

# Music on the Stage



## 11. So Bigger's Better?

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LAST WEEK, WE KEPT THINGS SMALL; TODAY, WE'RE THINKING BIG! The cult of size is generally associated with the Romantic era, beginning with the vast orchestras of Berlioz and Wagner and reaching a peak with works by lingering 20th-century romantics such as Strauss, Mahler, and their British admirer Havergal Brian.

The entertainment industry of the later 20th century has seen revival of interest in the blockbuster spectacle almost as an end in itself. We saw it in classical music with the elaborate opera productions that Franco Zeffirelli mounted at the Met in the 70s, 80s, and 90s. One goal of these was perhaps to compete with the advent of mega-musicals by Andrew Lloyd Webber and others, shows whose sheer scale and technical elaboration have made their successors the longest-running properties on Broadway.

A parallel development can be seen in the evolution of arena rock concerts, which often involve similar technology, and the international popularity of the Canadian *Cirque du Soleil*, many of whose creative artists have been hired to work a similar magic on musical theater and even opera. *rb.*

### A. Brass, Drums, Whatever

On the whole, this class has been avoiding concert music, but the sight of massed choirs and rows of brass and percussion has an undeniable theatrical quality. We shall look at one of the first and surely the last of the great choral/symphonic blockbusters.

**Mozart:** *Requiem*, opening of the *Dies Irae*

**Verdi:** *Requiem*, opening of the *Dies Irae*

**Berlioz:** *Requiem*, opening of the *Dies Irae* (Royal Albert Hall)

**Trailer,** *The Curse of the Gothic Symphony*

**Brian:** *Gothic Symphony*, end (Martyn Brabbins, Royal Albert Hall)

## B. What, no Horses?

Wagner wanted to put entire worlds on his stage, whether real or mythological. For artistic as well as budgetary reasons, modern directors have mostly turned to metaphor instead. But the meticulous detail of Franco Zeffirelli's opera productions buck that trend.

**Wagner:** *Die Walküre*, Ride of the Valkyries (Lepage, Met)

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**Puccini:** *La bohème*, ending of Act II (Zeffirelli, Met)

**Puccini:** *Turandot*, opening of Act II/2 (Zeffirelli, Met)

**Puccini:** *Turandot*, opening of Act II/2 (Serban, London)

## C. Heaven's on Fire

[What do I know? I have been to only one arena concert in my life, and that was atypical. Nonetheless, I found it very instructive to look at videos of what is out there, and even started enjoying some of the music. *rb.*]

**KISS:** *Heaven's on Fire* (Dubai)

**Cigarettes After Sex**, concert excerpt

**Don Broco:** *Everybody*

**LEBO M:** "Circle of Life" from *The Lion King* (live in Budapest)

## D. Magicians from Montreal

Founded in the 1980's, *Cirque du Soleil* has grown far beyond its original concept as a circus emphasizing human rather than animal performers. The sheer imagination that goes into their shows, and their combination of music, technology, and human skill, reach a level of wonder that is hard to match.

**Cirque du Soleil:** KURIOS, excerpt

**Cirque du Soleil:** LUZIA, excerpt

## E. Sir Andrew Lloyd Mega

Broadway today is dominated by its long-running mega-musicals, but there are grounds for thinking that the trend began in Britain with *Cats* (1981) and *Phantom of the Opera* (1986) by Andrew Lloyd Webber. We look especially into the creation of the earlier show.

**Webber:** *Phantom of the Opera*, masquerade (Royal Albert Hall)

**Interview:** Andrew Lloyd Webber on *Cats*

**Lloyd Webber:** *Cats*, opening

**Lloyd Webber:** *Cats*, Grizabella the Glamour Cat

**Lloyd Webber:** *Cats*, "Memory" (Elaine Page)

**Lloyd Webber:** *Cats*, Rum Tum Tugger (John Partridge)

Hector **Berlioz** (1803–69, *French composer*), Havergal **Brian** (1876–1972, *English composer*), T. S. **Eliot** (1888–1965, *American-English poet*), **Lebo M** (Lebohang Morake, 1964– , *South African composer*), Andrew **Lloyd Webber** (1948– , *English composer*), Wolfgang Amadeus **Mozart** (1756–91, *Austrian composer*), Giacomo **Puccini** (1858–1924, *Italian composer*), Giuseppe **Verdi** (1813–1901, *Italian composer*), Richard **Wagner** (1813–1883, *German composer*)

The course website is [www.brunyate.com/MusicStage](http://www.brunyate.com/MusicStage)  
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