

MAGIC LANTERN MELODIES

The magic lantern has frequently inspired composers – if only to give them an intriguing title for a purely instrumental musical item. Thanks to the researches of Stephen Bottomore in the British Library and Laura Minici Zotti in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the list of identified musical publications with magic lantern connections now amounts to twenty items – fifteen from the 18th and 19th centuries, five from 20th.

Apart from an 18th-century fragment (no. 1 in the listing below) the earliest item was published in London about 1810 and is titled "Lanterna Magica, or the Magic Lantern, with the favourite Pas Russe set for the Piano Forte. For juvenile performers". (It is notable that several of the items are designed to appeal particularly to children.) A second English piece, from c.1826, is called "La Lanterna Magica".

The decade 1840-50 saw three separate musical items – two songs and a collection of waltzes – published in Paris under the title "Lanterne Magique"; and in 1866 a Strauss Quadrille of the same name, based on the songs from a popular operetta, *Les Pirates*, by Victor Cheri, was also published in Paris. Disappointingly, the elaborate illustration on the cover of the Strauss sheet music has no connection with the lantern, though quite detailed pictures of lanterns appear on the two earlier French items (they are illustrated in the Society's publication *The Lantern Image*).

Three English pieces from the later part of the century have coloured covers, with clear illustrations of the magic lantern: the finest is Charles Westall's "The Magic Lantern Polka", a charming impression of a Victorian lantern show. The only copy so far traced is in the British Library.

The two pieces from the 20th century offer no such pictorial delights. "Magic Lantern Polka" was written by Ezra Read, a prolific composer of "descriptive music", with a journalistic ability to turn out music to celebrate any contemporary event, whether the Klondyke gold rush, the King's coronation, battles of the Boer War or the Paris Exhibition. He was also the compiler of the work of a popular late-Victorian piano tutor. Finally the Spanish composer Joachin Turina chose the title "Lanterna magica" for a piece in his "Ciclo plaeresco", opus 101, of 1947.

Although the majority of the items are purely instrumental, three are songs. A London-published Italian composition of 1840, Vincenzo Gabussi's "La Calabrese" begins (in rough translation) "Here is the Calabrese with the magic lantern, loved in towns and villages, showing in the clear glass, tra la la", and goes on to list the different cities that are displayed.

The words of the 1850 song "Lanterne Magique", published in Nantes and attributed to someone with the unfortunate initials "M.A.D.", are worth quoting in full, again in rough translation:

In the cold vapours of a thick mist,
Captivating the eager evening crowd,
A child displayed, with a frail hand,
Pretty pictures, poor Savoyard.
His music was a serinette,
A curtain hid the wooden cabin,
And the child cried in a feeble voice:
Magic lantern, magic lantern!

Ladies, see Sir Sun
Admire, gentlemen, Madame Moon.
Their course, he said, controls the fate
of the ever-gazing spectators.
Tragic is the fall of an eclipsed star,
Of the shining star they are partisans;
Here misfortune has courtesans;
Magic lantern, magic lantern!

Here you see a couple in love;
For two years the sweetness has lasted.
Love was their only fortune;
Here with a cradle how happy they are!
Never a reproach, a hasty word,
No memories of absinthe or gall;
For them the honeymoon always shines:
Magic lantern, magic lantern!

Sobriety in the Bas Breton;
Too much choice for a rose gardener; -
A rich heiress cannot find a husband. -
Monkey Bertrand tricks young Rat. -
An old maid with an angel heart,
Never speaking ill of her neighbour. -
A poor lad finding credit: -
Magic lantern, magic lantern!

The crowd all laughed at the pretty pictures;
More than one comment was heard.
And returning to his own home,
Each delighted spectator cried:
You must admit, in all good sense,
The world today is better than it was;
And the child said in a frail voice:
Magic lantern, magic lantern.

Although the reference to the rose gardener is a trifle obscure, it is evident that ironic illustrations of improbable incidents, like the sober Breton or the poor boy getting credit, were popular with audiences. The same style appears in Julien Fauque's words for the earlier song, "La Lanterne Magique". It begins,

In my lantern with curious pieces,
You can see pass by, one after the other,

Before your eyes, marvellous things,
Famous everywhere to this day.
To display this endless list,
Who will guide Harlequin's baton?
Attention! I shall show the horns
Which the god Mars gave to Vulcan.
Come, come the music!
Enter, enter, people of Paris!
Two sous, that is all the price,
To see the Magic Lantern.

The showman goes on to promise that he will show the moon at noonday, Robinson Crusoe finding Friday on a Sunday, Leda's swan, Jupiter, Samson and Delilah, Harpagon, the Wandering Jew and Diogenes. Other marvels in the same style as the other Savoyard's contradictions are modest scholars, a journalist with an opinion, pickpockets without nimble fingers, a grand lady with her own real hair, and a doctor who cures the sick without purgatives and medicines.

Another notable aspect of the 1850 song is the perception that the lantern had the power, and the purpose to lift the spirits of the spectators and to imbue them with optimism. Perhaps other lyrics awaiting discovery will afford more such clues to public appreciation of the lantern in the 19th century.

LA LANTERNE MAGIQUE

Chanson
Chantée par M^{me} KAISER à l'Alcazar d'Hiver.



Piano 3!

Guitare 1!

Paroles de

imp. ignoré et Villin, Paris

Musique de

JULIEN FAUQUE

R. PLANQUETTE

Maison ROYOL, Spécialité de musique p^r les Théâtres,
Paris, L. BATHLOT, Successeur, Editeur, 39, Rue de l'Ecliquier,
Propriété pour tous pays

The full list of music so far traced is as follows:

(1) n.d. but apparently 18th century. "La Lanterne magique". Two-line section of music on first page of "IVme recueil d'airs de toute espece et trois suites de pieces . . . pour le cythre ou la guitthare allemande dedie a Mr Rolland de Fraimont ameriquain, par Mr l'Abbe Carpentier chanoine de St Louis du Louvre amateur".
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

(2) c.1810. "Linterna Magica, or the Magic Lantern, with the favorite Pas Russe set for the Piano Forte. For juvenile performers". London. 2pp of music. No cover or illustration.
British Library

(3) 1823. "La Lanterne magique". Music by Romagnesi, Antoine Joseph Michel. Words by M. A. Naudet. Illustrated cover. A later edition at pp 128-9 in volume 2 of "Collection des Romances, chansonnettes et noctures de A. Romagnesi". 2 vols, Paris, 1824, has no illustration.
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

(4) 1826. "La Lanterna Magica. Divertimento for the Piano Forte and Flute ad lib, on two Favorite Airs from the Opera of The Pirates, composed and dedicated to Miss Moore. London, J. B. Cramer, Regent Street. 11pp music. No illustration.
British Library

(5) c.1840. "La Calabrese. duetto per soprano e contralto, composto e dedicata alle signorine Hannersley, dal cave Mo.V. Gabussi" (Vincenzo Gabussi). London, T. Boosey & Co. 9pp music. No illustration.
British Library

(6) c.1840 "Lanterne Magique. 20 Valses pour le Piano". Paris, Mayence, Anvers, fils B. Schott; London, P. Cocks; Milan, Ricordi. Music missing from only known copy. Illustrated cover by Henry Emy shows a Mephistophelean figure projecting with a lantern while a group of spectators sits on the ground watching.
(*The Lantern Image*, 161)

(7) c.1840 "La Lanterne Magique, Chanson chante par Madame Kaiser a l'Alcazar d'Hiver. Paroles de Julien Fauque, Musique de R. Planquette". Paris, L. Bathlot. 2pp music and words. Illustrated cover by H. Meyer shows a travelling showman drawing back a curtain to reveal a lantern.
(*The Lantern Image*, 163)

(8) c.1850 "Quadrilles Mignons pour le piano, par Alphonse Leduc". Quadrille no 1 is "La Lanterne Magique". Alphonse Leduc edit, rue de Grammont. Illustrated cover, one segment of which illustrates magic lantern.
François Binetruy collection, Paris

(9) 1862 "Lanterne magique!!!". Music by Louis Deffès. Words by Auguste Carre. (Peripheral references only to magic lantern.)
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

(10) c.1865 "Lanterne Magique". Paroles de M.A.D., Musique de Mlle V. de M. Nantes, Charpentier. 2pp music and words. No illustration.
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

(11) 1866 "La lanterne magique du nouveau Paris" by Victor Cheri. Words by M.M. Clairville, Monnier et Blum.
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

(12) 1866 "La Lanterne Magique, Quadrille sur les Motifs de Victor Cheri, dans Les Pirates, revue du Théâtre Imperial du Chatelet, par Strauss, Chef d'Orchestra des Bals de la Cour". Paris, E. Gerard et Cie. 5pp. music. Illustrated cover by Donjean shows a ball in progress, but no magic lantern anywhere visible.
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

(13) 1882 "The Magic lantern Polka" by Charles Westall. London. 9pp of music. A fine full-colour cover shows a magic lantern show in progress. Lantern and operator are in the foreground, the audience behind. The title is printed across the top.
British Library

(14) c.1890 "The Children's Evening Party, A Collection of Games with Tunes, Songs for the Little Ones, Quadrilles, Waltzes, Schottisches, Polkas, Country Dances, Vocal Marches, &c. &c. Compiled and Arranged for an Evening Amusement, by T. S. Gleadhill". London, Swan & Co, 4 Great Marlborough Street, W. Music missing from available copy. Cover design includes vignette showing a lantern show.
(*The Lantern Image*, 283)

(15) c.1895 "The Magic Lantern. A Series of Descriptive Pieces for the Pianoforte, composed by Seymour Smith". London, D. Wilcock, 13 Imperial Arcade, Ludgate Hill, EC. Printed by C. G. Roder, Leipzig. The same cover was used for all 12 pieces in the suite, which are listed on the front page; most consist of 5pp. music. The illustrated cover shows a Russian iron magic lantern, in the lower right-hand corner, projecting a Neapolitan scene, with bare-foot dancers.
(*The Lantern Image*, 293)

(16) 1903. "Magic Lantern Polka" by Ezra Read. London, The London Music Publishing Stores. 2pp music. No illustration.
British Library

(17) c.1910 "Ma Petite Lanterne Magique" par Francisque Darcieux. Suite enfantin pour piano sur des themes populaires. Lyon. Maroky ed. Paris, Gallet, 6 rue Vivienne. Illustrated cover printed in green.
Laurent Mannoni collection

(18) 1925 "La lanterne magique: tableaux rapides". 31 short pieces for piano by J.-M. Zoubaloff. Paris, L. Grus et Cie, 1925.
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

(19) 1947 "Ciclo plateresco. ii. Linterna maqica (Impresiones para piano) opus 101", 3 movements, by Joaquin Turina. Madrid, Union Musical Espanola. 11pp of music. No illustration.
British Library

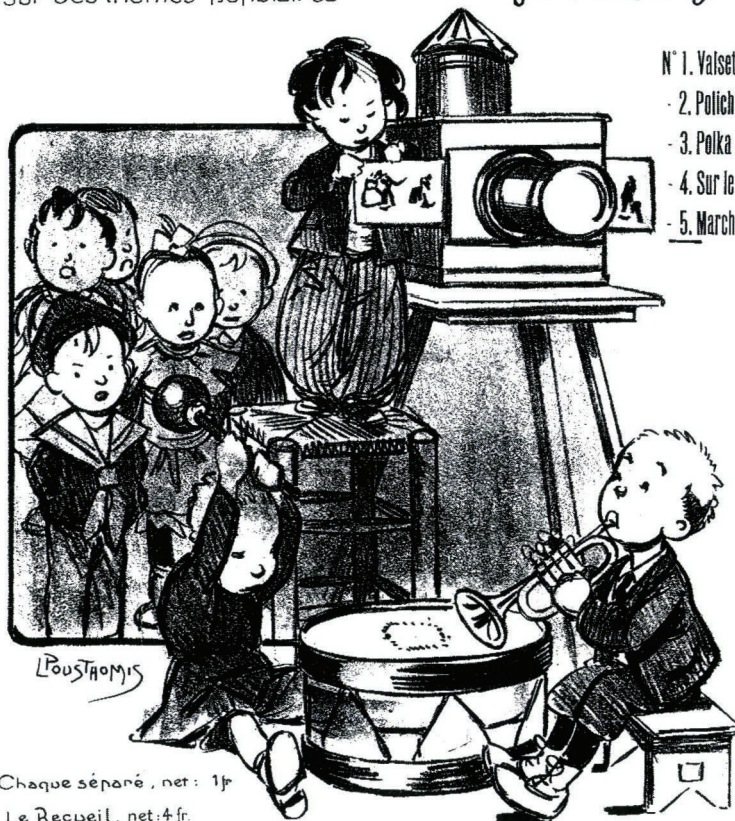
(20) 1977 "Lanterne magique". Piece by Claude Pascale in "La Clarinette. Pages de style en forme de pieces de concours: 6 pieces pour clarinette et piano" (by several composers).
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

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