Beyond the Double Bar

Many listeners will hear a piece of music in concert and think “That’s great! I wonder if there are other pieces like it that I might enjoy.” Beyond the Double Bar suggests further listening based on the music of each Masterworks and Small Stage concert, along with links to YouTube videos of recommended performances. If you have questions, comments, or suggestions about Beyond the Double Bar, please e-mail Dr. David Cole at dccole@swflso.org.

Masterworks V – Saturday, April 22, 2017

If you enjoyed Jonathan Leshnoff’s Starburst, you might like:

- Igor Stravinsky: Fireworks, Op. 4 (1908)
  A brief early orchestral work with hints of the mature composer to come. Stravinsky mailed this colorful piece to his teacher Rimsky-Korsakov for his comments, but the elder composer passed away while the manuscript was in transit.
  Stravinsky: Fireworks – Orchestre de Paris, Pierre Boulez

  Inspired by Van Gogh’s The Starry Night, this unique work is a musical metaphor to the painting, with relatively static musical material representing the quiet Provençal landscape while violently whirling music portrays the pulsating stars and planets overhead.
  Dutilleux: Timbres, espace, movement – BBC Philharmonic, Jan Pascal Tortelier

- Duke Ellington: Night Creature (1956)
  Not only can the night sparkle and swirl, it can swing, too. Ellington wrote a number of compositions that fused his band with a traditional symphony orchestra, and the results here are a persuasive synthesis – neither the jazz ensemble nor the symphony orchestra sound like they are crashing the party. The three movements are entitled “Blind Bug,” “Stalking Monster,” and “Dazzling Creature.”
  Ellington: Night Creature – Orchestra di Santa Cecilia, Myun-Whun Chung

If you enjoyed Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto, you might like:

- Alexander Glazunov: Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 82 (1905)
  As with Mendelssohn’s concerto, the movements of the Glazunov are played without pause, and most of the virtuoso pyrotechnics are reserved for the final movement. Unlike the Mendelssohn, Glazunov’s concerto is suffused with a passionate Russian warmth that tugs at the heartstrings.
  Glazunov: Violin Concerto – Hilary Hahn, WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln, Semyon Bychkov
A seldom-heard masterpiece from Denmark’s greatest composer. Nielsen’s concerto is filled with both dazzling bravura and ardent lyricism. The passage in the first movement where the soloist weaves garlands of energetic counterpoint around the movement’s main theme in the horns is goosebump-inducing.

Nielsen: Violin Concerto - Nikolaj Znaider, Danish Radio Symphony, Osmo Vänskä

Commissioned for a young violinist who found the first two movements lacking in flash but then declared the third impossible to play, Barber’s lushly neo-Romantic concerto begins with two movements of soaring lyricism and concludes with a fiendish (and fiendishly difficult) moto perpetuo finale.

Barber: Violin Concerto – Gil Shaham, BBC Symphony, David Robertson

If you enjoyed Mahler’s Symphony No. 1, you might like:

A Russian “Titan,” especially considering the enormous size of the orchestra (quadruple woodwinds, eight horns, etc.). Glière’s huge programmatic symphony might be something of a guilty pleasure, but this symphonic portrait of the legendary Russian hero Ilya Murometz packs a sizeable wallop. The section of the finale where Ilya and his comrades-in-arms engage in a hopeless battle with the forces of heaven practically defines the word “epic.”

Glière: Symphony No. 3 – BBC Philharmonic, Sir Edward Downes

Karol Szymanowski: Symphony No. 3, “The Song of the Night” (1916)
Polish composer Karol Szymanowski (1882 – 1937) had a lifelong fascination with the poetry and culture of India and the Middle East. This sensual and ecstatic symphony, sumptuously scored for tenor, chorus and large orchestra, is the height of that fascination, with a text by the Persian poet Rumi (1207–1273).

Szymanowski: Symphony No. 3 – John Garrison, City of Birmingham Symphony, Sir Simon Rattle

Sir Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 1 in A-flat major, Op. 55 (1908)
Elgar’s First bears a strong aesthetic resemblance to Mahler’s, especially in its struggle from darkness into light. In Elgar’s work, the whole is unified by a “motto” theme, a dignified procession (Elgar marks it nobilmente) that appears in various guises throughout the four movements of this symphony, eventually emerging triumphant. The struggle is not an easy one – the “sinister” forces (in the form of off-beat syncopations) attempt to disrupt the final glorious peroration, silenced only by the final few chords.

Elgar: Symphony No. 1 – London Philharmonic, Vernon Handley