Unit Plan:

“The Great Gate of Kiev”

from Pictures at an Exhibition

By: Modest Mussorgsky

Arranged by: David Stone
Basic Information

Title: The Great Gate of Kiev, from “Pictures at and Exhibition”
Composer: Modest Mussorgsky
Arranger: David Stone
Grade: “Amateur Orchestra”
Style: Romantic-Programmatic
Key: D Major/F minor/D Major/D minor/D Major
Meter: 2/2, 3/2, 4/4
Tempo Indications: Allegro alla breve, Maestoso, Meno Mosso Sempre Maestoso, Grave
Performance Time: 4:30
Instrumentation: Standard Full Orchestra
Score: Full
Concert Pitch: Yes.
Range Concerns: Trumpets go up to an A above the staff.
Unusual Requirements: None.
Program Notes:

Mussorgsky wrote one of his most famous works, “Pictures at an Exhibition” in 1874, very near to the end of his life. The piece, originally scored for solo piano, is written in 10 movements inspired by the artwork of his late friend, Victor Hartmann. The final movement, “The Great Gate of Kiev”, is based on gate Hartmann designed for Tsar Alexander II, which was supposed to simulate a Slavonic shaped helmet (corresponding to the heroes of Russian epics). His design for the gate did win the national competition, but the project was never executed.

This piece, often played by virtuosic pianists today, is also commonly heard in its full orchestra form. Composers such as Ravel, have written orchestrations and arrangements of the work. The arrangement by David Stone, which, we will play today, is an arrangement of the Ravel orchestration. The use of full orchestra gives this final movement of Mussorgsky’s “Pictures at an Exhibition” an epic and triumphant conclusion.
Historical Information: The Work

“Pictures at an Exhibition” was written by Mussorgsky to honor his late friend, Victor Hartmann. Hartmann passed away suddenly of an aneurysm, at the age of only 39, in 1873. To commemorate their friend the artist, Mussorgsky and some of his compatriots put together a collection of Hartmann’s sketches, watercolors, and paintings from travels he had taken abroad. Mussorgsky was so motivated by the works of Hartmann that he composed the entire 10-movement work in a mere six weeks. Although the physical art works of Victor Hartmann are mostly lost today, they are forever immortalized within Mussorgsky’s musical descriptions of them. Each movement’s title in “Pictures” alludes to a painting of sketch done by Hartmann.

Although the work itself was composed relatively quickly, publication lingered. The piece was finally published in 1886, five years after the composer’s death. Once published, as a piano solo showpiece, it was orchestrated multiple times. The first person to orchestrate the work was Russian composer and conductor Mikhail Tushmalov, although his orchestra only includes seven of the ten movements. The most popular orchestration of this work is that done by Maurice Ravel, in 1922. This version is most likely what one will hear a professional orchestra playing today. Most other arrangements of this work (such as the David Stone arrangement) have used Ravel’s orchestration as a starting point. The work has also been arranged for different types of musical ensembles and re-voiced to fit more or less musicians.
The Composer

Modest Mussorgsky was an interesting character to say the least. Besides his musical composition prowess, he was most commonly known for being a drunk and eventually met his end in 1881, thanks to complications of alcoholism. “Pictures at an Exhibition” was his final large-scale work, and consequently, one of his best known. A member of the “Russian Five”, Mussorgsky was part of a group of composers writing romantic, Russian art music between 1856-1870. His style itself was very much against the regimented European conservatory style. He wrote independent of forms, and strayed far from the territory of “academic” music. Many of his works were based upon Russian history, folklore, and nationalist themes.

In his early life Mussorgsky learned to play the piano. He played and wrote a few small compositions until joining the army at age 13 (this is said to have been his gateway into alcoholism). Once enlisted, his piano skills were in high demand from his fellow cadets; he often provided the musical entertainment for dances with traditional tunes, as well as improvisations.

At age 17, Mussorgsky met composer Alexander Borodin, when they served at a military hospital together. Once this connection was made, Mussorgsky met several other composers and began to take his own writing more seriously. He eventually began composition lessons with noted Russian composer, Mily Balakirev. However, Mussorgsky soon became unhappy with Balakirev and his criticism, as well as his leaning toward traditional European composition styles. Mussorgsky decided to break away, and so resulted in the works we recognize of his today such as “Night on Bald Mountain” as well as “Pictures at an Exhibition”.

Related History

1873 in Russia was under the rule of Tsar Nicholas the 1st. In the aftermath of the Crimean War (1853-56), Nicholas implemented substantial reforms in education, military, judiciary, and government to improve the Russian social climate. By 1882, the Ministry of Finance had created a bank for farmers, which allowed them to take out more loans for the purchase of land. This bank was somewhat appropriately titled, The Peasant Land Bank.

In 1874, something that would have directly affected Mussorgsky occurred. The Tsar decided to reform the military service. In order to do so the government changed the terms of service from the old 25 years, to short term active duty with several years on reserve. This made military service more accessible. The event that inspired this military change was the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871). This conflict took place between the Second French Empire and the Prussians (Northern Germany). The conflict resulted in the defeat of France, by the far superior/modernized German army.
Formal Analysis: Rondo Form

1. Main Theme (m. 1-29)
   a. Key: D Major
   b. Allegro alla breve, Maestoso, Con grandezza (in 2/2)
   c. 4 bar phrases (with the exception of m. 17-21)

2. Hymn Theme (m. 30-46)
   a. Key: F minor
   b. Irregular phrasing: 5, 6, 4, 2
   c. Woodwinds only

3. Main Theme (m. 47-63)
   a. Key: D Major
   b. Fanfare type section, moving notes in the strings/woodwinds

4. Hymn Theme (m. 64-96)
   a. Key: changes to D minor in m. 70
   b. Same irregular phrasing as above in Hymn Theme.
   c. Triplet theme added for effect in Woodwinds/string (m. 85)

5. Main Theme (m. 97-107)
   a. Key: D Major
   b. Meno Mosso, Sempre Maestoso
   c. Triplets divided in violins.

6. Transition (m. 108-119) “Interlude”
   a. Key: D Major
   b. Poco a poco rallentando into main theme (3/2 bars)
   c. Triplet theme vs. whole note/half note theme.

7. Main Theme (m. 120-129)
a. Key: D Major
b. Grave (in 4/4)
c. Last note short (for this interpretation)
Performance Notes:

On phrasing/musical contrast:

The notes/thematic material in this piece is very repetitive. It is important that the conductor as well as students is aware of the varying phrase lengths and how to shape them. The phrase lengths varying between 4, 5, 6, and 7 bars in length. This is not only important to the musical integrity of the work, but the breathing of the winds and brass. The students will sometimes need to breathe during these phrases (possibly stagger breathing throughout the section).

In regards to musicality in this piece, variations in phrases are necessary to create the contrast not given in the thematic material. That being said, capitalizing on the little dynamic markings given will be at one’s advantage in terms of musical flavor. Understanding the differing sections of material in the rondo form can also be helpful throughout this learning process.

Specifically, the choral sections of only woodwinds should be a stark contrast to the majestic bombastic sections of the main theme.

On interpretation and knowing what you want:

As a conductor and educator, this piece demands preparation in terms of knowing what you would like out of your interpretation. The work has been done over and over in various forms. Many conductors take time in places, add grand pauses, and end the piece differently (long or short final note).

For clarities sake, between yourself, and the students, it’s good to know these things ahead of time and be prepared to conduct them as
such. This is a big mistake I made, I had “ideas” but I wasn’t ready to carve them in stone when I started this unit, you should be.
Major Skills and Concepts

1. Changing time signatures
   a. 2/2 – beginning to m. 118
   b. 3/2 – m. 118-119 (poco a poco rallentando) triplet-duple subdivision
   c. 4/4 – Grave, slowing down of tempo-theme, augmented rhythms.

2. Phrasing (different phrase lengths)
   a. Opening phrase length 4 bars, 5 bars, 6 bars.
   b. Shaping of phrases for contrast in sections with similar melodic material.

3. Form- Rondo Form
   a. Main theme (A section)
   b. Choral theme (B Section)
   c. Transition section (music at letter F)
   d. Understanding the similarities and differences between sections and repeated melodic material.
Objectives for Students

1. Students will play correct notes and rhythms.
   a. Sections playing divisi. In tune.
   b. Winds and brass will play correct accidentals.
   c. Strings and woodwinds/brass/percussion matching pitches/rhythms.
   d. Proper subdivision of triplet and eighth note figures.

2. Students will phrase properly.
   a. Creating dynamic contrast within phrases.
   b. Strings: utilize techniques in bow weight/speed/distribution to accomplish phrasing goals.
   c. Breathing in the proper places to compliment musical phrases.
   d. Make musical differences in repeated material through dynamic changes.

3. Students will transition into different tempo changes.
   a. Transition to B-woodwind choral (accel.)
   b. Transition to Meno Mosso (m. 97) slowing down.
   c. Transition in m. 118 into the Grave (poco a poco rallentando into a slower tempo).
Strategies and Activities

Rehearsal Strategies:

-Letter C

a. 1st violins playing doubled eighth notes as singles first for intonation
b. Then play doubles.
c. Remediation: if that doesn’t work have inside player do singles, outside do double and vice versa.

-3/2 Bar

a. Have entire orchestra play triplet rhythm on open D.
b. Entire orchestra plays hemiola rhythm on open D.
c. Have each section play what’s written on open D. Put it together.
d. Have hemiola people (violins, woodwinds, brass) think of rhythm in divisions of two (1-2, 1-2, 1-2, du-ple).
e. Conduct the subdivision: right hand the triplet left the duple.

-Phrasing

a. Write out rhythm of first phrase (unison) on the board.
b. Have students play all notes at a piano dynamic.
c. Change the color of the high point of the phrase on the board.
d. Have students play those highlighted notes forte (coming back down to piano).
e. Now draw a phrase marking over notes on the board, create a gradual crescendo into the top of the phrase.
f. Repeat for all phrases like that in piece.
Practice Sections

1st Violins

- Letter C- singles then doubles of the eighth note runs.
- Letter C- intonation
- Letter E- transition between triplets to eighth notes
- General: techniques of bow weight, speed, and distribution to get desired phrasing and tone quality.

2nd Violins

- Letter C- intonation in divisi sections, specifically player on top part.
- Rhythm in 3/2 bar
- General: techniques of bow weight, speed, and distribution to get desired phrasing and tone quality.

Violas

- Letter C- articulation in main theme (tenueto markings)
- Rhythm in 3/2 bar
- Letter E- exaggerating the accents
- General: techniques of bow weight, speed, and distribution to get desired phrasing and tone quality.

Cellos

- Letter C- eighth note figure for intonation and rhythmic steadiness.
- Letter E- accents in proper places.
- M. 93 (before Meno mosso) rhythmic accuracy on syncopations.
- General: techniques of bow weight, speed, and distribution to get desired phrasing and tone quality.
Bass

- Letter C - rhythmic accuracy.
- M. 114 - intonation on accidentals
- General: techniques of bow weight, speed, and distribution to get desired phrasing and tone quality.

Woodwinds

- Letter B - note, rhythm accuracy, and intonation.
- Letter D - same
- Letter E - accidentals and accurate placement of accents
- 3/2 bar - rhythmic accuracy

Brass

- Letter A - rhythmic, note accuracy. INTONATION.
- M. 89 accurate accents/entrances
- M. 114 - accurate entrance, rhythmic accuracy
- M. 120 (Grave) – proper breath support for long held notes.

Percussion

- Beginning- Timpani intonation, bass drum proper entrances
- Entrances at M. 120 (Grave)
- Ending- cymbal crash and cut-off.
Assignments for Students

Form/Listening Map

• Create a listening map of “The Great Gate of Kiev”
• Identify the form of the piece and label these accordingly
• Map must use creativity (set-up, colorful, pictures, drawings)

Pictures for Exhibition

• Choose a piece of artwork (any era, or medium)
• Choose a song/piece of music that portrays what the piece of art.
• Be able to show physical proof of the music and arts existence (give the pieces title/artist and print a copy of the art work).
• Write a page long reflection connecting the piece of music to the piece of art.

Listening Assignment

• Listen to other movements of “Pictures at an Exhibition”.
• Look up another piece of art that relates to a movement.
• Write a one-paragraph reflection on how you think the piece of art and movement of music relate to one another.
Evaluation for Students

Rubric for Assignments:

• Form/Listening Map Assignment: 25 points
  o Students have all sections correctly labeled
  o Students have identified the form
  o Students have presented the information in a creative way

• Listening Assignment: 25 points
  o Students have identified which movement they chose to listen too.
  o Students have provided physical copy of the artwork corresponding
  o Students have written a one paragraph reflection
  o Students have turned assignment in on time.

• Pictures for Exhibition: 50 points
  o Students have chosen a legitimate piece of music/piece of artwork and have turned in physical proof of each.
  o Students have written a page long reflection on how the two relate.
  o Students have used proper spelling and grammar within this one page.
  o Students have turned in assignment on time.
**Lesson Plan: Day 15**

**Objective:** Students will shape phrases uses elements of technique as well as musical knowledge.

**Opening Set:** Take out “The Great Gate of Kiev”.

**Task/Analysis:**

1. Look at the beginning and what is written on the board (unison rhythm will be written in black marker with parts of the middle of the phrase in a different color).
2. Have students play only the first four measures (what is represented on the board).
   - Play them again but at a pianissimo dynamic level.
3. Look at what is on the board: play all but the different color notes pianissimo, while the other notes are played forte.
   - What changes about the amount of weight you put into the bow?
     - Louder= more weight.
   - Bow speed? Louder=more speed
   - Where will our bows be located in relation to fingerboard and bridge for proper tone production?
4. Teacher draws a phrase marking over the notes written on the board.
   - now instead of fast dramatic changes, gradually get louder and softer.
   - remediation: repeat until it is how “teacher” wants it.
5. Now go to Grave (m. 119) section
   - the music is the same, but we’re in 4
   - do the same thing
Evaluation: Can students accomplish these musical goals without teacher prompting? Following baton and phrases. Evaluate by listen to the beginning and then at the Grave (did these concepts stick enough to be taken out of context and applied somewhere else?).

Closing Set: Run Grave section to the end using appropriate phrasing and dynamic difference.
Calendar

Week 1:
Monday- Listen to piece in class, discuss the history of the work.
Tuesday- Sight-read through the piece
Wednesday- Discuss divisi, tempo changes, play through tempo changing sections.
Thursday- Attack 3/2 measures, how to play it, how it will be conducted.
Friday- Full Orchestra Rehearsal: Sight-reading with full orchestra, use the strings as an example to help understand 3/2 measures.

Week 2:
Monday- Technical Sections: Letter C, Letter E
Tuesday- Review C and E, Work Letter F
Wednesday- Review 3/2 bar, transitions
Thursday- Review 3/2 bar, transitions, Run C
Friday- Run the piece, Discuss issues, Fix spots.

Week 3:
Monday- Work beginning, Dynamics at A
Tuesday- Discuss phrase lengths, how to achieve dynamic contrast, play beginning to B
Wednesday- Work Grave to end (similar melodic material), phrase shaping
Thursday- Work letter E, dynamic contrast, F- same, Run the piece
Friday- Full Orchestra: Focus on B and D, woodwind solo sections, F for brass.
Week 4:

Monday- Get picky about phrasing, dynamic contrast, record a run-through
Tuesday- Listen to run through, discuss what students liked/disliked, go to spots
Wednesday- Fix spots from yesterday, run-through
Thursday- Run the piece, fix sections that need work

Friday- Full Orchestra Rehearsal: Focus on F, also, brass/woodwinds matching phrasing with strings.
Bibliography


Related Items

YouTube Recordings:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7d_Qj9iHaus

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aa0oKBtFKts

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eudSW4cM7qs

Piano Part:

Pictures at an Exhibition for the piano

International Music Company, New York City