

Flight of the Bumblebee

Classics for Kids



Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

Born: March 18, 1844

Died: June 21, 1908

Nikolai Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov was a Russian composer. During his childhood he often listened to Russian folk songs, church music, and operas. He was also a talented piano player.

When he was older, Rimsky-Korsakov followed his brother to the Naval College at St. Petersburg, where he took more piano lessons. He composed his first symphony while on a navy ship.

Nikolai left the navy to teach at St. Petersburg Conservatory, which is now called "Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory." He was well respected by his students, who included Igor Stravinsky, another great composer. He also became

part of a group of five famous Russian composers called "The Mighty Handful," or "The Mighty Five."

Throughout his life, Nikolai wrote operas, choral music, chamber music and works for his piano. One of his most famous pieces is "Flight of the Bumblebee," which is a song about a prince who disguises himself as a bee.



Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

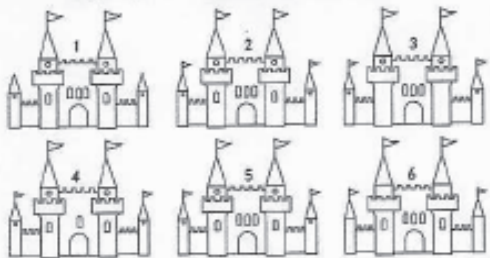


A Buzzing Prince!

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov was very good at using the instruments of the orchestra to create pictures and stories. In "Flight of the Bumblebee" he used the string family to create a musical "bumblebee." But, this is no ordinary insect—this bee is really a prince! The music comes from Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*. In the story, a magic swan turns the prince into a bumblebee so that he can visit Tsar Saltan without being seen. As you listen to the music, can you imagine a bumblebee buzzing around the Tsar and then quickly flying away so it doesn't get caught?

FIND THE TWINS

WHICH TWO ARE EXACTLY ALIKE?

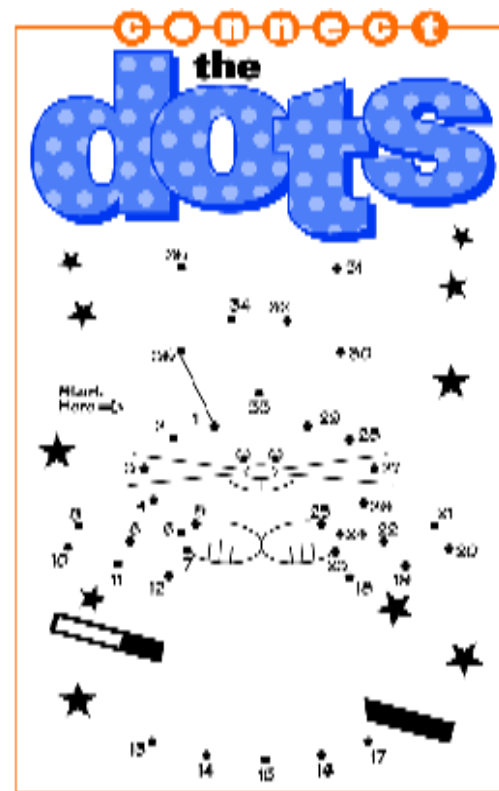
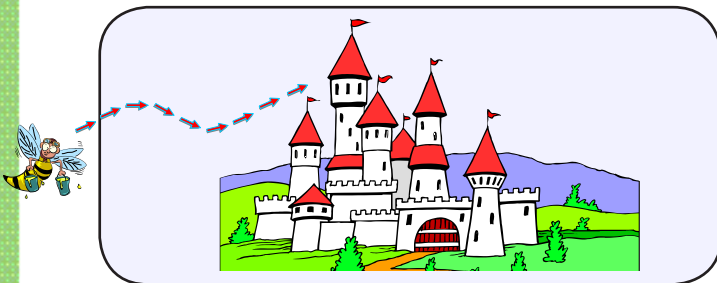


FLIGHT OF THE BUMBLEBEE

Various instruments play the music in this piece. Can you tell what they are? Hint: listen for a violin, a flute and groups of strings.

How does the composer make the bee “buzz?” He writes a series of notes that are all the same, then puts an accent on the next one that is just a tiny bit higher.

Another way that Rimsky-Korsakov makes it sound as if the bee is flying around is by using a chromatic note pattern. This means that the notes played are very close to one another in pitch. If you have a piano, you can play a chromatic scale by pressing both the white keys and the black keys in ascending or descending order.



Here's your chance to create your own piece of art for "Flight of the Bumblebee."

Draw or write your own story about this piece.

Send yours to:

Classics for Kids
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Cincinnati, OH 45214



Or E-mail us at mail@classicsforkids.com.