

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Modest Mussorgsky, Georges Bizet

Upbeat Suite

Dance of the Little Swans
Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks
Danse Boheme

arranged for mallet quartet by Brian Slawson



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Upbeat Suite is an arrangement of three orchestral excerpts, by three different composers, sharing common rhythmic elements. Upbeat “feels” (“2 beats”) are common across musical boundaries and usually reflect a cheerful nature, often enhanced by the use of grace notes and appoggiaturas. On mallet instruments, percussionists can perform them as they would flams on drums, making sure that the grace note complements the other dynamically.

All three movements herein should be played in a light, bouncy style. The marimba and vibraphone players should resist the common temptation to create a round, full sound in order to better serve the timbre of the upper instruments. In turn, those playing glockenspiel and xylophone need to be mindful of the extreme attack nature of their instruments when choosing mallets and balancing within the ensemble.

Dance of the Little Swans (from *Swan Lake*)

Program Notes

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) is regarded as one of classical music’s finest composers and was the first Russian composer to achieve international fame. He wrote operas, concertos, six massive symphonies, the smashing *1812 Overture* and scored three great ballets. To this day, *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and the *Nutcracker* are enthusiastically received worldwide. Although his music was popular during his lifetime, Tchaikovsky’s works were harshly criticized by Russians and Westerners alike, often for frivolous political reasons. Unfortunately, constant scrutiny and personal issues caused him severe depression, possibly contributing to his early death at age 53.

Performance Notes

Instrumentalists who accompany stage performers often play from an orchestra pit, making it difficult to observe the action on stage. In any case, it is beneficial to know what the underscoring represents. *Swan Lake* is the story of a princess turned into a swan by the curse of an evil sorcerer. Taken from Act 2, “Little Swans” begins with dancers moving together in a crowded huddle, as newborn chicks might do when seeking warmth and protection. Gradually they create a hand-to-hand chain, dancing in unison. At the end of the dance, the “swans” try to fly, fail at doing so, and collapse onto the ground.

The use of medium mallets by all players should help to create a consistent timbre, avoiding a harsh top end and a boomy bottom. Although Tchaikovsky is best known for his romantic, soaring melodies, *Dance of the Little Swans* should remain as light and rhythmic as the title suggests.

Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks (from *Pictures at an Exhibition*)

Program Notes

Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881) wrote his *Pictures at an Exhibition* piano suite in 1874. It would later prove to be his most famous piece, largely due to popular adaptations by other composers, including the blockbuster orchestral treatment by Maurice Ravel.

Mussorgsky met artist Viktor Hartmann around 1870, and both hoped to further the cause of Russian art. However, Hartmann died suddenly at age 39. Soon after, Mussorgsky attended an exhibition of Hartmann’s collected works and saw a colorful sketch of “unhatched chicks” costumes intended for use in a ballet, inspiring one of the most charming movements in Mussorgsky’s suite.

Performance Notes

As in *Danse Boheme*, ornaments abound. As in snare drum applications, be sure that the ornaments don't compromise the placement of strong beats. Listen to each other to balance and create a unified performance. Remember, music is a team sport!

Danse Boheme (from *Carmen*)

Program Notes

Like Mozart, French composer Georges Bizet (1838-1875) was a true child prodigy and a pianist of great renown. However, he disliked concertizing and rarely gave public performances. Instead he focused on composition at the Paris Conservatory and developed a love for writing opera, later spending three years in Italy where opera was king. Unexpectedly, Bizet's return to Paris proved to be a disappointment. Audiences were reluctant to embrace contemporary works, instead favoring familiar, traditional repertoire.

Bizet pressed on. Although he had never been to Spain, he was drawn to Spanish culture by the books he read. Bizet's final opera, *Carmen*, would be a colorful tribute to Spanish music and folklore. Its use of musical numbers interspersed with spoken dialogue is still common in today's Broadway shows. However, his unique opera's innovative nature and racy subject matter struck fear in the mind of its promoters, and opening night was often delayed. Finally, three months after *Carmen*'s long-awaited premiere received scathing reviews and garnered dismal box office receipts, Georges Bizet died of a heart attack at age 37, never to know that *Carmen* would become one of the most popular, critically acclaimed operas of all time.

Performance Notes

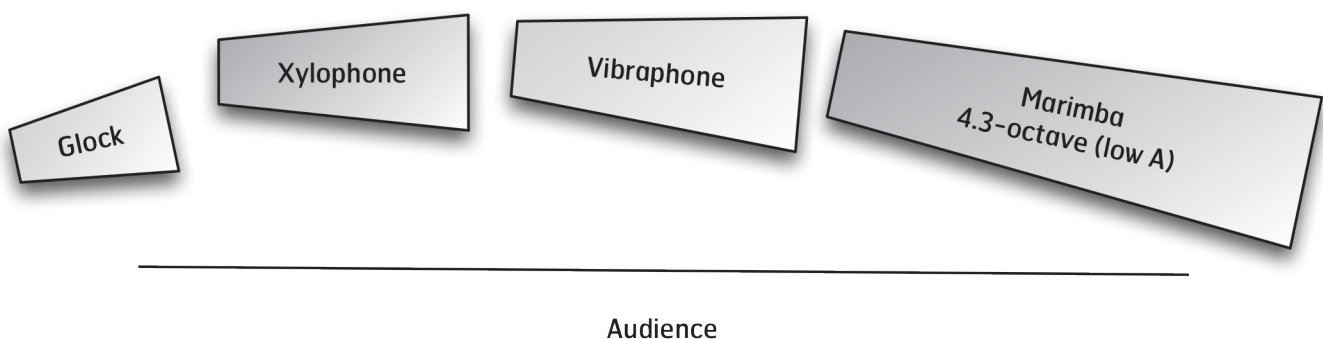
With the exception of the contrasting middle section, *Danse Boheme* is a frantic gypsy dance that should build in intensity throughout. Creating an anxious feeling of forward motion is key to capturing the essence of the music.

Players and Instrumentation

The three selections comprising *Upbeat Suite* each require **4 players** with the following instrumentation:

1. Glockenspiel
2. Xylophone
3. Vibraphone
4. Marimba – 4.3-octave (low A)

Suggested Setup



Level: Medium
Approx. playing time: 1'40"

Dance of the Little Swans

from *Swan Lake*

P. I. Tchaikovsky
arr. Brian Slawson

Allegro moderato ♩ = 100

Score for Glockenspiel, Xylophone, Vibraphone, and Marimba, measures 1 through 11.

Measures 1-5:

- Glockenspiel:** Rests in measures 1-3, then plays a descending eighth-note scale (F#4, E4, D4, C#4) in measures 4 and 5, marked *p*.
- Xylophone:** Plays a continuous eighth-note pattern (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) starting in measure 2, marked *mp*.
- Vibraphone:** Plays a continuous eighth-note pattern (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) starting in measure 2, marked *mp*. In measure 4, it plays a descending eighth-note scale (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) marked *mf*. In measure 5, it plays a descending eighth-note scale (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) marked *mp*, and a descending eighth-note scale (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) marked *mf*.
- Marimba:** Plays a continuous eighth-note pattern (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) starting in measure 1, marked *mp*. In measure 2, it plays a continuous eighth-note pattern (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) marked *p*.

Measures 6-10:

- Glockenspiel:** Rests in measures 6-8, then plays a descending eighth-note scale (F#4, E4, D4, C#4) in measure 9, marked *mp*. In measure 10, it plays a descending eighth-note scale (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) marked *mp*.
- Xylophone:** Plays a continuous eighth-note pattern (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) starting in measure 6, marked *mp*. In measure 10, it plays a descending eighth-note scale (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) marked *mf*.
- Vibraphone:** Plays a continuous eighth-note pattern (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) starting in measure 6, marked *mp*. In measure 10, it plays a descending eighth-note scale (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) marked *mf*.
- Marimba:** Plays a continuous eighth-note pattern (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) starting in measure 6, marked *mp*. In measure 10, it plays a descending eighth-note scale (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) marked *f*.

Measures 11:

- Glockenspiel:** Plays a descending eighth-note scale (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) marked *mp*.
- Xylophone:** Plays a continuous eighth-note pattern (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) marked *mp*.
- Vibraphone:** Plays a continuous eighth-note pattern (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) marked *mf*.
- Marimba:** Plays a continuous eighth-note pattern (F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3) marked *f*.

Sample
Image

16

G

X

V

M

mf

f mf

f

f

f

f mf

21

G

X

V

M

mf

f

Sample
Image

31

G

X

V

M

35

G

X

V

M

rit.

mf

f

f

f

Sample
Image

Level: Medium
Approx. playing time: 1'00"

Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks

from *Pictures at an Exhibition*

M. Mussorgsky
arr. Brian Slawson

$\text{♩} = 160$

Glockenspiel

Xylophone

Vibraphone

Marimba

rit. . .

G

X

V

M

Sample
Image

B

32

G

X

V

M

mp

41

G

X

V

M

C ♩ = 158

52

G

X

V

M

Sample
Image

63

G

X

V

M

mp

p

70

G

X

V

M

rit. A tempo

mp

p

mp

pp

mp

p

Sample
Image

Level: Medium
Approx. playing time: 2'20"

Danse Boheme

from *Carmen*

G. Bizet
arr. Brian Slawson

$\text{♩} = 116$

Glockenspiel

Xylophone

Vibraphone

Marimba

mp

mp

mp

mp

(4)

(4)

8

G

X

V

M

(4)

(4)

(4)

(4)

A

p

mp

(4)

Sample
Image

22

G

X

V

M

28

G

X

V

M

34

G

X

V

M

40

G

X

V

M

p

mp

f

p

mf

rit.

C ♩ = 104

45

G

X

V

M

mf

mp

p

p

mp

Sample
Image

D

rit.

Musical score for section D, measures 61-65. The score is for four staves: G (Guitar), X (Xylophone), V (Violin), and M (Mandolin). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'rit.' (ritardando). The dynamics are marked 'mf' (mezzo-forte) for the Violin and Mandolin parts. The Mandolin part has a (4) indicating a four-measure rest.

E A tempo ♩ = 116

Musical score for section E, measures 66-72. The score is for four staves: G (Guitar), X (Xylophone), V (Violin), and M (Mandolin). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'A tempo' with a quarter note equal to 116 beats per minute. The dynamics are marked 'ff' (fortissimo) for the Guitar, Xylophone, and Violin parts, and 'f' (forte) for the Mandolin part. The Mandolin part has a (4) indicating a four-measure rest.

Musical score for section E, measures 73-76. The score is for four staves: G (Guitar), X (Xylophone), V (Violin), and M (Mandolin). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'A tempo' with a quarter note equal to 116 beats per minute. The dynamics are marked 'ff' (fortissimo) for the Guitar and Xylophone parts, and 'f' (forte) for the Violin and Mandolin parts. The Mandolin part has a (4) indicating a four-measure rest.

**Sample
Image**

80

G

X

V

M

84

G

X

V

M

Sample
Image

