

L'Enfant et les sortilèges

The Enchanted Child

MUSIC FILM SCRIPT

Updated 25th June 2002
Duration: 45 minutes
Film language: French
Master format: Digital Beta PAL, 35 mm
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Music by **MAURICE RAVEL**
Libretto by **COLETTE**
film script and direction **MARIKKI HAKOLA**
Stage designer **KATRIINA ILMARANTA-PAJUNEN**
Photographer **RAIMO UUNILA**
Producers **MARIKKI HAKOLA & SANNA-KAISA HAKKARAINEN**
Production company **KROMA PRODUCTIONS LTD.**

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SCRIPT WRITER'S AND DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

“...Ravel's music is like a human magnifying glass, through which one can inspect philosophical questions posed by Colette ... “

The Enchanted Child is a fictional music film. The film script is based on the miniature opera “L'Enfant et les sortilèges” (1925) by Maurice Ravel (libretto by Colette).

The theme of the film is childhood, the child's worldview. It tells about the growth process through ethical questions associated with the theme of one's relationship with one's environment. The film invites the viewer to a journey into the world of a small boy's imagination and fantasies, leading the viewer to the basic questions of life related to being a responsible individual.

The opera “L'enfant et les sortilèges” is very cinematic and full of action in its original dramaturgical form and dramatics. The composition is indeed a brilliant starting point for a music film, as it provides a lot of material for an audiovisually told psychological story. A modern virtual technology with the computer graphics and 3D animation offer excellent tools for the cinematic realization of the story's fantasy world.

The music film Enchanted Child's primary target group is young people - while not forgetting adult viewers or the opera audience. The basis of the scriptwork has been to create a story full of excitement, content and surprising turns that would interest especially younger teenagers. The film's main distributing channel is television. Also, the idea is to print a 35-mm version for festival distribution.

ABOUT THE SCRIPT

The story of the film is based on the dramaturgy of Maurice Ravel's music and the story and libretto of Colette. Because the whole dialogue is related to music, the scriptwriter does not have much latitude to create a new course for the story or dialogue without committing great injustice toward the composer and the writer. Also, there is no reason for major changes, because the dynamics of the composition and dialogue offer a fine basis for the film by themselves. The scriptwork has therefore focussed on the expressional and philosophical interpretation of the music, story and dialogue, trying to find today's esthetical means for a cinematic realization, especially by looking for solutions that would interest young viewers.

The visual ideas of set decorator Katriina Ilmaranta-Pajunen have brought an important angle to the scriptwork. I have been able to use a large collection of outlines concerning the virtual computer based stage design and costumes. The staging and the wardrobe of the film will be, when they are complete, the artistic display of Ilmaranta-Pajunen's doctoral thesis.

Due to the nature and sound of the original dialogue, the only language used in the film will be French. The music simply cannot be performed in any other language than the original without losing the respect of the music world. The other language versions will be provided through subtitles.

INTERPRETATION OF THE STORY

The film tells about the afternoon of a small boy. He starts with his action a series of events, and he has to face the consequences of his thoughtless and mean deeds in a strange and imaginary way. The familiar objects and creatures of the boy's world assume the form of fantasy creatures. These creatures, tormented by the boy in many ways, decide to teach him a lesson that will make him realize the consequences of his actions. The events take the boy to the basic ethical questions in life, questions about power and responsibility, and humankind's relationship with the environment and nature. The story, which is exciting and even scary in many ways, still has a happy end. The boy learns to respect the living environment the hard way.

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The main theme will be expressing the psychological growth process of childhood. The message of the film is that the basis for ethical thinking lies in the everyday behavior of all people. The story doesn't, however, paint the usual moral black-and-white staging or finger pointing, but discusses the problem of good and evil in the very multifaceted way. One cannot force a person to be good. You can't force evil away. Good can turn into evil and the other way around, if the circumstances are suitable.

The film also contemplates on the development of a child's identity along with experiences of corporeality and sexual awakening. The boy meets his ideal love and also has his first erotic experiences. Corporeality is the story's main way of approaching existential questions, such as power and responsibility, the border between life and death, vulnerability of the mind and body, and limits of physical existence.

In Colette's text, the child's ethical worldview develops in the lively and dynamic relationship with the world, not on the ideal level or through outside teaching. A person's understanding of himself and his environment are formed through human experiences, through working in the world. The interpretation and psychological characterization of the boy's development story therefore culminates on this basic pragmatic starting point.

ABOUT THE TEXT AND MUSIC

Colette's text is - though containing deep philosophical themes - airy and smooth, far from heavy-minded meditations. The boy's growth story is presented at a very concrete level, in momentarily impressions, the dynamic vignette of the afternoon.

Ravel's musical expression brings strong emotional undercurrents into the story themes, independent from real-life time progression. The expressive impressiveness of the music and the graphically accurate psychological perceptions allow the viewer to understand the possibility of larger human understanding. Ravel's music is like a strongly experiencing, human magnifying glass, through which one can inspect the philosophical questions presented by Colette in the human scale.

WHY MAKE A FILM OUT OF AN OPERA?

After working with the cinematic script and plan of the opera "L'Enfant et les sortilèges", I am convinced that if the composer and writer had had the means of today - film, digital animation and virtual staging - they wouldn't have hesitated for a moment to paint their audiovisual fantasy with the film brush. The events in the composition, turns in the text, transitions, inter-scenic dynamics and the general musical structure - all put in one - are an excellent film script by themselves. Although a cinematic realization couldn't be produced at the time of the piece was composed, I think one should be made now. I also believe that *The Enchanted Child* is, because of its ethical themes, more current than ever before.

The opera is an audiovisual form of expression in itself, and a form of multimedia to a great degree. Among operas, *The Enchanted Child* is a composition that raises particularly strong visual associations. In its way of storytelling, it is also in many ways postmodern and ahead of its time. This opera will certainly be put to the stage also in the future. But the expressive means of the film will open for the composition - and in a larger sense, for the opera art - a chance to evolve into new directions as a form of expression. The composition would reach new audiences through the film's many distributing channels that it could never reach by itself. I wish to get a chance for the audiovisual realization of this impressive composition.

In Porvoo, 25th June 2002
Marikki Hakola

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SYNOPSIS

The music film *Enchanted Child* is a growth story, a depiction of a childhood worldview and the development of ethical values. The main character, the boy, is eleven years old. The events of the film are seen through the eyes of the boy, diving into his fantasy world. The space, boy's room, is in a constant metamorphosis representing changes in the boy's mind. The other characters act as symbolic stages of the boy's growth and criticize one after another child's thoughtless and mean actions. The creatures decide to teach the boy a stern lesson...

The first scene introduces the boy in his room doing homework. The homework bores him. He wants to be mean rather than diligent. The mother, shown as a huge shadow, peaks into the room to see how the homework is being done. The boy shows his tongue at the mother. The mother gets angry. As a punishment he must spend the afternoon alone until dinnertime. After he has been left alone, the boy begins to rampage. With shrieks of joy, he crushes the teacup and teapot, turns his computer over, pokes the squirrel in the cage with his sharp pencil, pulls the cat by its tail, raises a cloud of dust from a fireplace, sprays paint graffiti on the wallpaper and shakes the old grandfather's clock.

He is just about to sink into the armchair, watching the desolation with satisfaction and tired from his raving, when the furniture suddenly turns alive. The armchair crawls farther away from the mean boy, and dances a sarabande with the stool. The grandfather's clock is suddenly about to fall on the top of the boy. He has a narrow escape. The grandfather's clock roams around the room, seemingly feeling ill and unable to stop its clinging. The teapot and teacup challenge the boy into a boxing match, and make fun of the boy in the sound of foxtrot, while gobbling a pidgin language of English and Chinese. The confused boy is crying from fear and loneliness. Even the fire in the fireplace doesn't want to have anything to do with him, and shows its anger toward the boy. "Get lost", the fire sings, "I warm up the good ones but burn the bad ones".

You can hear the quiet lamentation of the shepherds from the wallpapers sprayed all over by the boy. The princess of the destroyed storybook declares she will abandon the boy forever. The boy sings to the princess - his first love - about his longing, but his pleadings are of no use. The princess storms to her fate. All of the sudden, the colors disappear from the room. Mister Arithmetics himself, surrounded by the gang of the Number Kids, jumps forward from the screen of a fallen computer, and pulls the boy into a wild dance. The crescendo of Arithmetics and Number Kids is furious, and the boy falls on the floor, stunned by its strength.

Suddenly the floor of the room starts to grow green grass and the ceiling opens into the outside space like a grand zipper. The black tomcat crawls out under the armchair and starts to flirt with a female cat. The blushing boy observes the flirtation of the cats. A huge old oak appears in the room and flowers are blooming around the boy. He is feeling surprised but happy about the the room turning into the garden. Soon the room is filled with the natural creatures. But the trees and small animals, the old oak, the dragonfly, the nightingale, the bat, the frog and the squirrel, ally against the boy, who has treated them so badly. The animals decide to teach the boy a stern lesson. The squirrel leads the charge. A furious fight begins. The scared boy screams: "Mother!"

In the heat of the battle, the squirrel gets wounded. Horrified and remorseful, the boy ties up the wound stops the bleeding. Then the boy, having lost all his strength, falls unconscious on the floor. A sudden silence follows. It is hard for the creatures to understand the change that the boy has gone through. The creatures notice that the boy is also wounded and he helped another one, also wounded. They think that maybe boy is not so bad. The boy sees a dream in which the afternoon events mix into a surrealistic journey, receiving new form and a different solution.

The creatures are powerless and cannot help the boy. The squirrel recovers, and points towards the closed door of the room. The creatures remember the boy's scream, and soon the space is ringing out: "Mother!" The light turns on in the corridor outside of the door. The creatures carry the boy carefully to the armchair and sneak into the darkness of the room. The comforting tunes of the choir of the creatures praise the child's goodness. The door opens and the boy wakes up. Puzzled but most relieved, the boy reaches towards the light: "Mother!"

ROLES / CHARACTERS

CHARACTER	ACTOR	ANIMATION
Boy	x	
Mother		x actor's shadow
Armchair	x	real chair, actor
Stool	x	x 3D, actor
Furniture		x 2D
Grandfather's Clock	x	x 2D, actor
Teapot	x	
Teacup	x	
Fire	x	x actor, animated flames
Ash	x	x actor, animated smoke
Shepherd Boy		x 2D photo animation
Shepherd Girl		x 2D photo animation
Princess	x	
Mister Arithmetics	x	
Number Kids	x	
Tomcat	x	puppet and actor
Female Cat	x	
Old Oak	x	x face animation on a 3D model
Dragonfly	x	
Nightingale		x 2D animation
Bat	x	
Frog	x	
Squirrel	x	3D, actor
Plants		x 2D
Animals		x 2D

CAST OF SINGERS

mezzo-soprano: Boy

dramatic or mezzo-soprano: Mother, Teacup, Dragonfly

soprano: Stool, Bat, Shepherd Boy

soprano: Princess, Female Cat, Squirrel

coloratura soprano: Fire, Shepherd Girl, Nightingale

tenor: Teapot, Tomcat

tenor: Mister Arithmetics, Frog

baritone: Armchair, Grandfather's Clock, Old Oak

mixed choir

childrens' choir

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LIST OF SCENES

Duration 50 minutes.

	Dur	Score	Scene	Characters	Choir
	0'30	-	graphics	-	
1	2'05	00 - 03	Bored Boy	Boy	
2	1'12	03 - 07	Mother's reprimands	Boy, Mother	
3	1'08	07 - 16	Boy's fury	Boy	
4	1'46	16 - 21	Dance of the chairs	Boy, Armchair, Stool	Furnitures
5	1'19	21 - 28	Grandfather's clock	Boy, Grandfather's Clock	
6	2'24	28 - 37	Tea and foxtrot	Boy, Teapot, Teacup	
7	3'04	37 - 50	Fire and ash	Boy, Fire, Ash (dancer)	
8	3'09	50 - 62	Pastoral	Boy, Shepherd Boy, Shepherd Girl	Pastoral
9	6'41	62 - 75	Princess	Boy, Princess	
10	1'47	75 - 95	Arithmetics	Boy, Arithmetics, Number Kids	Number Kids
11	4'00	95 - 103	Cat duet	Boy, Tomcat, Girl Cat	
12	1'41	103 - 105	Lamentation of an old oak	Boy, Old Oak	Flora
13	1'51	105 - 113	Flyers	Boy, Dragonfly, Nightingale	
14	0'34	113 - 117	Bat	Boy, Bat	
15	2'50	117 - 131	Frog and Squirrel	Boy, Frog, Squirrel	
16	1'46	131 - 135	Accusation of squirrel	Boy, Squirrel	
17	0'36	135 - 139	Battle	Boy, Squir., Drag., Night., Oak, Frog	
18	2'21	139 - 144	Wounded	Boy, Squir., Drag., Night., Oak, Frog	Flora & Fauna
19	2'44	144 - end	Salvation	Boy, Squir., Drag., Night., Oak, Frog	Flora & Fauna
	1'10	-	credits, air picture	-	

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CHARACTERIZATION OF THE CHARACTERS

ROLES

BOY

The main character, eleven years old, small school kid of today played by the child actor. Independent, stubborn, frustrated child, who has an lively imagination and lots of resourcefulness. The bored boy rebels against the instructions of the mother by turning to very mean. As the story progresses, it is revealed that the boy is a good child in his heart, able to realize his mistakes and learn from them even if only the hard way. The film is a growth story, where the boy's psychological development forms the basic theme of the film. The other characters act as symbolic stages of the boy's growth. The boy's character is played with as much everyday credibility, directness and clarity as possible.

MOTHER

The mother is seen only through images in the boy's mind, through the subjective interpretation of the boy. In the beginning, the mother is a huge shadowy figure, against whom the boy rebels. In the end, the light flooding from the door symbolizes the mother. The mother is also seen in the boy's dream as an animated stitch-figure.

ARMCHAIR

A red, stuffed, late 19th-century easy chair. A polite gentleman wearing an old woman's frock. The armchair wobbles, waddles and is can dance the salon dances of the 19th century. Realized with the combination of a real armchair morphing into an actor in the role costume.

STOOL

Red, stuffed, cute ladies stool of the end of the 19th century. A dolled-up old maid. The stool trips along, coquets and can dance the salon dances of the 19th century. Realized with the combination of 3D-graphics and an living actor in the role costume. The animation figure morphs into a role character.

GRANDFATHER'S CLOCK

An old, dignified and anachronistic clock that is reeling, mindlessly clanging around the room, groping the air and searching for balance. An insulted elder with a strong attack of nausea. Ticking parts of the clock engine are flying around in the air. An actor dressed in the role costume. Height of a whole room. At times, filling the whole room as parts.

TEAPOT

A black American former master boxer. A guy talking Yankee slang, sweating, pompous and defiant toward smaller ones. The role character steps out of a still-picture phrased into a piece of a broken teapot.

TEACUP

A Chinese porcelain cup. A vamp of age, speaks an unconceivable gibberish pidgin language of Chinese and English. The "personal coach" of the boxer. Her vulgar behavior is in conflict with her outer stylishness. The role character steps out of the still-picture phrased into the piece of a broken porcelain teacup.

FIRE

Oversensitive diva, a fluttering flame. Hysterical and perilous character. Realized with the pictorial combination of fire animation and an actress dressed in the role costume, a gorgeous prima donna, whose hair is flaming and an enormously long tongue sticks out of her mouth like a licking flame (dragon-style). The nails are striking welding sparks. Its steps are smoking.

ASH

A softly moving figure dressed in the gray veils and smoke wisps. Realization: combination of the smoke animation and a dancer dressed in the role costume.

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SHEPERD GIRL AND SHEPERD BOY

A girl, tender, melancholic character. A boy, serious, melancholic character. Both are small, hardly size of the finger.

PRINCESS

Adoringly beautiful, transparent maiden surrounded by a shining aura. The boy's first love. The princess understands the boy, is tender and forgiving. She can sense his tragic fate.

MR ARITHMETICS

A black-and-white character, an old fogey. Over-energetic master of ceremony. Behaves badly and makes disparaging gestures, beats the air with his map stick.

TOMCAT

A black gentleman tomcat, who has smooth moves, openly erotic behavior and lots of charmer's experience. The tomcat's meaning in life is to seduce female cats.

FEMALE CAT

A white seducer, a sex bomb, who has smooth moves, openly erotic behavior and lots of experience about the tomcats. The female cat's meaning in life is to seduce tomcats.

OLD OAK

A rugged, seasoned trunk of a tree, whose branches with their abundant leaves fill the whole sky. The wise elder of the garden, who is troubled by the rot, but still offers protection to the small animals of the garden.

DRAGONFLY

An insect maiden that flies around in anxiety, glittering in the colors of the rainbow, searching its lost partner. She sits on a branch of the tree, flapping her rainbow wings. Considerably smaller than the boy.

NIGHTINGALE

A small bird maiden flying restlessly, listening to the sorrow of the dragonfly, almost ready to burst in the tears and singing its mournful wailings. 2D animation character.

BAT

A widower with family, raging in torment to the boy who has killed the bat mother. An angry, pitch-eyed batman, who is charging like a berserk, with its shining cape flapping and the nails straggling.

FROG

Clumsy, simple and foolishly brave small creature, who can do frog tricks, like splashing, leaps and stretching. Always concentrated on thinking about food. Catches the nourishments with its long tongue.

SQUIRREL

A nimble professional soldier, embittered by sufferings of the captivity, intelligent fighter character, but blinded by hatred. Gives to the boy the opposition that the other garden creatures in their innocence cannot, not even the bat. An agitator who raises the garden creatures against the boy, but in the end also has a heart for mercifulness. A fur that has gone messy in the tribulations and the uniform.

NUMBER KIDS

10-12 kids. A Lad League with boys and girls under 12 years.