

ing the wedding of Scheherazade and Shahryar seems to fit:

“...they decorated the city after the goodliest fashion and diffused scents from censers and burnt aloes-wood and other perfumes in all the markets and thoroughfares...what while the drums beat and the flutes and pipes sounded and mimes and mountebanks played and plied their arts...”

Melodies from the second and third movements return during the course of the festival (compare to the original versions here and here), although Rimsky-Korsakov said his motivations for these reappearances were purely musical and cautioned listeners not to read too much into them from a narrative point of view. As this wild spectacle reaches its climax, the sea music from the first movement returns with the logic of a dream, and we witness the catastrophe of the shipwreck (a reference to the third Kalandar Prince’s tale). The waves subside, and Scheherazade’s violin solo rises high above the low, slumbering melody of Shahryar. As the solo violin soars to its highest register, the music fades into nothing, bringing Scheherazade’s magical tales to an end.



HIGH DEFINITION TAPE TRANSFERS

Nikolai Rimsky-korsakov

Scheherazade

Pierre Monteux

The London Symphony Orchestra

Throughout, the music of Scheherazade showcases Rimsky-Korsakov's mastery as an orchestrator; in terms of the pure, sensory pleasure of sound, he is unsurpassed. The music of the waves alternates with delicate passages for solo instruments, and each time the "waves" return, the orchestration becomes richer and grander, climaxing in a shimmering fortissimo.

Scheherazade's violin solo also introduces the next movement: "the fantastic narrative of the Prince Kalandar." In the medieval Islamic world, a Kalandar was a wandering mystic who led an ascetic lifestyle, relying on charity for his sustenance. Thus, the idea of a Kalandar-Prince might seem paradoxical. In the Nights, there are in fact three Kalandar Princes, each of whom began life as a prince, but, through a series of fantastical misfortunes, was blinded in one eye and reduced to the beggary of a Kalandar. We cannot be sure which of the three Kalandar Prince's stories Rimsky-Korsakov had in mind when composing this movement, but the music has a sense of adventure that fits them all.

Though some candidates have been proposed, it is difficult to identify a particular story to go with the third movement,

"The Prince and Princess." Love is a common theme throughout the Nights, and this movement shows Rimsky-Korsakov at his most lyrical. Not everyone appreciated this tenderness, however; an early London performance of Scheherazade provoked the rather prudish English press to debate whether this figure in the clarinet depicted kisses:

This makes it is easy to understand why Rimsky-Korsakov was hesitant to provide too much detail about his sources of his inspiration.

In this movement, Scheherazade's theme returns not at the beginning, but in the middle, as if she has paused for a moment to comment on the story. Her violin solo then blends with the music of the prince and princess. The passionate climax that follows surely represents not only the young lovers, but Scheherazade and Shahryar as well.

"The final marriage procession" from Edmund Dulac's illustrations for One Thousand and One Nights.

The finale bears the title of "Festival at Baghdad. The Sea. Ship Breaks upon a Cliff Surmounted by a Bronze Horseman." After an introduction from Scheherazade's violin solo, the festival gets underway. Again, it is difficult to identify a specific story to match the festival, but this passage describ-

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- 1 The Sea And Sinbad's Ship 9:10**
- 2 The Story Of The Kalendar Prince 11:00**
- 3 The Young Prince And The Young Princess 8:30**
- 4 Festival At Bagdad - The Sea 11:45**

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