

Overture to La dame blanche (The White Lady) by François-Adrien Boieldieu is the overture to his opera by the same name. It was first performed on 10 December 1825 in Paris, France. It is based on stories by Scottish writer, Sir Walter Scott. The opera includes conventional components of the Romantic period like exotic locations, a lost heir, a mysterious castle, hidden fortune, and a ghost. It was one of the first operas to introduce those new aspects, which later acted as a model for later operas by Meyerbeer and Gounod.

The overture, which was put together from Boieldieu's themes by his student Adolphe Adam, begins with a slow introduction, typical of opera overtures of the time. Reminiscent of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, the *allegro* section is quick, witty, and full of character.

Selections from *Hook* by John Williams includes selections from the 1991 movie starring Robins Williams and Dustin Hoffman. This medley includes songs like “We don’t wanna grow up”, “When You’re All Alone”, and several others. It is a riveting medley that showcases John Williams’ artistry as a film composer.

Concerto Grosso No. 1 for Piano and Strings by Ernst Bloch. Founding director of the Cleveland Institute of Music, composed his Concerto Grosso No. 1 for Piano and Strings when his students criticized his use of “old” compositional techniques, like tonality and form. This piece is a demonstration of using those “old” techniques in a new and contemporary way, for the 20th century. It was Bloch’s way of saying “watch this.” The point being that composers should not be composing in old styles, but instead be using a combination of styles and techniques to create new ideas and new music.

The concerto grosso, as a form, was highly popular during the Baroque era, especially by composers like Handel and Corelli. The first movement, a grand introduction, combines mixed meter and complex harmonies. The final movement, a fugue, is a common compositional device of the Baroque era. Written as a polyphonic composition consisting of five voices, it begins with the main theme being played by the violas. It then moves throughout the orchestra, passing through both violin sections, finally being introduced by the piano. Typical of a concerto grosso, Bloch also juxtaposes the use of individual instruments with the larger string ensemble.

Once all the instruments have been introduced, Bloch employs techniques that were popular with Bach, Handel, and other Baroque composers like sequences (repetition of small musical gestures), inversion (playing the main theme upside down, or inverting the intervals of the main theme), augmentation (elongating the main theme with longer notes), and stretto (an interruption of one musical line with another before the first finished). Before the conclusion, listen for a brief return of the main idea for the Prelude movement.

Jupiter from The Planets by Gustav Holst.

Holst began composing *The Planets* between 1914 and 1916, beginning with Mars, then continuing with Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Mercury. It was first performed in London, England in 1920.

For the premiere, Holst gave this note: “These pieces were suggested by the astrological significance of the planets; there is no program music, neither have they any connection with the deities of

classical mythology bearing the same names. If any guide to the music is required the subtitle to each piece will be found sufficient, especially if it be used in the broad sense. For instance, Jupiter brings jollity in the ordinary sense, and also the more ceremonial type of rejoicing associated with religions or national festivities. Saturn brings not only physical decay, but also a vision of fulfillment. Mercury is the symbol of mind.”

Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity: The most massive of the planets, possessing twelve satellites (one of them larger than the planet Mercury), named for the light-bringer, the rain-god, the god of thunderbolts, of the grape and the tasting of the new wine, of oaths, treaties, and contracts, and from whom we take the word “jovial.” “Jupiter,” says Noel Tyl, “symbolizes expansiveness, scope of enthusiasm, knowledge, honor, and opportunity . . . [and] corresponds to fortune, inheritance, bonanza.” Holst gives us an unmistakably English Jupiter. In 1921 Holst took the big tune in the middle and set to it as a unison song with orchestra the words, “I vow to thee, my country.”

-program note for Jupiter by Michael Steinberg

Berceuse & Finale from Firebird by Igor Stravinsky.

Igor Stravinsky, known for his revolutionary use of instruments, playing techniques, and moments of rough or “savage” playing, composed the music to *Firebird* between 1909 and 1910 and was premiered in Paris, France. It was the first of numerous ballets he composed in collaboration with Russian ballet impresario, Sergei Diaghilev. Stravinsky was Diaghilev’s fifth choice of composers, following a long line of successful composers like Glazunov, Tcherepnin, Liadov, and Sokolov.

The Ballets Russes, Diaghilev’s ballet company, made a specialty of dancing pieces that were inspired by Russian folklore, a cultural obsession at the time, and *Firebird* was a perfect for the company. The tale involves the dashing Prince Ivan Tsarevich, who finds himself one night wandering through the garden of King Kashchei, an evil monarch whose power resides in a magic egg, which he guards in an elegant box. In Kashchei’s garden, the prince captures a Firebird, which pleads for its life; the prince agrees to spare it if it gives him one of its magic tail-feathers, which it consents to do. Thus armed, the prince continues through his evening and happens upon thirteen enchanted princesses. The most beautiful of them catches his eye, and (acting under Kashchei’s spell) lures him to a spot where Kashchei’s demonic guards can ensnare him. But before he can be put under a spell himself, the prince uses the magic tail-feather to summon the Firebird, which reveals to him the secret of Kashchei’s magic egg. The prince locates and smashes the egg, breaking the web of evil enchantment, and goes off to marry the newly liberated Princess, with whom, of course, he will live happily ever after.

Being only twenty-eight when he wrote it, Stravinsky shows a mastery of multiple compositional techniques of harmony and orchestration. The *Berceuse & Finale* illustrates Stravinsky’s creativity of instrument usage, demonstrated by muted strings, harmonics, and tremolo all while drawing the listener’s ear to the melodic ideas shared between the bassoon and the oboe. The finale brings a riotous and dramatic ending to, what is a dramatic musical suite. Not only is the tempo quite faster, but the lopsided meter of 7/4 creates an energy that drives the music to a climactic ending.

-program note for Firebird by Michael Steinberg