





WATER
in music

Depicting *Water* in the Arts

What are the problems of representing
WATER?

- Water is fluid, and thus seemingly “formless”
- While “formless,” water takes on many forms—droplets, sprays, currents, ripples, waves—so that there are many kinds of water to represent

Depicting *Water* in the Arts


- There are many bodies of water—oceans, rivers, lakes, streams, fountains—whose surfaces are constantly in *motion*: how do you represent the motion of water?
- On the other hand, there are bodies of water—pools, the depths of the ocean—that are seemingly *completely still*: how do you represent the stillness of water?

Depicting *Water* in the Arts

- Before photography, painters developed different techniques to try to represent water.
- In the case of **Claude Monet** (1840-1926) and the Impressionist painters, instead of trying to realistically depict water, attempted to give an *impression of the movement of water* with visible brushstrokes, as in Monet's *Impression, Sunrise*



Claude Monet, *Impression, Sunrise* (1872)



How can you depict
WATER
in MUSIC?

Water in Music?

- What is the sound of water? Drops, ripples, streams, splashes, waves—or even no sound at all
- How can we give the impression of water using pitch, rhythm, meter, timbre, melody, and harmony?

Water in Music?

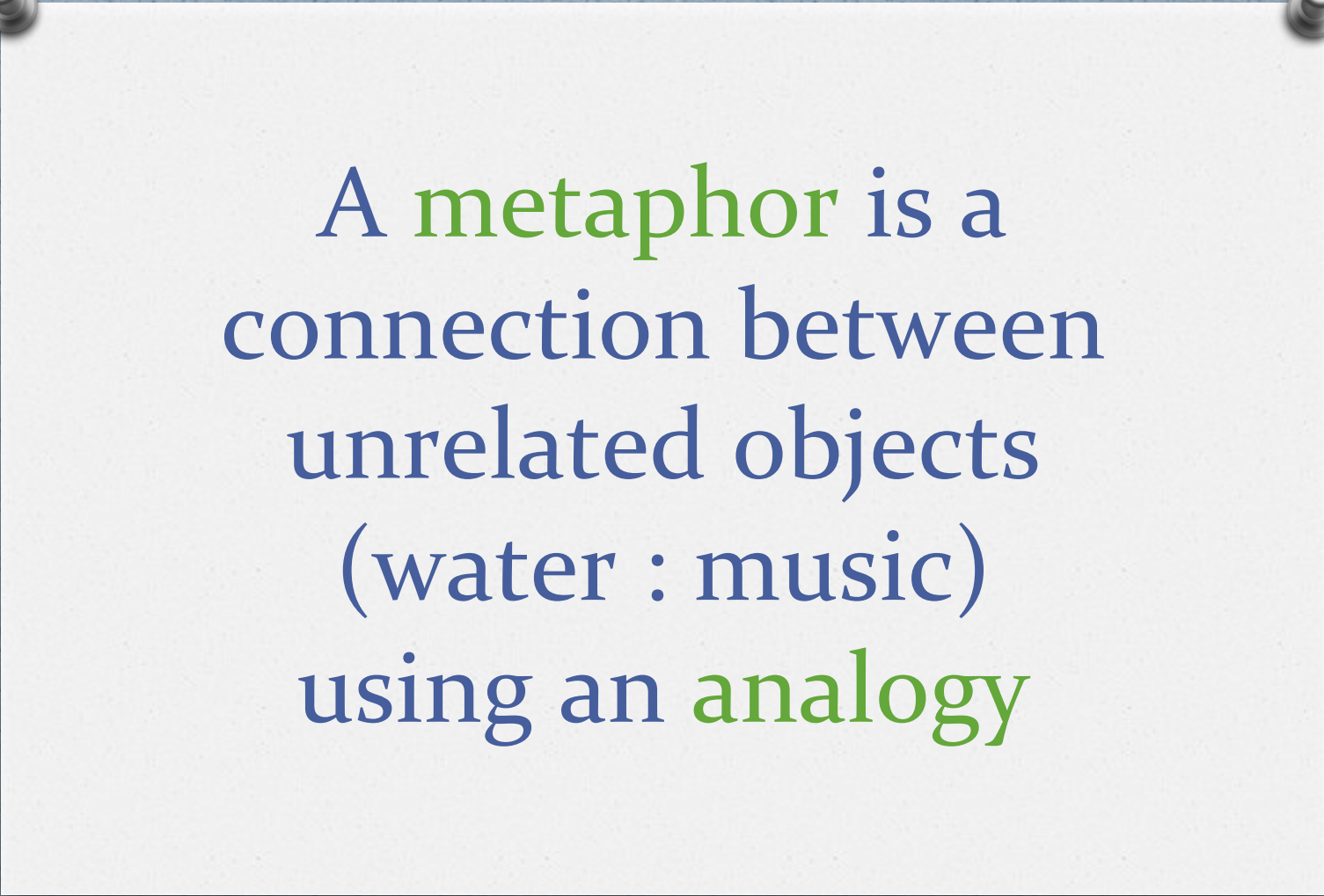


Musician playing “water” in Tan Dun’s *Ghost Opera*

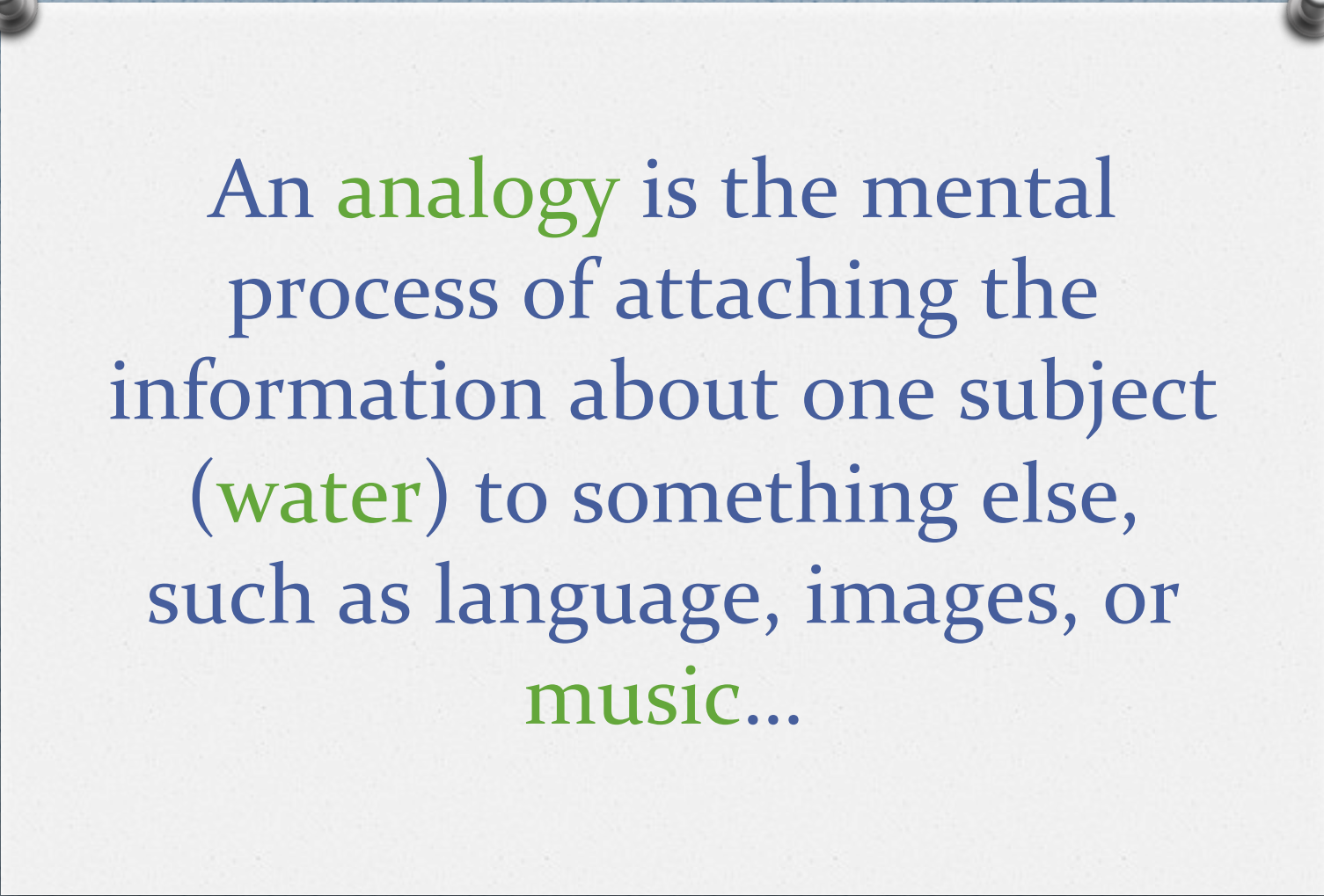
Water in Music?

- What is the sound of water? Drops, ripples, streams, splashes, waves—or even no sound at all
- How can we give the impression of water using pitch, rhythm, meter, timbre, melody, and harmony?

USING METAPHORS

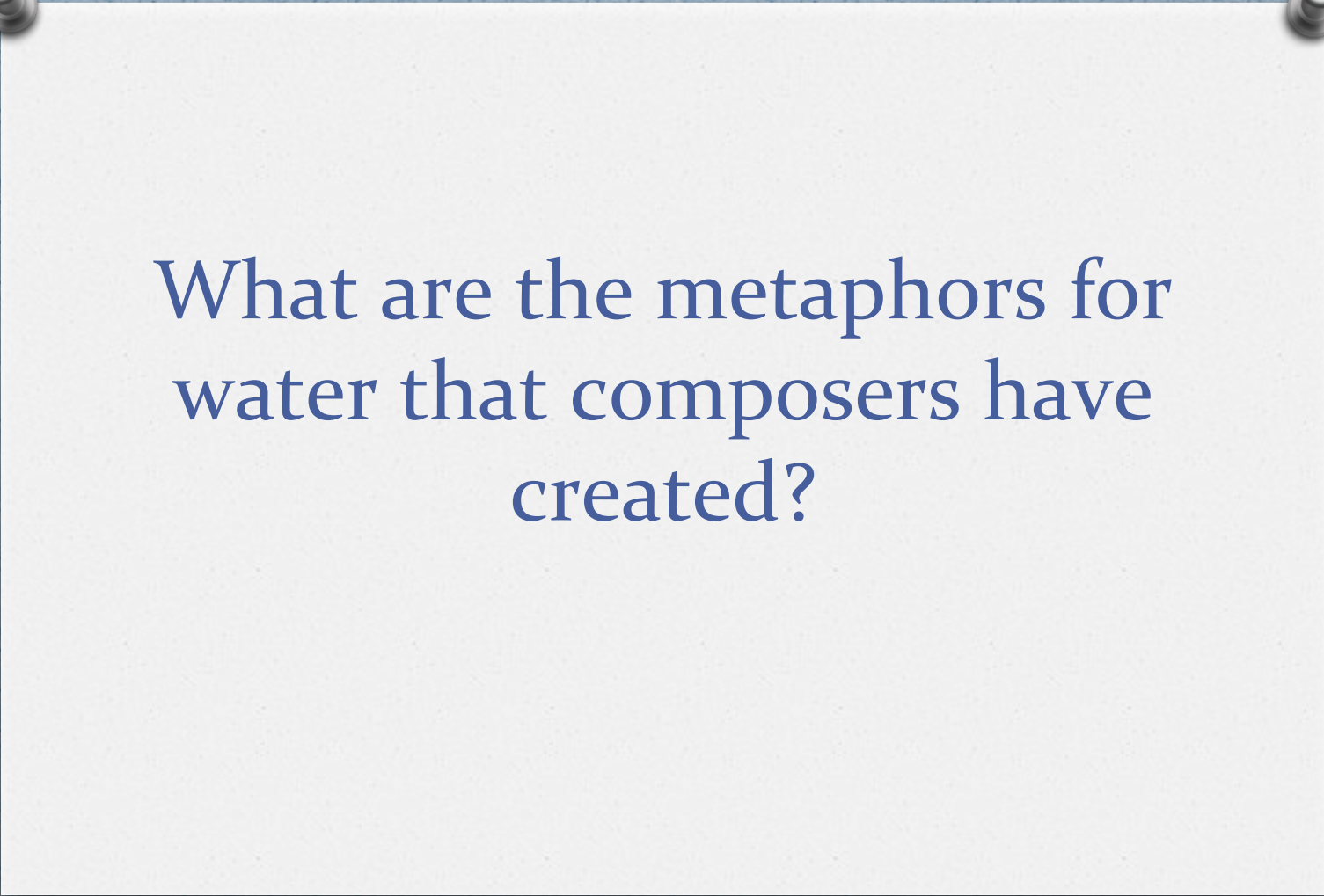


A **metaphor** is a
connection between
unrelated objects
(water : music)
using an **analogy**



An **analogy** is the mental process of attaching the information about one subject (**water**) to something else, such as language, images, or **music...**





What are the metaphors for
water that composers have
created?

WATER	MUSICAL METAPHOR
Depth of Water Deep Shallow	Large Range (low to high) Small Range (high)
Droplets, Rain	Short high notes, random rhythms
Jets of Water (Fountains)	Continuous fast, short notes
Waves	Notes moving from low to high to low again (up and down like a wave)
Movement of Water Waves	Triple meter

Camille
Saint-
Saëns
(1825-1921)





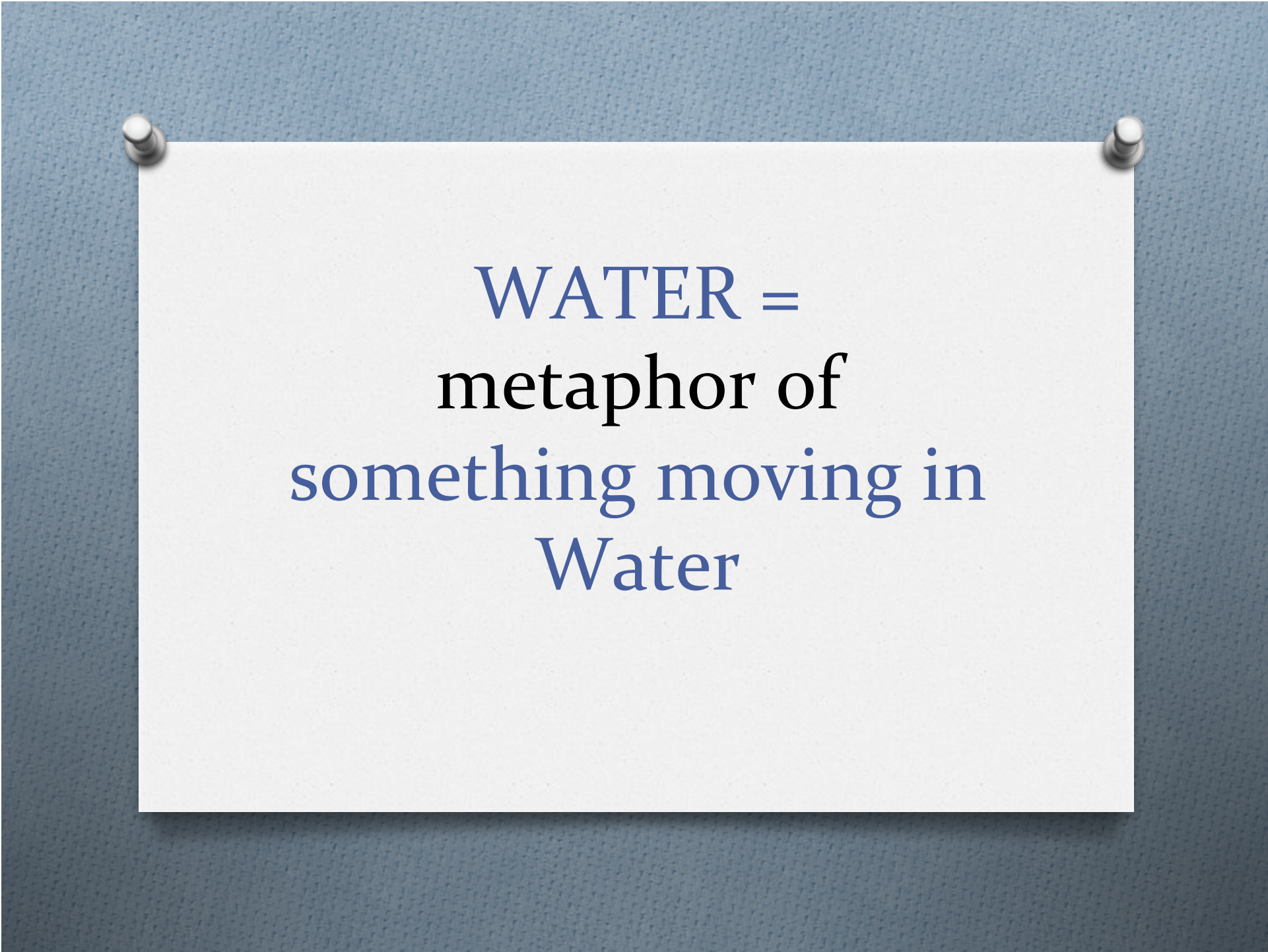
Camille Saint-Saëns

“Le Cygne”

[The Swan]

(1886)





WATER =
metaphor of
something moving in
Water



(the Swan swimming)

Le Cygne

- Triple meter = the sway of the ripples
- Two pianos playing *arpeggios*— “broken” chords—to represent the movement of the water, and the movement of the swan’s feet beneath the water
- Melody played by the cello to represent the swan, and the swan’s song

Swan Song

- There is an ancient superstition that swan's are silent for most of their lives, but right before they die, they burst into a beautiful song
- Saint-Saëns plays on this idea, by writing a beautiful melody for the cello as if it is the swan's voice—its swan song

Swan Song

- We also use the phrase “swan song” as a metaphor to something amazing or beautiful done just before someone dies:

“The last album was his ‘swan song.’”

Swan Song

- The famous ballet dancer Anna Pavlova commissioned a solo dance piece to the music of Saint-Saëns' *Le Cygne* called *The Dying Swan* the plays on this belief.



Anna Pavlova in *The Dying Swan*

Saint-Saëns, *Le Cygne* [The Swan]



Anikó Illéyi, Cello; Gábor Cseke, Piano

Johann
Strauss, Jr.
(1825-1899)



Johann Strauss, Jr.

- Johann Strauss, Jr. was a composer and conductor in **Vienna, Austria**, and was famous his orchestra—the Johann Strauss Orchestra—that played **dance music**
- Was known as “**The Waltz King**” because of the popularity of his waltzes (he wrote over 400)

Johann Strauss, Jr.

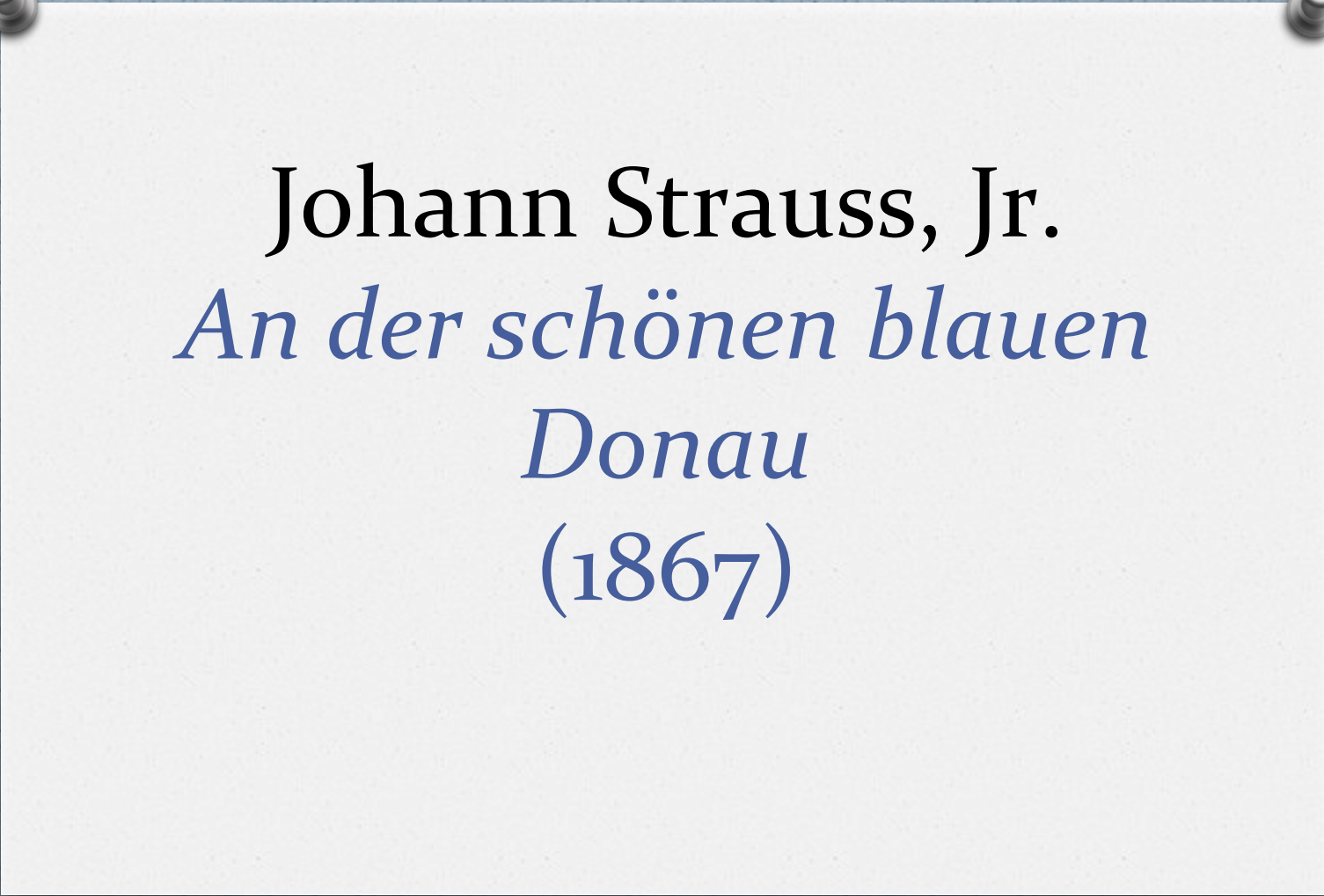
- The waltz is a **triple-meter dance**, that is done by a couple in “**closed**” **position** (the man embracing the woman)
- The dancers turn in **half circles**, and move counterclockwise around the dance floor



The Waltz

Johann Strauss, Jr.

- Strauss' most famous waltz is *An der schönen blauen Donau* [By the Beautiful Blue Danube]



Johann Strauss, Jr.
*An der schönen blauen
Donau
(1867)*

Johann Strauss, Jr.

- o The Donau—or “Danube” in English—is a large river that flows through Europe, beginning in Germany’s Black Forest and ending at the Black Sea
- o The Danube flows through the center of the city of Vienna where Strauss worked, and the river is a kind of symbol (metaphor) for the city itself

The Danube River

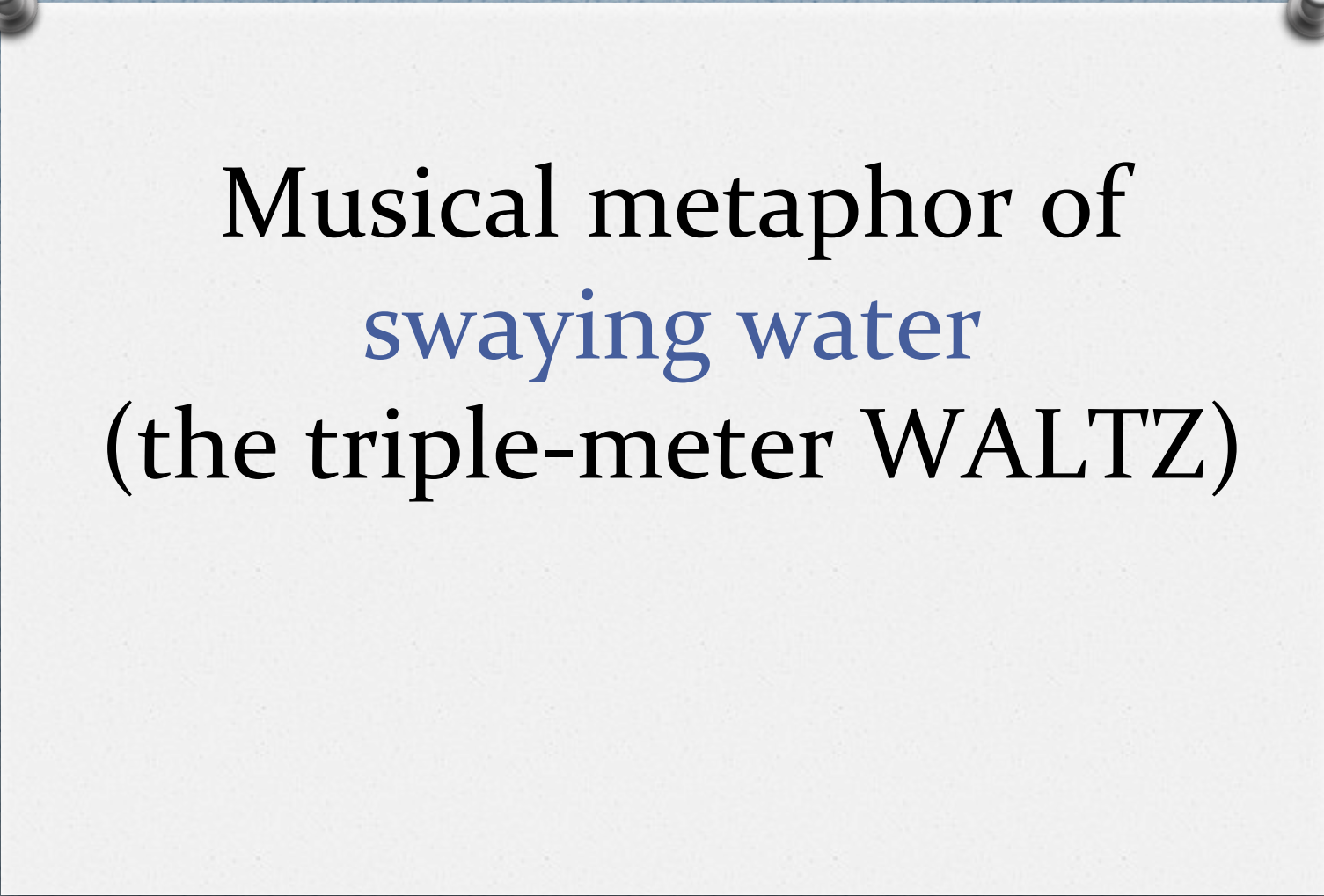


The Danube River



Johann Strauss, Jr.

- While all waltzes are in **triple meter**, Strauss uses the swaying rhythm of triple meter as a metaphor refer to the **movement of the waters** of the Danube



Musical metaphor of
swaying water
(the triple-meter WALTZ)

Johann Strauss, Jr.

- *By the Beautiful Blue Danube* is actually a series of waltzes—five in all—that are connected to each other

By the Beautiful Blue Danube

Waltz 1	00:00 “Blue Danube” Melody 00: 38 Contrast melody in Woodwinds
Waltz 2	1:10 Moving melody 2x 1:40 Singing melody in strings
Waltz 3	2:14 “Viennese” melody 1 2:47 “Viennese” melody 2
Transition	3:00
Waltz 4	3:05 Broad melody A 3:50 Broad melody B
Transition	4:21
Waltz 5	4:31 “Yodel” melody 5:01 “Rowing” melody
Coda	5:36 Coda (An ending section)

An der schönen blauen Donau, Vienna New Year's Concert



Léo Delibes
(1836-1891)



Léo Delibes

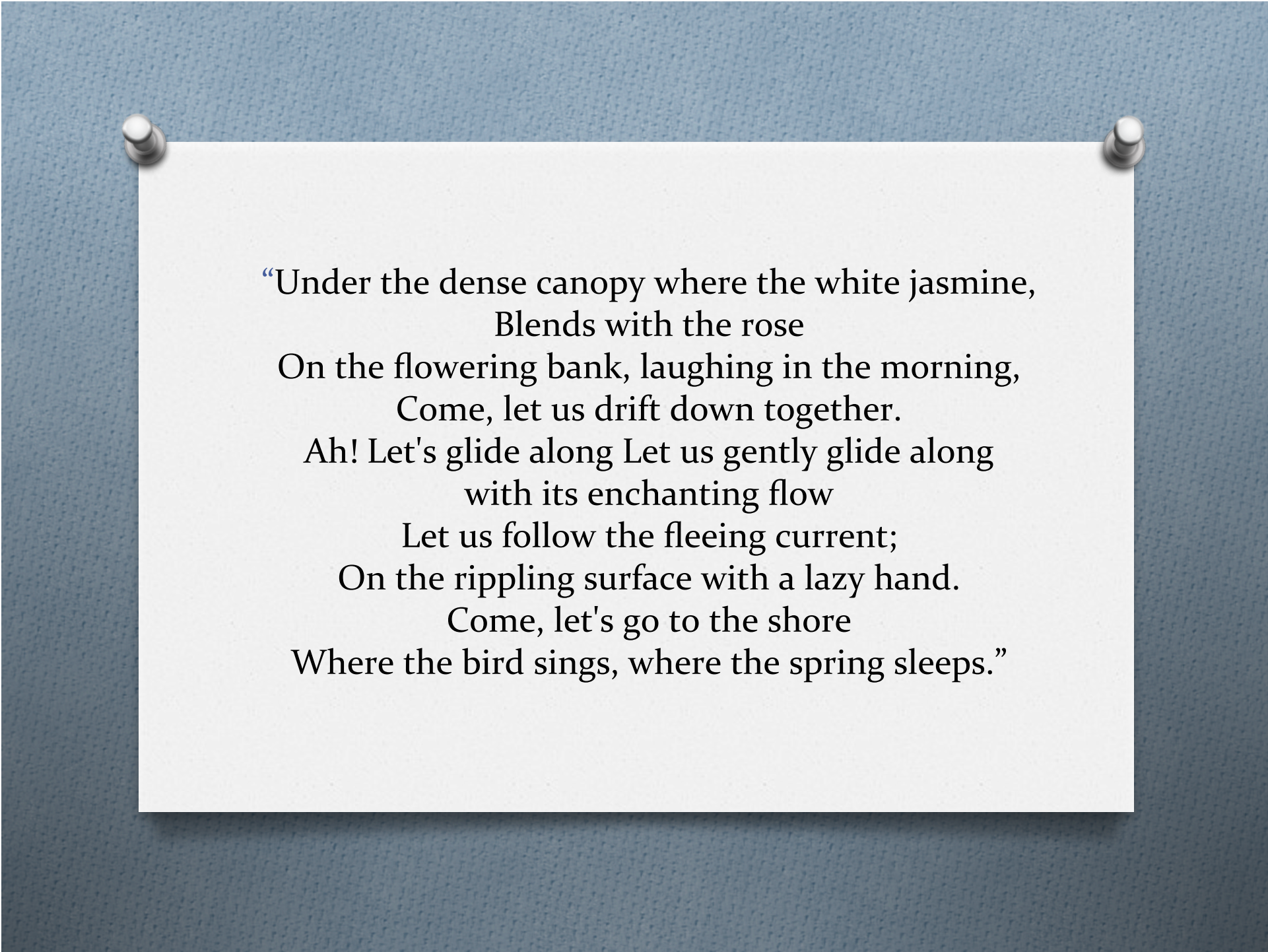
- Léo Delibes is best-known today for his ballets *Coppelia* and *Sylvia*, and for his opera *Lakmé*
- *Lakmé* takes place in colonial India, and tells the tragic love story of **Lakmé**, the daughter of a Brahmin priest, and **Gerald**, a British Army officer



Léo Delibes
“Flower Duet”
Lakmé
(1883)

Léo Delibes

- Early in the opera Lakmé and her friend Malika gather flowers as they sail on the river in a small boat
- As they pick the flowers they sing “Sous le dôme épais,” or as it’s better known, the “Flower Duet”



“Under the dense canopy where the white jasmine,
Blends with the rose
On the flowering bank, laughing in the morning,
Come, let us drift down together.
Ah! Let's glide along Let us gently glide along
with its enchanting flow
Let us follow the fleeing current;
On the rippling surface with a lazy hand.
Come, let's go to the shore
Where the bird sings, where the spring sleeps.”



Léo Delibes

- Delibes uses a **triple meter** to depict the swaying of the boat in the water: like Saint-Saëns' *Le Cygne*, he is representing not only the movement of the water, but of **something in the water** (a boat)
- The **tempo** of the music is **slow**, representing the calm movement of the stream

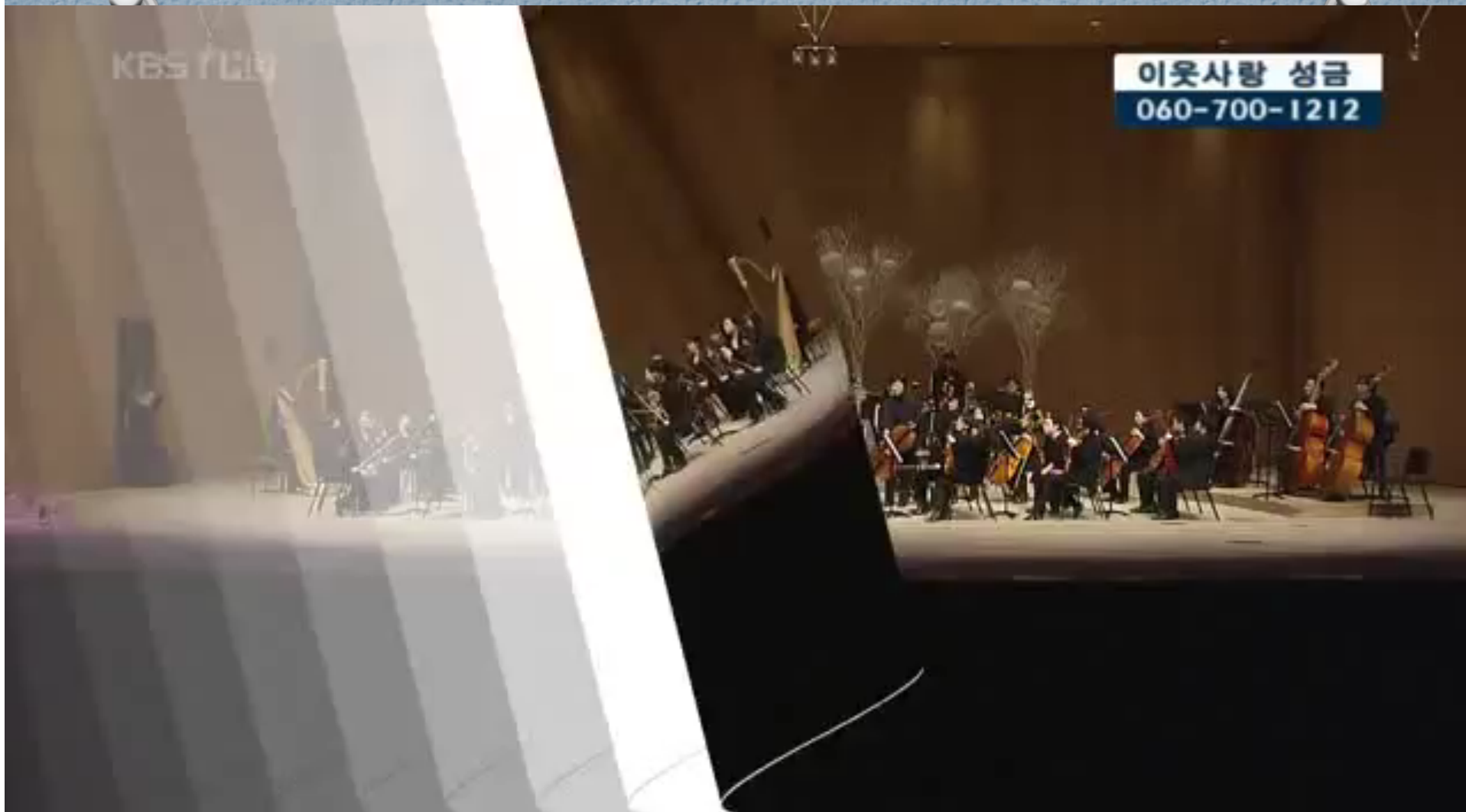
Léo Delibes

- Delibes also references something else—the type of songs that people sing when they are out boating—in this case, a kind of boating song called a **BARCAROLLE**
- Barcarolles are the songs sung by Venetian gondoliers, and are almost sung in a **swaying triple-meter rhythm**

A Venetian gondolier singing a barcarolle



Delibes, "Flower Duet" from *Lakme*



Sumi Jo (soprano) and Ah-Kyung Lee (Mezzo-soprano)

MUSIC to KNOW

- Camille Saint-Saëns, “The Swan” (Track 57, *The 99 Most Essential Pieces of Classical Music*)
- Johann Strauss, Jr., *By the Beautiful Blue Danube* (Track 28, *The 99 Most Essential Pieces of Classical Music*)
- Léo Delibes, “Flower Duet” from *Lakme* (Track 82, *111 Opera Masterpieces*)

TERMS to KNOW

- o Metaphor, Analogy
- o Triple Meter
- o Arpeggio
- o “Swan Song”
- o Waltz
- o “Waltz King”
- o Donau/Danube
- o Tempo (“Time” = how fast or slow)
- o Barcarolle, Gondolier