

CD Track Listing

Music in bold will be performed on the in-school concert.

All other music is available for the classroom exercises.

- 1. La Mer, Movement 3 - Debussy**
- 2. Intermezzo from *Midsummer Night's Dream* - Mendelssohn**
- 3. Watershed, Movement 3 - Lynn Purse**
- 4. Cantus Arcticus - Rautavaara**
- 5. Symphony No. 5, Movement 2 - Prokofiev**
- 6. Symphony No. 50, Movement 3 - Hovhanness**
- 7. Theme from *Jurassic Park* - Williams**
8. Musical Characteristic 1 - Beethoven, Symphony No. 9 - Movement 2
9. Musical Characteristic 2 - Beethoven, Symphony No. 5 - Movement 1
10. Musical Characteristic 3 - Beethoven, Leonore Overture No.3
11. Musical Characteristic 4 - Beethoven, Piano Concerto No. 1 - Movement 2
12. Musical Characteristic 5 - Beethoven, Symphony No. 9 - Movement 3

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La Mer - Claude Debussy

However problematic the label “impressionistic” is for the music of Claude Debussy, it does serve to highlight a crucial moment in the relationship between music and the other arts. After a century in which the Romantics celebrated music as the highest form of artistic expression, writers and painters began to free themselves from the ties to concrete reality that had seemed so limiting next to music’s ineffable, abstract qualities. Their resultant breakthroughs inspired composers, most fruitfully Debussy, to think about the materials of their art in new and previously unimaginable ways. Specific visual inspiration for the 1905 orchestral triptych *La mer* came, ironically, from the earlier generation of painters: Joseph Turner (1775-1851), whom Debussy lauded as the “finest creator of mystery in art,” and Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), whose “The Great Wave Off Kanagawa” print was the composer’s choice to adorn the title page of the score. Debussy’s own life experience provided an emotional canvas; he had thought at one point to become a sailor and kept a lifelong attachment to “my old friend, the sea; it is always endless and beautiful. It is really the thing in nature which best puts you in your place.”

Among the artists’ innovations was the use of color as an end in itself, and among the most influential legacies of Debussy was the use of musical color as an end in itself. The most obvious way Debussy achieves his sonorities is by augmenting the standard orchestra with some glitter: two harps and a large percussion section. But other musical elements also become agents of color. Harmonic changes serve as color washes; chords dissolve rather than resolve. Short melodic motives rather than fully developed themes sparkle in brief solos, substituting timbre and movement for narrative coherence.

Throughout the first movement, “From Dawn to Noon on the Sea,” motives interplay with quick timbral changes to suggest the sea’s dual nature: ever-changing on the surface but with an underlying eternal and static quality. The opening wavelike figure gradually accelerates; several thematic gestures emerge as the sea awakens, then subsides as a brass chorale suggests the ocean’s depths. “Play of the Waves” functions as a symphonic scherzo, its evanescent interaction of timbre, non-Western scales, and cross-rhythms portraying the unsettled nature of the waves that dance, break apart, and come back together. As its title suggests, “Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea” offers more traditional thematic interchange, enhanced by the return of material from the first movement; this thematic repetition gives the piece a sense of settling down. There is an especially delicious effect when a solo trumpet rises above the fray momentarily, only to be reabsorbed into the orchestra. The ending washes over us with forceful dissonance, leaving the sensation Debussy identified of being “in your place.”

Intermezzo from *Midsummer Night’s Dream* - Felix Mendelssohn

The fusion of drama and music is as old as recorded history. In the ancient Greek drama, in the liturgical plays of the Middle Ages, in the plays of Shakespeare, and on to the era of films, music has often functioned as an indispensable adjunct to theatrical presentation. Setting the mood of a scene, commenting on the action, conveying psychological undercurrents, depicting character – as well as providing prescribed musical selections – all of these purposes and others are served by incidental music.

In the annals of incidental music, few if any matches are quite as perfect as Mendelssohn’s score and Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Play and music became a true meeting of the spirits of author and composer. As a youngster, Mendelssohn had become familiar with Shakespeare, and particularly of *A*

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Midsummer Night's Dream, in the translations to German of the Englishman's works. The composer's sister Fanny explained it this way. "From our youth on we were entwined in A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Felix particularly made it his own. He identified with all the characters. He re-created them, so to speak, every one of those whom Shakespeare produced in the immensity of his genius." The first tangible result of Mendelssohn's identification with all the characters was the Overture, which came off of the young composer's writing table when he was all of 17 years old. Years after its first performance in 1827, the composer spoke of his intentions, explaining: "It follows the play closely. I think it should be enough to point out that the fairy rulers, Oberon and Titania, appear throughout the play with all their people. At the end, after everything has been satisfactorily settled, and the principal players have joyfully left the stage, the elves follow them, bless the house and disappear with the dawn. So the play ends, and my Overture too."

For Mendelssohn, however, the end of the Dream story did not come until 1943, when the King of Prussia asked the composer to write incidental music for a Berlin production of the play. Imagination stirred anew and enthusiasm bolstered by the production's gifted director Ludwig Tieck, Mendelssohn plunged into the task. Apparently anointed with newly activated amounts of Shakespearian fairy dust, he turned out a score that quite remarkably takes up the enchantment of the Overture where it left off all those years before. It should be remarked that there are those who don't think that estimate is a true one, and who believe the 1843 music does not reach the Overture's standard. Yet, even while standing in awe of the youthful piece, how can one fail to be swept up into the gossamer web of the Scherzo, the limpid calm of the Nocturne, the grandeur of the main section of the Wedding March and the ardor of its middle section, or any of the countless magical moments that shine through the complete score.

Intermezzo (between acts II and III). Another side of the Mendelssohn persona, the familiar Intermezzo is marked *Allegro appassionato* and is full of controlled ardor and elegant expressiveness.

Watershed, Movement 3 - Lynn Purse

Watershed is part of the larger long-term work – *A Year in Penn's Woods* – which is a mix of different kinds of musical and multi-media pieces that focus on the habitats and ecological systems of Western Pennsylvania. A concept that Purse developed on her last sabbatical, she has made presentations at national music conferences and locally at the Phipps, including a short video shot in North Park entitled *Autumn Equinox*. That video would later serve as inspiration for the "Sunrise on Still Water" movement of *Watershed*.

Watershed was supported by a Duquesne University Presidential Scholarship Award in 2017. After the premiere performance, the piece will be recorded with DSO, Adam Liu, and conductor Daniel Meyer in The Dr. Thomas D. Pappert Center for Performance and Innovation by faculty audio engineer Jay Dudt and released on the Three Oranges label.

Cantus Arcticus - Einojuhani Rautavaara

In many ways, Rautavaara's *Cantus Arcticus* is a modern incarnation of the "Goldfinch" concerto, except the soloists are actual birds, recorded near the Arctic Circle and in the bogs outside the town of Liminka in northern Finland. To build a musical work around a series of tape recordings also probes the differences between what is real and what is artificial, not unlike the story of "The Nightingale." Like all electro-acoustic works, this piece

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combines the “realness” of live musical forces, in this case a chamber orchestra, with the “artifice” of electronically produced sound, in this case the tape recordings. The paradox then, given that the recorded sounds are of actual birds, the calls of which the instruments can only imitate, is that the recording might actually be the more “real” voice. Or perhaps we are meant to hear a conversation between the here and now of the orchestra and the dreamlike somewhere else conjured through the recordings.

At the beginning of the first movement, “The Bog,” the two flutes are asked to “think of autumn and of Tchaikovsky” during their duet, before being joined by the rest of the woodwinds and then the birds, all the way from Finland. The repeated statements from the oboes and trumpets combine major and minor thirds, in a dissonant callback to the cuckoo song of Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony, “The Pastoral”—a gesture that creates a sense of temporal as well as spatial distance. The second movement, “Melancholy,” features a slowed-down recording of two shore larks calling back and forth to one another. Where in the first movement the birds of the bog receded into the background of the conversation among the woodwinds and brass, here the chorale-like texture in the strings creates a meditative space in which we can focus on the dialogue between the birds on the recording. In contrast, the third movement, “Swans migrating,” mimics the movement of birds rather than their voices. Over a recording of whooper swans, four groups of instruments are “only summarily synchronized mutually”—that is, they move closely together within their groups, but not identically. The first group is the violins and violas; the second the woodwinds; the third the horns, celli, and basses; and the fourth the celesta and harp. Each of the four groups occupies the same space, overlapping without colliding—coordinated, but not perfectly in synch. Anyone who has seen a flock moving together amorphously, or formations of geese flying at slightly different paces, can imagine what the sound of these instrumental choirs might look like. Over the course of the movement, in one long dynamic crescendo, these four groups and the recording meld together before fading into one distant sonic impression.

Symphony No.5, Movement 2 - Sergei Prokofiev

So popular was Prokofiev’s Fifth Symphony that, within months of its American premiere, a portrait of the composer was featured on the cover of Time magazine, in November 1945. In a period when Russia and its people were still regarded as our allies in the victory over fascism, the Symphony was a hit at home and abroad, the musical celebration of the war’s conclusion. But was it that?

When we read about this work, we see again and again the same adjectives circling – “heroic” or “joyous.” And always in the context of a nation’s victory, a people’s victory – but was it that? The decades do not bring this enigmatic man or his music into precise focus; he seems to evade scrutiny.

We know that this four-movement Symphony was composed in the summer of 1944, shortly after the landings of Allied troops on the beaches of Normandy and throughout the westward pushes of the Russian forces toward Berlin. By the time of its premiere in Moscow in January of 1945 under the composer’s direction, distant celebratory artillery fire would cause Prokofiev to pause, arms raised, as he prepared to begin the performance – the Russian army had crossed the Vistula.

Certainly the Symphony opens with an upward soaring, unmistakably optimistic theme, and the grinding climax at the end of the movement is a crisis vanquished. The second movement is a nervous scherzo, a stark contrast

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to the doleful third movement. But is the victory described in the final movement a personal or a public conquest? Is this, as Prokofiev wrote, "a symphony of the greatness of the human spirit, a song of praise of free and happy mankind," or is it, perhaps belying his official public statement, the struggle of the individual artistic spirit in the stifling confines of Stalin's cultural stranglehold? The greatness of this Symphony is inherent in this ambiguity. It can support a number of interpretations and no single one of them can confine it or bind it to the ground.

Symphony No. 50, Movement 3 - Alan Hovhanness

From the composer: "When Mount St. Helens erupted on the morning of May 18, 1980, the sonic boom struck our south windows. Ashes did not come here at that time but covered land to the east all across the State of Washington into Montana. Ashes continued to travel all around the world, landing lightly on our house a week later, after their journey all around our planet. In my Mount St. Helens Symphony I have tried to suggest a musical tribute to the sublime grandeur and beauty of Mount St. Helens and the surrounding majestic Cascade Mountains."

Theme from *Jurassic Park* - John Williams

Williams began writing the *Jurassic Park* score at the end of February 1993, and it was conducted a month later; because Williams sustained a back injury during the scoring sessions, several cues were conducted by Artie Kane (Kane is uncredited in the film, but receives special thanks in the 1993 soundtrack album's credits and is listed as a conductor in the La-La Land Records set). John Neufeld and Alexander Courage orchestrated the score. The composition process was done in Skywalker Ranch concurrently with the sound editing process, leading Williams to get inspiration from Gary Rydstrom's work with dinosaur noises. Williams described it as, "a rugged, noisy effort—a massive job of symphonic cartooning". He also said that, while trying to, "match the rhythmic gyrations of the dinosaurs", he ended up creating, "these kind of funny ballets". As with another Spielberg film he scored, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, Williams felt he needed to write, "pieces that would convey a sense of 'awe' and fascination", given that the movie dealt with the, "overwhelming happiness and excitement", that would emerge from seeing live dinosaurs. In turn, more suspenseful scenes, such as the *Tyrannosaurus rex* attack, earned frightening themes. For the first time, Spielberg was unable to attend the recording sessions for one of his own movies, as he was in Poland filming *Schindler's List*. Instead, Williams gave Spielberg demo tapes with piano versions of the main themes prior to his travel, and the director would listen to them daily on the way to the sets.