

Musical Escapes



4. Music and Merriment

THIS CLASS WAS ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO BE ABOUT MUSICAL HUMOR, and part of it still is. But music does not need to make us laugh to raise our spirits, and music whose good humor is inherent in the music itself is a lot more interesting than comedians using music as a prop in their acts. So we have popular songs set in four different world cities, three examples of uplifting dance, a bunch of fast finales to symphonies or concertos, a group of variations for solo horn, and—finally for laughs—some examples of singers using their voices to imitate non-vocal sounds. *rb.*

A. Aux Champs-Élysées

Four feel-good songs, each capturing something of the essence of a world city: Paris, London, New York, and Seoul.

Pomplamoose: *Aux Champs-Élysées*, 2020

Joe Dassin: *Aux Champs-Élysées*, 1969 (audio)

Jason Crest: *Waterloo Road*, 1968 (fragment)

Katrina and the Waves: *Walking on Sunshine*, 1985

Bernstein: *West Side Story* (1957), “I like to live in America,” ending (film 2021, Steven Spielberg, *dir.*; Justin Peck, *choreog.*; Ariana du Bose, *Anita*; David Alvarez, *Bernardo*)

Psy: *Gangnam Style* (video 2012)

B. Dance in Joy

Three substantial clips from the world of dance, all expressing feelings of joy. They are a varied bunch: an American choreographer interpreting a baroque cantata, a British one recreating the earliest romantic ballet in existence, and the curtain call of an extraordinary work in Paris (yes, we return to close the circle) created by a Swedish choreographer.

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November 18, 2025

Mark Morris: *L'allegro, il penseroso, e il moderato* (1988), "Birding"
(music by Handel, 1740; words by Milton)

Frederick Ashton: *La fille mal gardée* (1960 reworking of 1789
original; music by Ferdinand Hérold), Act I opening and finale
(Royal Ballet; William Tuckett, *Widow Simone*; Marianela Nuñez,
Lisa; Carlos Acosta, *Colas*)

Alexander Ekman: *PLAY* (2017), final curtain (Callie Day, *singer*;
words and music by Mikael Karlsson)

C. Fast Finales

By the mid-eighteenth century, it had become the convention to end a longer work with an upbeat movement in fast tempo, whether to please a prince or send a paying audience home with an earworm tune.

Prokofiev: *Classical Symphony* (1917), finale (hr-Sinfonie, Alondra de la Parra)

Mozart: *Horn Concerto #4, in Eb* (1786), rondo finale. (Zeng Yun, *horn*;
China NCPA Orchestra)

D. Horn Variations

Miscellaneous clips, taking off from the last piece above.

Flanders and Swann: *Ill Wind* (1964)

Mozart: *Horn Concerto #4, in Eb* (1786), rondo finale, arranged by
Joshua Davis for brass trio (Sarah Willis, Berlin Philharmonic)

Mozart et al.: *Rondo alla mambo* (2020), ending. (Sarah Willis,
Havana Lyceum Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic)

Rachmaninoff: *Vocalise* (1912), opening (Martina Adams, *horn*)

E. Vocalise

Various comic pieces that, like the Flanders and Swann excerpt above, involve singers imitating sounds from non-vocal sources.

Janequin: *La guerre* (c.1516), excerpt (The King's Singers)

Rossini: *Barber of Seville* (1818), overture (The King's Singers)

Rossini: *Duet for Two Cats* (1825), Kiri te Kanawa, Norma Burrowes

Bach: *Fugue in g minor*. Swingle Singers, 1992)

F. Farewell

Haydn's 45th Symphony seemed all set to end with one of those high-energy finales that had become the norm. But then the mood relaxed, and relaxed some more. For Haydn knew that a gentle joke could often be more effective than the most urgent pleas....

Haydn: *Farewell Symphony* (1772), finale (Il Giardino Armonico,
Giovanni Antonini)

Frederick **Ashton** (1904–88, *British choreographer*), Johann Sebastian **Bach** (1685–1750, *German composer*), Leonard **Bernstein** (1918–90, *American composer and conductor*), Joe **Dassin** (1938–80, *American-French singer-songwriter*), Alexander **Ekman** (1984– , *Swedish choreographer*), Michael **Flanders** (1922-75, *British lyricist and singer*), George Frideric **Handel** (1685–1759, *German composer*), Franz Joseph **Haydn** (1732–1809, *Austrian composer*), Ferdinand **Hérold** (1791–1833, *French composer*), Clément **Janequin** (1475–1560, *French composer*), Mikael **Karlsson** (1975– , *Swedish composer*), Mark **Morris** (1956– , *American choreographer*), Wolfgang Amadeus **Mozart** (1756–91, *Austrian composer*), Sergey **Prokofiev** (1891–1953, *Russian composer*), **Psy** (Park Jae-Sang, 1977– , *South Korean singer-songwriter*), Sergey **Rachmaninov** (1873–1943, *Russian composer*), Gioacchino **Rossini** (1792–1868, *Italian composer*), Ward **Swingle** (1927–2015, *American vocal arranger*)

The course website is www.brunyate.com/MusicalEscapes
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