

Bit About Beethoven

Early years in Bonn

Ludwig van Beethoven didn't have the happiest of starts in life. Born in Bonn, Germany, on December 16, 1770, he was the eldest of three children. His father, Johann – a musician who liked to drink (to



Beethoven's parents
Johann & Maria Magdalena

put it politely) – taught him to play piano and violin, and was known to pull the child out of bed to perform for his father's drinking companions, or in the early hours of the morning (4am has been suggested by one biographer) to practice, and smacked the boy should he make a mistake (was it around the ears? – I don't know). Neighbours provided accounts of the small boy weeping while he played the clavier, standing atop a footstool to reach the keys, his father beating him for each hesitation or mistake.



Grandfather

On a near daily basis, Beethoven was flogged, locked in the cellar and deprived of sleep for extra hours of practice. Needless to say he didn't enjoy a good relationship with his father.

As a toddler he did warm to his grandfather (who was also godfather and namesake), Bonn's most prosperous and eminent musician who was the music director at the court in Bonn. But grandfather died when Beethoven was only three.

So not much hope at home for any real progress either emotionally or musically – although it has been said that this early home life did set the stage for the habit Beethoven was to grow into of “idealising the unattainable”. As Beethoven developed then, it became clear that to realise potential he would have to leave home and travel away to some major musical centre. But how and to where?



Age 12

The question was answered when as a twelve-year-old and showing promise as a piano player, Beethoven's talent was recognised by the Court organist at Bonn – Christian Gottlob Neefe – who secured for him the position of assistant Court Organist while he taught him composition. The young lad even filled in as church organist when Neefe was out of town.

Thus Beethoven – standing in for Neefe when he was away – with probably with a touring theatre company – acquired experience of playing in public from a very early age.



Gottlob Neefe

Neefe schooled Beethoven in both piano playing and basic composition, introducing him to the works of J.S. Bach – especially the Well-Tempered Klavier – C.P.E. Bach and Mozart. In Cramer's 'Magazin der Musik' on 2nd March 1787, Neefe wrote prophetically of the young Beethoven: “This youthful genius is deserving of help to enable him to travel. He would surely become a second Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart were he to continue as he has begun”.

And so the road to greatness opened before him. Years later and the still young age of 23 Beethoven wrote to Neefe from Vienna: “Should I ever become a great man, you too will have a share in my success”.

Neefe was not to witness how prophetic his earlier words were or share in Beethoven's success. He died some five years later.



UNIVERSITY OF
THE THIRD AGE
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Programme Notes

14th February, 2020

BTHVN
2020

Excerpts from.....

Symphony No 1 – Beethoven

On the Beach at Sorrento – Richard Strauss

La Valse – Ravel

Wild Swans – Elena Kats-Chernin

The Miraculous Mandarin – Bartok

Symphony No. 9 – Dvorak



SUPERSTAR BEETHOVEN

Even today, in the early 21st Century, Ludwig van Beethoven is still the superstar among history's famous composers

Beethoven is everywhere – a global artist whose name needs no introduction and whose language requires no translation. Every day, somewhere in the world, there's a Beethoven symphony or piano concerto being performed live in front of thousands of people. Millions listen to his music on CDs, radio or online. Beethoven's music is played more than any other composer, and his 9th Symphony is played more often than any other piece.

Beethoven was the force behind the evolution of Viennese classical music, taking it to its highest form and paving the way for the Romantic era. Particularly for the core forms of Viennese classical music – the symphony, piano sonata and string quartet – the impact of Beethoven's work on the course of music history could not have been greater.

But Beethoven was a lot more. He was a revolutionary, a visionary and a man of the world. He had a powerful imagination and brimmed over with musical ideas; he was melancholy, he was deaf; he was bold and passionate. Starting with his earliest days as a child, Beethoven's life could not have been more intense.

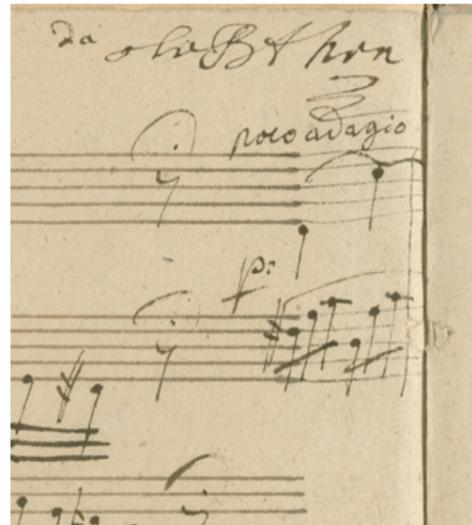
No other composer has left behind a legacy greater than Beethoven, who is considered the best-known composer of all time. His signature piece, the 9th Symphony, appears on UNESCO's World Heritage List. (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization aims to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture).

The BTHVN2020 logo



The famous Beethoven portrait painted by Joseph Karl Stieler appears behind the capitalized letters.

The logo derives from Beethoven himself: when he signed his scores he sometimes omitted the vowels and wrote 'Bthvn'.



Five pillars

The letters in the anniversary year's logo "BTHVN2020" stand for the German words for five key aspects, or "pillars," of the composer's character: Beethoven as a citizen, as a composer, a humanist, a visionary and a nature lover. – "B" for Bürger (citizen), "T" for Tonkünstler (composer), "H" for Humanist, "V" for Visionary, "N" for Nature.

The planned events in Germany will correspond to these five pillars.

According to certain scholars, the poem provided key inspiration for Dvorak particularly with regard to both central movements of the symphony. This conjecture is supported, among others, by Dvorak apparently stating that the second movement was written under the impression of the woodland burial scene from Longfellow's Hiawatha.



Burial of Minnehaha.

Unfortunately, the authenticity of this statement cannot be verified, since the only mention of it comes to us second-hand: In her study Antonin Dvorak in America, published in 1919, Katerina Emingerova discusses it with reference to an unspecified article in the American press.....



Wedding Journey of Hiawatha & Minnehaha

“As indicated by Michael Beckerman, who has examined this matter in detail, no article of any relevance contains any information about it. According to Beckerman, the symphony's second movement is inspired by two scenes from Hiawatha: the main theme – the celebrated Largo – has its prefiguration in the journey of Hiawatha and his wife Minnehaha across the vast, unspoiled American plains. The central part of the movement is said to be a reflection of the mood in the scene of Minnehaha's woodland burial.

The theory that the inspiration for the Largo lies outside musical contexts is also substantiated by the composer's notes written into the sketches for this movement: “Legend” and “The Legend Begins”.

(www.antonin-dvorak.cz/en/symphony9).

The Performance

Founded by Eugen Jochum in 1949, the **Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks** (Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra) – the orchestra of Munich's public radio and television broadcaster Bayerischer Rundfunk – has developed into an internationally renowned orchestra; its prominence continuously expanded and fortified by its intensive touring activities. The orchestra owes its extraordinary range of repertoire and sound spectrum to the program preferences of its previous chief conductors as well as to the great flexibility and acumen of each individual musician. Its chief conductors have included luminaries such as Rafael Kubelík, Sir Colin Davis and Lorin Maazel. Its latest chief conductor has been Latvian maestro Mariss Jansons who died in December last year.

In numerous surveys by music critics, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra has numbered among the top ten orchestras in the world. Most recently, in the 2008, the orchestra was ranked by the British music magazine Gramophone as 6th place, and in 2010, the Japanese music magazine 'Mostly Classic' ranked the orchestra in 4th place. For our performance we turn to this orchestra under the baton of Mariss Jansons recorded in July 2016.

The link to YouTube is https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_BlhOjp8RY&t=856s and the Largo movement begins at 10 minutes 57 seconds

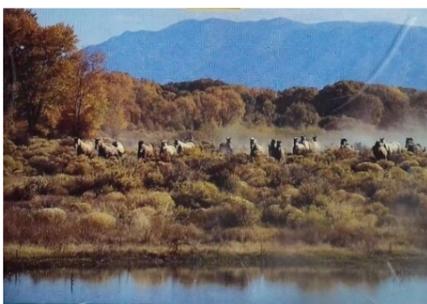
As a guide to following the story, here are the six scenes of the suite with their approximate entry points:

- 0-2m.40 Introduction - the city, the three thugs and the girl.
- 2m. 40 First Decoy Game - The Old Rake.
- 6m. 20 Second Decoy Game - The Young Boy.
- 9m. 40 Third Decoy Game - The Mandarin Appears.
- 12m. 15 The Girl Begins to dance for the Mandarin.
- 16m. 05 The Mandarin Chases the Girl.

The performance we hear is by the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Edward Gardner at a London Proms concert in 2011.

The YouTube link is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCKn0Qjm0Ho>

Antonin Dvorak — Symphony No 9 in E minor Op.95 (From the new World) -Largo



Countless history books and program notes would have us believe that Dvorak suddenly awakened a national musical consciousness soon after his arrival in the United States in 1892 and that the “New World” Symphony was an attempt to show naïve American composers how to build a distinctive style using what Dvorak called “Negro melodies”.

Leonard Bernstein claimed at a 1958 New York Philharmonic Young People’s Concert that composers in the United States at the end of the 19th century began to “feel funny about not writing American-sounding music. And it took a foreigner to point this out to them”.

A great story. But it’s not true. American composers were wrestling with national identity long before Dvorak’s arrival. (Douglas Shadie writing in the New York Times Dec. 2018).

Dvorak did come to America, however, because of a lack of world-recognised musicians in the USA in the late 19th century. For that reason a noted Patron of the Arts offered an attractive salary to a globally recognised musician to become the Director of the National Conservatory of Music and Dvorak “fitted the bill”.

Neither, then was the second movement of Dvorak’s 9th symphony based on the negro spiritual commonly known as “Goin’ Home”. The melody is completely Dvorak’s. The words came much later at the hands of one of Dvorak’s pupils. It must be noted however, that Dvorak did enjoy a friendship with Afro-American singer Harry T. Burleigh, whom he had met on many occasions before embarking upon the symphony.

A question also hovers above potential inspiration from the epic poem The Song of Hiawatha by American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a work Dvorak was reputed to be familiar with back in Prague during the 1870s, through a translation by Josef Vaclav Sladek, and during his stay in the United States he would also have had the English original at his disposal.

This epic poem draws on stories of the legendary Indian chief Hiawatha, incorporating compelling portrayals of the natural beauty of the wild American landscape.

BEETHOVEN AND USA MUSIC APPRECIATION 2020

When Beethoven is honoured around the world this year, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra will join orchestras around the world to celebrate the brilliance of this composer.

Likewise, our U3A Music Appreciation group will honour him this year by featuring his music. We will do this by ‘shadowing’ the MSO’s programme for 2020, presenting as much of the music they are presenting as possible (although the works will more than likely not feature the MSO).

Neither are their programmes all Beethoven. Far from it. There will be works by well-known and lesser-known composers, and works by Australian composers.

Nevertheless, there will be at least one Beethoven work in each of our sessions, culminating in November with a performance of the Ninth Symphony – perhaps a recording by the West-East Divan Orchestra conducted by Daniel Barenboim.

The West-East Divan Orchestra comprises musicians from a variety of Middle-eastern countries and was formed by Barenboim to promote understanding between Israelis and Palestinians and pave the way for a peaceful and fair solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Barenboim will conduct this orchestra in a performance of this symphony in Bonn to close the year’s celebrations. The MSO will likewise close out its 2020 concert programme with a performance of this symphony.

Beethoven - Symphony No 1 in C Major opus 26



It took Beethoven some time to become BEETHOVEN, symphonic master and role model. By the mid-1790s, Beethoven had composed most of the important instrumental genres, but had held off tackling the symphony and string quartet, perhaps because these were the kinds of pieces in which his teacher Haydn had made his greatest mark and enjoyed his most significant successes (Haydn wrote more than 100 symphonies and some 68 string quartets) (Beethoven - 9 symphonies and 16 string quartets).

When he did finally write, perform, and publish his first two symphonies and his set of six string quartets, Op. 18, he had reached full artistic maturity.

These works represent Beethoven at the height of his Classical powers, building on the achievements of Haydn and Mozart while not hiding his debt to them.

His first symphony come some 5 years after Haydn’s last and after also after those of Mozart. Beethoven’s symphonies form one of the most important bodies of work in musical history. The third, the fifth and the ninth get all the headlines and are generally the most well-loved, but the first is somewhat overlooked. It’s not that it’s simplistic in comparison or somehow far inferior to the others, it’s more that it’s been drowned out by its bigger brothers.

If you're looking for Beethoven the revolutionary musical visionary, you might not find him here in his first symphony. He was only about 25 when he finished this work, so it's understandable that he might not have completely found his voice yet. However, aside from hints of Mozart and Haydn (he even nicks one of Haydn's themes in the finale), you can hear definite evidence of that blustering Beethoven we know and love. Quick volume changes, explosive energy and the odd experiment (try the free-form opening of the fourth movement)

Written when Beethoven was so young, it's fair to say, his first symphony is, a little bit backwards-facing. The influence of Haydn and Mozart are very plain in the melodies (especially in one that he nicked directly from Haydn), but there are a few hints of the greatness to come, the greatness that was Beethoven's alone - listen out for the clattering accents throughout for an idea of the greatness that was yet to come. And the opening? It's pretty bizarre, starting in a different key from the key of the symphony as a whole. Just another example of Beethoven breaking the mould - and an example of the earth-shattering music he wrote just a few years later.



Portrait of Beethoven at about the time of his 1st Symphony

The Work Itself

We listen to the first movement which takes the expected sonata form, with a slow introduction not much different than many similar openings by Haydn. Even the harmonic ambiguity of the opening chords, which do not begin in the tonic of C major, is not unusual, given other off-tonic introductions in a few of Haydn's more recent symphonies. There is also an attention to detail—the pizzicati from the strings and the dynamic nuances that colour the opening wind chords—which had been typical of Mozart.

Once we reach the *Allegro con brio*, which means: 'at a fast tempo, and with spirit (literally 'with brilliance'), the spry energy of the first theme is what we expect at the beginning of a symphony in the Viennese tradition. Still, there is an impetuosity to the first violins' rising lines, like a horn call, and an urgency throughout the movement that is clearly Beethoven's tone of voice. Giving one instrument (the violins) a gesture associated with another (the horn) was a joke Haydn was fond of, but in Beethoven's hands, it is intensified beyond the point of humour.

(Acknowledgement: The description of the 1st movement comes from the Redlands Symphony Orchestra. Similar information on the remaining movements can be found on their website at: <https://www.redlandssymphony.com/pieces/symphony-no-1>).

The performance we are witnessing is by the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra - one of the first radio symphony orchestras in Germany. It is conducted by its musical director - Columbian born and now Austrian citizen - Andrés Orozco-Estrada - in a performance given in the Old Opera House, Frankfurt in February 2016.



The whole symphony can be accessed on YouTube at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6h4Gi2_LA4&t=1009s

"Anyone who thinks the modern theatre has reached an unrivalled level of depravity need only look back a century to find stage scenarios as shocking as anything likely to hit the boards today. *The Miraculous Mandarin*, completed in 1919, is a lurid tale of prostitution, fraud, theft, and murder". So began the 'backstory' in the Programme Notes for a performance by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra in June 2008.

The ballet's plot, based on a story by Hungarian writer Melchior Lengyel, involves three thugs who exploit the seductive powers of a beautiful young woman to lure men into their den, where the victims are robbed. The thugs force the girl to stand in the window and dance provocatively. In Bartók's score this seductive dance, musically depicted by the solo clarinet, occurs three times. The first two men who are lured into the trap are thrown out of the room when the thugs realize they have no money.



Then, the exotic Mandarin enters. As the Mandarin is entertained by the girl's dancing, the thugs rob him. In an attempt to kill the Mandarin, they smother him with a pillow and stab him, but to their horror he remains alive, unaffected by the wounds. Finally, the thugs release the Mandarin. He embraces the girl and, his longing fulfilled, he dies.

(Acknowledgement: thelistenersclub.com).

Our presentation is the Orchestral Concert Suite which was the way it was performed for most of the rest of Bartók's life following the initial uproar of the stage production. The suite contains only about two-thirds of the original music. Bartók cut two sections from the middle of the ballet, created a fourteen-measure concert ending for the Mandarin's dance in which he pursues the girl, and eliminated the ballet's final music depicting the thugs attacking the Mandarin and murdering him (which required a wordless chorus).

"The suite opens with Bartók's depiction of the city: "an awful clamour, clatter, stampeding and blowing of horns," he wrote; "I lead the highly respectable listener from the crowded streets of a metropolis to [a ruffian's] den." Here, the music weighs us down to the depths of hell—vicious music meant to penetrate to the depth of the soul, music that suffocates and overwhelms. It is this harsh, pounding music of the opening that is woven throughout the work, signalling violence". (sfsymphony.org)

A vertiginous first section depicts the city's streets and the girl's instructions. Each of her "decoy games" (so called in the score) is lured inside with clarinet arpeggios and ejected clamorously. A lewd trombone glissando characterizes the old man; a solo oboe the young man. The clarinet's third lure is more shrill, accompanied by a long orchestral tremor, interrupted by trombones, that ends in a shriek when the Mandarin stands in the doorway. After a sudden hush, he begins a slow waltz that accelerates until the orchestra shudders convulsively at his embrace of the girl.

She frees herself to whooping, pounding chords. A scurrying, Middle Eastern subject in the low strings gets hotly pursued by violins - a fugue of scarifying intensity, twice interrupted when the Mandarin stumbles before he finally clutches the girl. This signals the ruffians' attack, and the crashing, crushing end of the concert suite.



Act 2 opens with Eliza's search having continued for many years. She has been led far away from her father's kingdom to a desolate frozen island. The ice cracks open and her brothers burst forth as beautiful black swans. They carry her into the sky and she soars with them high above the land. Eliza vows to reverse the spell cast by her evil stepmother, and return her brothers to human form..

The good fairy, however, is unable to strip the stepmother of her evil powers and so teaches Eliza how to break the spell. Eliza must gather nettles from a graveyard and from these stinging weeds she must knit eleven jumpers—one for each brother. She must not speak until the task is complete.

A young prince, visiting his father's grave, sees Eliza. He recognises her beauty and kindness and falls in love. This causes the villagers to gossip. The villagers believe Eliza is a witch and taunt her. Just as they are about to burn her at the stake her brothers fly around her. She throws jumpers to the boys, but does not have time to complete the last jumper and her youngest brother must live with only one arm..

The prince proposes to Eliza and everyone celebrates the marriage. Hans Christian Andersen invites his favourite characters to the wedding. (ATALHEA).

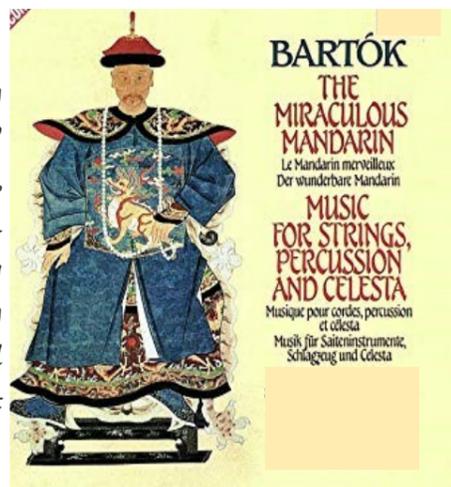
The complete ballet—an ABC production—was recorded in 2003 by The Australian Ballet and Orchestra Victoria conducted by Mark Summerbill. It can be seen on Youtube at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEZZEYoSA94>.

We watch a 10 minute segment from Act One which introduces Eliza and then her brothers having fun with her in their house slippers, and the arrival of the stepmother who seduces their father forcing him into proposing marriage.. It begins 8 minutes and 5 seconds into the recording.

The Miraculous Mandarin Opus 19—Béla Bartók

It's one of the scariest pieces ever written. Both shockingly violent and erotic, Béla Bartók's "pantomime grotesque" ballet, *The Miraculous Mandarin*, was met with "catcalls, stamping, whistling and booing" at its premiere in Cologne, Germany in November, 1926. The ensuing scandal, which whipped up the fury of Cologne's clergy and press, among others, caused the mayor, Konrad Adenauer (later the first chancellor of post-war West Germany) to ban the work on moral grounds.



Richard Strauss - "On the Beach of Sorrento" from *Aus Italien* Op 16



Richard Strauss once joked that he could depict even a knife and fork in music. So now imagine a panorama of the Roman Countryside, a moonlit Mediterranean beach and a carnival in Naples, painted in glowing orchestral colours with all the high spirits of a young genius on holiday – and loving every minute of it.

In the spring of 1886, directly after his first professional engagement at the Meiningen Court had come to an end, the young Richard Strauss visited Italy for the first time and spent five weeks touring various parts of the country. It was this trip which would give rise to his symphonic fantasy, *Aus Italien* (From Italy).

Each movement of *Aus Italien* depicts an aspect of the Italian landscape. However, the composer was at pains to point out that the score presented "the emotions felt while contemplating the magnificent beauty of nature in Rome and Naples, not in describing them".

The work opens in the countryside outside Rome, 'In the Campagna'.

The second movement 'In Roman Ruins' imagines the Forum. It is difficult to know if this music presents an image of ancient Romans hurrying about their business and furthering their intrigues, or whether it portrays the tourists who followed in subsequent years.

'*On the Beach of Sorrento*' is a musical impression that was described by the composer as a meditation on the sound of the wind in the leaves, the songs of the birds and the sound of the sea. It is a lovely bit of 'seaside' music that could relate to many places in the world.

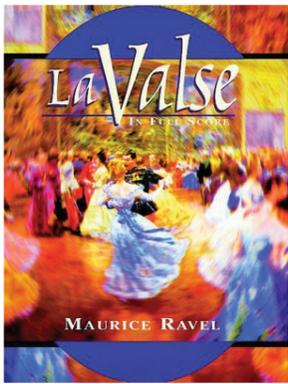
The finale, 'Scenes from Neapolitan Life' caused Strauss problems. This is an extrovert study of life in Naples, which was said to be much more 'vibrant' in 1886 than at present. The last movement incorporates "Funiculi, Funiculà," which Strauss heard on a trip through Italy and mistook for a Neapolitan folk song. The composer of "Funiculi, Funiculà," Luigi Denza, sued Strauss and forced him to pay a settlement.

Critical opinion is mixed in regard to Strauss' first big orchestral score of note. Richard Strauss's sister Johanna recalled the first three movements being received with applause, but the last movement was not well-approved and derisory whistles came from various quarters. A biography of the composer tells a different story: the first three movements were not well received, and the final was accorded booing and applause. Strauss himself found the work itself as new and revolutionary, and he was satisfied despite the critical responses for the première.

Another critic in his 'generosity' said it is something of a "Curate's Egg", with the 3rd movement - *On the beach of Sorrento* - being the best part.

This is the movement we hear, played by the Concert Symphony Orchestra of Rome conducted by Francesco La Vecchia. It is part of a concert given in the Berlin Philharmonia on the occasion of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The YouTube recording is in two [parts](#):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xo9bgPPQC3w>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K13dQQTveJ8>



Dance of Death or Delight? Ravel's La valse.

Music is a famously subjective art form; different listeners often find different meanings in exactly the same sounds. Traditions of interpretation may inform the way we hear pieces of music, but ultimately music itself is abstract. Even so, it is rare that a piece of music inspires reactions totally opposite to what its composer intended. Perhaps no work better illustrates this potential for paradox than Ravel's *La valse*.

A LONG-AWAITED MASTERPIECE

Ravel first conceived of the idea for *La valse* in 1906. Initially, the piece was to be called *Wien* (the German name for Vienna) in tribute to the Viennese waltzes of Johann Strauss II, which Ravel sincerely admired. Years later his student Manuel Rosenthal recalled that Ravel believed "that all composers really had the desire to succeed in writing a very good waltz", saying that "Unfortunately it's very difficult. Therefore I have tried to write a symphonic waltz as a tribute to the genius of Johann Strauss".

He would not actually begin serious work on the piece until 1919, when he received a commission from Sergei Diaghilev for a new score for the Ballets Russes (an itinerant ballet company based in Paris). In between its inception and completion, the world was rocked by the First World War. Though Ravel's health exempted him from military service, he experienced the horrors of the war first-hand by serving as an ambulance driver. Even more devastating than the carnage was the sudden death of his mother while he was away at the front. During the war Ravel did not compose, and with the exception of his exquisite *Tombeau de Couperin* (a suite of piano pieces begun before the war), his silence continued until he received the commission from Diaghilev.

Ravel himself described his vision of the opening of the ballet:



Ravel 1875

"Through whirling clouds, waltzing couples may be faintly distinguished. The clouds gradually scatter: one sees at letter 'A' [a rehearsal marking in the score] an immense hall peopled with a whiling crowd. The scene is gradually illuminated. The light of the chandeliers bursts forth at the fortissimo at letter 'B.' An imperial court, about 1855."

The piece begins with a remarkable, murky sonority as fragments of waltz rhythms and melodies emerge: It's as if we are overhearing

a waltz from another room—or another century. A melody begins haltingly in the bassoons and violas, gradually crescendoing and coming into focus as "the light of the chandeliers bursts forth."

Ravel then presents a series of waltz themes in stunning orchestral colours. Ravel is less interested in creating an actual ballroom waltz à la Strauss than in seizing on Strauss's most typical gestures and spinning them into a kaleidoscopic orchestral texture; many have described *La valse* as a Strauss waltz deconstructed.



Ravel in 1906, sporting a Belle Époque beard.

While some gestures may belong to Strauss, the harmonies, orchestration and rhythmic games are all Ravel's. Ravel's rich harmonic palate includes the colourful non-functional chords, spicy dissonances and even hints of polytonality that are all hallmarks of his mature style.

In the second half of the piece, the themes introduced in the first half cycle back, but are fragmented and recombined as the music becomes wilder and wilder. The careening dance approaches a climax and backs away repeatedly, at last building to a thrilling coda.

(<https://houstonsymphony.org/ravel-la-valse>)

We listen once more to the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted this time by Spanish-born conductor Pablo Heras-Casado.

The YouTube link is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIMJ6Ri-LMM>



Elena Kats-Chernin

Wild Swans—A Ballet by Elena Kats-Chernin

"I'm interested in the physicality of a performance...If I write a cluster [in a piano work], it's not only because I desire this particular sound, but also because I like to see the hand jump up and then fall onto the keyboard with that cluster. It's the energy, the gesture of hands, of the body, together with the aural perception."

(Elena Kats-Chernin, in conversation with Patricia Shaw, *Context Journal of Music Research*, 1991)

Elena Kats-Chernin's original ballet score for *Wild Swans* was created in collaboration with choreographer Meryl Tankard. It tells the story of the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale *The Wild Swans*.

Kats-Chernin says: "Being Russian" born I have a strong connection to the ballet scores of Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev and Stravinsky, and as a result in the *Wild Swans*, more than in any other work of mine, I allowed myself the freedom to roam through 200 years of musical genres, ranging from Hungarian Operetta through folk music and even including the influences of jazz and popular music".

The story describes the eleven sons and one daughter (her name is Eliza) of a king who died and is seduced by another woman. She is cruel to his children and shortly after marriage flies into a fit of rage and turns the boys into wild swans. They fly away leaving Eliza alone.

Eliza searches for her brothers (they are allowed to regain human form during night hours) in the depths of a forest. Overcome with tiredness, she sleeps and imagines herself playing with them as before. Suddenly she finds herself surrounded by glow worms and a good fairy who leads Eliza to her brothers. But she is woken from her dreams by the sound of flapping wings..

(Act 1 ends).

