

Musical Escapes



Vantage Point, Columbia
Tuesday Mornings, Late Fall 2025

Musical Escapes

Music has the power to take us out of ourselves, to offer a temporary escape to somewhere else. Escape to a distant place or time... to radiance, order, and calm... to fantasy or laughter... or simply to concentrate on something that, for the moment, is all-absorbing. This course will span the gamut—symphony or song, classical or popular, opera, ballet, or musical—arranged by theme rather than period or genre. Each class will be illustrated with video clips, some of substantial in length, others shorter to put them in context.

But this course is more than a series of excursions on a musical tour bus or time machine. We will look further into the cliché of being *transported* by music. Can music convey spiritual radiance without referencing a specific religion? Can it recreate a time other than the one in which it was composed? Can it take us to different places without some clue in the title? Can it make us laugh through sound alone? And since all music plays out in the imagination, can composers use it to explore particular fantasies of their own? These are important aesthetic questions—the answer is *not* always yes—but we won't approach them in the abstract; we need to listen, be open to our feelings, and discuss. *Roger Brunyate*.



1. Music and Mood (October 28)

Ways in which music can take control of our sense of time and transform our mood into merriment or calm, nostalgia or yearning, or sacred contemplation.

2. Music and Time (November 4)

Music as time-capsule. Ways in which it can take us back to the time in which it was written, or in rarer cases evoke memories of an earlier period still.





3. Places in Music (November 11)

Composers from the mid-19th century on who depicted the lands in which they lived, or places they visited as tourists, sometimes distilling an idealized view of a disappearing world.

4. Music and Merriment (November 18)

Popular songs, musical comedy, orchestral music and dance intended to raise our spirits. Music has always been a fine way to cheer us up, and in some cases it can even make us laugh out loud.

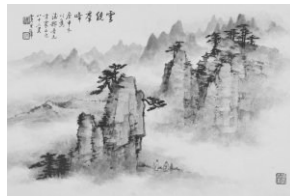


5. Music and Make-Believe (December 2)

Fantasy, talking animals, fairy tales—the ability of music to take us to imaginary worlds which, often as not, teach lessons of considerable relevance in this one.

6. Over the Rainbow (December 9)

Judy Garland of course. But yearning towards the unknown has always had a special place in music, not least in Mahler's meditation on the transcendent vision of Chinese art in *The Song of the Earth*.



Illustrations: 1, Young pianist in concentration. 2, Old buildings in Karelia (Sibelius). 3, Prague and the Moldau (Smetana). 4, *L'allegro, il penseroso, e il moderato*, ballet by Mark Morris. 5, Teapot and Chinese cup from Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, at Glyndebourne. 6. Chinese landscape (Mahler, *The Song of the Earth*).

The clips in this course include **instrumental compositions** by Bach, Borodin, Copland, Dvorak, Gershwin, Handel, Haydn, Holst, Janacek, Liszt, Mahler, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Prokofiev, Scarlatti, Schubert, Sibelius, and Smetana; **operas** by Britten, Ravel, and Rossini; **musicals** by Bernstein, Bock & Harnick, Lerner & Loewe, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and Cole Porter; **ballets** by Frederick Ashton, Alexander Ekman, and Mark Morris; and **songs** by Joe Dassin, Flanders and Swann, David Lang, Lennon & McCartney, Henry Mancini, and Yip Harburg, among many others. Although focused largely on classical music, the course aims to be eclectic.

For more detail, color illustrations, and artist bios,
see the class website:

<http://www.brunyate.com/MusicalEscapes/>

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