

Bacchanale from *Samson & Delilah*, Camille Saint-Saëns

French composer Camille Saint-Saëns lived a long life and enjoyed a long career. His operatic masterpiece *Samson et Dalila* was first staged in 1877. You know the plot if you're up on your Bible, or if you've seen Cecil B. DeMille's 1950 epic film *Samson and Delilah*. Saint-Saëns's opera adheres to the original story. Samson is the would-be liberator of the Israelites from the snares of the evil Philistines. The beautiful Philistine maiden Dalila, rejected by Samson, has sworn vengeance on him. She discovers that the secret of Samson's power lies in his hair (celebrities ever after would note this) and manages to practice her barbering skills on him, rendering him helpless. He is blinded and put on display in the Philistine temple. His prayer for one last surge of strength is granted and he dislodges the temple pillars, bringing the roof down on the godless crowd. Moments earlier that crowd, now silent, had gathered to witness Samson's humiliation and had delighted in the Bacchanale. Taking its name from Bacchus, mythological god of wine and fertility, a bacchanale is a dance that puts a premium on sensuality and abandon. Saint-Saëns's Bacchnale opens with a twisting melody that could charm a snake from its basket. This is followed by a passage that begins as though it might have come from a nineteenth-century Parisian dance hall. These elements alternate until the appearance of a lovely tune, full of longing; but the music hall and snake-charmer music have the final words.

Samson and Delilah (French: *Samson et Dalila*), Op. 47, is a grand opera in three acts and four scenes. It was first performed on 2 December 1877. It is the only opera by Saint-Saëns that is regularly performed. The second act love scene in Delilah's tent is one of the set pieces that define French opera. Two of Delilah's arias are particularly well known: "*Printemps qui commence*" ("Spring begins") and "*Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix*" ("My heart opens itself to your voice", also known as "Softly awakes my heart"), the latter of which is one of the most popular recital pieces in the mezzo-soprano/contralto repertoire.

The final act features the "Bacchanale," a showpiece in which Delilah leads a wild and provocative dance to taunt Samson. The piece opens with a sensuous oboe solo before a steady pulse develops in the orchestra itself. Over that pulse, light woodwinds and strings carry the dance theme forward, with percussion emphasizing the action.

Camille Saint-Saëns, 1915.

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Waltz from the Incidental Music to Lermontev's Play "Masquerade" Aram Khachaturian

Masquerade was written in 1941 by Aram Khachaturian as incidental music for a production of the play of the same name by Russian poet and playwright Mikhail Lermontov. It premiered on 21 June 1941 in the Vakhtangov Theatre in Moscow. The music is better known in the form of a five-movement suite.

Though little-known in the West, Lermontov is regarded among the giants of Russian literature, and is considered the poet-heir to Pushkin. When he was 21, Lermontov prepared three versions of *Masquerade*, hoping with each to appease the censor's pen for his unflattering depiction of the aristocracy. The second version eventually was approved, but not before Lermontov had been killed in a duel.

Masquerade unfolds like a Russian *Othello*, wherein the wealthy Eugene Arbenin poisons his beloved wife, Nina, convinced she has humiliated him by being unfaithful. The intrigue begins during a masked ball when Prince Zvezdich flirts with a disguised woman who gives him a bracelet as a token of affection. The prince brags about his encounter to Arbenin, who recognizes the bracelet as Nina's. When Arbenin asks Nina about the bracelet she confesses she lost it, never imagining the doubt beginning to consume her husband. The actual mystery woman is a baroness friend of Nina, who, even after realizing Arbenin's suspicions, won't come forward for fear of damaging her own reputation. By the time the baroness ends her masquerade and sends a letter revealing Nina's innocence, it is too late: Nina is dead and Arbenin goes mad, overcome with grief and remorse.

Masquerade was the last production staged by the theatre before the invasion of the USSR by Germany, and the production run was cut short.

It was then made into a ballet. The ballet, following Lermontov's drama, tells the tragic tale of a bracelet lost at a masked ball which leads Arbenin to wrongly accuse his wife Nina of infidelity. Despite her protestations of innocence, Arbenin poisons her, only to learn that she was guiltless. The 1985 filmed production presented here makes full use of cinematic techniques to convey the ambiguity of sinister stratagems lurking at the fringes of a swirling masquerade ball, while Khachaturian's music – in particular the famous Waltz and the wistful Nocturne – provides the perfect accompaniment to the inventive choreography.

In 1944, Khachaturian reworked the play's incidental music into a five-movement symphonic suite. It contains some of Khachaturian's most frequently heard melodies.

Aram Khachaturian (1903–1978) was known for drawing inspiration from the folk music of his native Armenia, with its characteristic scale progressions of Caucasian melodies, but the music in his *Masquerade Suite* seems almost as if it could have been drawn from Tchaikovsky.

Khachaturian said the *Waltz* was especially challenging because it had to justify Nina's exclamation, "How beautiful the new waltz is! ... Something between sorrow and joy gripped my heart." With its ominous undercurrent, the *Waltz* became one of Khachaturian's biggest hits, such that it was performed at his funeral.

Masquerade Waltz

Sabre Dance – Ketchaturian

It was one of the catchiest, most familiar — perhaps most maddening — tunes to come out of the 20th century. It was heard in cartoons. It heightened the drama of plate spinners doing their shtick on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. In celebration of the 100th anniversary of composer [Aram Khachaturian](#)'s birth, NPR's Tom Huizenga profiles the man behind "Sabre Dance."

The song was part of the Armenian composer's *Gayane* ballet, which he completed in 1942. A few years before he died, in 1978, Khachaturian told friends he was glad his work was widely accepted and still alive. "I hope it will live on for decades to come," he said.

It's the kind of music that makes you smile. It makes me smile. I feel good about it. It communicates. That's the most important word, I think. If music communicates, it will survive.

Pianist Sahan Arzruni

In fact it did live on, covered by such diverse performers as jazz great Woody Herman and rocker Dave Edmunds.

"But there's more to Khachaturian than the pulsating jabs of the 'Sabre Dance'," Huizenga says.

Khachaturian came of age as a composer during the Stalin regime. Though he wasn't considered a party apparatchik, he was swept up in the fervor of the new socialist dream.

"He did absolutely everything right, as far as the Soviet ideology is concerned," says pianist Sahan Arzruni, who worked with, and has written about Khachaturian. "He used the folk material of all the republics, not only the Armenia folk material but the Ukrainian, Georgian, Azerbaijani, Turkmenistani... The primary dogma, as far as the Soviet ideology is concerned, is to make the art relevant to the people. Not art for the sake of art."

Khachaturian churned out well-crafted, party-pleasing compositions such as the "Song of Stalin," "Ode in Memory of Lenin" and a popular violin concerto. But in 1948, Khachaturian suddenly found himself on the wrong side of the Soviet art police —

officially denounced, along with fellow composers Dmitri Shostakovich and Sergei Prokofiev.

Khachaturian apologized and even agreed to be sent back to Armenia to be "reeducated." In 1957, four years after Stalin died, Khachaturian was re-appointed to the Composer's Union. But by then, "all his major works were behind him," Huizenga says.

For the last 50 years, orchestras have largely avoided Khachaturian's music, a fact lamented by Marin Alsop, music director of the Colorado Symphony.

Cossak Danse from *Mazeppa* Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky.

Mazeppa, properly ***Mazepa*** is an opera in three acts (six scenes) by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. The libretto was written by Victor Burenin and is based on Pushkin's poem *Poltava*, part of the cultural legacy of Mazeppa.

Mazeppa is a blood-thirsty tale of crazy love, abduction, political persecution, execution, and vengeful murder. The action takes place in Ukraine at the beginning of the 18th century. The protagonists are the historical figures Ivan Stepanovych Mazeppa (c. 1640–1709), the Hetman of the Ukrainian Cossacks, and Vasyl Leontiyovych Kochubey (c.1640–1708), a very prosperous Ukrainian nobleman and statesman.

The opera was composed between June 1881 and April 1883. Pushkin based his story on historical events at [Poltava](#), [the battle](#) where Tsar [Peter the Great](#) defeated Swedish King [Charles XII](#). Pushkin took some creative freedom in order to create powerful characters and grand passions. For example, Kochubey (the wealthy Cossack whose daughter elopes with Mazeppa) actually managed to successfully keep Mariya from him. He turned Mazeppa in to the Tsar four years after Mazeppa asked for her hand.

The Flight of the Bumble Bee from Die Hummel Scherzo Das Marchen von Zar Saltan – Rimsky-Korsikov

Rimsky-Korsakov originally composed his ultra-famous Flight of the Bumblebee as part of The Tale of Tsar Sultan, the opera he wrote in 1899 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of the great Russian author Alexander Pushkin.

The piece closes Act III, Tableau 1, during which the magic Swan-Bird changes Prince Gvidon Saltanovich (the Tsar's son) into an insect so that he can fly away to visit his father (who does not know that he is alive). Although in the opera the Swan-Bird sings during the first part of the "Flight", her vocal line is [melodically](#) uninvolved and easily omitted; this feature, combined with the fact that the number decisively closes the scene, made easy extraction as an orchestral concerto piece possible.

This piece does not constitute one of the movements of the orchestral suite that Rimsky-Korsakov derived from the opera for concerts.

The music of this number recurs in modified form during the ensuing tableau (Act III, Tableau 2), at the points when the Bumblebee appears during the scene: it stings the two evil sisters on the brow, blinds Babarikha (the instigator of the plot to trick Saltan at the beginning into sending his wife away), and in general causes havoc at the end of the tableau. The readers of Alexander Pushkin's original poem, upon which this opera is based, will note that Gvidon is supposed to go on three separate trips to Saltan's kingdom, each of which requires a transformation into a different insect.

"Flight of the Bumblebee" is recognizable for its frantic pace when played up to [tempo](#), with nearly uninterrupted runs of [chromatic sixteenth notes](#). It is not so much the [pitch](#) or range of the notes that are played that challenges the musician, but simply the musician's ability to move to them quickly enough. Because of this and its complexity, it requires a great deal of skill to perform. Often in popular culture, it is thought of as being notoriously hard to play.

In the "Tsar Saltan" suite, the short version is commonly played, taking less than two minutes. In the Opera version, the three-minute fifty-five-second version is performed.

He wrote *The Flight of the Bumblebee* as a little orchestral throwaway for a fairy tale opera called *The Tale of Tsar Sultan*. But the music is infectious and has been borrowed time and again for things such as *The Green Hornet*, *The Muppets*, Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill*, and *Adventures of the Sonic Hedgehog*, just to name a few. It's also been the high-water mark for hot-dogging musicians who've tackled its torrential melody to impress their friends (see the *Guinness Book of World Records*).

Hall of the Mountain King – Edvard Grieg

In the Hall of the Mountain King is a piece of orchestral music composed by [Edvard Grieg](#) in 1875 as [incidental music](#) for the sixth scene of act 2 in [Henrik Ibsen's](#) 1867 play *Peer Gynt*. **Incidental music** is [music](#) written to accompany or point up the action or mood of a dramatic performance on stage, [film](#), [radio](#), television, or recording; to serve as a transition between parts of the action; or to introduce or close a performance. Ibsen's play tells the story of Peer Gynt, a Norwegian folk character who abducts a bride from her wedding and then abandons her in order to travel the world on other adventures. This piece is played as Peer Gynt, in a dream-like fantasy, enters the troll "Mountain King's hall". The king sits on his throne, with crown and scepter, surrounded by his children and relatives. The music is playing very fast and loud. Peer Gynt refuses to become a troll and the crowd chases him. He runs faster and faster and is almost captured but at the last moment he hears the church bells, he follows the sound and escapes. Very loud chords complete the movement. The trolls all disappear within the mountain and the mountain collapses.

Valse Triste - Jean Sibelius Music from *Valse triste*

Sibelius achieved his greatest popularity with *Valse triste*, a sad waltz which he composed for a play called *Death*, written by his brother-in-law Arvid Järnefelt. It was originally one of six pieces written for the play, but it is far better known as a separate concert piece.

Sibelius's immediate circle feared that he was dancing a real Waltz of Death because of his way of living. "Janne, you must give up alcohol. You must," his brother Christian wrote to him on 19th November 1903. It had already become evident to Sibelius's closest friends that his ability to work could only be sustained if he stayed away from the temptations of Helsinki. One day earlier Janne himself had taken measures to get away from the temptations of Helsinki: he bought a building site for a house close to Lake Tuusula, 45 km north of Helsinki. The house was to be called Ainola ("Aino's Place") and it would become the Sibeliuses' permanent home.

Here is how the scenario for the waltz was described in the original program note:

It is night. The son, who has been watching beside the bedside of his sick mother, has fallen asleep from sheer weariness. Gradually a ruddy light is diffused through the room: there is a sound of distant music: the glow and the music steal nearer until the strains of a valse melody float distantly to our ears. The sleeping mother awakens, rises from her bed and, in her long white garment, which takes the semblance of a ball dress, begins to move silently and slowly to and fro. She waves her hands and beckons in time to the music, as though she were summoning a crowd of invisible guests. And now they appear, these strange visionary couples, turning and gliding to an unearthly waltz rhythm. The dying woman mingles with the dancers; she strives to make them look into her eyes, but the shadowy guests one and all avoid her glance. Then she seems to sink exhausted on her bed and the music breaks off. Presently she gathers all her strength and invokes the dance once more, with more energetic gestures than before. Back come the shadowy dancers, gyrating in a wild, mad rhythm. The weird gaiety reaches a climax; there is a knock at the door, which flies wide open; the mother utters a despairing cry; the spectral guests vanish; the music dies away. Death stands on the threshold.

Sibelius gave little importance to this slight work, telling a biographer that "with all retouching [it] was finished in a week." Two years later he arranged the music for solo piano and for chamber orchestra as *Valse triste* ("Sad Waltz"), and sold it outright to his publisher, Fazer & Westerlund, for a tiny fee. The piece became immediately popular as a salon bonbon. When the German firm of Breitkopf und Härtel acquired the rights to Sibelius' music from Fazer & Westerlund late in 1905, they issued it in arrangements for all manner of performing forces, from solo flute to military band. It was among the most ubiquitous melodies in the years just before World War I, but Sibelius, having sold away his rights, shared in none of its royalties.

Sibelius, like Brahms and Richard Strauss, was a great admirer of the waltzes of Johann Strauss. Sibelius' biographer Cecil Gray saw the *Valse triste* as an "Hommage à Strauss," and its success prompted Sibelius to add a *Valse romantique* to the incidental music for a 1911 revival of *Kuolema*. Like the Viennese examples on which it is modeled, the *Valse triste* comprises several continuous sections. It was the melancholy opening section that suggested the work's name. This quiet, introspective paragraph is followed by a gossamer strain played with the utmost delicacy at the very tips of the string bows, a lyrical episode led by the woodwinds, and a more vigorous section for the full ensemble before the wistful mood of the opening returns briefly to round out this lovely, haunting miniature.

Valse triste was completed just before the premiere of *Death*. According to Sigurd Wettenhovi-Aspa, an eccentric friend of Sibelius, the idea for the waltz was conceived on the upper floor of the Kämp Restaurant with the help of oysters, soda water and quinine. Sibelius, who had a heavy cold, abstained from alcohol, but more than compensated with quinine, the medicine for colds at the time. A few months later Sibelius was forced to sell *Valse triste* at a low price due to a lack of money. A couple of years later the work was world-famous.

Valse Triste is also a ballet choreographed by Peter Martins when he was ballet master at the New York City Ballet. It was a ballet set to to Sibelius' s eponymous waltz as well as the music called Scene with Cranes from his incidental music for the play *Kuolema* (*Death*). The crane is a symbol of death in Finnish literature.

Highlights from *Wicked* – Stephen Schwartz, arr. Ted Ricketts

In March 2016, *Wicked* surpassed \$1 billion in total Broadway revenue, joining both *The Phantom of the Opera* and *The Lion King* as the only Broadway shows to do so. The musical is told from the perspective of the witches of the Land of Oz; its plot begins before and continues after Dorothy Gale arrives in Oz from Kansas, and includes several references to the 1939 film and Baum's novel. The selections in this compilation include: *No One Mourns the Wicked*, *I'm Not that Girl*, *Defying Gravity*, *No Good Deed* and *For Good*. A movie of this musical has been in the works since 2004. Look for it soon.

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Gregory Maguire is the author of the novel *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, on which the musical is based. He gave her that backstory: who knew she was a do-gooder with glasses? And that she and Glinda were once roommates?

It was Maguire's brilliant idea to take the hated figure from Baum's original story, *The Wizard of Oz* and tell things from her point of view. He wanted to have the two witches be roommates in college, but the way in which their friendship develops – and really the whole plot – is different onstage

The novel, described as a political, social, and ethical commentary on the nature of good and evil, takes place in the Land of Oz, in the years leading to Dorothy's arrival. The story centers on Elphaba, the misunderstood, smart, and fiery girl of emerald-green skin who grows up to become the notorious Wicked Witch of the West and Glinda, the beautiful, blonde, popular girl who grows up to become Glinda the Good Witch of the South. The story is divided into five different sections based on the plot location and presents events, characters, and situations from Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) and its 1939 film adaptation in new ways. . It is designed to set the reader thinking about what it really is to be "Wicked", and whether good intentions with bad results are the same as bad intentions with bad results. Schwartz considered how best to condense the novel's dense and complicated plot into a sensible script. To this end, he collaborated with Emmy Award-winning writer Winnie Holzman to develop the outline of the plot over the course of a year while meeting with producer Marc Platt to refine the structural outline of the show, spinning an original stage piece rather than creating a strict adaptation of Maguire's work.

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Since "Wicked" first opened in 2003, it's been seen by more than 60 million people worldwide, and has grossed more than \$5 billion. The show is 18 years old, but somehow it still feels new.

A Universal Pictures film adaptation, directed by Jon M. Chu with Platt and Stone returning as producers has been in development since 2004.

Movie Spectacular, Themes from *Batman*, *Dances with Wolves*, *Robin Hood*: *Prince of Thieves* – Arr. Jay Bocook

These three movies were some of the most exciting and interesting movies of the past few years. They are traditional tales of heroism and intrigue with numerous interpretations and variations available in the lore and characters.

Jay Bocook is a professional composer and arranger, and also the Director of Athletic Bands at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina. He started writing and arranging for Jenson publications while he was a band teacher in Travelers Rest, South Carolina, where he took a small High School band to the State AAA state marching band championship in 1978. He had great success arranging for a wide range of ensembles, from elementary bands to the United States Marine Band.



His works have been performed at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta, and the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. In 2003, Bocook was a contributing arranger to the musical *CyberJam*, which opened to rave reviews at London's Queen's Theatre. He also worked as the arranger for *Blast! The Music of Disney* for Disney Tokyo.

He now also is the Director of Athletic Bands and as a principal composer/arranger for the Hal Leonard publishing company. In 2009, he was inducted into the Drum Corps International Hall of Fame, and in 2011 he was elected into the American Bandmasters Association.