

Listening Log – Memory

Peter Rauscher

"I pledge my honor that I have abided by the Stevens Honor System."

Intro

The track I listened to this week was "The William Tell Overture", composed by Gioacchino Rossini and performed by the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, [available to stream here](#). The track was originally composed in 1829 and premiered that same year as the overture for the opera *William Tell*. This was the last of the stunning 39 operas he would compose in his lifetime. Since then, the piece has been used time and time again in popular media, serving as the theme song for *The Lone Ranger* – which made many associate the song with horseback riding.

Description

The piece begins at a slow, steady pulse – established by the repeated notes of the lower strings and kettle drums – which creates the foundation for the piece moving forward and provides a sense of stability throughout the overture. As the piece progresses, the frequency of the pulse increases slowly and dramatically, with a rising tempo creating a faster heartbeat and a frantic sense of urgency within the listener's body. The composer relies on the listener's short-term memory to recognize the changes in tempo and frequency over this piece's introductory period. The tension and anticipation build up crescendos and explodes into the piece's signature and iconic trumpet fanfare – the part which for many remains engrained within the long-term memory – which serves as the piece's main theme. Overall, the piece is characterized by a lively and syncopated rhythm, with the melody alternating between woodwind and string sections, creating a sense of energy and movement. The alternating of the instrumental sections in this manner creates the texture and tone the piece is loved and known for.

Experience

This is a piece I'm almost certain anyone who hasn't lived under a pop-culture rock for their entire life has heard. It's had widespread use in movies, television, and other media for a long time. For me specifically, this invokes images of Looney Toons and Tom and Jerry chase scenes – some of my first experiences with the track. The other time in recent memory I can recall hearing this piece was replaying "Fancypants Adventures", a browser game I frequented growing up. I have nothing but fond memories associated with this piece, and it reaches as far back as my memory itself does. Though I've heard this piece many times, I can't recall a time I've specifically sat down and listened to it all the way through, and certainly not in an isolated manner such as this. I garnered a deeper understanding to a piece I already know and love, which was a refreshingly nostalgic experience for me.