Learning and Teaching Resource on Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* (1st Movement)

for Senior Secondary Music Curriculum

The Arts Education Section of the Curriculum Development Institute,
the Education Bureau, Hong Kong (November 2026)

Preface

This learning and teaching resource is specifically designed for teachers and students preparing for **the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Music Examination in 2029 and 2030**. It serves as a guide to one of the designated set works under **Paper 1 (Listening) Part A: Music in Western Classical Culture**.

To ensure deep musical comprehension, this resource balances structural analysis with contextual exploration. A core feature of the material is the inclusion of **targeted listening exercises (L&T Activity 1–6)**. These exercises are designed to reinforce the core concepts and teaching points (L&T Key Point 1.1–3.3) introduced within the designated set work, while prompting students to apply these analytical tools to a wider selection of musical works.

This pedagogical approach directly aligns with the learning outcomes outlined in **the *Music Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4–6) (with updates in September 2024)***. By engaging with the set works, students are expected to look beyond the immediate historical backdrop and analytical context of a single piece. The *Music Curriculum and Assessment Guide* mentions that students should be equipped to:

> "…identify and analyse the artistic qualities of diverse music genres and styles in different cultures and periods, as well as the relationships with their historical and cultural contexts…"

while also learning to:

> "…use their critical thinking skills to appreciate and respond to music critically from multiple perspectives." (Page 11; for more details on these curriculum objectives, readers are encouraged to refer directly to the Music Curriculum and Assessment Guide.)

To facilitate integration into both classroom teaching and independent study, care has been taken to select comparative musical examples that are readily available. Recommended recordings for all exercises can be easily accessed across popular music streaming platforms.

It is our hope that these materials not only serve as an effective examination tool but also foster a deeper, more critical appreciation of Western musical traditions and their broader contexts.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Dr. WONG Chun-wai for generously granting permission to reproduce his piano reduction of Rimsky-Korsakov's work within these materials. Distilling dense, complex orchestral textures into an accessible piano reduction layout, Dr. WONG's score provides exceptional study and illustrative material for both teachers and students.

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1. Contextual Background

In 1888, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, a Russian composer, and a member of the Mighty Five—alongside Mily Balakirev, Alexander Borodin, Modest Mussorgsky, and César Cui, who together aimed to establish a distinct Russian national style of composition—wrote *Scheherazade*, one of his most celebrated orchestral works. The piece centres on the relationship between Scheherazade and the Sultan Schahriar,[1] as well as the stories Scheherazade told. In an early edition of the score, the composer provided a detailed literary programme:

> "The Sultan Schahriar, convinced of the perfidy and faithlessness of women, vowed to execute each of his wives after the first night. But the Sultana Scheherazade saved her own life by interesting him in the tales she told him through 1001 nights. Impelled by curiosity, the Sultan put off her execution, and at last entirely abandoned his sanguinary resolve. Many marvels did Scheherazade relate to him, citing the verses of poets and the words of songs, weaving tale into tale, story into the story.
>
> I. The sea and Sinbad's ship.
>
> II. The story of the prince-kalandar.
>
> III. The young prince and princess.
>
> IV. Festival in Baghdad. The sea. The ship breaks up against a cliff surmounted by a bronze horseman. Conclusion."

[1] The name of the Sultan appears in the literature under various transliterations (e.g. Shahriar, Shahryar, Schahriar). This document adopts Schahriar consistently.

L&T Key Point 1.1: Romantic tradition of programme orchestral music

This emphasis on extra-musical association places *Scheherazade* firmly within the broader Romantic tradition of programme orchestral music, which can be summarised as follows:

- Romantic composers increasingly sought to expand the expressive power of instrumental music and linked it to **extra-musical ideas** such as literature, landscapes, mythology, and personal experience.
- Notable examples include Berlioz's **programme symphony** *Symphonie fantastique* (1830), Liszt's thirteen **symphonic poems** (mainly composed between the 1840s and 1850s), and Tchaikovsky's **programme overtures** such as *Romeo and Juliet* (1880) and *the 1812 Overture* (1880).
- These works reflect a Romantic emphasis on **orchestral colour and dramatic contrast**—rather than Classical formal balance.

While aligning with the Romantic programmatic trend, Rimsky-Korsakov made clear that his aim was not to provide a literal, scene-by-scene musical depiction of the tales from *The One Thousand and One Nights*. Instead, his autobiography suggested that he intended *Scheherazade*, which was labelled as a **symphonic suite**, to be "a kaleidoscope of fairy-tale images and designs of Oriental character." He further explained:

> "In composing *Scheherazade* I mean these hints to direct but slightly the hearer's fancy on the path which my own fancy had travelled, and to leave more minute and particular conceptions to the will and mood of each. All I had desired was that the hearer, if he liked my piece as symphonic music, would carry away the impression that it is beyond doubt an oriental narrative of some numerous and varied fairy-tale wonders and not merely four pieces played one after the other and composed on the basis of themes common to all the four movements."

L&T Key Point 1.2: Musical Orientalism

The composer's words show that *Scheherazade* is deeply connected to the broader nineteenth-century European cultural fascination with the so-called "Orient/Oriental/East"—a phenomenon commonly described as Orientalism. Some key aspects include:

- Western artists, writers, and composers frequently turned to imagined visions of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia as sources of exotic colour, mystery, sensuality, and danger. In musical settings, this often meant using **unusual scales or modes, modal inflections, chromaticism, irregular rhythms, and distinctive orchestral colours** to evoke "Oriental" atmosphere.
- In *Scheherazade*, Rimsky-Korsakov draws on **modal writing and octatonic harmonies**, as well as rich, colourful orchestration, to create a sound world that listeners of his time—and even today—associate with exotic adventure and fantasy.

While *Scheherazade* is a masterpiece of orchestral colour, evocative imagery, and Romantic musical storytelling, it should be approached critically for its limitations of nineteenth-century Orientalist imagination. The "East" portrayed in *Scheherazade*—as in many other works from the period—is not a historically or culturally accurate representation of Middle Eastern music or society. Rather, it reflects a **Western fantasy of the "East,"** shaped by travel literature, translated tales, and Romantic imagination rather than lived reality.

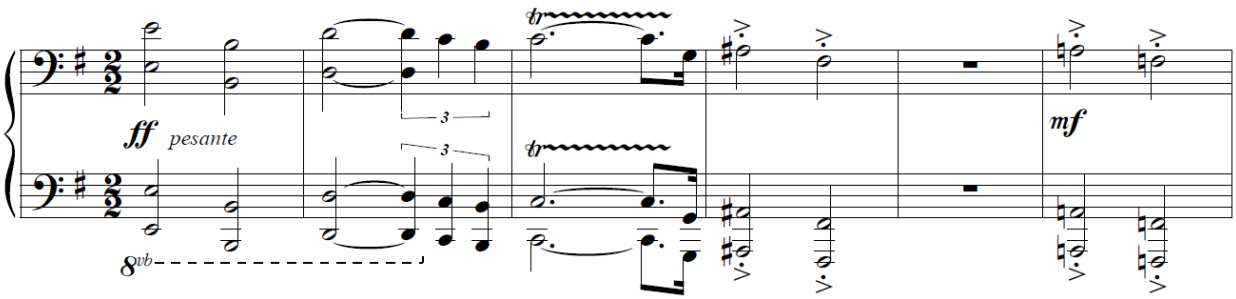
What is particularly interesting about *Scheherazade* as a work of programme music is the way multiple layers of storytelling unfold and overlap. Rimsky-Korsakov uses musical motives and orchestral colour to convey a **frame-story** that spans all four movements: Scheherazade's ongoing task of telling stories to the cruel Sultan Schahriar in order to save her life. At the same time, within each movement, the music depicts the **stories Scheherazade tells**, as suggested by the descriptive titles of the movements.

This resource explores these intertwined layers of storytelling, beginning by an examination of the musical portrayal of the frame-story, and then move on to Scheherazade's first tale, "The Sea and Sinbad's Ship," as depicted in the opening movement.

2. Frame-Story: Scheherazade and the Sultan Schahriar

Rimsky-Korsakov opens *Scheherazade* with two themes representing the work's central protagonists. Their musical characterisation relies on contrasting musical elements, which reflect not only their personalities within the narrative but also the stereotypical European imagining of Arabic and Middle Eastern figures common in the late nineteenth century.

L&T Key Point 2.1: The Sultan's Theme (bars 1–7)



The Sultan Schahriar is portrayed in the frame-story as a commanding, dominant, and menacing ruler whose actions are driven by rage and deep distrust of women. Rimsky-Korsakov conveys this cruel and authoritarian character through several distinct musical devices:

- **Unison, low-register brass with *fortissimo* dynamics**:
  The Sultan's theme, characterised by **angular melodic movement** and **accented articulation**, is stated in powerful unison, primarily in trombone, tuba, and *tutti* strings, establishing a sense of stern, unchallenged authority.
- **Descending whole-tone gesture**:
  The theme traces a descending whole-tone outline (E–D–C–A-sharp as the first note of each bar of the theme). This descending motion conveys an oppressive presence, while the whole-tone collection contributes to an ominous, unstable quality.
- **Chromatic instability and tonal "slippage"**:
  Although the theme's opening hints at E minor, its chromatic inflections—first a rising augmented-second to A-sharp (bar 4), and later the unexpected F-natural after the grand pause (bar 6)—undermine any sense of tonal stability. These chromatic shifts mirror the Sultan's irrational temperament and unpredictable nature.

The theme is immediately followed by a six-bar passage (bars 8–13) that recalls the shimmering opening of Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream Overture*. Beneath this lighter texture, the whole-tone outline (E–D–C–A-sharp) that had already been established in the Sultan's theme is also hidden in the progression.

L&T Activity 1

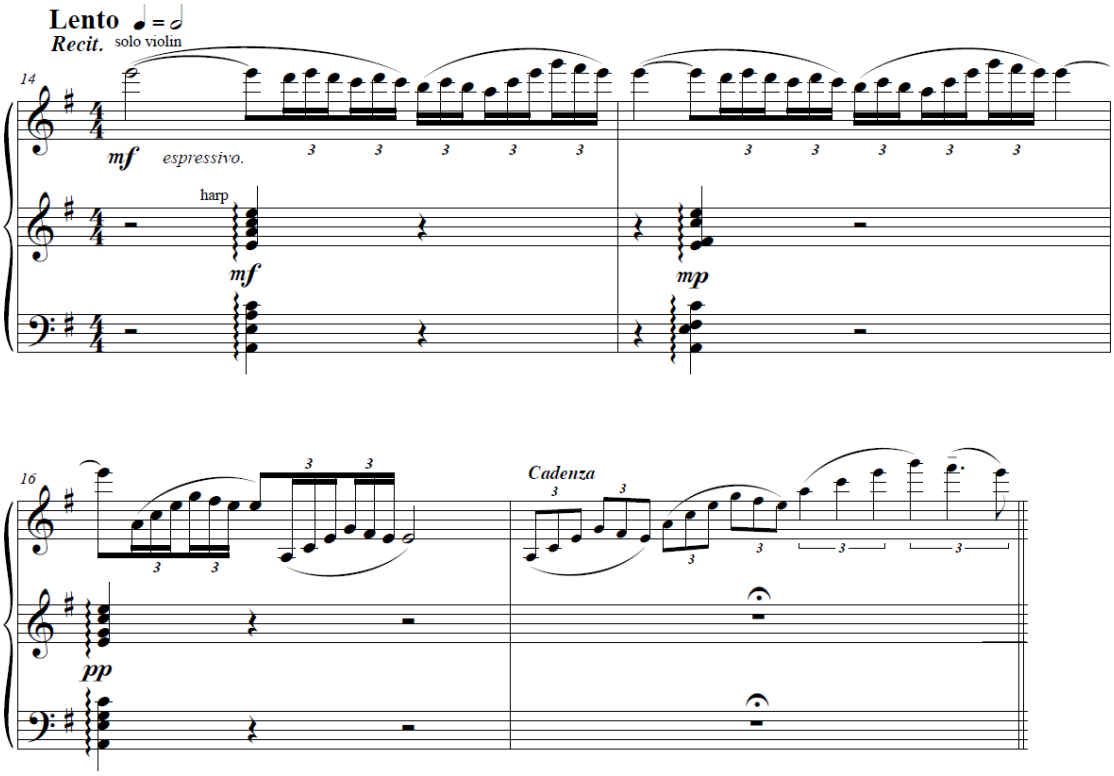
Compare and contrast the musical treatment of:

- the opening passage of Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture, and
- the six-bar passage (bars 8–13) in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*

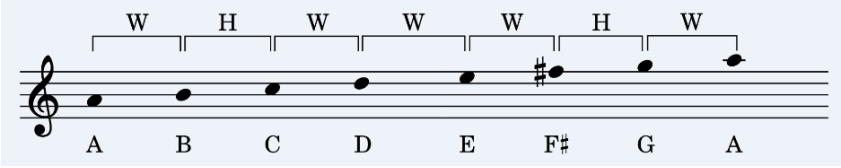
in terms of: instrumentation, texture, dynamics, harmony, and any other relevant musical elements.

Also compare and contrast the atmosphere and imagery each passage creates.

L&T Key Point 2.2: Scheherazade's Theme (bars 14–17)



The A Dorian scale on which the Scheherazade's Theme is based:



To depict the feminine character and her story-teller quality, Rimsky-Korsakov uses the following musical devices:

- **Solo violin and harp accompaniment**:
  Rimsky-Korsakov assigns Scheherazade's theme to a solo violin, whose lyrical character conveys her pervasive storytelling ability (the passage is marked *Recit.* (recitative), evoking the speech-like singing in opera). The violin is supported by sparse, arpeggiated chords in the harp, an instrument historically associated with bard/court storytellers and troubadours.

- **Use of modal writing**:
  The melodic writing is centred on the A Dorian mode (A-B-C-D-E-F#-G-A). This modal colour evokes a folk-like quality, enhancing the impression that Scheherazade is recounting tales from an ancient oral tradition.
- **Highly florid melodic passage**:
  The solo violin passage features **rapid triplet figures of oscillating melodic movements**, descending sequences, and rising arpeggio gestures that combine to produce a soaring melodic line in the instrument's **high tessitura**. These devices give the theme a fluent, flowing quality—musically representing Scheherazade's alluring and persuasive storytelling.
- **Cadenza to end**:
  The theme culminates in a brief cadenza—a musical hallmark of freedom and improvisation. Its declamatory style not only reflects her narrative role but also reinforces her free-spirited persona.

L&T Activity 2

Based on the musical characteristics of the themes studied, explain how Rimsky-Korsakov creates musical contrasts between the two themes in order to depict the conflicting characters of the two protagonists in the framing story.

Consider musical elements including, but not limited to: instrumentation, texture, dynamics, melody, rhythm, and articulation.

L&T Activity 3

Examine and describe how the themes of the Sultan Schahriar and Scheherazade return in the final movement of the work.

(a) How are the themes treated differently from its first appearance in the opening movement when compared to:
  (i) the start of the final movement?
  (ii) the end of the final movement?

(b) How do the two recurrences at (i) and (ii) suggest about the evolving relationship between the two characters as the framing story unfolds?

3. Scheherazade's Storytelling: The Sea and Sinbad's Ship

After introducing the themes of the two protagonists from the framing narrative, the movement turns to Scheherazade's storytelling, presenting musical scenes inspired by the tales from *The One Thousand and One Nights*. The movement's central tension is created by **thematic development and juxtaposition**. The two protagonists' themes continue to undergo development through the movement, woven into the narrative sound world of "The Sea and Sinbad's Ship." The table below summarises the overall structure, tonal centres, and thematic materials explored:

Section	Bar numbers	Scale used and key suggested	Themes used
A	Bars 18–69	Octatonic scale (to be explained on page 11), suggesting the key of E[2]	➢ **Sinbad's theme**, adapted from the Sultan's theme ➢ **Wave motive** in the accompaniment
B	Bars 70–75	Diatonic; C major	➢ Tranquil woodwind **chorale**
	Bars 76–81; Bars 82–87; Bars 88–93	Octatonic scale, each passage suggesting dominant of F, dominant of D, and dominant of B respectively[3]	➢ Wave motive reappears in the background, played by cello ➢ **Dialogue passages** between horn and solo woodwind, derived from Sinbad's (Sultan's) theme
C	Bars 94–97; Bars 98–101	B Dorian mode; A Dorian mode	➢ Scheherazade's theme
	Bars 102–113	Octatonic scale, with unstable tonalities	➢ **Storm theme**, with figurations derived from both Scheherazade's theme and Sinbad's (the Sultan's) theme

[2] The term "suggesting" underscores that while an E tonal centre is anchored by the recurring E major triad in the passage, the actual harmonic progression is highly non-diatonic. The passage utilises octatonicism and chromaticism that evade traditional functional progression.

[3] This sequence of dominant chords progresses by descending minor thirds ($C^7 \rightarrow A^7 \rightarrow F\#^7$). This chromatic mediant framework is highly characteristic of the 19th-century Russian nationalist school; rather than following a conventional circle-of-fifths progression, Rimsky-Korsakov generates a kaleidoscopic shift in harmonic colour that delays tonal resolution until the final cadence in B at bar 94.

		suggesting G major, A major and B major	
	Bars 114–123	Octatonic scale, suggesting the key of B	➢ Recurrence of Sinbad's (the Sultan's) theme
A'	Bars 123–148	Octatonic scale, suggesting the key of E	➢ Sinbad's theme, juxtaposed with the Storm theme ➢ Wave motive in the accompaniment
B'	Bars 149–154	Diatonic; E major	➢ Tranquil woodwind chorale
	Bars 155–160; Bars 161–166; Bars 167–172	Octatonic scale, each passage suggesting dominant of A, dominant of C, and dominant of E respectively	➢ Modified wave motive in the background ➢ Dialogue passages between cello and solo woodwind
C'	Bars 173–176; Bars 177–180	E Dorian mode; D Dorian mode	➢ Scheherazade's theme
	Bars 181–192	Octatonic scale, with unstable tonalities suggesting C major, D major and E major	➢ Storm theme
	Bars 193–205	Octatonic scale, suggesting the key of E	➢ Recurrence of Sinbad's theme
Coda	Bars 206–225	Octatonic scale, suggesting the key of E	➢ Sinbad's theme
	Bars 226–236	Octatonic scale, suggesting the key of E	➢ Tranquil woodwind chorale

L&T Key Point 3.1: Development of the Sultan's theme



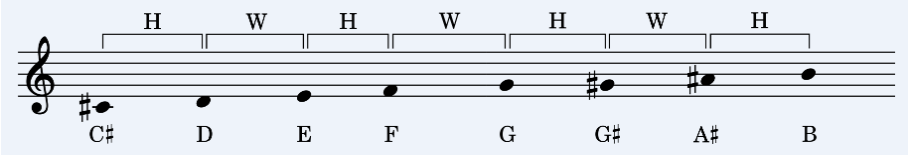
Sinbad's theme (bars 20–24) in Section A is derived from the Sultan's opening theme but transformed through several key modifications:

- **Change of metre and rhythmic character**:
  Sinbad's theme is set in compound duple time (6/4), giving it a flowing rhythmic profile.
- **Melodic contour with a new ending**:
  The basic melodic gesture remains recognisable from the Sultan's theme, but the ending is altered to outline the dominant chord of E. This creates an **open, unresolved antecedent phrase**, which recurs throughout the movement—musically suggesting Sinbad's ongoing, wandering adventures.
- **Change of instrumentation and texture**:
  Instead of a stark, aggressive unison statement, Sinbad's theme is given to the violins, supported by an accompaniment of **oscillating arpeggios** in the lower strings. These rising and falling arpeggios evoke the motion of ocean waves, helping establish the maritime setting of Sinbad's tale.

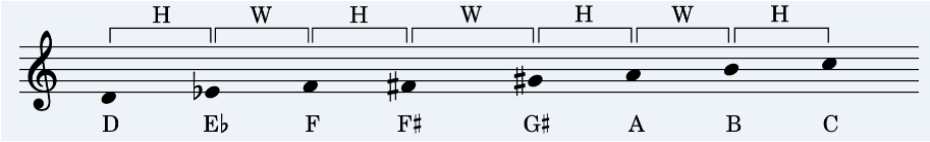
- **Use of octatonic harmonies**:
  The passage incorporates harmonies built on **octatonic scale***, a hallmark of late-Romantic Russian orchestral writing. The octatonic colour lends the music a fantastical quality (Taruskin 2009)—appropriate for Sinbad's legendary voyages and the broader mythic world of *The One Thousand and One Nights*.

***Octatonic scale** refers to an eight-note musical scale that alternates between half and whole steps.

For instance, in bars 18–22, the tonality of E major is established, while a C#-D octatonic scale is used:



By bars 23–24, the music reaches the dominant of E major, with the harmony shifting to the D-E♭ octatonic scale:[4]



L&T Activity 4

Examine and describe how Sinbad's theme develops in Section A (bars 20–69).

[4] These constitute two of the three unique octatonic collections available; the remaining configuration is the C-C# octatonic scale (C-C#-D#-E-F#-G-A-B♭).

L&T Key Point 3.2: Development of Scheherazade's theme

Scheherazade's theme returns and undergoes significant development in Section C (from bar 94 onwards) in the following ways:

- **Modal writing and sequencing**:
  Accompanied by the wave motive, Scheherazade's theme—characteristically played by the solo violin, first reappears in B Dorian mode. It is then treated in a descending sequence and recurs once again in A Dorian mode, as in the movement's opening (but in an octave lower). In both appearances, the theme concludes with an **imitative passage** between clarinet and violin.
- **Contrast between modal and octatonic harmonic language**:
  The modal quality of Scheherazade's theme, evoking a folk-like character, once again highlights her role as the storyteller of the tale. This modal writing stands in strong harmonic contrast to the surrounding passages, which feature octatonic harmonies associated with the fantastical and supernatural elements of the narrative (Taruskin 2009).
- **Fragmentation and motivic development**:
  After the two complete restatements of the theme, its ending melodic gesture and triplet figurations undergo further fragmentation and development, helping to depict the intensifying image of high winds and stormy seas. As the **storm theme** expands, it combines with the ending motive of the Sultan's theme, symbolically merging the forces of nature, conflict, and narrative tension.

L&T Activity 5

Listen to the opening prelude of Wagner's *Die Walküre* and the storm passage in Section C from the first movement of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* (from bar 120 onwards).

Compare and contrast how Wagner and Rimsky-Korsakov depict a storm through music. You may consider musical elements including, but not limited to: rhythm and metre; melody and motives; orchestration and texture; dynamics and articulation; and harmony.

L&T Key Point 3.3: Musical Representation of Ocean Wave

To depict the movement of ocean waves in the first movement of *Scheherazade*, Rimsky-Korsakov uses:

- **Continuous oscillating arpeggio figures (the wave motive)**:
  Rising and falling arpeggios in the lower strings imitate the physical swell of the sea, forming the foundation of the movement's maritime imagery.
- **Gradual crescendos and sudden dynamic drops**:
  These dynamic swells (often accompanied by **ascending sequences**) and releases (e.g. bars 54–69) enhance the impression of waves gathering force and then receding, reinforcing the ebb-and-flow motion of the sea
- **Use of trills in Sinbad's theme**:
  Trills in the melodic line heighten the sense of agitation and instability in the waves. These are often reinforced by **timpani *tremolo*** (e.g. bars 48–49), frequently shaped by **dynamic swells from *piano* and *forte***, vividly evoking the crashing impact of waves against the ship
- **Overall ABCA'B'C'–coda structure**:
  The large-scale alternation between loud, turbulent sections and softer, calmer sections mirror the every-changing nature of the sea, shifting between moments of relative calm and violent upheaval.

L&T Activity 6

Listen to an excerpt from the second movement ("Play of the Waves") of Debussy's *La Mer* (from Figure 30). Compare and contrast how Debussy and Rimsky-Korsakov depict ocean waves through music. In your answer, consider musical elements including, but not limited to: melody and motives; orchestration; dynamics; rhythm and metre; and harmony.

Concluding Remarks

This resource serves as a suggested guide for learning and teaching; it is by no means exhaustive, as *Scheherazade*—like any other Western music canons—invites a vast multitude of analytical and interpretive perspectives. The analytical framework chosen here has been specifically designed to accommodate the requirements of the listening examination. Within this assessment context, **exhaustive, bar-by-bar analysis is rarely the primary focus**. Instead, **students are expected to demonstrate broader holistic competencies**—for instance, tracking motivic development, mapping structural transformations, and understanding the piece within its broader historical and cultural contexts.

Teachers are highly encouraged—both in classroom activities and internal assessments—to introduce **comparative listening exercises**. Selecting another work with similar extra-musical themes or compositional approaches offers a powerful point of comparison. Such comparisons challenge students to identify and describe how different composers make use of various musical elements to achieve their narrative and compositional goals. In the process, students learn to make evidence-based interpretations of how programmatic purposes and compositional ideals are uniquely realised across different styles and eras.

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Disclaimer: The above learning and teaching resources were prepared by the Education Bureau. Schools should make appropriate adjustments and apply them flexibly based on the learning objectives and the actual needs of their students.

Learning and Teaching Resource on
Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade (1st Movement)
for Senior Secondary Music Curriculum

Suggested Answers

L&T Activity 1

Compare and contrast the musical treatment of:

- the opening passage of Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture, and
- the six-bar passage (bars 8–13) in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*

in terms of instrumentation, texture, dynamics, harmony, and any other relevant musical elements.

Also suggest the atmosphere and imagery each passage creates.

	Mendelssohn	Rimsky-Korsakov
Instrumentation	Woodwind section and horns	
Texture	Homophonic/ chordal texture Both passages start with flutes and clarinets (high woodwinds), with gradually thickening layers as bassoons and horns join	
Dynamics	Both passages remain soft throughout	
Harmony	Both passages feature chromatic and unconventional harmonic movement	
	Opens with an ambiguous tonic (E and G# with the fifth to define the chord), moving I – V – iv – I	Unexpected F# major chord before the arrival of the tonic chord of A minor
Atmosphere/ imaginary	Creates a dreamy, magical sound world	Sets a mysterious mood foreshadowing Scheherazade's storytelling and contrasting with Sultan's authoritarian theme

L&T Activity 2

Based on the musical characteristics of the themes studied, explain how Rimsky-Korsakov creates musical contrasts between the two themes in order to depict the conflicting characters of the two protagonists in the framing story.
Consider musical elements including, but not limited to, instrumentation, texture, dynamics, melody, rhythm, and articulation.

	Sultan's theme	**Scheherazade's theme**
Instrumentation	Heavy, forceful low brass and unison strings	Solo violin accompanied by harp
Texture	Dense, monophonic texture	Transparent texture with solo line above sparse chordal accompaniment (homophonic texture)
Dynamics	Loud, imposing	Much softer
Melody	Angular, forceful motive built on a descending whole-tone outline	Highly florid, featuring triplet figures of oscillating melodic movements, descending sequences, and rising arpeggios, in soaring high register
	Played in low register	Presented as a soaring melodic line in the violin's high tessitura
Rhythm	Regular rhythm, with accents on downbeats	Featuring triplet figures
Articulation	Accented	Legato
Contrasting characterisations	→ creating a sense of power, authority, and intimidation	→ producing a delicate and lyrical sound that suggests storytelling

L&T Activity 3

Examine and describe how the themes of the Sultan Schahriar and Scheherazade return in the final movement of the work.

(a) How are the themes treated differently from its first appearance in the opening movement when compared to:
(i) the start of the final movement?
(ii) the end of the final movement?

(b) How do the two recurrences at (i) and (ii) suggest about the evolving relationship between the two characters as the framing story unfolds?

	Opening movement	**Start of the final movement**	**End of the final movement**
How themes are treated differently	✓ Each theme appears once: first the Sultan's theme, followed by Scheherazade's theme ✓ The Sultan's theme is presented by low brass and strings in accented unison, with an angular melodic contour ✓ Scheherazade's theme is introduced by solo violin, accompanied by harp, featuring florid melodic line, triplets, arpeggiated figures, and a final cadenza	✓ Both themes appear twice in alternation, with their returns treated with variations	✓ Scheherazade's theme appears before the Sultan theme ✓ The Sultan's theme returns twice, but is softened; the work concludes with a shortened serene restatement of Scheherazade's theme
		✓ The second appearance of the Sultan's theme is significantly expanded, with the motive of descending leap at the end of the theme repeated and sequenced, played by full orchestra with percussions ✓ Trills played by woodwind and upper strings create a more agitated mood	✓ The Sultan's theme is played in legato and *pp* by cello and double bass, contrasting with the original loud, unison brass statement ✓ The aggressive accents are removed, creating a subdued and reflective mood ✓ Each phrase ends with a plagal(-like) cadence, giving a sense of reconciliation
		✓ Both appearances of Scheherazade's theme modify the final arpeggio passage, with each return	✓ Both appearances of Scheherazade's theme ascend into an even higher

		becoming more compressed, reflecting rising tension between the two protagonists ✓ The violin plays with multiple stopping (creating denser texture), and becomes more forceful and dramatically articulated, especially in the second appearance, depicting the character's more passionate storytelling	tessitura, creating a serene mood ✓ The solo violin plays sustained high note (inverted pedal point) that overlaps with the subdued Sultan's theme ✓ The whole work ends with the final, lyrical statement of the Scheherazade theme, suggesting her triumph through storytelling

L&T Activity 4

Examine and describe how Sinbad's theme develops in Section A (bars 20–69).

- **Two developmental passages**:
  Section A contains two passages, each comprising three repetitions of the theme with variations (a - a' - a''). Altogether, there are six phrases derived from Sinbad's theme.
- **Rising sequences**:
  In each passage, the first phrase states the theme in E major. The subsequent recurrences in the same passage appear in rising sequences, creating a sense of intensification and forward movement.
- **Expanded final phrase in each passage**:
  The third phrase (a'') of each passage is the most extensively developed. The opening motive of Sinbad's theme is isolated and treated in a series of ascending sequences (e.g. bars 36–42), driving the music towards a climatic dominant arrival.
- **Rising register and momentum**:
  The sequential build-up in the first passage raises the theme by a full octave—from E_1 to E_2—at the start of the second passage (from bar 46 onwards). This elevated starting point propels the music into an even higher register, portraying the sense of the vast, surging seascape of Sinbad's adventurous journey.

L&T Activity 5

Listen to the opening prelude of Wagner's *Die Walküre* (first two minutes) and the storm passage in Section C from the first movement of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* (from bar 120 onwards).

Compare and contrast how Wagner and Rimsky-Korsakov depict a storm through music. In your answer, consider musical elements including, but not limited to:

- rhythm and metre
- melody and motives
- orchestration and texture
- dynamics
- harmony

	Wagner	**Rimsky-Korsakov**
Rhythm and metre	✓ Both composers use persistent, fast rhythmic motion to generate a sense of turbulence and unrest.	
	✓ Wagner employs relentless repeated quavers.	✓ Rimsky-Korsakov uses rapid triplet figurations.
	✓ In triple time (3/2)	✓ In duple compound time (6/4)
Melody and motives	✓ Short motives and figurations, often tightly repeated and treated in rising sequences, are used to generate mounting tensions and restless mood.	
	✓ Sweeping ascending and descending bass lines depict the swirling, surging motion of the storm.	✓ Fast triplet figures, suggestive of high winds, are played against oscillating arpeggios that depict the rolling waves.
Orchestration and texture	✓ Both composers create a thick, turbulent textures through the overlapping of multiple thematic layers across the orchestra.	
	✓ Strong, sustained chords played by the wind section are juxtaposed with relentless repeated quavers and oscillating stepwise bassline.	✓ The triplet figurations in the high woodwind are set against the oscillating arpeggio motives in the strings.

Dynamics	✓ Shifting quickly from soft to loud in the opening, followed by an extended, driving crescendo that propels the music towards its climax.	✓ Sustains predominantly loud dynamics throughout the storm passage.
Harmony	✓ Sustained D minor chord throughout the excerpt, portraying a dark mood.	✓ Octatonic harmonies, creating a fantastical, otherworldly atmosphere that complements the narrative of Sinbad's voyage.

L&T Activity 6

Listen to an excerpt from the second movement ("Play of the Waves") of Debussy's *La Mer* (from Figure 30). Compare and contrast how Debussy and Rimsky-Korsakov depict ocean waves through music. You may consider musical elements including, but not limited to:

- Melody and motives
- Orchestration and texture
- Dynamics
- Rhythm and metre
- Harmony

	Debussy	**Rimsky-Korsakov**
Melody and motives	✓ Uses repeated and oscillating patterns to the sea's perpetual motion.	✓ Uses continuous oscillating arpeggio figures (wave motive) in the strings to portray the rolling movement of the sea.
	✓ Trills are featured in the themes/motives to heighten the sense of agitation	
	✓ Lacks themes/ melodic phrases, instead of using motives and colouristic gestures.	✓ Clearly defined theme (Sinbad's/ the Sultan's theme) recurs and transforms.
Orchestration and texture	✓ Layers/juxtaposes multiple instrumental colours simultaneously, suggesting depth and constant motion of the ocean.	✓ Wave motives in the lower strings support Sinbad's theme and storm theme played by strings and woodwinds (in mostly homophonic texture).
Dynamics	✓ Frequent gradual crescendos followed by sudden drops, suggesting waves swelling and breaking. ✓ Long dynamic surges simulate the ocean waves gradually building up.	
Rhythm and Metre	✓ Avoids strong metric pulses; rhythm often feels free and floating.	✓ Uses compound metre (6/4) and triplet figurations, producing a sweeping and relentless sea motion.
Harmony	✓ Uses octatonic harmonies to create a fantastical, supernatural colour	✓ Uses modal, whole-tone, and extended tonal/ chromatic harmonies, creating an ambiguous harmonic context