



CHARTERHOUSE

Founded in 1611

Musical Programme – Arts Festival 2010

Recordings of compositions of film score & other music by:

*Alexander McLean (R), William Mallin (W) and Xavier
Hetherington (G)*

Musical Storytelling by RCDM, examining Schubert's *Erlkönig* (The Erlking)

Songs set by students:

Jonathan Pacey (V): When all thoughts are exhausted,

Hugh Parsons (G): Birthday Tango, trad.

*Natalie Krzywkowska (G): Land of forgotten dreams, Eddie
Meduza*

Callum Edge (S): I so liked spring last year, Charlotte Mew

Coach-House, 'Twisted Ideals':

*Oscar Bashall - lead guitar/vocals; Jake Tempest- guitar; Will
Matthews – drums; Ed Roberts - bass guitar*

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Task Leading to composition:

GCSE Music: Integrated Assignment – Film Music

Compose music to accompany the following scene from a sci-fi/horror film. It falls into seven sections.

- 0'00" The camera zooms in on a spaceship travelling through outer space.
- 0'20" As the spaceship continues on its mission, the members of the crew relax, while keeping a careful check on the instruments.
- 0'45" Suddenly, a warning light flashes! One of the crew goes to investigate while the others wait and listen.
- 1'05" There is a scream followed by sounds of a short, fierce fight; the lights go out.
- 1'25" The emergency lighting comes on and full power is restored. Those still on the main deck look at each other anxiously, wondering what will happen next.
- 1'50" Strange sounds are heard, including moaning, grunting and running, sometimes close, sometimes in the distance.
- 2'20" All at once, the strange sounds seem to be very close; the crew's fear mounts.
- 2'45" End

Your music should:

- follow the above outline
- and
- contain clear musical ideas to:
 - represent the spaceship travelling through outer space
 - portray a scream and a short, fierce fight
 - represent the strange sounds which are sometimes close, sometimes in the distance
 - portray the mounting fear of the crew at the end.

Music and storytelling have had a long and close relationship. Some of the earliest examples of notated music in Europe are the narrative songs of the troubadours of the 12th and 13th centuries, and their followers, the trouvères and minnesänger, who wrote songs on the subject of *fin' amours*, or refined love.

From around the same time comes the *Ludus Danielis* (Play of Daniel), which tells the biblical story of Daniel. This is the earliest example of a play set to music for which the actual music has survived; it is highly likely that this merely represents the earliest recorded version of an old oral tradition of setting plays to music.

In the 16th century, the desire to express more complex narratives in music led to the highly-emotive Italian madrigal, before the burgeoning interest in classical culture inspired the creation of opera in Florence at the end of the century. The plots of early opera were taken almost exclusively from classical mythology, such as Monteverdi's opera *Orfeo* (1607), with the immediate success of opera as an art-form down to its intense integration of words, drama and musical expression.

Opera was to remain the dominant method of musical storytelling until the early 19th century, when art song – often in narrative song-cycles – came to be cultivated in German-speaking lands by composers such as Schubert and Schumann.

However, it's not just with words that music tells stories. From the earliest programmatic keyboard works of the 16th century, to Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony and the symphonic poems of Liszt, composers have sought to relate stories through music. Indeed, it's perhaps worth remarking that often the most dramatic moments of Wagner's operas are when the singing stops and the orchestra is left to convey the emotions of the characters unhindered by words.

Perhaps the most widespread use of music to tell stories today is film music. Although we may not always be fully conscious of the fact, the music in a film is constantly colouring our perception of the film's narrative. The next time you watch a film, ask yourself the question – what would watching this feel like without the music?

Erlkönig (1815) – words by Goethe, music by Schubert

Schubert's setting of Goethe's ballad *Erlkönig* (The Erlking) is a good example of many of the techniques at a composer's disposal when telling a story in music.

The song opens with hammering repeated notes in the piano part. Not only does this depict the horse thundering through the night, it also helps to establish the terrifying mood of the song.

The four poetic voices, the narrator, the father, the son and the Erlking, are distinguished in Schubert's setting by different pitch ranges, with the Father the lowest and the Son the highest.

Additionally, Schubert writes different music for each of the characters; the father's rather plain vocal line suggests a certain lack of emotional engagement, which contrasts with the Erlking, who is given a much more attractive, even seductive musical setting. Whereas much of the song changes key rapidly, leaving the listener feeling disorientated, the Erlking's verses stick comfortably in one key.

The son's cries of terror become higher at each repetition, depicting his increasing panic. Underpinning this, the piano part plays the interval of a tritone – which has a historic association with evil; the interval is also known as *diabolus in musica*, or Devil in Music.

This interval also returns the last time we hear from the father. By this stage the music has changed key to C#, which is a tritone distant from the home key of G minor: not only does this play on the traditional associations of the interval, it is also the furthest one can travel from the home key, suggesting that the father is losing his grip on his son.

The Erlking's final, menacing threat to take the boy by force is the first time we hear him with aggressive music; the piano plays extremely dissonant chords, underlining the intimidating tone of the Erlking.

As the narrator takes up the story again in the last stanza, Schubert plays another harmonic trick; although we're told that the father and son have reached home, the key of the music at this point is Ab major, *not* the home key of G minor. Schubert then withholds the dramatic climax of the song by placing a pause before the final blow, as we're told that 'in his arms the child...was dead', keeping us guessing as to the outcome of the tale.

*Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind?
Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind;
Er hat den Knaben wohl in dem Arm,
Er faßt ihn sicher, er hält ihn warm.*

Who rides, so late, through night and wind?
It is the father with his child.
He has the boy well in his arm
He holds him safely, he keeps him warm.

*"Mein Sohn, was birgst du so bang dein Gesicht?" —
"Siehst, Vater, du den Erlkönig nicht?
Den Erlkönig mit Kron und Schweif?" —
"Mein Sohn, es ist ein Nebelstreif."*

"My son, why do you hide your face so anxiously?"
"Father, do you not see the Erl king?
The Erl king with crown and tail?"
"My son, it's a wisp of fog."

*"Du liebes Kind, komm, geh mit mir!
Gar schöne Spiele spiel' ich mit dir;
Manch' bunte Blumen sind an dem Strand,
Meine Mutter hat manch gülden Gewand." —*

"You lovely child, come, go with me!
Many a beautiful game I'll play with you;
Many colourful flowers are on the shore,
My mother has many golden robes."

*"Mein Vater, mein Vater, und hörest du nicht,
Was Erlkönig mir leise verspricht?" —
"Sei ruhig, bleibe ruhig, mein Kind;
In dürren Blättern säuselt der Wind." —*

"My father, my father, and don't you hear
What Erl king is quietly promising me?"
"Be calm, stay calm, my child;
The wind is rustling through withered leaves."

*"Willst, feiner Knabe, du mit mir gehen?
Meine Töchter sollen dich warten schön;
Meine Töchter führen den nächtlichen Reihn,
Und wiegen und tanzen und singen dich ein." —*

"Do you want to come with me, dear boy?
My daughters shall wait on you fine;
My daughters will lead the nightly dance,
And rock and dance and sing you to sleep."

*"Mein Vater, mein Vater, und siehst du nicht dort
Erlkönigs Töchter am düstern Ort?" —
"Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh es genau:
Es scheinen die alten Weiden so grau." —*

"My father, my father, and don't you see there
Erl king's daughters in the gloomy place?"
"My son, my son, I see it clearly:
The old willows they shimmer so grey."

*"Ich liebe dich, mich reizt deine schöne Gestalt;
Und bist du nicht willig, so brauch ich Gewalt." —
"Mein Vater, mein Vater, jetzt faßt er mich an!
Erlkönig hat mir ein Leids getan!" —*

"I love you, your beautiful form entices me;
And if you're not willing, I shall use force."
"My father, my father, he's grabbing me now!
Erl king has done me some harm!"

*Dem Vater grauset's, er reitet geschwind,
Er hält in Armen das ächzende Kind,
Erreicht den Hof mit Müß' und Not;
In seinen Armen das Kind war tot.*

The father shudders; he swiftly rides on,
He holds the moaning child in his arms,
is hardly able to reach his farm;
In his arms, the child was dead.

Head of Academic Music, Russell Millard

Jonathan Pacey (V)

When all thoughts
Are exhausted
I slip into the woods
And gather
A pile of shepherd's purse.
Like the little stream
Making its way
Through the mossy crevices
I, too, quietly
Turn clear and transparent.

Taigu Ryōkan (1758–1831)

This poem by Taiku Ryokan describes what appears to be a woodland scene, but the imagery employed is confusing at best. The word 'slip' in the second line personifies the river mentioned later in the text, and this is exploited in the vocal line with a long melisma over the word in lulling triplets. The extended suspensions in the middle section are designed to give a feeling of angst against the protagonist's apparent delusion. In the last line - perhaps the strangest of the poem - there is a sudden progression from the leading-note minor to the tonic minor, which, coupled with the registral trough in the low bass part, complete the song in a harmonically confusing manner. The overall feel of the piece is one of a folk song mixed with romantic song-writing, which, being two disparate concepts, creates an unbalanced feeling.

Natalie Krzywkowska (G)

As a child I was running free
Like a leaf in the wind
The days seemed endless
No worries then
There was no ball and no chain
I look back on those days with a yearning in my heart
Land of forgotten dreams
As we grow older, our hearts turn cold
We're no longer running free
Live our lives in captivity
Now we're chained to the ground
But I look back on those days with a yearning in my heart
Land of forgotten dreams
Land of forgotten dreams

Eddie Meduza (1948–2002)

As part of the compositional element of the Cambridge Pre-U Music syllabus, I decided to write a piece of music consisting of a piano accompaniment and a vocal melody. The poem, provided by the exam board, is entitled “Land of Forgotten Dreams,” by Meduza. I wanted to match the slightly clichéd themes of the poem musically and therefore decided to take a more contemporary approach to the musical setting of the words. Nostalgia, childhood happiness and the concept of time are the prevailing themes of the poem, encompassed in the title of the poem itself. In the first half of the opening stanza, I felt it appropriate to convey a sense of childhood happiness to match the words through the simple, major-key chord progressions. The reflective second half of the stanza is filled with nostalgia for the simplicities of childhood, conveyed musically through the use of minor keys. The piano accompaniment following the first verse acts as a bridge between reminiscing and living in present reality. The chorus that follows involves a vocal melody shaped around a descending motif that conveys the narrator’s longing. This refrain occurs again after the second stanza with an altered vocal part, which adds a tone of desperation to the words. The broken chords that form the second stanza capture the concept of change with time.

I so liked Spring last year
Because you were here;—
The thrushes too—
Because it was these you so liked to hear—
I so liked you.
This year's a different thing,—
I'll not think of you.
But I'll like Spring because it is simply Spring
As the thrushes do.

Charlotte Mew (1869–1928)

Charlotte Mew's *I so liked spring last year* is a text that is reticent, private, and yet full of emotion: a life scarred by mental illness, sincere Protestantism, and “chaste lesbianism” puts this into some sort of perspective. The poem tells of thrushes singing in the past (“Spring last year”), which reminds her of her love’s fondness for this sound: this is what makes her “so like you”. However, the present (“this year”) is “a different thing”: she will enjoy Spring, just as nature does, for what it is – “simply Spring”. Ultimately, it conveys a sense of love lost and the power overcoming this; however a faint memory of her love lingers on in her mind to the end. In the music, I have tried to capture the reminiscent tone of the poem with pauses: these are held just beyond the bearable in order to express the emotional pain she goes through whilst recalling Spring last year. The recurring melodic ‘lost love’ theme is never resolved, and whilst at times it does attempt to break free, the music is brought around in full circle: although she tries, she can never forget Spring and its connotations.

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