



## KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER: KEY COMPOSER 2

**MODEST  
MUSSORGSKY**  
1839-1881



- Mussorgsky was a Russian composer
- Mussorgsky was a brilliant pianist—his mum was his first teacher
- Mussorgsky’s friends taught him composition. Later on in his life, as Mussorgsky struggled to cope, his friends often completed his work for him and improved it
- Most of Mussorgsky’s work was inspired by Russian history and folklore
- Mussorgsky gave up his career as a soldier to become a composer
- Mussorgsky struggled to make enough money, he struggled with his health and drank way too much alcohol. When his mum died, he never really got over it
- Mussorgsky died alone in a charity hospital. He was only 42 years old

Mussorgsky’s most **SIGNIFICANT WORK** is **NIGHT ON THE BARE MOUNTAIN**

This work also goes by the name NIGHT ON BALD MOUNTAIN. ‘Bare’ and ‘Bald’ both mean barren and refer to a real mountain found in Southern Russia. The music is about an old Russian legend when witches meet for a party at the top of the mountain and summon demons. It was completed in 1867 on Midsummer’s Eve. Night on a Bare Mountain is an example of a **tone poem**.

**Know what to listen out for...**


\***Contrasting dynamics—forte to piano—crescendo**

\***A storm—thunder and lightning**

\***Witches laughing and casting spells**

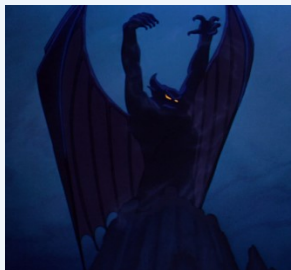
\***The ‘party’ music sounds like Russian folk music**

\***Morning arrives. You hear distant church bells and a shepherd playing his pipe**

Tone Poem	Orchestral music usually in one movement that describes a story, a painting or a poem
Dynamics	How loud or quiet the music is. <b>FORTE</b> means to play loudly and <b>PIANO</b> means to play softly
Crescendo	The music gradually gets louder. The musical sign is 
Folk music	The traditional music for the people of a country

### **FANTASIA**

This is a Disney film from 1940. It combines cartoon with classical music. Night on the Bare Mountain featured. This was the scary demon in the cartoon.



### **Other notable Russian composers**

**Tchaikovsky**—See key pieces 1

**Prokofiev**—See key pieces 2

**Stravinsky**—See key composer 6