OCR AoS5: Programme music, 1820-1910

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by Jane Werry

INTRODUCTION

Programme music of the Romantic period covers some of the most dramatic and appealing works in Western art music. Choosing this Area of Study will not only give you a great contrast with your compulsory classical and jazz set works, but will also provide your students with an inspiring and hugely enjoyable listening experience.

For each of the main pieces covered by this resource, there will be information about its context, background and programme (story). Details regarding each of the musical areas likely to come up in exam questions will also be given: harmony and tonality, melody, texture and timbre, and use of instruments. There will also be a link to a subsidiary work for the purposes of comparison.

INTRODUCING THE CONTENT AT THE START

Let students know what the Area of Study entails from the start, so they have a sense of the route ahead.

You can do this by giving them a knowledge organiser comprising a list of the pieces to be studied, together with all the audio they will need (via Spotify, YouTube or your school's VLE). Key terms can also be included. The information on the organiser is the basic factual knowledge that students will need to have embedded in their long-term memories before they can even begin to answer essay-style questions. It can be useful to test their knowledge of the facts before working with them on planning essays.

AoS5: Programme music, 1820-1910			
Style	**Main focus piece**	**Subsidiary piece(s)**	**Features**
Concert overture	Mendelssohn: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1826)	Tchaikovsky: Fantasy Overture, *Romeo and Juliet* (1880)	Sonata form with unconventional approach to keys; themes to represent characters/events.
Symphonic poem	Saint-Saëns: *Danse macabre* (1874)	Liszt: *Orpheus* (1854)	One-movement pieces for large orchestra, keys a 3rd apart, chromatic yet tonal.
Programme symphony	Berlioz: *Symphonie fantastique* (1830)	Richard Strauss: *Don Quixote* (1897)	Large-scale, multi-movement works with a narrative style; imaginative use of large orchestra, chromatic harmony.
Solo works	Mussorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874)	Schumann: *Kinderszenen* (1838)	A wide range of piano textures and harmonic approaches.
Programmatic pieces conveying a sense of national identity	Rimsky-Korsakov: *Scheherazade* (1888)	Grieg: Lyric Pieces, Book 5, Op. 54 (1891)	Quotations from folk music, or elements of folk style, modality, characteristic rhythms or melodic inflections.

Key terms	
Chromatic/ chromaticism	Literally 'coloured': the use of **notes and chords from outside** the **major/ minor key**.
Diatonic	In a **major or minor key**. Can be used to describe tonality or harmony.
Harmony	**Chords:** how notes are arranged **vertically** or played together.
Idée fixe	A musical theme associated with a person, place or thing.
Instrumentation	The instrumental **forces** used in a piece, listed on the front page of the score.
Octatonic scale	A scale using alternating tones and semitones.
Orchestration	How the instruments are **used and combined**. Includes the use of **instrumental techniques**.
Overture	An orchestral piece played before the start of an opera or play.
Pentatonic	Using a **five-note scale**: often found in folk music and Eastern music.
Programme	The **story** told, or picture painted, by a descriptive piece of music.
Sonata form	A structure with three sections: **exposition, development** and **recapitulation.**
Symphony	**Large-scale orchestral** work, usually in **four movements.**
Tonal	Music that is in a **major or minor key**.
Tonal centre	A useful term that is slightly less emphatic than **key.**
Tonality	Relating to **key**.
Tonic-dominant polarity	A useful phrase to describe the reliance of **tonal music** on tonic-dominant relationships to establish key.

Choice of music

There are no set works for this Area of Study if you're following the A level course, although the specification does give a list of suggested repertoire. If you are teaching AS Music, the set work for 2018 is Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*. The list here gives two works in each of the genres listed in the specification: having the opportunity to compare two pieces will give students a deeper understanding of the period, as well as more to write about in essays.

This resource will cover the pieces listed here as 'main focus pieces'. All of the pieces listed as 'subsidiary pieces' are covered in depth in the Rhinegold Study Guide, and that information will not be duplicated here, except to draw comparison with the 'main focus pieces' discussed in this resource.

This selection of pieces covers almost the entire chronology of the set period, and also composers of different nationalities. It also includes pieces that should have immediate but lasting appeal for students: one of the great pleasures of teaching A level music is introducing students to works that – hopefully – will become lifelong favourites.

One of the crucial things for students to learn is what to write about in their exam answers. Even if correct information is included, if it isn't relevant to the question, it will not be credited.

It's extremely important that students know what instrumentation, orchestration, harmony, tonality, texture and timbre actually are, and have examples from all of the pieces that they have studied, so that they can describe them accurately using the correct terminology.

Students also need to be made aware of the fact that there may be overlap between these types of question. For example, timbre and orchestration are extremely similar, and the examples that might be given in essays may be the same ones in each case.

A balance needs to be struck between precision in matching the content of an answer with the meaning of the question, and a more holistic understanding of where musical dimensions overlap.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

The period from 1820 to 1910 was full of change: political and social, technological, philosophical and artistic. All of these changes affected the way that musicians worked, and the music itself, in a variety of different ways.

Understanding the inter-relatedness of all of this is important for students, not least because context is a frequent topic for A level exam questions. Just as understanding the characteristics of Classical music will lend insight to appreciating music of the Romantic period, we need to unravel the main events of the 18th century if we are to comment perceptively on those of the 19th.

The Age of Enlightenment	A change in the overall way of thinking in 18th-century Europe, that questioned the overriding authority of the church and promoted a scientific approach based on reason. The Enlightenment also supported progress, tolerance, and constitutional government (as opposed to oligarchy, where the state is governed by a privileged few).
The French Revolution	This started in 1789, and involved the replacement of French royalty with a republic. Tied up with this was a rejection of the power of the church, and defence of the freedom of individuals. The revolutionary motto of 'liberté, égalité, fraternité' ('freedom, equality, brotherhood') is still the national motto of France today.
The Industrial Revolution	From about 1760 to the early 19th century, a swathe of new manufacturing processes led to a change from making things by hand to using machines. The effect of this on ordinary people was extreme. Whereas the majority of work used to take place in an agricultural setting in the countryside, workers migrated to cities where factory work became a principal form of employment. This led to the expansion of cities, and the associated changes in social structure, culture, communications and travel.

Romanticism

The idea of Romanticism is absolutely not confined to the realms of music, but can be thought of as an intellectual, artistic, philosophical and literary movement. It was a reaction to the ideals of the Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution.

Features of Romantic thinking include:
- An emphasis on the liberty of the individual, and freedom of expression.
- An interest in expressing emotions, often to extremes of grief or horror.
- An interest in nature, ancient mythology, and folk stories.
- A rejection of some of the ideas of the Enlightenment, including the supremacy of reason.
- A sense of the artist as a genius and a hero.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) was an immensely important figure in shaping the 19th century. He was a German writer, philosopher, scientist and politician whose thinking influenced the educated classes, but was also accessible to and popular with working-class people.

Goethe was one of the first to acknowledge that there was a shift in people's thinking in early 19th-century Europe, towards the emotional, the personal and the spiritual. His two-part drama *Faust*, about a character who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for unlimited worldly pleasures, became the most important story of the 19th century, inspiring many other writers and composers including Gounod, Liszt and Mahler. Goethe was also one of the champions of a revival of interest in Shakespeare, whose stories were also popular with Romantic composers.

THE CONCERT OVERTURE: MENDELSSOHN'S *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

This piece is notable for being one of the very first concert overtures, and also for the fact that Mendelssohn wrote it at the remarkably young age of 17. A concert overture is one that is not written to precede a stage production, but as a stand-alone concert piece. Mendelssohn had read a German translation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and was inspired to write a descriptive piece based on the story.

The Overture is in sonata form, which was immensely popular in the Classical period, but it also includes many much more forward-looking characteristics.

INSTRUMENTATION AND ORCHESTRATION

Mendelssohn writes for a small Romantic orchestra, similar to that used by Beethoven. There are pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets in A, bassoons, trumpets in E and horns in E, together with strings and timpani. Mendelssohn also includes an ophicleide, which was a keyed brass instrument with a mid-to-low register, now replaced by the tuba.

■ The ophicleide is also used Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. There is an excellent two-minute introduction to the ophicleide from the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment here.

The double bass part is separate from the cello part, and at times the violins divide, providing a thicker string texture used in the scampering fairies' music in the opening section and elsewhere. Although the violin texture is thicker, it avoids sounding heavy because the cellos and basses are not playing, and the violas (when they play) are pizzicato, keeping the sound light and appropriately fairylike.

The horns are often grouped with the woodwind. However, Mendelssohn reserves his 'heavies' – the trumpets, ophicleide and timpani – for music associated with mortal characters. Their first entry is delayed until Theseus's theme at bar 69.

Mendelssohn shows real boldness in his contrasts of orchestration. A good example of this is the passage from bar 250, when the fairies' theme is developed. The texture is kept deliberately light, with solo cello and bass stipulated in bar 276 in order to avoid any muddiness. The lightness of the texture makes even more dramatic the fortissimo 'con tutta forza' entries of the horns in bars 294, 302 and 310, each one rapidly fading back into the texture. Contrast can also be seen in the use of the timpani, which are sometimes used to reinforce the 'bigger' moments, but often a pianissimo roll provides a light, barely perceptible bass.

The transparency of the opening woodwind chords is mirrored by the closing bars, where strings, oboes, trumpets and ophicleide are banished, and the bass is provided by a pianissimo horn pedal note, with a soft timpani roll filling in the dominant of the chord.

HARMONY AND TONALITY

Mendelssohn does not conform to the usual arrangement of keys in sonata form: in this way he demonstrates a new approach to an established form. The main difference between the expected sonata form key structure is that Mendelssohn's first theme, representing the fairies, is in E minor, and we do not reach the tonic key of E major until the transition section from bar 69, representing Theseus, Duke of Athens.

> The word overture comes from the French 'ouverture', meaning 'opening'. An overture was originally an orchestral piece played before the start of an opera, or play, to set the mood for what was to follow.

The second subject (from bar 130) starts with a theme representing the two pairs of lovers, in the dominant key of B major, as you might expect in a sonata form movement. The second subject continues with a second theme in B major representing Peter Quince and the tradesmen, with a rustic drone. This section also features the distinctive hee-haws of Bottom when he is transformed into a donkey.

There are many examples of ambiguity and shifts between major and minor in this piece. Take the opening chords. The first chord contains two notes: E and G sharp. This could imply an E major chord or a C sharp minor chord. The third chord is an A minor chord, which is surprising, given the key signature of four sharps. The fairies' theme, heard initially in E minor, also appears in a major key version, for example at bar 98.

Despite the non-standard pattern of keys, and surprising shifts between major and minor, Mendelssohn still very much employs standard dominant-tonic relationships to modulate and to establish keys. It is a good idea to ask students to spot examples of this, as the presence – or avoidance – of dominant-tonic inevitability is a fascinating and vital feature of 19th-century music.

TEXTURE AND TIMBRE

An essay about texture and timbre may include many of the examples already discussed in the 'Instrumentation and orchestration' section. However, it would also need to make explicit reference to a variety of texture types.

The opening is homophonic. By the time we reach the Theseus theme at bar 69, melody-dominated homophony might be a more accurate description, and this remains the case for much of the piece, there being little in the way of counterpoint. There are, however, some good examples of antiphony, for example between the strings and brass at bar 238, more subtly between the two violin parts and the flutes and oboes from bar 290, and then more boldly again between strings and wind from bar 608.

COMPARISON WITH TCHAIKOVSKY'S *ROMEO AND JULIET* FANTASY OVERTURE

Tchaikovsky's orchestra is much bigger than Mendelssohn's, demonstrating that in the intervening 54 years, the trend was for ever larger ensembles in order to provide the composer with a rich palette of orchestral colour. Added to Mendelssohn's forces there is a piccolo, a cor anglais, two additional horns, three trombones, cymbals, bass drum ('gran cassa') and harp. The ophicleide has now been forced into obsolescence by the invention of the tuba.

Like Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky uses sonata form for his Overture, with a bold approach to key made more extreme by the developing tastes of the Romantic period. The tonic of Tchaikovsky's Overture is B minor, but his second subject is in D flat major rather than the conventional dominant. Tchaikovsky is less dependent on tonic-dominant polarity than Mendelssohn, however, making use of bold enharmonic changes and shifts of a semitone. There is much development of themes both in and out of the development section, in a similar way to that demonstrated by Mendelssohn.

Shakespeare again provides the story, and themes are used to represent characters and the main events of the plot.

THE SYMPHONIC POEM: SAINT-SAËNS'S
DANSE MACABRE

Composers such as Liszt sought to expand the possibilities offered by the concert overture, and as a result, the symphonic poem was born. A single-movement symphonic work based on a poem, story or picture, the symphonic poem was called a 'tone poem' by some composers.

Saint-Saëns wrote a song in 1872 using Henri Cazalis's poem *Danse macabre* as the text. Two years later he expanded the song into a symphonic poem. The poem is based on a French superstition in which Death appears at midnight on Halloween, corpses rise from their graves and dance in the moonlight until the cock crows at dawn.

INSTRUMENTATION AND ORCHESTRATION

The orchestra of *Danse macabre* comprises standard double woodwind plus piccolo, four horns (two natural horns in G and two valved horns in D), two valved trumpets in D, three trombones, tuba, xylophone, three timpani, triangle, cymbals, bass drum, harp and strings. In addition, there is a violin solo employing **scordatura** (non-standard) tuning, the E string being tuned down to E flat. The violin represents the personification of Death in the story. Death had featured in paintings and stories since the Renaissance playing the violin.

The xylophone is used prominently to conjure the rattling of the skeletons' bones. Other instruments take distinctive roles in the story, for example the 12 repeated harp Ds at the opening for the tolling of midnight, and the oboe solo in the coda for the crowing of the cockerel.

HARMONY AND TONALITY

The piece is in G minor. The opening, with repeated Ds and soft D major chords from the strings, can be seen as dominant preparation for the entry of the first theme. The theme is harmonised with alternating G minor and Fm7 chords, giving it a Phrygian twist that make it feel folk-like. The scordatura tuning of the solo violin creates a tritone between the top two strings. Since the Middle Ages, the tritone had been nicknamed *diabolus in musica,* or 'the devil in music' – due at least in part to its destabilising effect on harmony. When the violin enters in *Danse macabre*, we hear the open strings as Death tunes up, and the tritone immediately gives us the sense that this is no ordinary, mortal violinist.

The harmony is often chromatic, although underpinned by tonic-dominant relationships, with frequent use of tonic and dominant pedals. Some of the modulations are typical of the Romantic period, in that they stray into remoter keys than would be usual in earlier music. The appearance of a dance-like adaptation of the plainchant 'Dies irae' melody at letter D, for example, is in A major, and letter E it moves further away from G minor to the remote B major.

TEXTURE AND TIMBRE

Saint-Saëns creates a wide variety of orchestral textures, allowing the solo violin and solo woodwind lines to shine through when necessary, and contrasting this with muscular melodies played in octaves. The harp, together with pizzicato strings, often accompanies the solo violin.

While there is often a melody-and-accompaniment texture, there is a passage of imitative counterpoint from letter C. The central section of the piece features much antiphony in the build-up to the tutti reiteration of the first theme after letter K, when the skeleton dances reach their peak. After the crowing of the oboe cockerel, the texture thins right down as the sunrise sees the skeletons sink back into their graves. The piece ends as delicately as it opened.

COMPARISON WITH LISZT'S *ORPHEUS*

Franz Liszt composed 12 symphonic poems, of which *Orpheus*, composed in 1854, is the fourth. Liszt wanted to convey ideas in his programme music, rather than being tied to a narrative (as *Danse macabre* is). This symphonic poem was inspired by a picture of Orpheus taming wild animals with his music, and it was the civilising influence of the arts that Liszt wanted to portray.

Liszt's orchestra is very similar to that of Saint-Saëns, minus the xylophone and the solo violin. The harp is used prominently, as it is in *Danse macabre*, and again much use is made of solo players. *Orpheus*'s two main keys are C major and E major – a 3rd apart, similar to the G minor and B major used in *Danse macabre*, and demonstrating Romantic composers' adventurous approach to key relationships.

THE PROGRAMME SYMPHONY: BERLIOZ'S *SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE*

Written in 1830, the *Symphonie fantastique* is a five-movement symphonic work written to Berlioz's own programme. This describes events in the life of an artist (Berlioz himself) presented in a hallucinatory, dream-like fashion, which were inspired by Berlioz's unrequited passion for Irish actress Harriet Smithson. An excellent three-minute video introduction to the piece from conductor Michael Tilson Thomas can be found here.

> The Latin hymn 'Dies irae' ('Day of Wrath') dates from medieval times and describes the Day of Judgement. It has been quoted extensively by composers in all periods of musical history, and would have been a familiar melody for 19th-century audiences. The audience at the first performance of *Danse macabre* were, however, baffled by Saint-Saëns' treatment of the tune, as its playful character was at odds with what they would have expected.

In the *Symphonie fantastique*, Berlioz uses an ***idée fixe*** as a unifying feature across the five movements, representing the artist's beloved. Literally 'fixed idea', an idée fixe is a melody associated with a person, place or thing, and used to represent it in the music. This is the same principle as the **leitmotif**, used extensively by Wagner in his operas, which were mostly written in the 1850s and 1860s.

To get to know the *Symphonie fantastique*, and understand how each movement relates to the programme and uses the idée fixe, students could watch these excellent analytical videos on Youtube:
- First movement
- Second movement
- Third movement
- Fourth movement
- Fifth movement

Because it is such a large-scale work, however, you may want to focus on just one movement, and in terms of exam preparation this would be perfectly adequate. The last movement is particularly full of the features that make the *Symphonie fantastique* one of the most important, ground-breaking pieces of the 19th century. The programme for this movement involves the artist finding himself at a gathering of witches and ghouls, which also turns out to be his own funeral. The artist's beloved appears, but in a grotesque transformation, and the witches and spectres dance frenziedly.

INSTRUMENTATION AND ORCHESTRATION
Berlioz writes for a very large orchestra comprising two flutes (one doubling piccolo), two oboes (one doubling cor anglais), two clarinets (one doubling E flat clarinet), four bassoons, four horns (two in E flat and two in C, to maximise the number of notes they can cover), two cornets, two trumpets, three trombones, two ophicleides, timpani, cymbals, snare drum, bass drum, bells, two harps and strings.

In the fifth movement ('The Witches' Sabbath'), Berlioz uses a range of orchestral techniques and often gives very precise performance directions. At the opening, the violins (each section divided into three) are directed to play 'con sordino a punta d'arco', that is, with a mute and at the point of the bow, giving a shimmering tremolo. A solo E flat clarinet's shrill timbre is put to good use in a vulgar parody of the idée fixe, now in 6/8 and with trills and grace notes making it sound like a rather demented jig.

As you can see, the 'Dies irae' was extremely popular among Romantic composers, and continues to be so up to the present day. There is a hugely entertaining explanation of the importance of the Dies irae in this video.

At bar 102 the offstage bells, tuned to C and G, make their appearance, ringing a death knell that leads the way to a statement of the 'Dies irae' at bar 127. Towards the end of the movement, the strings play 'col legno' (using the wooden part of the bow on the strings), perhaps to represent the rattle of dancing bones in a precursor to Saint-Saëns's use of the xylophone.

HARMONY AND TONALITY
The key of the movement overall is C major/minor. The opening, however, is perhaps one of the boldest pieces of musical writing from the first half of the 19th century. The tonality feels uncertain, and much use is made of diminished 7th chords. Once the idée fixe appears, however, the tonality is much more definite, with a shift to E flat major when the E flat clarinet has the theme.

The bells and timpani are tuned to C and G, demonstrating the importance of the tonic and dominant. The 'Dies irae' theme is in C minor, and the 'Witches' Round Dance' in C major. There is much chromaticism: for example, the woodwind passage from bar 460 contains all 12 notes of the chromatic scale.

TEXTURE AND TIMBRE
Berlioz creates some interesting polyphonic textures. In the 'Dies irae' section (from bar 127) he has the original statement of the 'Dies irae' played by bassoons and ophicleides in octaves, with the offstage bells creating a two-part texture. The horns and trombones then play the 'Dies irae' in rhythmic diminution with a chordal texture, before the woodwind and upper strings play an even faster-moving, jig-like version. These three versions of the 'Dies irae' are batted about, tied together with the tolling of the bells. The 'Witches' Dance' from bar 241 is a fugue, which later (at bar 414) is cunningly combined with the 'Dies irae' theme.

Aside from the instrumental techniques already mentioned, one noteworthy timbral feature of this movement is the frequent use of oboe, flute and piccolo in rapid rising semiquaver flourishes. This could represent the screams of the artist in the midst of the horrifying bacchanal.

COMPARISON WITH RICHARD STRAUSS'S *DON QUIXOTE*

Don Quixote was written 67 years later than the *Symphonie fantastique*, but can be seen as being part of the same tradition of Romantic descriptive music. Strauss's orchestra is even bigger than Berlioz's, including bass clarinet, contrabassoon, six horns and a wind machine. It has a similar narrative approach to the *Symphonie fantastique*, portraying episodes from Cervantes's novel about a Spanish nobleman on a series of adventures. There are significant parts for solo cello and solo viola, representing Don Quixote himself and his squire Sancho Panza.

The harmony of *Don Quixote* is chromatic but tonal, with rapid movement through often distant keys established using perfect cadences.

SOLO WORKS: MUSSORGSKY'S *PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION*

By the mid-19th century, pianos were mass-produced and affordable for middle-class families. As a consequence, there was a huge demand for music that could be played at home, as well as for concerts featuring virtuoso pianists.

Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky composed *Pictures at an Exhibition* in 1874 after the sudden death of artist Victor Hartmann and subsequent exhibition of his work in St Petersburg. There are ten pictures, each described through a short piano piece, linked by a 'Promenade' as the viewer strolls through the gallery. The music is intended for a virtuoso, rather than amateur, pianist, although it is more often heard in an orchestral arrangement made by Ravel.

HARMONY AND TONALITY

Mussorgsky uses harmony and tonality to depict the subjects of Hartmann's paintings and drawings. For example, 'The Old Castle' uses a drone on G sharp throughout, to give a medieval feel. 'Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuÿle' features augmented 2nds to echo the Phrygian dominant scale used in Jewish music.

Sometimes, Mussorgsky draws upon techniques from earlier eras in his approach to harmony. In the second 'Promenade', the melody is in the left hand and harmonised with parallel block chords in the right hand. This is very similar to the Renaissance technique of fauxbourdon, where the principal melody or *cantus firmus* harmonised in parallel motion.

TEXTURE AND TIMBRE

Some scholars have suggested that *Pictures at an Exhibition* is not a particularly pianistic piece, and indeed that it lacks many of the trademarks of 19th-century piano writing. For example, arpeggios are almost entirely absent, with harmony mostly provided in block chords. Yet melody remains important even when the movement is in block chords: notice how, in the 'Promenade', the melody is doubled among the chord notes.

Melody-and-accompaniment texture does not feature in *Pictures* as much as it does in a lot of Romantic piano music. Mussorgsky often uses a melody in octaves, especially when portraying a fictional character, such as in 'Gnomus' and 'Baba Yaga'. Another texture he uses frequently is *martellato* (hammered), as in bars 37-38 of 'Limoges: The Market', and the closing bars of 'Baba Yaga'. This texture was also a favourite of Liszt's.

COMPARISON TO SCHUMANN'S *KINDERSZENEN*

Schumann's *Kinderszenen* (or *Scenes from Childhood*) are reminiscences, rather than pieces intended for young people to play – some of them are rather technically demanding. In comparison to Mussorgsky's *Pictures*, they are much more typically Romantic, with lush chromatic harmonies and a predominance of melody-and-accompaniment texture.

CONVEYING A SENSE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY: RIMSKY-KORSAKOV'S *SCHEHERAZADE*

Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies were composed after a failed uprising against the Hapsburg Empire in 1848. These sparked a trend for music with a national flavour. Most of this 'nationalist' music was not hugely authentic: middle-class composers cherry-picked features of folk music and adapted them for public consumption.

Rimsky-Korsakov was one of a group of Russian composers known as the Mighty Handful or the Five, along with Mussorgsky. They worked to create a distinctive Russian style that was noticeably different from the music of Germanic origin, considered to be the dominant force in Europe. Some of the ideas that they included in their music were:

- use of authentic Russian folk melodies.
- parallel 5ths and 4ths.
- tonal mutability – the tendency of a melody to shift naturally from one tonal centre to another.
- pentatonic and octatonic scales.
- orientalism – an interest in recreating a feeling of Russia's eastern regions and neighbours.

Scheherazade is based on the story of *The Thousand and One Nights*, a collection of Middle Eastern folk tales compiled in Arabic during the Middle Ages. Sultan Schariah has decided that all women are faithless and untrustworthy, and has vowed to put each new wife to death immediately after their wedding night. However, his latest wife Scheherazade has a ruse: she tells the Sultan a story every night. He finds these so tantalising that he puts off her execution and eventually abandons the idea altogether.

Rimsky-Korsakov's four movements have vague titles: 'The Sea and Sinbad's Ship', 'The Story of the Kalandar Prince', 'The Young Prince and the Young Princess', and 'The Sea, the Festival of Baghdad and the Shipwreck'. He did not want to be any more specific about precisely which tales from *The Thousand and One Nights* he was alluding to, and wished to avoid any sense of a direct narrative.

A three-minute video introduction can be found here and a longer, eight-minute analysis here.
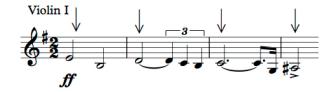
INSTRUMENTATION AND ORCHESTRATION
Rimsky-Korsakov's orchestra is a standard late 19th-century set-up comprising two flutes, two piccolos, two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, cymbals, tambourine, snare drum, small snare drum, bass drum, tam-tam, harp and strings. Although there is quite a battery of percussion in the ensemble, it is used sparingly – the tam-tam, for example, being saved for the shipwreck in the fourth movement.

The orchestra is used to make a wide variety of evocative sounds. In each movement, a sinuously winding violin solo punctuated with harp chords represents Scheherazade beginning her story. The rocking string-crossing of the lower strings, and later tutti strings, in the first movement, take the listener straight to the rolling sea. Woodwind solos are also used with great finesse: the Kalandar Prince in the second movement is painted vividly with a beguiling bassoon solo, while the solo clarinet and flute have rising and falling scalic patterns in the third movement to represent the young prince and princess. The last movement makes extensive use of violin harmonics and harp glissandi.

HARMONY AND TONALITY
The first movement demonstrates Rimsky-Korsakov's 'oriental' approach through use of keys a 3rd apart (E and C), and having the opening theme (the Sultan's theme) outlining part of a whole-tone scale:

A particular harmonic feature beloved of the Mighty Handful is demonstrated at the start of the third movement. The **Russian submediant** is a progression that moves from a root position tonic triad to a first inversion submediant triad via an augmented version of chord I:

TIMBRE AND TEXTURE

Rimsky-Korsakov's approach to texture is light and transparent, rarely relying on full orchestral tuttis. The texture is predominantly melody-and-accompaniment, with few examples of counterpoint, although there is some antiphony. As we've previously noted, although there is quite a battery of percussion in the ensemble, it is used sparingly – the tam-tam, for example, being saved for the shipwreck in the fourth movement.

COMPARISON WITH GRIEG'S LYRIC PIECES

Just as Rimsky-Korsakov and the Mighty Handful sought to break free from what they saw as the tyranny of the Germanic symphonic tradition, Norwegian composers such as Grieg wanted to assert their freedom from several centuries of Danish rule. *Scheherazade*'s nationalist style comes from its orientalism rather than any particular reference to Russian folk music. Grieg's Lyric Pieces, however, make frequent use of musical features from Norwegian folk music. These include melodic inflexions such as the falling leading-note, and harmonic devices such as pedal notes and parallel 5ths.