



Fairy Tales in Classical Music

Dr. Rachel Franklin

Monday, November 3-24, 2025 - 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. ET

Fairytales in Classical Music: Not Just for Halloween!

Ever since early humans began gathering together we have attempted to understand our inexplicable universe by telling tales. While composers have frequently enjoyed exploring the macabre and Gothic horror, classical repertory is equally graced with gentler stories, some of which even end happily ever after. In this expansion of her traditional frisson-filled Halloween sortie through our creepiest music, Dr. Rachel Franklin takes a fanciful journey to understand how fantasy and folklore inspired some of our greatest classical creators.

British-born Franklin has been a featured speaker for organizations including the Library of Congress and NPR, exploring intersections among classical and jazz music, film scores, and the fine arts.

NOV 3: Seven of the Scariest!

Fresh from Halloween, as the days draw darker and strange spirits are about, Liszt's *Totentanz*, Saint-Saëns' *Danse Macabre*, Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*, and other bone chillers set us up for a month of sorcery and bewitchery!

Works explored, media used:

Franz Liszt, 1811-1886

"Totentanz", 1849 and later revision dates

- Anton Yashkin, Orchestra Staatskapelle Weimar
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-G4pHLeORpg>

Franz Schubert, 1797-1828:

"Erlkönig" (the Elf King), 1821. Poem by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

- Daniel Norman, tenor, Sholto Kynoch, piano. Film created by Jeremy Hamway-Bidgood
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JS91p-vmSf0>

Modeste Mussorgsky, 1839-1881

"Night on Bald Mountain", 1867

- Evgeny Svetlanov, USSR Academic State Orchestra
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=by4khgR7Q5k>

Gustav Mahler, 1860-1911

Symphony No. 1 "Titan", 1889

- Christoph Eschenbach, Orchestra de Paris
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5A5tFyXQio>

Maurice Ravel, 1875-1937

"Le Gibet" from Gaspard de la Nuit, 1908

- Valentina Lisitsa
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PQ-H1PjrWQ&list=RD3PQ-H1PjrWQ&start_radio=1

Carl Orff, 1895-1982

"O Fortuna" from Carmina Burana, 1936

- Rundfunkchor Berlin, Radio-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Riccardo Chailly
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8yXqfZeKus&list=RD8yXqfZeKus&start_radio=1

John Adams discussing his work, "Must the Devil Have All the Good Tunes?"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJuh5mIBGs8>

John Adams, 1947

"Must the Devil Have All the Good Tunes?", 2018

- Yuja Wang, LA Phil, Gustavo Dudamel

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SV0U3UfdmUM&list=OLAK5uy_lxbmel3CaO627OtTKc9wg_xl5vL8Lyrvs&index=2

Camille Saint-Saëns, 1835-1921

"Danse Macabre" 1875

- Eva Zavaro, Orchestre de Paris, Julien Masmondet

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