

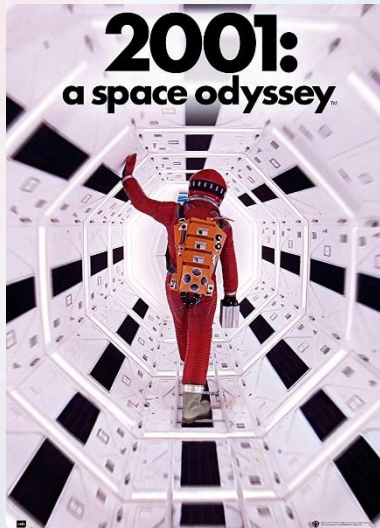
Meridian Music of the Week!

Issue No. 70 (based on original Newsletter No.15 – March 2020)

Each week ALL our children will be listening to a piece of music as part of our music lessons. We'll be talking about it in class and discussing what we like, what we don't like and what it makes us think about.

Parents/carers/family - why not join in and listen for yourself at home! All music is available **free** on YouTube as well as paid services such as iTunes and Spotify.

This week's music...



Music from the film '2001: A Space Odyssey' (1968)

The opening fanfare from 'Also Sprach Zarathustra' by Richard Strauss (1896) [HERE](#)

'The Blue Danube' by Johann Strauss II (1866) [HERE](#)

'Lux Aeterna' by György Ligeti (1966) [HERE](#)

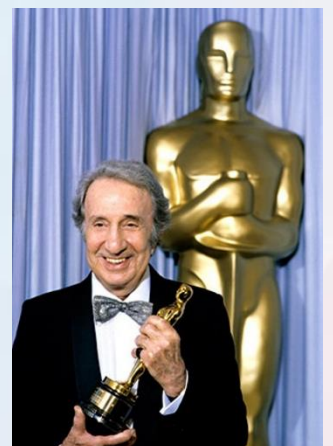
Back to the Future...

This week we have **THREE** different pieces of music by **THREE** different composers. Don't worry, two of them are quite short (the music that is, not the composers!) The last time we listened to this (back in March 2020) I set a quiz question because all these pieces are linked together in some way. This time I'll just tell you the answer. They all appear as background music in the ground-breaking 1968 sci-fi film '**2001: A Space Odyssey**' - directed by Stanley Kubrick.

The film was famous for being very scientifically accurate at the time (the original story was written by Arthur C Clarke who was a scientist as well as a writer) and for having cutting-edge special effects. But it was also famous for the way it used classical music to create special moods and atmosphere in the film. You would think that a modern sci-fi movie would want to use modern music - but Stanley Kubrick had other ideas.

Throw out the new - bring in the old!...

Most movies have music especially written for them - and originally, Stanley Kubrick hired a famous Hollywood composer called Alex North to write new music for the film - which he did. However, when Kubrick was finally editing the film, he decided that he would prefer to use existing classical music rather than the new music North had written for it. But he didn't tell him!



Alex North, film composer, receiving an Oscar in 1986

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In fact, North didn't know that his specially written music had been abandoned until he went to the film's opening premiere. Imagine how he must have felt when he sat in his cinema seat and settled back to hear his music on the big screen, only to suddenly hear **other** people's music - some of which was over 100 years old!

These are the three pieces of music we're going to listen to...

The opening fanfare from 'Also Sprach Zarathustra' by Richard Strauss (1896)



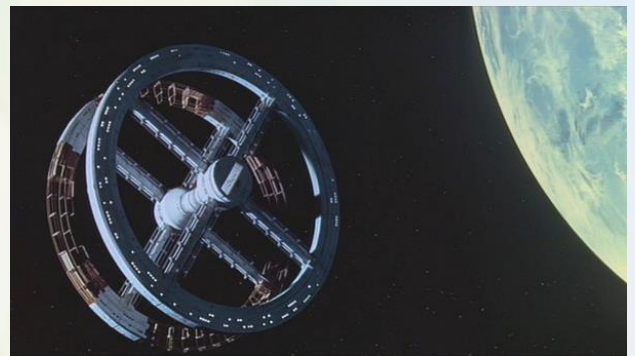
A cartoon drawing of composer Richard Strauss

Another name for this piece is 'Sunrise'. Richard Strauss was a German composer who received a lot of criticism during the Second World War. He agreed to take important musical jobs that were offered to him by Hitler's government. This made some people believe he was racist. However, he claimed he only took the jobs to help protect his daughter-in-law and grandchildren who were Jewish. When you listen to the piece, you might think there's something wrong! The first 15 seconds are just double basses, bassoon and organ playing a single, very low **pitch** note of C. Once you get to 16 seconds though, you might recognise it...

By the way, 'Also sprach Zarathustra' is German for 'So said Zarathustra'. Zarathustra was a Middle Eastern holy man who started a new religion around 500 years before Jesus was born. Unlike most people of the time, Zarathustra believed there was only one true God, rather than many different Gods. It made him very controversial at the time.

'The Blue Danube' by Johann Strauss II (1866)

Another Strauss, but this time a different one! This is the Austrian composer Johann Strauss the Second (his father, Johann the First was also a composer!) You're almost certain to recognise this tune as it's one of the most famous **waltzes** ever written. The Danube is Europe's second longest river and flows through 10 different countries (including Austria) – more than any other river in the world. Even though the music is supposed to celebrate the beauty of the river – the Danube is rarely 'blue'. It is historically famous for being one of the most polluted rivers in the world! Perhaps Strauss should have called it 'The **Brown** Danube'...



The Earth space station which we see in the film when 'The Blue Danube' is played.

Fun fact: Strauss' stepdaughter Alice once met the famous German composer Johannes Brahms and asked for his autograph. He signed his name in her autograph book but also wrote down the first few musical notes of 'The Blue Danube'. He then wrote underneath 'Unfortunately, not by Johannes Brahms'!

Continued/...

'Lux Aeterna' by György Ligeti (1966)



Modern composer György Ligeti
in some cool shades!

A more modern composer, Ligeti was a Hungarian who later went to live in Austria (maybe near the blue Danube?) He was famous for being an **avant-garde** composer, which means he wrote very modern music that didn't follow traditional rules.

He even experimented with electronic music – which was very unusual for the time. This piece of music is an **a cappella** piece (meaning, just voices) for a 16-part mixed choir. The words are taken from the Roman Catholic Mass ('Lux aeterna' is Latin for 'Everlasting light') – and it might sound out of tune to you – but that's on purpose. Ligeti wasn't so interested in **melody**, **harmony** or **rhythm** – but more in **timbre** (the 'character' of a sound). This one's a little longer (10 minutes) but worth sticking with. I recommend listening to this with headphones – it's very atmospheric!

By the way, when Stanley Kubrick decided to use Ligeti's music for his movie, no-one actually told him! Ligeti's publishers gave Kubrick permission to use the music without even asking Ligeti himself. When he found out he was furious – but he later calmed down and agreed that it could be used. It's a good thing too because it was his music appearing in the film that brought Ligeti to world-wide attention as a composer. He also went on to write more music for other Stanley Kubrick movies such as 'Eyes Wide Shut' and 'The Shining'.

One last thing...

In 1984 they made a sequel to the movie called '2010: The Year We Make Contact'. But this one wasn't directed by Stanley Kubrick and the new director decided he **didn't** want to use existing classical music like the original film. Instead, they asked a well-known movie composer to write the soundtrack. He went in completely the opposite direction for this movie sequel and almost all the music was composed and played on very modern synthesizers. Well, they were modern for 1984. You can hear an example from the soundtrack [HERE](#).

One of the 'modern' synthesizers used was the Synclavier. Take a look at the picture of it below to see just how 'modern' it was!



Listen & enjoy...

Mr. Mole

Music Teacher

