[\(17\) Starburst - YouTube](#)

This brief one-movement piece for string orchestra is a play on the imagery of rapidly changing musical colours. Exploding gestures are juxtaposed with gentle fleeting melodies in an attempt to create a multidimensional soundscape. A common definition of a starburst, "the rapid formation of large numbers of new stars in a galaxy at a rate high enough to alter the structure of the galaxy significantly," lends itself almost literally to the nature of the performing ensemble that premiered the work, the Sphinx Virtuosi, and I wrote the piece with their dynamic in mind. – Jessie Montgomery

BSO is very excited to be performing this piece at the concert as it will be the European Premiere!

SAINT-SAENS Camille Danse Macabre

[\(17\) Camille Saint-Saëns - Danse Macabre - YouTube](#)

The music is based on a poem written by Henri Cazalis, which tells of the gruesome goings-on in the churchyard of a French village on Halloween:

Zig-a-zig-a-zig it's the Rhythm of Death! Death at midnight playing a dance tune, Zig-a-zig-a-zig on his violin. The winter wind whistles and the night is dark. The winter wind whistles and the lime trees moan. Weird white skeletons streak across the shadows Running and leaping wrapped in their shrouds. Zig-a-zig-a-zig the dance grows even wilder You can hear the eerie clatter of the dancers' bones But wait! Suddenly they all stop dancing. They scatter, they vanish for the cock has crowed.

James Redwood has created a shorter arrangement of the piece for the concert.

MUSSORGSKY Modest

Pictures at an Exhibition, Baba Yaga

[\(17\) Pictures at an Exhibition \(Orch. M. Ravel\) : IX. The Hut on Fowls' Legs, "Baba Yaga" - YouTube](#)

Baba Yaga was a witch from Russian folklore who lived in a hut that could walk on the legs of a bird. Her hut could also fly aided by the blood of victims who were crushed when the house landed.

Students should be able to identify what is happening in the piece based on the description of the hut. The pounding, rhythmic opening notes suggest a giant bird bouncing on its legs. A quieter chase theme follows, in which the hut gains speed and leaps into the air. The quiet, steady theme on the violins represent the house circling, looking for a victim. It is followed by a lower tone as the house circles, until a single chord shows that the hut has thudded to the ground, presumably on top of a victim.

CLYNE Anna

Abstractions, I Marble Moon

Abstractions in a suite in five movements, each inspired by contemporary artworks from the Baltimore Museum of Art.

"From the very beginning working on this piece, my intention was not to literally transcribe the image musically. In each one, I'm trying to capture some aspect of the painting," – Anna Clyne

The piece we will hear in the concert Marble Moon, was inspired by a piece of art by Sarah Van Der Beek, which became a key point for the entire suite.

GRIEG Edvard

Peer Gynt – Morning Mood

[\(17\) Edvard Grieg - Peer Gynt - Suite No. 1, Op. 46 - I. Morning Mood - YouTube](#)

This piece of music was written to accompany a play by Henrik Ibsen. The piece depicts the rising sun which minds the main character stranded in the Moroccan desert after he was abandoned there by his companions. The scene description begins with "Dawn. Acacias and palm trees. Peer is sitting in his tree using a wrenched-off branch to defend himself against a group of monkeys."

WILLIAMS John

Hedwig's Theme from Harry Potter

[\(17\) Hedwig's Theme - YouTube](#)

To close our concert we will be performing Hedwig's Theme from Harry Potter. Listen out for the swirling strings, magical woodwind and powerful brass as we enter the world of Harry Potter!