

Musical Escapes



For more detail, color illustrations, artist bios,
and suggestions for further reading, see the class website:

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

I will always answer eMail to:
rogerbrunyate@gmail.com

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 feature one longer work, together with video excerpts of all kinds to put it into 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)

Opera buffa, musical comedy, orchestral music and dance intended to raise our spirits. We look into the question of whether it is possible to tell a joke in music, or whether it requires outside knowledge.

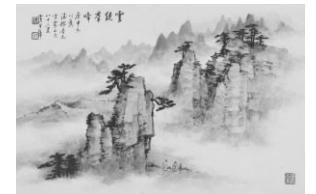


5. Music and Make-Believe (December 2)

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, Ashton: *Enigma Variations*, Elgar family and friends, Royal Ballet. 3, Prague and the Moldau (Smetana). 4, Maria Cassi and Leonardo Brizzi in *Opera Buffa!*. 5, Teapot and Chinese cup from Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, at Glyndebourne. 6. Chinese landscape (Mahler, *The Song of the Earth*).