

Incidental and Ballet Music

Incidental music has been part of society's entertainment since its role in Ancient Greek and Roman plays. It played an important role in both Mediaeval and Renaissance outdoor theatre and has been a prominent part of many indoor theatrical genres since Shakespeare.

There have been many great alliances between composers and other artists, working together to create artworks which are the product of two creative geniuses, rather than one. A well-known connection is that of George Lucas and John Williams. Would the Star Wars movies, discussed overleaf, really be Star Wars without the well-known musical themes?

An earlier, equally powerful partnership, was that of the composer Igor Stravinsky and the impresario of the Ballet Russe, Serge Diaghilev, producing such great works as *The Firebird*, *Petrushka* and *Rite of Spring*. Other well-known artists contributed to the ground-breaking work of the Ballet Russe during this period. Nijinsky choreographed much of the work as well as danced as male lead, Picasso and Cocteau designed scenery and stage design.

Premieres of new works, such as those collaborations by the artists mentioned above were not always appreciated by the audience. The premier of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* is famous for its audience's negative reaction at opening night. They shouted and booed and even threw fruit at the stage. Stravinsky's new use of rhythmic, melodic and harmonic ideas was too advanced for the conservative audience who were genuinely offended at the sound of the music.

Task 37 Watch a video of any of the following works and make notes about how the music either reinforces, contributes to or negates the action of the play or ballet.

Music for Plays

Purcell, Beethoven – *Egmont*
Mendelssohn – *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
Delius – *Hassan*
Bizet – *L'Arlésienne*
Grieg – *Peer Gynt*
Sullivan – *Merchant of Venice*, *Thespis*
Ibsen, *Doll's House*
Shostakovich – *Hypothetically Murdered*

Music for Ballet

Tchaikovsky – *Swan Lake*, *the Nutcracker*, *Sleeping Beauty*
Prokofiev – *Romeo and Juliet*, *Cinderella*
Ravel – *Daphnis et Chloe*
Stravinsky – *Firebird*, *Petrushka*, *The Rite of Spring*
Milhaud – *La Creation du Monde*
Bartók – *The Wooden Prince*
Vaughan Williams – *Job*
Copland – *Appalachian Spring*, *Billy the Kid*
Delibes – *Coppelia*
Mascagni – *Intermezzo*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*