

# Notes on the Program

By James M. Keller, Program Annotator, The Leni and Peter May Chair

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## 2001: A Space Odyssey

In 1964 director Stanley Kubrick set his sights on making a film that would explore Man's relationship to the universe. To help realize the project, he turned to renowned science-fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke, and the two began developing a scenario that might capture the epic sweep of the 1962 film *How the West Was Won*, but transposed to an intergalactic level. The two versions of *2001: A Space Odyssey* — film and novel — were released simultaneously in 1968, with the movie garnering reviews that ranged from the reverential to the derisive. Pauline Kael dismissed it as “a monumentally unimaginative movie.” Roger Ebert found that it “succeeds magnificently on a cosmic scale.” Renata Adler considered it “somewhere between hypnotic and immensely boring.” Certainly, it achieved popular success, and in celebrating the 50th anniversary of the film's release, critics have overwhelmingly come over to its side.

During the early stages of production, Kubrick took the entirely normal step of commissioning an original score, to be attached after the visual effects were in place. He selected Alex North (1910–91), an American composer whose résumé included the Oscar-nominated scores for *Death of a Salesman* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* in 1951, *Viva Zapata!* (1952), *The Rainmaker* (1956), *Spartacus* (1960), *Cleopatra* (1963), and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1966). North composed and submitted his score, but Kubrick decided to take a different tack, abandoning the original work entirely, opting instead for pre-existing concert music. (This had apparently been his vision from the outset, although he had been persuaded by MGM executives to go for a traditional score.) Most

of the pieces have been excerpted in the film: the tone poem *Also sprach Zarathustra* by Richard Strauss; the waltz *On the Beautiful Blue Danube* by Johann Strauss II; the ballet *Gayane* by Aram Khachaturian; and three contemporary works by György Ligeti — *Requiem*, *Lux aeterna*, and *Aventures* (the last in an electronic manipulation). Only Ligeti's *Atmosphères* is heard in its entirety.

Kubrick neglected to inform North about his change of plans, and the composer only learned about it as he watched in stunned astonishment at the film's premiere. His music went unheard until it was released on a 1993 recording. A 2007 CD, authorized by the North and Kubrick estates, provided a few additional musical passages and precise cue-points so interested parties could hear what might have been. Again critics disagreed; some expressed absolute certainty that the film would have been a greater achievement with North's music, while others came down just as firmly on the side of the classical selections. Among the latter was Ebert, who astutely observed:

When classical music is associated with popular entertainment, the result is usually to trivialize it (who can listen to the *William Tell* Overture without thinking of the Lone Ranger?). Kubrick's film is almost unique in *enhancing* the music by its association with his images.

Growing up Jewish in Hungary, a country that was dominated, in turn, by Hitler and Stalin, life was no bed of roses for **György Ligeti**. Unlike his father and his brother, he managed to survive internment in a labor camp, and was able to cobble together a firm

musical education, spending the years immediately following World War II at the Academy of Music in Budapest. He produced a stream of the folk-based choral music that was de rigueur in Hungary at the time, but he also worked on blatantly experimental pieces, building on the models of Bartók and the few other avant-garde composers of whose music he was aware. He prudently kept these scores to himself.

Ligeti became part of the great Hungarian exodus of 1956 and settled in Germany, where he soaked up the thriving culture of contemporary music. He soon became associated with the avant-garde center of Darmstadt and started producing captivating works of daring complexity, often within very free rhythmic frameworks. In 1960 his dramatic *Apparitions* for Orchestra was premiered in Vienna, and it boosted him to

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## **Atmosphères for Large Orchestra** **Kyrie, from Requiem** **Lux aeterna** **Aventures**

### **György Ligeti**

**Born:** May 28, 1923, in Târnăveni, Romania

**Died:** June 12, 2006, in Vienna, Austria

**Works composed and premiered:** *Atmosphères* for Large Orchestra composed 1961, on commission from Southwest German Radio, dedicated “In Memory of Mátyás Seiber,” a then recently deceased Hungarian composer who had assisted Ligeti’s career; premiered October 22, 1961, at the Donaueschingen Music Festival in Germany, Hans Rosbaud, conductor. *Kyrie*, from *Requiem*, composed 1964; premiered March 14, 1965, in Stockholm, Sweden, by the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Michael Gielen, conductor. *Lux aeterna*, composed 1966, on commission from the Schola Cantorum Stuttgart; premiered November 2, 1966, in Stuttgart, Germany, by the Schola Cantorum Stuttgart, Clytus Gottwald, director. *Aventures*, composed 1962, revised 1963, with a phonetic text by Ligeti; premiered April 4, 1963, in Hamburg, Germany, ensemble Die Reihe, Friedrich Cerha, conductor.

**New York Philharmonic premieres and most recent performances:** *Atmosphères* for Large Orchestra, premiered January 1, 1964, Leonard Bernstein, conductor. *Kyrie*, from *Requiem*, and *Lux aeterna* premiered September 20, 2013, with an *Art of the Score* screening of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Alan Gilbert, conductor. *Aventures*, premiered June 12, 1974, Pierre Boulez, conductor; all most recently performed with the September 21, 2013, screening of *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

*Ligeti’s sound world sets a tone for  
2001: A Space Odyssey*



## The Rocky Road to Filmdom

Director Stanley Kubrick incorporated four Ligeti works — *Atmosphères*, *Kyrie* from *Requiem*, *Lux aeterna*, and *Aventures* — into the sound track of *2001: A Space Odyssey* without the composer's knowledge or permission. After the film was released, Ligeti was tipped off by a friend that he ought to check it out. He went armed with a stopwatch and found that a good half-hour of the film score consisted of his music.

In 1980 Kubrick took care to obtain permission in advance before including Ligeti's music in *The Shining*, which makes use of the 1967 orchestral composition *Lontano*, among other pieces. Kubrick's final film, *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), employs a movement (played four times over) from the composer's piano suite *Musica ricercata*.

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prominence among experimental composers. Its dense, cloud-like textures, the result of great clusters of orchestral sounds, are woven vaguely through the slowly evolving piece.

The following year, ***Atmosphères*** consolidated Ligeti's mounting reputation. In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (second edition), the eminent critic (and Ligeti biographer) Paul Griffiths observes that *Atmosphères* is almost a single cloud, drifting through different regions of color, harmony, and texture, whether in the form of sustained tones (the only percussion instrument is piano, played by sweeping brushes and soft cloths over the strings) or of what he called "micropolyphony," consisting of dense weaves of canons at the unison, in which the lines move at different speeds and are not separately identifiable. Although the piece is structured in what are theoretically 22 separate sections, Ligeti was adamant that everything should unroll in a single seamless span and that the individual sections should be sensed as nothing more than shifts of emphasis. A personal consultation with the conductor Hans Rosbaud helped ensure that this quality would inform the work's premiere,

which proved so impressive that the audience demanded an encore.

Ligeti's ***Requiem***, composed between 1963 and 1965, sets only three portions of the traditional Mass for the Dead: the Introit, the *Kyrie*, and the Sequence (the last spread across two movements). The composer devoted about six months of 1964 to the ***Kyrie*** movement (marked *Molto espressivo*), delving into the world of dense counterpoint, and tracing aspects of a fugue that listeners might be hardpressed to perceive unless forewarned. Ligeti crafts his subject to be introduced by groups of singers who gradually fan out from a single note, such that each singer within a group fills in a point in a larger swath of pitches. And yet, these imposing tone clusters do proceed in unrelenting polyphony — micropolyphony — with overlapping lines propelled by their onward flow, held aloft over lengthy spans before being able to touch ground.

***Lux aeterna*** reflects something of the spirit of the *Requiem*. In fact, its text is drawn from the Communion section of the liturgical *Requiem*: "May everlasting light shine upon them, O Lord, with thy saints in eternity, for thou art merciful. Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, and may everlasting light shine upon them." Here a chromatic posture filled with canons and cloudiness and dense polyphony takes shape in a strictly a cappella context. The work makes some extreme demands on individual performers in terms of range and the negotiation of unaccustomed timbres without sacrificing the choral blend.

***Aventures***, written in 1962 and revised the following year, lives up to its title in being an adventurous piece — and to be adventurous in the context of Ligeti is to be very adventurous indeed. He employed rather loose notation in the vocal parts, but attached verbose instructions that easily make up for the perceived musical freedom. Ligeti's orchestration calls for three singers plus an instrumental

ensemble, of which the percussion contingent includes such oddball modes of sound-making as twanging rubber bands, attacking wooden furniture with a cudgel, and popping air-filled paper bags — prefiguring instrumentation the composer would develop in the mid-1970s for his opera *Le Grand Macabre*.

The singers give voice to a “secret language” that Ligeti worked out with minute attention to the phonetic qualities of the words, and each singer portrays five characters simultaneously. Ligeti’s biographer Richard Toop cited *Aventures* as emblematic of “the balancing act between the sublime and the ridiculous that often gives his music of the mid 1960s an unsettling edge.” All this is suggested only obliquely in the original sound track to *2001: A Space Odyssey*, since Kubrick presented the music in an entirely electronic realization that essentially evades the “humanoid” characterization that is part and parcel of the composition as Ligeti envisioned it.

The idea of the symphonic poem, or tone poem, may trace its ancestry to the dramatic or depictive overtures of the early 19th century, such as Mendelssohn’s *Fingal’s Cave Overture* or Berlioz’s *Waverley Overture*, but it was left for Franz Liszt to mold it into a clearly defined genre. This he did through a dozen single movement orchestral pieces composed in the 1840s and ’50s that drew inspiration from literary sources. As time went by, composers similarly derived influence from paintings or other artworks. The repertoire grew quickly, thanks to impressive contributions by such composers as Smetana, Dvořák, Musorgsky, Tchaikovsky, Saint-Saëns, Franck, and, most impressively, **Richard Strauss**.

In 1886 Strauss produced what might be considered his first symphonic poem, *Aus Italien*, and continued with hardly a break through the series of tone poems that many feel represent the genre at its height: *Macbeth* (1886–88), *Don Juan* and *Tod und Verklärung*

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## Also sprach Zarathustra (Thus Spake Zarathustra) Tone Poem (freely after Friedrich Nietzsche) for Large Orchestra, Op. 30

### Richard Strauss

**Born:** June 11, 1864, in Munich, Germany

**Died:** September 8, 1949, in Garmisch, Germany

**Work composed and premiered:** composed 1895–96; score dated August 24, 1896, Munich; premiered November 27, 1896, with the composer conducting the Frankfurt City Orchestra

**New York Philharmonic premiere and most recent performance:** premiered November 13, 1908, Wassily Safonoff, conductor; most recently played, April 27, 2017, at Tilles Center for the Performing Arts, Greenvale, New York, Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

*The Earth-moon-sun opening to 2001: A Space Odyssey, set to Also sprach Zarathustra*



(1888–89), *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* (1894–95), ***Also sprach Zarathustra*** (1895–96), *Don Quixote* (1896–97), *Ein Heldenleben* (1897–98), and *Symphonia Domestica* (1902–03), with *Eine Alpensymphonie* (1911–15) arriving as a late pendant.

Strauss immersed himself in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche in the early 1890s and was impressed by the philosopher’s attacks on formalized religion, which mirrored his own opinions. Nietzsche’s philosophy had just reached its mature formulation then, as articulated in his four-part treatise *Also sprach Zarathustra* (published 1883–85). In this work the philosopher speaks in a prose

narrative (as opposed to the formalized style of traditional philosophical treatises) through the voice of Zarathustra, a fanciful adaptation of the Persian prophet Zoroaster, who spends years meditating on a mountaintop and then descends to share his insights with the world. Most of the catchphrases popularly associated with Nietzsche — “God is Dead,” the “Will to Power,” the “Übermensch” or “Superman” — appear as touchstones in these volumes. Nietzsche’s ideas went to the heart of human existence and aspiration, which he viewed (quite pessimistically) as an endless process of self-aggrandizement and self-perpetuation, over

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## At the Time: Ahead of the Times

When *2001: A Space Odyssey* was released in 1968, studio publicity materials touted its futuristic aspects, stating that everything in it “can happen within the next three decades.”

Fifty years later, many of the film’s props and design elements are so much a part of daily life that they may be completely overlooked. That’s largely due to Kubrick’s insistence on consulting with top scientists and aerospace engineers, including those who had worked on NASA projects, to give *2001* a look that would be entirely plausible by the year of its title date. Look for:

- Flat-screen monitors, with graphic interfaces, throughout the spacecraft
- Tablet-like devices, or newspads, for personal use
- Seat-back screens on the passenger shuttle to the moon
- Corporate branding, with familiar names of the time (Pan Am, IBM, Hilton, Howard Johnson, Whirlpool, AT&T), a highly unusual practice in films of the period
- Video phones, or Picturephones, although in a pay phone booth setup recognizable to filmgoers in the late 1960s



- Biometric identification, as in the voice recognition used as part of the arrival procedure at the space station
- Artificial intelligence: HAL talks, plays chess, and spies, adopting human qualities and reflecting ongoing anxieties about computerization and surveillance.

— The Editors

Stanley Kubrick on the set of  
*2001: A Space Odyssey*

which the much heralded achievements of civilization — morality, religion, the arts — stand merely as pleasant distractions.

Strauss wrote to his friend Romain Rolland that Nietzsche's text was "the starting point, providing a form for the expression and the purely musical development of emotion." Nonetheless, a sort of narrative does exist, and following the stentorian fanfares of the work's famous introduction, textual indications inscribed in the score punctuate the sections of the piece's narrative: "Of Those of the Unseen World," "Of the Great Longing," "Of Joy and Passions," "The Dirge," "Of Science," "The Convalescent," "Dance Song," and "Night Wanderer's Song" (sometimes given as "Song of Those Who Come Later"). While he was popularly known as "The Waltz King," **Johann Strauss II** was greatly admired by many "serious" musicians of his time. Richard Strauss (no relation) remarked that in an era "when everything surrounding him had already evolved toward the complex

and the premeditated, [he] was one of the last to have primary inspiration." Gustav Mahler complimented Strauss's waltzes for "their uniqueness and delightful inventiveness." Jules Massenet observed that "Brahms is the spirit of Vienna, but Strauss is the perfume."

He began achieving success as an orchestra leader by age 19 and quickly emerged as something of a rival to his more established father. Initial uneasiness over this situation was overcome, and when Johann senior died in 1848, Strauss merged his late father's orchestra into his own. From 1863 to 1871 he served as director of Viennese court balls, just as his father had, and when he relinquished the position he merely handed the reins off to his brother, Eduard.

Strauss published almost 500 pieces of dance music, but none can rival the popularity of *An der schönen, blauen Donau* (*On the Beautiful Blue Danube*). The waltz has come to stand as a near-universal anthem of carefree elegance, but its intent was strikingly

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## **An der schönen, blauen Donau (On the Beautiful Blue Danube), Op. 314**

### **Johann Strauss II**

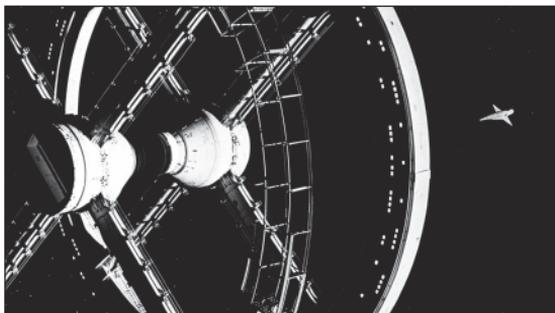
**Born:** October 25, 1825, in Vienna, Austria

**Died:** June 3, 1899, in Vienna

**Work composed and premiered:** composed 1866–67; premiered in its original version, for chorus and orchestra, to a text by Josef Weyl, on February 18, 1867, in Vienna, by the Vienna Men's Choral Society, with the orchestra of George V, King of Hanover, 42nd Infantry Regiment, Rudolf Weinwurm, conductor

**New York Philharmonic premiere and most recent performance:**

premiered June 29, 1901, Walter Damrosch, conductor; most recently played, December 31, 2016, Alan Gilbert, conductor



*In 2001: A Space Odyssey, a ship docks with the space station to the strains of On the Beautiful Blue Danube.*

different. The work's genealogy can be traced to early July 1865, when the prestigious Viennese Men's Choral Society asked the composer to write a waltz for an upcoming concert. Other obligations prevented Strauss from participating, but he pledged to compose a new work for the group by the following summer.

Good intentions notwithstanding, his promise remained unfulfilled as 1866 came and went. In the course of that year the Austrian army suffered a defeat by Prussia and the mood of the formerly buoyant Habsburg Empire turned grim. The social balance became so unstable that the Choral Society decided to tone down its traditionally rowdy Carnival concert for February 1867. Finally, Strauss was able to make good on his commitment, pulling together ideas for a waltz-suite in five sections, which were surrounded by an introduction and a coda. Text was provided by Josef Weyl, a police official who served as a sort of special material poet for the Society. His words have often been dismissed as cliché-ridden doggerel — “Wiener

seid froh! / Oh, wie so?” (“Rejoice, Viennese! / Oh, yeah? How so?”) — but a closer reading suggests that their frolicsome inanities are rich in ironic content that would not have been lost on Viennese listeners in the throes of societal and economic upheaval.

Filled as it is with barbs aimed at Vienna's politicians, landlords, and dancing citizenry, Weyl's text makes no mention of the Danube — which, in any case, no Viennese of that time, and few today, would likely describe as being a color resembling blue. The phrase apparently was lifted from a poem by Carl Isidor Beck, and when Strauss appropriated it as his title he may have intended it to announce the sense of unlikely parody that inhabits Weyl's poem. *An der schönen, blauen Donau* is occasionally heard in its choral setting, but it is more likely to be encountered as an orchestral piece. Both are entirely authentic readings: Strauss basically wrote this as a string of orchestral waltzes and seems to have had no particular involvement in selecting the text.

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## Adagio, from *Gayane*

### Aram Khachaturian

**Born:** June 6, 1903, in Tbilisi, Georgia

**Died:** May 1, 1978, in Moscow, USSR

**Work composed and premiered:** composed 1941–42; premiered December 9, 1942, in Perm, by the Kirov Ballet



**New York Philharmonic premiere and most recent performance:**

premiered March 24, 1949, Leopold Stokowski, conductor; most recently played, September 21, 2013, as part of an *Art of the Score* screening of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Alan Gilbert, conductor

*Astronaut Dave Bowman's pas de deux with HAL*

The son of an Armenian bookbinder living in Georgia, **Aram Khachaturian** went to Moscow in 1921 to enter college as a biology major. At the same time he pursued private instruction in cello at the Gnesin Institute of Music, and as his musical expertise developed he transferred to the conservatory's composition department, where his teachers included Reinhold Glière and Mikhail Gnesin (whose sisters had founded the school).

Despite his late start, Khachaturian advanced quickly and zealously. At age 26 he gained admission to the Moscow Conservatory. He stayed there for six years, completing his graduate education in 1936, the year he unveiled his very popular Piano Concerto.

In 1939 Khachaturian was named deputy chairman of the organizing committee of the Soviet Composers' Union. Working within an essentially conservative idiom and natively inclined toward melding folk-inspired sounds with classical traditions, Khachaturian seemed to embody the characteristics that Soviet officialdom valued in its composers. He wrote enough patriotic and propagandistic pieces to keep the commissars happy but spent most of his time on more serious instrumental pieces, including the first scores written specifically for sound movies in the Soviet Union.

Nonetheless, Khachaturian was not exempt when the Soviet Composers' Union came under attack from the Communist Party, and specifically from Ideological Secretary Andrei Zhdanov, in 1948. Like every other interesting composer in the Soviet Union, Khachaturian was denounced as a "formalist," and he "repented" by concentrating on overtly nationalistic pieces. Following Stalin's death, in 1953, Khachaturian went so far as to plead publicly for less restrictive state regulations on composers, a brave and unusual step at that time, and in 1957 he became influential in the Composers' Union again,

this time as board secretary, a position he held until his death. By that time he was revered at home as a dean of Soviet musicians, decorated with such honors as the Lenin Prize (1959, for the ballet *Spartacus*) and the Hero of Socialist Labor (1973), and was one of the few composers whose renown extended beyond the Soviet bloc.

Khachaturian composed ***Gayane***, the second of his three full-scale ballets, in the city of Perm, to which the Kirov Opera and Ballet Theatre of Leningrad (St. Petersburg) had been evacuated during World War II. *Gayane* offers a portrait of life on a collective farm in Armenia, where people of numerous Soviet nationalities find themselves working together in the interest of Soviet victory during the Great Patriotic War. At the heart of the action is a frail Armenian woman, Gayane, whose personal spiritual strength stands in contrast to her husband, who will be revealed as a traitor to his country. The ethnic variety of the farm's workers provides for all manner of contrasting folk-inspired dances from the Armenian, Kurdish, Georgian, Ukrainian, and Russian traditions. The most famous number is the Sabre Dance, a colorful and riotous bit of folkloric symphonic writing. But Khachaturian's full score, which earned its composer the Stalin Prize, merits occasional revisiting, as the *Adagio* demonstrates, beyond that justly applauded number.

**Instrumentation:** four flutes (all doubling piccolo), four oboes (one doubling English horn), four clarinets (one doubling E-flat clarinet and one doubling contrabass clarinet), three bassoons and contrabassoon, six horns, four trumpets, four trombones (one doubling contrabass trombone), tuba, timpani, bass drum, snare drum, cymbals, triangle, bells, chime, harp, two pianos, organ, and strings, plus mixed chorus for Ligeti's Kyrie, from Requiem, and *Lux aeterna*.